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## THREE PIGEONS

LASSCO Three Pigeons

Milton Common,

Oxfordshire OX9 2JN

+44 (0)1844 277188

3pigeons@lassco.co.uk

BRUNSWICK HOUSE

30 Wandsworth Road,

London SW8 2LG

+44 (0) 20 7394 2100

brunswick@lassco.co.uk



THE RATTLE-SNAKE.—*Crotalus Horridus*.

THIS poisonous reptile is found in the continent of America. Its venom is said to be more virulent than that of any creature of the same class; but happily it seldom employs its fatal power, except when induced by hunger, or for the purpose of self-preservation. It is extremely sluggish, and generally avoids the sight of man. The poison is inserted into the body of its victim by means of two long, sharp-pointed teeth or fangs, which grow one on each side of the upper jaw. The root of each fang rests on a kind of bag, containing a certain quantity of liquid poison of a yellow colour; and when the animal bites, a portion of this fluid is forced through an opening in the tooth, and lodged at the bottom of the wound. Another peculiarity of the poison teeth is, that, when not in use, they turn back, as it were upon a hinge, and lie flat in the roof of the animal's mouth. Some persons have imagined that the Rattle-Snake has the power of fascinating its prey. The idea probably arose from the circumstance of the smaller animals, on which this snake subsists, becoming so terrified at the sight of their frightful enemy, as to lose their self-possession when in its presence. Its name is given to it on account of the wonderful apparatus with which its tail is furnished. This consists of a series of hollow, horn-like substances, placed loosely one against the other, in such a manner as to produce a rattling noise when the tail is shaken; and as the animal, when intending an attack, gives a tremulous action to the tail, timely notice is afforded of the threatened danger. It is said that the number of pieces of which this rattle is formed indicates the age of the snake, as a fresh portion grows every year. The mechanism of the jaw of most serpents is very wonderful, allowing them, from its vast power of expansion, to swallow animals of great comparative size. Like those of all other creatures which swallow their prey whole, the teeth appear to be formed chiefly for preventing its escape, and not for the purposes of mastication. The effect of venom upon snakes is said to be very great, and is often produced by the serpent-charmers of India. Viscount Chateaubriand relates, that, in July, 1791, in Upper Canada, he saw a native appease the anger of a Rattle-Snake, and even cause it to follow him, by the music of his flute. This reminds us of the words of the Psalmist, when, speaking of the wicked, he says, "Their poison is like the poison of a serpent; they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely."

\* Pallas's Bull. 4. 5.

PUBLISHED UNDER THE SANCTION OF THE COMMITTEE OF GENERAL LITERATURE AND EDUCATION, APPOINTED BY THE SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

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Price 16 Penn; 16, ONE PENN.

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E. TAYLOR, LONDON, PRINTED BY W. BELL.

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