

421. This assemblage of animals is evidently inferior to that of other faunas, especially to those of the tropics. Not that there is a deficiency of animal life; for if the species are less numerous, there is a compensation in the multitude of individuals, and, also, in this other very significant fact, that the largest of all animals, the whales, belong to this fauna.

422. It has already been said, (400,) that the arctic fauna of the three continents is the same; its southern limit, however, is not a regular line. It does not correspond precisely with the polar circle, but rather to the isothermal zero—that is, the line where the average temperature of the year is at 32° of Fahrenheit. The course of this line presents numerous undulations. In general, it may be said to coincide with the northern limit of trees, so that it terminates where forest vegetation succeeds the vast arid plains, the barrens of North America, or the *tundras* of the Samoyedes. The uniformity of these plains involves a corresponding uniformity of plants and animals. On the North American continent it extends much farther southward on the eastern shore than on the western. From the peninsula of Alashka, it bends northwards towards the Mackenzie, then descends again towards the Bear Lake, and comes down nearly to the northern shore of Newfoundland.

423. II. TEMPERATE FAUNAS. — The faunas of the temperate regions of the northern hemisphere are much more varied than that of the arctic zone. Instead of consisting mainly of aquatic tribes, we have a considerable number of terrestrial animals, of graceful form, animated appearance, and varied colors, though less brilliant than those found in tropical regions. Those parts of the country covered with forests especially swarm with insects, which become the food of other animals; worms and terrestrial and fluviatile mollusks are also abundant.