

there are some too powerful for man to hazard an attack, and from whom few beasts can escape, even at this day.

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. To explain this, it must be observed, that the jaws of this animal do not open as ours, in the manner of a pair of hinges, where bones are applied to bones, and play upon one another; on the contrary, the serpent's jaws are held together at the roots by a stretching muscular skin; whence they open as wide as the animal chuses to stretch them, and admit of a prey much thicker than the snake's own body. The throat, like stretching leather, dilates to admit the morsel; the stomach receives it in part; and the rest remains in the gullet, till putrefaction, and the juices of the serpent's body, unite to dissolve it.

As to the teeth, some serpents have fangs, or canine teeth, and others are without them. Their teeth are crooked and hollow, and by a peculiar contrivance, they are capable of being  
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