

of food. They seemed to be preferred by the snakes to the sparrows, and presently one of the reptiles, waiting his opportunity, seized a guinea-pig by the neck, and, jerking it nearer, threw two or three folds round it, killing it in a few seconds.

The other snakes rapidly dispatched the sparrows in the same way when seized; but they were apparently in no hurry, as there was a number of the birds in one corner for more than an hour, which had not been touched during that time. It may be well to remark that there is nothing revolting in the spectacle of a serpent taking its food. Its victim suffers neither the mental nor bodily torture ordinarily supposed. When seized it is killed without delay, especially if it struggles to escape; and before its seizure it is never conscious of danger. Not only is this well known to those in charge of the creatures, but we can verify it from actual and careful observation. A rabbit will approach a snake out of mere curiosity, and, after sniffing at its head, and even being touched by its tongue, will start to another part of the enclosure, and resume its composure, returning again in the course of its explorations to the same snake without the least uneasiness, except what arises from a want of cabbage-leaves, and the indigestibility of the gravel flooring. Guinea-pigs show even less concern, and are not so easily startled by any moving objects. We are induced to make these remarks because a well meaning but injudicious individual wrote to the papers some time since upon what he considered the cruelty of giving living animals to be tortured slowly to death. It was, however, shown during the discussion which ensued, that facts were in direct opposition to the suggestions of sentimental imagination upon the subject.

The snakes which had seized the sparrows, &c., waited till their prey was quite dead before they uncoiled and began to prepare slowly for swallowing it. The pythons,