other species of Python may have attained in ancient times, but it is probably from some misconceived view of our pre­sent species that the marvellous traditions regarding almost immeasurable serpents have been derived. Who has not read of that enormous reptile which spread dismay even through a Roman army? It is thus related by Valerius Maximus, from one of the lost books of Livy, by whom it is said to have been recorded at greater length. “ And since we are on the sub­ject of uncommon phenomena, we may here mention the serpent so eloquently and accurately (!) recorded by Livy, who says, that near the river Bagrada in Africa, a snake was seen of so enormous a magnitude as to prevent the army of Attilius Regulus from the use of the river; and after snatching up several soldiers with its enormous mouth, and devouring them, and killing several more by striking and squeezing them by the spine of its tail, was at length destroyed by assailing it with all the force of military en­gines and showers of stones, after it had withstood the at­tack of their spears and darts ; that it was regarded by the whole army as a more formidable enemy than even Car­thage itself ; and that the whole adjacent region, being taint­ed with the pestilential effluvia proceeding from its remains, and the waters with its blood, the Roman army was obliged to move its station : he also adds, that the skin of the mon­ster, measuring 120 feet in length, was sent to Rome as a trophy.” The learned Frienshemius, having had the ad­vantage of living a thousand years or two after the histo­rian of the Punic war, has given a still more circumstantial account of this bloody broil in his *Supplementa Liυiana.* He there informs us, that "it caused so much trouble to Regulus, that he found it necessary to contest the posses­sion of the river with it, by employing the whole force of his army ; during which a considerable number of soldiers were lost, while the serpent could neither be vanquished nor wounded, the strong armour of its scales easily repelling the force of all the weapons that were directed against it ; upon which recourse was had to battering engines, with which the animal was attacked in the manner of a fortified tower, and was thus at length overpowered. Several dis­charges were made against it without success, till its *back being broken by an immense stone"* (we admire detailed ac­counts of ancient actions), “ the formidable monster began to lose its powers, and was yet with difficulty destroyed, after having diffused such a horror among the army, that they confessed they would rather attack Carthage itself than such another monster.” Probably such another was not then at hand, and we believe has never been seen since ;

but the anecdote itself holds out great encouragement to modern travellers. It is, we doubt not, to *Python bi vittatus* that Bosman and other writers refer, when they mention the religious veneration with which some great African ser­pents are regarded by the natives. But we must conclude our imperfect notice of this genus by stating, that of the remaining species, *P. Schneideri* (Plate CCCCXLIII. fig. 3, and Plate CCCCXLIV. fig. 5) is found in Malacca, Java, Sumatra, and Amboyna ; *P. amethystinus,* in Saparua, a small island opposite Amboyna (a nearly identical kind be­ing found in Timor, Samao, and New Ireland) ; and *P. Pe- ronii* in New Holland.

Genus Acrochordus. Head rounded, eyes extremely small, rather vertical, pupil orbicular, nostrils tubular, nearly terminal, opening forwards or upwards. Tail strongly pre­hensile, and, in common with the trunk, compressed. Anal hooks wanting. Whole body covered by small scales, and the abdomen furnished with a kind of keel beset with scales. Teeth as in the Boas proper.

The anomalous reptiles of our present genus may be said to combine the characters of the Boas and sea-serpents. Their dentition resembles that of the former, while the

position of the eyes and nostrils, the compact closure of the mouth, compressed form of the body, the existence of the abdominal crest and absence of anal hooks, assimilate them to the latter. They are, however, easily distinguished by being destitute of poison-fangs. Want of attention to the latter character, and some confused and contradictory data furnished by foreign naturalists, have caused several errors in the arrangement of the species, which are very few in number. They inhabit the intertropical countries of Asia, are extremely aquatic in their propensities, and are external­ly distinguished by a somewhat sombre colouring,—brown and a yellowish hue being the prevailing tints. The Ja­vanese species, *Aerochordus Javanicus,* is of a deep earthen- brown colour, irregularly marbled. Its form is thick, the head short and obtuse, the tail slender in proportion to the other parts. It attains a total length of eight feet with the thickness of a man’s arm, and was first described by Homstedt, from a specimen taken in a large pepper -ground near Sangasan in Java.@@1 *Ac. fasciatus* is also of a brown colour, but with paler bands upon the sides, the general form much more slender, and the dimensions considerably less.@@2 It is more extended in its distribution than the preceding, being found in Pondicherry, New Guinea, Sumatra, Java, and Timor. It forms (it is said erroneously) the genus *chersy­drus* of Baron Cuvier,—the great French naturalist having been informed by M. Leschenhault that the snake in ques­tion was extremely poisonous, and dwelt in the beds of the rivers of Java. The accuracy of the former assertion has been since disproved. No other species are distinctly known.

SECOND PRIMARY DIVISION-VENOMOUS SER­PENTS.

*Family I.—Cοlubriform Venomous Serpents.*

The poisonous species here assembled, although provided with envenomed fangs, so nearly resemble the Colubers in their general external forms as to be easily mistaken for them by an inexperienced eye. They also partake in some points of the features of the sea-serpents, but are distinguished by wanting the flattened tail ; while from the concluding family of venomous serpents *properly so called,* they are kept apart by the bulkier proportions, thick triangular heads, vertical pupils, and carinated scales, which characterize the species lost alluded to. At the same time it must be admitted, that those rigorous and distinct demarcations which so many lovers of nature desire to establish, but which so few can find, occur as seldom here as in other departments of zoo­logy,—several species in each family showing a strong ten­dency of transition towards another.

The reptiles of our present family have a more slenderly elongated form than those of other poisonous groups. Their trunk is in general a good deal drawn out, sometimes cylin­drical, or slightly compressed. Their tail, like that of all poisonous species, is rather short, conical, and rounded at the extremity. Their head, almost always of nearly equal dimensions with the neck, is small, short, and obtuse at the extremity. The eyes are rather small, sometimes vertical, the pupil always orbicular. The nostrils, always lateral and rather open, are pierced in a large plate on each side of the muzzle. The scales are not numerous, of medium size, and always smooth,—except in *Naja hæmachates,* in which they seem surmounted by a keel. The abdomen is constantly convex, and furnished with plates of greater or less extent, according to the species. But what particularly charac­terizes this family is, that all the genera of which it is com­posed have the crown of the head covered by nine plates,

*@@@1 Ad. Stοchk,* 1787 ; and *Journ. de Physique,* 1788.

@@@s Shaw, *Gen. Zool.* iii. pl. 130.