

more remarkable than those by which they can give them an electric shock, and arrest them in their course, whether they are assailants or fugitives. That God should arm certain *fishes*, in some sense, with the lightning of the clouds, and enable them thus to employ an element so potent and irresistible, as we do gunpowder, to astound, and smite and stupify, and kill the inhabitants of the waters, is one of those wonders of an Almighty arm which no terrestrial animal is gifted to exhibit. For though some quadrupeds, as the cat, are known, at certain times, to accumulate the electric fluid in their fur, so as to give a slight shock to the hand that strokes them, it has never been clearly ascertained that they can employ it to arrest or bewilder their prey, so as to prevent their escape. Even man himself, though he can charge his batteries with this element, and again discharge them, has not yet so subjected it to his dominion, as to use it independently of other substances, offensively and defensively, as the electric fishes do.

The fishes hitherto ascertained to possess this power belong to the genera *Tetrodon*, *Trichiurus*, *Malapterurus*, *Gymnotus*,* and *Raia*.† The most remarkable are the three last.

The faculty of the *Torpedo* to benumb its prey was known to Aristotle,‡ and Pliny further states,§ that, conscious of its power, it hides itself in the mud, and benumbs the unsuspecting fishes that swim over it. The Arabians, when they cultivated the sciences so successfully, had observed this faculty both in the *Torpedo* and the *Malapterurus*, and, perceiving an affinity between the electric fluid of the heavens and that of these fishes, called them *Raash*,|| a name signifying *thunder*.

* The trivial name of the first *four* of these species is *electricus*.

† R. *Torpedo*.

‡ Hist. An. l. ix. c. 37.

§ Hist. Nat. l. ix. c. 42.

|| Heb. ראש.