

of Aristotle were condemned, as allowing too much to reason and sense; and even so late as the twelfth century they were sought out and burned, and their readers excommunicated. By degrees, however, the extreme injustice of this impeachment of their character was acknowledged: they became the favorite study of the schoolmen, and furnished the keenest weapons of their controversy, being appealed to in all disputes as of sovereign authority; so that the slightest dissent from any opinion of the "great master," however absurd or unintelligible, was at once drowned by clamor, or silenced by the still more effectual argument of bitter persecution. If the logic of that gloomy period could be justly described as "the art of talking unintelligibly on matters of which we are ignorant," its physics might, with equal truth, be summed up in a deliberate preference of ignorance to knowledge, in matters of every day's experience and use.

(103.) In "this opake of nature and of soul," the perverse activity of the alchemists from time to time struck out a doubtful spark;* and our illustrious countryman, Roger Bacon, shone out, at the obscurest moment, like an early star predicting dawn. It was not, however, till the sixteenth century that the light of nature began to break forth with a regular and progressive increase. The vaunts of Paracelsus of the power of his chemical remedies and elixirs, and his open condemnation of the ancient pharmacy, backed as they were by many surprising cures, convinced all rational physicians that chemistry could furnish many excellent remedies, unknown till that time,† and a number of

* Macquer justly observes, that the alchemists would have rendered essential service to chemistry, had they only related their unsuccessful experiments as clearly as they have obscurely related those which they pretend to have been successful.—*Macquer's Dictionary of Chemistry*, i. x.

† Paracelsus performed most of these cures by mercury and opium, the use of which latter drug he had learned in Turkey. Of mercurial preparations the physicians of his time were ignorant, and of opium they were afraid, as being "cold in the fourth degree." Tartar was likewise a great favorite of Paracelsus, who imposed on it that name, "because it contains the water, the salt, the oil, and the acid, which burn