DRUMMOND'S
OBSERVATIONS
ON
NATURAL SYSTEMS
OF BOTANY.

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OBSERVATIONS
ON
NATURAL SYSTEMS
OF
BOTANY.

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"FIRST STEPS TO ANATOMY," ETC.

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PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1849.

“It has been the fashion in modern times, to depreciate the discoveries of Linnæus, and to put forward other eminent naturalists as rivals for popular favour at his expense. Nothing can be more unjust towards the memory of departed greatness, nothing can be less acceptable to existing merit, than the attempt to build up their fame by disparaging that of another.”

Magazine of Nat. Hist. vol. i. p. 10.

OBSERVATIONS

ON

NATURAL SYSTEMS OF BOTANY.

WHEN the Linnæan system of botany came to be understood, (and from its simplicity and clearness, this took place in a wonderfully short period of time,) it was enthusiastically embraced by almost every botanist in the civilised world, and in no country, perhaps, more cordially than in England. So beautiful, indeed, so manageable, and so attractive was it, that thousands became attached to the pursuit of botanical science, who, but for it, would never have spent a thought upon the subject. It became a favourite occupation with the learned, and indeed of the comparatively unlearned, to examine flowers, and refer them to their classes and orders, and finally, through this easy introduction, to ascertain their names and history; and thus a love of nature was increased, or generated, to an extent before unknown. The love of plants may almost be considered as inherent

in woman's nature, and here was a key by which what was before admired, could now be understood; by which, without other assistance, the gentler sex could ascertain what the plants were which occurred in their daily walks, and by which they could soon become acquainted with the vegetable productions of the groves, and fields, and woods around them. To every ramble was thus super-added a source of pleasure before unknown, and numerous plants hitherto overlooked, or disregarded, assumed an interest and importance before unthought of. So attractive, indeed, was botany thus rendered, that not only were there many female botanists, but female authors, who conferred great benefits on the science, more especially in enlarging our knowledge of the Algæ or sea-weeds. There is, however, I am sorry to say, little of this now; the enthusiasm is gone, and the culture of the science among the female sex has become, I am much afraid, almost extinct.

I believe that this has arisen chiefly from an idea, promulgated far and wide, that the system of Linnæus, being an artificial one, should be abandoned, and what has been called the Jussieuan, or Natural System, adopted in its place. But the great and important question ought to be, I conceive, what system is best calculated for leading the student to a knowledge of such plants as he may wish to examine; and this is easily answered,

for there never was, nor perhaps ever can be, invented, a method that will so completely answer such an end as the system laid down by Linnæus. All former methods sank into insignificance before it; and although it is the fashion of the present day to vilify, ridicule, and speak of it as useless, I greatly fear that, until it again comes into favour, and obtains the countenance it deserves, Botany, as a popular pursuit, will become as dead a letter as it was before the system of Linnæus engaged the attention, and struck with admiration and delight almost all the naturalists of Europe.

I have not myself, for many years, been attending to botanical pursuits, except occasionally by fits and starts, and then in a great measure for the purpose of renewing the delightful feelings I experienced, when young, in learning my early lessons from Priscilla Wakefield's introduction to the science; and what has principally urged me to write the present observations is the hope that, however feeble the effort may be, it may have some effect in assisting to excite similar feelings in the mind of the young botanist, by attracting him, if possible, to study the only easy method of gaining a knowledge of plants that has ever been the offspring of human genius.

According to an aphorism of Linnæus, the great and important step in understanding any science is to know things themselves. How can we

reason about plants unless we know what these plants are? We must first have a knowledge of the things we speak, or write, or think, or philosophise about, before we can do any of these to a good purpose, and, therefore, the most useful and important introduction to any science is that which leads us fairly to a knowledge of the *things themselves*. Here the Linnæan system is pre-eminent over all other introductions to a knowledge of plants; but what good thing has there ever been that has not had its enemies, and how often does its very excellence raise against it a host of dissentients? In allusion to the Linnæan system, one of the most laborious and learned botanists of our own times observes that this system, though “well adapted to captivate the superficial inquirer” — “yet exercises so baneful an influence upon Botany, as to have rendered it doubtful whether it even deserved a place among the sciences.” Now this passage, which would aim a death-blow at the system of Linnæus, seems to me, though intended otherwise, to be highly complimentary. Every beginner, in the study of any science whatever, must necessarily be a superficial inquirer, and whatever system is “well adapted to *captivate*” him to its farther prosecution must, indeed, be highly valuable, and I believe that in no science can there be found any introduction, at all to be compared in this respect to the botanical

system of Linnæus. But if it *captivate* the superficial inquirer to enter on the study of plants, does it follow that his inquiries are to be afterwards of a superficial nature? Was Linnæus a superficial inquirer? or Hudson, or Lightfoot, or Sir J. E. Smith, or Turner, or Templeton, or Sir W. Hooker, or Dr. Greville? And how many others might be named, all of the Linnæan school, by whose labours the Botany of these islands has been more completely elucidated than that, perhaps, of any country in the world!

In the second edition of Dr. Lindley's book on the Natural System of Botany, published in 1836, the author says in the Preface, page vii. "In the first edition of this work I entered into some explanation of the fallacy of the common opinion that the artificial system of Linnæus is easy, and the natural system difficult of application. Within the last five or six years, however, the sentiments of the public have undergone so great a change upon this subject, that I no longer find it necessary to go into such details."

That it has become the fashion to cry up what is called the natural system, for the purpose of suppressing the comparatively easy and efficient system of Linnæus, is but too true, and the consequence is, as already stated, that botanical pursuits, except amongst those who choose to devote a lifetime to them, have fallen into general neglect. In an

excellent review in the Dublin Quarterly Journal of Medical Science for February 1848, of a work lately published by Dr. Steele, entitled "A Handbook of Field Botany," I find the following corroboration of what I now advance :—"Dr. Steele may mean, when speaking of the advanced and advancing state of botanical science, that botany is becoming popular amongst the masses — that it is a favourite study of the million. We regret that we must dissent from this opinion. We venture to assert that botany was much more popular in Dublin forty, or even eighty years ago, than it is now. The members of the Medico-Physical, and other societies of the former period, had an herb-collector, and frequent mention is made in their Transactions of rare plants brought to them for inspection. They were in the habit of going out on herbarizing excursions ; and Dr. Rutty thought it, in one instance, a great grievance that a sufficient number did not attend on one of these occasions. What chance would we have, at the present day, of getting half a dozen members of the Royal Irish Academy to attend an herbarizing excursion ? And be it remembered this Medico-Physical Society numbered in its ranks the first physicians and surgeons of the day. We are informed by our respected friend, Mr. Mackay, of the many pleasant tours having a botanical object, in which, some forty years ago, he accompanied Dr. Whit-

ley Stokes, Dr. Percival, and other eminent men of that period. Ah ! we beg to assure Dr. Steele that botany is not advanced or advancing in popularity.”

What is here said of Dublin may, I am afraid, be applied to most other parts. In Belfast, which has gained some credit for the culture of natural history, especially through the late Mr. Templeton, and my esteemed friend William Thompson, Esq., I am not aware that there is a single person attending to botany, with the exception of some medical students, and their teacher, in the Royal Institution. That such a change should have taken place with regard to this beautiful science, I can only account for by attributing it, principally at least, to the assiduously repeated assertions that Linnæan botany is of no value. Dr. Lindley has written so much in its disparagement, and so highly extolled the natural system, that, without sufficient inquiry, the conclusion has become almost unavoidable that it is worthless: this author, indeed, exults in its entire overthrow, and observes that “fifteen years have sufficed to render the once popular, but superficial and useless system of Linnæus a mere matter of history.”* And yet this same writer states in the preface to his “School Botany,” that “whatever the future intention of a student of botany may be, it is in-

* Vegetable Kingdom, Preface.

dispensable that the first step to be taken should be that of gaining an acquaintance with the common plants of his own country. In the absence of that, he cannot make a single move in advance. He must first master the rudiments of the science, and master them correctly. This little book has been prepared for the purpose of enabling him to do so.”* Now I have no hesitation in saying that this little book *never* will do so; let it be compared with any introduction to Linnæan botany, and it will be apparent as noon-day, that, with the object mentioned in view, the latter is beyond all comparison its superior. Read Rose’s or Hull’s Elements, or Lee’s or Sir J. Smith’s Introduction, or the first volume of Withering’s Arrangement, or Rousseau’s Letters, or Priscilla Wakefield, and the superiority of all or any of them, in imparting the rudiments of botanical knowledge, and, what is of not less importance, in imbuing the student with a love for the science, will be clearly seen; whereas I firmly believe that Dr. Lindley’s “School Botany” must have the very opposite tendency.

After taking considerable pains to comprehend the natural system, as it is called, I have not been able to find out one single advantage which it possesses; it contradicts itself at every turn, is full

* School Botany, Preface, p. iv.

of misrepresentation, and so far from being natural, brings together into the same orders plants possessed of the most different qualities and appearance. We are candidly enough, indeed, told that, of this system, "Nature herself who creates species only, knows nothing. Our genera, orders, classes and the like, are mere contrivances to facilitate the arrangements of our ideas with regard to species. A genus, order or class, is therefore called natural, not *because it exists in nature*, but because it comprehends species naturally resembling each other more than they resemble anything else." *

Of these resemblances I will give some examples from Dr. Lindley's "Vegetable Kingdom;" but these, let it be observed, are only a small sample from a multitude, as I will refer only to such plants as almost every one is familiar with. We all know a rose, and we are equally well acquainted with the strawberry; but few persons, I apprehend, would say that they "resemble each other more than they do anything else," or that they should belong to a family of plants called natural. They belong, however, to the order Rosaceæ, as do many others as unlike roses as can be imagined, and among these is the meadow-sweet, which has no more resemblance to a rose

* Lindley's Nat. Syst. of Botany, 2d ed., Preface.

than it has to a beech-tree. Heath is not very like a rhododendron, yet by the magic power of the natural system, the heaths, rhododendrons, azaleas, and arbutuses are all domesticated together in one family or order, along with others as unlike each other as possible; and so it is with almost every one of the 303 orders described in the "Vegetable Kingdom." In the order Primulaceæ we have the primrose, the cyclamen, and the water violet. In Ranunculaceæ, we find united in similar bonds the butter-cup, the traveller's joy, the anemone, the hellebore, and the marsh-marigold, which *do* bear some similarity to each other; but then, along with these plants, we have the columbine, the larkspur, the aconite, and the peony, which an uninitiated person would pronounce to be very unlike to those preceding. The butter-cup and the larkspur have certainly little resemblance to each other. In the other orders we find similar anomalies throughout; the snow-drop, united with the American aloe—the lily, with the asparagus and butcher's broom—the lupin and trefoil, with the laburnum—the privet, with the ash—the potato, with capsicum and the deadly night-shade—the beautiful little speedwell (*veronica*), with the tall shepherd's club, snapdragon, globe-flowered buddlea, eye-bright, yellow-rattle, and digitalis. But it is unnecessary to point out any more of these most

unnatural combinations, and I will only further observe that the honeysuckle meets in the same order with the laurustinus and the elder.

Supposing that the latter plants, and others in the order in which they have been placed, had a considerable number of *certain* characters in their structure independent of their outward appearance, there might be some shadow of reason for connecting them together; but here, and throughout the whole system, uncertainty and discrepancies are predominant. To illustrate this I will copy from the "Vegetable Kingdom" the description given of this order, (the Caprifolia of Jussieu, Caprifoliaceæ of Richard, and Lonicereæ of Endlicher,) and mark in italics the discrepancies I allude to; but I must observe that much more striking examples of this ordered disorder might be selected.

"Shrubs or *herbaceous* plants with opposite leaves, destitute of stipules. Flowers *usually* corymbose, and *often* sweet-scented. Calyx superior, 4-5-cleft, *usually* with two or *more* bracts at its base. Corolla superior monopetalous, or *polypetalous*, rotate or *tubular*, regular or *irregular*. Stamens epipetalous, equal in number to the lobes of the corolla, and alternate with them. Ovary with from 1 to 5 cells, one of which is *often* 1-seeded, the others being many-seeded; in the former the ovule is pendulous; style 1;

stigmas 3 or 5. Fruit indehiscent, 1 or *more-celled*, either dry, *fleshy* or *succulent*, crowned by the persistent lobe of the calyx. Seeds either solitary and pendulous, or *numerous* and *attached to the axis*; testa *often* bony; embryo very small, in fleshy albumen; radicle next the hilum.

“As left by Jussieu, this order was a *heterogeneous* assemblage; as altered and better limited, *it seems to be less objectionable*. It possesses a striking affinity with Cinchonads,” &c. But why go on farther with this series of learned puzzles which can lead to nothing but doubts and darkness?

One, if not the most prominent, advantage arising from this natural system is stated to be, that *all* the species of *any one* natural order of plants are possessed of similar properties; that if we know the qualities of *any one* of these species, we may calculate with confidence on those qualities or properties being the same in *all* the other species of the same order; and on this subject Dr. Lindley speaks very decidedly. “This science,” he says, (that is the natural system,) “it is which teaches the physician how to discover in *every* region the medicines that are best adapted for the maladies that prevail in it; and which, by furnishing him with a certain clue to the knowledge of the tribes in which particular properties are, or are not to be found, renders him as much at ease alone, and seemingly without resources,

in a land of unknown herbs, as if he were in the midst of a magazine of drugs in some civilised country.”* Nearly the same thing has been repeated by this author in his other works†; but supposing it to be true, *which it is not*, still it would be of little avail, as not one in a hundred of the medical men in our navy or army care any thing about botany; though there can be no doubt that every physician and surgeon, whether in the service or not, should possess a certain degree of botanical knowledge. Still, however, botany “has no skill in surgery,” and every hour which its pursuit would detain the student from his paramount duties of attending hospital, and studying disease, would be much more disadvantageous than beneficial; a good botanist may be a very ignorant practitioner, and the best physicians or surgeons in the world be very ignorant of botany. Every professor of botany, to be sure, will trumpet forth to his students the incalculable advantages attending the cultivation of that science; but the text of all professors is of a complexion with that of the currier in the besieged town, and would, *mutatis mutandis*, have it believed that “there is nothing like leather.” Still every

* Introduction to Botany, Preface, p. vi.

