ance with the position they occupy, such as vertical, occi­pital, superciliary, frontal, rostral, labial, ocular, frenal, tem­poral, mental, and gular.@@,

The system of coloration which prevails among these in­sidious creatures is very varied, and admits of numerous exceptions to any general laws which we might attempt to establish in its illustration. In numerous species there is a beautiful accordance between the tinting of the body and the colour of the places they inhabit ; thus many tree-ser­pents are of a uniform greenish hue, exactly similar to that of the foliage by which they are overshadowed, while seve­ral kinds of *Dendrophis* and *Dryophis* seem rather to imi­tate the small and leafless branches. In the genus *Dipsas* the colours recall to mind those of the mossy trunks of an­cient trees ; fresh-water snakes are usually of a sombre uni­form hue ; while the marine species partake of those clearer tints of green and blue which beautify the pellucid billows of the up-heaving sea. Such as dwell in dry and desert lands are often to be scarcely distinguished from the parch­ed sand by which they are surrounded ; while others, which affect a more varied soil and richer vegetation, are adorned with the gay and gorgeous colouring of flowers, or the me­tallic splendour of the mineral kingdom. Several have their bodies encircled by alternate bands of crimson and black upon a pearly-white or delicate yellow ground, and present an aspect as richly adorned as any we can discover throughout the entire range of the animal world.

Lovelier not those that in Illyria changed Mermione and Cadmus, or the God In Epidaurus, nor to which transformed Ammιonian Jove, or Capitoline was seen :

He with Olympias, this with her who bore Scipio, the height of Rome.

Among the more beautiful may be mentioned *Coronella venustissima* and *coccinea, Lycodon formosus,* several spe­cies of *Tortrix* and *Helerοdοn,* the majority of the genus *Blaps, Naja lubrica, Dendrophis ornata,* and *Dipsas ma- crorhina.* Numerous other species are equally remarkable, both for the splendour and diversity of colour by which they are adorned ; but as these bright hues are subject to numerous causes of variation, from age, sex, and season, it results, that among no order of created beings is the always uncertain character of colour to be less depended on than among the subjects of our present dissertation. It seems, however, established as a general law, that the younger in­dividuals have the liveliest and most distinct tints, and that these in more aged examples are not unfrequently effaced, or fade away, as we find in *coluber canus* and *melanurus, Homalopsis buceata, Xenodon severus,* and others. The power of speedy and spontaneous change of colour does not, however, seem to be a possession of the Ophidian order, as it is of so many of the Saurian tribes. Yet a few of the arboreal serpents have been occasionally observed to mo­dify their living tints from time to time.

The natural colours of these creatures can scarcely be judged of from specimens imported to our cabinets from foreign climes. The spirit in which they are preserved is not the spirit of beauty. Black, brown, ochry-yellow, and several other tints, do not altogether lose their lustre ; and *calamaria arcliventris* and *brachyorrhos, Tortrix macu­lata* and *xenopeltis, Coronella rufula, Lycodon hebe* and *subanctus, Coluber constrictor, Æsculapii,* and *melanurus,* and several kinds of *Naja, Homalapsis,* and *Vipera,* may be named among those which are most easily preserved. But green speedily tarnishes after death, loses its vivacity, and becomes bluish ; it even communicates its tint to spirit of wine. White almost always loses its purity, and becomes

of a soiled or yellowish aspect, while pale yellow passes into dingy white. The brilliant hues of red and or.ιnge with which so many species are adorned, almost entirely disappear, and are converted into dingy or brownish yellow. Blue, which is rather a rare colour among Ophidian reptiles, also quickly fades away, and the more exposed the specimens are to the influence of light, the more rapidly are these and other changes effected.

In discussing the various branches of natural history, it is the practice of authors to state the *uses* of each particu­lar tribe of animals to the human race. We fear, that in relation to our present subjects, a single paragraph may suf­fice. Serpents certainly confer benefit by destroying other injurious creatures, such as small mammiferous vermin, worms, insects, and mollusca of various kinds. They were formerly used in medicine, though that practice, we believe, is now confined to the ignorant and superstitious ; yet it has been recently stated, that Dr Marikrosky, of Rosenau, in Hungary, has employed the gall of serpents with success in epileptic cases.@@2 It is well known that the flesh of the viper has been highly esteemed, both by ancient and mo­dern physicians, as a restorative and strengthening diet. This idea, as Dr Shaw has well observed, seems to have originated from the reptile casting its skin, a natural pro­cess, viewed by the vulgar as a renovation of youth ; and a snake being made the emblem of health, and consecrated to Æsculapius, may have depended on the same idea. The flesh of the viper was used by the ancients in leprous and other cases. “ The Greek physician Craterus, mentioned so often by Cicero in his Epistles to Atticus, cured, as Por- phyrius relates, a miserable slave, whose skin in a strange manner fell off from his bones, by advising him to feed on vipers’ flesh in the manner of fish. Antonius Musa, phy­sician to Octavius Cæsar (Augustus), is said by Pliny to have ordered the eating of vipers, in the case of otherwise incurable ulcers, which by this method were quickly heal­ed ; and Galen says, that those who are afflicted with ele­phantiasis are wonderfully relieved by eating vipers’ flesh dressed like eels.”@@3 According to Lopez, the negroes of the coast of Congo eat roasted adders, and regard them as de­licious food. It is well known that the credulous Sir Ke- nelm Digby, with a view to recover his wife, the Lady Ve­netia, from consumption, caused her to feed on capons fat­tened with vipers. But we need not detain our readers with more of these, at best, ambiguous views. To proceed with our natural history.

In European countries, the copulation of serpents usually takes place, in fine weather, during the months of April and May, and three or four months elapse before the eggs are laid. Incubation is effected within the body of the female ; for, on opening an egg immediately after exclusion, we al­most always find a fœtus more or less developed, sometimes entirely formed. In the latter case, the so-called shell is merely a delicate membrane, through which the young can force their way, even at the moment of parturition. In the greater number of species, however, the eggs are composed externally of a resistant covering resembling parchment, the young being very imperfectly formed at the period of deposition, and requiring sometimes a month or more be­fore they are hatched. It is merely this difference in the times of final exclusion that constitutes the distinction be­tween the viviparous and oviparous kinds, these being otherwise essentially the same. All Ophidians are in truth oviparous ; and those naturalists are in error who compare this seemingly viviparous generation to that of mammife­rous animals, in which the young are nourished by the pla­centa of the mother. According to M. Herholdt,@@4 the con-

@@@1 See *Physiognomie des Serpens,* i. 60.

@@@, Hufeland, *dοum. Ann.* 1831, call. 10.

*@@@3 General Zoolοgy,* iii. 372.

***@@@4 Oνersigt.*** 1830, p. 4.