

CHAPTER IV.

The Elfir-fish of Gawin Douglas. — The Fish of the Old Red Sandstone scarcely less curious. — Place which they occupied indicated in the present Creation by a mere Gap. — Fish divided into two great Series, the Osseous and Cartilaginous. — Their distinctive Peculiarities. — Geological Illustration of Dr. Johnson's shrewd Objection to the Theory of Soame Jenyns. — Proofs of the intermediate Character of the Ichthyolites of the Old Red Sandstone. — Appearances which first led the Writer to deem it intermediate. — Confirmation by Agassiz. — The *Osteolepis*. — Order to which this Ichthyolite belonged. — Description. — *Dipterus*. — *Diplopterus*. — *Cheirolepis*. — *Glyptolepis*.

HAS the reader ever heard of the “griesly fisch” and the “laithlie flood,” described by that minstrel Bishop of Dunkeld “who gave rude Scotland Virgil's page?” Both fish and flood are the extravagances of a poet's dream. The flood came rolling through a wilderness of bogs and quagmires, under banks “dark as rocks the whilk the sey upcast.” A skeleton forest stretched around, doddered and leafless; and through the “unblomit” and “barrant” trees

“The quhissling wind blew mony bitter blast;”

the whitened branches “clashed and clattered;” the “vile water rinnand o'erheid,” and “routing as thonder,” made “hideous trubil;” and to augment the uproar, the “griesly fisch,” like the fish of eastern story, raised their heads amid the foam, and shrieked and yelled as they passed. “The grim monsters fordeafit the heiring with their schouts;” — they were both fish and elves, and strangely noisy in the latter capacity; and the longer the poet listened, the more frightened he became.