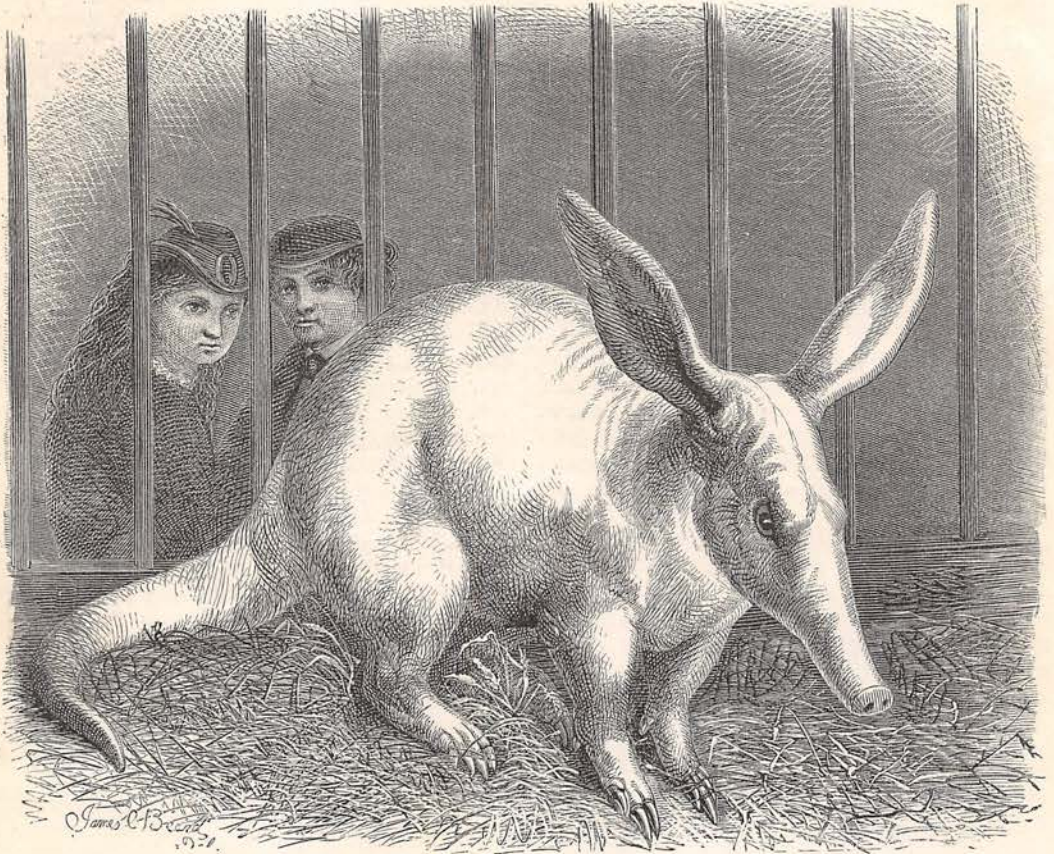


THE AARD-VARK.

BY JAS. C. BEARD.

OF the tribe of animals to which the strange creature represented in the accompanying illustrations belongs, none have traveled so far or seen so much of the great world as this particular one, rabbit and the pig. It has a long, irregular head; short limbs, ending in large flat feet; a tail, in which the whole bulk of the animal tapers gradually to a point; and enormous claws.



THE AARD-VARK AT CENTRAL PARK.

whose portrait was taken for ST. NICHOLAS while it was on a temporary visit to Central Park.

Even the great Zoological Garden in London, which forms the largest collection of living animals in the world, does not contain a specimen. In fact, it is very difficult to capture this animal alive, as it is extremely timid and wary, and with its great claws can burrow out of sight in a few minutes. Its home is in Africa, and its name Aard-vark, which means earth-pig. At first sight, its singular form seems a sort of compromise between that of the

Along the wide stretches of sand in Africa are to be seen great mounds, very similar in shape and appearance to the huts of the black men, but much more strongly built, consisting of mud which has hardened almost into stone in the heat of the sun.

These buildings, which are far superior to the houses constructed by the human beings who people the country, are erected by small insects called termites, or white ants, and are, in proportion to their builders, larger than any edifice ever constructed by man.

In this region, as evening advances, numerous stealthy creatures, never seen by day, creep forth from their hiding-places in the jungle in search of food, and among them are the Aard-varks; their long snouts projected in every direction, their brilliant black eyes wide open and their great ears thrown forward on the alert.

If the coast is clear, an animal of this kind—perhaps a mamma, followed by a couple of the queerest little babies imaginable—makes her way up to the nearest ant-hill, and, sitting upon her haunches, tears it to pieces without loss of time, breaking up the stony walls with perfect ease, and bringing dismay and death to the inmates, to whom, instead of the timid creature she appears to us, she is a terrible, devouring monster. So rapidly does she sweep the insects into her mouth by the swift movement of her long tongue, which is covered with a thick, sticky substance to which the ants adhere, that soon, of all the bewildered multitude which filled that great mound, not one is left to behold and mourn over the destruction of its little world.

There are animals closely related to the Aard-vark, which are covered with large horny scales instead of hair; and which, besides indulging in other strange habits, generally

sleep rolled up in the shape of a ball. But the Aard-vark, in endeavoring to follow so laudable a custom, only succeeds in standing on the top of its head, in which position it seems to sleep very com-



THE AARD-VARK ASLEEP.

fortably—so comfortably, indeed, that it afforded, as you see, a capital chance for a second portrait.

THE GHOST THAT LUCY SAW.

BY MARIA W. JONES.

ALL at once, right in the middle of the night, Martha wakened wide up. And no wonder, for the bed-clothes were drawn up over her face so that she could hardly breathe. She threw her arm over on Lucy's pillow, but instead of the curly head there was only a big round ball, made by that same curly head having the covering all tightly pulled up over and drawn down under it. The instant Martha's hand touched the big round ball, it shrieked out, "O! O!" as if somebody had taken it for a foot-ball and given it a kick.

Then Martha sat up and commenced vigorously pulling the sheet and counterpane away from the

little clinging hands that were holding them down so tightly, exclaiming as she tugged and pulled:

"Why, Lucy, what *is* the matter? What *have* you got your head all rolled up this way for? You almost smothered us!"

"O Martha!" piped the little girl's trembling voice, as she cuddled closer to her sister, "I am so glad you're awake. But don't speak so loud; there's something in the room!" And down went the little head under the covers again, and the little hands, by this time clinging around Martha's neck, pulled her head under too, while Lucy continued in an awful whisper: