

fast sinking, and, as the light thickens, the reaches of the neighbouring river display their frequent dimples, and now and anon long scaly jacks are raised over its surface. Its numerous crocodilons are astir; and now they quit the stream, and we see its thick hedge-like lines of equesticon open and again close, as they rustle through, to scour in quest of prey, the dark meadows that line its banks. There are tortoises that will this evening find their protecting armour of carapace and plastron all too weak, and close their long lives of centuries. And now we saunter downwards to the shore, and see the ground swell breaking white in the calm against ridges of coral scarce less white. The shores are strowed with shells of pearl. The whorled Ammonite and the Nautilus; and amid the gleam ganoid scales, reflected from the green depths beyond, we may see the phosphoric trail of the Belemnite, and its path is over shells of strange form and name,—the sedentary Gryphæa, the Penna, and the Plagiostoma.

“But, lo! yet another monster. A snake-like form, surmounted by a crocodilean head, rises high out of the water within yonder coral ledge, and the fiery, sinister eyes peer inquiringly round, as if in quest of prey. The body is but dimly seen, but it is short and bulky compared with the swan-like neck, and mounted on paddles instead of limbs; so that the entire creature, wholly unlike anything which now exists, has been likened to a vast boa constrictor threaded through the body of a turtle. We have looked upon the Pleurosaurus. And now outside the ledge there is a huge crocodilean head raised, and a monstrous eye, huger than that of any other living creature,—for it measures a full foot across,—glares upon the alimner and less powerful reptile, and in an instant the long neck and small head disappear. That monster of the immense eye,—an eye so constructed that its focus can be altered at will, and made to compromise either near or distant objects, and the organ itself adapted either to examine microscopically or to explore as a telescope,—is another be-paddled reptile of the sea, the *Teliosaurus*, or fish-lizard. But the night comes on, and the shadows of the woods and rocks deepen; there are uncouth sounds along the beach and in the forest; and new monsters of yet stranger shape are dimly discovered moving amid the uncertain gloom.

“Reptiles, reptiles, reptiles,—flying, swimming, waddling, walking,—the age is that of the cold-blooded, ungenial reptiles; and, save in the dwarf and inferior forms of the marsupials and insectivora, not one of the honest mammals has yet appeared. And now the moon rises in clouded majesty; and now her red wake brightens in one long strip of the dark sea; and we may mark where the *Oteosaurus*, a sort of reptilean whale, comes into view as it crosses the lighted track, and is straightway lost in the gloom. But the night grows dangerous, and these monster-haunted woods were not planted for man. Let us return then to the safer and better furnished world of the present time, and to our secure and quiet homes.”

The above may appear but the vision of a poetic fancy, but “those who have read of the book of nature” can testify to its reality; and to our readers it is a sample of much else in the volume which