

to cut down, and transport a large tree, to raise a mole, or build a village, are, on the contrary, operations which necessarily suppose common labours and concerted views; these are the only performances which result from immature society in savage nations; while the operations of the beavers are the fruits of a perfected society among those animals; for it is to be observed, that they never attempt to build but in countries where they are in no danger of having their tranquillity interrupted.

There are beavers in Languedoc, in the islands of the Rhone, and many in the northern provinces of Europe; but as all those countries are inhabited, or at least frequented by men, the beavers there, as well as all other animals, are dispersed, forlorn, and timid creatures. There they have never been known to assemble, or undertake any common work: whereas in desert regions, where human society was formed later, where some few vestiges of savages alone could be traced, beavers were every where seen united, forming societies, and constructing works which were the admiration of every beholder. Of this I shall endeavour to quote such testimonies as are most judicious and least liable to censure, and shall only consider as certain those facts which are confirmed  
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