

many inferior branches; including the history of minerals of organic fossils, and of alluvial deposits; with other matters which it is not here necessary to specify.

These objects are not merely adapted to the gratification of speculative curiosity; but are, in many cases, conducive to the wants or luxuries of mankind, to the numerous uses in the arts of life. Thus it becomes necessary to

GEOLOGY.

CHAP. I.

On the general Objects of Geological Science.

THE slightest examination of the surface of the Earth displays to us numerous irregularities by which its spherical form is modified; and, when we penetrate within it, we discover that it contains many rocks of different characters, disposed in a confused manner, and giving rise to the inequalities which form its mountains and its valleys, which are the immediate causes of the elevation of its continents and the depression of its seas. The study and description of these substances and these appearances, constitute the natural history of the Earth, according to the simplest view of that science. Thus this branch of Natural History comprises those circumstances in the disposition of the surface, which do not appertain to geography; together with the distribution, the mutual relations, and the nature, of all the substances which enter into its composition. These again subdivide themselves into