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978-1-108-00017-8 - A Preliminary Discourse on the Study of Natural Philosophy

John Frederick William Herschel

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“ INTELLIGIT QUANTUM DE NATURÆ ORDINE RE VEL MENTE OB-
“ SERVAVERIT ; NEC AMPLIUS SCIT AUT POTEST.”

BACON, NOVUM ORGANUM, APHOR. I.

MAN, AS THE MINISTER AND INTERPRETER OF NATURE, IS
LIMITED IN ACT AND UNDERSTANDING BY HIS OBSERVATION OF
THE ORDER OF NATURE : NEITHER HIS KNOWLEDGE NOR HIS
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on the Study of
NATURAL PHILOSOPHY

JOHN FREDERICK WILLIAM HERSCHEL, ESQ. A.M.

LATE FELLOW OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE. &c. &c. &c.



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BY
J. F. W. HERSCHEL, ESQ. M.A.
OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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“ In primis, hominis est propria VERI inquisitio atque investigatio Itaque cum sumus negotiis necessariis, curisque vacui, tum avemus aliquid videre, audire, ac dicere, cognitionemque rerum, aut occultarum aut admirabilium, ad bene beateque vivendum necessariam ducimus ; — ex quo intelligitur, quod VERUM, simplex, sincerumque sit, id esse naturæ hominis aptissimum. Huic veri videndi cupiditati adjuncta est appetitio quædam principatûs, ut nemini parere animus bene a natura informatus velit, nisi præcipienti, aut doctenti, aut utilitatis causâ justè et legitimè impetranti : ex quo animi magnitudo existit, et humanarum rerum contentio.”

CICERO, DE OFFICIIS, Lib. 1. § 13.

Before all other things, man is distinguished by his pursuit and investigation of TRUTH. And hence, when free from needful business and cares, we delight to see, to hear, and to communicate, and consider a knowledge of many admirable and abstruse things necessary to the good conduct and happiness of our lives : whence it is clear that whatsoever is TRUE, simple, and direct, the same is most congenial to our nature as men. Closely allied with this earnest longing to see and know the truth, is a kind of dignified and princely sentiment which forbids a mind, naturally well constituted, to submit its faculties to any but those who announce it in precept or in doctrine, or to yield obedience to any orders but such as are at once just, lawful, and founded on utility. From this source spring greatness of mind and contempt of worldly advantages and troubles.