

But while the student carefully avoids the interference of his opinions with the evidence deduced from phenomena, he must at the same time carefully guard his mind against those deceptions which may be practised on him by his senses. The senses are not always to be trusted, for they frequently deceive us when we most depend on their evidence; and this statement does not in any degree reflect upon the wisdom which was exerted in the formation of man, for his Creator has supplied him with that condition of mind which is amply sufficient to compensate for the inaccuracy with which those organs may convey an impression of external appearances.

But it may be still asked, what advantages are to be derived from the study of the physical sciences? and are they proportional to the labour which must be expended, and the mental discipline that must be suffered? These questions will be best answered by the mention of those results which ought to follow the investigation. We do not profess to teach the physical sciences, systematically, in this volume, but to explain the nature and cause of some of the most remarkable terrestrial and celestial phenomena, hoping to excite in the mind of the student an anxiety for a more extensive acquaintance with the sciences in general. It will not, therefore, be inappropriate to direct his attention to a consideration of those advantages which he may derive and confer upon society, by the study of this important branch of knowledge.

The personal advantages to be derived from the cultivation of natural philosophy, are chiefly mental. There are men who esteem themselves philosophers, and act as if this sentiment were highly enthusiastic and absurd. To what serviceable result can this or that study be applied? is the question which they are incessantly asking: by which they mean to inquire, how much money can be made of it. They are governed by the "auri sacra fames," and it for ever forbids their acquisition of the advantages in question. The best pleasures of life are but the flowers which beguile a laborious journey; and whatever may be the character of those we choose, they are usually obtained with difficulty. Those who select them from the paths of philosophy may receive titles of distinction, which, however, will not be conferred to encourage the pursuit, but to honour the title. The man who