

violate every natural relationship. At the same time, a renewed examination would afford ample opportunity, even to the most skeptical, to satisfy himself that the characters upon which these genera are founded have thus far, for the most part, escaped notice, and constitute a real addition to our knowledge, whatever be the view taken of the genera themselves.

As to the families adopted in this revision, they bear to one another exactly the same relations as all natural families have to one another in any natural order of the animal kingdom. They are consequently more readily distinguished by their habitus, as all natural families should be, that is to say, by their form, than are the artificial groups thus far called families among Testudinata by any special characters assigned to them. Why, according to present classifications, Chelydra and Cistudo, for instance, should belong together to the same family with our Terrapins, is not any more obvious than why the latter genus should not be referred to another group, the Testudinina, for instance; for there certainly are as striking differences, and even differences of a higher order, between Chelydra and Cistudo, or Chelydra and the common Terrapins, than between Vultures and Falcons. The same may be said of Ozotheca and Cynosternum taken together, when compared with either of them. And I cannot suppose that any naturalist will contend that different classes of the same great type of the animal kingdom should be classified upon different principles, however great the difference in the nature of the characters may be.

From what I have said in the opening of this section, it might be inferred that I consider the North American species of Testudinata as too well known to require much further attention and study. I am far from entertaining any such opinion. On the contrary, I consider, in general, an accurate knowledge of species as of such difficult attainment, that I do not yet venture upon sketching descriptions of our Turtles, as I understand that specific descriptions should be, even though I have already spent years in their investigation. What I offer in the following pages I wish to be considered merely as contributions towards a fuller illustration of this subject. It will still require long and patient studies before our Turtles are known as they ought to be, in order to draw a complete picture of the habits, growth, and variations of every species.¹

As to the synonymy of the species,² it is not my intention to swell this vol-

¹ It is one thing to draw up perfect descriptions of species, and another and a very different thing to write mere diagnoses, or simply to point out the peculiarities by which closely allied species may be distinguished. Comp. Part I., Chap. 2, Sect. 6, p. 163.

² The older synonymy of all the Testudinata

known at the time of the publication of his work is very learnedly discussed by J. D. SCHÆFFER, in his *Historia Testudinum*, Erlanga, 1792, 1 vol. 4to. For the North American species consult Dr. Holbrook's *North American Herpetology*, or Dumeril and Bibron's *Erpétologie générale*.