

Landesbibliothek Oldenburg

Digitalisierung von Drucken

Vermischte Aufsätze in englischer Prose

Ebeling, Christoph Daniel

Hamburg, 1777

VD18 13177109

Description Of Some Quadrupeds.

urn:nbn:de:gbv:45:1-15506

so brightly in his wish with you, that our government had shewn more respect for Corsican liberty; and think it disgraces our Nation, that we do not live in friendship with a brave people, engaged in the noblest of all contests; a contest against tyranny! and who have never given us any cause of complaint. Besides sympathy of sentiment, which is a natural bond of union, we ought in policy to shew as much regard for them, as the Genoese their oppressors have shewn for the French in our late war with that nation. Believe me with sincere regard and esteem

Sir,

Your most obedient and obliged
humble servant

Littleton.

DESCRIPTION OF SOME QUADRUPEDS. *)

Animals of the Ape kind are in *Guiana* in greater number and variety, than in any other part of the known world.

The Orang-Outang in this part of *America* is much larger than either the *African* or *Oriental*, if the accounts of the natives may be relied on; for I do not find that any of them have been seen by the White Inhabitants on this Coast, who never penetrate far into the woods. These animals, in all the different languages of the natives, are called by names signifying a Wild Man. They are represented by the *Indians* as being near five feet in height, maintaining an erect position, and having a human form, thinly covered with short black hair; but I suspect that their height has been augmented by the fears of the *Indians*, who greatly dread them, and instantly fly as soon as one is discovered, so that none of them have ever been taken alive, much less any attempts made for taming them. The *Indians* relate many fabulous stories of these animals; and like the inhabitants of *Africa* and the *East*, assert, that they will attack the males and ravish the females of the human species.

The Ape, here called a Quato, is large, and covered all over with long black hair, except the face, which is bald, and wrinkled. The ears are large, and of a human form, the eyes deeply sunk in their orbits, and the

*) Bancroft's Essay on the Natural History of Guiana. London 1769. 8.

nose very much resembling that of a Negro, but smaller. The body is near two feet in length, and round the thorax about eighteen inches in circumference. They have neither beard nor tail. These animals are frequently tamed, and in all their actions demonstrate an uncommon art and dexterity, not without a mixture of that mischievous sagacity for which they are remarkable. When their hands or fore feet are tied behind the back, they will walk and run in an erect position for a whole day, with the same ease and familiarity as though they were in their natural posture. When one of these animals is beat, he immediately runs and climbs a lemon or orange tree; and if he is pursued, will pick the lemons and oranges, and drop them on the head of the pursuer, and even endeavour to repel him by voiding his excrements upon him, at the same time making a variety of grimaces, and assuming a thousand ridiculous attitudes, which afford no small diversion to the spectators.

The Howling Baboons, as they are here called, seem to be the animals which are called by the natives of *Brasil* Guereba. They are of the size of a fox, covered with fine smooth hair, of a shining black, except on the legs, where it is of a brownish chesnut colour. The visage of this animal is erect, and pretty much resembles that of the Quato, but its ears are smaller, the eyes more prominent, and the chin is covered with a long streight black beard. They have a long tail, which is almost naked towards the end, the hair being probably worn off, by frequently clasping round the branches of trees, when they remove from one to another. They are the most numerous and vociferous of all the Monkey tribe, and frequently assemble by hundreds, both by night and day, and set up an incessant loud and disagreeable howling, which is heard at a great distance, and is not a little troublesome to the inhabitants. Sometimes the howling is kept up only by one for several minutes, until the rest join in the chorus; but these intermissions are not very frequent, as they seem to abhor taciturnity at these assemblies, and are unwilling to deny themselves the pleasure of contributing a share to this noisy entertainment. Besides these, there is another Monkey, somewhat larger than the howling Monkey, which is covered with long reddish hair, having large ears, a long red beard, and a long bushy tail.

tail. These animals, if possible, make a more hideous yell than the former; but happily their meetings are less frequent.

As the Orang-Outang is the largest, so the Saccawinkee is the smallest of the Ape tribe in *Guiana*. Its name is of *Indian* origin, though it has been adopted by the White Inhabitants. The body of a Saccawinkee, from the head to the root of the tail, is about six inches in length: the tail is about nine inches long, and covered with very long black hair: the head is small, as are the ears, which are almost round; the nose is slender and flat, and the eyes somewhat prominent, and of a shining black colour: the face is covered with a fine white downy hair, and the body is cloathed with long hair, of a shining black, except at the points, where it is white. These animals are frequently tamed, and their tricks and gestures are not a little diverting; but they can never be divested of a mischievous disposition, for which they are remarkable, and which seems constitutional.

