

before this unexplained wonder. The light of day was rapidly diminished, and suddenly disappeared without the sky being darkened by any cloud. Darkness instead of light, stars shining in the sky, nature seeming surprised and astonished; the combination of these unusual events is more than sufficient to explain the momentary terror with which individuals, and indeed, whole nations, allowed themselves to be carried away in these solemn moments.

By reason of the moon's rapid motion, a total eclipse never lasts longer than five minutes; but this short period is sufficient to allow a thousand sentiments to succeed each other in the terrified mind. The disappearance of the light of the moon, sometimes caused great trouble to ignorant minds; with how much more reason would the disappearance of the orb of day cause disquietude and fear!



TREE PRODUCING SEA-DUCKS.

History is full of the examples of fear caused by eclipses, and dangers caused through ignorance and superstition. Nicias had resolved to leave Sicily with his army; but, frightened by an eclipse of the moon, and wishing to delay several days, to assure himself if our satellite had lost nothing after this event, he missed the opportunity of retreat: his army was destroyed, he himself perished, and this misfortune commenced the ruin of Athens.

Often it has been seen that clever men have taken advantage of people's terror during eclipses, either of the sun or the moon, to gain their wishes. Christopher Columbus, reduced to sustaining his soldiers on the voluntary gifts of a savage and poor nation, and nearly losing this resource and perishing with hunger, gave out that he was about to deprive the world of the moon's light. The eclipse began, terror seized the Indians, and they returned, bringing to the feet of Columbus the accustomed tribute.

Drusus appeased a sedition in his army by predicting an eclipse of the moon; and, according to Livy, Tulpitius Gallus, in the war of Paulus Emilius against Perseus, used the same stratagem. Pericles, Agathocles,