

acid, which carrying them along with it into the fissures at least, if not into the solid substance of such stones or slates, there determines them to shoot into these elegant branchings; after the same manner, and frequently in the same figures, as the particles of mercury, copper, &c. are disposed and brought together by the salts in aqua fortis.*

But the progress of truth, although it may be delayed by opposition, cannot be permanently arrested. The converts to the new doctrines were indeed few, but much had been done to facilitate their future reception, for the slumber of prejudice had been broken, the hold of the ancient opinions on the affections had been loosened, and men no longer startled into scepticism when they heard of animals that in their productions mimicked the most beautiful and delicate vegetable forms. † The mind of naturalists was thus in some measure prepared for the change on the very eve of being effected by the labours and assiduity of a member of that very society which had lately listened, with apparent approbation, to the reveries of Dr Parsons.

John Ellis—the name of the individual alluded to—was a merchant in London, who devoted his leisure to the study of natural history, in which he attained so considerable knowledge as to gain easy access to the Royal Society, and the acquaintance and correspondence of the most celebrated naturalists of his time. He seems to have attached himself more particularly to the economical department of botany, and seized every opportunity to introduce foreign plants to our gardens, especially such as were remarkable from furnishing any material employed in the arts and manufactures; and he was equally solicitous to acquire and diffuse accurate information relative to any natural productions which might be rendered subservient to the necessities or comforts of mankind. He was fond also of amusing himself in making imitations of landscapes by the curious and skilful disposition of delicate sea-weed and corallines

* Employment for the Microscope, p. 218–20. Lond. 1753.

† “For it is not because an opinion is true, that others will therefore adopt it. It must at the same time be congruous with our other impressions, and admit of being dovetailed into them, or it will be rejected, for it is judged of by its conformity to the previous acquisitions, and is disliked and condemned if incompatible with them.”—Turner, Sac. Hist. of the World, Vol. ii. p. 19.