

“ Vestiges ” has (I trust inadvertently) resorted in this controversy.

It is not uninstrucive to mark how slowly and gradually the naturalists have been groping their way to a right classification in the ichthyic department of their science, and how it has been that identical perception of resemblance, having *cartilage* for its general idea, to which the author of the “ Vestiges ” attaches so much importance, that has served mainly to retard their progress. Not a few of the more distinguished among their number deemed it too important a distinction to be regarded as merely secondary; and so long as it was retained as a primary characteristic, the fishes failed to range themselves in the natural order;—dissimilar tribes were brought into close neighborhood, while tribes nearly allied were widely separated. It failed, as has been shown, to influence Linnæus; and though he no doubt pressed his peculiar views too far when he degraded the glutinous hag into a worm, and elevated the Sharks and Rays into reptiles, it is certainly worthy of remark, that, in the scheme of classification which is now regarded as the *most natural*,—that of Professor Muller, modified by Professor Owen,—the ichthyic worms of the Swede are placed in the first and lowest order of fishes,—the *Dermopteri*,—and the greater part of his ichthyic reptiles, in the eleventh and highest,—the *Plagiostomi*. Cuvier yielded, as has been shown, to the idea of resemblance founded on the *material* of the ichthyic framework, and so ranged his fishes into two parallel lines. Professor Oken, after first enunciating as law that “ the characteristic *organ* of fishes is the osseous system,” confessed the “ great difficulty ” which attaches to the question of skeletal “ texture or substance,” and finally gave up the distinction founded on it as obstinately irreducible to the purposes of a