

It is called *κουφή* or deaf, the country folk believing it is six months deaf and six months blind. The men who catch them say they use some charm, and further assert that when the creature is blind its eyes are smeared with some viscous humour, which makes them swell and close. This is all fable. I have seen many asps, but all had their sight. The ancients, David among them, believed it to be deaf. 'Their poison is like the poison of a serpent; they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear: which hearkeneth not to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely,' Ps. lviii. 4, 5, and it ought at least to be deaf, for it has no ears. I observed this fact on an asp four feet long; yet I would not say that nature has thus distinguished it from other animals, for the conduit which conveys sound to its sensorium may communicate with the aesophagus or the nostrils, or with that tiny tube through which it hisses. But this would be hard to see, and therefore to prove.

Its mouth, as I said, is very large, and can be stretched so as to swallow quite large animals. I have seen quails and partridges in them, and others have found hares. Its jaws have two rows of bones, the outer near the lips, the inner on the palate. The outer jaw is covered with fleshy excrescences, like bladders but of strong stout skin, under which on each side is a double fang, long curved, very sharp and piercing: it has the appearance of two teeth joined together, is very white and hard. It is not fixed, but bends inwards: when the snake wants to bite it erects the fang, which pierces the vesicle round it, then it strikes and pressing in the fang stirs in the wound the poison exuded from the vesicle. The lower jaw has one bone only, armed on each side with five small sharp teeth almost buried in the skin. In the upper jaw the inner bone is shaped into a kind of point, and has on each side six small sharp hard and pointed teeth transparently white, like fishes' scales, set sloping towards the throat, and like the upper row buried in thick skin. The lower jawbone is not