

earth's surface, and all terrestrial objects, from the vegetable mantle with which the land is covered, and the mollusca of the ocean, up to mankind. Man is considered, according to the variety of his mental dispositions and his exaltation of these spiritual gifts, in the development of the noblest creations of art. I have here enumerated the elements of a general knowledge of nature which lie scattered irregularly throughout different parts of the work. "The path on which I am about to enter," says Pliny, with a noble self-confidence, "is untrodden (*non trita auctoribus via*); no one among my own countrymen, or among the Greeks, has as yet attempted to treat of the whole of nature under its character of universality (*nemo apud Græcos qui unus omnia tractaverit*). If my undertaking should not succeed, it is, at any rate, both beautiful and noble (*pulchrum atque magnificentum*) to have made the attempt."

A grand and single image floated before the mind of the intellectual author; but, suffering his attention to be distracted by specialities, and wanting the living contemplation of nature, he was unable to hold fast this image. The execution was incomplete, not merely from a superficiality of views, and a want of knowledge of the objects to be treated of (here we, of course, can only judge of the portions that have come down to us), but also from an erroneous mode of arrangement. We discover in the author the busy and occupied man of rank, who prided himself on his wakefulness and nocturnal labors, but who, undoubtedly, too often confided the loose web of an endless compilation to his ill-informed dependents, while he was himself engaged in superintending the management of public affairs, when holding the place of Governor of Spain, or of a superintendent of the fleet in Lower Italy. This taste for compilation, for the laborious collection of the separate observations and facts yielded by science as it then existed, is by no means deserving of censure, but the want of success that has attended Pliny's undertaking is to be ascribed to his incapacity of mastering the materials accumulated, of bringing the descriptions of nature under the control of higher and more general views, or of keeping in sight the point of view presented by a comparative study of nature. The germs of such nobler, not merely orographic, but truly geognostic views, were to be met with in Eratosthenes and Strabo; but Pliny never made use of the works of the latter, and only on one occasion of those of the former; nor did Aristotle's History of Animals teach him their division into large classes based upon internal