laughable this may appear to an European, cuſtom makes it very indecent, in their opinion, to turn any thing of the kind to ridicule. 1771. Auguſt.

When a friend for whom they have a particular regard is, as they ſuppoſe, dangerouſly ill, beſide the above methods, they have recourſe to another very extraordinary piece of ſuperſtition; which is no leſs than than that of pretending to ſwallow hatchets, ice-chiſſels, broad bayonets, knives, and the like; out of a ſuperſtitious notion that undertaking ſuch deſperate feats will have ſome influence in appeaſing death, and procure a reſpite for their patient.

On ſuch extraordinary occaſions a conjuring-houſe is erected, by driving the ends of four long ſmall ſticks, or poles, into the ground at right angles, ſo as to form a ſquare of four, five, ſix, or ſeven feet, as may be required. The tops of the poles are tied together, and all is cloſe covered with a tent-cloth or other ſkin, exactly in the ſhape of a ſmall ſquare tent, except that there is no vacancy left at the top to admit the light. In the middle of this houſe, or tent, the patient is laid, and is ſoon followed by the conjurer, or conjurers. Sometimes five or ſix of them give their joint-aſſiſtance; but before they enter, they ſtrip themſelves quite naked, and as ſoon as they get into the houſe, the door being well cloſed, they kneel round the ſick perſon or perſons, and begin to ſuck and

1771. August. and blow at the parts affected, and then in a very ſhort ſpace of time ſing and talk as if converſing with familiar ſpirits, which they ſay appear to them in the ſhape of different beaſts and birds of prey. When they have had ſufficient conference with thoſe neceſſary agents, or ſhadows, as they term them, they aſk for the hatchet, bayonet, or the like, which is always prepared by another perſon, with a long ſtring faſtened to it by the haft, for the convenience of hauling it up again after they have ſwallowed it; for they very wiſely admit this to be a very neceſſary precaution, as hard and compact bodies, ſuch as iron and ſteel, would be very difficult to digeſt, even by the men who are enabled to ſwallow them. Beſides, as thoſe tools are in themſelves very uſeful, and not always to be procured, it would be very ungenerous in the conjurers to digeſt them, when it is known that barely ſwallowing them and hauling them up again is fully ſufficient to anſwer every purpoſe that is expected from them.

At the time when the forty and odd tents of Indians joined us, one man was ſo dangerouſly ill, that it was thought neceſſary the conjurers ſhould uſe ſome of thoſe wonderful experiments for his recovery; one of them therefore immediately conſented to ſwallow a broad bayonet. Accordingly, a conjuring-houſe was erected in the manner above deſcribed, into which the patient was conveyed, and he was ſoon followed by the conjurer, who, after a long preparatory diſcourſe, and the neceſſary conference

ference with his familiar ſpirits, or ſhadows, as they call them, advanced to the door and aſked for the bayonet, which was then ready prepared, by having a ſtring faſtened to it, and a ſhort piece of wood tied to the other end of the ſtring, to prevent him from ſwallowing it. I could not help obſerving that the length of the bit of wood was not more than the breadth of the bayonet: however, as it anſwered the intended purpoſe, it did equally well as if it had been as long as a handſpike. 1771. August 6th.

Though I am not ſo credulous as to believe that the conjurer abſolutely ſwallowed the bayonet, yet I muſt acknowledge that in the twinkling of an eye he conveyed it to—God knows where; and the ſmall piece of wood, or one exactly like it, was confined cloſe to his teeth. He then paraded backward and forward before the conjuring-houſe for a ſhort time, when he feigned to be greatly diſordered in his ſtomach and bowels; and, after making many wry faces, and groaning moſt hideouſly, he put his body into ſeveral diſtorted attitudes, very ſuitable to the occaſion. He then returned to the door of the conjuring-houſe, and after making many ſtrong efforts to vomit, by the help of the ſtring he at length, and after tugging at it ſome time, produced the bayonet, which apparently he hauled out of his mouth, to the no ſmall ſurprize of all preſent. He then looked round with an air of exultation, and ſtrutted into the conjuring-houſe, where he renewed his incantations, and continued them without intermiſſion twenty-four hours.

1771. Auguſt. Though I was not cloſe to his elbow when he performed the above feat, yet I thought myſelf near enough (and I can aſſure my readers I was all attention) to have detected him. Indeed I muſt confeſs that it appeared to me to be a very nice piece of deception, eſpecially as it was performed by a man quite naked.

Not long after this ſlight-of-hand work was over, ſome of the Indians aſked me what I thought of it; to which I anſwered, that I was too far off to ſee it ſo plain as I could wiſh; which indeed was no more than the ſtricteſt truth, becauſe I was not near enough to detect the deception. The ſick man, however, ſoon recovered; and in a few days afterwards we left that place and proceeded to the South Weſt.

9th. On the ninth of Auguſt, we once more purſued our journey, and continued our courſe in the South Weſt quarter, generally walking about ſeven or eight miles a day. All the Indians, however, who had been in our company, except twelve tents, ſtruck off different ways. As to myſelf, having had ſeveral days reſt, my feet were completely healed, though the ſkin remained very tender for ſome time.

19th—25th. From the nineteenth to the twenty-fifth, we walked by the ſide of Thaye-chuck-gyed Whoie, or Large White-ſtone Lake, which is about forty miles long from the North Eaſt

Eaſt to the South Weſt, but of very unequal breadth. A river from the North Weſt ſide of this lake is ſaid to run in a ſerpentine manner a long way to the Weſtward; and then tending to the Northward, compoſes the main branch of the Copper-mine River, as has been already mentioned; which may or may not be true. It is certain, however, that there are many rivulets which empty themſelves into this lake from the South Eaſt; but as they are all ſmall ſtreams, they may probably be no more than what is ſufficient to ſupply the conſtant decreaſe occaſioned by the exhalations, which, during the ſhort Summer, ſo high a Northern latitude always affords. 1771. Auguſt.

Deer were very plentiful the whole way; the Indians killed great numbers of them daily, merely for the ſake of their ſkins; and at this time of the year their pelts are in good ſeaſon, and the hair of a proper length for clothing.

The great deſtruction which is made of the deer in thoſe parts at this ſeaſon of the year only, is almoſt incredible; and as they are never known to have more than one young one at a time, it is wonderful they do not become ſcarce: but ſo far is this from being the caſe, that the oldeſt Northern Indian in all their tribe will affirm that the deer are as plentiful now as they ever have been; and though they are remarkably ſcarce ſome years near Churchill river, yet it is ſaid, and with great probability of truth, that they are

1771. Auguſt. more plentiful in other parts of the country than they were formerly. The ſcarcity or abundance of theſe animals in different places at the ſame ſeaſon is cauſed, in a great meaſure, by the winds which prevail for ſome time before; for the deer are ſuppoſed by the natives to walk always in the direction from which the wind blows, except when they migrate from Eaſt to Weſt, or from Weſt to Eaſt, in ſearch of the oppoſite ſex, for the purpoſe of propagating their ſpecies.

It requires the prime part of the ſkins of from eight to ten deer to make a complete ſuit of warm clothing for a grown perſon during the Winter; all of which ſhould, if poſſible, be killed in the month of Auguſt, or early in September; for after that time the hair is too long, and at the ſame time ſo looſe in the pelt, that it will drop off with the ſlighteſt injury.

Beſide theſe ſkins, which muſt be in the hair, each perſon requires ſeveral others to be dreſſed into leather, for ſtockings and ſhoes, and light Summer clothing; ſeveral more are alſo wanted in a parchment ſtate, to make *clewla* as they call it, or thongs to make netting for their ſnow-ſhoes, ſnares for deer, ſewing for their ſledges, and, in fact, for every other uſe where ſtrings or lines of any kind are required: ſo that each perſon, on an average, expends, in the courſe of a year, upwards of twenty deer ſkins in clothing

clothing and other domeſtic uſes, excluſive of tent cloths, bags, and many other things which it is impoſſible to remember, and unneceſſary to enumerate. 1771. Auguſt.

All ſkins for the above-mentioned purpoſes are, if poſſible, procured between the beginning of Auguſt and the middle of October; for when the rutting ſeaſon is over, and the Winter ſets in, the deer-ſkins are not only very thin, but in general full of worms and warbles; which render them of little uſe, unleſs it be to cut into fine thongs, of which they make fiſhing-nets, and nets for the heels and toes of their ſnow-ſhoes. Indeed the chief uſe that is made of them in Winter is for the purpoſe of food; and really when the hair is properly taken off, and all the warbles are ſqueezed out, if they are well-boiled, they are far from being diſagreeable. The Indians, however, never could perſuade me to eat the warbles, of which ſome of them are remarkably fond, particularly the children. They are always eaten raw and alive, out of the ſkin; and are ſaid, by thoſe who like them, to be as fine as gooſeberries. But the very idea of eating ſuch things, excluſive of their appearance, (many of them being as large as the firſt joint of the little finger,) was quite ſufficient to give me an unalterable diſguſt to ſuch a repaſt; and when I acknowledge that the warbles out of the deers backs, and the domeſtic lice, were the only two things I ever ſaw my companions

1771. August. panions eat, of which I could not, or did not, partake, I truſt I ſhall not be reckoned over-delicate in my appetite.

