

ancients, and even Pliny, have devoted it to a kind of anathema, by affirming that its poison is the most dangerous of all. In their writings they have affirmed that, infecting with its poison almost all the vegetables of a large country, it might cause the destruction of whole nations. The moderns also, for a long time, believed the salamander to be very poisonous; they have said that its bite is mortal, like that of the viper; they have sought out and prescribed remedies for it; but they have at length had recourse to observations, by which they ought to have begun. The celebrated Bacon wished that naturalists would endeavour to ascertain the truth respecting the poison of the salamander. Gesner proved by experiments that it did not bite, whatever means were used to irritate it; and Wurfbanus shewed that it might safely be touched, and that we might, without danger, drink the water of those wells which it inhabited.

M. de Maupertuis studied also the nature of this lizard; in making researches to discover what might be its pretended poison, he demonstrated, experimentally, that fire acted upon the salamander in the same manner as upon all other animals; he remarked that it was scarcely upon the fire when it appeared to be covered with the
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