

THE FOSSANE*.

BY some travellers the fossane is called the Genet of Madagascar, because it resembles the genet in colour, and some other articles. But it is constantly smaller, and has not the odoriferous pouch, which is an essential character of the genet. As we were uncertain as to this fact, we wrote to M. Poivre, who had sent us a stuffed skin, and who obliged us with the following answers: 'Lyon, July 19, 1761.
'The fossane which I brought from Madagascar had the manners of our martin. The inhabitants of the island assured me, that the genitals of the male, when in season, had a strong odour of musk. When the skin was stuffed at the royal garden, I examined it attentively, and could perceive no pouch or smell of musk. I reared a simular animal in Cochinchina, and another in the Phillipine islands. Both of them were males, and they became a little familiar. They were very young, and I kept

* Fossane weasel, with a slender body, rounded ears, and black eyes. The body and legs are covered with cinerous hair, mixed with tawny. The sides of the face are black. From the hind part of the head, towards the back and shoulders, four black lines extend. The shoulders, sides, and thighs, are black, and the tail is insolated with black; Pennant's Synops. of Quad. p. 237.

Fossane, or *Fossane*, the name of this animal at Madagascar, which we have adopted.

'them

‘ them only two or three months. I found no
 ‘ pouch in the part you mentioned; and I only
 ‘ perceived that their excrements had an odour
 ‘ similar to those of our martin. They eat flesh
 ‘ and fruits; but they preferred the latter, and
 ‘ showed a decided taste for bananas, upon which
 ‘ they sprung with avidity. This animal is very
 ‘ wild, and difficult to tame. Though taken
 ‘ when young, his air and character were always
 ‘ ferocious, which seemed to be uncommon in
 ‘ an animal that feeds spontaneously on fruits.
 ‘ The eye of the fossane is a large black globe,
 ‘ which gives it a mischievous aspect.’

We rejoice in this opportunity of expressing our gratitude to M. Poivre, who, from his attachment to natural history, and his friendship to those who cultivate that science, has adorned the royal cabinet with a great number of rare and valuable articles.

It appears to us, that the animal called *Berké* in Guiney, is the same with the fossane, and, consequently, that this species exists in Africa as well as in Asia. ‘ The *Berké* has a sharper muzzle and a smaller body than the cat; and ‘ is spotted like the civet *.’ We have no animal to which these characters apply so well as to the fossane.

* Voyage en Guinée, par Boffman, p. 256.

THE VANSIRE*.

THOSE who mention this animal have taken it for a ferret, to which it has a great resemblance. But it differs from the ferret by such characters as justify us in considering it as a distinct species. The vansire has twelve grinding teeth in the upper jaw, and the ferret only eight; and, though each of these animals has ten grinders in the under jaw, they neither resemble one another in figure nor situation. Besides, the colour of the vansire differs from that of all other ferrets; though these last, like all domestic animals, vary so much from each other in colour, that even the male differs from the female.

To us it appears, that the animal mentioned by Seba †, under the denomination of the *Java*

* The Madagascar weasel with short ears. The hair on the whole body and tail is brown at the roots, and barred above with black and ferruginous. The length, from nose to tail, is about fourteen inches; and that of the tail, to the tip of the hairs at the end, near ten; Pennant's *Synops. of Quad.* p. 224.

Vansire, derived from *vahang-hira*, the name of this animal in Madagascar. The province of Balta, in the kingdom of Congo, furnishes an infinity of fine fables, called three *insire*; *Hist. Geog. des Voyages*, tom. v. p. 87. *Nova*. There are no fables in Congo; and the similarity of the name leads us to think that the *insire* of Congo may be the *vansire* of Madagascar.

† *Muscula Javanica*: *Ab incolis Javae Keger-argus vocatur*; *Sida*, vol. i. p. 77. tab. 48. fig. 4.