

THE GREAT "BOA" OF THE PARIS MUSEUM.

The boa family (*Boidae*) comprises the boas, the tro-pidophides, the eunectes, etc. The reptile which has just been added to the menagerie of the Jardin des Plantes at Paris, and which is certainly one of the largest that has ever been seen in Europe, is not a "boa," as it has been erroneously styled, but a eunectes—*Eunectes murinus*. It is over twenty feet in length, and the size of its body is as large in proportion. This species of *Eunectes* is found in South America, especially in Guiana and Brazil. It was made known by Fermin, in his natural history of Surinam, and its habits have been since described by Prince Neuwied, in his *Beitrag zur Naturgeschichte von Brasilien* (vol. i.). The following are a few of the data that we owe to this accomplished traveler:

In Brazil this serpent is called *cucuriubu* or *cucuriu*. The Botocudos name it *ketamenioy*. The Prince saw specimens that were twenty feet in length, and the inhabitants assured him that in wild and uninhabited places the animal attained a much greater length. This serpent usually lives in the water, where it lies upon the bottom, with only its head protruding. Being a skillful diver, it is capable of going beneath the water and not appearing at the surface again till quite a long time afterward. Sometimes it swims rapidly through the water in all directions, after the manner of eel-like fishes, and sometimes, on the contrary, it abandons its stiff and immovable body to the rapid current of a creek or river. Sometimes it lies stretched out upon the sand or rocks of the shore, or else upon a fallen tree, patiently waiting for some thirsty mammal to approach near enough to be seized. The animals that it oftenest captures are agoutis, pacas, and capybaras. It is said that it also eats fishes.

In Brazil the eunectes does not become torpid in winter. The bow and gun are the weapons that the natives use for killing it, except when it is upon land, where it moves but slowly. In this case they dispatch it with clubs. Its skin is used for making foot-gear and traveling bags. Its fat is employed for different purposes, and its flesh is eaten by the Botocudos.

The eunectes, like the species of the other genera belonging to the family *Boidae*, is in no wise venomous.

There are already in the Museum of Paris several eunectes, either stuffed or in alcohol, two of which are of great size. One of these is not so long as the live specimen at the menagerie, but its body is thicker.

The new boid of the Jardin des Plantes reached the menagerie the 21st of last July. It came from South America, and was purchased

from a dealer in animals at Liverpool. Food has been offered it, but it has so far refused to eat fishes, rabbits, or other victuals. There is nothing surprising in this, since these sorts of reptiles are capable of going several months without partaking of food.

The animal usually remains in a bathing tub full of water in its cage, its head protruding from the liquid. It comes out of the water for a few moments during the day, but it is almost constantly immovable, and assumes nearly the position shown in our engraving, which is from nature. The rabbits figured alongside of it will give some idea of the reptile's dimensions.—*La Nature*.

A Mustard Sponge.

In referring to sponge as a carrier of poultices, Dr. Richardson considers that it makes the best of mustard carriers. Mix the mustard in a basin with water until the mass is smooth and of even consistency. Then take the soft mass all up with a clean sponge, lay the sponge in the center of a white handkerchief, tie up the corners neatly, and apply the smooth, convex surface to the skin. This mustard sponge, warmed again by the fire and slightly moistened, can be applied three or four times, is good for several hours, and saves the trouble of making a new poultice during the weariness of night watching. The sponge can afterward easily be washed clean in warm water.

How Long Will Oysters Live out of Water?

In the Bulletin of the U. S. Fish Commission, Prof. A. E. Verrill says: My attention was recently called by Capt. C. H. Townsend to a large cluster of oysters attached to an old boat which had been hanging in the front windows of the fish market of Charles Reed, in this city, for a long time. This cluster was taken from the water in the early part of December, 1884 (about the 10th, it is said), and when I examined it on February 25, several of the larger oysters were still alive. I am told that they continued to live for some days afterward. The larger ones, which were still alive, were of about the size ordinarily sold in the market. Most of the smaller ones were dead, and many of the larger ones, of which the edges had been broken or chipped, were dead and dried up when I saw them. Those that were alive had all been hung up with the front edge of the shell down and the hinge upward. They had been hanging in the show window, attached to a gas burner, during the whole time (over ten weeks), freely exposed to the air and light. The room was, of course, rather cool, as such shops usually are in winter, and the window space, although open freely to the shop, was doubtless still cooler, especially at night, but the air

The Star Fish.

