

the whole, we are willing to accept this view as at least one leading idea to be expressed by orders in the animal kingdom.

4. *Families* are characterised by general external form; and here we see no reason to differ from our author. The family is in short one of the most obvious and easily recognised relationships among animals, is almost instinctively perceived by us, and on this very account should have much more attention given to it in systematic Zoology than it has yet received, as one of the most useful aids in the determination of species.

“Unless, then, form be too vague an element to characterise any kind of natural groups in the animal kingdom, it must constitute a prominent feature of families. I have already remarked, that orders and families are the groups upon which zoologists are least agreed, and to the study and characterising of which they have paid least attention. Does this not arise simply from the fact, that, on the one hand, the difference between ordinal and class characters has not been understood, and only assumed to be a difference of degree; and, on the other hand, that the importance of the form, as the prominent character of families, has been entirely overlooked? For, though so few natural families of animals are well characterised, or characterised at all, we cannot open a modern treatise upon any class of animals without finding the genera more or less naturally grouped together, under the heading of a generic name with a termination in *idæ* or *inæ* indicating family and sub-family distinctions; and most of these groups, however unequal in absolute value, are really natural groups, though far from designating always natural families, being as often orders or sub-orders, as families or sub-families. Yet they indicate the facility there is, almost without study, to point out the intermediate natural groups between the classes and the genera. This arises, in my opinion, from the fact, that family resemblance in the animal kingdom is most strikingly expressed in the general form, and that form is an element which falls most easily under our perception, even when the observation is made superficially. But, at the same time, form is most difficult to describe accurately, and hence the imperfection of most of our family characteristics, and the constant substitution for such characters of features which are not essential to the family. To prove the correctness of this view, I would only appeal to the experience of every naturalist. When we see new animals, does not the first glance, that is, the first impression made upon us by