

can always teach another something, the writer feels impelled to mingle a little instruction in doses to suit the weakest stomach, that those who have not skipped this chapter on account of its title, may at least receive something for their perseverance. They need not suppose for a moment that the writer pretends to insist upon what he shall write as infallible, but where his readers differ from him, is perfectly willing to admit that he is entirely mistaken; the buyer of a book is always right, the author *a toujours tort*.

He supposes—let there be no misunderstandings when he accidentally uses a stronger word—that fishes are divided into two great orders, and are distinguished as having bony or cartilaginous skeletons; thus a quawl, provided he be a fish at all, would be a very cartilaginous one, and a catfish with his back fin erected, as the writer has often learned to his cost, is a bony fish.

As the cartilaginous fish are of small account, the reader may forget all about them if he wishes, but he is requested to remember the useful division of those having bony skeletons into the great classes, easily distinguished, of the soft finned and spiny finned, called in foreign languages by the horrible terms *malacopterygii* and *acanthopterygii*—terms unpronounceable except by a Dutchman or a philosopher. These classes are distinguished, as the English words imply, by their having the rays of their fins soft and flexible or hard and spine-like. The investigator may determine their peculiarities by pressing strongly upon the points of the fin rays; if nature intimates that his organism is suffering, the fish is a *acanthop*, etc.; if not, why not.