

The animal I shall select for my present purpose is that most extraordinary fossil creature, the Megatherium, (see Pl. 5), an animal, in some parts of its organization, nearly allied to the Sloth, and, like the Sloth, presenting an apparent monstrosity of external form, accompanied by many strange peculiarities of internal structure, which have hitherto been but little understood.

The Sloths have afforded a remarkable exception to the conclusions which naturalists have usually drawn, from their study of the organic structure and mechanism of other animals. The adaptation of each part of the body of the Elephant, to produce extraordinary strength, and of every member of the Deer and Antelope to give agility and speed, are too obvious to have escaped the attention of any scientific observer; but, it has been the constant practice of naturalists, to follow Buffon in misrepresenting the Sloths, as the most imperfectly constructed among all the members of the animal kingdom, as creatures incapable of enjoyment, and formed only for misery.

The Sloth does, indeed, afford the greatest deviations from the ordinary structure of living quadrupeds; and these have been erroneously considered as imperfections in its organization, without any compensating advantage. I have elsewhere* attempted to show that these ano-

* Linnean Transactions, Vol. XVII. Part 1.