

former population of our planet, we cannot but regard with feelings of new and unusual interest, the comparatively diminutive existing orders of that most ancient family of quadrupeds, with the very name of which we usually associate a sentiment of disgust. We shall view them with less contempt, when we learn from the records of geological history, that there was a time when reptiles not only constituted the chief tenants, and most powerful possessors of the earth, but extended their dominion also over the waters of the seas; and that the annals of their history may be traced back through thousands of years, antecedent to that latest point in the progressive stages of animal creation, when the first parents of the human race were called into existence.

Persons to whom this subject may now be presented for the first time, will receive, with much surprise, perhaps almost with incredulity, such statements as are here advanced. It must be admitted, that they at first seem much more like the dreams of fiction and romance, than the sober results of calm and deliberate investigation; but to those who will examine the evidence of facts upon which our conclusions rest, there can remain no more reasonable doubt of the former existence of these strange and curious creatures, in the times and places we assign to them; than is felt by the antiquary, who, finding the catacombs of Egypt stored