

sures. The teeth of the rhizodus—a Ganoidal fish of our coal-fields—were more sharp and trenchant than those of the crocodile of the Nile, and in the larger specimens fully four times the bulk and size of the teeth of the hugest reptile of this species that now lives. The dorsal spine of its contemporary the gyracanthus, a great Placoid, much exceeded in size that of any existing fish: it was a mighty spear-head, ornately carved like that of a New Zealand chief, but in a style that, when he first saw a specimen in my collection, greatly excited the admiration of Mr Ruskin. But one of the most remarkable weapons of the period was the sting of the pleuracanthus, another great Placoid of the age of gigantic fishes. It was sharp and polished as a stiletto, but, from its rounded form and dense structure, of great strength; and along two of its sides, from the taper point to within a few inches of the base, there ran a thickly-set row of barbs, hooked downwards, like the thorns that bristle on the young shoots of the wild rose, and which must have rendered it a weapon not merely of destruction, but also of torture. The defensive armour of the period, especially that of its Ganoids, seems to have been as remarkable for its powers of resistance as the offensive must have been for their potency in the assault; and it seems probable that in the great strength of the bony and enamelled arma-

Fig. 58.



PLEURACANTHUS LEVISSIMUS.
(*Coal Measures.*) (Half nat. size.)