No animal is more common on the rocky coasts than the star fish, and for this reason visitors to the seashore are very apt to pass it by, and search for the more attractive and rare sea anemones. But in doing this they pass by one of the most interesting animals, and one which has very curious habits. Drop a star fish into a glass dish filled with sea water, and watch it for a few moments. If it happens to drop on its back, one of the five arms which seem so rigid when taken from the water will begin to bend, scores of small suckers will fasten themselves upon the bottom of the tank, and soon the star will be right side up.

He is a restless creature when in an aquarium, and will continually rove about in search of something to eat. He moves about with a slow, regular motion, which at first seems mysterious. There is no irregular motion, as in walking, but simply a slow propulsion along the bottom or up the sides of the tank, as if pushed on by some continual pressure from behind. In a moment he mounts the perpendicular side, and through the transparent glass we have an opportunity to see how he moves. In the center of each arm there is a depression, and in each depression there are several rows of pure white suckers

extending from the base to the tip of the arm. These are his locomotive organs, and well do they serve the purpose. There are hundreds of them, elastic, yet muscular, all working at the same time to propel the creature along. One loosens its hold, stretches itself out, and takes another hold an eighth of an inch further up. Others follow, and the creature moves. It is held firmly, yet at the same time is continually moving.

But see, it is approaching a mussel hanging by its finely woven byssus to the side of the tank. Can it have designs upon this shell fish? Straight toward it the star moves, it nears the mussel, the forward suckers touch the shell; the star hesitates a moment, then moves on faster than before. One arm has passed over the mussel, and the mouth of the star fish is just over the center of the shell. Surely it can do no harm to this well defended shell fish. Its mouth is so small that it cannot swallow the mussel, and surely it cannot bore into the hard shell.

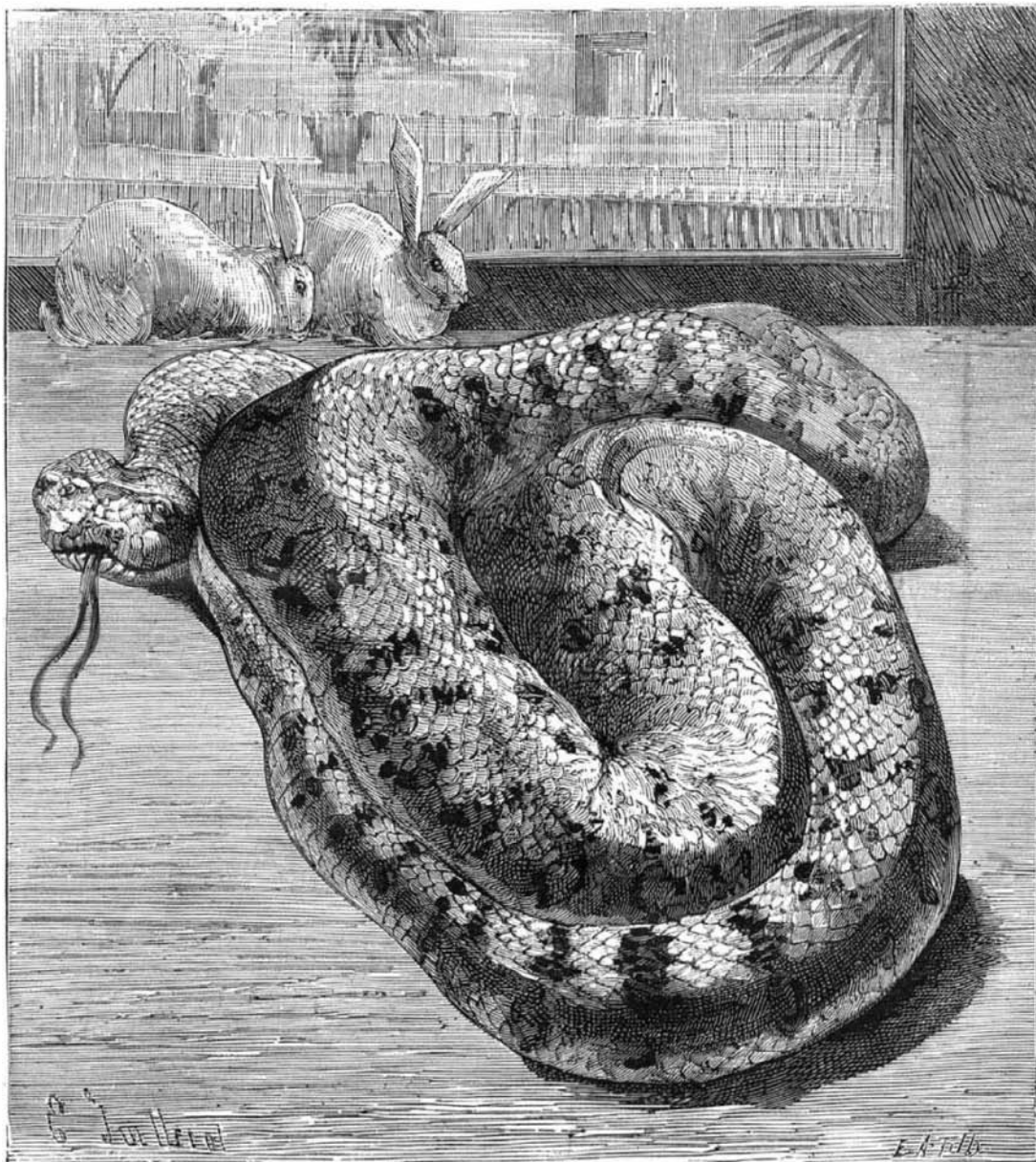
The star fish has stopped, the five arms are curled around the mussel, and it is held in a strong embrace. We watch the star fish with renewed interest, but all we see is the same motionless attitude, no change in position, nothing to indicate change. The star seems satisfied to remain as it is, as if at rest. Soon a thin membrane encircles the mussel, but nothing further is seen. We revisit the aquarium at the end of an hour, and the star is in the

