

The Marsupial Order comprehends a large number of existing genera, both herbivorous and carnivorous, which are now peculiar to North and South America, and to New Holland, with the adjacent islands. The kangaroo and opossum are its most familiar examples. The name Marsupialia is derived from the presence of a large external marsupium, or pouch, fixed on the abdomen, in which the foetus is placed after a very short period of uterine gestation, and remains suspended to the nipple by its mouth, until sufficiently matured to come forth to the external air. The discovery of animals of this kind, both in the secondary and tertiary formations, shows that the Marsupial Order, so far from being of more recent introduction than other orders of mammalia, is in reality the first and most ancient condition, under which animals of this class appeared upon our planet: as far as we know, it was their only form during the secondary period; it was co-existent with many other orders in the early parts of the tertiary period; and its geographical distribution in the present creation, is limited to the regions we have above enumerated.*

* In a highly important physiological paper, in the Phil. Trans. London, 1834, part ii. p. 349, Mr. Owen has pointed out "the most irrefragable evidence of creative foresight, afforded by the existing Marsupialia, in the peculiar modifications both of the maternal and foetal system, designed with especial reference to