

Platonic form of dialogue), has still the character of a commentary on the ancients.

The Germans appear to have been the first to liberate themselves from this thralldom, and to publish works founded mainly on actual observation. The first of the botanists who had this great merit is Otho Brunfels of Mentz, whose work, *Herbarum Vivæ Icones*, appeared in 1530. It consists of two volumes in folio, with wood-cuts; and in 1532, a German edition was published. The plants which it contains are given without any arrangement, and thus he belongs to the period of unsystematic knowledge. Yet the progress towards the formation of a system manifested itself so immediately in the series of German botanists to which he belongs, that we might with almost equal propriety transfer him to the history of that progress; to which we now proceed.

CHAPTER III.

FORMATION OF A SYSTEM OF ARRANGEMENT OF PLANTS.

Sect. 1.—Prelude to the Epoch of Cæsalpinus.

THE arrangement of plants in the earliest works was either arbitrary, or according to their use, or some other extraneous circumstance, as in Pliny. This and the division of vegetables by Dioscorides into *aromatic, alimentary, medicinal, vinous*, is, as will be easily seen, a merely casual distribution. The Arabian writers, and those of the middle ages, showed still more clearly their insensibility to the nature of system, by adopting an alphabetical arrangement; which was employed also in the Herbals of the sixteenth century. Brunfels, as we have said, adopted no principle of order; nor did his successor, Fuchs. Yet the latter writer urged his countrymen to put aside their Arabian and barbarous Latin doctors, and to observe the vegetable kingdom for themselves; and he himself set the example of doing this, examined plants with zeal and accuracy, and made above fifteen hundred drawings of them.¹

¹ His *Historia Stirpium* was published at Basil in 1542.