

and higher up, and ramified. It loves a sandy soil, and has no leaf whatever."

The books of Aristotle and Theophrastus soon took the place of the Book of Nature in the attention of the degenerate philosophers who succeeded them. A story is told by Strabo⁶ concerning the fate of the works of these great naturalists. In the case of the wars and changes which occurred among the successors of Alexander, the heirs of Theophrastus tried to secure to themselves his books, and those of his master, by burying them in the ground. There the manuscripts suffered much from damp and worms; till Apollonicon, a book-collector of those days, purchased them, and attempted, in his own way, to supply what time had obliterated. When Sylla marched the Roman troops into Athens, he took possession of the library of Apollonicon; and the works which it contained were soon circulated among the learned of Rome and Alexandria, who were thus enabled to *Aristotelize*⁷ on botany as on other subjects.

The library collected by the Attalic kings of Pergamus, and the Alexandrian Museum, founded and supported by the Ptolemies of Egypt, rather fostered the commentatorial spirit than promoted the increase of any real knowledge of nature. The Romans, in this as in other subjects, were practical, not speculative. They had, in the times of their national vigor, several writers on agriculture, who were highly esteemed; but no author, till we come to Pliny, who dwells on the mere knowledge of plants. And even in Pliny, it is easy to perceive that we have before us a writer who extracted his information principally from books. This remarkable man,⁸ in the middle of a public and active life, of campaigns and voyages, contrived to accumulate, by reading and study, an extraordinary store of knowledge of all kinds. So unwilling was he to have his reading and note-making interrupted, that, even before day-break in winter, and from his litter as he travelled, he was wont to dictate to his amanuensis, who was obliged to preserve his hand from the numbness which the cold occasioned, by the use of gloves.⁹

It has been ingeniously observed, that we may find traces in the botanical part of his Natural History, of the errors which this hurried and broken habit of study produced; and that he appears frequently to have had books read to him and to have heard them amiss.¹⁰ Thus,

⁶ Strabo, lib. xiii. c. i., § 54.

⁹ Plin. Jun. Epist. 3, 5.

⁷ *Ἀριστοτελίζειν.*

¹⁰ Sprengel, i. 163.

⁸ Sprengel, i. 163.