

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ON THE ASP OF CYPRUS.

I GLADLY adjoin here a description of the asp of Cyprus with which I am favoured by a friend who has resided in the island for 20 years. He informs me that what I wrote concerning the *κουφή* or deaf snake is applicable rather to another snake called *κεράστης* or horned, equally venomous, but not always mortal.

“The asp of Cyprus (*vipera mauritanica*) is a snake from three to five feet long, and from four to fifteen inches round, according to its age and the soil on which it is found. Its poison is deadly, but less acid and active than that of the Egyptian asp. The person bitten is tortured for 18 or 20 hours, and death is preceded by pallor, inflammation and convulsions.

The head is small in proportion to the body, and somewhat flat; the mouth very large, ending only where the neck begins. The muzzle round, nostrils broad, eyes small and dark under a projecting brow. The neck thin, but growing in bulk until it joins the belly. The tail ends in a thick fleshy point, on which is a short hard sharp spine. The skin of the back is an ashen or leaden grey, scaly and bright. It is dotted with darker spots: near and on the belly the spots may be white, or white and grey.