same position; at the end of two hours there is no change; but in three hours we return to see the star fish nestled in the darkest corner of the aquarium, while the unfortunate mussel hangs in its old position quite dead, the shell gaping open, and numerous little shrimp feeding on the half digested parts left by the destructive star fish.

What has been done? Simply this—the star fish, unable to take the shell into its stomach, has accommodated itself to circumstances, and extended its stomach out of its mouth, and digested the shell fish with its stomach entirely outside of its body. In this silent manner hordes of star fish invade the oyster beds, and in a single night destroy thousands. The oystermen, recognizing their destructive power, formerly had the stupid habit of cutting every star fish that they caught into three or four pieces and returning them to the water, not knowing that each piece had the power of reproducing itself, and that for each star thus torn into three or four pieces, two or three new individuals were formed.

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PAPIER maché has come of late to be largely used in the manufacture of theatrical properties, and nearly all the magnificent vases, the handsome plaques, the graceful statues, and the superb gold and silver plate seen to-day on the stage are made of that material.



EUNETES MURINUS.

must have been dry and the temperature quite variable. The window faces to the west, and would have direct sunlight in the afternoon. The remarkable duration of the life of these oysters is undoubtedly due to two causes:

1. The perfect condition of the edges of the shells, which allowed them to close up very tightly.
2. The position, suspended as they were, with the front edge downward, is the most favorable position for the retention of water within the gill cavity, for in this position the edges of the mantle would closely pack against the inner edges of the shell, effectually closing any small leaks, and the retained water would also be in the most favorable position to moisten the gills, even after part had evaporated. It is also possible that when in this position the oyster instinctively keeps the shell tightly closed, to prevent the loss of water.

This incident may give a hint as to the best mode of transporting oysters and clams long distances. Perfect shells should be selected, and they should be packed with the front edge downward, and kept moderately cool, in a crate or some such receptacle which will allow a free circulation of air. Under such favorable conditions selected oysters can doubtless be kept from eight to twelve weeks out of water. Probably the quahaug, or round clam, which has a very tightly closing shell, when perfect can be kept equally long in the same way.