

In this passage no mention is made of the pouch under the belly, which is the most distinguishing character of the opossums. But I still maintain, that, if the cūios of the East Indies has this character, it is certainly a species which approaches very near to the American opossums; and I shall be inclined to think that it differs from the opossum nearly in the same manner as the jaguar differs from the leopard. Of all the animals belonging to the southern climates of both Continents, the two last, without being of the same species, make the nearest approach to each other.

## THE MURINE OPOSSUM\*.

THIS species seems to make a very near approach to the former. They both belong to the same climate, and to the same Continent.

\* This opossum has long broad ears, rounded at the end, and thin and naked. The eyes are encompassed with black. The face, head, and upper part of the body, are of a tawny colour, and the belly of a yellowish white. The feet are covered with short whitish hair. The toes are formed like those of the preceding species. The tail is slender, and covered with minute scales to the very rump. The length, from nose to tail, is about six inches and a half, and that of the tail the same. The female wants the pouch or false belly; but, on the lower part, the skin forms on each side a fold, between which the teats are lodged. This species varies in colour. I have seen one from Guiana, which was brown above, and whitish beneath; Pennant's *Synops.* of *Quadr.* p. 207.

The *marmosé*, *marmosa*, is the Brazilian name of this animal. The negroes call the Virginian opossum *municos*, and the marmosé, which is smaller, the *rat manico*.

*Mus sylvestris Americanus scalopes* dictus; *Seba*, *tem. i. p. 46. tab. 31. fig. 1 & 2.* *Note.* The name *scalopes*, given by Seba to this animal, and which Klein and Brisson have adopted, is very ill applied. The scalopes of the Greeks is certainly not the marmosé of Brazil. Besides, it is impossible to determine, from the writings of the ancients, what animal they meant by the name *scalopes*: Ad finem, quidam mures sunt quos *scalopes* vocant, ut Schollinus Aristophanis in *Acharnensibus* animadvertit; *Aldrov. de Quadr. Digit. Prosp.* p. 416. This, I believe, is the only notice we have concerning the scalopes, and it is not sufficient to point out a particular species, and far less can it justify the application of the name to an animal of the New World.

Philander futurarum spadicus in dorso, in ventre dilate flavus, pedibus albicantibus; *Brisson. Quadr.* p. 211.

Dilephus

inent. They likewise resemble each other in the form of the body, in the structure of the feet, in the *prebenfite* tail, which is covered with scales through its whole extent, except at the origin, where it is covered with hair, and in the arrangement of the teeth, which are more numerous than in other quadrupeds\*. But the murine opossum is much smaller, and its muzzle is sharper: The female has no pouch under the belly; there are only two longitudinal folds near the thighs, between which the young attach themselves to the teats. The parts of generation both of the male and female resemble, in their form and position, those of the Virginian opossum. The glans of the male is also forked and placed in the anus; and this last aperture seems likewise, in the female, to be the orifice of the vagina. The birth of the young, in this species, seems to be still more premature. When they are brought forth, and attach themselves to the teats, they are hardly so large as small beans. The litter is also more numerous:

*Didelphis murina*, cauda semipilosa, mammae fenis; *Linna. Syst. Nat. p. 72. Note 1.* That *Linnaeus*, who places the murina immediately after the opossum, asks the question, *An possit procreare?* This cannot be the case; for *Linnaeus* acknowledges that his opossum had a pouch under the belly; and yet, from *Seba's* description, it is obvious that the female murina has no such pouch: 2. That the character of six teats, which he ascribes to the marmose, is by no means constant; for I have seen one that had fourteen teats.

\* Both the Virginian opossum and the marmose have fifty teeth.

I have

Plate CLXIII.



MURINE OPOSSUM.



FEMALE MURINE OPOSSUM.

I have seen ten young, each of them fixed to a separate teat, and yet the mother had four teats unoccupied; so that, in all, she had no less than fourteen teats. It is upon females of this species that the observations recommended in the preceding article ought chiefly to be made; for I am persuaded, that they bring forth a few days after conception, and that the young, at the time of exclusion, are only fetuses, as they exceed not one fourth part of the growth which fetuses generally acquire at that period. The delivery of the mother is always a very early abortion, and the fetuses preserve their lives solely by fixing to the teats, and never quitting their hold, till they attain that degree of strength and growth which they would have naturally acquired in the uterus, if they had not been thus prematurely excluded.

The murine opossum has the same dispositions and manners as the Virginian species. They both dig holes, burrow in the ground, fix themselves to the branches of trees by the extremities of the tail, and dart upon birds and small animals. They likewise eat fruits, grain, and roots. But they prefer fish and crabs, which, it is said, they catch with their tails. This fact is extremely doubtful, and accords not with the natural stupidity ascribed to these animals, which, according to the testimony of most travellers, can neither move, nor fly, nor defend themselves with any measure of dexterity.