

common to reptiles, and possessed by the Vampyre Bat of the island of Bonin. It is believed that the smaller species lived upon insects, and the larger preyed upon fishes, upon which it could throw itself like the sea-gull.

The most startling feature in the organisation of this animal is the strange combination of two powerful wings attached to the body of a reptile. The imagination of the poets long dwelt on such a combination; the *Dragon* was a creation of their fancy, and it played a great part in fable and in pagan mythology. The Dragon, or flying reptile, breathing fire and poisoning the air with his fiery breath, had, according to the fable, disputed with man the possession of the earth. Gods and demigods claimed, among their most famous exploits, the glory of having vanquished this powerful and redoubtable monster.

Among the animals of our epoch, only a single reptile is found provided with wings, or digital appendages analogous to the membranous wings of the bats, and which can be compared to the Pterodactyle. This is called the *Dragon*, one of the *Draconidæ*, a family of Saurians, which has been described by Daudin, as distinguished by the first six ribs, instead of hooping round the abdomen, extending in nearly a straight line, and sustaining a prolongation of skin which forms a sort of wing analogous to that of the Pterodactyle. Independent of the four feet, this wing sustains the animal, like a parachute, as it leaps from branch to branch; but the creature has no power to beat the air with it as birds do when flying. This reptile lives in the forests of the hottest parts of Africa, and in some isles of the Indian Ocean, especially in Sumatra and Java. The only known species is that figured at page 238 (Fig. 107), which comes from the East Indies.

What a strange population was that which occupied the earth at this stage of its history, when the waters were filled with creatures so extraordinary as those whose history we have traced! Plesiosaurs and Ichthyosaurs filled the seas, upon the surface of which floated innumerable Ammonites in light skiffs, some of them as large as a good-sized cart-wheel, while gigantic Turtles and Crocodiles crawled on the banks of the rivers and lakes. Only one genus of Mammals had yet appeared, but no birds; nothing broke the silence of the air, if we except the breathing of the terrestrial reptiles and the flight of winged insects.

The earth cooled progressively up to the Jurassic period, the rains lost their continuity and abundance, and the pressure of the atmosphere sensibly diminished. All these circumstances favoured