reason for supposing that it was ever any larger in former times.@@1 The recitals of our travellers have been too often drawn, not from their own observation (by no means ac­curate at the best), but merely from the popular belief of ignorant and superstitious natives. The Pythons of the Old World seldom exceed from eighteen to twenty feet in length ; and we can easily believe that one even of that extent being met by a benighted traveller in some lone­some forest glade, or murky meadow, might be afterwards described as something super-serpentine. Who in early life (how few at any period) ever caught a trout of two pounds or a pike of ten, without at least supposing that the one weighed four, the other fifteen ? Yet who fears the innocuous finny race, and how greatly must doubt and dismay increase the seeming dimensions of a huge lugu­brious reptile, weaving its way through some “ wild wood, dingle or bushy dell,” and dimly seen in sombre twilight hours, by snatches of only four or five yards nt a time ? The same exaggeration prevails regarding both the size of their natural prey, and its mode of capture. The la­mented Boié, who made numerous observations on the Pythons of Asiatic countries, states that they particularly attack only the smaller kinds of quadrupeds, although in­dividuals of unusual size sometimes swallow a young pig, or that species of deer called muntjac. But the larger maramiferous animals, and the human race more espe­cially, need entertain no reasonable expectation of attack ; and Prince Neuwied confirms this statement of the la­mented naturalist of Kiel, so far as concerns the great species of the New World, which prey chiefly on birds and reptiles.

Boas are said to be by no means difficult to tame. M. Dieperink of Paramaribo informed M. Schlegel that he was in the practice of keeping by him several different kinds of live Boas, all of which lived in perfect harmony, both among themselves and with other domestic animals. Professor Reindwardt, however, was witncss at Java to a spectacle which proved that these great serpents are not always as merciful as they are strong. A native of the island having brought to the Baron Van Der Capelle a huge Python, and being desirous to make it leave a pannier in which it was contained, the monster rose upon him sud­denly, and inflicted a severe wound, at once laying open the fore-arm throughout its entire extent. It may be as well, then, upon the whole, not to allow the serpents of this family to sleep at large in the bed-chambers of any other family where there are small children.

The members of our present group seize their prey sud­denly by ambuscade, usually lying in wait for it in the vi­cinity of water. They fix upon it with their teeth, and then, if of tolerable size or strength, entwine their folds around it, pressing out the breath of life, or even bruising the body, and breaking the bones in pieces. To aid this act of butchery, some of the species are said to keep their tails twisted around a tree, to which they drag their reluc­tant victim,—making use at the same time of the hard and gnarled trunk to give a still stronger stringency to their dreadful coils, while the faint-hearted prey

Clamores simul horrendos ad sidera tollit.

When the animal attacked is of smaller size, it is merely *mouthed,* always head foremost, covered with saliva to hasten putrefaction and aid deglutition, and afterwards swal­lowed at leisure. These gigantic reptiles are endowed with great muscular force, which, however, they rarely exercise in a state of captivity. They seem extremely lethargic when imported into Europe ; many of them, if not gentle in their manners, at least cannot be induced to bite by any provocation ; their movements are very slow, they rarely eat, and the majority indeed die after a few months’ confine­ment, without having tasted food.

The following curious, and we doubt not accurate, ac­count of the swallowing powers of one of the great Asiatic serpents, has been recorded by Mr Macleod. He calls the species *Boa constrictor,* which, as it was captured in Bor- nea, it could scarcely be. It belonged, we presume, to the genus Python, and measured sixteen feet in length by about eighteen inches in circumference. We shall make no apology for the size of the ensuing extract, as it so clearly il­lustrates the peculiar manners and the mode of deglutition of these Boa-like serpents.

“ The live stock for his use during the passage, consist­ing of six goats of the ordinary size, were sent with him on board, five being considered as a fair allowance for as many months. At an early period of the voyage we had an ex­hibition of his talent in the way of eating, which was pub­licly performed on the quarter-deck, upon which he was brought. The sliding door (of his cage) being opened, one of the goats was thrust in, and the door of the cage shut. The poor goat, as if instantly aware of all the horrors of its perilous situation, immediately began to utter the most piercing and distressing cries, butting instinctively at the same time with its head towards the serpent, in self-defence. The snake, which at first appeared scarcely to notice the poor animal, soon began to stir a little, and turning his head in the direction of the goat, he at length fixed a deadly and malignant eye on the trembling victim, whose agony and terror seemed to increase ; for, previous to the snake seizing his prey, it shook in every limb, but still continuing its unavailing show of attack, by butting at the serpent, which now became sufficiently animated to prepare for the banquet. The first operation was that of darting out his forked tongue, and at the same time rearing a little his head ; then suddenly seizing the goat by the fore leg with his mouth, and throwing it down, it was encircled in an in­stant in his horrid folds. So quick, indeed, and so instanta­neous was the act, that it was impossible for the eye to fol­low the rapid convolution of his elongated body. It was not a regular *screw-like* turn that was formed, but resem­bling rather a knot, one part of the body overlaying the other, as if to add weight to the muscular pressure, the more effectually to crush his object. During this time he continued to grasp with his fangs, though it appeared an unnecessary precaution, that part of the animal which he had first seized. The poor goat, in the mean time, conti­nued its feeble and *half-stifled* cries for some minutes, but they soon became more and more faint, and at last it ex­pired. The snake, however, retained it for a considerable time in his grasp after it was apparently motionless. He

@@@, Unable as we are either to confirm or contradict, from personal experience, the reported observations of travellers regarding the supposed dimensions of these huge reptiles, we are under the necessity of stating the different opinions which prevail upon the sub­ject, however irreconcileable these may sometimes seem with each other. The following quotation rather favours the idea of their great size and unexampled voracity. “ In the Dutch colonies of the East Indies, André Clever purchased of the hunters of the country an enormous serpent, in the body of which he found a deer of middle age, altogether entire, with its skin and limbs. In an­other individual of the same species, also examined by the traveller, a wild he∙goat was found, with its hums ; and a third had evi­dently swallowed a porcupine with its quills. He adds, that a pregnant woman also became the prey of a reptile of the same genus in the island of Amboyna; and that this kind is sometimes kept for the purpose of attacking the buffaloes in the kingdom of Aracan, on the frontiers of Bengal. We need hardly be astonished at this, when Prince Maurice of Nassau-Siegen, one of the governors of Brazil, in the seventeenth century, assures us that he himself was an eye-witness of stags, and other equally voluminous mammifera, and even of a Dutch woman” (usually a considerable mammifer), “ being devoured in this manner, in that region of South America where he commanded." Griffith's *Animal Kingdom,* ix. 295.