Between the Quato and Saccawinkee there are numerous species of these animals, of intermediate sizes, of which it would be impossible to convey distinct ideas by verbal descriptions, were I able to give them; but notwithstanding I have resided in *Guiana* near three years, I can by no means pretend to have seen all the different species of these animals, almost every day presenting a different kind to my observation, either in possession of the *Indians*, or in the woods, where they are so numerous, that scores are often in view at once. Nor are these animals a little troublesome, as they frequently rob the plantations of fruit, maize, rice, &c. These expeditions they undertake with great sagacity, ever using the precaution to place a centinel on a commodious high tree, to announce the approach of an enemy; a duty to which, it is said, they submit alternately; and that when they are surprized through the negligence or inattention of their centinel, they punish him severely.

*) There is a sort of BABOON at the *Cape of Good Hope*, with a head resembling that of a Dog, with very ugly and frightful features. However the fore part of the body much resembles that of a man; but the teeth are large and sharp. The fore feet are very like hands; and those

*) R. Brookes's M. D. Natural History of Quadrupeds, with cuts. London 1763. 6 Vol. 8.

those behind resemble men's. Their whole body is covered with hair, except the thighs, which are quite bare, and full of scratches.

When they are in great distress, that is, when they are hunted by Dogs, or are beaten for any fault, they sigh, groan, and weep, like human creatures in a fright, or that are in great pain. They are very fond of grapes, apples, and all sorts of fruit in general that grow in the gardens. When they get into a vineyard where the grapes are ripe, they fill themselves so immoderately with them, that they may be easily taken. Their fingers are armed with nails and claws that render them formidable to Dogs, which for that reason cannot easily take them. When they perceive any passenger in the fields that is obliged to dine in the open air, he must be very attentive, otherwise they will certainly carry off some of his victuals. If they succeed they make so many grimaces, and put themselves into such ridiculous postures, that a man must be very melancholy indeed to forbear laughing at them.

These animals are under some sort of discipline, and go about what they undertake with such skill, cunning, and foresight, that are very wonderful. As for instance when they rob an orchard, a garden, or a vineyard. They go upon these expeditions in large companies, and part of them enter the inclosure while one is set to watch; and the rest stand without the fence, and form a sort of a line, which runs from the place they are pillaging to that of their rendezvous. Every thing being thus disposed, the Baboons within the orchard, throw the fruit to those that are without as fast as they gather it; or if the hedge or wall be high, to those that sit thereon, who deliver them to those without; and so on all along the line, which usually terminates in some mountain. They catch the fruit as readily as the most skilful player can a ball. While this is doing they keep a deep silence, and perform their work extremely quick. When the centinel perceives any one coming he sets up a great cry, and at this signal the whole company disappears in an instant. The *Dutch* at the *Cape* sometimes take the young ones of these Baboons, and feed them with Goat's or Sheep's milk. When they are tamed and grown up, they watch the house as carefully as the best Dog in *Europe*.

The

The *American* BEAVER, is now better known than the others, for of this we have a very exact description from the *Memoirs of the Royal Academy at Paris*. The hair which covers the whole body, except the tail, is not alike throughout; for there are two sorts mixed together, which differ not only in length, but in colour and thickness. Part of it is about an inch and a half long, and as thick as the hair of a man's head, very shining, and of a brown colour, inclining somewhat to a tawny. It is of a close substance, and so solid, that no cavity can be perceived with a microscope.

The shortest is about an inch long, and is in greater plenty than the European; it is likewise more small and soft, insomuch, that it feels almost like silk. This difference of the hair or fur, is to be met with in several animals; but more particularly in the Beaver, the Otter, and the Wild Boar; which perhaps may be the more necessary for these creatures, because they delight in muddy places, and the longest hair may serve to keep the mud from penetrating to the skin.

The head from the nose to the hind part, is five inches and a half long, and five inches broad from the prominence of the two cheek bones. The ears are like those of an Otter, being round, and very short: They are covered with hair on the outside, but are almost naked within.

It is commonly said that these animals delight in gnawing of trees, and in reality, the teeth seem to be very proper for that purpose, especially those before; but they are not sharp pointed to serve instead of a saw, as some have affirmed, or at least, they are not so in the *American* Beaver; but they are proper to cut with, like those of Squirrels, Porcupines, and Rats.

