

Chapter II.

Classification of Animals.

Meaning of Classification—Early Classifications—Physiological Classification—Aristotle—Ray and Linnæus—Lamarck—Cuvier—Recognition of Embryological Basis—Genealogical Trees—Grades of Classification—Conception of Species.

The word *classification* is apt to sound dull to many ears, yet it is doubtful whether there is any exercise more irresistible or more fascinating. Is there anyone, until he has realized the fallacy of it, who does not feel ill at ease until he has classified his neighbours, as rich or poor, as ignorant or cultured, as socialists or anarchists, and so on through the list of groups which have at least some of the distinctions of species?

Do we not see our children slowly working out their *taxonomy* of herb, shrub, and tree; of beast, bird, and creeping thing; or better than these, unless the pleasure of it be too ruthlessly denied them? Do they not in some measure recapitulate the history of classifications, advancing from the artificial to the natural, from the utilitarian to the scientific? Are they not, in the Eden of their youth, indulging in one of the earliest recorded intellectual exercises, that of giving names to things? Classification is but an attempt towards that order without which there cannot be progress.

The earliest classifications on record have for the most part a utilitarian basis—distinguishing the edible and the nauseous, the useful and the harmful, and so on, in which there is the salt of common sense and the warrant of indisputable utility. Whatever merits the modern classification of snakes may lay claim to, it can hardly dispense with the primeval distinction between the venomous and the innocent.

But man cannot be utilitarian always, and classification became physiological. Animals were grouped