† In preface to 1st and 2d editions of Introduction to the Natural System, and of the Vegetable Kingdom.

medical practitioner should be well acquainted, at least with the plants common in his own neighbourhood, and this he can readily be, by adopting the easy system of Linnæus.

We may conceive a case to occur two or three times in a century, in which an army surgeon, on a foreign station, would be desirous of a substitute for one of his medicines that had run short, say the Peruvian bark. Now, among the trees of the country he was in, there might be one or more of the species which produce this bark, and, if any thing of a botanist, and having a Linnæan Flora, he would without much trouble ascertain the *genus*, and then he would, to a certain degree, be sure of his object, for all the *species* of the genus *Cinchona* of Linnæus possess, more or less powerfully, the same properties.

But we are told that in the natural system *all* the plants included *in the same order* are possessed of similar properties. “The advantages (says Dr. Lindley) of the natural system in applying botany to useful purposes are immense, especially to medical men, who depend so much upon the vegetable kingdom for their remedial agents. A knowledge of the properties of *one* plant enables the practitioner to judge scientifically of the qualities of *other* plants naturally allied to it, and therefore the physician, acquainted with the natural system of botany, may direct his inquiries, when

on foreign stations, not empirically, but *upon fixed principles* into the *qualities* of the medicinal plants which have been provided in every region for the alleviation of the maladies peculiar to it. He is thus enabled to read the hidden characters with which nature has labelled all the hosts of species that spring from her teeming bosom. Every one of these bears inscribed upon it the *uses* to which it may be applied, the *dangers* to be apprehended from it, or the *virtues* with which it has been endowed. The language in which they are written, is not indeed human, it is in the living hieroglyphics of the Almighty, which the skill of man is permitted to interpret. The key to their meaning lies enveloped in the folds of the natural system, and is to be found in no other place." *

This is a very high eulogium on the natural system, and, according to it, all the plants contained in the *order* to which the Peruvian bark belongs ought to possess the same febrifuge, and other qualities. This order in Dr. Lindley's work is termed Cinchonaceæ (anglified, or vulgarised rather, into Cinchonads). The order is very large, containing trees, shrubs and herbs, and includes most of the plants belonging to Jussieu's Rubiaceæ, and is the long-named order Lygo-

* Vegetable Kingdom, Preface, p. viii.

dysodeaceæ of Bartling's *Ordines Naturales Plantarum*. Dr. Lindley states (*Veg. Kingd.* p. 762.) that many of the plants in this order are very valuable as “tonics, febrifuges, emetics, or purgatives.” These surely are very opposite properties, and the physician, depending on the above eulogium, might find to his cost, or at least his patient might chance to do so, that little dependence should be placed in the supposed similarity of properties of different plants belonging to the order of which the *Cinchona* forms the type. But we are told farther of the same order, that “other species, having their secretions in a state of great concentration, prove to be formidable poisons.” (p. 762.) Some, however, *have* “properties analogous to those of *Cinchona*,” viz. the *Portlandia hexandria*, and *Coutarea speciosa*, &c.; but then again, *Ophiorhiza Mungos*, of the same order, “is so intensely bitter that the plant is called by the Malays earth-gall.” The emetic *ipecacuanha* also belongs to it, and “Sir R. Schomburgk assures us that Indians have been poisoned by using the wood of *Evosimia corymbosa* to make spits for roasting meat on.” What a valuable substitute for Peruvian bark! Some plants of the order are used for poisoning fish, some for destroying rats and mice, others are used for dying, and to it the coffee shrub belongs; and such are the opposite and discordant qualities of the plants belonging

to this natural, but which many in their simplicity might consider most unnatural, order, and that opinion would not be lessened by what we are farther told concerning it, viz. “The fragrance or beauty of some of the plants of this order, especially of the Gardenias, Hindsias, Posoquierias, Ixoras, Cinchonas, Bouvardias, Catesbæas, &c., is unsurpassed in the vegetable kingdom, and forms a strange contrast with the Spermacoces, Richardsonias, &c., which are amongst the meanest weeds we know.” Very strange, certainly, and may be considered as unnatural as strange.

The plants contained in this order are not the only ones possessing the properties of Peruvian bark. Thus, in Dr. Lindley’s 232d order, Loganiaceæ, p. 602., he tells us that the *Strychnos pseudo-quina* “is universally employed instead of Cinchona, and is asserted to be fully equal to Peruvian bark in the cure of the intermittents of Brazil.” But then, as is stated in the same page, the dreadfully poisonous *nux vomica* is the produce of *another* species of *Strychnos*, while the famous Wooraly or Ourali poison is prepared from another, the *Strychnos toxifera*. The same author informs us, that “from the bark of the root of *Strychnos Tieuté*, another *frightful* poison is prepared in Java ;” but he adds that, notwithstanding this, other plants of the order are used in medicine with advantage.

And this is the natural system which is to teach us the properties of *all* the plants belonging to any order whatever, if we can only find the key by ascertaining the qualities of any one species belonging to it. For my own part, I must say that I can scarcely find a single order of the flowering plants which is not a heterogeneous and incongruous assemblage, and there is scarcely one of them that is not far better calculated to puzzle, bewilder, and disgust the student, than to enlighten him. To a beginner in botany this boasted natural system is, and necessarily must be, almost if not entirely useless. There is not, and never can be, any system deserving the title of natural; for, even as Dr. Lindley himself admits, Nature knows nothing but species, and the only use that any system can be of is, that it may lead the student or inquirer to a knowledge of species, for which purpose that of Linnæus (and it pretended to nothing farther, though it accomplished more,) is the most valuable and efficient that has ever been contrived. I will have more than one occasion to advert to this subject, and by doing so I trust that my remarks may have some little influence in stemming the torrent of learned mystery that is overwhelming all popular taste for botanical science, and making the latter little better than a system of free-masonry that can only be made available, if at all, by the favoured few, who, with

every advantage of gardens, nurseries, libraries and museums, make it the sole business of their lives.

But supposing that there should be any good reason for adopting the system of Jussieu as applied to the vegetable world at large, there cannot be the slightest that I can imagine for adopting it in the arrangement, either of a local Flora, or one comparatively limited, such as that of either Great Britain or Ireland; yet such is the influence of fashion, that various Floras of this description have been published, yet not altogether perhaps from fashion alone, but probably in a great measure from fear, since so great has been the senseless outcry against Linnaean botany, that an author continuing to adopt it at the present day, would run every risk of being considered as behind what would be called the present advanced state of botanical science, and his book be accordingly condemned.

In 1847, Dr. Steele, Lecturer on Botany in the Richmond Hospital School of Medicine and Surgery, published his "Handbook of Field Botany, comprising the flowering plants and ferns indigenous to the British Isles, arranged according to the natural system." There has been so much boasting of the advantages of this natural system in almost every work written to explain it, that people are led into the belief that it must possess superior advantages to any other, and even

blindly to think that it will *easily* lead to a knowledge of plants. Dr. Steele, accordingly, following his leader, Dr. Lindley, says, "In preparing the following pages for publication, I have been desirous to supply the student in botany with a guide to the floral productions of the British Isles, which, arranged according to the principles of the natural system, should embrace all that might be found necessary to enable him to identify species with *ease* and *certainty*."* Now it seems to me a most extraordinary infatuation that writers will continue to maintain the delusion, that this system is a natural one, and more extraordinary still, that it will enable the student "*to identify species with ease and certainty*." I do not believe that a plan could be invented, though done for the express purpose, that would more effectually be productive of difficulty and uncertainty, or that could by its difficulties more effectually deter the student from the study of botany, or give him a dislike to that science. I do believe that the so-called natural system has gained its popularity (if that can be called popularity, which is limited to a very small portion of the community,) by an unceasing practice of puffing itself, and condemning every thing but itself.

In the review of Dr. Steele's book already mentioned, the reviewer gives a very good illus-

* Introduction.

tration of the *easy* steps by which the student is to arrive at a knowledge of plants, before he can find out the order, genus, or species of one not previously seen. He must first ascertain its order. “ But it is said (observes the reviewer), we can simplify the investigation by which we can assign a plant to its natural order ; and how is this to be done ? By forming an analysis of the vegetable kingdom upon some few differential characters ; by requiring the student to interrogate the plant, in what may be called a dichotomous manner, through a great number of questions. For example : if the learner take up the common Seacatch-fly, and wishes to ascertain what family it belongs to, he has, first, to observe whether it be a flowering plant : secondly, whether it be a tree, or shrub, with distinct bark, wood, and pith, or an herb ; whether the leaves are branch-ribbed or straight-ribbed, whether the flowers be tertiary, or sextenary, or not : thirdly, he will have to see whether the flowers have both stamens and pistils : fourthly, whether the ovary be inferior or superior : fifthly, whether the corolla be apopetalous or synpetalous : sixthly, he will have to determine whether the petals are, or are not larger than the sepals : seventhly, — but there is no use in fatiguing our readers. It is sufficient to say, that the student will require to proceed to *fifteenthly*, before he can satisfy himself that the family is that

of the Caryophyllæ; and he must subsequently determine the genus and the species." This, certainly, is no royal road to botany, though Dr. Steele, in the introduction to his book, states that it has been prepared, "*merely* to facilitate the labours of the young exploring botanist."* I fear that before the young explorer has acquired a knowledge of one half of the ninety-eight orders of flowering plants in the "Field Book," he will find the labour rather too much for him.

Let us now see how the young botanist is to find out the Sea-catch-fly by the Linnæan system: let him put in his pocket, when he goes to the sea-shore, the Irish Flora of Miss Bailey (now Lady Kane), published in Dublin in 1833:—well, he finds springing up from among the stones, or rough gravel above high-water mark, a plant with handsome white flowers, which he had never before seen; he pulls one of these flowers, and by a *single glance* he at once knows its class and order: he sees that it has ten stamens, and belongs to the class Decandria, and that it has three styles, and therefore is in the order Trigynia. He then opens his Flora, and finds that in this class and order there are three native (Irish) genera, namely, *Arenaria*, *Stellaria*, and *Silene*, and he therefore knows that to one of these three, the plant he has

* Page xi.

found must belong. In the small space of five lines and a half (page 83.), he finds the generic distinctions of the whole three — that *Arenaria* has its petals undivided, but the specimen in his hand has them cloven ; it cannot, therefore, belong to the genus *Arenaria* ; that the capsule of *Stellaria* consists of one cell, but the flower he is examining has one of three incomplete cells, and the petals have claws, and thus he is certain that it belongs to the genus *Silene*. Thus, without trouble, and in the shortest time, he ascertains the class, order, and genus of this, to him previously unknown plant, and now he has only to discover the species, of which there are four in the book he is consulting. Of these, one is hairy and viscid, but his plant is not so ; another has *ovate* leaves, in his specimen they are *lanceolate* ; and in the fourth species the stems are *moss-like* ; and now he is certain, that of the four species his plant is the *Silene maritima*, or Sea-catch-fly.

How a system that is so beautiful, interesting and easy, should ever be pronounced as useless, is altogether an enigma to my plain understanding, and I am equally at a loss to account for Dr. Lindley's long and persevering abuse of it ; but I have no doubt in stating my confirmed opinion that botany never can become a popular science, while beset by the innumerable difficulties, doubts and discrepancies, which the system of Jussieu

involves. The more easily we can get to a knowledge of the plants around us, the more generally will it be cultivated as an elegant, delightful, and fascinating pursuit; but this must be acquired by other means than the dry, laborious, and frigid processes to be followed in the study of this natural unnatural system, in which nothing can be found stable enough to return the slightest recompense for the labour that must be bestowed upon it. Among its other boasted merits, it is said to be more philosophical than the Linnæan system; but I cannot in any way discover in what its philosophy consists, and notwithstanding all the flattering encomiums lavished upon it on this account, I must agree with Professor Rennie that "Philosophy it cannot be, in any genuine acceptation of the term."* As to each order containing plants possessed of similar medical and other properties, it is entirely a delusion, not to give it a more opprobrious name, and as to incongruities and contradictions, they are among its most striking characteristics.

One great advantage attending the study of Linnæan botany is, that not being very difficult to master and understand, the student is at every step satisfied and delighted with his progress, and the farther he advances, the more pleasure does

* Alphabet of Botany, p. 109.

he experience. No higher praise could be bestowed on an improver of science, than to say, that he had contrived a method of rendering that plain which was before intricate, and of easy acquirement what was previously difficult; and this praise is eminently due to Linnæus, his sexual system having at once cleared away obstacles hitherto almost insuperable; and while it captivated many to the study of plants, it retained others, who feeling the difficulties of the natural system of Tournefort then generally followed, were about to abandon the study altogether, but continued to cultivate it with increased ardour, encouraged by the new views, and seeing the clear and easy road now opened to them.

The amiable and enthusiastic naturalist, Dr. Garden, who was located as a physician in South Carolina, states in a letter to Linnæus, dated March 1755, that during that time he had made daily excursions into the country, studying botany after the natural method of Tournefort, which, according to Linnæus, was the best at the time that had ever been contrived, and which was generally adopted. "But," (says Dr. Garden) "the immense labour of reducing the plants I collected into proper orders, to say nothing of the uncertainty attending the investigation of genera and species, and still more of determining varieties according to the Tournefortian system, was all

so very tiresome, that at length my patience was exhausted, and had I not by good fortune met with your most excellent works, I might have been stopped in my progress, and might altogether have given up this most pleasing of pursuits. I had already almost yielded to this uncertainty, and want of satisfaction, when my friend Mr. Bull put your writings into my hands. These have first introduced into Botany the science of demonstration founded upon mathematical principles, and, at the same time, a sound as well as easy mode of classification.”*

This I conceive to be exactly a parallel instance with what is taking place at the present time. The study of this lauded natural system is found to be so tiresome and unsatisfactory, such a process of mechanical labour, and such a tax upon the memory, while no adequate good results from it, that it is soon abandoned to the very few who have courage to pursue it, and who are so apt to plume themselves on their superior acquirements, and indulge their self-esteem, in depreciating with a frown of authority, as though they were Tritons among the minnows, all advocates and followers of the Linnæan system.

One great advantage of the latter is, that it is in itself consistent, while that of Jussieu, however

* Linnæan Correspondence, vol. i. p. 287.

modified, is for ever changing, and every promulgator of it, by his writings, adapts it to his own ideas or fancy, and so the system of one year often differs materially from that of the preceding, and will most probably differ as much from that which is to succeed. Dr. Lindley, in the third edition of his "Natural System," and which is entitled "The Vegetable Kingdom," states that the former "was originally written in illustration of the popular system of De Candolle, but *daily* experience showed the *insufficiency* of that system, and *the necessity* of forming sub-divisions of the primary groups of plants higher than their so-called natural orders became so apparent, as to lead to serious attempts to carry out a plan of alliances, in imitation of a few continental writers;" and he states that these attempts were embodied in the second edition, published in 1836, that his views "were favourably received by those best able to judge of their value," which means, I suppose, by those who chose to agree with him, but that, "on the other hand, they have been severely criticised by writers who show a singular want of knowledge of the true bearing of such works. Those persons have imagined that a natural classification of plants is something which is suddenly to start into existence, perfect in all its parts, and their criticisms betray a total ignorance of the difficulties by which such a subject is surrounded."

Preface, p. xi. Now I can conscientiously say, that, for my part, I am not one of those persons; and so far from imagining a natural classification to start suddenly into existence, I do not believe that there ever was, is, will, or can be, any classification truly deserving the name of natural;—the systems hitherto fabricated, are certainly any thing but *that*.

It is supposed, however, that, in course of time, the investigations of numerous observers in this field will at length build up, at least a sufficiently, if not absolutely perfect system; but at all events, the attempts hitherto made have produced little uniformity, and each country has a system of its own adoption. Dr. Lindley himself states that since the publication of his Natural System in 1836, his views have been in some respects altered, and adds that “this is inevitable in such a science as that of Systematic Botany, when the discovery of a *few* new facts, or *half a dozen* fresh genera, may *instantly* change the point of view from which a given object is observed.” But let us admit that a system has been at last completed as near perfection as it could possibly be, and which would be quite satisfactory to all the principal botanists in Europe, ought that to be a reason for putting down *another* system, which, from its ease and simplicity, is calculated to attract persons of every station in life to such a love of plants, as will

interest them at every step they take into the country, which will add a new sense, as it were, in contemplating the beauties of nature, which is capable of giving delight to the young, as well as to those who have fallen into the “sere and yellow leaf,” and of beguiling into a sense of happiness the waning hours of the invalid? I know from various instances that the pursuit of Linnæan botany does so, I know also that many persons have acquired not only a love for, but an extensive knowledge of native botany from books alone, and without a syllable of any other teaching; but it seems, from what Dr. Lindley observes elsewhere, that *he* had no such faculty of learning what was simple and easy. “I have been always” (he says) “at issue with the Linnæan school of Botany, as to this system accomplishing even the little that it pretends to; and if I may be permitted to appeal to my own personal experience of the difficulties of a beginner who is unassisted by a tutor (and few have had fewer difficulties to contend against than myself), I should say that it is totally opposed to such a conclusion. I began with the Linnæan system, which I was taught to regard as little less than an inspired production; I had plenty of books compiled according to that system to consult, and I was fairly driven to seek refuge in the natural system from the difficulties and inconsistencies of that of Linnæus.” Now I cannot attach the slight-

est importance to this confession of the learned writer, for thousands who never had the access to books on Linnæan botany which he had, have not only found it divested of the difficulties he alludes to, but have from only the most limited number of such books, and from no teaching but what *they* taught, become zealous and delighted cultivators of the science. For my own part, though I advance this as a mere feather in the scale, I had no such advantages, I had no plenty of books on the subject, yet one single Linnæan lesson inspired me with a warm enthusiasm for the science. A medical friend who, during his collegiate studies had attended a botanical course, pointed out to me, in a morning's excursion, the parts of fructification in several wild flowers, and drew a slight sketch of the principles on which the Linnæan classification is founded:—I was enchanted, all was totally new to me, and I felt delighted at the prospect of being soon able to arrive at a knowledge of the plants I might find in my walks. And that naturally was all I then looked to; but instead of having plenty of books, I could only command Priscilla Wakefield's Introduction, and Birkenhout's Synopsis of the Natural History of Great Britain and Ireland, the second volume of which comprehends the Vegetable Kingdom. With these two books I became at once enamoured, and, boy as I was, the reading of them formed the

most fascinating and delightful occupation that had ever occupied my youthful mind, and now that the lapse of years has silvered my hairs, I recall with unsubdued pleasure the remembrance of those times, and almost feel young again.

As to any inconsistencies of the Linnæan system, I consider them of but little moment; they were always acknowledged, and as applied to our own Flora, are in reality of no permanent moment. That they will sometimes cause difficulties to the student must be confessed, but they are anything but insurmountable; and it matters not what botanical system may be followed, these are inseparable; but so far as I can see, they are trivial indeed to those which, at every step, we meet with in those systems which have falsely been called natural.

While Dr. Lindley found the system of Linnæus so impracticable, he admits that its principles are clear and simple, and says, "that student must indeed be remarkably dull of apprehension, who could not master them in a day;" but because its application is in some cases not equally easy, because in fact it is not absolutely perfect, what no system on earth ever will be, he would reject it altogether, and supersede it by a system attended by ten thousand times its difficulties, and which no two systematists of the school of Jussieu understand alike. An advocate of this natural sys-

tem states in the volume of botany, published by the Society for diffusing Useful Knowledge (p. 199.) that the system of Linnæus “is so simple that any body may master it in an hour; the names of its classes and orders generally carry with them their own explanation; the parts upon whose difference the system turns, are readily examined; and the whole scheme is so plain, as to be intelligible to the meanest capacity.” That any person of the *highest* capacity could master it in one day, as asserted by the one writer, and much less in an hour, as stated by the other, I cannot conceive; but the testimony of both bears me out in what I have stated, with regard to its value in the facilities which it affords for leading any one to the acquirement of a knowledge of the plants he may wish to examine.

And is this the system that should be cast off, and abandoned as “an idle weed?” Is a system that, even from its most inveterate detractors, has received the character of captivating the young inquirer to the acquirement of a love for the study of the vegetable world, to be pronounced as unworthy of regard? Before a student can be led to the knowledge of an unknown plant, must he spend his years in a dry laborious study, and load his memory like an encyclopedia, in order to discover a single species? I should suppose that the facility of understanding and applying this system

ought to be considered as the very highest commendation; and I trust that the time will yet arrive, when it will obtain that consequence of which it has been despoiled by the idle search after a natural system.

It is stated, however, that Linnæus himself was the strongest advocate for a natural system, and that is to a certain degree true; but at the same time he considered it as a thing all but hopeless, though in his time there were only known about eight thousand plants, while now there are ten times that number, and, on looking at his *Fragmenta in the Philosophia Botanica*, it will be evident that he would no more have dreamt of founding any such system on the nature of the seeds and seed vessels, than of constructing a system of ornithology on the eggs and nests of birds. But Linnæus never intended, that if even a natural system should be discovered, it was to supersede the sexual system, though the advocates of that called natural would gladly, even at the expense of truth, make it appear otherwise, and do sometimes even state this as an absolute fact. Thus a writer in the fifth volume of the London and Edinburgh Journal makes the following veracious remarks: “If something more than the *nāme* of a plant be to be comprehended in botanical arrangements, let us imitate the example of Linnæus, who, conscious of the inadequacy of his

artificial system to serve the cause of genuine botany, wisely abandoned it, and devoted himself to devising a natural method, and called upon all botanists to assist in accomplishing so desirable an object. Let us no longer cling to this system which has been expelled from almost every other country of Europe, but rather let us cast it, like an idle weed, away, which cannot be suffered longer to deform the fair garden of philosophic truth.”*

This assertion, with regard to Linnæus, is most absolutely false, either wilfully so, or originating in the writer's ignorance of Linnæus or his writings; and I think it very probable that he has been not less ignorant of the system of Jussieu: there has been so much boasting in praise of the latter, and so much confident assertion of its superiority, that persons, really unacquainted with any system whatever, may think themselves authorised, and that they cannot be going wrong, in depreciating that of Linnæus to the lowest state of degradation, and of sounding the praises of the Jussieuan to the very welkin. That the “immortal Swede” never for a moment thought of abandoning his sexual system, is very evident, on better authority than mine. “That natural affinities,” says Mr. Roscoe, “are to be studied, and that this depart-

* Vol. v. p. 76.

ment of the science cannot be too diligently cultivated, was his decided conviction. He has even frequently contemplated the possibility of an arrangement, which should include, in their natural orders, the whole vegetable kingdom; but, in alluding to such an event, it was always as a mere possibility, of the completion of which he had scarcely a distant hope. Still less would he have been inclined to admit that any such arrangement, even if it could be formed, could supersede that which he had with so much assiduity demonstrated, and to which he invariably adhered to the close of his life. To collect together detached sentiments from his writings, for the purpose of proving that he preferred a natural method to his own, as a general arrangement, is to pervert his opinions, to render him the adversary of his own labours, and the suicide of his own fame. To the firm and inflexible conviction of the practical superiority of his own method, all the passages of these writers are strictly reconcileable; but if any doubt remained on this subject, it could readily be dissipated by a reference to his own works. Even in the brief introduction to his own fragments of natural orders, he has placed it in so clear and perspicuous a light that it is impossible to mistake it. 'Natural orders,' says he, 'cannot constitute a method

without a key. In distinguishing plants, the artificial method is alone of any avail; a natural method being scarcely, or not at all, possible. Natural orders are useful in acquainting us with the nature of plants, but an artificial method is requisite to their discrimination.' And to this he has added, in language that must for ever remove all ambiguity on this head, 'Those persons who, instead of a natural method, have arranged plants in fragments of such a method, and reject an artificial one, seem to me to resemble those who having a convenient and well-roofed house, overturn it in order to build one in the place of it, of which they are unable to finish the roof.'

"That Linnæus has in many parts of his works highly commended those who have distinguished themselves in investigating the natural relations of plants, is certain; but to suppose that by this he meant to approve of those who pretended to have formed a natural arrangement, is to attribute to him an opinion which he has disavowed in the most pointed terms. 'A real botanist,' says he, 'will investigate the natural order of plants when it can be discovered. But he will not boast of having discovered a system perfectly conformable to the laws of nature.' And among his diagnostics of pretended botanists, he particularly includes

that of ‘presuming that they are acquainted with a natural method.’ ”*

Now, after all the boasting and misrepresentation that have been made concerning this so-called natural system, can any man tell what the natural system *is*? Every country seems to have one of its own, and it is so very pliable that every writer models it according to his own fancy. Of these modifications, Dr. Lindley in his *Vegetable Kingdom*, has given a view from the time of Ray, in 1703, and of Linnæus’s *Fragmenta* in 1751, down to the present period, and a few glances at his statements will show the uncertainty and fluctuation which prevail throughout.

1789. Jussieu’s system appeared, founded on the principles of Ray and Tournefort.

1810. Robert Brown’s *Prodromus Floræ Novæ Hollandiæ*, &c.

“In this work the system of Jussieu is *principally* followed, *but the classes are omitted*, and the sequence of the orders is *changed*.”

1813. De Candolle, *Théorie Élémentaire de la Botanique*, &c.

Dr. Lindley adopts the series of classification laid down by De Candolle, because he thinks it “that which is least removed from a natural sequence, and partly because it is

* Wm. Roscoe, *Linnæan Transactions*, vol. xi. p. 6.

convenient and easy for study. But let no one imagine (he says) that I attach the least importance to it."

In 1819, in a second edition of his *Théorie*, De Candolle proposed certain groups under the name of cohorts, but in another edition published since his death, by his son in 1844, "*these cohorts are all broken up, and considerable alterations are made in the sequence of the natural orders.*"

1825. Agardh — *Classes Plantarum*.

"The principle of disregarding characters, and trusting merely to (presumed) affinity, is carried to such a length as to diminish the value of the groups."

1827. Dumortier — *Florula Belgica*.

This author "does not appear to have given any account of its principles."

1830. Bartling — *Ordines Naturales Plantarum, &c.*

"In this work the vegetable kingdom is divided into eight principal divisions or alliances, called by the author classes. The latter are furnished with detailed characters drawn up in the same manner as those of the orders, and to the whole is prefixed an abridgment of the plan of classification. The synonyms of the alliances are slightly given ; but it is remarkable that they do not contain any allusion to the *anterior works of Perleb and Agardh.*"

1832. Hess J. *Uebersicht der Phanerogamischen, &c.*

"essentially an *imitation* of the method of

De Candolle, with *some changes* in the sequence of orders."

1832. Schultz Carl. Heinrich. Natürliches System, &c.

"In *some* respects this is like the system of De Candolle. The author first breaks up the vegetable kingdom into Homorgana, which have an exclusively cellular construction, and Heterorgana, which are formed with spiral vessels, and laticiferous vessels in addition. *These are evidently* the cellular and vascular plants of De Candolle."

