

the theory may not be established as true, it may be useful by bringing into view the real nature and application of such principles.

It is, therefore, according to our views, unphilosophical to derive despair, instead of hope, from the imperfect success of Buffon and his predecessors. Yet this is what is done by the writer to whom we refer. "For me," says he,<sup>15</sup> "I vow that, after having long meditated on the system of Buffon,—a system so remarkable, so ingenious, so well matured, so wonderfully connected in all its parts, at first sight so probable;—I confess that, after this long study, and the researches which it requires, I have conceived in consequence, a distrust of myself, a skepticism, a disdain of hypothetical systems, a decided predilection and exclusive taste for pure and rational observation, in short, a disheartening, which I had never felt before."

The best remedy of such feelings is to be found in the history of science. Kepler, when he had been driven to reject the solid epicycles of the ancients, or a person who had admired Kepler as M. Bourdon admires Buffon, but who saw that his magnetic virtue was an untenable fiction, might, in the same manner, have thrown up all hope of a sound theory of the causes of the celestial motions. But astronomers were too wise and too fortunate to yield to such despondency. The predecessors of Newton substituted a solid science of Mechanics for the vague notions of Kepler; and the time soon came when Newton himself reduced the motions of the heavens to a Law as distinctly conceived as the Motions had been before.

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## CHAPTER V.

### EXAMINATION OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM, AND CONSEQUENT SPECULATIONS.

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#### *Sect. 1.—The Examination of the Nervous System.*

IT is hardly necessary to illustrate by further examples the manner in which anatomical observation has produced conjectural and hypothetical attempts to connect structure and action with some

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<sup>15</sup> Bourdon, p. 274.