The structure of the feet is very extraordinary, and shew plainly, that nature designed these animals to live as well in the water as on the land. For though they have four feet like terrestrial animals; yet those behind are as fit for swimming as walking, and the five toes of which they consist, are joined together like those of a Goose; but in shape, they are like the hand of a man, only they are covered with hair on the outside, and the nails are long and sharp, ~~as may be seen in the figure.~~ Many authors have said, that the Beaver in most things resembles an Otter; but now it plainly appears they were mistaken. The *Academists of Paris* suppose, that this error may have arisen from their having seen the Beavers
of

of *Europe* only; because as they affirm, the *European* are webfooted before like Geese; whereas those of *America* are only so in their hind feet; and therefore, the account of *Gesner*, must have been taken partly from these last.

The length of the fore feet is six inches and a half from the elbow to the end of the longest finger, and three inches from the beginning of the hand to the same extremity. The hind feet are the longest, being six inches from the extremity of the heel to the end of the longest toe, which is the second. Besides the five fingers and toes which have nails at the end, are a little slanting in their shape, and hollow in the inside like quills, there is on the external part of each foot both before and behind, a little bone which makes a protuberance, and might be taken for a sixth finger if it had been separated from the foot; but as it is not, it seems to be designed to give more firmness and strength thereto.

The tail has somewhat that resembles a fish, and seems to have no manner of relation to the rest of the body, which is like that of a land animal. It is covered with a skin, furnished with scales that are joined together by a pellicle. These scales are of the thickness of parchment, above a line and a half in length, and generally of the figure of a hexagon, having six corners. Those under the tail differ but little from those above, except in having two or three little hairs on each. The colour is of a greyish brown, inclining a little to that of slate. When the skin of a Beaver is dressed, the scales fall off, but leave their print behind them. When the tail was dissected the flesh was pretty flat, and was not unlike that of large fish. It is about eleven inches in length, and at the root not above two broad; but it grows broader as it approaches the middle, where it is three inches, and then it grows less again to the end, where it terminates in an oval. It is about two inches thick near the root; but grows gradually thinner to the very end; insomuch, that it is no more than an inch thick in the middle, and not quite half one at the extremity.

Several writers have taken notice of the ingenuity of *American* Beavers in making their houses, of which I shall now give some account. The first thing they do when they are about to build, is to assemble in companies, sometimes of two or three hundred together; then they chuse a place where plenty of provisions are to be had, and where all necessaries are to be found proper for
their

their use. Their houses are always in the water, and when they can find neither lake nor pond, they endeavour to supply that defect by stopping the current of a brook or small river, by means of a dam. To this end they first cut down trees in the following manner: Three or four Beavers will go to work about a large tree, and by continually gnawing of it with their teeth, they at last throw it down, and so contrive matters that it always falls towards the water, that they may have the less way to carry it, when they have divided it into pieces. After they have done this, they take each piece by itself, and roll it towards the water, where they intend to place it.

These pieces are more or less thick and long, according to the nature and situation of the places where they are required. Sometimes they make use of the large trunks of trees, which they lay down flat; sometimes the dam only consists of branches as thick as one's thigh, which are supported by stakes interwoven with the branches of trees; and all the vacant places are filled up with a sort of clay, in such a manner, that no water can pass through them. They prepare the clay with their paws or hands, and their tails serve instead of a carriage, as well as a trowel to lay on their clay.

The foundations of the dams are generally ten or twelve feet thick, and they lessen gradually till they come to two or three. They always observe an exact proportion, insomuch, that the most curious architects are not capable of performing their work more regularly. That side towards the current of the water is always sloping, but the other is perpendicular.

The construction of the houses is, altogether as wonderful; for they are generally built upon piles in small lakes, which are formed by making of the dams. Sometimes they are on the bank of a river, or on the extremity of a point of land, which advances into the water. They are of a round or oval form, and the top of them is like a dome.

This description of one of their houses which was examined and measured, will perhaps give the reader more satisfaction than an account in general. This of which I am now speaking, was about three parts surrounded with water, and the other part was joined to the land. It was round, with an oval dome at the top, and the height above the surface of the water, was eight feet. It was about forty feet in diameter, and one hundred

dred and twenty in circumference, which perhaps may seem strange, because the proportion is geometrical; this however, is fact, for it was measured several times. The part that joined to the bank was not made out of it, but was of the same materials with the rest.

The bottom of the house was of earth, or soil, with pieces of wood laid in it, above three inches in circumference; then a parcel of poplar sticks laid with one end in the house, and another slanting a long way under water; then a layer of earth again, and then poplar sticks, which were repeated to the height of eighteen inches. From thence to the top of the house there was a mixture of earth, stones, and sticks, curiously put together; and the whole was covered with sods, that had long grass growing thereon. The largest pieces of wood made use of near the top, were about three inches in diameter, and all the rest was small stuff, not above two or three fingers thick.

