

THE WILD MAN OF THE WOODS.

(From the Scientific American.)

The continent of Africa where the equator crosses it is about 2,200 miles in breadth, a vast unknown tropical region, which has been explored for only a few hundred miles in its eastern and western portions. So far as examined it is a mass of hills and mountains, covered with the dense forests of the tropics, inhabited by strange tribes of cannibal negroes and still stranger tribes of gigantic monkeys which are almost human in their aspect and organization. The country is traversed by rivers, and embraces great sea-like lakes, in which hippopotami wallow and fight, and alligators in countless numbers bask in the vertical rays of the sun.

The western portion of this region to a distance of 330 miles from the coast has been explored by Paul B. Du Chaillu, an American of French parentage. He was associated with his father in trade on the African coast for four years, and being a student of natural history was desirous of procuring specimens of the peculiar animals of Central Africa, which were unknown to the world of science. He was particularly anxious to obtain specimens of the gorilla, the great tailless ape, which approaches nearer to man, in its structure, than any other of the lower animals. This anxiety was not a little lightened by the stories which the natives told of the gigantic strength and ferocity of the gorilla, and of its half human affections, manners and customs. Mr. Du Chaillu started on his exploration in 1856 and spent four years in the forests unaccompanied by any white person, traveling on foot more than 8,000 miles. During this time he killed and stuffed more than 2,000 birds and 1,000 quadrupeds, 60 being new species. He brought his collection to this country, where it was exhibited for a while to the public. The exhibition was noticed at the time in the *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN*. He afterwards took it to England, where it has excited the greatest interest among naturalists, reviving the discussion of the development theory of creation, which embraces the question of the human race being descended from monkeys.

Mr. Du Chaillu has published an account of his explorations, from which we take the following extracts:—

KILLING HIS FIRST GORILLA.

We started early, and pushed for the most dense and impenetrable part of the forest, in hopes to find the very home of the beast I so much wished to shoot. Hour after hour we traveled, and yet no signs of gorilla. Only the everlasting little chattering monkeys—and not many of these—and occasionally birds. In fact, the forests of this part of Africa—as the reader has seen by this time—are not so full of life as in some other parts to the south.

Suddenly M'engai uttered a little cluck with his tongue, which is the native's way of showing that something is stirring, and that a sharp look-out is necessary. And presently I noticed, ahead of us seemingly, a noise as of some one breaking down branches or twigs of trees.

This was the gorilla, I knew at once, by the eager and satisfied looks of the men. They looked once more carefully at their guns, to see if by any chance the powder had fallen out of the pans; I also examined mine, to make sure that all was right; and then we marched on cautiously.

The singular noise of the breaking of tree branches continued. We walked with the greatest care, making no noise at all. The countenances of the men showed that they thought themselves engaged in a very serious undertaking; but we pushed on, until finally we thought we saw through the thick woods the moving of the branches and small trees which the great beast was tearing down, probably to get from them the berries and fruits he lives on.

Suddenly, as we were yet creeping along, in a silence which made a heavy breath seem loud and distinct, the woods were at once filled with the tremendous barking roar of the gorilla.

Then the underbrush swayed rapidly just ahead, and presently before us stood an immense male gorilla. He had gone through the jungle on all fours; but when he saw our party he erected himself and looked us boldly in the face. He stood about a dozen yards from us, and was a sight I think I never shall forget. Nearly six feet high (he proved four inches shorter,) with immense body, huge chest, and great muscular arms, with fiercely-glaring large deep gray eyes, and a hellish expression of face, which seemed to me like some nightmare vision; thus stood before us this king of the African forest.

He was not afraid of us. He stood there, and beat his breast with his huge fists till it resounded like an immense bass drum, which is their mode of offering defiance; meantime giving vent to roar after roar.

The roar of the gorilla is the most singular and awful noise heard in these African woods. It begins with a sharp bark, like an angry dog, then glides into a deep bass roll, which literally and closely resembles the roll of distant thunder along the sky, for which I have sometimes been tempted to take it where I did not see the animal. So deep is it that it seems to proceed less from the mouth and throat than from the deep chest and vast paunch.

His eyes began to flash fiercer fire as we stood motionless on the defensive, and the crest of short hair which stands on his forehead began to twitch rapidly up and down, while his powerful fangs were shown as he again sent forth a thunderous roar. And now truly he reminded me of nothing but some hellish drac creature—a being of that hideous order, half man, half beast, which we find pictured by old artists in some representations of the infernal regions. He advanced a few steps—then stopped to utter that hideous roar again—advanced again, and finally stopped when at a distance of about six yards from us. And here, just as he began another of his roars, beating his breast in rage, we fired, and killed him.

With a groan which had something terribly human in it, and yet was full of brute-like, he fell forward on his face. The body shook convulsively for a few minutes, the limbs moved about in a straggling way, then all was quiet—death had done its work, and I had leisure to examine the huge body. It proved to be five feet eight inches high, and the muscular development of the arms and breast showed what immense strength it had possessed.

My men, though rejoicing at our luck, immediately began to quarrel about the apportionment of the meat—for they really eat this creature. I saw that they would come to blows presently if I did not interfere, and therefore said I would myself give each man his share, which satisfied all. As we were too tired to return to our camp of last night, we determined to camp here on the spot, and accordingly soon had some shelters erected and dinner going on. Luckily, one of the fellows shot a deer just as we began to camp, and on its meat I feasted, while my men ate gorilla.

A YOUNG GORILLA.

This time I was accessory to its capture. We were walking along in silence, when I heard a cry, and presently saw before me a female gorilla, with a tiny baby-gorilla hanging to her breast and sucking. The mother was stroking the little one, and looking fondly down at it; and the scene was so pretty and touching that I held my fire, and considered—like a soft-hearted fellow—whether I had not better leave them in peace. Before I could make up my mind, however, my hunter fired and killed the mother, who fell without a struggle.

The mother fell, but the baby clung to her, and, with pitiful cries, endeavored to attract her attention. I came up, and when it saw me it hid its poor little head in its mother's breast. It could neither walk nor bite, so I could easily manage it; and I carried it, while the men bore the mother on a pole. When we got to the village another scene ensued. The men put the body down, and I set the little fellow near. As soon as he saw his mother, he crawled to her and threw himself on her breast. He did not find his accustomed nourishment, and I saw that he perceived something was the matter with the old one. He crawled over her body, snelt at it, and gave utterance from time to time to a plaintive cry, "Hoo, hoo, hoo," which touched my heart.

I could get no milk for this poor little fellow, who could not eat, and consequently died on the third day after he was caught. He seemed more docile than the other I had, for he already recognized my voice, and would try to hurry toward me when he saw me. I put the little body in alcohol, and sent it to Dr. Wyman, of Boston, for dissection.

The mother was skinned; and when I came to examine, I found her a very singular specimen. Her head was smaller than that of any other gorilla I ever saw, and the rump was of a reddish-brown color.—These are peculiarities which made this