

Darwin at the Zoo

by John Riley

This year we have no need of spring!
Two days ago in the sudden warmth
I rode to the zoo. Such good fortune!
The rhinoceros was turned out.
It galloped up and down its keep
and though it seemed much like a cow

it made the most marvelous stops.
In the wet heat of the afternoon
Jenny the orang-u-tang suffered
three fits of furious passion.
She looked quite sulky in her frustration
until her keeper calmly said:

“Jenny, stop bawling, be a good girl
and I will give you this fine apple.”
She understood his every word!
So much a child, she took great labor
to stop her whining, but succeeded,
and thus was granted the apple.

Adapted from a letter Charles Darwin wrote to “My dear Granny,”
Susan Elizabeth Darwin, on April 1, 1838.

