

of the North American Turtles should at once meet with a favorable reception. There are so many naturalists who look upon classification in general, and especially upon minor subdivisions, in the system of animals, merely as convenient devices to facilitate their study, that any distinction which in their estimation might be dispensed with is considered by them as objectionable, and must be so, according to their standard, which does not even admit that genera may exist in nature. However, as it is one of the objects of this work to show that genera are founded in nature, and that therefore the investigation of the genera and all the other natural divisions among animals require as careful and minute attention as that of species, I would add a few more remarks upon this topic, in order to anticipate the objections which may be raised against the subdivision of our Turtles into many distinct genera, and to illustrate their value by a comparison with the genera of one order of the class of Birds,—the Birds of prey,—with which the Testudinata may fairly be contrasted for their number, and the character of their peculiarities. In the first place, the groups called by Duméril and Bibron Thalassites, Potamides, Elodites, and Chersites (without entering again into the question already discussed,<sup>1</sup> whether they are families or groups of a higher order, or partly families and partly sub-orders) may stand a comparison with those groups among the Birds of prey which correspond to the old genera Vultur, Falco, and Strix, and which are now generally considered as families, though the differences among these Birds are certainly not so great, nor even of the same kind, as those which distinguish the Chelonii and the Amydæ. Indeed, the Vulturidæ, Falconidæ, and Strigidæ, when contrasted with one another, exhibit rather differences of form than of structure, whilst the peculiarities of the subdivisions of Testudinata cited above are rather differences of structure, which amounts to saying, that the differences of the latter bear the character of sub-orders, and the groups of Birds mentioned before differ in the manner of families. And yet nobody objects now any longer to the further subdivision of the Falconidæ, for instance, into such sub-families as Aquilinæ, Eagles, Buteoninæ, Buzzards, Falconinæ, Falcons, Accipitrinæ, Hawks, etc. This being the case, who does not perceive, that, if the groups Falconidæ, Vulturidæ, and Strigidæ are genuine families, they ought not to be compared respectively with a group like the Elodites, which embraces animals as different as the Cistudo, the true Emys, the Terrapins, the Cynosternum, the Chelydra, the Chelys, the Chelodina, etc.; but that, on the contrary, groups like these last, well circumscribed within their natural limits, truly constitute families also, corresponding, by their intrinsic value, to the families of the Strigidæ, Vulturidæ, and Falconidæ.

<sup>1</sup> Comp. Chap. 1, Sect. 2, p. 242-252.