

for, to dress these stakes, & put them in a situation nearly perpendicular; some of the beavers must elevate, with their teeth, the thick ends against the margin of the river, or against the cross-tree, while others plunge to the bottom, and dig holes with their fore feet, to receive the points, that they may stand on end. When some are labouring in this manner, others bring earth, which they splash with their feet, and beat firm with their tails. They carry the earth in their mouths, and with their fore feet, and transport it in such quantities, that they fill with it all the intervals between the piles. These piles consist of several rows of stakes, of equal height, all placed opposite to each other, and extend from one bank of the river to the other. The stakes facing the under part of the river, are placed perpendicularly, but the rest of the work slopes upwards to sustain the pressure of the fluid; so that the bank, which is ten or twelve feet wide at the base, is reduced to two or three at the top. It has, therefore, not only the necessary thickness and solidity, but the most advantageous form for supporting the weight of the water, for preventing its issue, and to repel its efforts. Near the top, or thinnest part of the bank, they make two or three sloping holes to allow the surface water to escape, and these they enlarge or contract according as the river rises or falls; and when any breaches are made in the bank by sudden or violent inundations, they know how to repair them as soon as the water subsides.

It would be superfluous, after this account of their public work, to give a detail of their particular operations, were it not necessary, in a history of these animals, to mention every fact, and were not the first great structure made with a view, to render their smaller habitations more commodious. These cabins or houses are built upon piles near the margin of the pond, and have two openings, the one for going to the land, and the other for throwing themselves into the water. The form of the edifices is either oval or round, some of them larger, and some less, varying from four or five, to eight or ten feet diameter. Some of them consist of three or four stories; and their walls are about two feet thick, raised perpendicularly upon planks, or plain stakes; which serve both for foundations and floors to their houses. When they consist but of one story, the walls rise perpendicularly a few feet only, afterwards assume a curved form, and terminate in a dome or vault, which serves them for a roof. They are built with amazing solidity, and neatly plastered both without and within. They are impenetrable to rain, and resist the most impetuous winds. The partitions are covered with a kind of stucco, as nicely plastered as if it had been executed by the hand of man. In the application of this mortar, their tails serve for trowels, and their feet for plashing. They employ different materials, as wood, stone, and a kind of sandy earth, which is not subject to be dissolved in water. The wood they use, is almost all of the light and tender kinds, as alders, poplars, and willows; which generally grow on the banks of the rivers, and are more easily barked, cut and transported, than the heavier and more solid species of timber. When they once attack a tree, they never abandon it, till they cut it down and carry it off. They always begin the operation of cutting at a foot or at a foot and a half above the ground. They labour in a sitting posture; and, besides the convenience of this sit-