1833. John Lindley.—Nixus Plantarum.

"This was an attempt, in imitation of Agardh and Bartling, to reduce the natural orders into groups subordinate to the higher divisions. The author *threw aside* the distinctions between perigynous and hypogynous insertion as *uncertain*, and leading to bad grouping, insisted upon the value of albumen as a primary character, and objected to the general principle that the sections of plants are to furnish their character, and not a character the section. Finally, he maintained that no sections are capable of being positively defined, except such as depend upon physiological peculiarities; and that all other collections of species, by whatever name they are known, whose distinguishing marks are dependant upon structure alone, merely exhibit tendencies to resem-

blance in certain points, for which tendencies definitions are impracticable.”

1834. Paul Horaninow, *Primæ Lineæ Systematis Naturæ*, &c.

“Here the Vegetable Kingdom is divided into four circles:” — “each of these is broken up into classes.” — “By this author, as by some of the German naturalists, Fungals and Algals are expelled from the Vegetable Kingdom, and form a part of a kingdom of Phytozoa.”

1835. Elias Fries, *Corpus Florarum provincialium Sueciæ*.

“In this work, the author has given a general scheme of arrangement *according to his own peculiar views*, and has applied it to the Flora of Scania.”

1835. Martius, C., *Conspectus Regni Vegetabilis*, &c.

“The motto prefixed to this treatise, ‘Ye shall know them by their fruit,’ explains the principles upon which Dr. Von Martius has constructed *his* system. He assumes ‘that because the fruit and its seed, or the parts analogous to them, constitute the crown and end of the whole nature and vitality of plants, on that very account it must be superior to the other parts in dignity.’” — “Accordingly its variations are scrutinised with much care, and *many new terms* are proposed for the sake of expressing those variations with great precision.”

1836. Sir E. French Bromhead, Bart. In the Edinburgh Journal, April 1836, and Magazine of Natural History for 1840. How very simple and self-evident are the principles on which the Baronet has constructed *his* system, may be gathered from this observation of Dr. Lindley. "He (the Baronet) considers the theory of the circulation of organic forms to be confirmed by *his method*, but does not look on them as closed, or re-entering circles. He would rather compare them to the approach of the returning parts of a spiral, or to the similarity of the opposite ends of a fusiform figure." This, I presume, is some of the nonsense which owns M'Leay's *Horæ Entomologicæ* as its original parent.

1836—1840. Stephen Endlicher, *Genera Plantarum secundum ordines naturales disposita*.

"Upon *this* system has been published the most important systematical work that has appeared since the *Genera Plantarum* of Jussieu in 1789." "It has been executed with great skill, but *it is too much dependent on mere theoretical considerations*, and is *difficult to use*, in consequence of the looseness of the characters assigned to *what the author names classes*, which are *equivalent to my* (Dr. Lindley's) *alliances*."

1838. John Lindley, Article *Exogens* in the Penny Cyclopaedia.

"In this place the author's views, as ex-

plained in previous works, *were considerably modified*, so far as regards Exogens. He proposed, in the first place, *to abandon altogether* the old divisions of polypetalous, monopetalous, and apetalous plants, and to *reconstruct the whole fabric of exogenous classification* upon the following principles," &c. "And thus the three monopetalous, apetalous, and polypetalous divisions *were exchanged for five others founded upon totally different principles*. It will be seen that this scheme has been *partly* adopted in the present volume."

1838. C. J. Perler, *Clavis Classium ordinum et familiarum, atque index generum regni vegetabilis*.

"The alliances are *often* well constructed, but, not having the genera arranged under them, they are extremely troublesome to use."

1839. John Lindley, *Botanical Register*, p. 77. "On this occasion the author directed his attention to an *extension of the primary classes of plants*, which he *proposed* to raise to eight."

1839. Thomas Baskerville. *Affinities of plants*.

"In the *main*, he adopted the scheme of orders in the *Nixus Plantarum*; but he criticised that arrangement with some skill, and *avoided many of its worst errors*." This, at all events, is candid.

1841. Trautvetter Ernst. Christian, *De novo Systemate Botanico*.

“This is a speculative disquisition upon the philosophical way of classing plants. The author begs that he may be understood to have executed his task, *not like a botanist*, but like a philosopher.”

1843. Adolphe Brongniart, *Enumération des Genres de Plantes*, &c.

“The apetalous division of Jussieu is *abandoned* on the ground that the orders belonging to it are an imperfect state of polypetalous orders (called, after Endlicher, dialypetalous). The impracticability of a lineal natural arrangement is insisted upon. Rules *are to be formed* upon *à posteriori*, not *à priori*, considerations. Albumen is regarded of high value, especially the difference between farinaceous albumen and that which is fleshy, oily, and horny, which last are taken to be slight modifications of each other. Finally, the direction of the embryo is regarded of more importance in its relation to the pericarp than to the hilum.” This does not command the unqualified approbation of Dr. Lindley, who states that “the *great faults* of this arrangement in bringing amentaceous into contact with leguminous plants, in separating cloranth from pepperworts, myrtle-blooms from hippurids, and many such instances, need not be insisted on. Such a system cannot be founded on *sound* principles.” I should

like much to ascertain what these sound principles are, as, unfortunately, so dull is my apprehension, that I have never yet been able to discover one of them.

1843. Paul Horaninow, *Tetractys naturæ seu systema quadrimembre omnium naturalium*.

“No distinctive characters are proposed for any of the groups, so that means are not afforded by the learned author of judging of the *principles* which have guided him in the details of *his* classification.”

1845. John Lindley, *The Vegetable Kingdom*.

I have no opportunity of knowing what other systems, classifications, or floras, have seen the light since the publication of this last, except Dr. Steele's Field Book, Dublin, 1847; and he in his Introduction, of course, considers the Linnæan system, not exactly in the light of a “useless weed,” but “as the beautiful structure of a past age, but which is altogether unsuited to the requirements of a more enlightened generation.” As no two writers, however, in this enlightened generation ever agree in their natural arrangements of plants, though each very generously endeavours to illuminate with his own inward light all the rest of the world, it would be unfair to expect that the author of the Field Book should humbly follow, *pari passu*, in the steps of his predecessors; and accordingly we find him stating (Introd. p. v.)

“that, with reference to the arrangement of the orders adopted, it may not be unnecessary to offer a few remarks, *as it differs from* those natural systems more generally known as such.” He does not, however, think it necessary “to state *all* the reasons” by which he has been influenced in that “now brought forward.” I will not attempt stating the principles by which he has been guided in his arrangement: I suppose they are as good as those of any other of the same school: but to do so would take up more time than I wish to spare, and a better reason still is, that I do not understand them any better than I can Dr. Lindley’s lucid explanation of his Nixus Plantarum.

From these notices, it must, I think, be pretty evident that what is called the natural system of botany is one chaotic mass of confusion and uncertainty. Every writer on the subject fabricates a system to his own liking, and among them no two are alike. But it will be said that a large number of labourers in the field will in time make all plain, and the true natural system be at length fairly discovered. But is there such a thing in nature herself as a natural system of vegetables? There are now, it is said, nearly one hundred thousand different species of plants known; but when we consider the immense regions of the earth’s surface that have never been seen nor investigated by the eye of the naturalist, that

every country newly visited presents plants never previously known, and that even in those which have been the most thoroughly scrutinized—England, for example,—even to this day new species occasionally come to light, we may not unreasonably conclude that, perhaps, not two thirds of the vegetable kingdom have as yet been discovered; and if this be the case, when is the system to be completed, when every discovery of a few new genera may disconcert the whole fabric? How superior to this is the system of Linnæus, in which, were a million of plants never before seen or heard of, to be discovered, each would at once take its place in its regular class and order.

I must now advert to a little finesse held out on every occasion to the disparagement of Linnæan botany. We are told that it leads the student only to the *names* of plants. According to Richard some imagine “botany to consist merely of a knowledge of the names of plants,” and that, “although they may have learned a great number of names, they have no real knowledge of the plants, and are unable to distinguish them from each other. They are like persons who, in learning a language, get by heart a great number of words without knowing their meaning.”* This is one

* Elements of Botany and Vegetable Physiology, by A. Richard, translated by Wm. Macgillivray, preface to 1st ed. p. xxiii.

of the many groundless statements brought forward in the face of truth and common sense against Linnæan botany. Did any person, in learning a language, ever get by heart a great number of words without knowing their meaning? Did any one ever study plants by the Linnæan system, and yet have no real knowledge of them, and not know one from another? Why it is one great excellence of that system that it *does* teach us to distinguish plants from each other; and it is the only one that has ever effectually accomplished that object. Yet this is the reiterated calumny going from mouth to mouth, and from volume to volume, which, with others having as little regard for truth, are bandied about by the contrivers of what are called natural systems.

I will agree so far, however, with these writers, that the *mere* knowing of a name is of little or no value. If I hear of a place on the globe called Ireland, if I know nothing of its geographical position, of its scenery, its zoology, its botany, its history, or its inhabitants, then I know it by name only, whatever that may be, Hibernia, Ireland, or the Emerald Isle, and this is knowing it by its name or names, but nothing more. But if I read of it under any of its appellations, though I had never heard of any of them before, and wish to learn something farther respecting it, I would

have recourse to a gazetteer, a geography, a map, and a history of the country, and so learn whatever is known relating to it, though, had I never heard a name for the island, I could have no key for learning any thing concerning it: so that even the name alone will sometimes open up the path to gain knowledge, though in the name itself there is abstractedly nothing. And this is the case with botany; the insulated name is nothing, and so it is even in things where we can get little farther than the name. If I learn that there is such a constellation as the Ursa major, the Pleiades, Orion, Cassiopea's chair, &c., I know nothing farther than that such things are; but if I extend my research beyond this, study a map of the stars, and then be able to point out on the heaven itself what is one constellation and what is another, even that is something more than the mere name of the thing.

Let me now suppose that two persons, *A.* and *B.*, are walking in a wooded country. *A.* observes that he never saw finer beeches, ashes, birches, alders, &c., and *B.* replies that the trees around them are indeed very fine, and their names have long been quite familiar to him, but at the same time he cannot tell one tree from another; here, then, *B.* knows the names of the trees, but cannot tell what any one is, though standing before his eyes, and this is the only extent to which these writers would fain impress upon us, that Linnæan botany

can lead. *A.*, however, is acquainted not with the name only, but with the tree itself. On examining it, he knows what the object of his investigation is, and, being acquainted with the principles of the Linnæan system, he refers it to its class and order, compares its different parts with the description given in a Flora, finds from the latter its different synonyms; and hence the various works into which he may look for a full description of every thing known concerning it. But suppose that he had previously known nothing whatever of the tree, though it were the first time he had ever seen it, yet, should it be in the flowering state, he can, by the same process, ascertain what it is, and gain a knowledge of its entire history; but it is absolutely as false as it is absurd, to assert that Linnæan botany leads only to a knowledge of names. To ascertain a plant when seen, and learn its scientific appellation, is the very first and the most important step to all botanical knowledge, and, in leading to this, the system of Linnæus leaves every other at an immeasurable distance.

Neither does it inculcate the erroneous doctrine, that the plants contained in its classes or orders are in each characterised by similar properties and virtues, — a position on which the makers of natural systems rest in a great measure the superiority of their fabrics. There is not, perhaps, a single

species on the face of the globe that has not something peculiar to itself, and no trust should ever be implicitly put in general resemblances, or apparent affinities between plants, no matter what classification they may be arranged under. Exceptions will always be found to their general properties, no matter how natural their assemblages may seem to be; and thus, even among the grasses, which without any theory may be considered a really natural family, there are some species, which, instead of possessing the bland and nutritive properties of the great mass of the tribe, are decidedly poisonous. In our own country the Darnel (*Lolium temulentum*) is generally known on account of its deleterious properties. In the north of Ireland, it is vulgarly known by the name of *Sturdy*; and when it grows in any considerable quantity among oats or barley, the meal produced from these becomes unmarketable, as soon as the spurious mixture becomes known. The effects it produces are giddiness, sickness, great general debility, and an irresistible tendency to sleep, such as would be caused by a strong opiate, or other powerful narcotic. Linnæus states that, when malted with barley, the ale soon intoxicates, and it is well known that it has this effect when used in the distillation of spirits. It is said, indeed, that near London it is grown in large quantities, probably with the nefarious object

of adding to the intoxicating quality of distilled or fermented liquors. Used in a large proportion in bread it may even prove fatal, as in the case of a farmer near Poitiers in France; but a more melancholy example of this is given by Mr. Ainsworth, in the tenth volume of the London Geographical Journal, p. 512. "A melancholy scene," he says, "presented itself on our arrival at Antioch in the actual decimation of the troops then quartered there; 700 men were in the hospitals, one of which is Ibrahim Pasha's late palace (which he is said to have sold to Mohammed Ali), and the average mortality was from fifteen to twenty per day. Upon inquiry of the medical officers, they attributed it to the common fever of the country; but upon visiting the hospitals I found the symptoms and course of the disease to present quite a different face. The attacks were sudden, accompanied by giddiness and great prostration of strength: this was soon followed by a comatose state; the tongue was paralysed and the pupil fixed; and if powerful remedies were not early administered, the attacks proved fatal in from four to eight or twelve hours. The attention of the medical officers being roused to the true nature of the malady, inquiries were immediately instituted most minutely into the food and drink of these poor men; nor was it long before the corn was ascertained to be largely

adulterated with the seed of the *Lolium temulentum*, well known in the East, and even noticed in Scripture, for its very fatal effects. Ibrahim Pasha sent orders to have the afflicted regiment removed to Aleppo to recover its strength.”* Graham, also, in his catalogue of the plants of Bombay, p. 234., says of the *Paspalum scrobiculatum*, which is a common and cheap grain, but not wholesome, that there is a variety called *Hareek* which has the same narcotic qualities as the *Lolium temulentum*. Humboldt also mentions a grass (the *Sesleria quitensis* of Sprengel’s *Species Plantarum*) found in Peru, which is highly poisonous and fatal to animals, and Loudon’s *Cyclopaedia of Plants* states, that the *Bromus mollis* is said to cause giddiness in man and quadrupeds, and to be fatal to poultry.

