

The mechanism of the mouth of these animals is so contrived by Divine Wisdom, and the pieces that form it so put together, as to enable them to twist, and distort, and dilate it so enormously that they can swallow animals bigger than their own bodies.* The vertebræ of the great Boa are more numerous than those of other serpents, which gives them a greater power of surrounding and strangling their prey with their dreadful voluminous folds, of crushing it, and, with the help of their saliva, rendering it fit for deglutition. With their tail, likewise, they can lay strong hold of a tree, so as to use it as a fulcrum, by which their powers of compression are increased and rendered more available where they have to contend with the struggles of powerful animals.

Order 4.—The connection of the *Saurians*, or the animals forming the next Order, with the Ophidians, is very intimate. Cuvier says that many serpents under the skin have the vestige of a posterior limb, which in some shows its extremity externally, in the form of a little claw.† Amongst the lizards is one that has only two *fore-legs*,‡ and another that has only two *hind* ones;§ and a third,|| in which the legs are so short and so distant, and the body so slender and serpentiform, that they resemble a snake with four legs rather than a lizard.

This Order is divided into numerous genera and subgenera. One of the most celebrated is the Chameleon. I have already noticed some of its peculiarities, and its mode of catching the insects that form its food.¶ The ancients were of opinion that it lived upon air, led by the power it has of swelling itself to twice its natural size, by inflating

* Cuv. Anat. Comp. iii. 90.

‡ Chirotes.

|| Seps See Roget, B. T. i. 448. f. 210.

† Règn. An. ii. 71.

§ Bipes.

¶ See above, p. 142.