

upon a tree which they have once attacked. They begin to cut a tree at the distance of a foot, or a foot and a half from the ground, and they sit as they work, for besides the advantage of this convenient posture, they have the pleasure of continually gnawing fresh bark and soft wood, both of which they prefer to most other kinds of aliment; and of these they provide an ample store for their subsistence during winter*, being averse to dry wood. It is in the water, and near their habitations, that they establish their magazines; there is one allotted to each cabin, proportioned to the number of its inhabitants, to which they have all a common right, and never plunder their neighbours. Some hamlets, if we may so call them, are composed of 20 or 25 cabins, but such large settlements are rare; generally they do not consist of more than ten or a dozen families, each of which has its own district, magazine, and habitation; nor will they allow strangers to come into their neighbourhood. The smallest dwellings contain two, four, or six; and the largest eighteen, twenty, and it is even asserted thirty beavers; and it very seldom happens, that the males and females are not of an equal

* The space allotted for the provision of eight or ten beavers is from 25 to 30 feet in length, and eight or ten feet broad and deep.