then slowly and cautiously unfolded himself, till the goat fell dead from his monstrous embrace, when he began to prepare himself for swallowing it. Placing his mouth in front of the dead animal, he commenced by lubricating with his saliva that part of the goat ; and then taking its muzzle into his mouth, which had, and indeed always has, the ap­pearance of a raw, lacerated wound, he sucked it in as far as the horns would allow. These protuberances opposed some little difficulty, not so much from their extent, as from their points ; however, they also in a very short time disappeared, that is to say, externally ; but their progress was still to be traced very distinctly on the outside, threatening every mo­ment to protrude through the skin. The victim had now de­scended as far as the shoulders ; and it was an astonishing sight to observe the extraordinary action of the snake’s muscles when stretched to such an unnatural extent,—an extent which must have utterly destroyed all muscular power in any animal that was not, like himself, endowed with very peculiar faculties of expansion and action at the same time. When his head and neck had no other appearance than that of a serpent’s skin, stuffed almost to bursting, still the workings of the muscles were evident, and his power of suction, as it is erroneously called, unabated ; it was, in fact, the effect of a contractile muscular power, assisted by two rows of strong, hooked teeth. With all this, he must be so formed as to be able to suspend, for a time, his respiration ; for it is impossible to conceive that the process of breathing could be carried on while the mouth and throat were *so* completely stuffed and expanded by the body of the goat, and the lungs themselves (admitting the trachea to be ever so hard) compressed, as they must have been, by its pas­sage downwards.

“ The whole operation of completely gorging the goat occupied about two hours and twenty minutes ; at the end of which time the tumefaction was confined to the middle part of the body, or stomach, the superior parts, which had been so much distended, having resumed their natural di­mensions. He then coiled himself up again, and lay quietly in his usual torpid state for about three weeks or a month, when, his last meal appearing to be completely digested and dissolved, he was presented with another goat, which he killed and devoured with equal facility.”@@1

As the vessel, which was sailing from Batavia to Eng­land, approached the Cape of Good Hope, this gigantic rep­tile began to droop, as was at first supposed, from the in­creasing cold. It refused to kill some fowls which were presented, and died before reaching St Helena. On dis­section, the coats of the stomach were found to be “ exco­riated and pierced by worms!” Nothing of either goat re­mained except a single horn. During a prior captivity of some months at Whidah, in the kingdom of Dahomey, Mr Macleod had enjoyed opportunities of observing snakes “ double the size of the one just described.” These kill­ed their prey in the same manner ; but from their supe­rior bulk were capable of swallowing much larger animals than either goats or sheep. Governor Abson, who had re­sided for nearly forty years at Fort William, a settlement of the African Company, used to describe some desperate struggles which had taken place between these great ser­pents and various wild beasts, as well as smaller cattle. A negro herdsman was once seized by the thigh, but the mon­ster, in attempting to entwine itself around him, got en­

tangled by a tree, and the man being armed with a knife, had presence of mind to inflict several severe gashes on the neck and throat, which enabled him to disengage him­self from the dreadful coils which were closing fast around him. But he remained lame for life, in consequence of the wound and heavy pressure inflicted by the jaws.

The natural colours, which are various in this family, disappear speedily after death. Some are brown upon a yellowish ground, others exhibit a uniformly greenish hue, red prevails among certain species, while a few are nearly black. Almost all are more or less spotted ; and it has been observed that, unlike the smaller tribes of serpents, these markings continue equally, or rather more distinct, as the individual increases in years. The body of the Boas is thickest at the middle, tapers towards either end, and is always considerably compressed. The abdomen is broad, and slightly convex or keeled. The tail is shaped like the body, but is more slender, not very conical, and usually terminates in a blunted point. It is always prehensile, that is, possesses the power of rolling inwards upon itself, or forming convolutions around other bodies. The scales in general are rather small, and as they encroach considerably on the under surface, it follows that the abdominal plates arc narrower than usual. There are sometimes from sixty to seventy ranges of scales, and about two hundred and fifty abdominal plates. The number of these, however, is greater in the Boas of the ancient world than among the American species, which moreover differ in several other respects; while the genus *Aerochordus* is distinguished from all its congeners by the small granular scales which clothe the entire surface, and of which a double series prevails along the median line of the abdomen, forming a kind of project­ing ridge or keel.

The head of the Boas is always distinguishable from the trunk, being thick, rather lengthened, conical, depressed, and terminated by a muzzle for the most part elongated, and truncated at the point. The eyes are placed at some dis­tance from the nostrils, and are lateral in the terrestrial species, of which the head is flattened above, and more or less angular on the sides ; but the more aquatic kinds have the eyes rather vertical. These organs are always small in our present family, and, excepting *Aerochordus,* have the

pupil horizontally elongated. The nostrils are broad, close- y approached to the end of the muzzle, and in some are placed upon its summit. They open upwards in the genus just named, and assume a tubular form. All the species are provided with palatine teeth, nearly as much developed as the maxillary ones ; but there are no intermaxillary teeth except among the Pythons. The glands of the head are less developed in this family than among the majority of Ophidian reptiles.

Genus Boa. No intermaxillary teeth. Space between the orbits formed solely by the frontale properly so called. Sub- caudal plates simple.@@3 See Plate CCCCXLIII. figs. 8-11.

This restricted genus includes the largest of Ophidian reptiles, and although composed chiefly of South American snakes, it also contains three Asiatic species, which, though of much smaller size, cannot be regarded otherwise than as a geographical division.

*Boa constrictor,* Linn., is a middle-sized species, which rarely exceeds the length of ten or twelve feet.@@3 It is of a reddish tint, elegantly marked by irregular reticulations of

@@@, Macleod's *Voyage of the Alceste,* p. 290.

@@@« This is the prevailing character of these parts, although we find in this, as in many other cases, a difficulty in seizing upon single determinate features of constant application. Thus we sometimes meet with several divided plates in the sub-caudal region of these so-called Boas.

@@@s The true *Β. constrictor* is often confounded with the more gigantic *B. murina,* and its dimensions have in consequence been greatly exaggerated. We doubt if any existing species ever attains to the alleged size of the so-called *B. constrictor.* Mr Swainson, however, who has travelled in South America, and is himself a zealous student of the facts of zoology, both as recorded in books and as existing in nature, states that the young individuals frequent in our menageries are mere pigmies in comparison to the