

Another function of these tremendous animals is to devour all *carcasses*, which, from whatever cause, are floating in the water, thus they act the same part in disinfecting and purifying the ocean, that the hyænas and vultures, their terrestrial analogues, and other animals, do upon earth.

Another lesson may be learned from the existence of these terrible monsters; for if God fitted them to devour, He fitted them also to instruct. The existence of creatures so evil, and such relentless destroyers of his works in the material world, teach us, that there are probably analogous beings in the spiritual world; and what occasion we have for watchfulness, to escape their destructive fury.

There is nothing more remarkable in the Class we are considering, than the infinite variety and singularity of the figures and shapes of fishes. It has been thought, that the ocean contains representatives of every terrestrial and aërial form. However this be, it may be asserted that the forms of fishes are more singular and extraordinary, more grotesque and monstrous, than those of any other department of the animal kingdom; but on this subject I need not enlarge.

Having made these general remarks upon fishes, I shall next say something on their *Classification*. Of all the Classes of animals, that of Fishes, as Baron Cuvier observes, is the most difficult to divide into Orders. Linné considered what have been usually denominated *Cartilaginous Fishes*, as forming a section of his *Amphibians* :* but the former illustrious naturalist has very judiciously arranged them with the fishes. Ichthyologists in general agree with Cuvier in dividing this Class into two Sub-classes—viz., *Osseans*, in which the skeleton is *bony* and formed of bony *fibres*; and *Cartilagineans*, in which it is

* Nantes.