

Four years ago I set up a number of hypothetical genealogies for the larger groups of organisms in the systematic introduction to my General History of Development (Gen. Morph. vol. ii.), and thereby, in fact, made the first attempt actually to construct the pedigrees of organisms in the manner required by the theory of development. I was quite conscious of the extreme difficulty of the task, and as I undertook it in spite of all discouraging obstacles, I claim no more than the merit of having made the first attempt and given a stimulus for other and better attempts. Probably most zoologists and botanists were but little satisfied with this beginning, and least so in reference to the special domain in which each one is specially at work. However, it is certainly in this case much easier to blame than to produce something better, and what best proves the immense difficulty of this infinitely complicated task is the fact that no naturalist has as yet supplied the place of my pedigrees by better ones. But, like all other scientific hypotheses which serve to explain facts, my genealogical hypotheses may claim to be taken into consideration until they are replaced by better ones.

I hope that this replacement will very soon take place; and I wish for nothing more than that my first attempt may induce very many naturalists to establish more accurate pedigrees for the individual groups, at least in the special domain of the animal and vegetable kingdom which happens to be well known to one or other of them. By numerous attempts of this kind our genealogical knowledge, in the course of time, will slowly advance and approach more and more towards perfection, although it can with certainty be foreseen that we shall never arrive at a