



In front, in the centre, the Rhinoceros; to the right, the Hippopotamus and Orang-outang. Centre back ground, the Giraffe; to the left, Antelopes & Zebra.

GROUP OF AFRICAN ANIMALS.\*

WHEREVER the observant traveller turns his steps, he finds in every country animals peculiar to itself; and many of these, occupying the most remote and insulated spots, are the most inadequately supplied with the means of locomotion. — One mode of their original dis-

\* For this interesting article touching the natural history of the Quadrupeds of Africa, we are indebted to No. XVI. of "Harpers' Family Library," entitled "Discovery and Adventures in Africa from the earliest periods to the present time," embellished with several fine engravings and plans of the routes of the enterprising travellers, Park, Denham, and Clapperton. It is a neat and handsomely printed volume of 363 18mo pages, and embraces whatever is striking in the adventures of travellers who have sought to explore Africa, from the earliest ages, and in various directions. Its aim is to give a general view of the physical and social condition of that sun-burnt continent at the present day—and in this the compilers have certainly succeeded. It is altogether such a work as we should

persion, whether from a single position, or from multiplied centres of creation, has therefore been a theme which has not unfrequently exercised the ingenuity of naturalists. The subject, however, seems to be one which scarcely falls within the scope of human intelligence; although a most ample source of interesting and legitimate speculation may be made to flow from an accurate and extended record of facts illustrative of their present distribution, the amount of genera and species, the relation which that amount bears to the animal productions of other countries, and similar numerical details.

Most nearly allied to the human race of all the species of the brute creation, the black or African orang-outang (*Simia troglodytes* of Linnæus) may be allowed to assume the foremost place in our enumeration. It is native to no other country than Africa, although we are as yet unacquainted with the extent of territory which it occupies in that continent. Angola, the banks of the river Congo, and all the districts which border the Gulf of Guinea, are the localities in which it has as yet most frequently occurred. Its history, like that of its Asiatic congener, the red orang-outang (*Simia satyrus*, Linn.) is still involved in considerable obscurity. Its habits, in the adult state, are extremely retired and wary; and the young alone have fallen into the hands of Europeans in modern times. Great exaggeration prevails in the narratives of all the earlier travellers regarding the sagacity of this singular animal. Its external figure and general conformation no doubt greatly resemble those of the human race, and hence its actions have to us much of the semblance of human wisdom. But a remarkable circumstance in the mental constitution of this tribe of animals disproves their fancied alliance to mankind,—the young are gentle, obedient, and extremely docile,—but as they increase in years their

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be glad to find extensively circulated:—it contains much useful information written in an engaging manner, of that quarter of the globe, the greater part of which down to a comparatively recent period, was the subject only of vague report and conjecture. In short it is no unworthy member of one of the best works in our country.—*The Family Library*. From that part of the work which treats of the Natural History of the Quadrupeds of Africa, and which is illustrated by an engraving of a group of animals, at the head of the present article, we shall make farther extracts.

dispositions undergo a striking change, and their truly brutal nature is evinced by an unusual degree of untractable ferocity. In the wild state they are inferior both to the dog and the elephant in sagacity, although their analogous structure never fails to impress the beholder with a belief that they resemble man in mental character as well as in corporeal form. Two species of African orang-outang seem to have been described by the earlier writers. These were probably the young and old of the same species seen apart at different times, for later researches do not lead to the belief of there being more than one.

“The greatest of these two monsters,” says Battell, “is called *pongo* in their language; and the less is called *engeco*. This pongo is exactly proportioned like a man; but he is more like a giant in stature; for he is very tall, and hath a man’s face, hollow-eyed, with long hair upon his brows. His face and ears are without hair, and his hands also. His body is full of hair but not very thick, and it is of a dunnish color. He differeth not from a man but in his legs, for they have no calf. He goeth always upon his legs, and carrieth his hands clasped on the nape of his neck when he goeth upon the ground. They sleep in the trees, and build shelters from the rain. They feed upon fruit that they find in the woods, and upon nuts; for they eat no kind of flesh. They cannot speak, and appear to have no more understanding than a beast. The people of the country, when they travel in the woods, make fires where they sleep in the night; and in the morning, when they are gone, the pongos will come and sit about the fire till it goeth out; for they have no understanding to lay the wood together, or any means to light it. They go many together, and often kill the negroes that travel in the woods. Many times they fall upon the elephants which come to feed where they be, and so beat them with their clubbed fists, and with pieces of wood, that they will run roaring away from them. Those pongos are seldom or never taken alive, because they are so strong that ten men cannot hold one of them; but yet they take many of their young ones with poisoned arrows.”

Purchas informs us, on the authority of a personal conversation with Battell, that a pongo on one occasion carried off a young negro, who lived for an entire season in the society of these animals; that, on his return, the negro stated they had never injured him, but, on the contrary, were greatly delighted with his company; and not only brought him abundance of nuts and wild fruits, but carefully and courageously defended him from the attacks of serpents and beasts of prey.

With the exception of such information as has been drawn from the observance of one or two young individuals sent alive to Europe, our knowledge of this species has not increased. We have become aware of the inaccuracy and exaggeration of previous statements, but have not ourselves succeeded in filling up the picture. It is indeed singular, that when the history of animals inhabiting New-Holland, or the most distant islands of the Indian Ocean, are annually receiving, so much new and correct illustration, the most remarkable species of the brute creation, inhabiting a comparatively neighboring country, should have remained for about 2000 years under the shade of an almost fabulous name, and that the "wild man of the woods," should express all we yet really know of the African orang-outang in the adult state.

Africa produces many other species of the monkey tribe. The promontory most familiar to the Mediterranean voyager, called Apes' Mountain, not far from the opposing point of Gibraltar, is so called from the occurrence of these animals; and the rock of the last-named fortress is itself the only strong-hold which they possess in Europe. They do not, however, occur in desert countries, commonly so called; that is, the open sandy plains of Africa are altogether unfitted for the dwellings of these pigmy people. Apes of all kinds are a sylvan race. Their structure being such as to render them unfit for the exercise of rapid movements, either on all fours or in an upright position, the inclined and densely intermingled branches of trees are their

favorite places of resort. Their feet in climbing being equally useful with their hands, great additional power and activity are thus derived. Among the shady and otherwise unpeopled arbors which skirt the banks of the yet mysterious rivers of Africa, they dwell in single pairs or in congregated troops, according to the instincts of each peculiar kind; and seated on the tops of ancient trees, or swinging from pendant boughs, they play their fantastic tricks, secure alike from the wily serpent during the day, and the panther which prowls by night.