

works enable the adept at once to say, "this man does not understand what he is writing:" all is exact, full, and genial as if the author enjoyed what he is describing; everywhere the subject is treated up to its very latest stage, nor have we noted a single omission of importance. On debatable points, whether of principle or history, its almost judicial clearness and impartiality are admirable, and even where we sometimes dissent from our author's opinion or decision, we have no fault to find with the manner of stating the case. In a literary point of view also, the work is excellently performed; the style is at once vigorous and elegant, reminding us of Herschel and Arago in their best efforts, and sometimes rising into eloquence as welcome as unexpected; while for deep and exhaustive reflection, and acute and happy generalisation, it abounds in passages which make it on the whole one of the most instructive as well as delightful books we have ever read. We suppose we ought to feel shame in confessing to the hope that some dishonest publisher on this side the Atlantic will reproduce it as soon as possible, for although it is "supplied to subscribers *gratis*," that is small comfort to those whose pockets are not deep enough for that whole Encyclopædia Britannica, and whose inclinations are decided for having the pennyworth of bread without the sack.

The range of period over which this dissertation extends, is somewhat limited, including only the last preceding three quarters of a century; this selection having been determined, as Professor Forbes informs us, by the fact of the previous ground having been already occupied in the Encyclopædia by the dissertations of Playfair and Sir J. Leslie. We think this is a matter to be regretted, for we cannot endorse the laudation which Professor Forbes somewhat ostentatiously bestows on his predecessors' productions. That of Sir John Leslie is often inaccurate, not seldom unjust, and, viewed by the light of modern science, altogether incomplete: and if the same objections cannot be urged against that of Playfair, still it is encumbered by masses of heavy technicalities which he has attempted to popularise, but has only succeeded in rendering tedious for the *savau* and mostly unintelligible to the general reader. We sincerely wish that the publishers had cancelled these ineffective essays and induced Professor Forbes to re-write the history of that most important epoch which includes Galileo, Kepler and Newton. The following is the programme which Professor Forbes has set out to be performed, so condensed and yet so lucid that we have not the heart to abridge it, long as it is for our space.

I have adopted the period from about the year 1775 to 1850 as the general limit of my review. We may imagine this period, of three quarters of a century