

**Men with tails : remarks on the Niam-Niams of central Africa / comprising an introduction by Dr. Kahn ; an essay on the anatomical view of the question, by Dr. Sexton ; articles on the subject, reprinted from the Lancet, and the Literary gazette, together with an engraving of a group of these extraordinary beings, as shown in Dr. Kahn's anatomical museum.**

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MEN WITH TAILS.

REMARKS

ON

THE NIAM-NIAMS

OF CENTRAL AFRICA;

COMPRISING

AN INTRODUCTION,

BY

DR. KAHN;

AND

AN ESSAY ON THE ANATOMICAL VIEW  
OF THE QUESTION,

BY

DR. SEXTON,

F.R.G.S., F.E.S., ETC.;

AS SHOWN IN

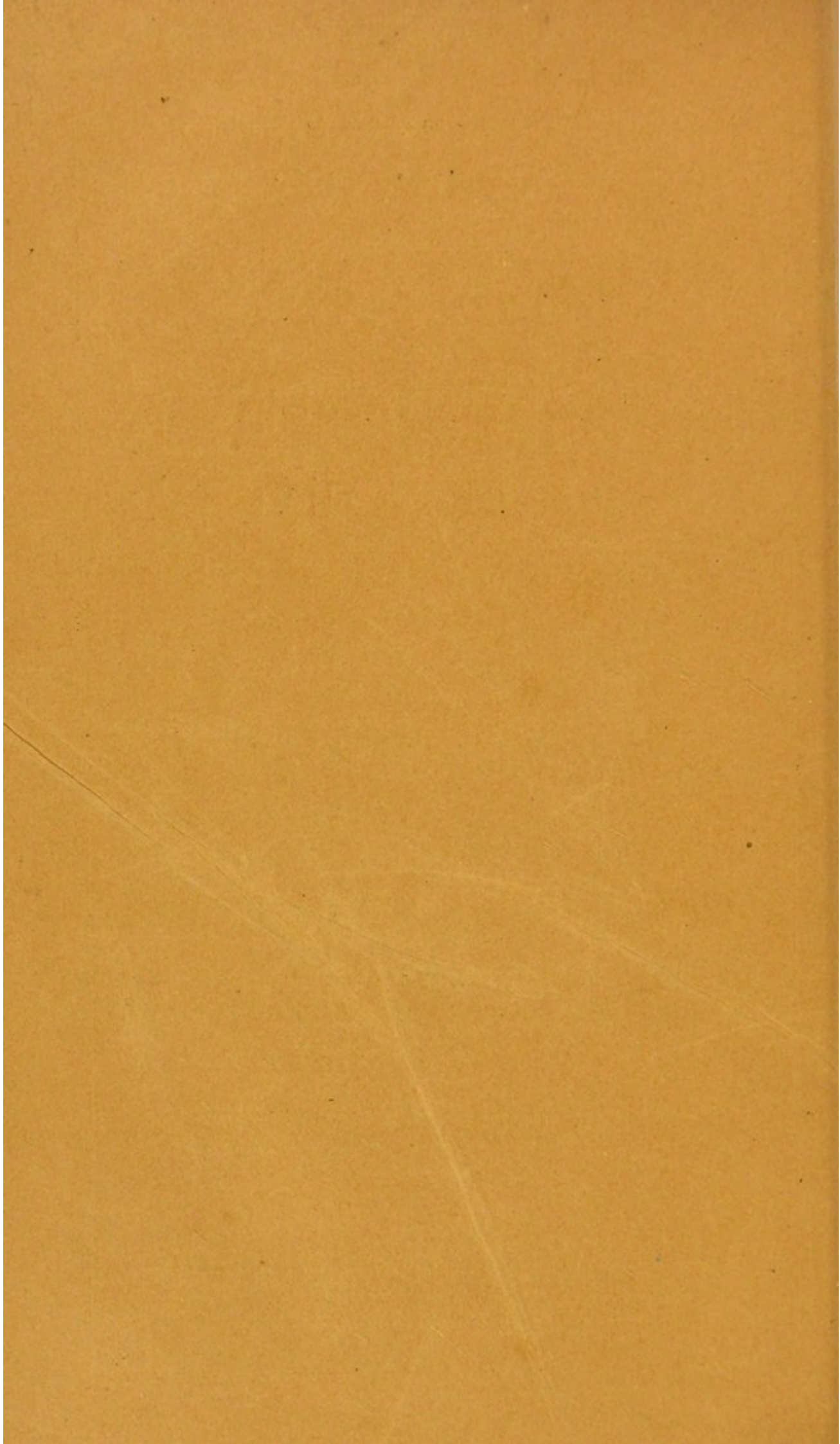
Dr. KAHN'S ANATOMICAL MUSEUM,  
232, PICCADILLY.

