

They placed in one species all organic individuals which were very similar, or almost identical in form, and which could only be distinguished from one another by very unimportant differences. On the other hand, they considered as different species those individuals which presented more essential or more striking differences in the formation of their bodies. But of course this opened the flood-gates to the most arbitrary proceedings in the systematic distinctions of species. For as all the individuals of one species are never completely alike in all their parts, but as every species varies more or less, no one could point out which degree of variation constituted a really "good species," or which degree indicated a "mere variety."

This dogmatic conception of the idea of species, and the arbitrary proceedings connected with it, necessarily led to the most perplexing contradictions, and to the most untenable suppositions. This is clearly demonstrable in the case of the celebrated George Cuvier (born in 1769), who next to Linnæus has exercised the greatest influence on the study of zoology. In his conception and definition of the idea of species, he agreed on the whole with Linnæus, and shared also his belief in an independent creation of individual species. Cuvier considered their immutability of such importance that he was led to the foolish assertion, "The immutability of species is a necessary condition of the existence of scientific natural history." As Linnæus' definition of species did not satisfy him, he made an attempt to give a more exact and, for systematic practice, a more useful definition, in the following words: "All those individual animals and plants belong to one species which can be proved to be either descended from one another, or from