

that its origin might be as surprising as its power, and being desirous of realizing the ingenious fictions of the poets, they have pretended that it owes its existence to the purest of elements, which cannot consume it; and they have called it the daughter of fire, giving it, however, a body of ice. The moderns have followed the ridiculous tales of the ancients; and as it is difficult to stop when once the bounds of probability are passed, some have gone so far as to think that the most violent fire could be extinguished by the land salamander. Quacks sold this small lizard, affirming, that if thrown into the greatest conflagration it would check its progress. It was very necessary that philosophers and naturalists should take the trouble to prove by facts what reason alone might have demonstrated; and it was not till after the light of science was diffused abroad, that the world gave over believing in this wonderful property of the salamander. This lizard, which is found in so many countries in the ancient world, and even in very high latitudes, has been, however, but very little noticed, because it is seldom seen out of its hole, and because it for a long time inspired so much terror: even Aristotle speaks of it as an animal with which he was not much acquainted.