

"All represented there. They fed on each other. The father fell a victim to the appetite of his wife, and she was eaten by one of her sons. The latter was swallowed by his sister, and she by her brother, and so on till that fellow only was left. He breakfasted off a water-snake this morning almost as long as himself, so he's a bit sleepy, but my boy will wake him up."

"Here, Willie!"

A delicate-looking youth about seven years of age came running into the room. Such a pretty boy, with large, dreamy eyes and a mass of sunny brown hair combed over his forehead. Obedient to a sign from his father, he pushed aside the glass covering of the case, and, inserting his tiny hand, pulled out the wriggling monster and began to caress it by stroking its head.

"I can't do much with him," said the boy. "I like the rattles and turtleheads the best."

Putting the cannibal back into its lair, he went over to a large case, in which some twenty turtlehead snakes, varying in length from three to eight feet, were busily engaged in twisting themselves and each other into knots. The boy opened one side of the case, and, seizing a snake with each hand, put them round his neck.

"This one's Barnum and that's Baby, see how they kiss me," said the little fellow as the reptiles rubbed their mouths against his lips and cheeks. Barnum was a beautifully marked creature, pure white belly and back with black and white spots. He measured about eight feet, and the centre of his body was as thick as a man's wrist. Baby was five feet long. Without removing the two others, the boy again put his hands in the case and brought out three more full-sized fellows, which he placed about his waist. "This is Jack, and that's Nellie, and here's Bill. They know me and they would never hurt me." It made the newsman shudder as he watched the snakes crawling and twisting over the boy, while a dozen more heads protruded from the case, pointing their forked tongues at the lad as if trying to join in the fun.

"Those snakes could crush my son to death if they liked," said Mr. Cills, as he also took three or four of the reptiles and allowed them to wriggle about his body, "but they would never think of doing him harm. With the exception of Baby, all those turtle-heads were brought to me by a sea captain from the West Indies. Baby was hatched from an egg that lay in the barrel which formed their travelling carriage. He was four inches long