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SNAKES, MONGOOSES,
SNAKE-CHARMERS AND THE LIKE.

I have a friend who would give a price for those long fingers all of one
length —
those hideous bird's claws, for that rich looking snake and the mon-
goose —
products of the country in which everything is hard work, the country
of the grass-getter,
the torch-bearer, the dog-servant, the message-bearer, the holy-man.
Engrossed in this distinguished worm nearly as wild and as fierce as
the day it was captured,
he gazes as if incapable of looking at anything with a view to analysis.
" The slight snake rippling quickly through the grass,
the leisurely tortoise with its pied back,
the chameleon passing from twig to stone, from stone to straw, "
lit his imagination at one time; his admiration now converges upon this:
thick, not heavy, it stands up from its travelling-basket,
the essentially Greek, the plastic animal, all of a piece from nose to tail;
one is compelled to look at it as at the shadows of the Alps
imprisoning in their folds like flies in amber, the rhythms of the
skating-rink.
This animal to which from the earliest times, importance has attached,
fine as its worshippers have said —, for what was it invented?
To show that when intelligence in its pure form
has embarked on a train of thought which is unproductive, it will come
back?
We do not know; the only positive thing about it is its shape, but why
protest?
The passion for setting people right is in itself an afflictive disease.
Distaste which takes no credit to itself is best.

MARIANNE MOORE.