

CHAPTER III.

SEQUEL TO THE EPOCH OF NEWTON.—RECEPTION OF THE
NEWTONIAN THEORY.*Sect. 1.—General Remarks.*

THE doctrine of universal gravitation, like other great steps in science, required a certain time to make its way into men's minds; and had to be confirmed, illustrated, and completed, by the labors of succeeding philosophers. As the discovery itself was great beyond former example, the features of the natural sequel to the discovery were also on a gigantic scale; and many vast and laborious trains of research, each of which might, in itself, be considered as forming a wide science, and several of which have occupied many profound and zealous inquirers from that time to our own day, come before us as parts only of the verification of Newton's Theory. Almost every thing that has been done, and is doing, in astronomy, falls inevitably under this description; and it is only when the astronomer travels to the very limits of his vast field of labor, that he falls in with phenomena which do not acknowledge the jurisdiction of the Newtonian legislation. We must give some account of the events of this part of the history of astronomy; but our narrative must necessarily be extremely brief and imperfect; for the subject is most large and copious, and our limits are fixed and narrow. We have here to do with the history of discoveries, only so far as it illustrates their philosophy. And though the

place at a later period. Flamsteed wished to have his Observations printed complete and entire. Halley, who, under the authority of Newton and others, had the management of the printing, made many alterations and omissions, which Flamsteed considered as deforming and spoiling the work. The advantages of publishing a *complete* series of observations, now generally understood, were not then known to astronomers in general; though well known to Flamsteed, and earnestly insisted upon in his remonstrances. The result was that Flamsteed published his Observations at his own expense, and finally obtained permission to destroy the copies printed by Halley, which he did. In 1726, after Flamsteed's death, his widow applied to the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford, requesting that the volume printed by Halley might be removed out of the Bodleian Library, where it exists, as being "nothing more than an erroneous abridgment of Mr. Flamsteed's works," and unfit to see the light.