

assemblage we have met with among the organic vestiges of the ancient world. The Plesiosaurus was a marine, air-breathing, carnivorous reptile, combining the characters of the head of a Lizard, the teeth of a Crocodile, a neck of excessive length resembling that of a Swan, the ribs of a Chameleon, a body of moderate size, and a very short tail, and, finally, four paddles resembling those of a Whale. Let us bestow a glance upon the remains of this strange animal which the earth has revealed, and which science has restored to us.

The head of the Plesiosaurus presents a combination of the characters belonging to the Ichthyosaurus, the Crocodile, and the Lizard. Its enormously long neck comprises a greater number of vertebræ than the neck of either the Camel, the Giraffe, or even the Swan, which of all the feathered race has the longest neck in comparison to the rest of the body. And it is to be remarked, that, contrary to what obtains in the Mammals, where the vertebræ of the neck are always seven, the vertebræ in birds increase in number with the length of the neck:

The body is cylindrical and rounded, like that of the great marine Turtles. It was, doubtless, naked, *i.e.*, not protected with the scales or carapace with which some authors have invested it; for no traces of such coverings have been found near any of the skeletons which have been hitherto discovered. The dorsal vertebræ are attached to each other by nearly plane surfaces like those of terrestrial quadrupeds, a mode of arrangement which must have deprived the whole of its vertebral

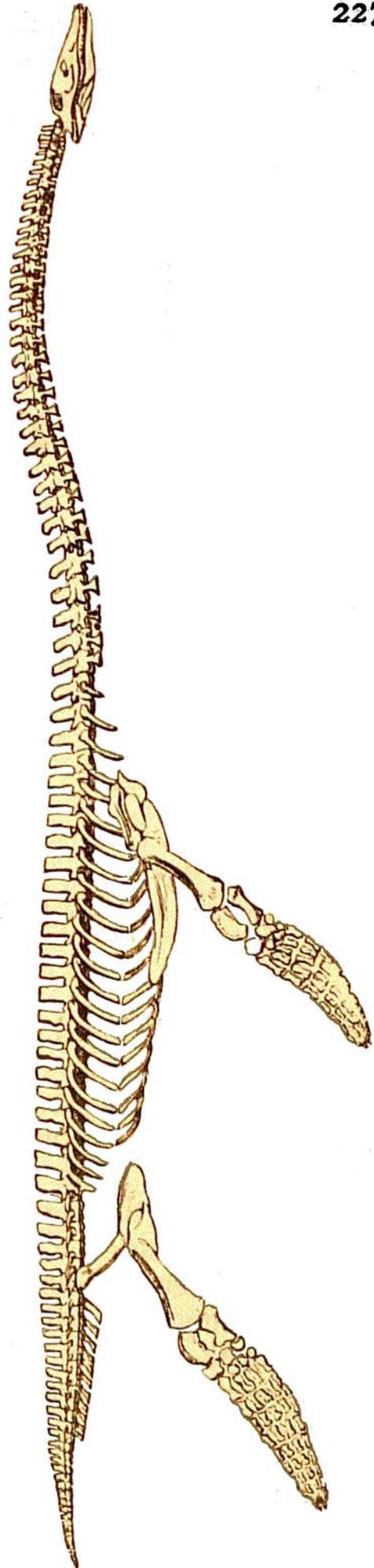


Fig. 102.—Skeleton of *Plesiosaurus dolichodeirus* restored. (Conybeare principally.)