

Letter from C. Waterton, Esq., mentioning a young gorilla.

WALTON HALL, Feb. 4, 1856.

“DEAR SIR,—As your favour of the 28th did not seem to require an immediate answer I put it aside for a while, having a multiplicity of business then on hand, and being obliged to be from home for a couple of days.

“I beg to enclose you the letter to which you allude.

“Pray do not suppose that for one single moment I should be illiberal enough to undervalue a ‘closet naturalist.’ ‘Non cuivis homini contingit adire corinthum.’ It does not fall to every one’s lot to range through the forests of Guiana, still, a gentleman given to natural history may do wonders for it in his own apartments on his native soil; and had Audubon, Swainson, Jameson, &c., not attacked me in all the pride of pompous self-conceit, I should have been the last man in the world to expose their gross ignorance.

“You ask me ‘If we are to have another volume of essays?’ I beg to answer, no. Last year, Mrs Loudon (to whom I made a present of the essays) wrote to me, and asked for a few papers to be inserted in a forthcoming edition. I answered, that as I had had some strange and awful adventures since the ‘Autobiography’ made its appearance, I would tack them on to it. But from that time to this, I have never had a line, either from Mrs Loudon or from her publishers. But some months ago, having made a present of a superb case of preserved specimens in natural history to the Jesuits’ College in Lancashire, I gave directions to my stationer at Wakefield to procure me from London the fourth or last edition of the essays; and I made references to it accordingly. But, lo and behold, when I had opened this supposed fourth edition, I saw printed on the title page ‘a new edition.’ Better had they printed a fifth edition. This threw all my references wrong. Should you be passing by Messrs Longman, perhaps you will have the goodness to ask when this ‘new edition’ was printed.

"I am sorry you did not show me your drawing of the chimpanzee before it was engraved. The artist has not done justice to it. He has made the ears far too large.[7] The little brown chimpanzee has very small ears; fully as small in proportion as those of a genuine negro. I am half inclined to give to the world a little treatise on the monkey tribe. I am prepared to show that Linnæus, Buffon, and all our hosts of naturalists who have copied the remarks of these celebrated naturalists, are perfectly in the dark with regard to the true character of all the monkey tribe.

Yesterday, I sent up to the Gardener's Chronicle a few notes on the woodpecker.—Believe me, dear sir, very truly yours,

**CHARLES WATERTON.**

"P.S.—Many thanks for your nice little treatise on the chimpanzee."

Mr **Waterton** enclosed me a copy of the following letter, which he published in a Yorkshire newspaper:—

To Mrs Wombwell.

"MADAM,—I am truly sorry that the inclemency of the weather has prevented the inhabitants of this renowned watering-place from visiting your wonderful gorilla, or brown orang-outang.

"I have passed two hours in its company, and I have been gratified beyond expression.

"Would that all lovers of natural history could get a sight of it, as, possibly, they may never see another of the same species in this country.

“It differs widely in one respect from all other orang-outangs which have been exhibited in England—namely, that, when on the ground, it never walks on the soles of its fore-feet, but on the knuckles of the toes of those feet; and those toes are doubled up like the closed fist of a man. This must be a painful position; and, to relieve itself, the animal catches hold of visitors, and clings caressingly to Miss Bright, who exhibits it. Here then, it is at rest, with the toes of the fore-feet performing their natural functions, which they never do when the animal is on the ground.

“Hence I draw the conclusion that this singular quadruped, like the sloth, is not a walker on the ground of its own free-will, but by accident only.

“No doubt whatever it is born, and lives, and dies aloft, amongst the trees in the forests of Africa.

“Put it on a tree, and then it will immediately have the full use of the toes of its fore-feet. Place it on the ground, and then you will see that the toes of the fore-feet become useless, as I have already described.

“That it may retain its health, and thus remunerate you for the large sum which you have expended in the purchase of it, is, madam, the sincere hope of your obedient servant and well-wisher,

**CHARLES WATERTON.”**

**Scarborough** Cliff, No. 1, Nov. 1, 1855.

“P.S.—You are quite at liberty to make what use you choose of this letter. I have written it for your own benefit, and for the good of natural history.”[8]

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