PRICE SIXPENCE, WITH A PLAIN ENGRAVING;  
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London:

PRINTED BY W. J. GOLBOURN, 6, PRINCES STREET,  
LEICESTER SQUARE;  
AND 88, PARK STREET, REGENT'S PARK.





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ARTICLES ON THE SUBJECT, REPRINTED FROM THE  
"LANCET," AND THE "LITERARY GAZETTE;"

TOGETHER WITH

AN ENGRAVING OF A GROUP OF THESE EXTRAORDINARY BEINGS,

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MEN WITH TALENT

REMARKS

THE NINETEENTH

OF CENTRAL EUROPE

AN INTRODUCTION

MR. KAHN;

AN ESSAY ON THE ANATOMICAL VIEW OF

THE QUESTION

DR. SEXTON

ARTICLE OF THE REPORT, IN PART TAKEN FROM THE  
PAPER, AND THE LIBRARY OF THE

AN EXHIBITION OF A SORT OF THESE EXTRAORDINARY BEINGS

The Johns Hopkins University

and

the Johns Hopkins University

Johns

of the Johns Hopkins University

1881

## INTRODUCTION.

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IN adding to my Museum Models of Characters as extraordinary as the Niam-Niams are looked upon as being, it is perhaps necessary to give a few words of explanation. Were there no evidence of the existence of these people but that which is to be found in the testimony referred to in the articles quoted in the following pages from the *Lancet* and the *Literary Gazette*, it would be sufficient to justify me in modelling them, to instruct the large number who visit my collection, in the wonders and marvels of their own species; but I might then have had some slight misgivings as to whether it was really a fact that such people had any existence, and should also have had some difficulty in discovering the particulars regarding their figure, height, color, etc. Having, however, received a few weeks since, a communication from a valued friend of mine who has spent many years in Africa, and who is now in Constantinople, wherein he informs me that he has on two or three occasions come in contact with the Niam-Niams, and had one with him which he intended to bring to this country, until a few days before he posted the letter to me, when, to his great regret, the tailed man died. The skeleton, however—which will probably be almost as interesting to the scientific as the living man—my friend has still with him. Having, therefore, received this intelligence, together with drawings of a group of these curious species of humanity, I have taken the earliest opportunity of adding models of them to my collection, trusting they may both interest and instruct those who derive



pleasure from the study of the various branches of science relating to man.

I have printed in the following pages two articles on this subject from two of the leading journals, one medical, the other literary, in which the public will see in a "Mulum in Parvo" style, the evidence of the existence of these tailed men, apart entirely from my private communication. Dr. Sexton has also written a short sketch of the anatomical view of the question, and has clearly shown, that not only is it not impossible for human beings to possess caudal appendages, but that it is but natural that such should be the case. At the end of the book is also added a description of the figures, which will no doubt be acceptable to those who pay a visit to the collection.

JOSEPH KAHN, M.D.

*Vienna.*

*Anatomical Museum, Piccadilly,*

*January 1st, 1855.*

ANATOMICAL VIEW  
OF THE  
QUESTION OF MEN WITH TAILS,  
BY  
GEORGE SEXTON, M.D., F.R.G.S., F.E.S.  
ETC.

