

SECTION VII.

MOSASAURUS, OR GREAT ANIMAL OF MAESTRICHT.

THE Mosasaurus has been long known by the name of the great animal of Maestricht, occurring near that city, in the calcareous freestone which forms the most recent deposit of the cretaceous formation, and contains Ammonites, Belemnites, Hamites, and many other shells belonging to the chalk, mixt with numerous remains of marine animals that are peculiar to itself. A nearly perfect head of this animal was discovered in 1780, and is now in the Museum at Paris. This celebrated head during many years baffled all the skill of Naturalists; some considered it to be that of a Whale, others of a Crocodile; but its true place in the animal kingdom was first suggested by Adrian Camper, and at length confirmed by Cuvier. By their investigations it is proved to have been a gigantic marine reptile, most nearly allied to the Monitor.* The geological epoch at which the Mosasaurus

* The Monitors form a genus of Lizards, frequenting marshes and the banks of rivers in hot climates; they have received this name from the prevailing, but absurd, notion that they give warning by a whistling noise, of the approach of Crocodiles and Caymans. One species, the *Lacerta nilotica*, which devours the eggs of Crocodiles, has been sculptured on the monuments of ancient Egypt.