

these mail-clad fishes, and then turn to our own times and find them reduced to a few isolated, hated, and hunted species. The garpike or "billfish" (*Lepidosteus*), and the sturgeon (*Acipenser*), are the only surviving representatives of the royal families of the Carboniferous Age. In turn, the dynasty of the fishes was superseded by that of the reptiles.

It was impossible that air-breathers should inhabit the earth before the atmosphere became purified of the noxious gases which remained from the ancient igneous condition of the globe. The principal impurity—carbonic acid—was destined to be consumed by the demands of an abundant terrestrial vegetation. The latter part of the reign of fishes was marked by the advent of multitudes of land-loving vegetable forms—the heralds of the close of the dominion of races whose element was the water. It was many ages after its first appearance before terrestrial vegetation became fully established. We know that here and there one of these stranger forms grew upon the shores of those seas which were the domain of the fish; and, falling down upon the beach, or borne along by river torrents, the decaying trunks were drifted seaward, and sunken among the sands which entombed the bodies of the royal families of the age. We know that the slight improvement in the condition of the atmosphere was responded to by the introduction of a few air-breathers of sluggish and imperfect respiration. The name of the oldest air-breathing animal at present known to have lived upon our earth is *Telerpeton Elginense*. Its remains have been found in the south of Scotland, in a yellow sandstone supposed to be of the same age as the Old Red Sandstone. The same rock has furnished some other remains, formerly supposed to be the vestiges of fishes, but now known to be the remains of reptiles; and geologists are not by any means of one accord in the opin-