Setting aside, however, the deleterious quality of the grasses mentioned, we may advert to other properties which are innocuous. Their nutritive characters are found to depend upon the quantity of various matters entering into their composition, viz., sugar, mucilage, albumen, bitter extractive, and salts; and we find a most competent authority stating, that “not two species of grasses are found to agree in the proportions of these vege-

* Mr. Ainsworth’s Journey from Constantinople to Mosul, in 1839–40.

table principles contained in each; as instances, the *Elymus arenarius* affords the largest proportion of sugar, the *Poa compressa* (var. *erecta*) consists almost of pure mucilage, and the *Festuca pennata*, or *Holcus avenaceus*, &c., a greater proportion of bitter extractive and saline matters.”* We may thus see that even in this, perhaps the most natural family of plants, and where we might least expect to meet with discrepancies, no two genera, no two species, have properties exactly alike, and the same remark will apply to every thing respecting them. Every species has a history of its own, no matter how close a resemblance it may bear to the general family. When we observe the cattle grazing in our pastures, we would be inclined to suppose that in all parts of the world their feeding on grasses would be equally salutary and safe; but we would be mistaken, and of this I will mention a few instances. Nothing can be more beautiful or rich than the meadows and pasturages of these kingdoms; and yet, even here, we sometimes find that what may be called the mechanical structure of some grasses proves highly injurious to the animals feeding on them. Thus the awns of the *Hordeum murinum*, mouse barley, or way-bennet, which is not common

* George Sinclair, Loudon's Gardener's Magazine, vol. i. p. 28.

in meadows, though in many places frequent by road-sides, and at the foot of old walls, when it does get intermixed with the hay, is very injurious to horses, by sticking in their mouths, and rendering them so sore that they are unable to eat.* The *Hordeum maritimum*, in some parts of the isle of Thanet, where it is called *squirrel-tail grass*, is so pernicious “as to be absolutely impracticable to horses unaccustomed to it, frequently occasioning inflammations.”† Another British grass, and one of the most beautiful of its tribe, the *Stipa pennata*, or feather-grass, though fortunately very rare now, if not extinct, is, where it is plentiful, extremely injurious to sheep. In the first volume of Loudon’s Gardener’s Magazine, p. 442., reference is made to a pamphlet published by two professors in the university of Hungary, entitled “*De Stipæ Noxa*,” from which it appears that the species mentioned, and another (not British), the *Stipa capitata*, are very common in certain pastures in Hungary; that the feathered seeds carried by the wind, fall upon the backs of sheep, and by their hygrometrical action, work their way mechanically through the wool, then get through the flesh, and finally enter the body, piercing the intestines or liver, and causing the death of the animal.

* Curtis on Grasses, p. 31.

† Withering’s Arrangement, &c., vol. ii. p. 204.

From Pallas, again, we learn that in the south-eastern mountains of the Crimea, various grasses, as the *Ægilops caudata* and *ovata*, *Elymus caput medusæ*, and others, are most injurious to horses, &c. He states that from the roughness of their bearded parts, they are all very injurious to cattle, horses especially, as by adhering to their mouth and throat they often prove fatal. I will next observe, that if all plants of the same natural family possessed similar qualities, we should never be afraid, in any part of the world, to wend our way through tracts of country clothed with a grassy verdure. Suppose, for instance, that instead of taking a ramble among the green meadows of England, or the verdure of the emerald isle, we should direct our steps through some of the verdant tracts of southern Africa, we might find ourselves in a different sort of vegetation, though of grass all the while, from the soft carpet of brome-grass, the meadow soft grass, and others of our home pastures. Instead of these, we might find, to our cost, that instead of these gentle beautifiers of the surface of old earth, we had got involved among the spiny poa—*Poa spinosa*—whose families of flowers, according to Burchell, form a bunch of thorns so strong, sharp, rigid, and pungent, that no animal could graze near it, nor the naked-legged Hottentots venture to walk among it,

though it is not more than a foot and a half high.* It will readily be said that such annoyance could be easily guarded against. A good pair of boots would set the grass at defiance, and perhaps they would; but let us go to another portion of the globe, and we may not find a remedy so easy. In the island of Socotra, there is found a *grass* of a still more formidable character than the *Poa spinosa*. It is about twenty inches high; at its upper part radii branch forth, and at the end of each of these is a sharp barbed spine. Lieutenant Wilstead of the East India Company's marine service, says, "Whenever we dismounted from our camels to walk, we found these a great pest and annoyance; for they adhered in great numbers to our clothes, and frequently penetrated the flesh. Considerable care was also necessary in extracting them; for if they were broken, and the barbed parts left in the wound, a painful swelling arose, and they were not removed until suppuration took place, and they became, by that means, ejected. They also adhered with much tenacity to our clothes, from which, when once lodged, it was difficult to remove them."†

We may thus see, without going farther, that even in this most natural family of plants, the

* Burchell's Travels, vol. i. p. 211.

† London Geog. Journal, vol. v. p. 136. This grass belongs to the genus *Pennisetum*.

greatest differences are to be found in their properties, whether poisonous, nutritive, or mechanical; and indeed we may lay it down as a certain fact, that whenever a class or order of plants, no matter to what system they may belong, whether founded on the system of Linnæus or Jussieu, contains a number of genera, there will be found anything but uniformity in their properties; and the same may be said to take place also to a considerable degree with regard to genera; — that is, if a genus include a great many species, there will be found among these, wide differences in almost every respect, independent of their mere botanical characters, and this may even occur when the species are small in number; thus, of the four species of *Lolium* described in Loudon's Cyclopædia of plants, three are innocuous, and one, the *Lolium temulentum*, fatally poisonous.

It would be tiresome to me, as well as to my reader, were I to analyse fully the discordances to be found in the plants belonging to the orders of any one writer from Jussieu downwards; but, as Dr. Lindley has sounded the praises of the natural system to such an extravagant pitch, I will point out from his own book, "The Vegetable Kingdom," some of the contradictory qualities of the plants contained in his natural orders; but which his repeated assertions would have us to believe cannot be any thing but similar to each other. I

have already given a sample of this in the case of Peruvian bark; but through the whole system the same contradictions and inconsistencies prevail.

I will first advert to the order Liliaceæ, in which the *Phormium tenax*, the *Sansevieria*, &c., afford a strong cordage, even superior to hemp, but no article of food; while some, as the onion, garlic, and leek are eatable; but we could not manufacture from any of them even a sewing-thread. The bulbs of squill, and various others, are nauseous and emetic; but, on the contrary, the produce of the aloe tribe is extensively used as a purgative; and here we have an example of plants of the *same genus* having different properties; for we are told that the drug is obtained *only* from the *arborescent* species; and hence those that are not tree-like do not produce the drug at all. While the squill is emetic, and the aloe purgative, the *Gloriosa superba* and *Crown imperial* are virulent poisons. Then again, in other plants included in this order, we find them producing resinous secretions, as the Gum Dragon from the *Dracæna Draco*; and the Botany Bay gum, which is fragrant, and “flows in abundance from the *Xanthorrhæa arborea*,” and certainly must be very unlike the juice of leeks, onions, or garlic, while, instead of the strong and disagreeable odour of the latter, we have in the same order the

tuberosc emitting its “delicious fragrance,” as also the sweet emanations of the hyacinth.

On the order Euphorbiaceæ I need not dwell, as the author himself has said all that is necessary for showing how the plants contained in it agree with each other. “In fact,” he says, “there is a *gradual and insensible* transition in this order from *mere* stimulants to *the most dangerous poisons*.”

Order Juglandaceæ, page 292. This order contains only four genera, but still we find the same disagreements: thus the seed of the walnut “is esteemed for its sweet and wholesome qualities;” “but, the seeds of *Carya amara* are too bitter to be eaten.”

Order Menispermaceæ, page 307. “Active narcotic and bitter qualities prevail among the species; the former in excess, rendering them poisonous; the latter causing them to be regarded as *valuable* tonics. A few are mucilaginous.” This, in plain language, is simply saying that some are poisonous, some tonic, and some neither the one nor the other.

Order Cucurbitaceæ, page 311. “Although we best know the cucurbits by their use as eatable fruits, the melon, cucumber, vegetable marrow, and similar plants being the common species, yet acrimony and a drastic tendency pervade many species, the fruits of some of which afford

cathartics of remarkable power, acting, in even small doses, with great energy on nearly the whole line of the alimentary canal." The fruit of some species of *Luffa* "is violently cathartic." Yet that of *Luffa acutangula* is "a favourite pot-herb of the natives of India, and is esteemed *very wholesome*." The drug called Elaterium has, from the most ancient times, been known as a most violent drastic; it is the inspissated juice of the *Momordica elaterium*, and is so extremely powerful, that in its use not more than one sixth or one fourth of a grain can be safely ventured on; but Dr. Lindley states, that while "all the numerous cultivated varieties of the melon and cucumber are known to be wholesome, *some, if not all*, the Indian species of *Momordica* seem equally *safe*." The seeds, again, of *Telfairia pedata*, an African plant belonging to this order, "are as large as chestnuts, and said to be as excellent as almonds, having a very agreeable flavour." But then, with the usual contradiction, we are told that the "oily seeds of *Feuillæa cordifolia*, a West Indian shrub, are *intensely* bitter, and act *violently* both as emetics and purgatives."

How, with such examples before them, men will continue to persist in maintaining the idea that if we know the properties of any one plant included in these so-called natural orders, we can fairly calculate on similar properties being pos-

sessed by the others, is to me very unaccountable ; and still more so, that even medical men of high and most deserved reputation can lend their voice in supporting the delusion ; but so it is, and hence Dr. A. Todd Thomson, in his *Elements of Materia Medica*, says, that “although the Linnæan or artificial system be that which has hitherto been employed for classing medicinal plants as objects of botany, yet the natural system holds out so many advantages to medical science, that there can be one opinion only of its superiority in a practical point of view. It informs the medical inquirer not only of the botanical affinities of the plants, but also supplies him with a knowledge of their properties and qualities. This acquaintance with the properties of *even one* plant of any order, enables him to form some idea of the remedial value of *all the other plants in the same order*, and, if needful, to *substitute*, upon *fixed principles*, *any one* of them for that which is more usually employed.”*

The only possible way in which I can attempt to account for such a passage as this, is, that the writer adopted his opinion from hearsay, without examination of the subject, and indeed the confident assertions with regard to the superiority of the natural system and its advantages, though

* Second edition, page 68.

“false as dicers’ oaths,” have been so frequently repeated, that, joined with unmeasured abuse of the Linnæan system, the statements have been received on trust ; and yet it is incomprehensible how the fabricators of these systems could so deceive themselves, and not less so, how far they have deceived others. It would be tedious, and I trust unnecessary, to advert farther to the orders of the “Vegetable Kingdom,” and it may suffice to say that the same contradictions characterise the book almost from first to last, and that every thing respecting the unanimity of plants in the different orders is as unstable, uncertain, and unsatisfactory, as is the account of their medical virtues: Dr. Lindley may tell us about the “hidden characters with which nature has labelled all the hosts of species that spring from her teeming bosom ;” but were they labelled, they would not be hidden ; and although we should search for the key to explain the meaning which “lies enveloped in the folds of the natural system, and is to be found in no other place,” I believe we might, with about an equal chance of success, try to find a key for the fold that envelopes the philosopher’s stone, the wishing-cap of Fortunatus, or the lamp of Aladin.

What must be the impression made on the mind of the medical student, when he reads the above observations of Dr. Thomson in his

Materia Medica, or hears such doctrines promulgated in the lectures of that gentleman in the London University, but that the natural system is all in all, and the Linnæan useless and deservedly exploded? To such students, however, this would be of no great moment, unless, that thinking the door was thus thrown open to the acquirement of much substantial knowledge, they were to devote that time to it which should be employed in studies more useful and essential to the future practice of their profession. I have already adverted to botany, as a branch of medical education, and I will now enlarge a very little farther on the subject; and I again repeat, that every practitioner, whether as physician or surgeon, ought, even in justice to his own character, to have, to a certain extent, a knowledge of that science; but that it is essential to his utility in the treatment of his patients, to possess more than a moderate knowledge of it, I am not prepared to admit. Mr. Gray, in his "Natural Arrangement of British Plants, according to their Relations to each other, as pointed out by Jussieu, De Candolle, Brown, &c.," which was published in 1821, that is, nine years prior to the publication of Dr. Lindley's Introduction to the Natural System, though the latter gentleman has not made the slightest allusion to it, makes the following observation, which seems to embody everything necessary to the phy-

sician, so far as medicine is concerned. "Another part of medicine," he says, "in which the use of botany is evident, too frequently happens in consequence of the similitude of plants to one another, so that those ignorant of the means of distinguishing them are led to use a plant of such powerful action on the human frame as to kill, or very violently affect, the unfortunate person who has mistaken it for some nutrimental vegetable, especially foreigners, who use a greater variety of vegetables than ourselves. Yet, even among us, the instances are not rare, in which hemlock has been mistaken for parsley, the roots of wild cicely for parsneps, dog's mercury for a spinage herb, the berries of night-shade for esculent ones, and more especially, the deleterious mushrooms for those that are eatable with some degree of safety; for in truth all are to be held as of doubtful salubrity. Now the skilful botanist, who can determine, from the remains of what has been taken, the cause of the symptoms, has an evident advantage in respect to the mode of treating his patient over one who is ignorant of the cause, and must therefore prescribe at random."

