

CHAPTER IX.

MAMMALIA.

§ 1. *Mammalia in general.*

THE singular animals, so remarkable for their anomalous shapes, their torpid vitality, and their amphibious constitution, which have lately occupied our attention, appear placed by nature as forms of transition, in the passage from those vertebrated animals which dwell in the water, to those which inhabit the land. The class of *Mammifera*, or *Mammalia*, comprehends all the animals which possess a spinal column, breathe air by means of lungs, and are also warm-blooded, and viviparous, conditions which render it necessary that they should possess organs, called *mammæ*, endowed with the power of preparing milk for the nourishment of their young; a peculiarity from which the name of the class is derived. But they are not exclusively land animals; for among the mammalia must be ranked several amphibious and aquatic tribes, such as the seal, the walrus, the porpus, the dolphin, the narwhal, the cachalot, and the whale; animals which, however widely they differ in their habits and external conformation from terrestrial quadrupeds, possess, in common with the latter, all the essential characters of internal structure and of functions above enumerated. These characters belong also to the human species, which must consequently, in its zoological relations, be ranked as a genus of the class mammalia. So numerous, indeed, are the analogies which connect the natural families of this class with our own race, that we must ever feel a deep interest in the accurate investigation of their comparative anatomy and physiology; and it has been found, accordingly, that the progress which has, of late years, been made