

the seas were warmed by the same sun and tenanted the same banks, in the midst of a vegetation not unlike that which the climate of Africa now produces.

The great Saurians in the Lias of Lyme Regis seem to have suffered a somewhat sudden death, partly in consequence of a series of small catastrophes suddenly destroying the animals then existing in particular spots. "In general the bones are not scattered about, and in a detached state, as would happen if the dead animal had descended to the bottom of the sea, to be decomposed, or devoured piecemeal, as, indeed, might also happen if the creature floated for a time on the surface, one animal devouring one part, and another carrying off a different portion; on the contrary, the bones of the skeleton, though frequently compressed, as must arise from the enormous pressure to which they have so long been subjected, are tolerably connected, frequently in perfect, or nearly perfect, order, as if prepared by the anatomist. The skin, moreover, may sometimes be traced, and the compressed contents of the intestines may at times be also observed—all tending to show that the animals were suddenly destroyed, and as suddenly preserved."*

These strange and gigantic Saurians seem almost to disappear during the succeeding geological periods; for, although they have been discovered as low down as the Trias in Germany, and as high up as the Chalk in England, they only appear as stragglers in these epochs; so, too, the Reptiles, the existing Saurians are, as it were, only the shadowy, feeble representatives of these powerful races of the ancient world.

Confining ourselves to well-established facts, we shall consider in some detail the best known of these fossil reptiles—the *Ichthyosaurus*, *Plesiosaurus*, and *Pterodactyle*.

The extraordinary creature which bears the name of *Ichthyosaurus* (from the Greek words *ἰχθύς σαύρος*, signifying fish-lizard), presents certain dispositions and organic arrangements which are met with dispersed in certain classes of animals now living, but they never seem to be again reunited in any single individual. It possesses, as Cuvier says, the snout of a dolphin, the head of a lizard, the jaws and teeth of a crocodile, the vertebræ of a fish, the head and sternum of a lizard, the paddles like those of a whale, and the trunk and tail of a quadruped.

Bayle appears to have furnished the best idea of the *Ichthyosaurus* by describing it as the Whale of the Saurians—the Cetacean of the

* "Geological Manual," by H. T. De la Beche, 3rd ed., p. 346.