

made quite as much progress as the purely abstract sciences. In a manner, though perhaps hardly as powerful in their influence on practical pursuits, they are more popular; they occupy a larger number of students; and inasmuch as they also comprise the study of man himself, they have a very profound influence on our latest opinions, interests, and beliefs—*i.e.*, on our inner life. It is the object of this and some of the following chapters to trace concisely the altered ways and means by which, in the course of the last hundred years, the study of the actual things and events of nature has been prosecuted. For those who wrote the history of the descriptive sciences in the middle of our century, the arrangement of this vast subject presented little difficulty. It had been in the main accomplished by the great naturalists who, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, laboured to bring the large and ever increasing number of natural objects into some supposed system and some professed order, to enumerate them in catalogues or marshal them in museums. The familiar division of natural things into animals, vegetables, and minerals had received a general sanction. Separate sciences, with separate chairs at the universities, which still survive, attended to the separate treatment of these subjects. One of the greatest changes which the present age has witnessed has been the breaking down of the old landmarks and of the stereotyped divisions which existed in the beginning and all through the first half of the century.¹

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¹ This change has also very much lessened the interest with which we now regard the solution of a problem which, down to recent times, was much discussed—the classification of the sciences. It will be seen that of the many principles of division which have been