This is modest enough, but does not come up to the ideas of some of the supporters of Jussieu, who carry their commendation of botany to a rather extravagant length. Thus Richard says, "It is an inexhaustible source of efficacious remedies

to the physician who is possessed of the knowledge requisite for enabling him to avail himself of its treasures. No class of natural bodies affords so many useful medicaments. Now, what medical man, anxious to exercise his art in a manner worthy of its importance, can, without some misgivings, prescribe to his patients plants which he scarcely knows by name, which he has never seen in the recent state, and which he cannot distinguish even from those to which they have no affinity, because he has not studied their characters? He is like the surgeon who, in performing an operation, is all the while ignorant of the organs which his instrument is dividing. The physician, in this case, not only shows himself to be unworthy of the high opinion which may have been conceived of him, but, by his culpable inexperience, renders himself liable to approve of errors the most prejudicial, and to sanction mistakes the most fatal to suffering humanity.”*

Now I can readily imagine that in some rare instances a practitioner in the country might make use of a few plants in the recent state, and if the apothecary or physician wished to employ a hemlock poultice or fomentation, it certainly would be

* Elements of Botany and Vegetable Physiology, including the Characters of the Natural Families of Plants, by A. Richard, M.D. Translated by W. Macgillivray, A.M. Preface to the 1st edition.

quite necessary that he should know exactly the plant to be employed ; but this is a thing that can but very seldom occur, and indeed, in these islands at least, the number of plants had recourse to by the regular practitioner in the recent state is very limited, and they require very little, if any scientific knowledge to be acquainted with them. He need not study Jussieu or De Candolle, to know the bog-bean, or digitalis, or henbane, or chamomile, or broom, or dulcamara. In large towns, I believe the physician seldom, if ever, thinks of employing recent plants ; and as for his having a *botanical* knowledge of those included in the *Materia Medica*, it is at all events not absolutely necessary. It is creditable, I will grant, to a medical man to be acquainted with the botany of the vegetable drugs he may prescribe ; but in general it is by no means requisite, and can neither tend to raise his reputation, nor the want of it to diminish his value. Must a physician, when he prescribes rhubarb, or ipecacuanha, or jalap, or cascarilla, or columba, &c., know the classification or botanical characters of the plants producing these articles ? Certainly not ; the knowledge he requires is, not to know the botany of the article, but whether it is a sound and good article of the *materia medica*. He requires to be acquainted with its qualities *as a drug*, and to know its proper application in treating disease,

the mode of prescribing it, &c. If he write a receipe for pills composed of extract of hemlock, or hyoscyamus, he will know whether the extract is genuine, and all the botanical knowledge he could possess of the plants in their growing state would not make him one grain the wiser ; in fact, we might just as well say that the cook in the kitchen could not be sufficiently acquainted with the qualities and application of ginger, nutmeg, allspice, and pepper, unless she knew their botanical history, as that a medical man requires such science for understanding nine-tenths or more of the vegetable drugs which he has occasion to prescribe. We use our tea, coffee, and cocoa, without caring anything for their botany ; and a man can smoke and snuff tobacco with perfect ease and satisfaction without even knowing the country where it grows, much less its botanical classification.

Were it true, however, that the genera and species belonging to the different families or classes called natural have similar properties in each, I would admit at once that this would be a matter of the very highest consequence ; but I cannot see even the slightest shadow of proof for drawing such a conclusion, and of this I have already given sufficient evidence : anything like certainty is not in its nature.

Dr. Lindley may tell us that every plant “bears inscribed upon it the *uses* to which it may be

applied, the *dangers* to be apprehended from it, or the *virtues* with which it has been endowed," and that the language in which all this is written is in the "hieroglyphics of the Almighty," but that the skill of man is permitted to interpret them. But if we may judge from the past, I fear this skill will be a long time in coming. The disciples of Jussieu, indeed, however prolific they may be in fancies, seem to have made a very slow progress in elucidating the hieroglyphics alluded to, though they have added no trifling number of their own to the list: — but give us patience, all will be unriddled in time; for, says Dr. Lindley, "the Natural System of Botany may be likened to the plan of a vast edifice, at the construction of which many are labouring. Certain courts and quadrangles are easily set out; a particular style of architecture is agreed upon, and it may be even settled irrevocably in what places the state apartments and cellars are to be stationed; but when farther details are to be discussed, many unsatisfactory attempts must be made by the architects, and many an awkward arrangement of the rooms proposed, before a final plan can be produced. If perfection in such small matters is impracticable, if it is impossible to arrange all the details of even an edifice, so as to satisfy all critics, how much more hopeless must be the task of classifying the infinite works of the creation! To demand perfec-

tion in a work of that nature is little less than impious; for perfection is the attribute, not of man, but of his Maker."

Surely the builders of Babel must have been expert and good workmen, and greatly superior, in forming their plans, to the bungling architects of the above "vast edifice." They had agreed upon the state rooms and cellars, but their thick heads did nothing but squabble about all the rest of the house; the bed-rooms, the pantries, kitchen, scullery, wash-house, stables too I suppose, could only be at last fixed upon after "many an awkward arrangement;" but there could not, I believe, be a better illustration of the proceedings and plannings of the builders of natural systems, with this difference, however, that they will never, to the end of time, agree upon a "final plan."

After all that has been written on the natural system,—after so many books having stated that the plants described in them are arranged according to the natural system, and every follower of the Jussieuan method speaking invariably of *the* natural method, yet strange to say this is all a matter of moonshine; and Dr. Lindley himself, who published the first edition of his "Vegetable Kingdom" under the title of an Introduction to the Natural System of Botany, and who triumphantly exults in having completely beaten the Linnæan system out of the field, tells us that it is

a vain idea to think that we can explain the system of nature. “An arrangement,” he observes, “which shall be so absolutely correct an expression of the plan of nature as to justify its being called THE Natural System, is a chimera. All that the naturalist can do is to carry into effect the principles above explained” (namely, those that the author has previously laid down) “with a greater or less amount of skill; the result will be A Natural System.”* The above principles! why, every fabricator of these systems forms what he calls principles of his own, and on these founds his scheme, and gives it the title of the natural system; and hence no two of these systems rest upon principles of the same description, and as the real system of nature, if there be such a thing at all, cannot be ascertained, then the only meaning we can in truth attach to the title is, that each of these systems is *the* system of the writer, but must certainly be a misnomer, if called the system of nature; it may be Jussieu’s system, De Candolle’s system, or that of twenty others, but the system of nature it is not.

Another thing to which I must make some reference is the assertion that every country, every region, produces plants capable of curing or remedying all the diseases of man peculiar to it; and

* Vegetable Kingdom.

a very pretty theory it is, except that it is not true. We might as well be told that in every country fruits would be found fit for food, yet in the whole immense continent of New Holland, there are only two plants of this description, one resembling our common bramble, and the other (*Leptomeria Billardieri*), which bears only a small berry: and alas! for Greenland, whose only natural vegetation consists of stunted brushwood and grass; Iceland, in which the only grain that can be raised is barley, and the native plants of which consist of little more than coarse grass, mosses, and lichens. And how numerous are the other regions which might be mentioned, in which the inhabitants, instead of having plants for medicine, cannot even find them for food; and as to the former, perhaps they are better without them. I believe that among ourselves we have too many drugs, and that every sensible physician whose mind has been matured by *observation*, prescribes a very small number of such taken from the vegetable kingdom. But human credulity has an open ear and an insatiable appetite for remedies of all kinds, and quackery of every description; and to read of the virtues of plants in the old herbals and works on materia medica, from Dioscorides downwards, not forgetting the natural systems of the present time, the great wonder is, that people should die at all. Dr. Lindley states,

and reiterates the statement, that physicians or surgeons on foreign service who understand the natural system, can, on distinct principles, understand “the qualities of the medicinal plants which nature has provided in *every region* for the alleviation of the maladies peculiar to it.” This comfortable theory has long ago, however, been more fully developed by my countryman K’eogh, in his *Botanologia Universalis Hibernica*, published in 1735. In the preface he remarks, that “if the real properties or true qualities of all the herbs and trees growing in this kingdom were found out, there is not a distemper or disease which the inhabitants thereof are subject to, but there might be found out a simple, I mean a single herb, tree, or shrub, growing therein, which could cure it, or at least remove it for a considerable time, without sending for exotic herbs and drugs to foreign countries, which destroy more here than they cure, though they might be proper and useful to the natives of those countries from whence they came, as being more natural to them.” Mr. K’eogh’s taste was all for recent plants, and he repudiates drugs, druggists, and apothecaries; and one strong argument which he uses is, that “we did not hear of druggists or apothecaries before the flood, (the Antediluvians were unacquainted with them,) nor yet after the flood for a very considerable time: nay, in this very kingdom, there were scarcely two

in a province a hundred years ago, yet the people then lived to very advanced years."

He regrets that still there was not a sufficient knowledge acquired of the qualities of plants, and says, "What vast advantages and benefit would it be to mankind to find out the specific virtues or true properties of the herbs; by which means there would be a simple to cure any distemper in nature. King Solomon knew them, and he wrote their specific virtues, from the Hyssop that grew upon the wall, to the Cedar of Libanus; but the discoveries that were made by him thereon are lost, destroyed by time, and buried in the rubbish of antiquity: but I heartily wish they could be restored." Could he return to this nether world, he would now know that the lost treasure had been found by fifty Solomons, and in fifty different ways; and yet he himself had made very considerable progress in gaining a knowledge of the hidden hieroglyphics, as is evident from what he proposes to tell his readers. — "In this Treatise," he says, "I design to show you what herbs are properly Anastomatic, Leptyntic, Rypitic, Carminative, Stegnotic, Styptic, Pycknotic, Emphratic, Hypnotic, Diaphoretic, Hydrotic, Ariotic, Diuretic, Traumatic, Lithontripitic, Absorbent, &c. : —these are internal alteratives.

"Your external alterative herbs are either Malactic, Chatastic, Ariotic, Heltic, Apocroustic,

Pyrotic, Amytic, Metasyncritic, Cathartic, Septic, Epispastic, Escharotic, Caustic, Colletic, Emplastic, Porotic, Ecprestic, Peptic, Rypitic, Sarcotic, Epulotic, Cosmetic, &c. I shall also show what herbs are specifically Cephalic, Neurotic, Stomatic, Pnumonic, Anacathartic, Cordial, Hepatic, Splenatic, Nephritic, Hysteric, Arthritic, Cathartic, Emetic, Ptarmic, Salivatic, Masticatory, Emmenagogic, Alexipharmic, Analeptic, Galactogenetic, Spermatogenetic, Suppurative, Alexiteric, Discussive, Bechic, Cholagogue, Flegmagogue, Optic, Antiodontalgic, Antiotalgic, Anthypochondractic, &c.”

Mr. Gray, in his very elaborate arrangement of British Plants on the Jussieuan system, adopted the plan of giving translations of the Latin specific terms into literal English; he formed also a great many new genera, and even to these he gave literal English terminations: — thus, his genus *Biddulphia*, formed from three confervoid plants, and named in honour of Miss Biddulph; he does not, in naming the different species say *Biddulphia*, but *Biddulph*. And observe the elegant and refined taste which this plan displays: the first species, *Biddulphia pulchella*, he translates *pretty Biddulph*, which is very well, for as the genus was meant to do honour to the lady, she could not complain of being called pretty; but the second species, *Biddulphia obliquata*, is called *crooked Bid-*

dulph; and the third, *stipitated* Biddulph, as if she stood, like a mushroom, only on one leg. In the genus *Griffithsia*, instituted by Agardh in honour of Mrs. Griffiths, so celebrated for her investigation of the Algæ, we have *bearded* Griffiths, *many-cut* Griffiths, and *horse-tail* Griffiths. Agardh also instituted the genus *Hutchinsia*, from Miss Hutchins of Bantry, a lady who made many discoveries in Irish Cryptogamic botany; and in Mr. Gray's work we have, among other species of the genus, *long* Hutchins, — *black* Hutchins, — *blackish* Hutchins, — *pitcher* Hutchins, — *stiff* Hutchins, — and (*proh pudor!*) *naked* Hutchins. This is followed, however, by a kind of *amende honorable*, and we have *Hutchinsia pulchella*, *pretty* Hutchins, as much as to say that "Beauty unadorned is adorned the most." As a genus of Mr. Gray's own, we have that of *Vertebrata* containing one species called *even-topped* back-bone; only think of giving the name of back-bone to a small conferva parasitic on fuci! In *Scytosiphon*, we have *gut-leathern pipe*, and others scarcely less elegant; in *Palmella*, *broken trembler*, and *worm-like trembler*. — The genus *Gastridium* of Lyngbye is beautifully called *Belly-weed*; and we have *blunt* belly-weed, — *very thin* belly-weed, — *scarlet* belly-weed. Mr. Gray also formed a genus called *Mackaia*, from Mr. Mackay, I suppose, of the Dublin University Botanic Garden, in which we find *discordant*

Mackay, — *bearded* Mackay, (Mr. Mackay unshaved, I presume), — *heath-like* Mackay, — and *stiff-pointed* Mackay. The genus *Variolaria* of Persoon, among the Lichens, is called *small-pox* moss. Among the Fungi, we have the *Scleroderma* of Persoon, called *skin litter* and *warty skin litter*, &c. — *Bovista* of Dillenius is called *bull-fist*. — The genus *Gymnopus* of Persoon, among the Agarics, is translated *naked-foot*; and we have, among others, *cracked* naked-foot — *spindle* naked-foot, — *modest* naked-foot, — *brimstone* naked-foot, — *green* naked-foot, — *fat* naked-foot, — *stinking* naked-foot. The genus *Coprinus* of Persoon, is called *dungstool*; and we have, among others, *half-egg* dungstool, — *wig* dungstool, — *grey* dungstool, — *house* dungstool. Among the mosses we have the genus *Gymnostomum*, anglicised into plain-mouth; and hence *bent-beak* plain-mouth, *bundled* plain-mouth, *small-mouth* plain-mouth, &c. *Diphyschium* is called double-hunch. *Tetraphis* four-tooth. *Trichostomum*, hairy-mouth; and among the species we have *woolly* hairy-mouth, — *hoary* hairy-mouth, — *one-sided* hairy-mouth, — *needle-like* hairy-mouth — *bundled* hairy-mouth, &c. *Leucodon* is white tooth, and *Didymodon* twin-tooth; and we have *hairy* twin-tooth, *odd-sided* twin-tooth, &c. *Anomodon* is odd-tooth; and here we have *short-hanging* odd tooth, and *spriggy* odd-tooth, &c. In *Hookeria*, a genus established by Sir J. E. Smith in honour of Sir W. J.

