

*Extracts from a Letter to THOMAS BELL, Esq., F.R.S., from
GEORGE CLARK, Esq., of Mauritius.*

Port Louis, May 1st, 1848.

* * * “ You have doubtless seen specimens of the musk-shrew, which is so common in most hot countries, and are acquainted with its general habits. You have most likely heard of the singular fact that instinct in them seems totally at fault, by leading them to cry out as soon as discovered, and thus frequently to bring destruction on themselves. Are you aware that the mammæ, instead of being distributed along the abdomen and thorax, as in most other quadrupeds of that sort, (indeed all, as far as I have learnt,) are placed like those of a cow, in the groins, three on each side? If this fact is new to you, I will send you a specimen in spirit. If the same peculiarity is observable in our English shrew, of which I think the muzzle is equally elongated and tapering, I should think that the dugs are so placed to render suction more easy, from the action of the several nurslings being so concentrated, and thereby causing a greater flow of milk to that spot. From the attenuated muzzle of this creature, the power of suction must be but small, and the same circumstance would enable the whole brood to suck in such a position as to radiate from a centre. I should be greatly obliged by your opinion on this point. There is another highly interesting fact connected with this little animal, which is strangely at variance with, and may in some degree compensate for, the anomaly of *erring instinct* just mentioned. If their nest is discovered while the young are in an unfledged state, and before their tiny eyes are open, the mother walks away, and one little one takes hold of her tail, another holding his, and so on, and the whole brood following thus in a line are conveyed to a place of safety. I may conclude by stating that I have never seen more than six of these in one litter, and that all the females I have examined have only six mammæ.

“ I have never seen in any other place so great a variety of goats as this place possesses, and the characteristics are so various that I think they may interest you. Among these the largest is generally called here the “up-country goat;” they are of Indian origin, and have enormously long legs with lank and lean bodies and coarse bones. The head is shorter than in the ordinary European goats, and considerably deeper, with a very convex forehead—in many, the profile forms the segment of a circle. The males of this breed have very spreading horns, of considerable length, and spiral in their growth, and they are decidedly less salacious and vigorous than the smaller breeds. The horns of the female are very different, being nearly upright, and rarely exceeding 6 or 7 inches in length. Both have a kind of dewlap under the throat, which extends lower in the males than in the females. A very singular feature in them is the ears, which are sometimes very long; I have seen one female in which they are 19 inches long and $4\frac{3}{4}$ broad in the widest part. When not long, it is very common to see them crumpled up like a piece of burnt leather, and this peculiarity may be often met with where the parents on both sides had long ears;

it is also often observable that two kids produced at the same birth exhibit this remarkable difference. These goats are less prolific than the smaller breeds, seldom producing more than two at a birth, and going longer between their bearing than the others. There is as remarkable a difference in their udders as in their ears. Some have immense teats, and yield a great quantity of milk, while others are very deficient. This breed is, I am told, highly esteemed in India, and they fetch a higher price at Calcutta than any others; but they are here remarkably obnoxious to pulmonary disorders, and I have seen so many instances of this, that I am never disposed to purchase them. They are generally covered with a rather coarse hair, of moderate length, but very long in the thighs and breech. Black is the prevailing colour, and it is very common to see the ears covered with small white specks. The neck of this breed is usually carried at a greater angle with the body than in the other kinds: in some specimens this gives them an appearance approaching that of the lama. I have seen males of this kind 3 feet high at the shoulder, and females as much as 2 ft. 9 in. Many goats are brought hither from Muscat. They are a very pretty breed, of moderate size, with long hair hanging down from each side nearly to the knees. They have very pretty little heads, and the horns are very fine, and form a pretty curve backwards, spreading so little that they sometimes require to be cut to prevent them from hurting the cheeks, when they have grown so long as to turn forward, which occurs at 5 or 6 years of age. These are generally excellent milkers, but are very obnoxious to pulmonary disorders, connected with which is a very singular fact, which I can vouch for from at least a dozen cases that have occurred in my own flock. Goats in general, but this breed most especially, are subject to be infested with a louse of a dark red colour, having six legs. If these insects are very numerous, it is an infallible sign that the lungs are diseased; and they increase with the progress of the disorder, till at last they are in such numbers, that in the hollow of the flanks and behind the shoulders you cannot put a pin's head between them. They may be destroyed with tobacco or mercury; but in a few days the beast will be as much infested with them as before, and cannot be kept free. No matter how healthy the creature may appear; if there are many of these lice on it, you may be perfectly sure that the lungs are not sound. Another variety much like this in form, but of rather smaller size and with remarkably close hair, is brought from the upper part of the Persian Gulf. They are the prettiest goats I know, having remarkably small heads with full eyes, and horns like the last-mentioned in point of fineness, but much less curved. They are a very healthy breed, and much disposed to carry flesh. The teats of this race are, as far as I have seen, invariably pointed at the end and very full at the top, and their udders are particularly thin and soft. I have never seen a male of this breed, but there is a very singular feature in the males of the last-mentioned kind: the testicles are so separated in the scrotum as to have much the appearance of teats, and I once saw a person at a sale give a high price for one, under the idea that it was a female, with a fine show of milk. This peculiarity is more or less observable