The month of October is the rutting ſeaſon with the deer in thoſe parts, and after the time of their courtſhip is over, the bucks ſeparate from the does; the former proceed to the Weſtward, to take ſhelter in the woods during the Winter, and the latter keep out in the barren ground the whole year. This, though a general rule, is not without ſome exceptions; for I have frequently ſeen many does in the woods, though they bore no proportion to the number of bucks. This rule, therefore, only ſtands good reſpecting the deer to the North of Churchill River; for the deer to the Southward live promiſcuouſly among the woods, as well as in the plains, and along the banks of rivers, lakes, &c. the whole year.

The old buck's horns are very large, with many branches, and always drop off in the month of November, which is about the time they begin to approach the woods. This is undoubtedly wiſely ordered by Providence, the better to enable them to eſcape from their enemies through the woods; otherwiſe they would become an eaſy prey to wolves and other beaſts, and be liable to get entangled among the trees, even in ranging about in ſearch of food. The ſame opinion may probably be admitted of the Southern deer, which always reſide among the

the woods; but the Northern deer, though by far the ſmalleſt in this country, have much the largeſt horns, and the branches are ſo long, and at the ſame time ſpread ſo wide, as to make them more liable to be entangled among the under-woods, than any other ſpecies of deer that I have noticed. The young bucks in thoſe parts do not ſhed their horns ſo ſoon as the old ones: I have frequently ſeen them killed at or near Chriſtmas, and could diſcover no appearance of their horns being looſe. The does do not ſhed their horns till the Summer; ſo that when the buck's horns are ready to drop off, the horns of the does are all hairy, and ſcarcely come to their full growth. 1771. Auguſt.

The deer in thoſe parts are generally in motion from Eaſt to Weſt, or from Weſt to Eaſt, according to the ſeaſon, or the prevailing winds; and that is the principal reaſon why the Northern Indians are always ſhifting their ſtation. From November till May, the bucks continue to the Weſtward, among the woods, when their horns begin to ſprout; after which they proceed on to the Eaſtward, to the barren grounds; and the does that have been on the barren ground all the Winter, are taught by inſtinct to advance to the Weſtward to meet them, in order to propagate their ſpecies. Immediately after the rutting ſeaſon is over, they ſeparate, as hath been mentioned above. The old vulgar ſaying, ſo generally received among the lower claſs of people in England, concerning the bucks ſhedding their yards, or more properly the glands of the *penis*,

1771. *penis*, yearly, whether it be true in England or not, is cer-
Auguſt. tainly not true in any of the countries bordering on Hud-ſon's Bay. A long reſidence among the Indians has enabled me to confirm this aſſertion with great confidence, as I have ſeen deer killed every day throughout the year; and when I have mentioned this circumſtance to the Indians, either Northern or Southern, they always aſſured me that they never obſerved any ſuch ſymptoms. With equal truth I can aſſert, and that from ocular demonſtration, that the animal which is called the Alpine Hare in Hudſon's Bay, actually undergoes ſomething ſimilar to that which is vulgarly aſcribed to the Engliſh deer. I have ſeen and handled ſeveral of them, who had been killed juſt after they had coupled in the Spring, with the *peniſes* hanging out, dried up, and ſhrivelled, like the navel-ſtring of young animals; and on examination I always found a paſſage through them for the urine to paſs. I have thought proper to give this remark a place in my Journal, becauſe, in all probability, it is not generally known, even to thoſe gentlemen who have made natural hiſtory their chief ſtudy; and if their reſearches are of any real utility to mankind, it is ſurely to be regretted that Providence ſhould have placed the greateſt part of them too remote from want to be obliged to travel for ocular proofs of what they aſſert in their publications; they are therefore wiſely content to ſtay at home, and enjoy the bleſſings with which they are endowed, reſting ſatisfied to collect ſuch information for their own amuſement, and the gratification of the public, as thoſe

who are neceſſitated to be travellers are able or willing to give them. It is true, and I am ſorry it is ſo, that I come under the latter deſcription; but hope I have not, or ſhall not, in the courſe of this Journal, advance any thing that will not ſtand the teſt of experiment, and the ſkill of the moſt competent judges. 1771. August.

After leaving White Stone Lake, we continued our courſe in the South Weſt quarter, ſeldom walking more than twelve miles a day, and frequently not half that diſtance.

On the third of September, we arrived at a ſmall river belonging to Point Lake, but the weather at this time proved ſo boiſterous, and there was ſo much rain, ſnow, and froſt, alternately, that we were obliged to wait ſeveral days before we could croſs it in our canoes; and the water was too deep, and the current too rapid, to attempt fording it. During this interruption, however, our time was not entirely loſt, as deer were ſo plentiful that the Indians killed numbers of them, as well for the ſake of their ſkins, as for their fleſh, which was at preſent in excellent order, and the ſkins in proper ſeaſon for the dry uſes for which they are deſtined. September 3d.

In the afternoon of the ſeventh, the weather became fine and moderate, when we all were ferried acroſs the river; and the next morning ſhaped our courſe to the 7th. 8th.

1771. September. North Weſt, by the ſide of Point Lake. After three days journey, which only conſiſted of about eighteen miles, we came to a few ſmall ſcrubby woods, which were the firſt that we had ſeen from the twenty-fifth of May, except thoſe we had perceived at the Copper-mine River.

One of the Indian's wives, who for ſome time had been in a conſumption, had for a few days paſt become ſo weak as to be incapable of travelling, which, among thoſe people, is the moſt deplorable ſtate to which a human being can poſſibly be brought. Whether ſhe had been given over by the doctors, or that it was for want of friends among them, I cannot tell, but certain it is, that no expedients were taken for her recovery; ſo that, without much ceremony, ſhe was left unaſſiſted, to periſh above-ground.

Though this was the firſt inſtance of the kind I had ſeen, it is the common, and indeed the conſtant practice of thoſe Indians; for when a grown perſon is ſo ill, eſpecially in the Summer, as not to be able to walk, and too heavy to be carried, they ſay it is better to leave one who is paſt recovery, than for the whole family to ſit down by them and ſtarve to death; well knowing that they cannot be of any ſervice to the afflicted. On thoſe occaſions, therefore, the friends or relations of the ſick generally leave them ſome victuals and water; and, if the ſituation of the place will afford it, a little firing. When thoſe

thoſe articles are provided, the perſon to be left is acquainted with the road which the others intend to go; and then, after covering them well up with deer ſkins, &c. they take their leave, and walk away crying. 1771. September

Sometimes perſons thus left, recover; and come up with their friends, or wander about till they meet with other Indians, whom they accompany till they again join their relations. Inſtances of this kind are ſeldom known. The poor woman above mentioned, however, came up with us three ſeveral times, after having been left in the manner deſcribed. At length, poor creature! ſhe dropt behind, and no one attempted to go back in ſearch of her.

A cuſtom apparently ſo unnatural is perhaps not to be found among any other of the human race: if properly conſidered, however, it may with juſtice be aſcribed to neceſſity and ſelf-preſervation, rather than to the want of humanity and ſocial feeling, which ought to be the characteriſtic of men, as the nobleſt part of the creation. Neceſſity, added to national cuſtom, contributes principally to make ſcenes of this kind leſs ſhocking to thoſe people, than they muſt appear to the more civilized part of mankind.

During the early part of September, the weather was in general cold, with much ſleet and ſnow; which ſeemed to

1771. September. promiſe that the Winter would ſet in early. Deer at this time being very plentiful, and the few woods we met with affording tent-poles and firing, the Indians propoſed to remain where we were ſome time, in order to dreſs ſkins, and provide our Winter clothing; alſo to make ſnow-ſhoes and temporary ſledges, as well as to prepare a large quantity of dried meat and fat to carry with us; for by the accounts of the Indians, they have always experienced a great ſcarcity of deer, and every other kind of game, in the direction they propoſed we ſhould go when we left Point Lake.

Toward the middle of the month, the weather became quite mild and open, and continued ſo till the end of it; but there was ſo much conſtant and inceſſant rain, that it
28th. rotted moſt of our tents. On the twenty-eighth, however, the wind ſettled in the North Weſt quarter, when
30th. the weather grew ſo cold, that by the thirtieth all the ponds, lakes, and other ſtanding waters, were frozen over ſo hard, that we were enabled to croſs them on the ice without danger.

