

and variety elsewhere unknown ; and lastly, the Polyps there display an activity of which the other zones present no example. Whole groups of islands are surrounded with coral reefs formed by those little animals.

435. The variety of the tropical fauna is further enriched by the circumstance that each continent furnishes new and peculiar forms. Sometimes whole types are limited to one continent, as the sloth, the toucans, and the humming-birds to America, the giraffe and hippopotamus to Africa ; and again animals of the same group have different characteristics, according as they are found on different continents. Thus, the monkeys of America have flat and widely separated nostrils, thirty-six teeth, and generally a long, prehensile tail. The monkeys of the Old World, on the contrary, have nostrils close together, only thirty-two teeth, and not one of them has a prehensile tail.

436. But these differences, however important they may appear at first glance, are subordinate to more important characters, which establish a certain general affinity between all the faunas of the tropics. Such, for example, is the fact that the quadrumana are limited, on all the continents, to the warmest regions ; and never, or but rarely, penetrate into the temperate zone. This limitation is a natural consequence of the distribution of the palms ; for as these trees, which constitute the ruling feature of the flora of the tropics, furnish, to a great extent, the food of the monkeys on both continents, we have only to trace the limits of the palms, to have a pretty accurate indication of the extent of the tropical faunas on all three continents.

437. Several well-marked faunas may be distinguished in the tropical part of the American continent, namely :

1. The fauna of Brazil, characterized by its gigantic reptiles, its monkeys, its Edentata, its tapir, its humming-birds, and its astonishing variety of insects.