

to the reptilian division, but were ushered upon the scene in the times of the Tertiary deposits, when the mammalian dynasty had supplanted that of the Iguanodon and Megalosaurus. Their ill omened birth took place when the influence of their house was on the wane, as if to set such a stamp of utter hopelessness on its fallen condition, as that set by the birth of a worthless or idiot heir on the fortunes of a sinking family. The degradation of the Ophidians consists in the absence of limbs, — an absence total in by much the greater number of their families, and represented in others, as in the boas and pythons, by mere abortive hinder limbs concealed in the skin; but they are thus not only *monsters through defect of parts*, if I may so express myself, but also *monsters through redundancy*, as a vegetative repetition of vertebra and ribs, to the number of three or four hundred, forms the special contrivance by which the want of these is compensated. I am also disposed to regard the poison-bag of the venomous snakes as a mark of degradation; — it seems, judging from analogy, to be a protective provision of a low character, exemplified chiefly in the invertebrate families, — ants, centipides, and mosquitos, — spiders, wasps, and scorpions. The higher carnivora are, we find, furnished with unpoisoned weapons, which, like those of civilized man, are sufficiently effective, simply from the excellence of their construction, and the power with which they are wielded, for every purpose of assault or defence. It is only the squalid savages and degraded boschmen of creation that have their feeble teeth and tiny stings steeped in venom, and so made formidable. *Monstrosity through displacement of parts* constitutes yet another form of degradation; and this form, united, in some instances, to the other two, we find curiously exemplified in the geological