in all the males of this sort I have seen. Another well-defined variety of goat, of very valuable qualities, comes from the eastern shore of the Persian Gulf. They are of good size with a remarkably stately carriage, and their horns are mostly lyre-shaped, like some breeds of antelopes. Their hair is of moderate length, generally fine and wavy, and long on the posterior portion of the spine, as well as on the fore and hind legs, a little above the hocks and knees. Their udders are of the shape last-mentioned, and they are excellent milkers. I have seen some give as much as three quarts of milk in a day. They are mostly black with fawn-coloured legs, and almost invariably have fawn-coloured marks down the sides of the face. We have a large and small breed from Bengal, with very short legs, both excellent milkers, prolific and hardy. The large breed is almost invariably coal-black, and when in good condition would furnish about 80 lbs. of meat. They frequently produce four at a birth and sometimes five, and it is not rare to see their teats touching the ground. The smaller breed is of the same form, but very diminutive, and of all colours; they average from 15 to 18 inches in height and about $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet in length, and are as prolific as the last-mentioned, and wonderfully precocious. I have *seen* a female of this breed conceive at *ten weeks old*, and bring forth a healthy kid, which she reared well. It is very common for them to take the male at three months, but they rarely conceive before the age of four months, and the males are not capable of engendering at less than six months old. As a matter of course, the race deteriorates very much where such premature production is allowed; and I have seen a flock dwindle down from a good size to little bigger than rabbits, from a continuation of this bad practice. A very fine breed of goats is brought from Patna and Benares, and among these many are pied in a very uncommon way. They are spotted with brown and fallow, black and gray, and black and white, but the most remarkable appearance consists in the shape of the spots, which are often all circular. These have a something of that convexity of forehead noticed in the first breed I mentioned, but the dewlap is almost entirely wanting. Their horns are generally short, and sometimes bend forward, and at others curl back just encircling the ears, and these are invariably lopped. The last variety I shall mention is from the island of Socotra, and destitute of horns. They are long and low, and generally have very large teats: I have seen some considerably thicker than an ordinary man's wrist. They are very good milkers, and disposed to fatten easily. I fear I have tired you with details which are perhaps stale to you, or if not, possessing little interest.

“With respect to the marks on the spine and shoulders, and occasionally the legs of ponies, I see that they occur much in the same degree as in England; but they are decidedly most prevalent in those of a dun and mouse colour, both which hues are common among the Javanese and Burmese ponies. I have had additional opportunity of verifying the fact that geldings stand their work as well as entire horses here, both by my own experience, and the testimony of persons of much judgement and observation. Mules are used here almost exclusively for plantation work, and we have

them of various breeds. The finest cargo I ever saw came from Boston, U.S. They were almost all from high-bred mares, and many of them showed as much blood as thorough-bred horses, and they were as active as deer. I do not remember whether I mentioned them to you in my last; but, if I did not, I shall be very happy to give you a description of the various breeds of mules and asses employed in this colony. About three years ago the murrain cut off about nine-tenths of our horned cattle. In the herds attacked, not above one per cent. escaped, and they were generally old ones. A few months since it broke out again, and has cut off several fine herds without leaving a single head. It is said, I believe with truth, that it arose from the removal of a dung-heap in which some had been buried three years ago. It is stated that pigs are subject to it, but that it is much less fatal among them than with oxen, but I am not at all satisfied of the identity of the disease. It is also asserted that goats, sheep and deer are liable to its attacks, but having examined several goats said to have died of it when it was so prevalent here, I found no case in which the murrain was the cause of death, there being other evident causes.

"I do not know if you are aware that ipecacuanha, of which we have a wild variety very plentiful here, is a deadly and speedy poison to ruminating animals. It often happens that foreign cows, goats and sheep perish from eating it, but the natives very rarely touch it. A few leaves of it are sufficient to kill a goat in four or five hours." ***

A Comparison between Sterna Cantiaea, Gm., of Europe, and Sterna aculeiflora, nobis, hitherto considered identical with S. Cantiaea, and a description of a new species of Wren. By Dr. CABOT.

The following measurements from adult, full-plumaged specimens were given :

American.	Millimetres.	European.
Bill along ridge	49	57
" " gape	64	75
From the nostril to the point of the bill	36	41
Length of nostril.....	6	9
Length of lower mandible along the centre (measuring to the feathers)	41	47
Length of do. do. along the side, do. do.	51	62
Width of bill at commencement of feathers	8	7½
Depth of do. do. do.	11¼	12½
Length of wing from flexure	290	317
Length of tail to tips of lateral feathers	136	149
Length of tarsus	25	28
Middle toe without the claw	18	21
Middle claw	7½	9
Inner toe with claw	17	20
Outer do. do.	21	26
Thumb.....	6½	8½

Besides these differences in the measurement of parts not subject to change from improper stuffing, &c., we find that the colouring differs in some very important particulars. In the American bird the yellow is strictly confined to the tip of the bill, and the line of union of the yellow and black is perpendicular and unbroken, whereas in