

CHAPTER VI.

THE PROGRESS OF SYSTEMATIC ZOOLOGY.

THE history of Systematic Botany, as we have presented it, may be considered as a sufficient type of the general order of progression in the sciences of classification. It has appeared, in the survey which we have had to give, that this science, no less than those which we first considered, has been formed by a series of inductive processes, and has, in its history, Epochs at which, by such processes, decided advances were made. The important step in such cases is, the seizing upon some artificial mark which conforms to natural resemblances;—some basis of arrangement and nomenclature by means of which true propositions of considerable generality can be enunciated. The advance of other classificatory sciences, as well as botany, must consist of such steps; and their course, like that of botany, must (if we attend only to the real additions made to knowledge,) be gradual and progressive, from the earliest times to the present.

To exemplify this continued and constant progression in the whole range of Zoology, would require vast knowledge and great labor; and is, perhaps, the less necessary, after we have dwelt so long on the history of Botany, considered in the same point of view. But there are a few observations respecting Zoology in general which we are led to make in consequence of statements recently promulgated; for these statements seem to represent the history of Zoology as having followed a course very different from that which we have just ascribed to the classificatory sciences in general. It is held by some naturalists, that not only the formation of a systematic classification in Zoology dates as far back as Aristotle; but that his classification is, in many respects, superior to some of the most admired and recent attempts of modern times.

If this were really the case, it would show that at least the idea of a Systematic Classification had been formed and developed long previous to the period to which we have assigned such a step; and it would be difficult to reconcile such an early maturity of Zoology with the conviction, which we have had impressed upon us by the other