are said to hold it in great dread, from the belief of its be­ing a highly poisonous species.@@1

Genus Dipsas. Head thick, broad, obtuse; the body vigorous, but much compressed. Pupil of the eye usually vertical. Plate CCCCXLIV. fig. 7.

This genus comprises all those tree-serpents which, re­sembling the Colubers (and so far differing from the two preceding genera) in the bulkier proportion of their parts, are distinguished by their compressed bodies and more slender tails. Both the size and colours differ greatly ac­cording to the species, some of which do not measure more than fourteen inches, while others extend to five or six feet. South America and the East Indies are their characteristic countries, although a somewhat anomalous species is found in Egypt and Dalmatia. The genuine Dipsas dwell habit­ually in trees, concealing themselves amid dense foliage, from whence they dart upon their unsuspecting prey. The largest species known to naturalists is *Dip. dendrophila,* a Javanese reptile, which sometimes measures seven feet in length. The ground-colour is a beautiful lustrous black, with steel-blue reflections, paler on the under surface ; and the body is encircled by from forty-five to fifty trans­verse narrow bands of a fine golden yellow.@@2 *Dip. fallax* is, we presume, the sole European species,—if the reptile so named really pertains to our present genus.@@’ Its habits offer great disparity, at least M. Cantraine found it in Dal­matia in the month of December, creeping slowly among the ruins of an ancient castle. It had previously been found in the Levant by Olivier, and was more recently ob­served in the Morea by M. Bory St Vincent. Fleischman informs us that it lives under stones, stirs abroad only in the early morning and towards evening, avoids water, and feeds on insects, lizards, and mice. About twenty-five spe­cies of this genus are described by M. Schlegel.

*Family V.—Fresh-water Serpents.*

The members of this group are more or less allied to Co­luber in their organization. They inhabit the water, or at least frequently enter into that element, and prefer the banks of rivers and the shores of lakes to situations more remote from moisture. It does not follow that all snakes endowed with analogous instincts and manners belong to this group, because the majority of the Boas, and almost all the Colubers, nearly correspond in their habits of life, and are yet very dissimilar in their structure. In this fa­mily there are combined those serpents which, having many mutual relatione in their form and physiognomy, constitute a very natural assemblage, though by no means distantly separated from all other subdivisions. It is composed of two genera, of which the first exhibits, with few exceptions, nothing remarkable in its organization,—while the second is characterized by several singular features.

Genus TropIdonotus. Head broad, body rather bulky, abdomen broad and convex, tail short.

The majority of this genus inhabit Asia, especially the Indian Archipelago. Southern Africa produces only a single species ; Europe two, which occur on both sides of the Mediterranean basin. The same restricted number is found in Japan, and several are native to North America. None is known to inhabit either South America or New Holland. Certain species are widely distributed, while others are confined within narrow limits. They usually occur along the shady, wooded banks of lakes and rivers, where they prey on frogs and fishes. They swim with great dexterity, and are capable of continuing for a length of time beneath the surface. Although they can both creep

and climb with considerable swiftness, they usually prefer to escape from threatened danger by plunging into water. Many species never remove from the close vicinity of that element ; others inhabit plains subject to inundation ; and a few are found to dwell in moist umbrageous forests, even on the sides and towards the summits of high mountains. Certain species are gregarious ; while some are solitary, dwelling in the deserted holes of small quadrupeds. Such as inhabit temperate climates fall into a lethargic state in winter. The whole are oviparous ; but the eggs of many, even when newly laid, contain young in a state of consi­derable advancement.

The first species we shall notice is *Tropidonοtus natrix (Coluber natrix,* Linn., *Nairix tοrquata,* Ray), the best- known and most generally-diffused of European serpents, and one of the few which inhabit the cold and cloudy clime of Britain. We have exhibited its osteology on Plate CCCCXLIV. fig. 2. It is subject to great variation of co­lour, but the prevailing tint is a pale ashy-blue tinged with green, and relieved by a series of black spots or bands. The under surface is dusky blue, with mottlings of yellowish white. The collar is white or yellow, bordered posteriorly by deep black ; and the plates of the head are extremely regular in their form. The length ranges from two and a half to four, or occasionally five feet. The female is always the larger. This reptile has been studied and described by a host of European writers. It is not characterized by any wildness or ferocity, is easily tamed, and rarely bites even when seized. “ Il m’est cependant arrivé,” says M. Schlegel, “ qu’étant encore très-jeune, et m’étant approché du bord d’un bois, où une société nombreuse de ces serpens s’était éta­blie pour faire leur ponte, un Tropidonote d’une taille énorme m’attaqua avec fureur, tandis que plusieurs autres s’échap­paient dans les trous dont la terre était percée.”@@\* The ringed snake, as our present species is generally named, prefers to take possession of the subterranean dwelling of a mouse or mole to commencing an excavation for itself. Being fond of warmth and shelter, it often approaches hu­man habitations, and readily lays its eggs in dunghills. Yet it is often met with in the remotest wilds, or in thick um­brageous forests, and sometimes at a height of several thou­sand feet above the level of the sea. But on the whole it prefers the vicinity of tranquil waters, where it dives fre­quently in search of fishes, as well as of frogs and other batrachian reptiles. Although it possesses the power of re­maining under water for nearly half an hour, it is not or­ganized for a continued abode in that element ; and when frequently forced from shore, its swimming powers become exhausted, and it is “ found drowned.” It is extremely voracious, and will swallow a great number of frogs at a meal. It hybemates, in cold and temperate countries, from the month of October or November, seeking profounder excavations, where frost can scarcely enter. It leaves its retreat in March or April, according to the region it inha­bits, and casts its skin once a month till the end of August. In that month also it lays its eggs, to the number of two dozen or more. As the species pairs in April, it follows that these eggs take five months to be developed in the ovi­ducts, though they are hatched in about three weeks after deposition. Their form is oval, and they measure about an inch and three lines in length. The young, when first visible, measure from six to eight inches. This species abounds over all France and Germany. It does not inha­bit the maritime parte of Holland, but is common in Gucl- derland and the province of Drenthe. It is well known in Italy, Sicily, and Sardinia, as well as in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, and extends over a great portion of temperate

@@@1 *Gen.* *Zool.* iii. 572.

@@@• Wagler, *Icones,* i. pl. 8.

@@@5 It is the *Tartolou fallax* of Fleischman's *ltiucrtutic,* pl. 1.

*@@@4 Physiog.* ii. 304.