

§ 5. *Ruminantia.*

IN following the series of Mammalia in the order which best exhibits their successive stages of development, I shall commence with those whose digestive apparatus is formed to extract nourishment exclusively from the vegetable kingdom. The first assemblage that presents itself to our notice is the remarkable family of *Ruminants*, which feed principally on herbage. Wherever the earth is closed with vegetation, it requires neither skill nor exertion on their part to seek and to devour the rich repast which is profusely spread under their feet. To remove from one pasture to another, to browse, and to repose, constitute the peaceful employments of their lives, and satisfy the chief conditions of their existence. To these purposes the whole conformation of their skeleton, and especially of those parts which constitute the limbs, is adapted. The anterior extremities having only to support the weight of the fore part of the trunk, and to assist in progressive motion, have a less complicated arrangement of joints, and exhibit many of those consolidations of the bones, which tend to simplify the structure, and contribute to its strength.

But though never incited by the calls of appetite to engage in sanguinary warfare, they are yet liable to the assaults of many ferocious and well armed adversaries, and are often unprovided with any adequate means of defence; their only resource, therefore, is to avoid the dangers of the encounter by a rapid and precipitate flight. To confer this power appears to have been the object aimed at by nature in every part of the conformation of these animals. It is among the ruminant tribes that the fleetest of quadrupeds are to be found, such as the gazelle, the antelope, and the deer, animals which exhibit the highest perfection of structure belonging to this type. We may observe that the parts composing the hind legs are longer, and inclined to