

2. CHOLOPUS.

Cholæpus, Illiger, Prodr. Syst. Mamm. &c. p. 108 (1811).

Cholopus, Sclater, P. Z. S. 1872, p. 861.

The most obvious external difference between this genus and the last lies in the fore foot, only two of the digits being functionally developed in *Cholopus*. In the skull the tympanic remains in a very imperfect state throughout life; while, on the other hand, the intermaxillaries are better developed than in *Bradypus*, and soon become ankylosed with the maxillaries, forming an angular projection in front of the palate, which corresponds to the curious "spout-like process" into which the front part of the mandible is produced. There are either six or seven cervical vertebræ, and only four molars on each side in the lower jaw; but the anterior pair of teeth, both above and below, are much larger than the rest, being developed into large triangular canine-like weapons, of which the creature can make formidable use.

For long the only known member of the genus was its type, the Unau or Two-toed Sloth of Brazil, *Bradypus didactylus* of Linnæus. In 1858 Professor Peters described a second species, from Costa Rica, under the name of *Cholæpus hoffmanni*, characterized by its long hair and short white claws; and a few years later he was enabled to show, from the examination of no less than six skeletons, that the normal number of cervical vertebræ was *six* in *C. hoffmanni*, instead of *seven* as in *C. didactylus*.

This curious discovery has since been amply confirmed by the examination of other specimens; but, on the other hand, the external characters pointed out by Dr. Peters do not prove quite constant when a large number of examples are compared. It is true that the hair of *C. hoffmanni* is usually longer, of a paler brown, and more often tipped with white than that of *C. didactylus*; but many intermediate specimens occur which it is very difficult to assign to either species. Dr. v. Frantzius observes that the animal is dark, short-haired, and woolly in youth, but becomes longer-haired and paler in colour as it grows up. The comparative length of the claws appears also to depend on age, as suggested by Gray. On the characters of the skull, which Professor Peters considered to be more convex and shorter in the rostrum than that of *C. didactylus*, I can place no weight; for Dr. Krauss has shown how variable are the cranial features of the latter species*, and Dr. v. Frantzius found just as little constancy in Hoffmann's Sloth†.

Mr. O. Thomas's recent discovery of a skin and skeleton of *C. hoffmanni* in a collection formed in Ecuador‡, shows that the range of the form is not so well defined as has hitherto been supposed; and it even suggests a doubt whether the reduction of the vertebræ, on which the separation of the Central-American race appears solely to rest, may not occur more or less frequently as an individual variation in other parts of the

* Arch. f. Naturg. xxxv. 1, pp. 124-129.

† Tom. cit. p. 313.

‡ P. Z. S. 1880, p. 402.