

impressed upon the character of scientific discoveries of the last hundred years a peculiar stamp which it would have been absurd to ignore while endeavoring, within a moderate compass, and in the plainest language, to convey a vivid though comprehensive sketch of the advancement of natural philosophy during this and the preceding, or, rather, two preceding generations.

It is not to be imagined that the difficulty of the problems which occupy the speculative philosopher, or the comprehensiveness of mind required for their solution, diminishes in any degree as we descend from the regions of pure science to the walks of every-day life—from the vast periods and majestic motions which astronomy enables us to explain and predict, to the common details of the workshop and the railway. In fact, the former are to be regarded as the *simpler* investigations, whilst our terrestrial agents have their effects modified by the diversified states of aggregation and various mechanical properties of matter, and by the numerous modifications of force arising from heat, electricity, or magnetism, to which it may be exposed. We have as yet made an insignificant advance towards that completer system of natural philosophy of which Newton's will form but one section, in which all the properties of matter and their consequences shall be as well understood as the particular property of gravity is at present. Many of these are to be learned by daily observation of the effects which occur in the ordinary progress of civilisation amongst us. We are continually performing experiments on a great scale and on purely commercial principles, which no individual philosopher or merely scientific society could have ventured to attempt. And in the midst of these appeals to experience, unexpected results are frequently occurring which send us back once more to the study of first principles, which, indeed, while they confound the empiric, do but establish the reputation of the philosophic engineer, who seldom fails to turn them to good account, both in his theory and practice.

We have already expressed our opinion of the manner in which Professor Forbes has performed his task, and so much pleasure have we derived from this performance that we almost feel convicted of ingratitude when the suggestion rises, that our author, in his selection of names for biographical record, has not been quite free from a spice of nativism, or (shall we say ?) of that local partiality from which the modern Athens is no more exempt than was the ancient. Certainly, we think the space devoted to one or two individuals might have been curtailed without injury to the work. This, however, is but a small matter, and does not affect its sterling value. To give any abstract or condensation of the subject does not seem feasible within our limits, and we prefer that our readers should take our word that this dissertation is alike essential to the historical student and to him who wishes to take in at one view the many featured image of modern science. If we were to single out particular portions for praise, we should select the biography of Laplace, the history of the discovery of Neptune, the wonderfully curious establishment of the undulatory theory of light by Young and Fresnel, and the glowing descriptions of the dis-