

species as well as higher groups being marked out, not by any distributive law, but by the purely non-significant operation of human experience, which cannot transcend the results of death and decay."

To the very last Louis Agassiz maintained his conviction that "there is no evidence of a direct descent of later from earlier species in the geological succession of animals"; and the famous *Essay on Classification* appears throughout to involve a misunderstanding of what classification really is. At the same time, it must be remembered that this great naturalist saw clearly that the various forms of life are not chaotic, that they can be put in order, that there is a *Systema Naturæ*, and a progressive development which he chose to express only in transcendental terms.

The modern conception of species may be expressed as follows:—When we see individual organisms very like one another, and so well marked off from their nearest neighbours that it is possible to distinguish them, we find it convenient to give them a specific name. Before doing so, if there is opportunity, we take certain common-sense precautions. We inquire whether the distinguishing marks which have arrested our attention have any real constancy, whether they persist through successive generations. What is more difficult is, to distinguish acquired characters or modifications, which are assumed by each individual in its lifetime as the result of external conditions, from inborn characters which form the real basis of the specific inheritance. We also inquire whether the distinctive characteristics in question are greater than those variations which are so often exhibited among the progeny of a single pair. Thus, no one would propose to divide men into species according to the colour of their hair or eyes, since that would land one in the absurdity of placing two brothers in different species. We also find out whether the members of the proposed species are fertile *inter se*, and tend to be sterile when crossed with the members of a related species.

To sum up, a species is a relative conception, convenient when we wish to include under one title all the