---

THE course of science is ever onward. Discoveries are continually being made which are not only in themselves wonderful, and, shedding a flood of light where before we had to grope our way in the dark, make us wonder at our previous ignorance, and throw away opinions and prejudices which for years we had cherished as the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; but they prepare us for revelations much more marvellous than themselves, and which, could they have been hinted at to our ancestors, would have been viewed as the most extravagant speculations of an enthusiastic madman, or a dream of an Arab poet, revelling in the regions of fancy and romance. Not many years ago, a celebrated natural philosopher demonstrated, to the satisfaction of almost every one, and especially himself, that it was a matter of impossibility for a steam vessel to cross the Atlantic ocean; and a nobleman, following in his train, declared himself ready to eat the boiler of the first vessel that should accomplish this impossible feat. But, lo! by the ingenuity of a man who heeded not these idle, so-called demonstrations, as to what science could not do, but who, no doubt, would have replied in an unanswerable manner, 'first learn wh t



science can do ; then, and not till then, you will be in a position to tell us what science cannot do ; by the energy and perseverance of such a man,' the impossibility was overcome, the feat was accomplished—a steamer did cross the Atlantic. The astounded philosopher, looking first at his own demonstrations and then at the fact, could only exclaim, 'Dear me ! who would have thought it !' and the nobleman, not caring to perform his promise, said as little as possible. Recently we have been favored with demonstration after demonstration that men could not be so nearly allied to the monkey tribe as to possess that caudal appendage, called in common or vulgar language, a tail—which demonstrations were, no doubt, as satisfactory as those before referred to, regarding the power of steam ; but almost before the sound of the word impossible, as uttered on the last occasion this question was mooted, has died off from our ears, a race of men turn up with the vertebral column so much prolonged as to constitute this impossible tail. Yet what, after all, is there remarkable in men with tails ? What law of nature does it violate ? What axiom in natural science is it in opposition to ? What established principles of anatomy does it overthrow ? We answer, none. A few years ago there burst upon the world a tremendous flood of light in regard to the subject of anatomy, in the discovery—evidently *one* of the greatest of modern times—of transcendental or philosophic anatomy. We then learned that our old theories, which sought for and found, as we imagined, a distinct type in every species of animals, were incorrect, and that all the higher orders were built upon the same type—that there was unity of plan running through the whole—that the skeleton of the highest and of the lowest were the same in their primary parts, only differing in the modification of parts existing in all, or in the presence in the higher orders, of parts merely as appendages to the primary structure. This discovery revolutionized all our previous views, and prepared the way for numerous facts which should afterwards be brought to light ; amongst them that of men with tails. Now, a tail is simply an elongation of the vertebral column. 'Tis true, when we view, as we did formerly, that column as being divided in man into 24 vertebræ, as follows—

Cervical . . . . .	7
Dorsal . . . . .	12
Lumbar . . . . .	5

and that the terminal part *superiorly* was attached to another series of bones, forming the cranium, and having no relation whatever to



the spine, further than their being in apposition with it, and *inferiorly*, connected with a triangular bone named the sacrum, to which was also attached another bone of nearly the same shape, but much smaller, *named* the coccyx, by means of which the column terminates nearly in point, that these last-named bones had no more relation to the vertebral column than any other two classes of bones in the system—'tis true, when this view was taken there was some difficulty in the way of believing in men with tails, because a question arose, to what part could the tail be attached? Certainly not as an appendage to the coccyx, because, as has already been remarked, that terminates in a point as narrow as the tail itself must do. Was the coccyx then absent? That would be to suppose too great a revolution in the structure. Was the tail then placed between the sacrum and coccyx? Then it would not be a tail at all, because by a tail we understand the terminal part of the vertebral column. These were difficulties which we should then have had to contend with, but have not now. The following division of the vertebral column is now adopted—

Cranial Vertebrae . . . . .	3, or perhaps more.
Cervical . . . . .	7
Dorsal . . . . .	12
Lumbar . . . . .	5
Sacral . . . . .	5
Coccygeal . . . . .	4

According to this view, the head at the upper part of the column, and the sacrum and coccyx at the lower, are nothing more than vertebrae in different conditions, so that we have simply a vertebral column to deal with, terminated at each end with bones of its own. Now, to say nothing of the head, as we have to do more particularly with the inferior end of this column, what is the difference in these parts, between those animals with tails, and those destitute of that appendage? Simply this: that the coccygeal vertebrae are more numerous. And what is therefore to prevent the existence of an additional vertebrae or two in some of the races of men? Nothing. The fact is, a man with five fingers on one hand is more wonderful than a man with a tail, because in the *former* you have an additional appendage, in the *latter* simply an elongation of a part already existing, by the addition of another small bone of exactly the same character as those to which it is attached at either end, and whose ossification could take place in the same way as theirs.



