

different, still agree in a general resemblance of several others, which at once decides us in considering them as having a natural relation. In the former cases, our ingenuity is exercised to determine what can be the cause of their resemblance; in the latter, of their difference: the former belong to the province of inductive generalization, and afford the most instructive cases for the investigation of causes; the latter appertain to the more secret recesses of nature; the very existence of such families being in itself one of the great and complicated phenomena of the universe, which we cannot hope to unriddle without an intimate and extensive acquaintance with the highest laws.*

CHAP. VI.

OF THE FIRST STAGE OF INDUCTION.—THE DISCOVERY OF PROXIMATE CAUSES, AND LAWS OF THE LOWEST DEGREE OF GENERALITY, AND THEIR VERIFICATION.

(137.) The first thing that a philosophic mind considers, when any new phenomenon presents itself, is its *explanation*, or reference to an immediate producing cause. If that cannot be ascertained, the next is to

* The following passage, from Lindley's Synopsis of the British Flora, characterizes justly the respective merits, in a philosophical point of view, of natural and artificial systems of classification in general, though limited in its expression to his own immediate science:—"After all that has been effected, or is likely to be accomplished hereafter, there will always be more difficulty in acquiring a knowledge of the natural system of botany than of the Linnæan. The latter skims only the surface of things, and leaves the student in the fancied possession of a sort of information which it is easy enough to obtain, but which is of little value when acquired: the former requires a minute investigation of every part and every property known to exist in plants; but when understood has conveyed to the mind a store of real information, of the utmost use to man in every station of life. Whatever the difficulties may be of becoming acquainted with plants according to this method, they are inseparable from botany, which cannot be usefully studied without encountering them." Schiller has some beautiful lines on this, entitled "Menschliches Wissen" (or Human Knowledge); Gedichte, vol. i. p. 72. Leipzig, 1800.