

great scientific institution which owes its origin to the first of the Ptolemies long enjoyed, among other advantages, that of being able to give a free scope to the differently directed pursuits of its members, and thus, although founded in a foreign country, and surrounded by nations of different races, it could still preserve the characteristics of the Greek acuteness of mind and a Greek mode of thought.

A few examples must suffice, in accordance with the spirit and form of the present work, to show how experiments and observations, under the protecting influence of the Ptolemies, acquired their appropriate recognition as the true sources of knowledge regarding celestial and terrestrial phenomena, and how, in the Alexandrian period, a felicitous generalization of views manifested itself conjointly with a laborious accumulation of knowledge. Although the different Greek schools of philosophy, when transplanted to Lower Egypt, gave occasion, by their Oriental degeneration, to many mythical hypotheses regarding nature and natural phenomena, mathematics still constituted the firmest foundation of the Platonic doctrines inculcated in the Alexandrian Museum;* and this science comprehended, in the advanced stages of its development, pure mathematics, mechanics, and astronomy. In Plato's high appreciation of mathematical development of thought, as well as in Aristotle's morphological views, which embraced all organisms, we discover the germs of the subsequent advances of physical science. They became the guiding stars which led the human mind through the bewildering fanaticism of the Dark Ages, and prevented the utter destruction of a sound and scientific manifestation of mental vigor.

The mathematician and astronomer, Eratosthenes of Cyrene, the most celebrated of the Alexandrian librarians, employed the materials at his command to compose a system of universal geography. He freed geography from mythical legends, and, although himself occupied with chronology and history, separated geographical descriptions from that admixture of historical elements with which it had previously been not ungracefully embodied. The absence of these elements was, however, satisfactorily compensated for by the introduc-

* Fries, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, bd. ii., s. 5; and the same author's *Lehrbuch der Naturlehre*, th. i., s. 42. Compare, also, the considerations on the influence which Plato exercised on the foundation of the experimental sciences by the application of mathematics, in Brandis, *Geschichte der Griechisch-Römischen Philosophie*, th. ii., abth i., s. 276.