

**A BEAVER COLONY.**

The beaver is one of the animals which constantly advancing civilization is gradually exterminating. In earlier times the beaver was found almost everywhere, even in the southern regions of Europe, but at present they are only found in large numbers in the northern part of America, also in southern Siberia, and on the shores of rivers flowing into the Caspian Sea.

The beaver (*Castor*) belongs to the race of mammals of the order of rodents. These animals furnish the beaver fat, an animal substance which is secreted by them in glands or pouches, and the pelt also is valuable. In earlier times the fur of the beaver was used for the finest hats.

The products of the American beaver are not so valuable as the Russian, yet the American beaver trade, especially of the great Hudson's Bay Company, is a remarkably profitable industry.

Beavers are especially interesting, for of all the mammals they show the most mechanical instinct in building their habitations, and the American beavers have the reputation of being by far the most ingenious builders in the whole family.

Our illustration represents a beaver colony of northern Minnesota, and the industrious animals are employed in constructing their water castles. They are remarkably shy, and labor only in the night, so that it is very difficult to surprise

**The Rabbit Pest in New South Wales.**

The keeping of rabbits of any kind is now prohibited by law, there being a penalty of £100 for every offence proved. This may seem severe, but it is stated that the rabbit pest can be traced, in a large measure, to a few rodents which were thoughtlessly let loose. It is marvelous how rapidly their numbers become multiplied in the pastoral districts, in several of which they have completely eaten out the sheep. In reference to the ravages of these unwelcome animals, Mr. Maxwell, of Cobar, says: "Once rabbits get on a run, it is a constant outlay. In a small paddock of 40 acres I have seen three men constantly killing four and five dozen per day for months together, and still they kept coming. That was twelve years ago. They tried killing for several years. Before rabbits came we used to have 70 to 80 per cent of lambs, and ran three sheep to four acres. In less than three years we could not rear a lamb, and it took four acres to keep one sheep alive, and all our cattle died."

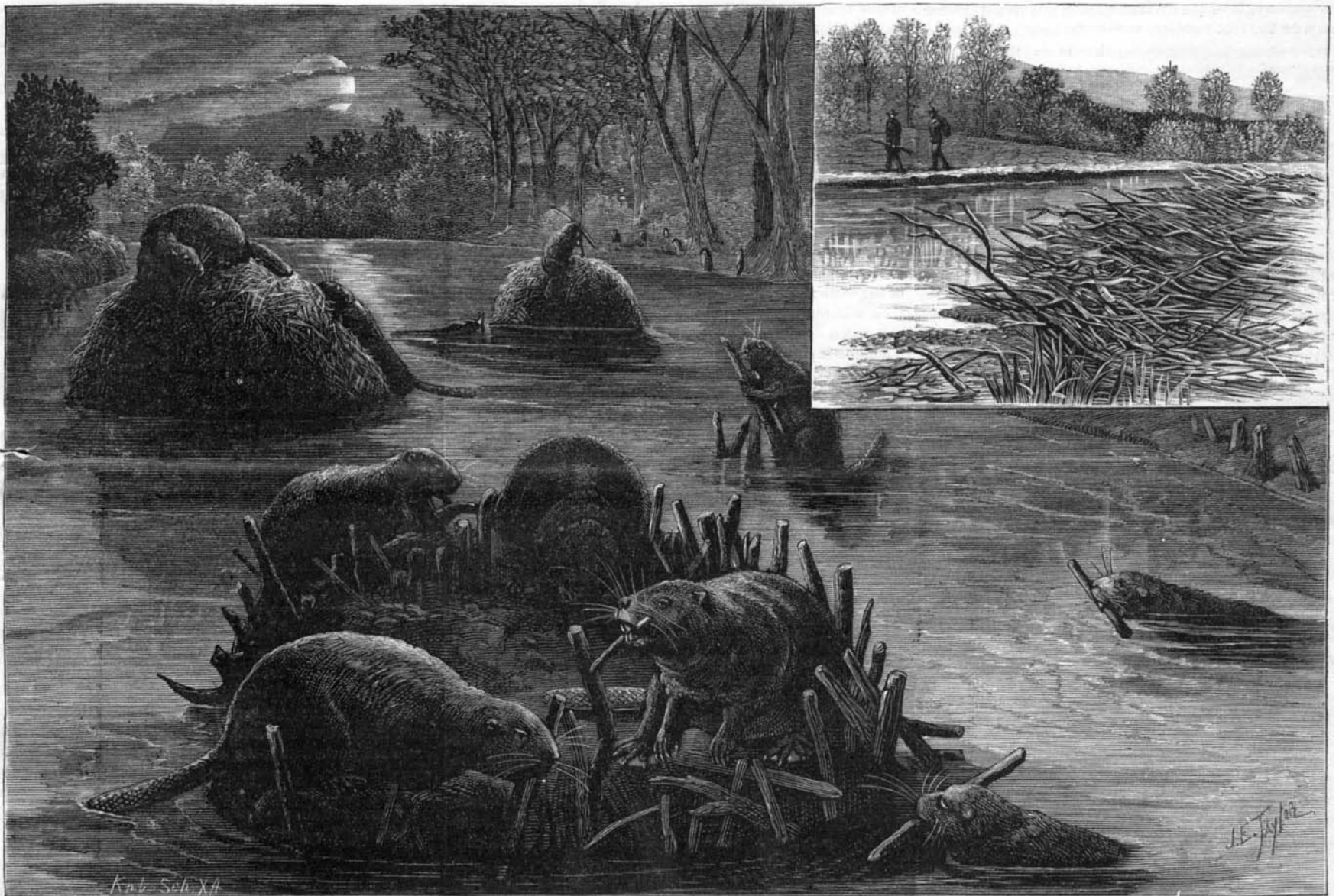
"Then we fenced with paling and kept them out of the run, and kept killing—that is, trapping, shooting, hunting with dogs and ferrets, and poisoning. The brutes kept coming most of the time into the little paddock, as it was the sweetest feed. There are still rabbits on the place, and men have to be kept to keep them down." At first Victoria was the principal sufferer, but, somehow or other, the rabbits have crossed the Murray, spreading devastation and panic

