

cular purposes, so combined in the hand, as to perform actions the most minute and complicated, consistently with powerful exertion.

The wonder still is, that whether we examine this system in man, or in any of the inferior species of animals, nothing can be more curiously adjusted or appropriated; and we should be inclined to say, whatever instance occupied our thoughts for the time, that to this particular object the system had been framed. The view which the subject opens to us, is unbounded. The curious synthesis by which we ascertain the nature, condition, and habits of an extinct animal, from the examination of its fossil remains, is grounded on a knowledge of the system of which we are speaking; and to make the proper use of this department we must understand what a fossil bone is.

A bone consists of many parts; but for our present purpose it is only necessary to observe that the hard substance, the phosphate of lime, which we familiarly recognise as bone, is every where penetrated by membranes and vessels as delicate as those which belong to any other part of the body. Fossil bones are those which are found imbedded in the earth, and may be in different conditions. They either retain their animal part, or may have become petrified; that is to say, the animal matter may have been decomposed and dissipated, with the phosphoric