

uation; they enjoy the pleasure of gnawing perpetually the bark and wood, which are most palatable to their taste; for they prefer fresh bark and tender wood to most of their ordinary aliment. Of these provisions they lay up ample stores, to support them during the winter, but they are not fond of dry wood. It is in the water, and near their habitations, that they establish their magazines. Each cabin has its own magazine, proportioned to the number of its inhabitants, who have all a common right to the store, and never pillage their neighbours. Some villages are composed of twenty or twenty-five cabins. But these large establishments are rare, and the common republic seldom exceeds ten or twelve families, of which each has his own quarter of the village, his own magazine, and his separate habitation. They allow not strangers to sit in their neighbourhood. The smallest cabins contain two, four, or six; and the largest eighteen, twenty, and it is alleged, sometimes thirty beavers. They are almost always equally paired, having the same number of females as of males. Thus, upon a moderate computation, the society is often composed of 150 or 200, who all, at first, labour jointly, in raising the great public building, and afterwards in select tribes or companies, in making particular habitations. In this society, however numerous, an universal peace is maintained. Their union is cemented by common labours; and it is rendered perpetual by mutual convenience, and the abundance of provisions which they amass and consume together. Moderate appetites, a simple taste, an aversion to blood and carnage, deprive them of the idea of rapine and war. They enjoy every possible good, while man knows only how to pant after happiness. Friends to each other, if they have some foreign enemies, they know how to avoid them: When danger approaches, they advertise one another, by striking their tails on the surface of the water, the noise of which is heard at a great distance, and resounds through all the vaults of their habitations. Each takes his post; some plunge into the lake, others conceal themselves within their walls, which can be peretrated only by the fire of heaven, or the steel of man, and which no animal will attempt either to open or to overturn. These retreats are not only very safe, but neat and commodious. The floors are spread over with verdure. The branches of the box and the fir serve them for carpets, upon which they permit not the smallest dirtiness. The window that faces the water answers for a balcony to receive the fresh air, and to breathe. During the greatest part of the day, they sit on end, with their heads and anterior parts of the body elevated, and their posterior parts sunk in the water. This window is made with caution, the aperture of which is sufficiently raised to prevent its being stopped up with the ice, which, in the beaver climates, it often two or three feet thick. When this happens, they slope the sole of the window, cut obliquely the stakes which support it, and thus open a communication with the unfrozen water. The element is so necessary, or rather so agreeable to them, that they can seldom dispense with it. They often swim a long way under the ice. It is then that they are most easily taken, by attacking the cabin on one hand, and, at the same time, watching at a hole made at some distance, where they are obliged to repair for the purpose of respiration. The continual habit of keeping their tail and posterior parts in