the noise is natural to these frogs, or assumed to decoy the chickens within their reach, we know not; but they constantly make a chuckling sound so exactly like a hen calling her chickens for food that we have seen whole broods deceived, and rushing toward the sluit where they supposed the hen to be. The frogs are very wary, and it is difficult to find them unless by the screams of their victims. We have lost large numbers of small chickens in an unaccountable manner, and feel sure now that these frogs must be answerable for very many of them, as there are no rats here, and the chickens are carefully housed at night."

**Gluttony in a Frog.**

A rather interesting incident occurred while I was a student in the Sheffield Scientific School of Yale College. In the Peabody Museum we had a large wire cage containing numerous reptiles, and among these was a frog of unusual size.

On one of our excursions I brought in a number of frogs and other animals, and going to the cage dropped the contents of the jar, frogs and all, down among the animals at the bottom. The large frog, which had been confined there for some time, caught one of the small ones before it reached the bottom of the cage, and swallowed it with as great ease as he would have captured a fly. This quickly done, he

**BEAVERS AT WORK.**

these architects at their labor and find out the secrets of their method of construction. The individual dwellings consist of rounded hills, which are composed of pieces of wood, stone, and mud, and are divided in the inside into two apartments, an upper dry room and a lower one filled with water. The single habitations are united by a solid dam, for which whole trees are used as the building material.

The beavers gnaw with their powerful teeth the trees standing close by the shore, near to the ground, and when they have gnawed the trunk nearly through they so direct it by a peculiar trick that, as the tree falls into the water, the stream carries the trunk downward, and it is brought into the right position.

In early times travelers who were not punctilious in regard to the truth, and who gave free rein to their fancy, told wonderful stories in regard to the skill of these architects, and though many of these stories have been shown to be false by observation and research, yet it still remains a fact that the beavers are really the most ingenious builders to be found in the whole animal kingdom.—*From Um die Welt.*

**THE RUBBER PLANT IN MEXICO.**—Mexico is making a study of the culture of the rubber plant. The hardiness of the plant is said to be such that its culture is exceedingly simple and inexpensive, where the climate and soil are suitable. In much of the Mexican coast region the only expense is the weeding required when the plants are young, to give them a chance to grow and strengthen.

throughout the southwestern portions of the colony, and ruining the prospects of numbers of hardy settlers. How far the Rabbit Nuisance Act will aid in abating the evil remains to be seen, but if it fails the situation will be one of the gravest character.—*Ill. Sydney News.*

**Bird-Eating Frog.**

The following curious narrative is taken from the *Cape Times*, March 27, 1883: "A lady living in the George district supplies the *G. R. Herald* with the following particulars of the remarkable habits of this creature:

"I have much pleasure in furnishing all the information we have regarding the large frogs which have proved so destructive to our young chickens. A water sluit runs round our terrace, and passes through the ground over which the poultry range, and in this the frogs harbor. The first time our attention was drawn to their bird eating propensity was by the cries of a small bird in a fuchsia near the stream. Thinking it had been seized by a snake, several hastened to the spot, and saw a beautiful red and green sugar bird in the mouth of a large greenish frog; only the bird's head was visible; and its cries becoming fainter, the frog was killed and the bird released. Its feathers were all wet and slimy, and for some days after we could distinguish it in the garden by its ruffled plumage."

"Since then the same species of frog has on several occasions been killed with young chickens half swallowed, and once a duckling was rescued from the same fate. Whether

sat and looked about with an air of satisfaction for a moment, then sprang upon another of medium size, caught and swallowed it as quickly as the first. This done, there was another pause of a couple of minutes, and then, with another quick bound, he seized and swallowed a third frog, equal in size to the second; this accomplished there was another pause of about five minutes, and then another quick, savage bound for a fourth victim, this time for a frog two-thirds the size of himself. Each of the three was seized and swallowed head first, but the fourth effort was not so successful as the others, for this he only managed to get into his mouth as far as its hind legs, when there was a pause and a struggle. The unfortunate frog in the mouth of the large one persisted in holding its hind legs out sidewise, at right angles to its body, as if conscious that these tactics would prevent the other from swallowing it; and at the same time the large one used its front feet, at times one, and again both, to straighten out the hind legs of his victim so that he might be able to swallow it; and while this struggle was going on, he made frequent efforts to use the sides and bottom of the cage as an object against which to press the other frog, so as to aid his efforts to swallow it. The struggle, however, after lasting a number of minutes, terminated in favor of the smaller frog, for by desperate efforts it managed to elude the grasp of its assailant; but while the battle did last it used both its muscular and vocal powers to their utmost to thwart the murderous designs of its enemy.—*B. F. Koons, in American Naturalist.*