

Natural History.

THE LEMUR VARI.

Lemur is the name applied to many animals of the order *Quadrumanæ*, or monkeys, of the families *Galeopithecidae* and *Lemuridae*.

The fingers are not all provided with flat nails, some of them terminate in claws. They stand with difficulty, and their gait is generally like that of a quadruped. They have no pouches; their nostrils terminate in folded elastic sides, which permits of opening and closing them at pleasure. The incisor teeth are separated by vacant spaces, and the molars provided with sharp conical points adapted to tearing. The lemurs live principally upon fruits and roots, and are fond of insects; if they eat flesh at all it is in very small quantities. If the physical conformation of the lemur is similar to that of the carnivorous animals, their habits place them among the monkeys, and like them they live habitually upon the trees in the midst of the foliage. There, concealed and suspended by their lower members, they watch for their prey. If an insect comes within reach it is the work of an instant to catch and devour it.

The lemurs comprise five principal genera, almost all natives of the island of Madagascar or the adjacent countries. The *indri*, one of the largest species, are tamed by the natives of Madagascar, and being very agile are trained like dogs for the chase. The *loris* have no tails, a characteristic which distinguishes the other species. There are also *galagos*, *tarsiers*, and *maki's*; these last are subdivided into many species: the *macco*, the *mongour*, and the *vari*. The animals represented in our engraving belong to the species *vari* of the genus *maki*. They are remarkable for their lank forms, their long bushy tails, the ruff around their faces, and their peculiar eyes, large and round, which give them the ghostly appearance to which they owe their name.

It is known that the Romans believed that lemurs were malevolent spirits who returned at night to the earth to torment the living and that they instituted special ceremonies with the design of removing them. "Lemurs, gods of the infernal regions, come out of this abode." But one has never been tempted to address this obijuration to the lemur vari, notwithstanding his name and astonishing appearance, because he is gentle, sociable, fawning, and attaches himself quickly to persons who care for him and treat him well.—*L'Illustration*.

A WATER CARRYING TORTOISE.

At a meeting of the Academy of Sciences the other evening, a very fine specimen of the desert land tortoise, from Cajon Pass, San Bernardino county, in this State, was received. The specimen had been carefully prepared, and was as large as an ordinary bucket. The tortoise is a native of the arid regions of California and Arizona, and Prof. E. T. Cox, who was present, related a curious circumstance connected with it.

He found on dissecting one of them that it carried on each side a membrane, attached to the inner portion of the shell, in which was about a pint of clear water, the whole amount being about a quart. He was of opinion that this water was derived from the secretions of the giant barrel cactus, on which the tortoise feeds. The cactus contains a great deal of water.

The tortoise is found in sections of country where there is no water, and where there is no vegetation but the cactus. A traveler suffering from thirst could, in an emergency, supply himself with water by killing a tortoise. They are highly prized by Mexicans, who make from them a delicious soup. The foxes of the desert attack the tortoise and finally overcome it by dragging them at times for miles.

B. B. Redding said he would try to obtain a live one for the Academy, in order that its habits and peculiarities may be carefully observed and noted. He instanced being on the Gallapagos islands in 1849, and assisting in the capture of 92 land tortoises, varying from 450 to 600 lbs. in weight, which the vessel brought to San Francisco and sold for more money than the whole cargo of lumber netted at that time. They were two months on board the vessel, yet ate nothing and those killed had in them considerable quantities of pure water. They live on the high lava rocks, which rise as mountains on the island, where there are no springs or streams, and the only dependence of animal life for water is necessarily upon the irregular and uncertain rain showers.

It may be mentioned that the tortoises are of different species, though they may have the same habit in respect of carrying water. The famous edible species of the coasts of the Pacific and Indies, of which the headquarters is at Gallapagos islands, is the *Testudo Indica*. They grow to five, six, and even seven hundred pounds or more. Those found in this State are smaller and are the *Agassii* species, first described some years ago by Dr. J. G. Cooper, if we recollect aright. Those Mr. Redding describes from the Gallapagos were offered water while on the ship but refused it. Yet when killed they all contained water. The place they inhabit is a dry one, lacking water. It may be that they go to the high places and obtain it from the vegetation, the same as our species does.

Health and Home.

A WHOLESOME HOUSE.

A "F.R.C.S.," on this subject, in a late issue of the leading journal, gives the following narrative of his own efforts to convert an old London house into a perfect wholesome and comfortable habitation:

I may premise that I am a consulting surgeon, that my house is on the Portland Estate, in one of the streets frequented by the members of my calling, and that it is well filled by children and servants. We are not crowded, but we have not the luxury of a spare bedroom. I entered into possession some ten or twelve years ago as a sub-lessee, paying the full value in the way of rent; and it chanced at the time to be so important to me to secure the house that I was not very scrupulous in my investigation of its condition. It was then in the hands of the Portland lessee, my immediate landlord; it had by him been swept and garnished, painted and papered, and presented a fair outside appearance. The tenant who preceded me, and who although his name was certainly not Hogsflesh, I may disguise like the hero of the well-known comedy, under the simple appellation of Mr. H., was himself before the public a conspicuous sanitary reformer; but even this fact did not produce in my mind the distrust which I now know it was calculated to inspire. The house had been for several months empty and I discovered nothing offensive on visiting it before I concluded my bargain.

My first awakening to a knowledge of the actual state of things was brought about a week or ten days after the commencement of my occupancy by a squeal from the basement, this squeal being the remonstrance of one of my servants against the sudden appearance of a rat. My first thought was that the intruder had opened up a connection between my kitchen and the Barking outfall; but on investigation I discovered that the house was not even connected with the street sewer, and that we were living over a honeycomb of cesspools. I sent off the family next day to Brighton, had the cesspools emptied and filled up, laid down a pipe drain to the sewer, and was for a while content. My immediate landlord very liberally and kindly allowed me to deduct from my rent one-half of the cost of the actual work; but he did not share the expense of sending my family away or the loss incidental to the temporary unfitness of the house to be used as a place for the reception of patients.

In due time we were all re-established in our dwelling, and soon afterwards a medical neighbor called upon me. My visitor did not know what we had gone through, but he had been accustomed to visit my predecessor in the tenancy, and was well acquainted with the house. After talking for a time, he began sniffing about, and at last exclaimed "Dear me, you have got rid of the smell of H!" He had actually attributed the faint odor which had formerly clung about the room in which we were to the personal presence of the distinguished sanitarian to whom he referred.

I had furnished the house in the way common to habitations of its class. There were window curtains in the dining-room, window curtains in the consulting-room, window curtains in the drawing-room, window curtains in the bedrooms. There were carpets on all the floors; there were unprotected papers on the walls; there were wardrobes and other pieces of furniture, which had their apparent height increased by cornices, within which were hollow spaces, seemingly made on purpose to form harbours for dirt. In dry weather the dust found its way through every chink; in wet weather the feet of visitors brought in mud, which dried into dust speedily. If the children romped for ten minutes in a carpeted room, the dust would lie in a thick layer upon the tables and chairs when they had finished. Dirt seemed to be omnipresent and all-pervading. It was plentiful in the air we breathed, it mingled with the food we ate, and with the