Among the various ſuperſtitious cuſtoms of thoſe people, it is worth remarking, and ought to have been mentioned in its proper place, that immediately after my companions had killed the Eſquimaux at the Copper River, they conſidered themſelves in a ſtate of uncleanneſs, which induced them to practiſe ſome very curious and unuſual ceremonies.

In the firſt place, all who were abſolutely concerned in the murder were prohibited from cooking any kind of victuals, either for themſelves or others. As luckily there were two in company who had not ſhed blood, they were employed always as cooks till we joined the women. This circumſtance was exceedingly favourable on my ſide; for had there been no perſons of the above deſcription in company, that taſk, I was told, would have fallen on me; which would have been no leſs fatiguing and troubleſome, than humiliating and vexatious. 1771. September.

When the victuals were cooked, all the murderers took a kind of red earth, or oker, and painted all the ſpace between the noſe and chin, as well as the greater part of their cheeks, almoſt to the ears, before they would taſte a bit, and would not drink out of any other diſh, or ſmoke out of any other pipe, but their own; and none of the others ſeemed willing to drink or ſmoke out of theirs.

We had no ſooner joined the women, at our return from the expedition, than there ſeemed to be an univerſal ſpirit of emulation among them, vying who ſhould firſt make a ſuit of ornaments for their huſbands, which conſiſted of bracelets for the wriſts, and a band for the forehead, compoſed of porcupine quils and mooſe-hair, curiouſly wrought on leather.

The cuſtom of painting the mouth and part of the cheeks before each meal, and drinking and ſmoking out of

1771. September. of their own utenſils, was ſtrictly and invariably obſerved, till the Winter began to ſet in; and during the whole of that time they would never kiſs any of their wives or children. They refrained alſo from eating many parts of the deer and other animals, particularly the head, entrails, and blood; and during their uncleanneſs, their victuals were never ſodden in water, but dried in the ſun, eaten quite raw, or broiled, when a fire fit for the purpoſe could be procured.

When the time arrived that was to put an end to theſe ceremonies, the men, without a female being preſent, made a fire at ſome diſtance from the tents, into which they threw all their ornaments, pipe-ſtems, and diſhes, which were ſoon conſumed to aſhes; after which a feaſt was prepared, conſiſting of ſuch articles as they had long been prohibited from eating; and when all was over, each man was at libery to eat, drink, and ſmoke as he pleaſed; and alſo to kiſs his wives and children at diſcretion, which they ſeemed to do with more raptures than I had ever known them do it either before or ſince.

October. 6th. October came in very roughly, attended with heavy falls of ſnow, and much drift. On the ſixth at night, a heavy gale of wind from the North Weſt put us in great diſorder; for though the few woods we paſſed had furniſhed us with tent-poles and fewel, yet they did not afford us the leaſt ſhelter whatever. The wind blew with ſuch violence,

violence, that in ſpite of all our endeavours, it overſet ſeveral of the tents, and mine, among the reſt, ſhared the diſaſter, which I cannot ſufficiently lament, as the but-ends of the weather tent-poles fell on the quadrant, and though it was in a ſtrong wainſcot caſe, two of the bubbles, the index, and ſeveral other parts were broken, which rendered it entirely uſeleſs. This being the caſe, I did not think it worth carriage, but broke it to pieces, and gave the braſs-work to the Indians, who cut it into ſmall lumps, and made uſe of it inſtead of ball. 1771. October.

On the twenty-third of October, ſeveral Copper and a few dog-ribbed Indians came to our tents laden with furrs, which they ſold to ſome of my crew for ſuch iron-work as they had to give in exchange. This viſit, I afterwards found, was by appointment of the Copper Indians whom we had ſeen at Congecathawhachaga, and who, in their way to us, had met the Dog-ribbed Indians, who were alſo glad of ſo favourable an opportunity of purchaſing ſome of thoſe valuable articles, though at a very extravagant price: for one of the Indians in my company, though not properly of my party, got no leſs than forty beaver ſkins, and ſixty martins, for one piece of iron which he had ſtole when he was laſt at the Fort *. 23d.

One

* The piece of iron above mentioned was the coulter of a new-faſhioned plough, invented by Captain John Fowler, late Governor at Churchill River, with which he had a large piece of ground ploughed, and afterwards ſowed with

1771. October. One of thoſe ſtrangers had about forty beaver ſkins, with which he intended to pay Matonabbee an old debt; but one of the other Indians ſeized the whole, notwithſtanding he knew it to be in fact Matonabbee's property. This treatment, together with many other inſults, which he had received during my abode with him, made him renew his old reſolution of leaving his own country, and going to reſide with the Athapuſcow Indians.

As the moſt intereſting part of my journey was now over, I did not think it neceſſary to interfere in his private affairs; and therefore did not endeavour to influence him either one way or the other: out of complaiſance, therefore, rather than any thing elſe, I told him, that I thought ſuch behaviour very uncourteous, eſpecially in a man of his rank and dignity. As to the reaſon of his determination, I did not think it worth while to enquire into it; but, by his diſcourſe with the other Indians, I ſoon underſtood that they all intended to make an excurſion into the country of the Athapuſcow Indians, in order to kill mooſe and beaver. The former of thoſe animals are never found in the Northern Indian territories; and the latter are ſo ſcarce in thoſe Northern parts, that during the whole Winter of one thouſand ſeven hundred and ſeventy,

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with oats: but the part being nothing but a hot burning ſand, like the Spaniſh lines at Gibraltar, the ſucceſs may eaſily be gueſſed; which was, that it did not produce a ſingle grain.

I did

I did not ſee more than two beaver houſes. Martins are alſo ſcarce in thoſe parts; for during the above period, I do not think that more than ſix or eight were killed by all the Indians in my company. This exceedingly ſmall number, among ſo many people, may with great truth be attributed to the indolence of the Indians, and the wandering life which they lead, rather than to the great ſcarcity of the martins. It is true, that our moving ſo frequently from place to place, did at times make it not an object worth while to build traps; but had they taken the advantage of all favourable opportunities, and been poſſeſſed of half the induſtry of the Company's ſervants in the Bay, they might with great eaſe have caught as many hundreds, if not ſome thouſands; and when we conſider the extent of ground which we walked over in that time, ſuch a number would not have been any proof of the martins being very plentiful. 1771. October.

Except a few martins; wolves, quiquehatches, foxes, and otters, are the chief furrs to be met with in thoſe parts, and few of the Northern Indians chuſe to kill either the wolf or the quiquehatch, under a notion that they are ſomething more than common animals. Indeed, I have known ſome of them ſo bigotted to this opinion, that having by chance killed a quiquehatch by a gun which had been ſet for a fox, they have left it where it was killed, and would not take off its ſkin. Notwithſtanding this

1771. October. ſilly notion, which is too frequently to be obſerved among thoſe people, it generally happens that there are ſome in every gang who are leſs ſcrupulous, ſo that none of thoſe furrs are ever left to rot; and even thoſe who make a point of not killing the animals themſelves, are ready to receive their ſkins from other Indians, and carry them to the Fort for trade.

30th. By the thirtieth of October, all our clothing, ſnow-ſhoes, and temporary ſledges, being completed, we once more began to prepare for moving; and on the following day ſet out, and walked five or ſix miles to the South-ward.

November 1ſt.

5th. From the firſt to the fifth of November we walked on the ice of a large lake, which, though very conſiderable both in length and breadth, is not diſtinguiſhed by any general name; on which account I gave it the name of No Name Lake. On the South ſide of this lake we found ſome wood, which was very acceptable, being the firſt that we had ſeen ſince we left Point Lake.

No Name Lake is about fifty miles long from North to South, and, according to the account of the Indians, is thirty-five miles wide from Eaſt to Weſt. It is ſaid to abound with fine fiſh; but the weather at the time we croſſed it was ſo cold, as to render it impoſſible to ſit on the ice any length

length of time to angle. A few exceedingly fine trout, and ſome very large pike, however, were caught by my companions. 1771. November.

When we arrived on the South ſide of the above lake, we ſhaped our courſe to the South Weſt; and though the weather was in general very cold, yet as we every night found tufts of wood, in which we could pitch our tents, we were enabled to make a better defence againſt the weather, than we had had it in our power to do for ſome time paſt.

On the tenth of November, we arrived at the edge of of the main woods; at which time the Indians began to make proper ſledges, ſome ſnow-ſhoes, &c. after which we proceeded again to the South Weſt. But deer and all other kinds of game were ſo ſcarce the whole way, that, except a few partridges, nothing was killed by any in company: we had, nevertheleſs, plenty of the proviſion which had been prepared at Point Lake. 10th.

On the twentieth of the ſame month, we arrived at Anaw'd Whoie, or the Indian Lake. In our way we croſſed part of Methy Lake, and walked near eighty miles on a ſmall river belonging to it, which empties itſelf into the Great Athapuſcow Lake *. While we were walking 20th.

