

## SECTION IX.

## CONCLUSIONS.

The importance of such an investigation as the preceding, must be obvious to every philosophical investigator. As soon as it is understood that all the different groups introduced into a natural system may have a definite meaning; as soon as it can be shown that each exhibits a definite relation among living beings, founded in nature, and no more subject to arbitrary modifications than any other law expressing natural phenomena; as soon as it is made plain that the natural limits of all these groups may be ascertained by careful investigations, the interest in the study of classification or the systematic relationship existing among all organized beings, which has almost ceased to engage the attention of the more careful original investigators, will be revived, and the manifold ties which link together all animals and plants, as the living expression of a gigantic conception, carried out in the course of time, like a soul-breathing epos, will be scrutinized anew, determined with greater precision, and expressed with increasing clearness and propriety. Fanciful and artificial classifications will gradually lose their hold upon a better informed community; scientific men themselves will be restrained from bringing forward immature and premature investigations; no characteristics of new species will have a claim upon the notice of the learned, which has not been fully investigated and compared with those most closely allied to it; no genus will be admitted, the structural peculiarities of which are not clearly and distinctly illustrated; no family will be considered as well founded, which shall not exhibit a distinct system of forms intimately combined and determined by structural relations; no order will appear admissible, which shall not represent a well-marked degree of structural complication; no class will deserve that name, which shall not appear as a distinct and independent expression of some general plan of structure, carried out in a peculiar way and with peculiar means; no type will be recognized as one of the fundamental groups of the animal kingdom, which shall not exhibit a plan of its own, not convertible into another. No naturalist will be justified in introducing any one of these groups into our systems without showing: 1st, that it is a natural group; 2d, that it is a group of this or that kind, to avoid, henceforth, calling families groups that may be genera, families groups that may be orders, classes or types groups that may be orders or classes; 3d, that the characters by which these groups may be recognized are in fact respectively specific,