The following table, from Agassiz and Gould's Comparative Physiology, showing, as it does, the number of vertebræ in each region, in a few examples, from the four great divisions of the vertebrata, will, perhaps, throw a little light on this subject, and show that the difference between an animal with a tail and one without is not as great so is generally imagined.

	Cervical.	Dorsal.	Lumbar.	Sacral.	Coccygeal	Total.
<b>MAMMALIA.</b>						
Man . . . . .	7	12	5	5	4	33
Long-tailed Monkey .	7	12	7	3	31	60
Lion . . . . .	7	13	7	3	26	56
Long-tailed Opossum.	7	16	6	2	36	64
Long-tailed Anteater.	7	16	3	6	40	72
Elephant . . . . .	7	20	3	4	27	61
Giraffe . . . . .	7	14	5	4	18	48
Whale . . . . .	7	15	9	1	27	59
<b>BIRDS.</b>						
Vulture . . . . .	15	7	..	13	6	41
Swallow . . . . .	13	7	..	10	7	37
Turkey . . . . .	14	7	..	15	6	42
Ostrich . . . . .	18	9	..	19	9	55
Crane . . . . .	17	10	..	15	6	48
Swan . . . . .	23	11	..	16	8	58
<b>REPTILES.</b>						
Tortoise . . . . .	9	10	..	3	20	42
Monitor (Lizard) . .	6	21	2	2	115	146
Python (Boa) . . . .	..	320	..	..	102	422
Rattle Snake . . . .	..	171	..	..	36	207
Land Salamander . .	1	14	..	1	26	44
Axolote . . . . .	2	18	..	..	42	62
<b>FISHES.</b>						
Perch . . . . .	..	21	..	..	21	42
Mackerel . . . . .	..	15	..	..	16	31
Trichiurus . . . . .	..	60	..	..	100	160
Salmon . . . . .	..	34	..	..	22	56
Cod . . . . .	..	19	..	..	34	53
Congor Eel . . . . .	..	60	..	..	102	162
Shark . . . . .	..	95	..	..	270	365



*The following articles from two first-class journals, one medical, the other literary, may not be uninteresting, having a bearing upon the fact of the existence of this race of men.*

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**From the "LANCET," Saturday, Nov. 4th, 1854.**

Are we truly promoted monkeys? If there is truth in testimony, the confession, however humiliating to human vanity, must be made. What, if Lord Monboddo, the much ridiculed, should have the laugh on his side? Our contemporary, the *Gazette Hebdomadaire*, publishes a circumstantial summary of what he believes to be authentic intelligence. In 1677, it is said a Dutch traveller, John Struys, was the first to make the interesting discovery that we are entitled to a caudal appendage. He saw, or at least says he saw, in Africa, a man with *a tail more than a foot long*. But this may be a mere traveller's tale. M. du Couret, who has written a book upon the tail question, says, that a Marabout of Kuchenah, a town of Central Nigrita, affirms that there exists, between the Gulf of Benin and Abyssinia, tailed Anthropophagi, called Niam-Niams. M. du Couret says he has himself seen at Mecca, in 1842, a Negro from Central Africa, who carried a true tail; and further, that he has it from several djelabs, or slave merchants, Arabian and Nubian, that there is in this part of Africa a spot where all the indigeni have the same conformation as this negro. M. du Couret gave a minute description of this race to the Paris Academy of Science, in 1849. He reports, that both males and females have tails *from two to three inches long*. The tail of the individual he examined was very movable. Similar communications were made to the Academy by M. M. Arnault and Bayssierès, and by M. Rocher d'Héricourt to the Oriental Society. More recently, M. Francis de Castelneau relates, that travelling some years ago he was at Bahia, and bethought him that it was a convenient opportunity of studying the question. He interrogated a slave named Mahammah, remarkable for his intelligence and the extent of his travels. This man says, that by order of the Sultan of Kano he once joined an expedition against the Niam-Niams. They came by surprise upon a band of these tail-gifted people, and



