

state it is safe from the attack of dogs; for the dog not being able to take the whole in its mouth, tries to bite one side, and the ball slips away. The smooth hard covering of the *mataco* offers a better defence than the sharp spines of the hedgehog. The *pichy* prefers a very dry soil; and the sand-dunes near the coast, where for many months it can never taste water, is its favorite resort: it often tries to escape notice by squatting close to the ground. In the course of a day's ride, near Bahia Blanca, several were generally met with. The instant one was perceived, it was necessary, in order to catch it, almost to tumble off one's horse; for in soft soil the animal burrowed so quickly that its hinder quarters would almost disappear before one could alight. It seems almost a pity to kill such nice little animals, for, as a Gaucho said, while sharpening his knife on the back of one, "Son tan mansos" (they are so quiet).

Of reptiles there are many kinds: one snake (a *Trigonocephalus*, or *Eophias*), from the size of the poison channel in its fangs, must be very deadly. Cuvier, in opposition to some other naturalists, makes this a sub-genus of the rattlesnake, and intermediate between it and the viper. In confirmation of this opinion, I observed a fact, which appears to me very curious and instructive, as showing how every character, even though it may be in some degree independent of structure, has a tendency to vary by slow degrees. The extremity of the tail of this snake is terminated by a point, which is very slightly enlarged; and as the animal glides along, it constantly vibrates the last inch; and this part, striking against the dry grass and brushwood, produces a rattling noise, which can be distinctly heard at the distance of six feet. As often as the animal was irritated or surprised, its tail was shaken; and the vibrations were extremely rapid. Even as long as the body retained its irritability, a tendency to this habitual movement was evident. This *Trigonocephalus* has, therefore, in some respects, the structure of a viper, with the habits of a rattlesnake: the noise, however, being produced by a simpler device. The expression of this