

CHAPTER VI.

VERTEBRATA.

§ 1. *Vertebrated Animals in general.*

IF it be pleasing to trace the footsteps of nature in constructions so infinitely varied as those of the lower animals, and to follow the gradations of ascent from the zoophyte to the winged insect, which exhibits the greatest perfection compatible with the restricted dimensions of that class of beings, still more interesting must be the study of those more elaborate efforts of creative power, which are displayed, on a wider field, in the higher orders of the animal kingdom. In the various tribes of beings which are now to come before us, we find nature proceeding to display more refined developments in her system of organization, resorting to new models of structure on a scale of greater magnitude than before, devising new plans of economy, calculated for more extended periods of duration, and adopting new arrangements of organs, fitted for the exercise of a higher order of faculties. The result of these more elaborate constructions is seen in the vast series of *Vertebrated Animals*, which comprises a well-marked division of Zoology, comprehending all the larger species that exist on the globe, in whatever climate or element they may be found; and including man himself, placed, as he unquestionably is, at the summit of the scale;—the undisputed Lord of the Creation.

A remarkable affinity of structure prevails throughout the whole of this extensive assemblage of beings. Whatever may be the size or external form of these animals, whatever the activity or sluggishness of their movements, whether they be inhabitants of the land, the waters, or the air, a striking similitude may be traced, both in the disposition of their vital organs, and in the construction of the solid frame-