

our globe, the fishes, being then the only representatives of the type of vertebrata, were invested with the characters of a higher order, embodying, as it were, a prospective view of a higher development in another class, which was introduced as a distinct type only at a later period ; and from that time the reptilian character, which had been so prominent in the oldest fishes, was gradually reduced, till in more recent periods, and in the present creation, the fishes lost all this herpetological relationship, and were at last endowed with characters which contrast as much, when compared with those of reptiles, as they agreed closely in the beginning. Lepidosteus alone reminds us in our time of these old-fashioned characters of the class of fishes as it was in former days."

The ancient fishes seem to have received their fullest development during the Carboniferous period. Their number was very great : some of them attained to an enormous size, and, though the true reptile had already appeared, they continued to retain till the close of the system the high reptilian character and organization. Nothing, however, so impresses the observer as the formidable character of the offensive weapons with which they were furnished, and the amazing strength of their defensive armature. I need scarce say, that the Palæontologist finds no trace in nature of that golden age of the world of which the poets delighted to sing, when all creatures lived together in unbroken peace, and war and bloodshed were unknown. Ever since animal life began upon our planet, there existed, in all the departments of being, carnivorous classes, who could not live but by the death of their neighbours, and who were armed, in consequence, for their destruction, like the butcher with his axe and knife, and the angler with his hook and spear. But there were certain periods in the history of the past during which these weapons assumed a more formidable aspect than at others ; and never were they more formidable than in the times of the Coal Mea-