

CHAPTER II.

ON THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE POLYPES
ABSTRACTEDLY CONSIDERED.

ON the continent the term *Zoophyte* has of late been used in a very extensive sense, so as to include every animal which exhibits a circular disposition of parts radiating from a common centre, and many also in which this character is little or not at all obvious. In this country the word has never been so employed excepting in translations from a foreign language: no English writer ever thinks of calling an intestinal worm, or a sea-jelly, or a star-fish, or even the infusory animalcules, a zoophyte; but he applies the name to no other creatures than those which in their form, or most remarkable characters, recall the appearance of a vegetable or its leading properties. In this restricted sense I also use it in this work, or rather with a still narrower circumscription, having assigned what appear to be sufficient reasons for removing the corallines and sponges from the category, and restoring them to the vegetable kingdom, to which the earlier naturalists believed they had a rightful claim. The definition of a zoophyte is thus considerably simplified, but there remains sufficient variety and discrepancy in the constituents of the order to render that definition in some degree vague and incongruous. The fact is—the classification of molluscous, and radiated, and acritous animals requires to be recast: the limits between them have not been determined with undisputed precision, and it seems probable that there are in each class some tribes which will pass from one to the other as discovery proceeds. It has been recently proposed* to remove a large pro-

* Thompson's Zoological Researches and Illustrations, p. 92.