

their allies. At length, during the ages of the Chalk, the Cycloids and Ctenoids were ushered in, and were gradually developed in creation until the human period, in which they seem to have reached their culminating point, and now many times exceed in number and importance all other fishes. We do not see a sturgeon (our British representative of the Ganoids) once in a twelvemonth ; and though the skate and dogfish (our representatives of the Placoids) are greatly less rare, their number bears but a small proportion to that of the fishes belonging to the two prevailing orders, of which thousands of boatloads are landed on our coasts every day.

The all but entire disappearance of the Ganoids from creation is surely a curious and not unsuggestive circumstance. In the human family there are races that have long since reached their culminating point, and are now either fast disappearing or have already disappeared. The Aztecs of Central America, or the Copts of the valley of the Nile, are but the inconsiderable fragments of once mighty nations, memorials of whose greatness live in the vast sepulchral mounds of the far West, or in the temples of Thebes or Luxor, or the pyramids of Gizeh. But in the rivers of these very countries,—in the polypterus of the Nile, or the lepidosteus of the Mississippi,—we are presented with the few surviving fragments of a dynasty compared with which that of Egypt or of Central America occupied but an exceedingly small portion of either space or time. The dynasty of the Ganoids was at one time co-extensive with every river, lake, and sea, and endured during the unreckoned *eons* which extended from the times of the Lower Old Red Sandstone until those of the Chalk. I may here mention, that as there are orders of plants, such as the Rosaceæ and the Grasses, that scarce preceded man in their appearance, so there are families of fishes that seem peculiarly to belong to the human period. Of these, there is a family very familiar on our coasts, and which, though it fur-