

by an overseer, who gives notice to his workmen when to be at their posts by flapping with his tail upon the water, divides them into parties for each several kinds of work, distributes their employments, assigns their stations, and superintends the execution of his commands, is too absurd to require refutation. But there are many other statements regarding them equally untrue, although not at first sight so palpably ridiculous. Thus it is said that their tails are used by them as sledges for the conveyance of their materials, a purpose for which the conformation of this appendage renders it highly improbable that it can serve, and which observation has proved to be performed in a very different manner. But not content with metamorphosing this organ into a sledge, our travellers have also made it a trowel, and have given very particular descriptions of the manner in which the beaver employs it in spreading the plaster, with which, according to their accounts, his work is overlaid. Unfortunately, however, it is equally unfitted by its structure for such an operation; and the only organs employed in mixing up the mud with the rest of the materials, are the fore paws and the mouth. These, in fact, are the instruments with which all the labors of the beavers are effected; and it is sufficiently obvious that neither with their assistance, nor indeed with the united powers of all their organs, could these animals drive stakes of the thickness of a man's leg three or four feet deep into the ground, or execute a variety of other feats for which they have obtained general credit.

The sticks and branches which they use, instead of being driven into the ground, are laid for the most part in a horizontal direction, and they are only prevented from floating away by the stones and mud which are brought up by the beavers in their paws from the bottom to be laid upon them, and which gradually become cemented into a firm and compact mass. All their work is performed during the night. Although the favorable nature of the situation may have induced many families to assemble in the same spot, they do not on that account carry on their operations in common; unless when a dam of large extent is to be built, when they usually unite their forces for its completion. Each family occupies itself exclusively on its own habitation, which has in general but one apartment. The idea of their houses being divided into several chambers, each allotted to its appropriate purpose, may have originated from the fact of their some-