

CHAPTER THIRD.

NOTICE OF THE PRINCIPAL SYSTEMS OF ZOÖLOGY.

SECTION I.

GENERAL REMARKS UPON MODERN SYSTEMS.

WITHOUT attempting to give an historical account of the leading features of all zoölogical systems, it is proper that I should here compare critically the practice of modern naturalists with the principles discussed above. With this view, it would hardly be necessary to go back beyond the publication of the "Animal Kingdom," by Cuvier, were it not that Cuvier is still represented, by many naturalists, and especially by Ehrenberg,¹ and some other German zoölogists, as favoring the division of the whole animal kingdom into two great groups, one containing the Vertebrates, and the other all the remaining classes, under the name of Invertebrates, while in reality it was he, who first, dismissing his own earlier views, introduced into the classification of the animal kingdom that fourfold division which has been the basis of all improvements in modern Zoölogy. He first showed that animals differ, not only by modifications of one and the same organic structure, but are constructed upon four different plans of structure, forming natural, distinct groups, which he called Radiata, Articulata, Mollusca, and Vertebrata.

It is true, that the further subdivisions of these leading groups have undergone many changes since the publication of the "Règne Animal." Many smaller groups, even entire classes, have been removed from one of his "embranchements" to another; but it is equally true, that the characteristic idea which lies at the bottom of these great divisions was first recognized by him, the greatest zoölogist of all times.

¹ EHRENBORG, (C. G.) Die Corallenthiere des rothen Meeres, Berlin, 1834, 4to., p. 30.