

to those of the Oölitic formation, which immediately precedes, than to those of the carboniferous formation, which is much more ancient; and, in the same manner, the fossils of the carboniferous group approach more nearly to those of the Silurian formation than to those of the Tertiary.

468. These relations could not escape the observation of naturalists, and indeed they are of great importance for the true understanding of the development of life at the surface of our earth. And, as in the history of man, several grand periods have been established, under the name of *Ages*, marked by peculiarities in his social and intellectual condition, and illustrated by contemporaneous monuments, so, in the history of the earth, also, are distinguished several great periods, which may be designated as the various *Ages of Nature*, illustrated, in like manner, by their monuments, the fossil remains, which, by certain general traits stamped upon them, clearly indicate the eras to which they belong.

469. We distinguish four Ages of Nature, corresponding to the great geological divisions, namely :

1st. *The Primary or Palæozoic Age*, comprising the lower Silurian, the upper Silurian, and the Devonian. During this age there were no air-breathing animals. The fishes were the masters of creation. We may therefore call it the *Reign of Fishes*.

2d. *The Secondary Age*, comprising the carboniferous formation, the Trias, the Oölitic, and the Cretaceous formations. This is the epoch in which air-breathing animals first appear. Reptiles predominate over the other classes, and we may therefore call it the *Reign of Reptiles*.

3d. *The Tertiary Age*, comprising the tertiary formations. During this age, terrestrial mammals, of great size, abound. This is the *Reign of Mammals*.

4th. *The Modern Age*, characterized by the appearance of the most perfect of all created beings. This is the *Reign of Man*.