

their own accord and power, as soon as the point has made an entrance. This last circumstance is purely imaginary, without any foundation, and the first is as false as the second. The error seems to have arisen from this animal raising his prickles upright when he is irritated; and as some of them are only inserted into the skin by a small pellicle they easily fall off. We have had many living porcupines, but never saw them dart any of their quills, even though violently agitated. It is a matter of astonishment, therefore, that the gravest authors, both ancient and modern, as well as the most sensible travellers, should join in opinion respecting a circumstance so entirely false. Some affirm that they have been wounded by this sort of darting; others, assert that the quills are darted with such vengeance, as to pierce a plank at a great distance. The marvellous commonly is pleasingly believed, and increases in proportion to the number of hands it passes through. Truth, on the contrary, diminishes in the same degree; and in spite of the positive negative which I have placed on these two fictions, I am persuaded, that many future writers will assert that the porcupine darts his quills to a distance, and that when those quills are separated from the  
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