

members of a group of individuals who resemble one another in certain characters. There is no absolute constancy in these specific characters, and one species often melts into another, with which it is connected by intermediate varieties. At the same time, the characters on account of which the naturalist gives a specific name to a group of individuals, should be greater than those which distinguish the members of any one family, should show a relative constancy from generation to generation, and should be associated with reproductive peculiarities which tend to restrict the range of mutual fertility to the members of the proposed species.

The invaluable order and precision introduced by Ray and Linnæus involved an exaggeration of the constancy and the discontinuity of species,—an exaggeration which evolutionary systematists have been slowly endeavouring to correct.

Chapter III.

Classification of Plants.

Ancient Classification—Mediæval Mysticism—The Herbalists—Cesalpino—Linnæus—Development of the Natural System.

The history of the successive attempts to classify plants is not readily condensed; it occupies over two hundred pages in Sachs's *History of Botany*, where no words are wasted. Some condensed summary must, however, be attempted, for it is impossible to appreciate the present position without going back to the Jussieus, and the Jussieus force us back to Linnæus, and Linnæus back again to Cesalpino.

The ancient classifications were childish in outline and utilitarian in detail. "Herbs, shrubs, and trees"—these three words for many centuries formed the outline of the classification; the details referred to the diseases which the plants were believed to cure. We need hardly say more in

Ancient
Classifica-
tion.