

subordinate classes, sufficiently well defined to admit of names, and these again into others, whose names may become attached to, or compounded with, the former, till at length the particular species is identified. The facility with which the botanist, the entomologist, or the chemist, refers by name to any individual object in his science shows what may be accomplished in this way when characters are themselves distinct. In other branches, however, considerable difficulty is experienced. This arises mostly where the species to be distinguished are separated from each other, chiefly by difference in degree, of certain qualities common to all, and where the degrees shade into each other insensibly. Perhaps such subjects can hardly be considered ripe for systematic nomenclature; and that the attempt to apply it ought only to be partial, embracing such groups and parcels of individuals as agree in characters evidently natural and generic, and leaving the remainder under trivial or provisional denominations, till they shall be better known, and capable of being scientifically grouped.

(132.) Indeed, nomenclature, in a systematic point of view, is as much, perhaps more, a consequence than a cause of extended knowledge. Any one may give an arbitrary name to a thing, merely to be able to talk of it; but to give a name which shall at once refer it to a place in a system, we must know its properties; and we must *have* a system large enough, and regular enough, to receive it in a place which belongs to it, and to no other. It appears, therefore, doubtful whether it is desirable, for the essential purposes of science, that extreme refinement in systematic nomenclature should be insisted on. Were science perfect, indeed, systems of classification might be agreed on, which should assign to every object in nature a place in some class, to which it more remarkably and preëminently belonged than to any other, and under which it might acquire a name, never afterwards subject to change. But, so long as this is not the case, and new relations are daily discovered, we must be very cautious how we insist strongly on the establishment and extension of classes which have in them