

Professor Owen,—our highest authority in comparative anatomy,—that while one Stonesfield genus unequivocally belonged to the marsupial order, another of its genera bears also certain of the marsupial traits ; and that the group which they composed,—a very small one, and consisting exclusively of minute insect-eating animals,—exhibits in its general aspect the characteristics of this pouched family. Even the genus

Fig. 69.



THYLACOTHERIUM PREVOSTI.
(*Stonesfield Slate.*)

of the group that least resembles them was pronounced by Cuvier to have its nearest affinities with the opossums. And let us mark how very much may be implied in this circumstance. In the “Animal Kingdom” of the great naturalist just named, the marsupiala, or pouched animals, are made to occupy the fourth place among the nine orders of the Mammalia ; but should they not rather occupy a place intermediate between the placental mammals and the birds ? and does not nature indicate their true position by the position which she assigns to them in the geologic scale ? The birds are oviparous ; and between the extrusion of the egg and the development of the perfect young bird they have to hatch it into life during a long period of incubation. The marsupiala are not oviparous, for their *eggs* want the enveloping shell or skin ; but they, too, are extruded in an exceedingly rudimentary and foetal state, and have to undergo in the pouch a greatly longer period of *incubation* than that demanded by nature for any bird whatever. The young kangaroo is extruded, after it has remained for little more than a month in