

not then exist.¹ Science was not a subject of general, still less of popular, instruction. It was an occupation of the few, who, privileged by fortune or talent, or gifted with inordinate perseverance, forced their way into the *salons* of society² or the rooms of the Academy. The first public course of natural history was opened in Paris by Valmont de Bomare in 1760.³ Science still stood far out of the reach of the practical man or the poor man; it had not yet become an element of education or an instrument for industry. It was a fashionable pursuit, a luxury of the great, a key that occasionally opened the door of the palace; but it was not a thing of immediate use, except in adding glory and renown to its royal protectors, or to the rare genius which could make new discoveries. Almost the only application made of it was in navigation, and in the construction of instruments connected therewith. This essentially literary—not national—popularisation of science had also its great dangers. No ideas lend themselves to such easy, but likewise to such shallow, generalisations as those of science. Once let out of the hand which uses them, in the strict and cautious manner by which alone they lead to valuable results, they are apt to work mischief. Because the tool is so sharp, the object to which it is applied seems to be

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Dangers of
the merely
literary pop-
ularisation.

¹ Cuvier, in his 'Rapport,' &c., p. 361, mentions the elementary works published by some of the medical professors at the beginning of the century, but says also that "En Allemagne, surtout, où l'usage des livres élémentaires est plus commun que chez nous, il n'est presque aucune université, dont les professeurs n'en aient publié d'excellens."

² See Maury, p. 182, &c. Also Cuvier, 'Rapport,' vol. ii. p. 427: "En France la réputation des ouvrages dépend, pour l'ordinaire, des femmes et de quelques gens de lettres, qui croient pouvoir juger des sciences positives, parce qu'ils ont combiné quelques idées générales de métaphysique."

³ See Maury, 'L'ancienne Académie des Sciences,' p. 283.