* The courſe of this river is nearly South Weſt.

1771. November. on the above little river, the Indians ſet fiſhing-nets under the ice every night; but their labour was attended with ſo little ſucceſs, that all they caught ſerved only as a delicacy, or to make a little change in our diet; for the quantity was too trifling to occaſion any conſiderable ſaving of our other proviſions.

Anaw'd Lake, though ſo ſmall as not to exceed twenty miles wide in the broadeſt part, is celebrated by the natives for abounding with plenty of fiſh during the Winter; accordingly the Indians ſet all their nets, which were not a few, and met with ſuch ſucceſs, that in about ten days the roes only were as much as all the women could haul after them.

Tittimeg and barble, with a few ſmall pike, were the only fiſh caught at this part; the roes of which, particularly thoſe of the tittimeg, are more eſteemed by the Northern Indians, to take with them on a journey, than the fiſh itſelf; for about two pounds weight of theſe roes, when well bruiſed, will make near four gallons of broth, as thick as common burgoe; and if properly managed, will be as white as rice, which makes it very pleaſing to the eye, and no leſs agreeable to the palate.

The land round this lake is very hilly, though not mountainous, and chiefly conſiſts of rocks and looſe ſtones; there muſt, however, be a ſmall portion of ſoil

on the ſurface, as it is in moſt parts well clothed with tall poplars, pines, fir, and birch; particularly in the vallies, where the poplars, pine, and birch ſeem to thrive beſt; but the firs were as large, and in as flouriſhing a ſtate, on the very ſummit of the hills, as in any other part. 1771. November.

Rabbits were here ſo plentiful, particularly on the South and South Eaſt ſide of the lake, that ſeveral of the Indians caught twenty or thirty in a night with ſnares; and the wood-partridges were ſo numerous in the fir trees, and ſo tame, that I have known an Indian kill near twenty of them in a day with his bow and arrows. The Northern Indians call this ſpecies of the partridge Day; and though their fleſh is generally very black and bitter, occaſioned by their feeding on the bruſh of the fir tree, yet they make a variety, or change of diet, and are thought exceedingly good, particularly by the natives, who, though capable of living ſo hard, and at times eating very ungrateful food, are nevertheleſs as fond of variety as any people whom I ever ſaw; and will go as great lengths, according to their circumſtances, to gratify their palates, as the greateſt epicure in England. As a proof of this aſſertion, I have frequently known Matonabbee, and others who could afford it, for the ſake of variety only, ſend ſome of their young men to kill a few partridges at the expence of more ammunition than would have killed deer ſufficient to have maintained their families many days; whereas the partridges were always eaten up at one meal: and to heighten

1771. November. heighten the luxury on theſe occaſions, the partridges are boiled in a kettle of ſheer fat, which it muſt be allowed renders them beyond all deſcription finer flavoured than when boiled in water or common broth. I have alſo eat deer-ſkins boiled in fat, which were exceedingly good.

As during our ſtay at Anaw'd Lake ſeveral of the Indians were ſickly, the doctors undertook to adminiſter relief; particularly to one man, who had been hauled on a ſledge by his brother for two months. His diſorder was the dead palſey, which affected one ſide, from the crown of his head to the ſole of his foot. Beſides this dreadful diſorder, he had ſome inward complaints, with a total loſs of appetite; ſo that he was reduced to a mere ſkeleton, and ſo weak as to be ſcarcely capable of ſpeaking. In this deplorable condition, he was laid in the center of a large conjuring-houſe, made much after the manner as that which has been already deſcribed. And that nothing might be wanting toward his recovery, the ſame man who deceived me in ſwallowing a bayonet in the Summer, now offered to ſwallow a large piece of board, about the ſize of a barrel-ſtave, in order to effect his recovery. The piece of board was prepared by another man, and painted according to the direction of the juggler, with a rude repreſentation of ſome beaſt of prey on one ſide, and on the reverſe was painted, according to their rude method, a reſemblance of the ſky.

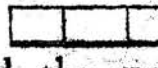
Without

Without entering into a long detail of the preparations for this feat, I ſhall at once proceed to obſerve, that after the conjurer had held the neceſſary conference with his inviſible ſpirits, or ſhadows, he aſked if I was preſent; for he had heard of my ſaying that I did not ſee him ſwallow the bayonet fair: and on being anſwered in the affirmative, he deſired me to come nearer; on which the mob made a lane for me to paſs, and I advanced cloſe to him, and found him ſtanding at the conjuring-houſe door as naked as he was born. 1771. November.

When the piece of board was delivered to him, he propoſed at firſt only to ſhove one-third of it down his throat, and then walk round the company afterward to ſhove down another third; and ſo proceed till he had ſwallowed the whole, except a ſmall piece of the end, which was left behind to haul it up again. When he put it to his mouth it apparently ſlipped down his throat like lightning, and only left about three inches ſticking without his lips; after walking backwards and forwards three times, he hauled it up again, and ran into the conjuring-houſe with great precipitation. This he did to all appearance with great eaſe and compoſure; and notwithſtanding I was all attention on the occaſion, I could not detect the deceit; and as to the reality of its being a piece of wood that he pretended to ſwallow, there is not the leaſt reaſon to doubt of it, for I had it in my hand, both before and immediately after the ceremony.

To

1771. November. To prevent a variety of opinions on this occaſion, and to leſſen the apparent magnitude of the miracle, as well as to give ſome colour to my ſcepticiſm, which might otherwiſe perhaps appear ridiculous, it is neceſſary to obſerve, that this feat was performed in a dark and exceſſively cold night; and although there was a large fire at ſome diſtance, which reflected a good light, yet there was great room for colluſion: for though the conjurer himſelf was quite naked, there were ſeveral of his fraternity well-clothed, who attended him very cloſe during the time of his attempting to ſwallow the board, as well as at the time of his hauling it up again.

For theſe reaſons it is neceſſary alſo to obſerve, that on the day preceding the performance of this piece of deception, in one of my hunting excurſions, I accidentally came acroſs the conjurer as he was ſitting under a buſh, ſeveral miles from the tents, where he was buſily employed ſhaping a piece of wood exactly like that part which ſtuck out of his mouth after he had pretended to ſwallow the remainder of the piece. The ſhape of the piece which I ſaw him making was this,  ; which exactly reſembled the forked end of the main piece, the ſhape of which was this,  . So that when his attendants had concealed the main piece, it was eaſy for him to ſtick the ſmall point into his mouth, as it was reduced at the ſmall end to a proper ſize for the purpoſe.

Similar

Similar proofs may eaſily be urged againſt his ſwallowing the bayonet in the Summer, as no perſon leſs ignorant than themſelves can poſſibly place any belief in the reality of thoſe feats; yet on the whole, they muſt be allowed a conſiderable ſhare of dexterity in the performance of thoſe tricks, and a wonderful deal of perſeverance in what they do for the relief of thoſe whom they undertake to cure. 1771. November.

Not long after the above performance had taken place, ſome of the Indians began to aſk me what I thought of it. As I could not have any plea for ſaying that I was far off, and at the ſame time not caring to affront them by hinting my ſuſpicions of the deceit, I was ſome time at a loſs for an anſwer: I urged, however, the impoſſibility of a man's ſwallowing a piece of wood, that was not only much longer than his whole back, but nearly twice as broad as he could extend his mouth. On which ſome of them laughed at my ignorance, as they were pleaſed to call it; and ſaid, that the ſpirit in waiting ſwallowed, or otherwiſe concealed, the ſtick, and only left the forked end apparently ſticking out of the conjurer's mouth. My guide, Matonabbee, with all his other good ſenſe, was ſo bigotted to the reality of thoſe performances, that he aſſured me in the ſtrongeſt terms, he had ſeen a man, who was then in company, ſwallow a child's cradle, with as much eaſe as he could fold up a piece of paper, and put it into his mouth; and that when he hauled it up again, not the

1771. November. mark of a tooth, or of any violence, was to be diſcovered about it.

This ſtory ſo far exceeded the feats which I had ſeen with the bayonet and board, that, for the ſake of keeping up the farce, I began to be very inquiſitive about the ſpirits which appear to them on thoſe occaſions, and their form; when I was told that they appeared in various ſhapes, for almoſt every conjurer had his peculiar attendant; but that the ſpirit which attended the man who pretended to ſwallow the piece of wood, they ſaid, generally appeared to him in the ſhape of a cloud. This I thought very a-propos to the preſent occaſion; and I muſt confeſs that I never had ſo thick a cloud thrown before my eyes before or ſince; and had it not been by accident, that I ſaw him make a counterpart to the piece of wood ſaid to be ſwallowed, I ſhould have been ſtill at a loſs how to account for ſo extraordinary a piece of deception, performed by a man who was entirely naked.

