

forms between quadrupeds and birds. But these singularities would be rather defects than perfections, if the beaver did not derive from this conformation peculiar advantages which render him superior to all other animals.

The beavers begin to assemble in June or July in order to form themselves into a society. They arrive in numbers from all sides, and soon form a company of two or three hundred; the place of meeting is generally that where they intend to fix their abode, and is always by the side of some lake or river. If it be a lake wherein the waters always remain upon a level they dispense with making a dam; but if it be a running stream, subject to floods and falls, they build a bank or pier quite across so as to secure a piece of water always at the same height, and this bank is frequently from 80 to 100 feet long, and ten or twelve thick at the base. If we compare the greatness of the work with the size* of the architect, it will appear enormous, but the solidity with which it is constructed is still more astonishing. They commonly choose that part of the river which is most shallow, and if possible, where some
large

* The largest beavers weigh from 50 to 60 pounds, and are seldom more than three feet in length, measuring from the tip of the nose to the insertion of the tail.