

or make different species for different regions, I somewhat incline to number this among the imaginary ones.

The habits of the Solan goose, especially at its breeding time, have been so fully described in popular works, that I shall not dwell on the subject; but its systematic position and affinities may be worthy of some consideration, and will give me the opportunity of offering some details illustrative of views of classification, of which a general outline has been already submitted to you.

The genus *Sula* is referred to the family *Pelecanidae*, among the *Natatores* or swimming-birds; and this family is distinguished by the union of the hind toe with the others in a single membrane, great power of wing, generally short legs, the nostrils being slits with a scarcely perceptible aperture, the skin of the throat generally more or less extensible, the tongue small, and the gizzard united with the stomach. The admitted generic forms in the family are *Atagen*, the frigate-birds—(amidst much confusion about names, I have adopted those of Dr. Geo. Gray, as given in the *Genera of Birds*); *Phaeton*, the tropic bird; *Sula*, the gannett; *Graculus*, the cormorant; *Pelecanus*, the pelican; and *Plotus*, the snake-bird. These genera are not rich in species, and the family is a small one, and remarkably deviative in its habits from the mass of *Natatorial* birds; yet such striking peculiarities are observable among the genera, that Dr. G. Gray has placed them in three sub-families, and we may see reason for extending this sub-division. But before we proceed with the analysis of the *Pelecanidae*, I may perhaps be indulged in a few observations on classification generally, and especially on the best treatment of the great class of Birds, designed in illustration and confirmation of a method already submitted to the Institute.

It is well known, that according to the views of McLeay and Swainson, the plan of creation in every different group of organized beings, is sub-division into three leading,—or, since one of them is itself again divided,—into five secondary groups, which are characterized as typical, sub-typical, and aberrant—the latter itself exhibiting three variations. In applying this scheme to the various parts of organised nature, so much knowledge and ingenuity were displayed, and there were so many striking instances in which a satisfactory natural grouping seemed to result, that many were led to believe that the secret of natural classification was detected, and that in order to obtain a perfect system we had only diligently to work out in the