As ſoon as our conjurer had executed the above feat, and entered the conjuring-houſe, as already mentioned, five other men and an old woman, all of whom were great profeſſors of that art, ſtripped themſelves quite naked and followed him, when they ſoon began to ſuck, blow, ſing, and dance, round the poor paralytic; and continued ſo to do for three days and four nights, without taking the leaſt reſt or refreſhment, not even ſo much as a drop of water.

When

When theſe poor deluding and deluded people came out of the conjuring-houſe, their mouths were ſo parched with thirſt as to be quite black, and their throats ſo ſore, that they were ſcarcely able to articulate a ſingle word, except thoſe that ſtand for *yes* and *no* in their language. 1771. November.

After ſo long an abſtinence they were very careful not to eat or drink too much at one time, particularly for the firſt day; and indeed ſome of them, to appearance, were almoſt as bad as the poor man they had been endeavouring to relieve. But great part of this was feigned; for they lay on their backs with their eyes fixed, as if in the agonies of death, and were treated like young children; one perſon ſat conſtantly by them, moiſtening their mouths with fat, and now and then giving them a drop of water. At other times a ſmall bit of meat was put into their mouths, or a pipe held for them to ſmoke. This farce only laſted for the firſt day; after which they ſeemed to be perfectly well, except the hoarſeneſs, which continued for a conſiderable time afterwards. And it is truly wonderful, though the ſtricteſt truth, that when the poor ſick man was taken from the conjuring-houſe, he had not only recovered his appetite to an amazing degree, but was able to move all the fingers and toes of the ſide that had been ſo long dead. In three weeks he recovered ſo far as to be capable of walking, and at the end of ſix weeks went a hunting for his family. He was one of the perſons * par-

* His name was Coſ-abyagh, the Northern Indian name for the Rock Partridge.

1771. November. ticularly engaged to provide for me during my journey; and after his recovery from this dreadful diſorder, accompanied me back to Prince of Wales's Fort in June one thouſand ſeven hundred and ſeventy-two; and ſince that time he has frequently viſited the Factory, though he never had a healthy look afterwards, and at times ſeemed troubled with a nervous complaint. It may be added, that he had been formerly of a remarkable lively diſpoſition; but after his laſt illneſs he always appeared thoughtful, ſometimes gloomy, and; in fact, the diſorder ſeemed to have changed his whole nature; for before that dreadful paralytic ſtroke, he was diſtinguiſhed for his good-nature and benevolent diſpoſition; was entirely free from every appearance of avarice; and the whole of his wiſhes ſeemed confined within the narrow limits of poſſeſſing as many goods as were abſolutely neceſſary, with his own induſtry, to enable him to ſupport his family from ſeaſon to ſeaſon; but after this event, he was the moſt fractious, quarrelſome, diſcontented, and covetous wretch alive.

Though the ordinary trick of theſe conjurers may be eaſily detected, and juſtly exploded, being no more than the tricks of common jugglers, yet the apparent good effect of their labours on the ſick and diſeaſed is not ſo eaſily accounted for. Perhaps the implicit confidence placed in them by the ſick may, at times, leave the mind ſo perfectly at reſt, as to cauſe the diſorder to take a favourable turn; and a few ſucceſsful caſes are quite ſufficient to eſtabliſh the doctor's character and reputation:

But

But how this conſideration could operate in the caſe I have juſt mentioned I am at a loſs to ſay; ſuch, however, was the fact, and I leave it to be accounted for by others. 1771. November.

When theſe jugglers take a diſlike to, and threaten a ſecret revenge on any perſon, it often proves fatal to that perſon; as, from a firm belief that the conjurer has power over his life, he permits the very thoughts of it to prey on his ſpirits, till by degrees it brings on a diſorder which puts an end to his exiſtence *: and ſometimes a threat of this kind

* As a proof of this, Matonabbee, (who always thought me poſſeſſed of this art,) on his arrival at Prince of Wales's Fort in the Winter of 1778, informed me, that a man whom I had never ſeen but once, had treated him in ſuch a manner that he was afraid of his life; in conſequence of which he preſſed me very much to kill him, though I was then ſeveral hundreds of miles diſtant. On which, to pleaſe this great man to whom I owed ſo much, and not expecting that any harm could poſſibly ariſe from it, I drew a rough ſketch of two human figures on a piece of paper, in the attitude of wreſtling: in the hand of one of them, I drew the figure of a bayonet pointing to the breaſt of the other. This is me, ſaid I to Matonabbee, pointing to the figure which was holding the bayonet; and the other, is your enemy. Oppoſite to thoſe figures I drew a pine-tree, over which I traced a large human eye, and out of the tree projected a human hand. This paper I gave to Matonabbee, with inſtructions to make it as publicly known as poſſible. Sure enough, the following year, when he came in to trade, he informed me that the man was dead, though at that time he was not leſs than three hundred miles from Prince Wales's Fort. He aſſured me that the man was in perfect health when he heard of my deſign againſt him; but almoſt immediately afterwards became quite gloomy, and refuſing all kind of ſuſtenance, in a very few days died. After this I was frequently applied to on the ſame account, both by Matonabbee and other leading Indians, but never thought proper to comply with their requeſts; by which means I not only preſerved the credit I gained on the firſt attempt, but always kept them in awe, and in ſome degree of reſpect and obedience

1771. November. kind cauſes the death of a whole family; and that without any blood being ſhed, or the leaſt apparent moleſtation being offered to any of the parties.

December 1ſt. Having dried as many fiſh and fiſh-roes as we could conveniently take with us, we once more packed up our ſtores, and, on the firſt day of December, ſet out, and continued our courſe to the South Weſt, leaving Anaw'd Lake on the South Weſt. Several of the Indians being out of order, we made but ſhort days journies.

From the firſt to the thirteenth, we walked along a courſe of ſmall lakes, joined to each other by ſmall rivers, or creeks, that have communication with Anaw'd Lake.

In our way we caught daily a few fiſh by angling, and ſaw many beaver houſes; but theſe were generally in ſo difficult a ſituation, and had ſo many ſtones in the compoſition of them, that the Indians killed but few, and that at a great expence of labour and tools.

13th. On the thirteenth, one of the Indians killed two deer, which were the firſt that we had ſeen ſince the twentieth

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obedience to me. In fact, ſtrange as it may appear, it is almoſt abſolutely neceſſary that the chiefs at this place ſhould profeſs ſomething a little ſupernatural, to be able to deal with thoſe people. The circumſtance here recorded is a fact well known to Mr. William Jefferſon, who ſucceeded me at Churchill Factory, as well as to all the officers and many of the common men who were at Prince of Wales's Fort at the time.

of

of October. So that during a period of near two months, we had lived on the dried meat that we had prepared at Point Lake, and a few fiſh; of which the latter was not very conſiderable in quantity, except what was caught at Anaw'd Lake. It is true, we alſo caught a few rabbits, and at times the wood-partridges were ſo plentiful, that the Indians killed conſiderable numbers of them with their bows and arrows; but the number of mouths was ſo great, that all which was caught from our leaving Point Lake, though, if enumerated, they might appear very conſiderable, would not have afforded us all a bare ſubſiſtence; for though I and ſome others experienced no real want, yet there were many in our company who could ſcarcely be ſaid to live, and would not have exiſted at all, had it not been for the dry meat we had with us. 1771. December.

When we left the above-mentioned lakes we ſhaped a courſe more to the Southward, and on the twenty-fourth, arrived at the North ſide of the great Athapuſcow Lake. In our way we ſaw many Indian deer, and beaver were very plentiful, many of which the Indians killed; but the days were ſo ſhort, that the Sun only took a circuit of a few points of the compaſs above the horizon, and did not, at its greateſt altitude, riſe half-way up the trees. The brilliancy of the *Aurora Borealis*, however, and of the Stars, even without the aſſiſtance of the Moon, made ſome amends for that deficiency; for it was frequently ſo light all night, that I could ſee to read a very ſmall print. 24th.

The

1771. December. The Indians make no difference between night and day when they are hunting of beaver; but thoſe *nocturnal* lights are always found inſufficient for the purpoſe of hunting deer or mooſe.

I do not remember to have met with any travellers into high Northern latitudes, who remarked their having heard the Northern Lights make any noiſe in the air as they vary their colours or poſition; which may probably be owing to the want of perfect ſilence at the time they made their obſervations on thoſe meteors. I can poſitively affirm, that in ſtill nights I have frequently heard them make a ruſtling and crackling noiſe, like the waving of a large flag in a freſh gale of wind. This is not peculiar to the place of which I am now writing, as I have heard the ſame noiſe very plain at Churchill River; and in all probability it is only for want of attention that it has not been heard in every part of the Northern hemiſphere where they have been known to ſhine with any conſiderable degree of luſtre. It is, however, very probable that theſe lights are ſometimes much nearer the Earth than they are at others, according to the ſtate of the atmoſphere, and this may have a great effect on the ſound: but the truth or falſehood of this conjecture I leave to the determinations of thoſe who are better ſkilled in natural philoſophy than I can pretend to be.

