

CHAPTER III.

FAILURE OF THE GREEK PHYSICAL PHILOSOPHY.

Francis Bacon's Remarks.

THOUGH we do not accept, as authority, even the judgments of Francis Bacon, and shall have to estimate the strong and the weak parts of his, no less than of other philosophies, we shall find his remarks on the Greek philosophers very instructive. Thus he says of Aristotle (*Nov. Org.* 1. Aph. lxiii.):

“He is an example of the kind of philosophy in which much is made out of little; so that the basis of experience is too narrow. He corrupted Natural Philosophy by his Logic, and made the world out of his Categories. He disposed of the distinction of *dense* and *rare*, by which bodies occupy more or less dimension or space, by the frigid distinction of *act* and *power*. He assigned to each kind of body a single proper motion, so that if they have any other motion they must receive it from some extraneous source; and imposed many other arbitrary rules upon Nature; being everywhere more careful how one may give a ready answer, and make a positive assertion, than how he may apprehend the variety of nature.

“And this appears most evidently by the comparison of his philosophy with the other philosophies which had any vogue in Greece. For the *Homoiomeria*¹ of Anaxagoras, the *Atoms* of Leucippus and Democritus, the Heaven and Earth of Parmenides, the Love and Hate of Empedocles, the Fire of Heraclitus, had some trace of the thoughts of a natural philosopher; some savor of experience, and nature, and bodily things; while the Physics of Aristotle, in general, sound only of Logical Terms.

“Nor let any one be moved by this—that in his books *Of Animals*, and in his *Problems*, and in others of his tracts, there is often a quoting of experiments. For he had made up his mind beforehand; and did not consult experience in order to make right propositions and axioms, but when he had settled his system to his will, he twisted experience

¹ For these technical forms of the Greeks, see Sec. 8 of this chapter.