

animal which was at first simple. We shall reserve the discussion of this subject until we have the data before us; which, of themselves, and without much argument, will suffice to overthrow it.

I may notice here another idea of naturalists, who are pleased to reduce these differences in the structure of animals into general laws. They affirm that in the centre of the animal body there is no disposition to change, whilst in the extremities we see surprising variations of form. If this be a law, there is no more to be said about it, the enquiry is terminated. But I contend that the term is quite inapplicable, and worse than useless, as tending to check enquiry. What then is the meaning of this variation in the form of the extremities and the comparative permanence towards the centre of the skeleton? I conceive the rationale to be this, that the central parts, by which in fact they mean the skull, spine, and ribs, are permanent in their offices; whilst the extremities vary and are adapted to every exterior circumstance. The office of the back part of the skull is to protect the brain, that of the spine to contain the spinal marrow, and of the ribs to perform respiration. Why should we expect these parts to vary in shape while their office remains the same? But the shoulder must vary in form, as it does in motion. The shape of the bones and the joints of the