

change their forms, is very strikingly shown in many cases among amphibious animals and reptiles. Our commonest indigenous snake, the ringed snake, lays eggs which require three weeks' time to develop. But when it is kept in captivity, and no sand is strewn in the cage, it does not lay its eggs, but retains them until the young ones are developed. The difference between animals producing living offspring and those laying eggs is here effaced simply by the change of the ground upon which the animal lives.

The water-salamanders, or tritons, which have been artificially made to retain their original gills, are extremely interesting in this respect. The tritons are amphibious animals, nearly akin to frogs, and possess, like the latter, in their youth external organs of respiration—gills—with which they, while living in water, breathe the air dissolved in the water. At a later date a metamorphosis takes place in tritons, as in frogs. They leave the water, lose their gills, and accustom themselves to breathe with their lungs. But if they are prevented from doing this by being kept shut up in a tank, they do not lose their gills. The gills remain, and the water-salamander continues through life in that low stage of development, beyond which its lower relations, the gilled salamanders, or *Sozobranchiata*, never pass. The gilled salamander attains its full size, its sexual development, and reproduces itself without losing its gills.

Great interest was caused a short time ago, among zoologists, by the axolotl (*Siredon pisciformis*), a gilled salamander from Mexico, nearly related to the triton; it had already been known for a long time, and been bred on a large scale in the zoological garden in Paris. This animal possesses external gills, like the young salamander, but