

distinguished from all those which have previously engaged our attention, by the possession of a bony, jointed, hollow column of support or spine, formed of bones termed *vertebræ* (*to turn*), and enclosing and protecting those strands or chords of the nervous system, called the spinal marrow; the former classes, being destitute of such a structure, have the general name of *Invertebrata*.

In the beings whose mineralized remains form the subject of our present investigation, the durable parts of the frame-work, or skeleton, are, in most instances, situated internally, and their fossil relics consist principally of the bones, or solid earthy portions of their structures, either imbedded in the rocks in their natural relative position, or in a state of dismemberment, and dispersion. In most cases the teeth, and in many the durable parts of their external integument, or skin, are also preserved, in a greater or lesser degree of integrity.

In the lowest class of *vertebrata*, the FISHES, the skin is covered with numerous pieces or scales, of a dense, durable substance, and strengthened, in some families, by the addition of osseous plates; thus constituting a flexible and almost impenetrable coat of armour, affording suitable protection to beings peculiarly exposed to external injuries, from the nature of the regions they inhabit, and the state of warfare with each other, in which they are constantly engaged. Confined to a fluid medium, they