

serpent. It is probable, that in early times, when the arts were little known, and mankind were but thinly scattered over the earth, serpents, continuing undisturbed possessors of the forest, grew to an amazing magnitude; and every other tribe of animals fell before them. To animals of this kind, grown by time and rapacity to a hundred, or a hundred and fifty feet in length, the lion, the tiger, and even the elephant itself, were but feeble opponents. The dreadful monster spread desolation around him; every creature that had life was devoured, or fled to a distance. In this manner, having for ages lived in the hidden and unpeopled forests, 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 picture; 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;