

scheme of mythology that borrowed through traditional channels from Divine revelation, as a meet representative of man's great enemy the Evil One. I of course refer to the ophidian or serpent family. The earliest ophidian remains known to the Palæontologist occur in that ancient deposit of the Tertiary division known as the London Clay, and must have belonged to serpents, some of them allied to the Pythons, some to the sea-snakes, which, judging from the corresponding parts of recent species, must have been from fourteen to twenty feet in length.

Fig. 66.



PALEOPHIS TOLIAPICUS.
(*Ophidian of the Eocene.*)

And here let us again pause for a moment, to remark how strangely these irascible, repulsive reptiles,—creatures lengthened out far beyond the proportions of the other members of their class by mere vegetative repetitions of the vertebræ,—condemned to derive, worm-like, their ability of progressive motion from the ring-like scutes of the abdomen,—venomous in many of their species,—formidable in others to even the noblest animals, from their fascinating powers and their great craft,—without fore or hinder limbs, without thoracic or pelvic arches,—the very types and exemplars (our highest naturalists being the judges) of the extreme of animal degradation,—let us, I say, remark how strangely their history has been mixed up with that of man and of religion in all the older mythologies, and in that Divine Revelation whence the older mythologies were derived. It was one of the most