Thus it is impossible that an assertion, false to any amount which the existing state of observation can easily detect, should have any abiding prevalence in astronomy. Such errors may long keep their ground in any science which is contained mainly in didactic works, and studied in the closet, but not acted upon elsewhere;—which is reasoned upon much, but brought to the test of experiment rarely or never. Here, on the contrary, an error, if it arise, makes its way into the Tables, into the Ephemeris, into the observer's nightly List, or his sheet of Reductions; the evidence of sense flies in its face in a thousand observatories; the discrepancy is traced to its source, and soon disappears forever.

In this favored branch of knowledge, the most recondite and delicate discoveries can no more suffer doubt or contradiction, than the most palpable facts of sense which the face of nature offers to our notice. The last great discovery in astronomy—the motion of the stars arising from Aberration—is as obvious to the vast population of astronomical observers in all parts of the world, as the motion of the stars about the pole is to the casual night wanderer. And this immunity from the danger of any large error in the received doctrines, is a firm platform on which the astronomer can stand and exert himself to reach perpetually further and further into the region of the unknown.

The same scrupulous care and diligence in recording all that has hitherto been ascertained, has been extended to those departments of astronomy in which we have as yet no general principles which serve to bind together our acquired treasures. These records may be considered as constituting a *Descriptive Astronomy;* such are, for instance, Catalogues of Stars, and Maps of the Heavens, Maps of the Moon, representations of the appearance of the Sun and Planets as seen through powerful telescopes, pictures of Nebulæ, of Comets, and the like. Thus, besides the Catalogue of Fundamental Stars which may be considered as standard points of reference for all observations of the Sun, Moon, and Planets, there exist many large catalogues of smaller stars. Flamsteed's *Historia Celestis*, which much surpassed any previous catalogue, contained above 3000 stars. But in 1801, the French *Histoire Céleste* appeared, comprising observations of 50,000 stars. Catalogues or charts of other special portions of the sky have been published more recently; and in 1825, the Berlin Academy proposed to the astronomers of Europe to carry on this work by portioning out the heavens among them.

[2d Ed.] [Before Flamsteed, the best Catalogue of the Stars was