

CHAPTER VIII.

REPTILIA.

§ 1. *Terrestrial Vertebrata in general.*

THE numerous tribes of vertebrated animals which are strictly terrestrial, or destined to move on land, differ widely in their modes of progression, and in the mechanical advantages of their formation. The greater number are quadrupeds; some formed for climbing trees, others for burrowing in the earth; some for treading on sandy plains, some for scaling precipices. A few seem scarcely capable of advancing; others outstrip the winds in fleetness. Some families of reptiles are entirely destitute of any external organs of motion, the whole trunk of the body resting on the ground: while man occupies a place where he stands, alone, being distinguished by the exclusive faculty of permanently sustaining himself on the lower extremities.

In reviewing the developments and the mechanical functions exhibited by so great a diversity of structures, I shall commence with an examination of those amphibious reptiles which appear to form an intermediate link in the chain connecting the strictly aquatic, with the terrestrial vertebrated animals: then, taking up this latter series, I shall consider the more simple conformation, and less perfect motions of terrestrial animals destitute of limbs; and gradually ascend to those in which the support and progression of the body is effected by extremities, more and more artificially formed: concluding with the human structure, which terminates this extensive series.