

but from the fire of heaven, or weapons of man, and which no animal dares attempt to open or overturn. These asylums are not only secure but neat and commodious. The floors are covered with verdure; young branches of the box and fir serving them for carpets, and upon which they do not suffer the smallest dirt. The window that fronts the water they use as a balcony to enjoy the fresh air, and to bathe, which they do the greatest part of the day, sitting in an upright posture in the water, with their heads and fore parts only visible. This element appears so necessary, or at least so pleasing, that they seem unable to do without frequent immersions in it; therefore, in making this window, they are very careful to guard against its being blocked up by the ice; when the river is frozen over, they make an opening in it, and swim a considerable way under the ice; at which times they are easily taken, by attacking the dwelling on one hand, and at the same time lying in wait for them at a hole purposely made in the ice at some distance, and to which they are obliged to come for breath. The habit of continually keeping their tails and hinder parts in the water, seems to have changed the nature of their flesh: that of the fore parts, as far as the reins, has the taste
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