

CHAPTER XXVIII.

METHOD IN THE HISTORY OF LIFE.

NATURE has always issued her bulletins. It is a most interesting fact in the history of the animal creation that Nature advertised her plans in the very earliest creative acts. In our study of the relics of the primeval ages we do not find the grand and fundamental purposes of Infinite Wisdom unfolding themselves by degrees as type after type of organic life made its advent upon our planet. It is quite true that the full development of Nature's schemes can only be apprehended in the ultimate results, and that, with our highest wisdom, we are continually surprised at the wealth of resources exposed in the unfolding of a simple plan. But Nature had her plans, and these were mature in the very beginning. All possible contingencies being foreseen, no amendments or modifications have been necessitated by the growth of successive populations and the march of human improvement. The outlines of Nature's grand methods were announced in her initial creative efforts. It was thus in the plan of continental development; it was thus in the plan of the animal creation. It is only in the infinite flexibility of her plans, and in the inexhaustible richness of their filling up, that Nature transcends all the possibilities of human expectation.

To the geologist no fact is more familiar or more patent than the simultaneous introduction upon the earth of three of the four fundamental plans of animal structure which in the following ages were to sport into the infinite variety