

representatives of the hydrophis or true water-snake, nor of tortoises, nor of the batrachian or lizard tribes.

In like manner, in the geological periods, immediately antecedent to that when the present molluscous fauna came into existence, there was a similar absence of large reptiles, although there were then, as now, in colder latitudes, many huge sharks, seals, narwals, and whales. If, however, the creature observed in North America and Norway, should really prove to be some unknown species of any one of these last-mentioned families of vertebrata, I see no impropriety in its retaining the English name of sea serpent, just as one of the seals is now called a sea elephant, and a small fish of the Mediterranean, a sea horse; while other marine animals are named sea mice and urchins, although they have only a fanciful resemblance to hedgehogs or mice.

Some naturalists have argued that, if it were an undescribed species, some of its bones must, ere this, have been washed ashore; but I question whether we are as yet so well acquainted with all the tenants of the great deep as to entitle us to attach much weight to this argument from negative evidence; and I learn from good zoologists that there are whales so rare as never to have been seen since Sibbald described them in the middle of the seventeenth century. There is also a great cetacean, about thirty feet long, called *Delphinorhyncus micropterus*, of which only three specimens have ever been met with. One of these was thrown ashore forty years ago on the coast of Scotland, and the other two stranded on the shores of Belgium and France, and identified with the British species by Dr. Melville.

The doubts, however, which since my return from the United States, I have been led to entertain respecting the distinct and independent existence of the sea serpent, arise from a strong suspicion that it is a known species of sea animal which has actually been cast ashore in the Orkneys, and that some of its bones are now preserved in our museums, showing it to be of the squaline family, and no stranger to some of the zoologists whom it has perplexed, nor to many of the seafaring people whom it has frightened. In the summer of the year 1808, the fishermen