

natural laws, purges itself by successive degrees of the superfluities and incumbrances which hang about particulars, and obscure the perception of their points of resemblance and connection. We shall state the helps which may be afforded us, in a work of so much thought and labor, by a methodical course of proceeding, and by a careful notice of those means which have at any time been found successful, with a view to their better understanding and adaptation to other cases; a species of mental induction of no mean utility and extent in itself; inasmuch as by pursuing it alone we can attain a more intimate knowledge than we actually possess of the laws which regulate our discovery of truth, and of the rules, so far as they extend, to which invention is reducible. In doing this, we shall commence at the beginning, with experience itself, considered as the accumulation of the knowledge of individual objects and facts.

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## CHAP. IV.

### OF THE OBSERVATION OF FACTS AND THE COLLECTION OF INSTANCES.

(109.) Nature offers us two sorts of subjects of contemplation in the external world,—objects, and their mutual actions. But, after what has been said on the subject of sensation, the reader will be at no loss to perceive that we know nothing of the objects themselves which compose the universe, except through the medium of the impressions they excite in us, which impressions are the results of certain actions and processes in which sensible objects and the material parts of ourselves are directly concerned. Thus our observation of external nature is limited to the mutual action of material objects on one another; and