

there are others in which we are obliged to suspend our opinions, and in a great number of others we have not the smallest ray of light for our guide; for, independent of the uncertainty arising from the contrariety of assertions respecting recorded facts, independent of the doubts resulting from the inaccuracy of those who have endeavoured to observe Nature, the greatest obstacle to the advancement of knowledge, is our ignorance of a great number of effects which time has not disclosed to us, and which can only be revealed to posterity by experience, and the most accurate observations; in the mean time we stray in darkness, perplexed between prejudices and probabilities, ignorant even of possibilities, and every moment confounding the opinions of men with the acts of Nature. Examples are in abundance; but, without quitting our subject, we know that the goat and the sheep couple together; though we are still to learn whether the mule from this commixture is sterile or fruitful. We are apt to conclude that mules in general, are barren, because those produced from the he-ass and mare, or the horse and she-ass, are sterile. But this opinion may have no foundation, since the ancients positively assert, that the mule produces at seven years