

EVIDENCE OF THE SILURIAN MOLLUSCS -- OF THE
FOSSIL FLORA.ANCIENT TREE.

AFTER dwelling at such length on the earlier fishes, it may seem scarce necessary to advert to their lower contemporaries the mollusca, — that great division of the animal kingdom which Cuvier places second in the descending order, in his survey of the entire series, and first among the invertebrates; and which Oken regards as the division out of which the immediately preceding class of the vertebral animals have been developed. “The fish,” he says, “is to be viewed as a mussel, from between whose shells a monstrous abdomen has grown out.” There is, however, a peculiarity in the molluscan group of the Silurian system, to which I must be permitted briefly to refer, as, to employ the figure of Sterne, it presents “two handles” of an essentially different kind, and as in all such two-handled cases, the mere special pleader is sure to avail himself of only the handle which best suits his purpose for the time.

Cuvier’s first and highest class of the mollusca is formed of what are termed the Cephalopods, — a class of creatures possessed of great freedom of motion: they can walk, swim, and seize their prey; they have what even the lowest fishes,