

the "longevity of the species in the mammalia is upon the whole inferior to that of the testacea."¹

The great size of the bones of the Megatheroid animals, including the Megatherium, Megalonyx, Scelidotherium, and Mylodon, is truly wonderful. The habits of life of these animals were a complete puzzle to naturalists, until Professor Owen² lately solved the problem with remarkable ingenuity. The teeth indicate, by their simple structure, that these Megatheroid animals lived on vegetable food, and probably on the leaves and small twigs of trees; their ponderous forms and great strong curved claws seem so little adapted for locomotion that some eminent naturalists have actually believed that, like the sloths, to which they are intimately related, they subsisted by climbing back downward on trees, and feeding on the leaves. It was a bold, not to say preposterous, idea to conceive even antediluvian trees, with branches strong enough to bear animals as large as elephants. Professor Owen, with far more probability, believes that, instead of climbing on the trees, they pulled the branches down to them, and tore up the smaller ones by the roots, and so fed on the leaves. The colossal breadth and weight of their hinder quarters, which can hardly be imagined without having been seen, become, on this view, of obvious service, instead of being an incumbrance: their apparent clumsiness disappears. With their great tails and their huge heels firmly fixed like a tripod on the ground, they could freely exert the full force of their most powerful arms and great claws. Strongly rooted, indeed, must that tree have been which could have resisted such force! The Mylodon, moreover, was furnished with a long extensile tongue like that of the giraffe, which, by one of those beautiful provisions of nature, thus reaches with the aid of its long neck its leafy food. I may remark that in Abyssinia the elephant, according to Bruce, when it cannot reach with its proboscis the branches,

¹ Principles of Geology, vol. iv. p. 40.

² This theory was first developed in the Zoölogy of the Voyage of the "Beagle," and subsequently in Professor Owen's Memoir on Mylodon robustus.