

Thus have France, England, and Germany, in the course of about a century, successively produced the three great Lawgivers of Modern Husbandry.

It was in the year 1837 that the British Association for the Advancement of Science, perceiving the immense accumulation of facts, for the most part unsystematized, which had already taken place in organic chemistry, and was annually increasing therein, invited Justus Liebig, who had already attained to eminence by his extensive researches in this branch of science, to write a report upon its then condition; which honorable duty the illustrious philosopher undertook. In the year 1840, Liebig, in fulfilment of this engagement, produced his memorable work on "Organic Chemistry in its Applications to Agriculture and Physiology." In ordinary hands such a report would, in all probability, have been but a compilation, more or less compendious, of facts already known, and conceptions already proposed for their co-ordination. But the original genius of Liebig, essentially philosophical and constructive, impressed upon his work a very different character.

He began by sweeping away the fallacious theoretical views which were at that time in vogue,—particularly the so-called "Humus theory,"—and replacing them by a theory of his own, wider in scope, and more conformable with truth. With this, the so-called "Mineral theory," as a general clue for his guidance, Liebig was enabled to thread the labyrinth of intermingled facts and fallacies, which had necessarily resulted from so many investigations, inductive and deductive, carried on for so many years, by so many independent thinkers and experimentalists, and recorded in so many scattered memoirs. All of these he was enabled to weigh and appreciate, by the criterion of a new law, or rather system of laws, themselves evolved during his large induction, and established (in a great measure) by help of the very facts they served to elucidate and connect.

Profiting by the controversial criticism which his book, on its appearance, did not fail to provoke, Liebig made it more perfect in successive editions; and extended it by additional volumes, some modestly entitled "Familiar Letters," some promulgated as codes of Natural Law, but all forming parts of a connected series, in which, as in a mirror, is displayed the progressive development of Liebig's views, in the light of his own and of contemporary researches. By these labors, pursued with unwearied industry