The outermost part of this house did not stand farther out in the creek than the edge of the shore; but that which brought the water almost round the house were the trenches, which were made by taking out the earth; these were nine feet in the broadest part, and eighteen feet in length. The creek at the front of the house was six and thirty feet broad, and seemed to be pretty deep. The house was so contrived as to be very solid, for there was no breaking into it without an ax; and in the frosty season it was quite impenetrable. From this house there were several paths into the wood, through which they drew the sticks and trees, which they made use of for food or building.

The wall of the house was two feet thick, and it was covered with smooth clay on the inside in such a manner, that it would not admit the least breath of air. Two thirds of the structure was out of the water; and in the upper part, each Beaver had his particular place, whereon leaves were strewed to lie upon.

There never was any filth seen in any of these houses, which are made like an oven in the inside, with a passage for these animals to go and bathe in the water. One of these will generally lodge about eight or ten Beavers, though sometimes they have held thirty; but this is very uncommon.

The creatures are never surprized by the frost and snow; for they finish their work towards the end of *September*,
and

and then they lay in provisions for the winter. In the summer time they live upon fruits, and the barks and leaves of trees; and they likewise catch small fish, and particularly Crabs or Crawfish. However, their winter provision is the tender branches of trees, particularly poplar, of which they seem to be very fond. It is usually said, and upon pretty good authority, that these Beavers make the walls of their houses of a thickness in proportion to the severity of the succeeding winter, which if true, these animals must be furnished with uncommon foresight.

When there are great floods caused by the melting of the snow, which damage the houses of the Beavers, they then leave them, and shift for themselves as well as they can; however, the females return as soon as the are abated; but the males keep the field till *July*, when they assemble again to repair the damage that has been done by the flood, either to their houses or dams. Several authors have said, that the Beavers make several rooms in their houses; but this upon examination has been found to be false.

In hunting the Beavers, the savages sometimes shoot them, always getting on the contrary side of the wind; for they are very shy, quick in hearing, and of a very keen scent. This is generally done when the Beavers are at work, or on shore feeding on poplar bark. If they hear any noise when at work, they immediately jump into the water, and continue there some time; and when they rise, it is at a distance from the place where they went in.

They sometimes are taken with traps; these are nothing but poplar sticks laid in a path near the water; which when the Beaver begins to feed upon, they cause a large log of wood to fall upon their necks, which is put in motion by their moving of the sticks; and consequently requires an ingenious contrivance. The savages generally prefer this way of taking them, because it does not damage their skins.

In the winter time they break the ice in two places at a distance from the house, the one behind the other. Then they take away the broken ice with a kind of a racket, the better to see where to place their stakes. They fasten their nets to these, which have large meshes, and sometimes are eighteen or twenty yards in length. When these are fixed, they proceed to demolish the
house,

house, and turn a Dog therein, which terrifying the Beaver he immediately leaves it, and takes to the water, after which, he is soon entangled by the net.

Mr. *Lawson* who was general surveyor of *North Carolina*, affirms, that Beavers are very plenty in that country. He confirms what has been said about their ingenuity in building of their dams and houses, and observes, that their food is chiefly the barks of trees and shrubs; such as that of the *sassafras*, *ash*, *sweet gum*, and several others. He adds, that if they are taken young, they will become very tame; but then they will do a great deal of mischief in the orchards, by breaking the trees. They will likewise block up the doors of the houses in the night, with the sticks and wood which they bring thither. He farther informs us, that it is certain death for them to eat any thing that is salt. The flesh is looked upon as very delicate food; but the tail is the greatest dainty, and is in great request.

SOME CHAPTERS OUT OF THE HISTORY OF
TOM JONES A FOUNDLING. *)

Book IV. Chap. 4. 8 and 10.

This matter, then, which put an end to the debate mentioned in the last chapter, was no other than a quarrel between Master *Blifil* and *Tom Jones*, the consequence of which had been a bloody nose to the former; for though *Mr. Blifil*, notwithstanding he was the younger, was in size above the other's match, yet *Tom* was much his superior at the noble art of boxing.

Tom, however, cautiously avoided all engagements with that youth; for besides that *Tommy Jones* was an inoffensive lad amidst all his roguery, and really loved *Blifil*, *Mr. Thwakum* being always the second of the latter, would have been sufficient to deter him.

But well says a certain Author no man is wise at all hours; it is therefore no wonder that a boy is not so. A difference arising at play between the two lads, *Mr. Blifil* called *Tom* a beggarly bastard. Upon which the latter, who was somewhat passionate in his disposition, immediately caused that phenomenon in the face of the former, which we have above remembered.

Mr.

*) The Works of Henry Fielding Esq; Vol. 8. London 1762. 8.