

suspicion, but it was openly insinuated that its object was the subversion of the Christian religion, and the Royal Society itself a conspiracy against the political and religious freedom of England. Coarse and violent attacks were made on its members, and most persistent efforts expended by writers of undoubted ability to ridicule and discredit its transactions. Vigorous as these onslaughts were, however, their influence in checking the steady progress of the Society was imperceptible. Whilst the names of her critics were soon forgotten, the subject of their attacks grew in the favour of the nation, and established her reputation at home and abroad. To-day the Royal Society stands in no need of defenders; its historian need not now descend to the task of proving that it was designed neither for the extinction of the Universities nor of the Christian religion. On the contrary, to trace the history of the Royal Society is to describe the rise and progress of scientific discovery in England. The era of its inception saw the birth of many new sciences. The first National Observatory was built at Greenwich, and modern Astronomy incurred the great debt it owes to the immortal Flamsteed. Experimental Chemistry, Mineralogy, Zoology and Botany may be said to have been founded at this time. In the development of these and kindred sciences the Royal Society has played an important part, as a few names from its long roll will amply prove. Amongst these we find Newton, Young and Faraday; Boyle, Dalton and Davy; Brewster, the two Herschels, and scores of others worthy of honourable mention; and in our own day the Society embraces numbers of men like Joule, Thomson and Darwin, whose labours are destined still further to promote its progress and to enrich Science. The example thus furnished by so splendid a record has not been without its influence on other parts of the empire. In Edinburgh, Dublin, and most of the large cities, similar associations have long since been established, and have shared largely in the labours and honours of the pioneer society. The important position thus occupied by the Royal Society and its allies with respect to the advancement of science, has its counterparts in the history of other countries. On the continent there is a similar confederation of scientific societies, at the head of which stands the French Academy. In the number of its illustrious names, in the multiplicity of its labours, and in the splendour of its achievements, this association surpasses all others. Founded about the same time as the Royal Society, it has continued to command the attention and to engross the intellectual