massacred the whole. They all had tails of about 40 centimetres long, and two or three in diameter. The tails were flexible. They afterwards took other parties prisoners. The Chief of the Niam-Niams begged for mercy, but the Sultan of Kano had them all killed *because they had tails*, and no one would buy them for slaves. In 1852, M. d'Abbadie, the well-known traveller, related to the Geographical Society that an Abyssinian priest had given him very circumstantial details concerning this race of men. According to this priest the tail is 29 millimetres long, and covered with hair; but the women do not possess it. M. Hübsch, physician to the hospital at Constantinople, has just addressed an interesting communication to the editor of our French contemporary. He says, that in 1852 he saw a Negress with a tail. Her master, a slave merchant, told him, that there exists in Central Africa a tribe called Niam-Niams: that all the members of this tribe have tails, which sometimes reached the length of two feet; but this, M. Hübsch says, may be an Oriental exaggeration. The tail M. Hübsch examined was two inches long, supple, without hair, and ended in a point. Her master could not sell her; the objection did not reside in her tail, but in her avowed taste for human flesh. In 1853, M. Hübsch saw a man of the same race, who had a tail an inch and a-half long. He is also acquainted with the son of an apothecary at Constantinople, who was born with a tail an inch long; he belongs to the white Caucasian race. M. Hübsch adds, that the Turks have long been acquainted with this race of men, and are very much surprised that scientific Europe should appear to have been ignorant of their existence. Such is the evidence in favor of our affinity to the monkey tribe. Whether the Niam-Niams be a creation of Oriental fancy, like the Yahoos of Captain Gulliver, or a race actually existing, it is at any rate an object of interest to extend our ethnographical inquiries in Central Africa. Should any enthusiastic traveller determine to solve the question, we counsel him to bring home the finest tailed specimen that can be found.



From the "**LITERARY GAZETTE**," Tuesday, Oct. 28, 1854.

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*Voyage au Pays des Niam-Niams.* By Hadji-Abd-el-Hamed-Bey,  
Paris: Martinon.

Was Lord Monboddo right, after all, about men having tails? Professor Owen, to be sure, laboured in the British Association, in its recent meeting, to demolish the notion of his lordship, and of many eminent *savans*, that man is only an improved monkey. But here is a book just brought out at Paris, and making, we hear, considerable sensation in that capital, which proves, or at least asserts, that our relationship to monkeydom is considerably closer than the learned Professor will allow; inasmuch as there exists at least one portion of our species who are ornamented with what is the glorious appendage of the greater part of the monkey tribes—*tails*—real, *bonâ-fide*, vertebral tails.

The reader may be inclined to think that the book in which this singular revelation is made is some vulgar catchpenny, or foolish hoax. But it purports to be the plain and unvarnished narrative of an eminent traveller, sent out by the French government, at its expense, to make explorations in the least known parts of Africa; and it is certainly published by him with all apparent seriousness. The name of this gentleman is C. L. du Couret, but for personal safety in his African voyages, he found it necessary to disguise his nationality and abjure his religion, and he therefore assumed the name on the title-page of his book—Hadji-Abd-el-Hamed-Bey. The warrant on which he proceeded to Africa is given; it is dated Paris, the 7th November, 1849, and is signed by M. de Parieu, at that time Minister of Public Instruction. This document expressly states that he has been provided with instructions by the Academy of Sciences of Paris; and it as expressly directs him, amongst other things, "to visit the country of the Ghilanes," where it says, "he has reason to believe that he will find a race of men with tails (*hommes à appendice*), a specimen of whom he saw at Mecca, in 1842," and it directs him "to make special researches respecting them."



