

check to our progress, until, at length, we reached a point where the stream divided into two branches—or, in American phraseology, “forked”—when a halt was sounded, and we landed for rest and refreshment. The grassy bank sloped gently to the water’s edge, and offered every convenience for a halting place; the canoes were drawn up, stores were unpacked, fires lighted, and in very short space, breakfast was declared ready. What a glorious breakfast it was, and with what *gusto* we enjoyed it!

We did not, however, linger long over our repast, for the day was yet young, and we were all eager for sport; so soon, therefore, as we had finished, and made some necessary arrangements, we separated to follow our several inclinations for the rest of the day. Two of the party went up the right branch of the stream for salmon-fishing, in its swift waters; other two, in pursuit of wild pigeons, pushed over to a rich alluvial meadow, or plain—called “intervale” in the colonies—which skirted the banks of the left branch, and was covered with a luxuriant growth of that useful and beautiful forest tree—the sugar maple.

It was my fancy to accompany Tomah, the oldest Indian of our party, in quest of ducks, up a deep and narrow creek, winding its tortuous way through the fertile intervale, which, from the size of the trees, flourishing in its rich, virgin soil, and freedom from underwood, bore great resemblance to an old English park. We paddled gently and cautiously about a mile, the perfect stillness only broken by the heavy splash of the large mud-turtle, as, launching himself from off the fallen and half-sunken tree on which he basked in the sunshine, he sunk with sullen plunge; or the sharp and rattling note of the crested king-fisher, the resplendant azure of his plumage glancing in the sunbeams, as he flitted from tree to tree before our advance, unwillingly disturbed in his accustomed pursuits, and wondering at our intrusion upon his hitherto quiet haunts. Moving stealthily along, and alive to every sound and movement near

us, we were brought up suddenly by a mound across the creek, which Tomah at once pronounced an ancient beaver-dam, one that had, in former days, been thrown up by those most industrious and sagacious animals, the beavers, to create a small lake, or pond, in which to place their singular lodges, or habitations. This dam was about thirty feet in length, from bank to bank, and, as nearly as could be ascertained, some six feet in width at the base, the thickness gradually diminishing to the top, which was a little over a foot in breadth. It was built with small trees, which had evidently been cut on the banks of the creek by the teeth of the persevering beavers, and, falling into the water, had been floated down, and then placed, horizontally and cross-wise, in an exceedingly well selected situation. A sufficient number of trees appeared to have been thus placed; the projecting tops and branches had then been cut off, and, with twigs and stones, had served to fill up the larger interstices; after which the whole fabric had been rendered water-tight with tough clay, and strongly-adhesive mud from the banks and bed of the creek. The top of the dam was surmounted with a thick growth of vigorous shoots from the willow, the birch, the aspen, and other trees used in the work, and looked not unlike a hedge-row, dividing the upper from the lower waters of the stream. It was evident that the trapper had been here, and that all the beavers had been killed, or driven off, long before, for their lodges were broken and dilapidated, and no recent traces of their labours were visible.

At one extremity of the dam, close to the bank, was an opening, through which the flow of the stream found its way; and Tomah explained to me that this opening was used by the beavers for the purpose of raising or lowering the waters of the pond. It constituted, in fact, the waste-gate of the dam: in times of flood, the beavers enlarged the opening to give vent to the surplus water; and in the heat and drought of summer they closed it again, so as to secure to themselves sufficient extent of surface