

ture of carbonic acid, or sulphuretted hydrogen gas, or of bituminous or earthy matter in the form of mud.

The circumstances under which the fossil fishes are found at Monte Bolca seem to indicate that they perished suddenly on arriving at a part of the then existing seas, which was rendered noxious by the volcanic agency, of which the adjacent basaltic rocks afford abundant evidence. The skeletons of these fish lie parallel to the laminae of the strata of the calcareous slate; they are always entire, and so closely packed on one another, that many individuals are often contained in a single block. The thousands of specimens which are dispersed over the cabinets of Europe, have nearly all been taken from one quarry. All these fishes must have died suddenly on this fatal spot, and have been speedily buried in the calcareous sediment then in the course of deposition. From the fact that certain individuals have even preserved traces of colour upon their skin, we are certain that they were entombed before decomposition of their soft parts had taken place.*

* The celebrated fish (*Blochius longirostris*) from this quarry, described as petrified in the act of swallowing another fish (*Ithiolitologia Veronese*, Tab. XII.) has been ascertained by M. Agassiz to be a deception, arising from the accidental juxtaposition of two fishes. The size of the head of the smaller fish supposed to be swallowed, is such as never could have entered the diminutive stomach of the putative glutton; moreover it does not enter within the margin of its jaws.