

Lavoisier laid the basis of the science of chemistry, and Fourcroy, by popular lectures, made its study fashionable. Petit taught anatomy, Nollet electricity, and Arago astronomy; while Laplace, in his "Celeste Mechanique," gave to the world his nebular hypothesis, which at the end of this century still stands for us as a working theory of the evolution of the universe. And even though Mongolfier excited the wonder of the people by his balloons, and Mesmer cloaked a scientific fact with charlatanism, while Count Alessandro di Cagliostro, "by profession a healer of diseases, abolisher of wrinkles, friend of the poor and impotent, grandmaster of the Egyptian Lodge of High Science, spirit-summoner, gold-cook, Grand Cophta, prophet, priest and theurgic moralist and swindler, exploited the ladies of three courts, only to come to grief at last over the theft of the diamond necklace, yet there is the imminent fact that in the councils of this period of maelstrom ferment, when so many noble men were sucked into the vortex, there was a galaxy of earnest spirits filled with a love of truth, greater probably than was ever before gathered in the parliament of any nation. It was as the Golden Age of Greece in art, or the glories in literature of the Elizabethan period—Turgot, writer on economics, was Minister of Finance; Helvetius, the mathematician, was Director of Forests and Farms, and developed scientific agriculture. Laplace was a Secretary of State, under the National Convention, while Lavoisier, whom the German Wurtz has called the "father of French chemistry" was, in the words of Lalonde, "to be found everywhere,"—and with what good reason amongst a people where the search after scientific truth was at fever heat in every department of life. It was as when the prisoner comes from the close dungeon into the free air of heaven—he breathes deeply and again for fear he may lose it. The situation is epitomized in the life of Lavoisier, a model of what the man of science may and ought to be. Born in 1743, of wealthy tradespeople, he had all the early advantages of the schools of his time, and studied mathematics, astronomy and botany assiduously, and became so absorbed in natural philosophy that at twenty-three years of age he gained the gold medal of the Academy of Sciences for a thesis on "Lighting of the Streets of Paris." He analyzed gypsum and is soon found touring France with Guellard, and making a geological map, subsequently publishing "Memoires surcouches des Montagnes." At twenty-six years of age he was made one of the Farmers-General, in order that his resources for advancing scientific study might be increased. Imagine such a possibility to-day! He soon overtook the pneumatic studies of Black, Cavendish and Priestley, checked their errors and added to and gave form to their studies on air. Weekly experimental laboratory reviews of work done were carried on by him with Laplace, Mayer, Berthollet and