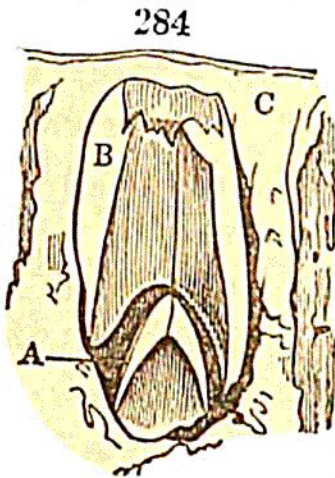


low cones, composed of ivory and enamel, are renewed by the new tooth (as is shown at A, in Fig. 284,) being formed



in the cavity of the one (B) which it is to replace, and not being enclosed in any separate cavity of the jaw bone (c.) As this new tooth increases in size, it presses against the base of the old one, and entering its cavity, acquires the same conical form; so that when the latter is shed, it is already in its place, and fit for immediate use. This succession of teeth takes place several times during

the life of the animal, so that they are sharp and perfect at all ages.

The fangs of serpents are furnished, like the stings of nettles, with a receptacle at their base for a poisonous liquor, which is squeezed out by the pressure of the tooth, at the moment it inflicts the wound, and conducted along a canal, opening near the extremity of the tooth. Each fang is lodged in a strong bony socket, and is, by the intervention of a connecting bone, pressed forwards whenever the jaw is opened sufficiently wide; and the fang is thus made to assume an erect position. As these sharp teeth are very liable to accidents, others are ready to supply their places when wanted: for which purpose there are commonly provided two or three half-grown fangs, which are connected only by soft parts with the jaw, and are successively moved forwards into the socket to replace those that were lost.\*

The tube through which the poison flows is formed by the folding in of the edges of a deep longitudinal groove, extending along the greater part of the tooth; an interval being left between these edges, both at the base and extremity of the fang, by which means there remain apertures at both ends for the passage of the fluid poison. This structure was discovered by Mr. T. Smith in the *Coluber naia*,

\* Home, Lectures, &c. I. 333.