

It transfers us to other regions, and throws us back on older eras. We are carried in the spirit of palæontology to the compartment of the globe where England now is, but then was not ; and strange seas are spread out before us, and frightful saurians of the early ages of the secondary period tenant these waters. The Ichthyosaurus, or fish-lizard, of which not the genus only, but the entire natural order, is lost, rules and ravages the ocean. With a length of thirty to forty feet,* with enormous eyes, combining microscopic and telescopic power—which neither minuteness nor distance can elude—with jaws full of conical teeth, and plated and cross braced to render their grasp as powerful as it is prompt, this monstrous marine reptile is plying its paddles, and dashing through billows, and filling its capacious stomach with indiscriminate prey.† More near to the land, the

* Geologists give very different measurements of fossil animals. It does not follow that their accounts are contradictory, since different specimens may have been adopted as standards. In these paragraphs my principal authority for numbers is Professor Ansted.

† There is evidence that the ichthyosaurus, when urged by its appetite, did not abstain from feeding on its own species.