

distinguish at the first glance the plants of different quarters of the globe, and yet will be at a loss to tell by what mark he detects them. There is, I know not what look—sinister, obscure, in African plants; superb and elevated in the Asiatic; smooth and cheerful in the American; stunted and indurated in the Alpines.”¹ The inventor of the sexual system of plants, which proved to be such a good “finder” in the hands of the botanist and herbalist, speaks of the difficulty of the task of discovering the natural orders. “Yet,” he says, “I, too, have laboured at this—have done something, have much still to do, and shall labour at the object as long as I live.”²

Linnæus’s artificial system met with little acceptance in France, where, under the opposite influence of Buffon,³

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Linnæus and
Buffon.

¹ Quoted by Whewell (*‘Hist.,’* vol. iii. p. 263) from the *‘Philosophia Botanica’* (1751).

² *Ibid.*, quoted from the *‘Classes Plantarum’* (1738). Julius Sachs, in his excellent *‘History of Botany’* (Munich, 1875, transl. from the German by H. E. Garnsey, 1890), says of Linnæus, that in his morphological as well as in his systematic labours, there existed two unreconciled conceptions—a superficial one, meant only for practical use, which found expression in his artificial sexual system, and a deeper, scientifically valuable one. “For practical purposes of description he elaborated his nomenclature of the parts which, however useful, appears nevertheless flat and superficial, as any deeper foundation through a comparative study of forms is wanting. But alongside of this, there appears in various passages of his writings the desire for a more profound conception of plant-forms. What he had to say on this subject he brought together under the

term *‘metamorphosis plantarum’*” (p. 110 of the German edition).

³ Buffon’s great name has a place in the history of the genetic as well as of the morphological view of nature, inasmuch as he looked at the things of nature as much from the side of their individual speciality as from that of their connection and orderly arrangement in time and space. And inasmuch as he “does not only consider the form, but tries to maintain an interest in the general economy of the whole of nature by picturing to us the homes, the habits and customs, the instincts, &c., of living things, so he strove in general to represent the single phenomena of nature as existing in intimate connection” (Carus, *‘Gesch. der Zoologie,’* p. 523). “As Buffon opposed the extreme systematisers, who seemed to think it the end of science, not so much to know about an object as to be able to name it, and fit it into their system, so Daubenton (the collaborator of Buffon in France)