

wasted. When frightened, this little spider either feigns death by extending its front legs, or suddenly drops from the web. A large *Epeira* of the same division with *Epeira tuberculata* and *conica* is extremely common, especially in dry situations. Its web, which is generally placed among the great leaves of the common agave, is sometimes strengthened near the centre by a pair or even four zigzag ribbons, which connect two adjoining rays. When any large insect, as a grasshopper or wasp, is caught, the spider, by a dexterous movement, makes it revolve very rapidly, and at the same time emitting a band of threads from its spinners, soon envelops its prey in a case like the cocoon of a silkworm. The spider now examines the powerless victim, and gives the fatal bite on the hinder part of its thorax; then retreating, patiently waits till the poison has taken effect. The virulence of this poison may be judged of from the fact that in half a minute I opened the mesh, and found a large wasp quite lifeless. This *Epeira* always stands with its head downward near the centre of the web. When disturbed, it acts differently, according to circumstances: if there is a thicket below, it suddenly falls down; and I have distinctly seen the thread from the spinners lengthened by the animal while yet stationary, as preparatory to its fall. If the ground is clear beneath, the *Epeira* seldom falls, but moves quickly through a central passage from one to the other side. When still further disturbed, it practices a most curious manoeuvre: standing in the middle, it violently jerks the web, which is attached to elastic twigs, till at last the whole acquires such a rapid vibratory movement that even the outline of the spider's body becomes indistinct.

It is well known that most of the British spiders, when a large insect is caught in their webs, endeavor to cut the lines and liberate their prey, to save their nets from being entirely spoiled. I once, however, saw in a hothouse in Shropshire a large female wasp caught in the irregular web of a quite small spider; and this spider, instead of cutting the web, most perseveringly continued to entangle the body,