

like themselves."\* This definition, he admits, is correct; because every living individual bears a very close resemblance to those from which it springs. But this is not all which is usually implied by the term species; for the majority of naturalists agree with Linnæus in supposing that all the individuals propagated from one stock have certain distinguishing characters in common, which will never vary, and which have remained the same since the creation of each species.

In order to shake this opinion, Lamarck enters upon the following line of argument:—The more we advance in the knowledge of the different organized bodies which cover the surface of the globe, the more our embarrassment increases, to determine what ought to be regarded as a species, and still more how to limit and distinguish genera. In proportion as our collections are enriched, we see almost every void filled up, and all our lines of separation effaced! we are reduced to arbitrary determinations, and are sometimes fain to seize upon the slight differences of mere varieties, in order to form characters for what we choose to call a species; and sometimes we are induced to pronounce individuals but slightly differing, and which others regard as true species, to be varieties.

The greater the abundance of natural objects assembled together, the more do we discover proofs that every thing passes by insensible shades into something else; that even the more remarkable differences are evanescent, and that nature has, for the most part, left us nothing at our disposal for establishing distinctions, save trifling, and, in some respects, puerile particularities.

We find that many genera amongst animals and plants are of such an extent, in consequence of the number of species referred to them, that the study and determination of these last has become almost impracticable. When the species are arranged in a series, and placed near to each other, with due regard to their natural affinities, they each differ in so minute a degree from those next adjoining, that they almost melt into each other, and are in a manner confounded together. If we see isolated species, we may presume the absence of some more closely connected, and which have not yet been discovered. Already are there genera, and even entire orders—nay, whole classes, which present an approximation to the state of things here indicated.

If, when species have been thus placed in a regular series, we select one, and then, making a leap over several intermediate ones, we take a second, at some distance from the first, these two will, on comparison, be seen to be very dissimilar; and it is in this manner that every naturalist begins to study the objects which are at his own door. He then finds it an easy task to establish generic and specific distinctions; and it is only when his experience is enlarged, and when he has made himself master of the intermediate links, that his difficulties and ambiguities begin. But while we are thus compelled to resort to trifling and minute characters in our attempt

\* Phil. Zool., tom. i. p. 54.