

its body did not appear to swell; it seemed to be thrown into violent convulsions, and in about a minute fell helplessly on its side, and died. A larger animal would not have been so soon killed; but as the snakes, being confined, have not often occasion to use their venom, it is probably more powerful than when they are in a wild state. There are a large number of puff-adders in one case; and a guinea-pig being introduced began sniffing about as usual; but though he was touching one of the reptiles, it did not seem disposed to strike, when suddenly another puff-adder darted at full length from an opposite corner, and striking the creature, remained with its fangs apparently buried in its flesh, contrary, we believe, to the usual habit of the reptile. His intention was perhaps to prevent any of the others from devouring it. There are specimens of the two species of cobras, the Indian and Egyptian; perhaps the most interesting of all serpents; but, on account of their excitable nature, it has been found necessary to hide them partially from view by filling the lower half of the case-front with groundglass, so that it is not easy to observe them.

The appearance of the cobra when about to give the fatal stroke is graceful, and yet terrible to see. The inflated hood, the waving motion of the head, and the peculiar expression of the eye, combine to impress the observer of its consciousness of the deadly power which it possesses, and with which it threatens any living creature that dares approach it. Venomous serpents can generally be distinguished by the broad head and stumpy tail which they possess; but this rule does not always hold good, some of them—for example, the cobras—having a structure closely resembling that of the colubrines, with the exception of the fangs and organs pertaining to them. There are in this house some young alligators, which are kept with the water-tortoises. They seem to pass their time generally in