Hooker, we find *Hookeria lucens*, *shining* Hooker, and were we to apply the epithet *shining* to the great botanist from whom the genus is named, though comparatively a weak one, still it would be appropriate; but if, instead of *lucens*, the trivial name had been *gibbosa*, then Mr. Gray, according to his plan, would have called it *Hump-backed Hooker*.

Among the flowering plants in the second volume, similar vulgarities do not prevail so much, though there are some choice specimens: thus, among the Grasses, *Tricodia decumbens* (the *Festuca decumbens* of Linnæus) is called *down-lying three-cut*; and in *Digitaria* of Haller, we have *Digitaria glabra*, called *bald*, and *Digitaria sanguinalis*, *bloody fingers*.

Is it not deplorable that such vile names, which have not even the sanction of ancient usage, should be introduced into the beautiful science of botany? It matters little what the classical names of genera and species may be, because their meaning is limited to the plants themselves, and cannot, without distorting the ideas connected with them, be literally rendered into any vernacular tongue. Yet Mr. Gray's "Arrangement" is among the most elaborate and learned works on British plants, and had he fortunately written it in agreement with the Linnæan system, and avoided the petty ambition of forming new and unnecessary genera, and fabricating names before unheard of, it would

have been a most valuable publication, instead of coming so unnoticed from the press, that one might suppose Dr. Lindley, from his total silence respecting it, had never heard of its existence. It is, indeed, painful to think of the immense labour that work must have cost, and yet that it was so little countenanced; for, in many respects, it is among the most valuable books we possess on the botany of these islands.

It is not a little remarkable, that while writers will inflict on the students of botany the most difficult methods by which they can arrive at any knowledge of plants, they profess that by altering terms known and adopted from time immemorial, or at least that have long been in use, they render the acquirement of knowledge more plain and easy; but in almost every attempt of the kind, injury is done to the purity and utility of nomenclature, without any benefit resulting from it to the student: and, indeed, while they tell us that Linnæan botany can lead us only to the names of plants, they seem to attach a most absurd importance to such names or changes of names as they themselves may propose, though generally without one truly sensible reason why such change should be made. This is a glaring and most injurious practice in every department of Natural History, and tends most materially to create a disgust, or at least a dislike to its study.

Dr. Lindley, in his turn, is not behind-hand in

proposing new and altering old names, and though these are not so offensive as many of Mr. Gray's, yet they appear (to me, at least) to be conceived throughout in a very bad taste. Why should the classical term *Algæ* be changed into *Algals*, or *Fungi* into *Fungals*, a term as bad as the modern plural *Funguses*? Why should the *Florideæ* of Agardh be altered to *Ceramiaceæ*, and have the new-coined name of *Rosetangles* applied to them; or the *Jungermannia* be called *scale-mosses*, a term equally applicable to the whole of the moss family? Why are *Andreae* called *split-mosses*; why the *Musci* of Linnæus, Jussieu, and all other authors, changed to *Bryaceæ*, with the English name of *Urn-mosses*, when each genus has an appellation of its own? Why should the order *Filices* of all authors be changed to *Filicales*, or *Lichenes* to *Lichenales*; and why should two additional syllables be added to the orders of Jussieu, and other systematists? Jussieu's term *Gramina* is surely as good (if not better) than *Graminaceæ*,—*Musæ* as *Musaceæ*—*Junci* as *Junaceæ*,—*Lilia* as *Liliaceæ*, &c. But while the author has added additional syllables to almost every order of plants in the systems of his predecessors, yet he professes a great dislike to names of sesquipedalian length, and observes that he confidently believes "every intelligent reader will admit that such names as *Urn-mosses*, *Taccads*, &c., are preferable to *Bry-a-ce-æ*, *Tac-ca-ce-æ*," &c.,

(I need not enumerate the whole, they are so near akin to each other,) “and other sesquipedalian expressions.”*

I will now remark that Bryaceæ cannot be called a sesquipedalian expression, as it is not easy to call by that epithet a word consisting of only four syllables; if it be, however, then the name of our good queen must be the same, Vic-to-ri-a; and even Dominie Sampson’s favourite exclamation, pro-di-gi-ous, consists of no more. But if it be a sesquipedalian expression, it is one of the author’s own making, very uncalled for, and to be adopted only on his authority to supplant the universally received term of Mus-ci, or Moss-es. Taccaceæ is a term of the same number of syllables; but this is the author’s own doing also, for by all but himself the order has been named Tac-ce-æ.

It is a great evil in every department of natural history, that so many writers seem to persuade themselves that by altering what has been long established, they may confer a benefit on science; one genus must be split into several others, specific names are perpetually changing, so that the appellation of an animal or plant this year may be quite different the next, and again changed the year following for something else. Classifications are subjected to the same ordeal, and often without any one assignable reason urged in favour of

* Pref. to Veg. Kingdom, p. xviii.

it; and this confusion and uncertainty are perpetually added to what is too confused and uncertain already. The fashion of forming new genera, especially, has risen to a very unfortunate height; but the temptation to do so seems to be almost as irresistible as the shake of the dice-box is to the hand of the gambler. Thus Captain Brown, in the second edition of his “*Illustrations of British Conchology*,” very properly remarks, that “it is to be lamented that ambition should prompt naturalists to change established classification and nomenclature, as nothing tends so much to retard the progress of science.” And yet what has the writer of this observation done in the same work? He has fabricated no less than fifteen what he calls new genera of shells, in the very limited field of the Conchology of the British Islands.

The author of the “*Vegetable Kingdom*” complains, that since the time of Linnæus, the great reformer of nomenclature, “a host of strange names, inharmonious, sesquipedalian, and barbarous, have found their way into Botany,” and he is anxious to do something “towards alleviating this grievous evil;” but I fear his remedy is no better than the disease; it is to give English terminations to the different orders of his system; and this in several ways; but the plan I conceive is a most unhappy one, and I cannot see what advantage can arise to the science, or its nomenclature,

from the introduction of the following names, and of many others similarly constructed; viz.: — Burmanniads, Mayacs, Phileriads, Pariads, Morads, Juglands, Lardizabalads, Kadsurads, Pangiards, Samyds, Hydrophylys, Sauvagesiads, Vivianiads, Voychads, Theads, Rhizobols, Guttifers, Humiridiads, Francoads, Xanthoxyls, Erythroxylys, Nyctagos, Saururads, Brixads, Chailletiards, Hippocrateads, Reaumuriads, Stilbids, Ehretiads, Salvadorads, Selagids, Gilliesiads, Garryads, Helwingiads, &c.

The old English term *wort* meant an herb in general, but was applied more particularly to pot-herbs; and in reforming our botanical nomenclature the author has taken advantage of and applied it to many plants where it certainly was not required, and where its application would have been better dispensed with. I can see no reason why a lily should be called a lily-wort, a birch tree, a birch-wort, a willow a willow-wort, a nettle, a nettle-wort, or a heath a heath-wort; yet many plants besides these have been provided with this unnecessary appendicle to their ordinary names. Some, however, have escaped, and a maple is called a maple, a water-lily is a water-lily still, a laurel is a laurel, rushes are rushes, and cranberries retain their ancient appellation; but the hazel, the horn-beam, the beech, the chestnut, and the oak, are called mast-worts. The lime tree is a linden-

bloom, and the myrtle a myrtle-bloom; the honeysuckle is called a caprifoil, and plants of the dock tribe are buck-wheats. — This slight sketch, and it is no more, may give some idea of the most recently improved nomenclature which is to enlighten the advocates of the natural system, and teach them how to steer clear of “strange, inharmonious, sesquipedalian, erroneous, and barbarous names;” and I congratulate them warmly on the acquisition.

In the same work we find the order Labiatae of Jussieu and others, changed to Lamiaceae, from *Lamium*, the dead-nettle; but it is Englished “Labiates.” This order is stated to contain 125 genera, and 2350 species; but why the term Labiatae, which forms perhaps the *most* natural order which is to be found, should be abolished, and a name from one of the above numerous genera be substituted in its place, is far beyond my comprehension. Neither can I better understand why the Compositae of Linnæus and most authors, and which is also one of the most natural orders, should be altered to Asteraceae, the genus *Aster* being only one out of 1005 genera, containing 9000 species, as stated in the “Vegetable Kingdom.” Not less incomprehensible seems the change of Linnæus’s order Papilionaceae, the Leguminosae of Jussieu and others, to Fabaceae, which means the bean-tribe; but is the whin a

bean, or the indigo plant, or the locust trees, which are of prodigious size, or the laburnum, or the tragacanth plant, and hundreds of others which are no more like a bean than they are to a cauliflower? Linnæus formed his Papilionaceæ from the form of the corolla, and Jussieu his Leguminosæ from the nature of the seed-vessel. The number of genera in the order, as estimated by the above authority, amounts to 467, and the species to 6500, including plants of the most opposite qualities, many being nutritious, many poisonous, with a hundred other differences; but all may in some measure be legitimately arranged, as Papilionaceæ, from the flower, or Leguminosæ, from the fruit; but to call them Fabaceæ, or the bean tribe, is letting the fancy take a flight rather too sublime.

In like manner the Siliquosæ of Linnæus, formed from the seed-vessel, and Jussieu's Cruciferae, founded on the corolla, have been exchanged for Brassicaceæ, the cabbage tribe; but I should think few persons could easily discern much likeness between a cabbage, even in the wild state, and a wall-flower, horse-radish, the shepherd's purse, or water-cresses; nor does the insertion of the term Crucifers after that of Brassicaceæ, so far as I can see, amend the matter, though had the name Cruciferae, given to the order by Jussieu, been so translated, its vulgarity might be con-

sidered not worthy the notice of criticism ; and this remark would similarly apply to the order in the "Vegetable Kingdom" called *Apiaceæ*, which literally means the parsley tribe, but is translated *Umbellifers*. It is the *Umbellatæ* of Linnæus, and Jussieu's *Umbelliferæ*, which, among the few classes or orders which may be called *natural*, has in all times been considered among the first. It is said to consist of 267 genera, and 1500 species ; and from one of the very smallest of the genera, *Apium*, or parsley, the modern term is applied to the whole ; many of them among the most deleterious plants in the vegetable world.

What appears to me as the great error in the system of Jussieu, was his taking the seed as the basis of his classification ; it formed one of sand, on which nothing durable can ever rest ; and hence the perpetual tinkering, patching, taking away, adding to, or altering in some way or another his system by every one who undertakes to explain it by writing. If part be Jussieu's, the next is of the author's own concocting ; but, at the same time, the single, double, or no lobe of the seeds, form the great divisions on which the fabric is to rest. It is no doubt a very curious physiological fact, that plants growing from seeds composed of one cotyledon, have a different vegetation, mode of growth, and structure, from those which grow from

two; and that hence, by inspecting a plant, we can tell pretty clearly whether it is a monocotyledon, or dicotyledon. Partly from this circumstance it has been concluded that the seed is superior in dignity or importance to other parts, it being the origin of the plant which springs from it. "We know," says Richard, "that those organs which conduce to reproduction, perform the most important part in vegetable life, and that among them the embryo, which is in a manner the common end towards which all the organs of the plant direct themselves, is that which occupies the first rank in importance. The embryo, therefore, has supplied our author (Jussieu) with his primary divisions. The stamina and the pistil occupy the second rank, and afford more constant and more valuable characters than the floral envelopes."* On this principle it has been that Dr. Von Martius adopted for his book the motto "You will know them by their fruit;" but I believe a much more sensible one would have been, had he adopted a wiser classification, "You will know them by their *flowers*." This importance given to the seed is putting the child in the first rank, and its parents in the second; or to use an old name for the cud-weed, the "son before the father." But while the seed produces the plant, what has pro-

* Elements of Botany and Vegetable Physiology, p. 359.

duced the seed? why should the latter be considered of higher dignity than the stock to which it has owed its origin? Why should an acorn be considered of a more noble nature than the oak to which it owes its birth? An acorn can produce only one oak, but a single oak can bring forth thousands of acorns. On what side then does the dignity lie? If such a word can be applicable at all to such a matter, surely the old tree braving the storms of a hundred winters, is more so than the acorns annually showered from his boughs to serve as food for the beasts of the forest. According to Ray one single tobacco plant will produce 360,000 seeds. Is each of these of more importance than the parent plant? It may be said, indeed, and truly, that each would produce a plant similar; but admitting this, in what respect can it be superior to those organs of the flower which brought it into existence, and without which it never would have existed at all? This question, however, about the comparative importance of different parts is idle; and in forming a classification of plants, the great and paramount question is, what plan is most manageable, easy, and certain, by which to gain a knowledge of the plants we may examine; and it is admitted by all, even its worst enemies, that in this the Linnæan is pre-eminent.