Unless, then, we can suppose that a regular recognized traveller and *savant*, employed by the French government, and commissioned by the French Academy of Sciences—the most distinguished learned body of Europe—can descend to the pitiful trick of palming a Munchausen tale on the public, we must accept this book as a serious narrative, and no hoax.

We translate the author's description of the singular people to whom he introduces us:—"The Niam-Niams, or Ghilanes (their name signifies cannibals), form a race of men who have a great similitude with the monkey. Shorter than other negroes, they are rarely more than five feet high. They are generally ill proportioned; their bodies are thin, and appear weak; their arms long and lank; their feet and hands larger and flatter than those of other races of men; their lower jaws are very strong and very long; their cheek-bones are high; their forehead is narrow and falls backwards; their ears are long and deformed; their eyes small, brilliant, and remarkably restless; their nose large and flat, the mouth large, the lips thick, the teeth big and sharp, and remarkably white (they sharpen their teeth). Their hair is curly but not very woolly, short and not thick. What, however peculiarly distinguishes this people, is the external prolongation of the vertebral column, which in every individual, male or female, forms a tail of from two to three inches long."

Of their way of living he says—"They live in numerous bands, in a completely savage state, without any clothing, and feed on what they get by the chase or fishing, on roots, and on plants and fruits, which without the least labour a bountiful Paradise puts within their reach, and causes to grow spontaneously. They are armed with small lances, bows and arrows, and they poison the latter skilfully; with clubs of very hard wood; with shields made from the skins of the elephant, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, and crocodile; they often seek quarrels with neighbouring negro tribes, with the sole object of carrying off their women (to whom they are very partial), their children, and other victims, whom they devour without pity. They are idolatrous. Formerly the Arabs bought great numbers of them from the slave dealers (Djelabs), but at present they will not take any of them, because the children belonging to this race who were sold to them became, on growing up, dominated by the ferocious instincts natural to their species, and devoured the children of their masters."



The author declares, to his great regret, that he was not able to reach the country of the Niam-Niams; but he says that the existence of the people was confirmed to him not only by the Arab slave dealers, but by Nubians, Noubahs, Schellouks, Nouerrs, and other tribes of the interior of Africa whom he visited. He, however, *saw* a Niam-Niam at Mecca, and he thus describes him:—"I resided at Mecca in 1842. An Emir, to whom I expressed doubts as to the existence of men with tails, determined to convince me of the reality of the fact. He caused to be brought before me one of his slaves named Belal, aged 30, belonging to the race of Ghilanes. This slave spoke Arab perfectly, and appeared very intelligent. I conversed a long time with him, and he informed me that in his country people speak a language which, from want of practice, he had completely forgotten; that his countrymen, whose number he calculates at about thirty or forty thousand, adore the sun, the moon, certain fixed stars, and the sources of a great river, to which they immolated victims (probable the sources of the Nile); that their customary and most agreeable food is raw flesh, and that they prefer it bleeding; that they particularly like human flesh, and that in their combats with their neighbours they immolate the prisoners they take, and eat them, without distinction of sex or age; but that women and children are preferred, because their flesh is more succulent. This Ghilane had become a Mussulman full of fervour: he had resided in the holy city for more than fifteen years. However, the desire, or rather the necessity, for such it was to him, of eating raw flesh, manifested itself from time to time, and on such occasions his master, from motives of prudence, did not fail to give him a large piece of raw mutton, which he devoured with rage in the presence of everybody. When this frightful appetite came on he tried to combat it, but it was too strong for him. I have often been present at his strange, savage and disgusting repast, and when I have asked him why he did not attempt to break himself of such a hideous habit, he has answered me, 'I have often endeavoured to do so, but have never been able. It is an instinct which I have inherited from my father and mother. In my country everybody lives in this way, and if my master were to neglect to satisfy the *penchant* which nature has given me, I feel that I could not resist the necessity of devouring something, and that I should commit some great crime, by attacking a child or a poor creature too weak to resist me.' Having asked him if he did not prefer human flesh



