

The joints in the back-bone are exceedingly numerous, which enable the creature to bend in any direction. In the generality of animals, these joints do not exceed thirty or forty; but in the serpent kind, they amount to one hundred and forty-five from the head to the vent, and twenty-five more from that to the tail. The number of these joints must give the back-bone a surprising degree of pliancy; but this is still increased by the manner in which each of these joints are locked into the other. In man and quadrupeds, the flat surfaces of the bones are laid one against the other, and bound tight by sinews, but in serpents, the bones play one within the other like a ball and socket, so that they have full motion upon each other in every direction. Though the number of joints in the back bone is so very great, yet that in the ribs is greater; for from the head to the vent, there are two ribs to every joint, which make their number two hundred and ninety. These ribs are furnished with four muscles; which being inserted in the head, run along to the end of the tail, and give the animal great strength and agility in all its motions.

The skin is composed of a number of scales, united to each other by a transparent membrane, which