

## THE MEXICAN OPOSSUM\*.

THIS animal was first taken notice of by Fernandes †. The cayopollin, says he, is a small animal, about the size of a rat. It resembles the opossum in the muzzle, the ears, and the tail, which last it uses as a hand. The ears are thin and transparent. The legs and feet are white. The young, when frightened, lay fast hold of the mother, who carries them up to the nearest tree. This species is found in the mountains of New Spain. Nieremberg ‡ has copied

\* This animal has large, angular, transparent ears. Its nose is thicker than that of the former kind. There is a slight border of black round the eyes. The hairs on the head and upper part of the body are ash-coloured at the roots, and tawny at the tips. The belly and legs are whitish. The tail is long, pretty thick, varied with brown and yellow, hairy near an inch from its origin, and the rest is naked. The length, from nose to tail, is about seven inches and a half, and that of the tail more than eleven; *Pennant's Synops. of Quad.* p. 108.

Cayopollin, or kayopollin; *Fernandes, Hist. Nov. Hisp.* p. 10. Animal caudinum seu cayopollin; *Nieremberg, Hist. Nat. Peruv.* p. 158.

*Mus Indicus dictus cayopollin*; *Charloteau, Exercit.* p. 25.

*Mus Africanus kayopollin dictus*; *Seba, tom. i. p. 39. tab. 31. fig. 3.* Note, This is an American, not an African animal.

*Phylander saturate spadiceus in dorso, in ventre ex albo flavicans, cauda ex saturate spadiceo maculata*; *Brisson, Quad.* p. 212.

† Franc. Fernandes, *Hist. Quad. Nov. Hisp.* p. 10.

‡ Euseb. Nieremberg, *Hist. Nat. Peruv.* p. 158.

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these remarks verbatim, without adding any of his own. Seba\*, who first gave a figure of this animal, has not described it. He only says, that its head is somewhat thicker, and its tail larger than those of the marmose or murine opossum, and that, though it be of the same genus, it belongs to a different climate, and even to a different continent. He then refers to Nieremberg and Johnston for farther information concerning this animal. But it is evident, that neither Nieremberg nor Johnston had ever seen it; for they only follow Fernandes. None of these three authors say that it is a native of Africa. They mention it, on the contrary, as peculiar to the mountains of the warm regions of America; and yet Seba, without the smallest authority, pretends that it is an African animal. That which we saw unquestionably came from America. It was larger, the muzzle was not so sharp, and the tail was longer than those of the murine opossum, and in every particular it approached nearer than the latter to the Virginian opossum. These three animals have a great resemblance in their external and internal structure, in the supernumerary bones of the pelvis, in the form of the feet, in the premature birth, in their long and constant adherence to the teats, and in their manners and dispositions. They all belong to the same climate of the New World. They are never found

\* Seba, tom. i. p. 49. tab. 31. fig. 3.

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440 THE MEXICAN OPOSSUM.

in the cold regions of America, and cannot live even in temperate climates. Besides, they have all an ugly aspect. Their mouth, which is split like that of a pike, their ears, which resemble those of a bat, their serpent-like tail, and their feet, shaped like those of a monkey, exhibit a strange picture, which is rendered still more disagreeable by their offensive smell, and by the slowness and stupidity that accompany all their actions and movements.

END OF THE FIFTH VOLUME.

Plate CLXV.



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