

## CHAPTER XIII.

## ABSORPTION.

ABSORPTION is another function, related to nutrition, which deserves special notice. The principal objects of this function are the removal of such materials as have been already deposited, and have become either useless or injurious, and their conveyance into the general mass of circulating fluids; purposes which are accomplished by a peculiar set of vessels, called the *Lymphatics*. These vessels contain a fluid, which being transparent and colourless like water, has been denominated the *lymph*. The lymphatics are perfectly similar in their structure, and probably, also, in their mode of action, to the lacteals, which absorb the chyle from the intestinal cavity: they are found in all the classes of vertebrated animals, and pervade extensively every part of the body. Exceedingly minute at their origin, they unite together as they proceed, forming larger and larger trunks, generally following the course of the veins, till they finally discharge their contents either into the thoracic duct, or into



some of the large veins in the vicinity of the heart. Throughout their whole course, they are, like the lacteals, provided with numerous valves, which, when the vessel is distended with lymph, give it a resemblance to a string of beads, Fig. 378.\* In the lower animals, it appears that the veins are occasionally endowed with a power of absorption, similar to that possessed

\* In warm-blooded animals, the lymphatics are made to traverse, in some part of their course, certain bodies of a compact structure, resembling glands, and termed, accordingly, the *lymphatic glands*. One of these is represented