

## CHAPTER XVI.

## THE REIGN OF REPTILES.

WE now enter upon a new Age in the history of the world. The reptilian army has arrived and taken absolute possession of the land and the sea. The highest of these monarch reptiles, in respect to organization, are some lizard-like creatures as much at home in the sea as upon the land. But especially does the great deep swarm with huge beings having the body of a lizard, the immense jaws and sharp, conical teeth of a crocodile, the bi-concave vertebræ of a fish, and the short, flat paddles of a whale. What a synthesis of characters is here! The type of the age is expressed in the lacertiform trunk and tail. Crocodiles had not yet existed; but the jaws of these monsters seem like an experiment preparatory to the supply of quantities of those savage brutes. Mammals were yet in the distant future; but here, in the paddles of these Enaliosaurs is a prophecy of coming cetacea—the form which the mammalian type assumes at the point where it comes in contact with the type of fishes. The reign of fishes is past; but here, in the bi-concave vertebræ of these sea-monsters is preserved a reminiscence of the last sovereigns.

This, the Triassic Age, was peculiarly the reign of Labyrinthodont saurians. Thirty-five years ago the tracks of these anomalous creatures were first noticed upon some red sandstone in Saxony, and they have since been discovered in other parts of the world. The peculiarity of these footprints consists in their hand-like form, and in the occurrence of a series of larger and smaller in connection with