That there are groups or tribes of vegetables approaching each other so closely in the general

aspect of the species belonging to them, as to be considered not improperly as natural, there can be no doubt, and such have been acknowledged at all times ; as the grasses, the palms, the pine tribe, roses, heaths, narcissusses, pinks, ferns, mosses, peonies, irises, &c. ; but these are all founded on their outward characters, their form of growth, the appearance of their flowers, and other external marks ; and when we examine Linnæus's "*Methodi Naturalis Fragmenta*," it is evident that in general these were formed on similar grounds ; thus we have the order *Palmæ*, the palm tribe ; *Orchideæ*, from the form and appearance of their flowers ; *Ensatæ*, from their sword-shaped leaves, as the iris and cornflag ; *Tripetaloideæ*, from their flowers having three petals only, as in flowering rush, and water plantain ; *Denudatæ*, from the flower standing up naked from the leaves, as crocus, and meadow saffron ; *Spathaceæ*, the flowers rising from a spathe or sheath, as snow-drop, and narcissus ; *Coronariæ*, from their garland-like heads of flowers, as hyacinth, and asphodeleæ ; *Liliaceæ*, as the lily and tulip ; *Calamariæ*, from their pen-like stem, as bullrush and sedges ; *Gramina*, grasses ; *Coniferæ*, the pine tribe ; *Amentaceæ*, from their bearing amenta or catkins, as the birch, willow, and hazel ; *Dumosæ*, from their underwood, or bushy growth, as *Laurus-tinus* ; *Compositæ*, the flowers being compounded

in a particular way of many smaller ones, as dandelion, daisy, and marigold; Umbellatæ, from their flowers being in umbels, as hemlock, carrot, and parsley; Multisiliquæ, from the seed-vessels being numerous and pod-like, as in columbine and ranunculus; Bicornes, from their two-pointed anthers, as in heath and bilberry; Campanacæ, from their bell-shaped flowers, convolvulus; Luridæ, from their lurid aspect, as night-shade, and henbane; Pomacæ and Drupacæ, from their fruit, as apple, pear, almond, plum, cherry; Stellatæ, from the whorled disposition of the leaves, as in wood-roof, and Robin-run-in-the-hedge, &c.

I have now given enough to shew that Linæus, in his *Fragmenta*, considered that natural orders (were the hopeless task to be attempted of forming such) ought to be founded on striking or evident external characters; and this is all I wish to make appear. They were given in the "*Philosophia Botanica*" as hints of the way in which natural orders should be formed. They are very imperfect, as he always declared; and some of them contain genera for which no reason can be given why they are located in the place they hold; but yet he scarcely would have brought together into the same order plants so wholly unlike each other as many we find associated in the systems of the present day: for instance, the snowdrop with the American aloe; the tulip and lily with butcher's-

broom; the mulberry with the fig; the castor-oil tree with the box; chickweed with the gaudy pink and lychnis; the snapdragon and digitalis with the beautiful veronica and globe buddlea the honeysuckle with the laurustinus and the elder; the lime tree with the corchorus; or the hardy and evergreen ivy with the delicate and lowly moschatel. In an artificial system it matters not how incongruous may be the species included in any class or order; but to find such as the above, and hundreds of others, in systems professing to arrange together such plants as are "more like to each other than to any thing else," is certainly somewhat of the wonderful.

One of the greatest charms attached to the study of botany is its giving an interest of the deepest kind to our rambles in the country. A love of plants leads us to an enthusiastic admiration of nature, as her beauty or workmanship are displayed in their formation; but still it is not, perhaps, more the love of the objects as such, than the circumstance that their study leads us into every variety of the diversified scenery of the landscape. It affords a constant attraction to the mind, of the most agreeable description, and affords a pleasure in its pursuit that is ever permanent. Whatever, indeed, will pleasurablely tempt us to visit the scenes of nature, will bring with it its reward of happiness; and to this, I

believe, is owing the enthusiasm of the angler, in following his favourite occupation. It is not merely the capture of a few fish that delights him, but that it leads him into the lovely scenery of the country, wherever mountains rise and waters flow, whether through meadows rich with verdure, or along the more sequestered course of rivers, bounded by heath-covered hills, among which they brawl over stones and rocks, or plunge headlong raging and foaming down the dark and gloomy precipice. This view is beautifully placed before us by a modern writer on the art of angling: — “What angler,” he asks, “will acknowledge other pleasures equal to his own? Yet it is not the sport alone which draws us with magnetic influence to fix us spell-bound by the river’s side. No; we have yet a brighter source of true enjoyment in the pure air and tranquil country scenes which wait upon our wanderings. One while amid the wildest sources of the mountain stream; anon beside the lovely lowland river. Now tempting its placid depths of pool, its freshening runs, its eddying, gurgling, glistening rock-holes; or pausing to admire the majestic plunge of some adjacent waterfall. What is so beneficial to a body worn with the many cares of study, or close application to a worldly calling, as the free relaxation in which we revel when we quit the noise and bustle of the crowded town to feast

upon the mountain breeze? Or what can be so renovating to the wearied mind as to contemplate nature's loveliness with placid thoughts, which gladden and improve the heart, and turn its peaceful reveries in gratitude to nature's God."*

Another writer on the art of angling observes, that "the studious man of whatever profession, although perfectly conscious of the necessity of air and exercise to the preservation of health, has seldom sufficient resolution to tear himself from his accustomed pursuits, without some powerful stimulus to action; and therefore any pleasurable recreation that may induce exercise, and lead the sedentary to the enjoyments of a pure air, breathing over woods, meadows, and waters, cannot fail to be beneficial. I am not acquainted with any amusement in which this advantage can be enjoyed without considerable alloy, except the diversion of angling."†

Every writer on this art, I believe, from Izaak Walton to the present day, speaks in a similar strain. It is not the paltry taking of a few trout that constitutes the charm of the pursuit; this originates in the impressions formed on the mind by the various scenes of nature into which the

* The Illustrated Fly-fishers' Text-book, p. 1.

† British Anglers' Manual, by T. C. Hofland, Esq., Introduction, p. xi.

angler is drawn in following up his pastime ; and to feelings of similar origin we may trace much of the pleasure arising from the pursuit of any branch of natural history, and more especially, perhaps, of Botany. It is true, indeed, that the study of the productions of nature may be delightful under any circumstances ; and that the inhabitant of a crowded metropolis may pursue it with the greatest ardour ; but still the investigation of nature in her own domain has additional charms ; and however much we may admire the beauty of natural objects, of shells, for instance, in the cabinet of a naturalist, or in a public museum, would we not receive a still greater enjoyment, could we observe them in their native habitats ? or in collecting them ourselves on the shores where they had been left by the ebbing tide, or thrown up by some recent storm ? The pursuit of natural history, indeed, is in all circumstances redolent of pleasure to its cultivators ; that is, when they are fairly warmed with the subject, and possessed of that degree of enthusiasm, without which every pursuit is stale, flat, and unprofitable.

From the passages I have given, it will be apparent that few pursuits can be more delightful than angling is to those who have acquired a passion for it ; yet I would hold it at a very low level compared with the occupations of the na-

turalist. That it has its undeniable pleasures, however, and that these arise in a great measure from the scenery in which the “brothers of the angle” exercise their art, there can be no question; and from that consideration I have referred to this favourite and absorbing pursuit. But while the study of nature leads us, like the pastime of the angler, from the crowded haunts of men into the quiet of the country, it has before it an unbounded sphere of thought and contemplation, and this advantage besides, that it is the source not merely of a temporary, but of the most permanent pleasure. When a botanist at any time examines the contents of his herbarium, there is scarcely a specimen there that does not recall to his memory the period, place, and other circumstances connected with the gathering of it; he lives over again, as it were, the time at which he discovered this plant or that, and when winter comes

“With all his rising train —
Vapours, and clouds, and storms,”

he is led by the vivid impressions of memory to recall the summer, enjoy its sunshine, breathe the mountain air, wander in the gloom of woods and glens, and in viewing his sea-plants, listen to old ocean’s waves weltering on his rugged shores. And though we should know plants by their

names *only*, yet that is a knowledge of no mean importance, since in thus being acquainted with them there is a positive and absolute pleasure, even should we go no farther; though one thing is certain, that, unless we know their names in the first place, we have no key by which to find out their history and properties, while it is only by this that the young botanist will be inspired with such a degree of enthusiasm as may lead him on to a deeper study of the science, which will be more especially the case if he can find out their names for himself, and *that*, no system ever invented will enable him to do, except the Linnæan.

I must now observe that I have no knowledge whatever of Dr. Lindley, except through his publications; and the commenting on these, as I have done, has been any thing but pleasurable, and not written without regret; but when I saw that the taste for botany, as a popular pursuit, was almost entirely gone, — when I read the triumphant assertions of so able and determined an advocate of natural systems, that the Linnæan had exercised the most *baneful influence* on botany, — that it was doubtful whether it even deserved a place among the sciences, — that the time had arrived “when the ingenious expedient of Linnæus, which could only be justified by the state of botany when he first entered upon his career, must be

finally relinquished,"—that in fifteen years he (Dr. Lindley) had rendered the once popular but *superficial* and USELESS system of Linnæus a mere matter of history,—in fact, that it was entirely exploded, and had disappeared as completely from the face of the earth as the ancient capital of Priam, &c. &c.,—I considered myself fairly entitled to express my opinions and feelings on the subject.

Though I had for a long period been attending little to botanical pursuits, I thought of inquiring into these natural systems, with the impression on my mind, that I was to find something of the highest benefit to every thing connected with botanical science; but great, certainly, was my disappointment, on finding them a chaotic mass of contradictions, their boasted advantages a mere fable, and the high praises bestowed on them having the most shadowy foundation. But even supposing that all had been true that was reported of them, I could not comprehend why the system of Linnæus,—the only *one* that has ever been contrived for leading us easily to the *names* of plants,—should meet with such a load of abuse,—that it was not science at all, but a useless weed, and now a mere matter of history intended only for times of ignorance, but not adapted to the requirements of the present enlightened generation; nor can I comprehend it yet. Were the

advocates of the misnamed natural systems afraid, that unless Linnæan botany were quite extinguished, it might lessen their consequence, be a bar to their ambition, divide the sceptre of Flora, and prevent or retard their attainment of supreme authority, rule, and dictation in the botanical world? Dr. Lindley tells us, as has been already stated, that “whatever the future intentions of a student of botany may be, it is *indispensable* that the *first step* to be taken should be that of gaining an acquaintance with the common plants of his own country. *In the absence of that he cannot make a single move in advance.*” — (School Botany, Preface, p. iv.) Why then should the student be robbed of the means of doing so by debarring him from the only resource he may have within his reach? namely, the Linnæan classification, and a Linnæan Flora. But Dr. Lindley says that “when students do not enjoy the advantage of a competent teacher, their best plan will be to put this book (the School Botany) into the hands of an intelligent gardener, and to *induce* him to furnish them weekly with the plants that are named in it.” Now if this volume could find its way to every corner of Great Britain and Ireland, and if in each of these there could be found an intelligent gardener to furnish specimens for a *con-si-de-ra-tion*, like old Trapbois in the “Fortunes of Nigel,” I will

grant that it might lead to a knowledge of the names of some plants; but the great advantage of the Linnæan system is, that the student can by it teach himself in places where a gardener was never heard of within fifty miles, and that it can be used by persons to whom it might be inconvenient to pay a consideration for the specimens alluded to. From the inveteracy with which this author constantly speaks of the system of Linnaeus, one might suppose that its suppression formed almost the paramount object of his life, and some of his favourers have been sufficiently urgent in supporting his endeavours in that respect. Thus the late justly celebrated and indefatigable Mr. Loudon, in a notice of an Introductory Lecture, delivered by Dr. Lindley in the London University in April, 1829, says, “we cannot too much applaud Mr. Lindley for adopting the natural system, which, we believe, has already been done by Professor Henslow at Cambridge: it will mark an era in the history of botany in this country, and redound to the honour and advantage both of Mr. Lindley and the London University. Even if the Linnæan system cannot be done without, or, as most botanists think probable, will never be wholly dispensed with as an easy index for determining the names of individual species, still it is worthy of the *ambition* of a man of Mr. Lindley’s learning, talents, and industry,

to teach that system *which is avowedly the most difficult*; the Linnæan being, in truth, so easy that any one who has a book introductory to it, and leisure to walk in the fields, may learn it by himself. We have not a doubt of Mr. Lindley's complete success in every sense in which the word can be taken, and we desire it with all our hearts for his high spirit.”*

I suppose that except botany there never yet has been any branch of knowledge, the teaching of which has been applauded on account of the teacher adopting the most difficult method. It usually is the highest recommendation of a teacher, whether professor or schoolmaster, that he has an easy way of initiating his pupils in a knowledge of the subject, whatever that may be which he professes to teach; but in every thing relating to botany on the natural scheme a departure from ordinary rules is the fashion of the day. Here we are told that any one who has a book introductory to Linnæan botany, and leisure to walk in the fields, may learn it by himself; but nevertheless the professor is applauded for his teaching what very few could comprehend, and told that his doing so will redound not only to his own honour but that of the London University. Mr. Loudon has said that it is worthy

* Loudon's Gardener's Magazine, vol. v. p. 328.

of the ambition of a man of the professor's learning, talents, and industry, to teach that system which is avowedly the most difficult. I must again repeat that I know nothing of the professor except from his writings; and I trust this opinion of Mr. Loudon's, so strongly expressed with regard to ambition, is erroneous; I should think it equally worthy of a man's ambition, equally honourable, and certainly more equitable, to attempt the diffusion of knowledge by the easiest means, than to gain the highest name at the risk of destroying all general taste for the cultivation of one of the loveliest of the sciences.

I now conclude these observations by hoping that the time may yet come when Linnæan botany will regain its former splendour, and that, to use the words of the great Boerhaave, as applied by him to it, "ages to come will applaud, good men will imitate, and all will be improved."

THE END.

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NEW WORKS

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