

travagant to deceive any one; monsters with a hundred arms, and twenty different heads, are too monstrous to find belief.

It is not the Japanese and Chinese only who have not the imaginary animals, which they represent as real, and even exhibit in their religious books; the Mexicans have them also: it is the custom of all people, either at the time when their idolatry has not become sufficiently refined, or when the meaning of these emblematical combinations have been lost. But who will pretend to find in nature these offsprings of ignorance and superstition?

Certain travellers, however, anxious to establish a character of renown, have asserted that they have seen these fantastic animals, or that, for want of due attention, and deceived by a slight resemblance, they have taken real creatures for them. Large apes have appeared real cynocephali; baboons, as men with tails; and thus St. Augustin said that he had seen a satyr.

Some real animals, scarcely seen, and badly described, may have caused these monstrous ideas, slightly founded on reality. Thus we cannot doubt the existence of the hyena, though this animal has not a neck supported by one single bone,(1) and that he does not change sex every year, as Pliny(2) says;

(1) I have even seen, in the cabinet of the late M. Adrian Camper, a hyena's skeleton, in which many of the vertebra of the neck were soldered together. It is probable that it is some similar individual which has caused this character to be given to all hyenas. This animal must be more subject to this accident than any other, in consequence of the prodigious force of its neck, and the frequent use it makes of it. When the hyena has seized any thing, it is easier to drag it along, than to tear from it what it holds: this is why the Arabs have selected it as the emblem of insuperable obstinacy.

(2) It does not change the sex; but has at the perinæum an