

any thing artificial, as a basis of a rigid nomenclature; and especially how we mistake the means for the end, and sacrifice convenience and distinctness to a rage for arrangement. Every nomenclature dependent on artificial classifications, is necessarily subject to fluctuations; and hardly any thing can counterbalance the evil of disturbing well-established names, which have once acquired a general circulation. In nature, one and the same object makes a part of an infinite number of different systems,—an individual in an infinite number of groups, some of greater, some of less importance, according to the different points of view in which they may be considered. Hence, as many different systems of nomenclature may be imagined, as there can be discovered different heads of classification, while yet it is highly desirable that each object should be universally spoken of under one name, *if possible*. Consequently, in all subjects where comprehensive heads of classification do not prominently offer themselves, all nomenclature must be a balance of difficulties, and a good, short, *unmeaning* name, which has once obtained a footing in usage, is preferable to almost any other.

(133.) There is no science in which the evils resulting from a rage for nomenclature have been felt to such an extent as in mineralogy. The number of simple minerals actually recognised by mineralogists does not exceed a few hundreds, yet there is scarcely one which has not four or five names in different books. The consequence is most unhappy. No name is suffered to endure long enough to take root; and every new writer on this interesting science begins, as a matter of course, by making a *tabula rasa* of all former nomenclature, and proposing a new one in its place. The climax has at length been put to this most inconvenient and bewildering state of things by the appearance of a system supported by extraordinary merit in other respects, and therefore carrying the highest authority, in which names which had acquired universal circulation, and had hitherto maintained their ground in the midst of the general confusion, and even worked their way into common