gion. The colours seem less subject to variation than among the other Ophidians, and there is no external dif­ference between the sexes. All the species are included by M. Schlegel in the following genus.

Genus Hydrophis. Head small, uniform with the trunk. Nostrils vertical, of an orbicular form, and capable of being closed by a valve. Eye small, pupil orbicular. Fangs but slightly developed, and always followed by se­veral other teeth, solid though slender. Body tapering towards both extremities. Scales lozenge-shaped or hex­agonal, not imbricated, covered by a thin epidermis, and surmounted by a tubercle, of which there are two on the median range of the abdomen. The abdominal scales scarcely larger than the others. Tail broad, flattened la­terally, and performing the functions of an oar or rudder. Lungs often prolonged into a reservoir of air as far as the commencement of the caudal region.

Of this genus there are seven species, the particular characters of which we cannot here detail, although their general attributes may be made out from the preceding observations. See Plate CCCCXLIV. fig. 4.

The most common kind is *Hyd. pelamys* of Oken@@1 *(An­guis piatura,* Linn.), of a comparatively thickish form, the head much elongated, the median line of the abdomen in­dicated by a suture formed by two rows of scales. It is of a blackish brown above, beneath yellow ; the tail, and sometimes the entire body, varied by these colours. It is the most extensively distributed of the genus, being found wherever any sea-snakes occur. It seems to be the black backed hydrus of Shaw *(Hydrus bicolor,* Schneid.); and in India rejoices in the euphonious name of *Nalla Wahlagdlee Pam.@@i* Of general occurrence in the Asiatic seas, it is also common round the coasts of Otaheite, where it is relished as an article of food, and known under the title of *Etoοnatoree.*

*Family III.—Poisonous Serpents properly so called.*

The species of this family are the most venomous of all, and may, for the most part, be recognised by something especially repulsive and forbidding in their aspect. Their form is rather thick and heavy, their tail short, their head extremely broad, depressed, and somewhat heart-shaped ; rarely protected by plates, but usually covered by scales resembling those of the dorsal region ; the eyes are small, deeply seated in the sides of the head, and shaded by pro­jecting superciliary plates, the pupil vertical ; the upper lip is inflated, and falls over the lengthened fangs ; the body is usually beset by scales of a lanceolated form, sur­mounted by a ridge, except in one or two species of Tri­gonocephalus, in which they arc smooth.

Their habits and modes of life likewise present some disparities when compared with those of the preceding groups. Being of a lethargic nature and slow of move­ment, they seldom wander about in search of prey, but keep themselves coiled up till it approaches closely, and then springing upon it by a sudden straightening of the body, they inflict a fatal wound, which needs no repeti­tion. There seems reason to believe that this mode of attack is peculiar to the present family, the other poisonous kinds pursuing their prey, and *holding on* when they have seized it, while the poisonous serpents properly so called are satisfied by sinking their envenomed fangs into the flesh of their victim. Their gape is very wide, their hooks long and sharp, their poison abundant and in a state of high concentration, and the wound is inflicted suddenly,

with great force. The result is left to nature, and is in consequence both sure and speedy.

We have said that the poison-fangs are more developed than among the other Ophidians. They alone occupy the maxillaries, being never followed by any small solid teeth, though these occur along the palate and at the extre­mity of the lower jaw. The nostrils are in some spacious, in others narrow, and vary also in their position. They are followed in certain species by a deep pit or hollow, scooped in the sides of the muzzle, and connected with a broad cavity in the upper maxillaries. This character (of which, however, we know not the function) seems analo­gous in some measure to the *larmiers* of ruminating quad­rupeds, and has been employed for the distribution of these serpents into several groups. Such as are distinguished by this nasal pit inhabit the forests of tropical countries, and consist of two genera, *Trigonocephalus* and *Crotalus,* of which the former (native both to Asia and America) is chiefly found in moist and sombre woods, or places covered by an abundant vegetation ; while the latter (peculiar to the western world) prefers a somewhat drier and more barren soil. Such as possess no nasal excavation are com­prized in the genus *Viperus.* They affect a more open, sandy soil, and occur exclusively in the ancient continents and New Holland. We shall briefly survey these different groups, in the order now named.

Genus Trigonocephalus. Head, as in other members of the family, heart-shaped or triangular, extremely broad behind, and consequently very distinguishable from the neck. Tail terminated by a conical corneous plate.

The poison apparatus of these reptiles is developed in the highest degree ; and as the species sometimes attain a length of five or six feet, they may be regarded as among the most redoubtable of venomous serpents. They all fre­quent wooded or shady situations, or moist meadows in the immediate vicinity of forest-land. The abdomen is al­ways broad, rather convex, and furnished with plates, which vary, according to the species, from 140 to about 270. The tail is always short, conical, and usually somewhat slender. The sub-caudal plates vary from forty to seventy ; and of these some are simple, others divided into two. The body is often marked by large irregular or lozenge-shaped spots upon a brownish or yellowish ground. Some, however, are reddish, others of a greenish hue, and there is frequently a line of deeper hue behind the eye. The species are rare in collections. None occur in Europe or Africa. Ame­rica and the intertropical countries of Asia produce a large majority. the genus is divisible into two sections, accord­ing as the head is covered with scales or with plates.

One of the most noted species of the first section is *Trig, lanceolarus,* a native of the West Indies.@@3 The general co­lour is greenish yellow, paler beneath, and variously marked with specks, spots, and bands of brown. A **broad** brown line, bordered with white, proceeds from the eye towards the mouth. We have a good account of the habits and his­tory of this reptile from Colonel Moreau de Jonnès.@@4 He tells us of one killed by an officer which measured above seven feet and a half in length ; and still greater (but per­haps less accurate) measurements are given by Dutertre@@i and Labat.@@s In the bodies of such females as were ex­amined, he found some fifty or sixty young ones, which, when the period of their birth arrives, issue forth completely formed, and much inclined to bite. In the adult state they prey chiefly on rats, which, though not indigenous to these islands, are now in all probability as 10,000 to one com­pared with the native quadrupeds. The snakes in question

***@@@1 Naturgesch.*** vol. iii. part ii. p. 279.

***@@@» Indian Serpents,*** i. 47, pl. 41.

***@@@3 Quad. Ouip.*** ii. p. 121, pi. 5, fig. 1. Also described by Dr Shaw, under the title of ***Coluber megæra. Gen. Zοοl.*** iii. 406.

*@@@4 du Trigοnοcéphale des Antilles.*

*@@@4 Hist. Gén. des Antilles habitées par les François.*

*@@@β Nouveau Voyage aux Antilles, contenant l'Hist. Nat.*