

resemble the serpents; and there are, indeed, species which seem to form connecting links between the two orders.

The *Ophidia* are, however, seen to much greater advantage at their feeding-time, which occurs once a week; not that they are all fed so often, for many will take sufficient food at a meal for several weeks, and some (in particular the pythons) have been known to fast for months together. Having been present lately on the occasion of these creatures receiving their usual allowance, we purpose to give a short account, from careful observation, of the manner in which they seized and killed their prey.

The constricting serpents, as we may term them, are kept in large cases, the entrance to which is either by a glass door in front, which opens by a sliding up, or by a similar contrivance at the back, in the wooden partition. The colubrine snakes are in some of these cases generally, and indeed are so harmless that little precaution is needed. The venomous serpents have no opening but a small one on the lid of the case, about two or three inches square. Through this their food is introduced; and all necessary operations for the cleanliness and order of the interior are performed with a rod of stout wire, to the evident disgust of the occupants, who, if newcomers, strike at it vigorously with their fangs. The first to be fed were the yellow snakes, and other species in the same case. The keeper, having unceremoniously removed the blanket, beneath which most of the occupants of the compartment were huddled together, as usual, quickly introduced under the glass door about a dozen sparrows and one or two guinea-pigs. The former immediately retired to the darkest corners, seeming, however, to be quite unconcerned as to the presence of the snakes, as in some cases they stood on the latter, which for the most part remained motionless. The guinea-pigs were more restless, moving slowly about as if in search