Indian deer (the only ſpecies found in thoſe parts, except the mooſe) are ſo much larger than thoſe which frequent

quent the barren grounds to the North of Churchill River, that a ſmall doe is equal in ſize to a Northern buck. The hair of the former is of a ſandy red during the Winter; and their horns, though much ſtronger, are not ſo long and branchy as are thoſe of the latter kind. Neither is the fleſh of thoſe deer ſo much eſteemed by the Northern Indians, as that of the ſmaller kind, which inhabit the more Eaſtern and Northern parts of the country. Indeed, it muſt be allowed to be much coarſer, and of a different flavour; inaſmuch as the large Lincolnſhire mutton differs from graſs lamb. I muſt acknowledge, however, that I always thought it very good. This is that ſpecies of deer which are found ſo plentiful near York Fort and Severn River. They are alſo at times found in conſiderable numbers near Churchill River; and I have ſeen them killed as far North, near the ſea-ſide, as Seal River: But the ſmall Northern Indian deer are ſeldom known to croſs Churchill River, except in ſome very extraordinary cold ſeaſons, and when the Northern winds have prevailed much in the preceding fall; for theſe viſits are always made in the Winter. But though I own that the fleſh of the large Southern deer is very good, I muſt at the ſame time confeſs that the fleſh of the ſmall Northern deer, whether buck or doe, in their proper ſeaſon, is by far more delicious, and the fineſt I have ever eaten, either in this country or any other; and is of that peculiar quality, that it never cloys. I can affirm this from my own experience;

1771. December.

1771. December. for, after living on it entirely, as it may be ſaid, for twelve or eighteen months ſucceſſively, I ſcarcely ever wiſhed for a change of food; though when fiſh or fowl came in my way, it was very agreeable.

The beaver being ſo plentiful, the attention of my companions was chiefly engaged on them, as they not only furniſhed delicious food, but their ſkins proved a valuable acquiſition, being a principal article of trade, as well as a ſerviceable one for clothing, &c.

The ſituation of the beaver-houſes is various. Where the beavers are numerous they are found to inhabit lakes, ponds, and rivers, as well as thoſe narrow creeks which connect the numerous lakes with which this country abounds; but the two latter are generally choſen by them when the depth of water and other circumſtances are ſuitable, as they have then the advantage of a current to convey wood and other neceſſaries to their habitations, and becauſe, in general, they are more difficult to be taken, than thoſe that are built in ſtanding water.

There is no one particular part of a lake, pond, river, or creek, of which the beavers make choice for building their houſes on, in preference to another; for they ſometimes build on points, ſometimes in the hollow of a bay, and often on ſmall iſlands; they always chuſe, however, thoſe

thoſe parts that have ſuch a depth of water as will reſiſt the froſt in Winter, and prevent it from freezing to the bottom. 1771. December.

The beaver that build their houſes in ſmall rivers or creeks, in which the water is liable to be drained off when the back ſupplies are dried up by the froſt, are wonderfully taught by inſtinct to provide againſt that evil, by making a dam quite acroſs the river, at a convenient diſtance from their houſes. This I look upon as the moſt curious piece of workmanſhip that is performed by the beaver; not ſo much for the neatneſs of the work, as for its ſtrength and real ſervice; and at the ſame time it diſcovers ſuch a degree of ſagacity and foreſight in the animal, of approaching evils, as is little inferior to that of the human ſpecies, and is certainly peculiar to thoſe animals.

The beaver-dams differ in ſhape according to the nature of the place in which they are built. If the water in the river or creek have but little motion, the dam is almoſt ſtraight; but when the current is more rapid, it is always made with a conſiderable curve, convex toward the ſtream. The materials made uſe of in thoſe dams are drift-wood, green willows, birch, and poplars, if they can be got; alſo mud and ſtones, intermixed in ſuch a manner as muſt evidently contribute to the ſtrength of the dam; but in theſe dams there is no other order or method obſerved, ex-

1771. December. cept that of the work being carried on with a regular ſweep, and all the parts being made of equal ſtrength.

In places which have been long frequented by beaver undiſturbed, their dams, by frequent repairing, become a ſolid bank, capable of reſiſting a great force both of water and ice; and as the willow, poplar, and birch generally take root and ſhoot up, they by degrees form a kind of regular-planted hedge, which I have ſeen in ſome places ſo tall, that birds have built their neſts among the branches.

Though the beaver which build their houſes in lakes and other ſtanding waters, may enjoy a ſufficient quantity of their favourite element without the aſſiſtance of a dam, the trouble of getting wood and other neceſſaries to their habitations without the help of a current, muſt in ſome meaſure counterbalance the other advantages which are reaped from ſuch a ſituation; for it muſt be obſerved, that the beaver which build in rivers and creeks, always cut their wood above their houſes, ſo that the current, with little trouble, conveys it to the place required.

The beaver-houſes are built of the ſame materials as their dams, and are always proportioned in ſize to the number of inhabitants, which ſeldom exceed four old, and ſix or eight young ones; though, by chance, I have ſeen above double that number.

Theſe

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Theſe houſes, though not altogether unworthy of admiration, fall very ſhort of the general deſcription given of them; for inſtead of order or regulation being obſerved in rearing them, they are of a much ruder ſtructure than their dams.

Thoſe who have undertaken to deſcribe the inſide of beaver-houſes, as having ſeveral apartments appropriated to various uſes; ſuch as eating, ſleeping, ſtore-houſes for proviſions, and one for their natural occaſions, *&c.* muſt have been very little acquainted with the ſubject; or, which is ſtill worſe, guilty of attempting to impoſe on the credulous, by repreſenting the greateſt falſehoods as real facts. Many years conſtant reſidence among the Indians, during which I had an opportunity of ſeeing ſeveral hundreds of thoſe houſes, has enabled me to affirm that every thing of the kind is entirely void of truth; for, notwithſtanding the ſagacity of thoſe animals, it has never been obſerved that they aim at any other conveniencies in their houſes, than to have a dry place to lie on; and there they uſually eat their victuals, which they occaſionally take out of the water.

It frequently happens, that ſome of the large houſes are found to have one or more partitions, if they deſerve that appellation; but that is no more than a part of the main building, left by the ſagacity of the beaver to ſupport the roof. On ſuch occaſions it is common for thoſe different

1771. December. different apartments, as ſome are pleaſed to call them, to have no communication with each other but by water; ſo that in fact they may be called double or treble houſes, rather than different apartments of the ſame houſe. I have ſeen a large beaver-houſe built in a ſmall iſland, that had near a dozen apartments under one roof: and, two or three of theſe only excepted, none of them had any communication with each other but by water. As there were beaver enough to inhabit each apartment, it is more than probable that each family knew its own, and always entered at their own door, without having any farther connection with their neighbours than a friendly intercourſe; and to join their united labours in erecting their ſeparate habitations, and building their dams where required. It is difficult to ſay whether their intereſt on other occaſions was anyways reciprocal. The Indians of my party killed twelve old beaver, and twenty-five young and half-grown ones out of the houſe above mentioned; and on examination found that ſeveral had eſcaped their vigilance, and could not be taken but at the expence of more trouble than would be ſufficient to take double the number in a leſs difficult ſituation

Travellers who aſſert that the beaver have two doors to their houſes, one on the land-ſide, and the other next the

* The difficulty here alluded to, was the numberleſs vaults the beaver had in the ſides of the pond, and the immenſe thickneſs of the houſe in ſome parts.

water,

water, ſeem to be leſs acquainted with thoſe animals than others who aſſign them an elegant ſuite of apartments. Such a proceeding would be quite contrary to their manner of life, and at the ſame time would render their houſes of no uſe, either to protect them from their enemies, or guard them againſt the extreme cold in Winter. 1771. December.

The quiquehatches, or wolvereens, are great enemies to the beaver; and if there were a paſſage into their houſes on the land-ſide, would not leave one of them alive wherever they came.

I cannot refrain from ſmiling, when I read the accounts of different Authors who have written on the œconomy of thoſe animals, as there ſeems to be a conteſt between them, who ſhall moſt exceed in fiction. But the Compiler of the Wonders of Nature and Art ſeems, in my opinion, to have ſucceeded beſt in this reſpect; as he has not only collected all the fictions into which other writers on the ſubject have run, but has ſo greatly improved on them, that little remains to be added to his account of the beaver, beſide a vocabulary of their language, a code of their laws, and a ſketch of their religion, to make it the moſt complete natural hiſtory of that animal which can poſſibly be offered to the public.