to that which was generally given to him, and if the latter had the same taste, and was equally nourishing, he answered, that in his country men were eaten not only to satisfy hunger, but from vengeance; that nothing is so delicious as the blood and flesh of an enemy; and that though human flesh was preferable to all others, he was fully satisfied with that which was given to him, as it relieved him from the fear of committing a crime. Having asked to see him naked, in order to make a drawing of him, he objected for a long time on account of religious scruples; but at length, by means of a rich present, I persuaded him to strip. I could then contemplate him at my ease, without fearing to humiliate him. He was thin, wiry, and strong. His skin was black, shining, and soft as velvet; his arms and legs appeared weak, but nervous and full of muscle, and his ribs could be counted. He was so ugly as to be repulsive: his mouth was enormous, his lips thick, his teeth sharp, strong, and extremely white; he was very active and skilful; and his tail, *rather more than three inches long*, had as much flexibility as that of a monkey."

As if apprehensive of not having his own statements credited, M. du Couret, or, as he prefers to be called, Hadji-Abd-el-Hamed-Bey, does not neglect to quote the testimony of M. F. de Castelneau, another eminent traveller, who was formerly commissioned by the French government, to the existence of the tailed Niam-Niams; a testimony not, indeed, based like his own, on ocular demonstration, but on the statements of persons in whom M. de Castelneau placed the fullest confidence. We remember very well that in 1851 M. de Castelneau published a pamphlet on the subject, and that it was presented to the Academy of Sciences: it was noticed, indeed, in our Paris letter of the 29th of November in the same year. Our author, Hadji, also states that M. d'Abbadie, another eminent African traveller, likewise heard of and believed in the men with tails, and in 1852 made a communication to the Geographical Society of Paris to that effect. M. Rocher d'Héricourt, who is also a distinguished traveller in the less-known parts of Africa, and the Imam of Muscat, who was in Paris in 1849, are, moreover, named as having given confirmatory evidence on the subject; and the brother-in-law of the Sultan of Bournou, one Si-el-Hadj-Mohammed-Ben-Abd-el-Djillil, has not only, says M. du Couret, vouched for the existence of the race, but has stated that the Sultan was at one time at war with them, and has sent drawings of several of them to some of the most learned naturalists at Paris.



Whether or not all this testimony be sufficient to prove the existence of a race of men with caudal appendages, is a matter for individual opinion. For ourselves, we will pronounce neither one way nor the other; for if, on the one hand, it be hard to believe that M. du Couret, M. de Castelneau, and other distinguished scientific men, are foolish victims of credulity, or dupes of impostors, on the other hand it is not a little singular that the precise whereabouts of the Niam-Niam country is not described; and more singular still that none of the tailed race should have yet been sent to Europe, though, as we are told in the book before us, they are by no means rare at Mecca, in the towns on the coast of the Red Sea, and in the Arab slave markets. M. du Couret himself appears to feel this difficulty, for he says, in concluding his work—"If, as I hope, I return to Africa, I will not fail to occupy myself anew with this interesting question, and I will spare no pains to bring into France a living Ghilane, if it be possible; or if not, at least the skeleton of one, in order to convince the most incredulous."



## DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES.

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THE GROUP OF THESE MARVELLOUS BEINGS  
COMPRISE A MAN, WOMAN, AND CHILD.

