

could give their undivided attention to the accumulation of facts, leaving their combination and the deduction of general laws to others, who had either more of the inspiration of nature, or had taken a more extensive view of physical causes. It is not the collector of flowers, or of minerals, who can give the character of a country, and theorize on the problematic causes from which it originated, but the man who has traced the connexions of its parts, and from an eminence surveyed its outline, and marked its features. And he who in the general pursuit of knowledge has cultivated that spirit of generalization which can alone enable him to perceive the relations of different phenomena, will be best able to determine the character and influence of the immutable laws of nature.

It may be here necessary to remark, that in the study of nature, all preconceived opinions must be renounced ; and the mind must ever be in a waiting attitude, ready to receive the evidence of phenomena, whether they contradict or support the theories which have been adopted.

We can conceive it possible that an individual should have so entirely devoted himself to other studies, as to be ignorant of every discovery of modern chymistry. Such an individual would consider water as an elementary substance, and, were we to speak of its decomposition, a feeling of incredulity would certainly rise in his mind. But, let him proceed to the investigation, and with a few plates of copper and zinc, this apparently elementary body will be decomposed, and the two gases of which it is constituted may be collected in separate tubes. One of these, he is informed, is oxygen, which is a component part of air, and the supporter of combustion ; the other, hydrogen. When combined in the gaseous state, they form a most explosive compound ; and, in proof of this fact, they are placed in the same tube, and ignited. But this last experiment resolves them again into the liquid state, and drops of water are observed around the tube. What must be the result of such experiments upon the mind of the man who is thus suddenly driven from an opinion that he had received upon the sanction of all the ancient philosophers ! This, however, is but a solitary instance of what has continually occurred, and we are thus admonished to renounce the influence of all preconceived opinions in philosophical inquiries, and to give every phenomenon its true estimate in the determination of a cause.