

power is not confined, as might be supposed, to one pole, but is equally active in both; and, could we entirely neutralize the effect of one, the other would be found sufficient to keep the magnet in its customary direction.

That we may clearly explain the nature of this attractive force, it will be necessary to refer to a few facts that especially relate to artificial magnets.

The magnetic power was first observed in a certain ore of iron. This magnetic iron ore appears to have been known from a very early age; but by what means it became known, or to whom the discovery is due, can only be a matter of conjecture; and fable in this instance, as well as others, supplies the place of truth. The Chinese lay claim to the merit of the discovery, and the Greeks induce us to favour their pretensions, by pleasing the fancy with a beautiful fable. The loadstone, they say, was discovered by Magnes, a shepherd of Mount Ida, who found a piece attached to the iron of his crook, and from this circumstance, it is said, the ore derived its name. The Hindoos are not without pretensions to the honour, and support their right with reasons as feasible as those adduced by other nations. The influence of magnets upon ferruginous bodies was probably known long before its directive power was discovered, which is to us its most important property. It is generally supposed that John de Giova, a Neapolitan, ought to have the honour of the discovery; but Dr. Gilbert and others say that the compass was brought into Italy from China, by Paulus Venetus, in the year 1260.

It is not at all singular that there should be so much difference of opinion upon a subject concerning which no authenticated evidence can be adduced. The magnetic principle of direction may have been discovered in Asia, Africa, or Europe, and various nations lay claim to the honour, each one finding defenders. Europeans have been as anxious to establish a right to the discovery as other nations, and their anxiety has been probably increased by the knowledge that they have long possessed a monopoly of intellectual energy and its consequent. It has been justly remarked by a celebrated writer on magnetism, that if the discovery can be attributed to Europeans, the Norwegians have the best claim to it, not only from the character of their early enterprises, but also from the probability of their meeting with the ore