The school of Edessa, a prototype of the Benedictine schools of Monte Cassino and Salerno, gave the first impulse to a scientific investigation of remedial agents yielded from the mineral and vegetable kingdoms. When these establishments were dissolved by Christian fanaticism, under Zeno the Isaurian, the Nestorians were scattered over Persia, where they soon attained to political importance, and founded at Dschondisapur, in Khusistan, a medical school, which was afterward much frequented. They succeeded, toward the middle of the seventh century, in extending their knowledge and their doctrines as far as China, under the Thang dynasty, 572 years after Buddhism had penetrated thither from India.

The seeds of Western civilization, which had been scattered over Persia by learned monks and by the philosophers of the last Platonic school at Athens, persecuted by Justinian, had exercised a beneficial influence on the Arabs during their first Asiatic campaigns. However faint the sparks of knowledge diffused by the Nestorian priesthood might have been, their peculiar tendency to the investigation of medical pharmacy could not fail to influence a race which had so long lived in the enjoyment of a free communion with nature, and which preserved a more vivid feeling for every kind of natural investigation than the Greek and Italian inhabitants of cities. The cosmical importance attached to the age of the Arabs depends in a great measure on the national characteristics which we are here considering. The Arabs, I would again remark, are to be regarded as the actual founders of physical science, considered in the sense which we now apply to the words.

It is undoubtedly extremely difficult to associate any absolute beginning with any definite epoch of time in the history of the mental world and of the intimately-connected elements of thought. Individual luminous points of knowledge, and the processes by which knowledge was gradually attained, may be traced scattered through very early periods of time. How great is the difference that separates Dioscorides, who distilled mercury from cinnabar, from the Arabian chemist Dscheber; how widely is Ptolemy, as an optician, removed from Alhazen; but we must, nevertheless, date the foundation of the physical sciences, and even of natural science, from the point where new paths were first trodden by many different investigators, although with unequal success. To the mere contemplation of nature, to the observation of the phenomena accidentally presented to the eye in the terrestrial and celestial regions of space, succeeds investigation into the actual, an