

which appears with his name, is an imposture of the middle ages, full of errors and absurdities.³

His disciple, friend, and successor, Theophrastus of Eresos, is, as we have said already, the first great writer on botany whose works we possess; and, as may be said in most cases of the first great writer, he offers to us a richer store of genuine knowledge and good sense than all his successors. But we find in him that the Greeks of his time, who aspired, as we have said, to collect and *systematize* a body of information on every subject, failed in one half of their object, as far as related to the vegetable world. Their attempts at a systematic distribution of plants were altogether futile. Although Aristotle's divisions of the animal kingdom are, even at this day, looked upon with admiration by the best naturalists, the arrangements and comparisons of plants which were contrived by Theophrastus and his successors, have not left the slightest trace in the modern form of the science; and, therefore, according to our plan, are of no importance in our history. And thus we can treat all the miscellaneous information concerning vegetables which was accumulated by the whole of this school of writers, in no other way than as something antecedent to the first progress towards systematic knowledge.

The information thus collected by the unsystematic writers is of various kinds; and relates to the economical and medicinal uses of plants, their habits, mode of cultivation, and many other circumstances: it frequently includes some description; but this is always extremely imperfect, because the essential conditions of description had not been discovered. Of works composed of materials so heterogeneous, it can be of little use to produce specimens; but I may quote a few words from Theophrastus, which may serve to connect him with the future history of the science, as bearing upon one of the many problems respecting the identification of ancient and modern plants. It has been made a question whether the following description does not refer to the potato.⁴ He is speaking of the differences of roots: "Some roots," he says, "are still different from those which have been described; as that of the *arachidna*⁵ plant: for this bears fruit underground as well as above: the fleshy part sends one thick root deep into the ground, but the others, which bear the fruit, are more slender

³ Mirbel, *Botanique*, ii. 505.

⁴ Theoph. i. 11.

⁵ Most probably the *Arachnis hypogæa*, or ground-nut.