

early prejudices are not easily surmounted, it is difficult to consider the toad in any other view than a venomous creature; while the fact as stated by an ingenious writer is, that “ The
 “ toad is a harmless, defenceless creature, tor-
 “ pid and unvenomous, and seeking the darkest
 “ retreats, not from the malignity of its na-
 “ ture, but the multitude of its enemies*.”

Like all the frog kind, the toad is torpid in winter. It then chuses for a retreat either the hollow root of a tree, the cleft of a rock, or sometimes the bottom of a pond, where it is found in a state of seeming insensibility. As it is very long-lived, it is extremely difficult to kill; its skin is tough, and cannot be easily pierced; and, though covered with wounds, the creature continues to shew signs of life, and every part appears in motion. But what shall we say to its living for centuries lodged in the bosom of a rock, or cased within the body of an oak tree, without the smallest access on any side, either

* Poetry too has lent its aid to countenance this idea of the toad being a venomous animal: and it is usually coupled with sentiments of abhorrence and malignity. Thus Shakspeare in Lear exclaims,

“ From the extremest upward of thy head,
 To the descent and dust below thy foot,
 A most toad spotted traitor.”

Bacon says, that in the great plague, there were seen in divers ditches about London, many toads that had tails three inches long, whereas toads usually have no tails.