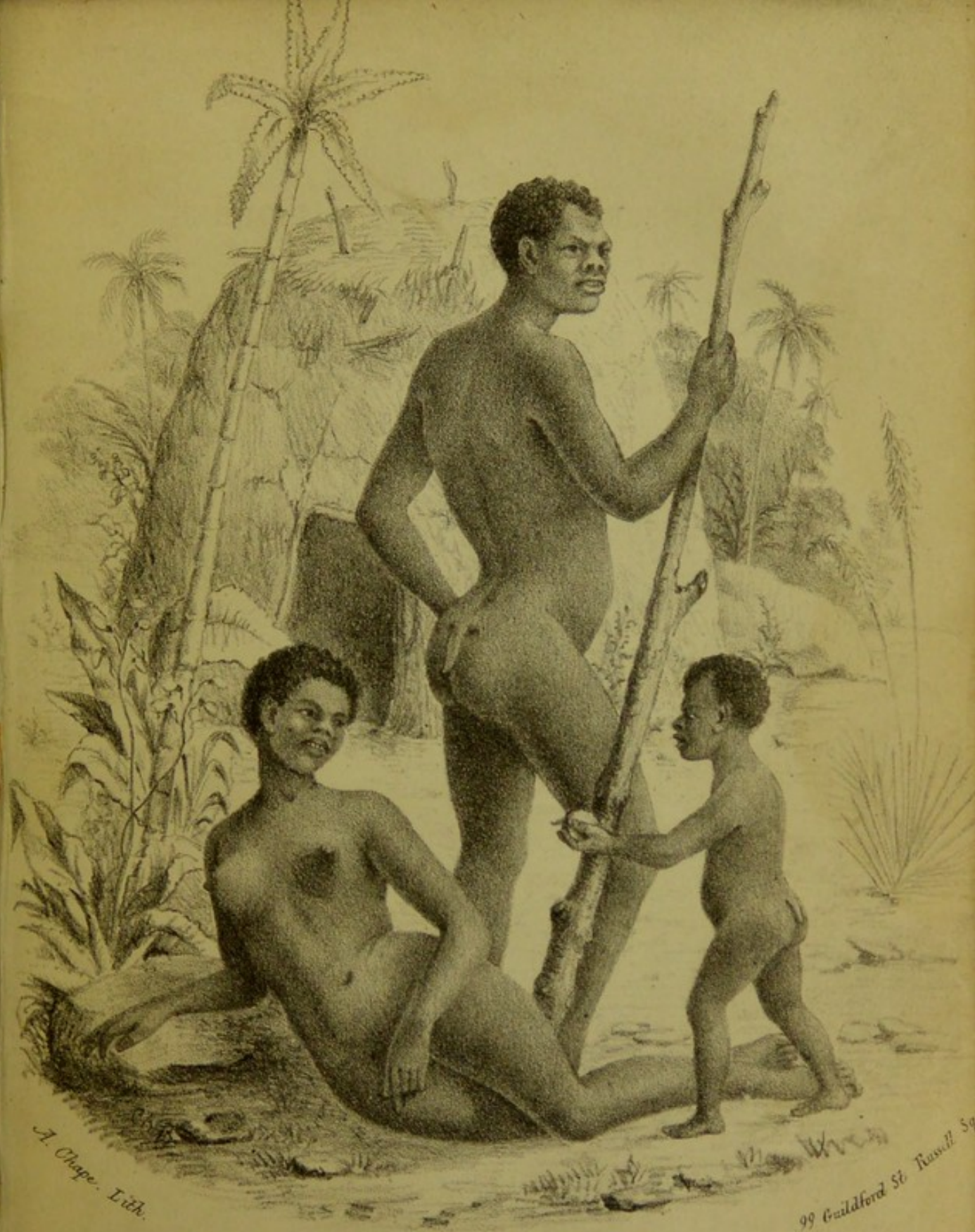
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1.—The Man, in his rude and savage state—diminutive stature, black skin, large flat negro foot, long arms, repulsive figure, large jaws, enormous mouth, high cheek bones, narrow and receding forehead, long ears, thick lips, large white and sharp teeth, curly hair, vertebral column prolonged, so as to form a tail about three inches in length, and, in a word, a frame approximating towards the lower animals—is seen leaning upon one of his implements of warfare; his eye keenly piercing the distant view, and watching for prey (human, or otherwise); his ear intently listening to catch the first faint sound of approaching footsteps; his large flat broad nose, with the nostrils expanded, sniffing the air—even this sense appropriated to the uses of discovering prey, and detecting danger. The height of the man is about five feet.

2.—The Woman with the same characteristics, but a milder eye, playing lovingly with a little child.

3.—A Male Child of the same race, reaching out its hand with some fruit.





**THE NIAM-NIAMS**  
*OR THE*  
**TAILED FAMILY**  
**OF CENTRAL AFRICA.**

*Exhibited at*  
**D<sup>R</sup>. KAHN'S MUSEUM.**



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