

definite periodicals, of which one or more might be assigned to each large division of the animal and vegetable kingdoms. Even under this utopian arrangement the requirements of adequate publication would be very much at the mercy of different contributors.

Looking only to the Amphipoda, one sees and feels the natural tendency in those who describe actual specimens to multiply genera and species, while in those who classify the results obtained by others, the tendency is to be impatient of minute distinctions, to rejoice at being able to unite two species into one, and to ignore one genus in favour of another which they regard as embracing it. Nothing but good is done by those who pare away the superfluities of nomenclature by discovering that the same genus or species has been described under more than one name, but it is a question whether much profit has resulted from attempts to discard small genera in favour of a large comprehensive genus. In the history of the subject we see that the names of the rejected genera almost invariably obtain eventual acceptance, so that the attempts at suppression only result in a confused synonymy. Few authors, for instance, would now dispense with *Melita* and *Mæra* of Leach, which to Milne-Edwards appeared useless and even injurious subdivisions of *Gammarus*.¹ Those who take the lead in introducing minute subdivisions do, indeed, force the hand of their successors, since differences which might well have been regarded as specific under a moderately wide genus, have to be accounted generic when the already existing genera of a family are separated by very small distinctions. But premature interference rather increases than remedies the confusion, although, when knowledge of the subject has largely advanced, the time and opportunity for a general revision may arrive and be thoroughly welcome.

As far as the form of a name is concerned, it has seemed to me beyond all question best to adopt that which the author of the name himself gave to it. This was far from being my original opinion. It is, of course, a delightful effort of criticism, and a token of one's own intrinsic superiority, to be able to correct the spelling of some eminent man of science. But in actual practice each correction makes a new name, adding therefore to the synonymy, and often making necessary the citation of two authorities instead of one. Sometimes the corrected form of a name comes into collision with a genus established before or since in some other branch of zoology. Sometimes a name is inconveniently lengthened in the effort to make it conform to the laws of philology, and a syllable is inserted which the originator of the name perhaps intentionally left out. As Leach has shown, it is not necessary for a scientific name to have a derivation at all, so that in the last resort the names which do not satisfy the laws of classical formation may be defended on the ground that one congeries of letters is as good as another. At any rate, for the purposes of natural history, the fixity of a name is of far more importance than any indirect lesson in scholarship of which it may be made the text. I may as well, however, confess that in respect to the genus *Amphithoë* I have not had courage to

¹ Hist. Nat. des Crust., t. iii. p. 54.