There cannot be a greater impoſition, or indeed a groſſer inſult, on common underſtanding, than the wiſh

1771. December. to make us believe the ſtories of ſome of the works aſcribed to the beaver; and though it is not to be ſuppoſed that the compiler of a general work can be intimately acquainted with every ſubject of which it may be neceſſary to treat, yet a very moderate ſhare of underſtanding is ſurely ſufficient to guard him againſt giving credit to ſuch marvellous tales, however ſmoothly they may be told, or however boldly they may be aſſerted, by the romancing traveller.

To deny that the beaver is poſſeſſed of a very conſiderable degree of ſagacity, would be as abſurd in me, as it is in thoſe Authors who think they cannot allow them too much. I ſhall willingly grant them their full ſhare; but it is impoſſible for any one to conceive how, or by what means, a beaver, whoſe full height when ſtanding erect does not exceed two feet and a half, or three feet at moſt, and whoſe fore-paws are not much larger than a half-crown piece, can "drive ſtakes as thick as a man's leg into the "ground three or four feet deep." Their "wattling thoſe "ſtakes with twigs," is equally abſurd; and their "plaiſ-"tering the inſide of their houſes with a compoſition of "mud and ſtraw, and ſwimming with mud and ſtones on "their tails," are ſtill more incredible. The form and ſize of the animal, notwithſtanding all its ſagacity, will not admit of its performing ſuch feats; and it would be as impoſſible for a beaver to uſe its tail as a trowel, except on the ſurface of the ground on which it walks, as it would

would have been for Sir James Thornhill to have painted the dome of St. Paul's cathedral without the aſſiſtance of ſcaffolding. The joints of their tail will not admit of their turning it over their backs on any occaſion whatever, as it has a natural inclination to bend downwards; and it is not without ſome conſiderable exertion that they can keep it from trailing on the ground. This being the caſe, they cannot ſit erect like a ſquirrel, which is their common poſture; particularly when eating, or when they are cleaning themſelves, as a cat or ſquirrel does, without having their tails bent forward between their legs; and which may not improperly be called their trencher. 1771. December.

So far are the beaver from driving ſtakes into the ground when building their houſes, that they lay moſt of the wood croſswiſe, and nearly horizontal, and without any other order than that of leaving a hollow or cavity in the middle; when any unneceſſary branches project inward, they cut them off with their teeth, and throw them in among the reſt, to prevent the mud from falling through the roof. It is a miſtaken notion, that the wood-work is firſt completed and then plaiſtered; for the whole of their houſes, as well as their dams, are from the foundation one maſs of wood and mud, mixed with ſtones, if they can be procured. The mud is always taken from the edge of the bank, or the bottom of the creek or pond, near the door of the houſe; and though their fore-paws are ſo ſmall, yet it is held cloſe up between them, under their throat, that

1771. December. that they carry both mud and ſtones; while they always drag the wood with their teeth.

All their work is executed in the night; and they are ſo expeditious in completing it, that in the courſe of one night I have known them to have collected as much mud at their houſes as to have amounted to ſome thouſands of their little handfuls; and when any mixture of graſs or ſtraw has appeared in it, it has been, moſt aſſuredly, mere chance, owing to the nature of the ground from which they had taken it. As to their deſignedly making a compoſition for that purpoſe, it is entirely void of truth.

It is a great piece of policy in thoſe animals, to cover, or plaiſter, as it is uſually called, the outſide of their houſes every fall with freſh mud, and as late as poſſible in the Autumn, even when the froſt becomes pretty ſevere; as by this means it ſoon freezes as hard as a ſtone, and prevents their common enemy, the quiquehatch, from diſturbing them during the Winter. And as they are frequently ſeen to walk over their work, and ſometimes to give a flap with their tail, particularly when plunging into the water, this has, without doubt, given riſe to the vulgar opinion that they uſe their tails as a trowel, with which they plaiſter their houſes; whereas that flapping of the tail is no more than a cuſtom, which they always preſerve, even when they become tame and domeſtic, and more particularly ſo when they are ſtartled.

Their

Their food chiefly conſiſts of a large root, ſomething reſembling a cabbage-ſtalk, which grows at the bottom of the lakes and rivers. They eat alſo the bark of trees, particularly that of the poplar, birch, and willow; but the ice preventing them from getting to the land in Winter, they have not any barks to feed upon during that ſeaſon, except that of ſuch ſticks as they cut down in Summer, and throw into the water oppoſite the doors of their houſes; and as they generally eat a great deal, the roots above mentioned conſtitute a chief part of their food during the Winter. In Summer they vary their diet, by eating various kinds of herbage, and ſuch berries as grow near their haunts during that ſeaſon. 1771. December.

When the ice breaks up in the Spring, the beaver always leave their houſes, and rove about the whole Summer, probably in ſearch of a more commodious ſituation; but in caſe of not ſucceeding in their endeavours, they return again to their old habitations a little before the fall of the leaf, and lay in their Winter ſtock of woods. They ſeldom begin to repair the houſes till the froſt commences, and never finiſh the outer-coat till the cold is pretty ſevere, as hath been already mentioned.

When they ſhift their habitations, or when the increaſe of their number renders it neceſſary to make ſome addition to their houſes, or to erect new ones, they begin felling

1771. December. the wood for theſe purpoſes early in the Summer, but ſeldom begin to build till the middle or latter end of Auguſt, and never complete their houſes till the cold weather be ſet in.

Notwithſtanding what has been ſo repeatedly reported of thoſe animals aſſembling in great bodies, and jointly erecting large towns, cities, and commonwealths, as they have ſometimes been called, I am confident, from many circumſtances, that even where the greateſt numbers of beaver are ſituated in the neighbourhood of each other, their labours are not carried on jointly in the erection of their different habitations, nor have they any reciprocal intereſt, except it be ſuch as live immediately under the ſame roof; and then it extends no farther than to build or keep a dam which is common to ſeveral houſes. In ſuch caſes it is natural to think that every one who receives benefit from ſuch dams, ſhould aſſiſt in erecting it, being ſenſible of its utility to all.

Perſons who attempt to take beaver in Winter ſhould be thoroughly acquainted with their manner of life, otherwiſe they will have endleſs trouble to effect their purpoſe, and probably without ſucceſs in the end; becauſe they have always a number of holes in the banks, which ſerve them as places of retreat when any injury is offered to their houſes; and in general it is in thoſe holes that they are taken.

When

When the beaver which are ſituated in a ſmall river or creek are to be taken, the Indians ſometimes find it neceſſary to ſtake the river acroſs, to prevent them from paſſing; after which, they endeavour to find out all their holes or places of retreat in the banks. This requires much practice and experience to accompliſh, and is performed in the following manner: Every man being furniſhed with an ice-chiſel, laſhes it to the end of a ſmall ſtaff about four or five feet long; he then walks along the edge of the banks, and keeps knocking his chiſels againſt the ice. Thoſe who are well acquainted with that kind of work well know by the ſound of the ice when they are oppoſite to any of the beavers' holes or vaults. As ſoon as they ſuſpect any, they cut a hole through the ice big enough to admit an old beaver; and in this manner proceed till they have found out all their places of retreat, or at leaſt as many of them as poſſible. While the principal men are thus employed, ſome of the underſtrappers, and the women, are buſy in breaking open the houſe, which at times is no eaſy taſk; for I have frequently known theſe houſes to be five and ſix feet thick; and one in particular, was more than eight feet thick on the crown. When the beaver find that their habitations are invaded, they fly to their holes in the banks for ſhelter; and on being perceived by the Indians, which is eaſily done, by attending to the motion of the water, they block up the entrance with ſtakes of wood, and then haul the beaver out of its hole, either by hand, if they can reach it, or with a large hook made

1771. December.

1771. December. made for that purpoſe, which is faſtened to the end of a long ſtick.

In this kind of hunting, every man has the ſole right to all the beaver caught by him in the holes or vaults; and as this is a conſtant rule, each perſon takes care to mark ſuch as he diſcovers, by ſticking up the branch of a tree, or ſome other diſtinguiſhing poſt, by which he may know them. All that are caught in the houſe alſo are the property of the perſon who finds it.

The ſame regulations are obſerved, and the ſame proceſs uſed in taking beaver that are found in lakes and other ſtanding waters, except it be that of ſtaking the lake acroſs, which would be both unneceſſary and impoſſible. Taking beaver-houſes in theſe ſituations is generally attended with leſs trouble and more ſucceſs than in the former.

