arts of man, though ever ſo earneſtly bent upon its deſtruction. For this reaſon, there is ſcarce a country in the world that does not ſtill give birth to this poiſonous brood, that ſeems formed to quell human pride, and repreſs the boaſts of ſecurity. Mankind have dri­ven the lion, the tiger, and the wolf, from their vicini­ty ; but the ſnake and the viper ſtill defy their power.

Their numbers, however, are thinned by human aſſiduity ; and it is poſſible ſome of the kinds are whol­ly deſtroyed. In none of the countries of Europe are they ſufficiently numerous to be truly terrible. The various malignity that has been aſcribed to European ſerpents of old is now utterly unknown ; there are not above three or four kinds that are dangerous, and their poiſon operates in all in the same manner. The drowſy death, the ſtarting of the blood from every pore, the inſatiable and burning thirſt, the melting down the ſolid maſs of the whole form into one heap of putrefaction, ſaid to be occaſioned by the bites of African ſerpents, are horrors with which we are entire­ly unacquainted.

But though we have thus reduced theſe dangers, ha­ving been incapable of wholly removing them, in other parts of the world they ſtill rage with all their ancient malignity. In the warm countries that lie within the tropics, as well as in the cold regions of the north, where the inhabitants are few, the ſerpents propagate in equal proportion. But of all countries those re­gions have them in the greateſt abundance where the fields are unpeopled and fertile, and where the climate ſupplies warmth and humidity. All along the ſwampy banks of the river Niger or Oroonoko, where the ſun is hot, the foreſts thick, and the men but few, the ſer­pents cling among the branches of the trees in infinite numbers, and carry on an unceaſing war againſt all other animals in their vicinity. Travellers have aſſured us, that they have often ſeen large ſnakes twining round the trunk of a tall tree, encompaſſing it like a wreath, and thus riſing and deſcending at pleaſure.— We are not, therefore, to reject as wholly fabulous the accounts left us by the ancients of the terrible devaſtations committed by a ſingle ſerpent. It is probable, in early times, when the arts were little known, and man­kind were but thinly ſcattered over the earth, that ſer­pents, continuing undiſturbed poſſeſſors of the foreſt, grew to an amazing magnitude ; and every other tribe of animals fell before them. It then might have hap­pened, that ſerpents reigned the tyrants of a diſtrict for centuries together. To animals of this kind, grown by time and rapacity to 100 or 150 feet in length, the lion, the tiger, and even the elephant itſelf, were but feeble opponents. That horrible foetor, which even the commoneſt and the most harmleſs ſnakes are ſtill found to diffuſe, might, in theſe larger ones, become too powerful for any living being to withſtand ; and while they preyed without diſtinction, they might thus alſo have poiſoned the atmosphere around them. In this manner, having for ages lived in the hidden and un­peopled foreſt, and finding, as their appetites were more powerful, the quantity of their prey decreaſing, it is poſſible they might venture boldly from their retreats into the more cultivated parts of the country, and carry conſternation among mankind, as they had before desolation among the lower ranks of nature. We have many histories of antiquity, preſenting us ſuch a pic­

ture, and exhibiting a whole nation sinking under the ravages of a ſingle ſerpent. At that time man had not learned the art of uniting the efforts of many to effect one great purpoſe. Oppoſing multitudes only added new victims to the general calamity, and increaſed mu­tual embarraſſment and terror. The animal was there­fore to be ſingly oppoſed by him who had the greateſt ſtrength, the beſt armour, and the moſt undaunted cou­rage. In ſuch an encounter, hundreds muſt have fal­len ; till one, more lucky than the rest, by a fortunate blow, or by taking the monſter in its torpid interval, and ſurcharged with ſpoil, might kill, and thus rid his country of the destroyer. Such was the original oc­cupation of heroes ; and thoſe who firſt obtained that name, from their deſtroying the ravagers of the earth, gained it much more deſervedly than their ſucceſſors, who acquired their reputation only for their ſkill in de­ſtroying each other. But as we deſcend into more en­lightened antiquity, we find theſe animals leſs formi­dable, as being attacked in a more ſucceſsful manner. We are told, that while Regulus led his army along the banks of the river Bagrada in Africa, an enormous ſer­pent disputed his paſſage over. We are aſſured by Pliny, that it was 120 feet long, and that it had deſtroyed many of the army. At laſt, however, the battering engines were brought out againſt it ; and theſe aſſailing it at a diſtance, it was ſoon deſtroyed. Its ſpoils were car­ried to Rome, and the general was decreed an ovation for his ſucceſs. There are, perhaps, few facts better aſcertained in hiſtory than this : an ovation was a re­markable honour ; and was given only for ſome signal exploit that did not deserve a triumph : no hiſtorian would offer to invent that part of the ſtory at leaſt, without being ſubject to the moſt ſhameful detection. The ſkin was kept for ſeveral years after in the Capi­tol ; and Pliny ſays he ſaw it there. At preſent, in­deed, ſuch ravages from ſerpents are ſcarce ſeen in any part of the world ; not but that, in Africa and Ame­rica, ſome of them are powerful enough to brave the aſſaults of men to this day.

*Nequent expleri corda tuendo Terribiles oculos villosaque ſetis pectore.*

If we take a ſurvey of ſerpents in general, they have marks by which they are diſtinguiſhed from all the reſt of animated nature. They have the length and the ſuppleneſs of the eel, but want fins to ſwim with ; they have the ſcaly covering and pointed tail of the lizard, but they want legs to walk with ; they have the crawling motion of the worm, but, unlike that animal, they have lungs to breathe with : like all the reptile kind, they are reſentful when offended ; and nature has ſupplied them with terrible arms to revenge every in­jury.

Though they are poſſeſſed of very different degrees of malignity, yet they are all formidable to man, and have a ſtrong similitude of form to each other. With reſpect to their conformation, all ſerpents have a very wide mouth in proportion to the size of the head ; and, what is very extraordinary, they can gape and ſwallow the head of another animal which is three times as big as their own. However, it is noway ſurpriſing that the ſkin of the ſnake ſhould ſtretch to receive ſo large a morſel ; the wonder ſeems how the jaws could take it