

Aristotle, and other ancient philosophers, did indeed collect facts ; but that they took no steps in classifying and comparing them ; and that thus they failed to obtain from them any general knowledge. For, in reality, the treatises of Aristotle which we have mentioned, are as remarkable for the power of classifying and systematizing which they exhibit, as for the industry shown in the accumulation. But it is not classification of facts merely which can lead us to knowledge, except we adopt that special arrangement, which, in each case, brings into view the principles of the subject. We may easily show how unprofitable an arbitrary or random classification is, however orderly and systematic it may be.

For instance, for a long period all unusual fiery appearances in the sky were classed together as *meteors*. Comets, shooting-stars, and globes of fire, and the aurora borealis in all its forms, were thus grouped together, and classifications of considerable extent and minuteness were proposed with reference to these objects. But this classification was of a mixed and arbitrary kind. Figure, color, motion, duration, were all combined as characters, and the imagination lent its aid, transforming these striking appearances into fiery swords and spears, bears and dragons, armies and chariots. The facts so classified were, notwithstanding, worthless ; and would not have been one jot the less so, had they and their classes been ten times as numerous as they were. No rule or law that would stand the test of observation was or could be thus discovered. Such classifications have, therefore, long been neglected and forgotten. Even the ancient descriptions of these objects of curiosity are unintelligible, or unworthy of trust, because the spectators had no steady conception of the usual order of such phenomena. For, however much we may fear to be misled by preconceived opinions, the caprices of imagination distort our impressions far more than the anticipations of reason. In this case men had, indeed we may say with regard to many of these meteors, they still have, no science : not for want of facts, nor even for want of classification of facts ; but because the classification was one in which no real principle was contained.

4. Since, as we have said before, two things are requisite to science, —Facts and Ideas ; and since, as we have seen, Facts were not wanting in the physical speculations of the ancients, we are naturally led to ask, Were they then deficient in Ideas ? Was there a want among them of mental activity, and logical connection of thought ? But it is so obvious that the answer to this inquiry must be in the negative, that we need not dwell upon it. No one who knows any thing of the