The beaver is an animal which cannot keep under water long at a time; ſo that when their houſes are broke open, and all their places of retreat diſcovered, they have but one choice left, as it may be called, either to be taken in their houſes or their vaults: in general they prefer the latter; for where there is one beaver caught in the houſe, many thouſands are taken in their vaults in the banks. Sometimes they are caught in nets, and in the Summer very frequently in traps. In Winter they are very fat and delicious;

delicious; but the trouble of rearing their young, the thinneſs of their hair, and their conſtantly roving from place to place, with the trouble they have in providing againſt the approach of Winter, generally keep them very poor during the Summer ſeaſon, at which time their fleſh is but indifferent eating, and their ſkins of ſo little value, that the Indians generally ſinge them, even to the amount of many thouſands in one Summer. They have from two to five young, at a time. Mr. Dobbs, in his Account of Hudſon's Bay, enumerates no leſs than eight different kinds of beaver; but it muſt be underſtood that they are all of one kind and ſpecies: his diſtinctions ariſe wholly from the different ſeaſons of the year in which they are killed, and the different uſes to which their ſkins are applied, which is the ſole reaſon that they vary ſo much in value. 1771. December.

Joſeph Lefranc, or Mr. Dobbs for him, ſays, that a good hunter can kill ſix hundred beaver in one ſeaſon, and can only carry one hundred to market. If that was really the caſe in Lefranc's time, the canoes muſt have been much ſmaller than they are at preſent; for it is well known that the generality of the canoes which have viſited the Company's Factories for the laſt forty or fifty years, are capable of carrying three hundred beaver-ſkins with great eaſe, excluſive of the Indians luggage, proviſions, &c.

If

1771. December. If ever a particular Indian killed ſix hundred beaver in one Winter, (which is rather to be doubted,) it is more than probable that many in his company did not kill twenty, and perhaps ſome none at all; ſo that by diſtributing them among thoſe who had bad ſucceſs, and others who had no abilities for that kind of hunting, there would be no neceſſity of leaving them to rot, or for ſinging them in the fire, as related by that Author. During my reſidence among the Indians I have known ſome individuals kill more beaver, and other heavy furrs, in the courſe of a Winter, than their wives could manage; but the overplus was never wantonly deſtroyed, but always given to their relations, or to thoſe who had been leſs ſucceſsful; ſo that the whole of the great hunters labours were always brought to the Factory. It is indeed too frequently a cuſtom among the Southern Indians to ſinge many otters, as well as beaver; but this is ſeldom done, except in Summer, when their ſkins are of ſo little value as to be ſcarcely worth the duty; on which account it has been always thought impolitic to encourage the natives to kill ſuch valuable animals at a time when their ſkins are not in ſeaſon.

The white beaver, mentioned by Lefranc, are ſo rare, that inſtead of being "blown upon by the Company's Factors," as he aſſerts, I rather doubt whether one-tenth of them ever ſaw one during the time of their reſidence in this country. In the courſe of twenty years experience in the countries about

about Hudſon's Bay, though I travelled ſix hundred miles to the Weſt of the ſea-coaſt, I never ſaw but one white beaver-ſkin, and it had many reddiſh and brown hairs along the ridge of the back, and the ſides and belly were of a gloſſy ſilvery white. It was deemed by the Indians a great curioſity; and I offered three times the uſual price for a few of them, if they could be got; but in the courſe of ten years that I remained there afterward, I could not procure another; which is a convincing proof there is no ſuch thing as a breed of that kind, and that a variation from the uſual colour is very rare. 1771. December.

Black beaver, and that of a beautiful gloſs, are not uncommon: perhaps they are more plentiful at Churchill than at any other Factory in the Bay; but it is rare to get more than twelve or fifteen of their ſkins in the courſe of one year's trade.

Lefranc, as an Indian, muſt have known better than to have informed Mr. Dobbs that the beaver have from ten to fifteen young at a time; or if he did, he muſt have deceived him wilfully: for the Indians, by killing them in all ſtages of geſtation, have abundant opportunities of aſcertaining the uſual number of their offspring. I have ſeen ſome hundreds of them killed at the ſeaſons favourable for thoſe obſervations, and never could diſcover more than ſix young in one female, and that only in two in-

 ſtances;

1771. December. ſtances; for the uſual number, as I have before obſerved, is from two to five.

Beſides this unerring method of aſcertaining the real number of young which any animal has at a time, there is another rule to go by, with reſpect to the beaver, which experience has proved to the Indians never to vary or deceive them, that is by diſſection; for on examining the womb of a beaver, even at a time when not with young, there is always found a hardiſh round knob for every young ſhe had at the laſt litter. This is a circumſtance I have been particularly careful to examine, and can affirm it to be true, from real experience.

Moſt of the accounts, nay I may ſay all the accounts now extant, reſpecting the beaver, are taken from the authority of the French who have reſided in Canada; but thoſe accounts differ ſo much from the real ſtate and œconomy of all the beaver to the North of that place, as to leave great room to ſuſpect the truth of them altogether. In the firſt place, the aſſertion that they have two doors to their houſes, one on the land-ſide, and the other next the water, is, as I have before obſerved, quite contrary to fact and common ſenſe, as it would render their houſes of no uſe to them, either as places of ſhelter from the inclemency of the extreme cold in Winter, or as a retreat from their common enemy the quiquehatch. The only thing

that could have made M. Du Pratz, and other French writers, conjecture that ſuch a thing did exiſt, muſt have been from having ſeen ſome old beaver-houſes which had been taken by the Indians; for they are always obliged to make a hole in one ſide of the houſe before they can drive them out; and it is more than probable that in ſo mild a climate as Canada, the Indians do generally make thoſe holes on the land-ſide *, which without doubt gave riſe to the ſuggeſtion. 1771. December.

In reſpect to the beaver dunging in their houſes, as ſome perſons aſſert, it is quite wrong, as they always plunge into the water to do it. I am the better enabled to make this aſſertion, from having kept ſeveral of them till they became ſo domeſticated as to anſwer to their name, and follow thoſe to whom they were accuſtomed, in the ſame manner as a dog would do; and they were as much pleaſed at being fondled, as any animal I ever ſaw. I had a houſe built for them, and a ſmall piece of water before the door, into which they always plunged when they wanted to eaſe nature; and their dung being of a light ſubſtance, immediately riſes and floats on the ſurface,

* The Northern Indians think that the ſagacity of the beaver directs them to make that part of their houſe which fronts the North much thicker than any other part, with a view of defending themſelves from the cold winds which generally blow from that quarter during the Winter; and for this reaſon the Northern Indians generally break open that ſide of the beaver-houſes which exactly front the South.

1771. December. then ſeparates and ſubſides to the bottom. When the Winter ſets in ſo as to freeze the water ſolid, they ſtill continue their cuſtom of coming out of their houſe, and dunging and making water on the ice; and when the weather was ſo cold that I was obliged to take them into my houſe, they always went into a large tub of water which I ſet for that purpoſe: ſo that they made not the leaſt dirt, though they were kept in my own ſitting-room, where they were the conſtant companions of the Indian women and children, and were ſo fond of their company, that when the Indians were abſent for any conſiderable time, the beaver diſcovered great ſigns of uneaſineſs, and on their return ſhewed equal marks of pleaſure, by fondling on them, crawling into their laps, laying on their backs, ſitting erect like a ſquirrel, and behaving to them like children who ſee their parents but ſeldom. In general, during the Winter they lived on the ſame food as the women did, and were remarkably fond of rice and plum-pudding: they would eat partridges and freſh veniſon very freely, but I never tried them with fiſh, though I have heard they will at times prey on them. In fact, there are few of the granivorous animals that may not be brought to be carniverous. It is well known that our domeſtic poultry will eat animal food: thouſands of geeſe that come to London market are fattened on tallow-craps; and our horſes in Hudſon's Bay would not only eat all kinds of animal food, but alſo drink freely of the waſh, or pot-liquor, intended for the hogs.

hogs. And we are aſſured by the moſt authentic Authors, that in Iceland, not only black cattle, but alſo the ſheep, are almoſt entirely fed on fiſh and fiſh-bones during the Winter ſeaſon. Even in the Iſles of Orkney, and that in Summer, the ſheep attend the ebbing of the tide as regular as the Eſquimaux curlew, and go down to the ſhore which the tide has left, to feed on the ſea-weed. This, however, is through neceſſity; for even the famous Iſland of Pomona * will not afford them an exiſtence above high-water-mark. 1771. December

With reſpect to the inferior, or ſlave-beaver, of which ſome Authors ſpeak, it is, in my opinion, very difficult for thoſe who are beſt acquainted with the œconomy of this animal to determine whether there are any that deſerve that appellation or not. It ſometimes happens, that a beaver is caught, which has but a very indifferent coat, and which has broad patches on the back, and ſhoulders almoſt wholly without hair. This is the only foundation for aſſerting that there is an inferior, or ſlave-beaver, among them. And when one of the above deſcription is taken, it is perhaps too haſtily inferred that the hair is worn off from thoſe parts by carrying heavy loads: whereas it is moſt probable that it is cauſed by a diſorder that attacks them ſomewhat ſimilar to the mange; for

* This being the largeſt of the Orkney Iſlands, is called by the Inhabitants the Main Land.

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