

but then they dwindled away. In modern times, our familiar bony-scaled gar-pike haunts the freshened waters of river and lake—the poor degenerate descendant of ancestors which once dominated over the world. Venerable relic of a mighty empire! Were the lineal descendant of Menes or Nebuchadnezzar to stand before me, the antiquity of his lineage would inspire my interest and veneration, but it would be as yesterday compared with the lineage of this poor gar-pike.

Why have these creatures been preserved in existence so long? The march of organic improvement has advanced for thousands upon thousands of centuries, and left them far in the rear. These forms are misplaced in the modern world. They constitute an anachronism, which is either an absurdity, or a phenomenon too full of meaning for ordinary comprehension. The gar-pike destroys our game-fish and our market-fish—as he ravaged neighboring kingdoms while he ruled an empire of his own. He tangles and tears the nets of the fishermen, who visit their execrations upon him. His flesh is unpalatable for food. The mud-loving sturgeon, less destructive in his nature, brings no utility into the modern world. The fierce shark, equally unfit for food, is the free-booter of the ocean. Other fishes furnish aliment to man. They came from unknown realms to meet man here, and serve his ends. But these archaic types linger from a time when human wants had as yet no existence, when human food was not demanded. They were never intended for food, since they made food of every other creature. These useless and destructive beings are out of joint with the world and with history. Why are they here?

Why? They come to import ideas into the modern world. They bring down to us living illustrations of faunas passed away. The plates of *Cephalaspis* and the spines of *Machaeracanthus* quarried from the rock might pique our curiosity and distress us by their mystery; but they would not instruct. It was intended that the intelligence of the being which always stood as the finality of organic improvement should grasp the conception of the world, and reproduce the grand history of