

THE
CANADIAN
NATURALIST AND GEOLOGIST.

VOLUME III.

AUGUST, 1858.

NUMBER 4.

ARTICLE XXIV.—*Agassiz' Contributions to the Natural History of the United States.* (Vols. 1 & 2. Boston.)

(Concluded from our last.)

The second chapter is one of the most important in the work. It treats of the actual basis in nature of the various ranks of groups in which animals are arranged,—the *Branch* or *Province*, the *Class*, the *Order*, the *Family*, the *Genus*, the *Species*. Is there any reason in nature why this particular gradation should be adopted, or is it merely an artificial convenience. Agassiz thinks that it is natural, and that naturalists, like many other workers, have reached to a truly scientific system without knowing it. He believes that the successive subdivisions of the animal kingdom are based on the following considerations:—

“Branches or types are characterised by the *plan* of their structure.

Classes by the *manner* in which the plan is executed, as far as ways and means are concerned.

Orders by the *degrees of complication* of structure.

Families by their *form*, as far as determined by structure.

Genera by the *details* of the execution in special parts.

Species by the relations of individuals to one another and to the world in which they live, as well as by the proportions of their parts, their ornamentation, &c.”