tions, and sends her eggs into the light ſome time be­fore the young ones are capable of leaving the ſhell. Thus, if either are opened, the eggs will be found in the womb, covered with their membranous ſhell, and adhering to each other like large beads on a ſtring, In the eggs of both, the young ones will be found, though at different ſtages of maturity : thoſe of the viper will crawl and bite in the moment the ſhell that incloſes them is broke open : thoſe of the ſnake are not yet ar­rived at their perfect form.

Father Labat took a ſerpent of the viper kind that was nine feet long, and ordered it to be opened in his preſence. He then ſaw the manner in which the eggs of theſe animals lie in the womb. In this creature there were six eggs, each of the ſize of a gooſe egg, but longer, more pointed, and covered with a membranous ſkin, by which also they were united to each other. Each of theſe eggs contained from 13 to 15 young ones, about six inches long, and as thick as a gooſe- quill. Though the female from whence they were ta­ken was ſpotted, the young ſeemed to have a va­riety of colours very different from the parent ; and this led the traveller to ſuppoſe that the colour was no characteriſtic mark among ſerpents. Theſe little miſchievous animals were no ſooner let looſe from the ſhell, than they crept about, and put themſelves into a threat­ening poſture, coiling themſelves up and biting the ſtick with which he was deſtroying them. In this manner he killed 74 young ones ; thoſe that were contained in one of the eggs eſcaped at the place where the female was killed, by the burſting of the egg and their getting among the buſhes.

The faſcinating power aſcribed to ſerpents, especially to rattleſnakes, by which they are ſaid to draw animals to them, is very curious. It has been deſcribed by ſo many different perſons, who affirmed that they had ſeen inſtances of it, and has been believed by so many men of penetration and diſcernment, that it deserves at leaſt to be mentioned. The rattleſnake fixes its eyes upon any animal, ſuch as a bird or ſquirrel. When the animal ſpies the ſnake, it ſkips from ſpray to ſpray, ho­vering and approaching nearer the enemy ; deſcending, with diffracted geſtures and cries, from the top of the loftieſt trees to the mouth of the ſnake, who opens his jaws, and in an instant ſwallows the unfortunate ani­mal.

The following inſtances of faſcination have ſo much the appearance of fiction, that it would require a very uncommon degree of evidence to render them credible. They are extracted from a paper in the Gentleman’s Magazine for the year 1765, p. 5 11. which was com­municated by Mr Peter Collinſon from a correſpondent in Philadelphia.

“ A perſon of good credit was travelling by the side of a creek or small river, where he ſaw a ground ſquirrel running to and fro between the creek and a great tree a few yards diſtant ; the ſquirrel’s hair looking very rough, which ſhowed he was ſeared, and his returns being shorter and ſhorter, the man ſtood to obſerve the cauſe, and ſoon ſpied the head and neck of a rattleſnake point­ing at the ſquirrel through a hole of the great tree, it being hollow ; the ſquirrel at length gave over running, and laid himself quietly down with his head cloſe to the ſnake’s ; the ſnake then opened his mouth wide, and took in the ſquirrel’s head ; upon which the man gave

the ſnake a whip acroſs the neck, and ſo the ſquirrel be­ing reſeaſed, he ran into the creek.

“ When I was about 13 years old, I lived with Wil­liam Atkinſon, an honeſt man in Bucks county, who, returning from a ride in warm weather, told us, that while his horſe was drinking at a run, he heard the cry of a blackbird, which he ſpied on the top of a ſapling, fluttering and straining the way he ſeemed unwilling to fly, and holding ſo fall the ſprigs he was perched upon that the ſappling top bent. After he had viewed the bird a few minutes, it quitted the place, and made a circle or two higher in the air, and then reſumed its former ſtanding, fluttering and crying : Thereupon William rode the way the bird drained, and ſoon ſpied a large black ſnake in coil, ſteadily eyeing the bird. He gave the ſnake a laſh with his whip, and this taking off the ſnake’s eye from his prey, the charm was broken, and away fled the bird, changing its note to a ſong of joy.

“ Mr Nicholas Scull, a ſurveyor, told me, that when he was a young man, as he happened once to be lean­ing upon a fence, and looking over it, he ſaw a large rattleſnake in coil, looking ſtedfaſtly at him. He found himſelf ſurpriſed and liſtleſs immediately, and had no power for about a minute (as he thinks) but to look at the ſnake, and then he had the reſolution to puſh him­ſelf from the fence, and turn away, feeling ſuch horror and confuſion as he would not undergo again for any conſideration.

“ Doctor Chew tells me, a man in Maryland was found fault with by his companion that he did not come along ; the companion ſtepping towards him, observed that his eyes were fixed upon a rattleſnake which was gliding ſlowly towards him, with his head raiſed as if he was reaching up at him ; the man was leaning to­wards the ſnake, and laying to himſelf, *he will bite me! he will bite me !* Upon which his companion caught him by thc ſhoulder, and pulled him about, and cried out, *What the devil ails you ? He will bite you ſure enough !* This man found himſelf very ſick after his inchantment.”

The faſcinating power of ſerpents was believed by Dr Mead and other eminent men, who certainly thought they had ſufficient evidence for admitting it. Incredible therefore as it appears, it ought not to be rejected without examination ; though being of a very extraor­dinary nature, it cannot be received without unqueſtionable evidence. Scepticiſm is no leſs abſurd than incre­dulity ; and the true philoſopher will carefully avoid both. Human knowledge is founded on obſervation and experience ; not, however, on every man’s perſonal obſervation and experience, but on the united obſervation and experience of all mankind. But this preſuppoſes the credibility of human teſtimony in every caſe that does not involve an impoſſibility. All the laws of nature are not yet known, nor all the wonder­ful powers of which ſhe is posseſſed. It is not more in­credible *à priori,* that the eye of a ſerpent ſhould at­tract an animal than that a magnet ſhould attract a piece of iron, or a piece of iron attract electrical mat­ter. The evidence of theſe facts reſts entirely on per­ſonal obſervation or authentic teſtimony. The only thing requiſite with reſpect to objects of teſtimony is, when the fact is ſo extraordinary as has not fallen within the obſervation of the generality of men, the ſtrength