

[VIII.]

THE MAMMALS, REPTILES, AND FISHES.

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[Plate VIII.]

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EXCLUDING the Birds, the indigenous terrestrial Vertebrate fauna of the Funafuti Atoll appears to be comprised in five species:— a rat and four lizards. Introduced, are the European rat and mouse, of which, however, examples were not obtained for certain identification; and, as domestic animals, the pig and cat.

Dogs, now unknown on the Atoll, were at one time common, but were purposely exterminated, the reason, according to Moss, being as follows\* :—“ At Funafuti the Turimen march round the village during the night, and quietly steal into the houses to see if all is right. It was found that the house dogs barked and gave notice of their approach, so they forthwith decreed the destruction of all dogs on the island and again became masters of the situation.”

Of marine animals, we are told that “Porpoises” are common off the coast at certain periods,† and that a turtle is also occasionally obtained; Bats, Crocodiles, Ophidians, and Batrachians are unknown.

There being no fresh water on the Atoll beyond what the inhabitants can obtain by artificially arresting the rainfall, the Fish fauna is represented only by marine forms. Of these a fair number was collected, and indirect evidence respecting a few others is noted in the accompanying list.

MAMMALS.

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Much of the literature of the Pacific Islands contains some mention of a native rat, described as living in the bush or infesting the houses and feeding upon vegetables and fruit, but for the

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\* Moss—Through Atolls and Islands in the Great South Sea, 1889, p. 118.

† See p. 67, “General Account.”