

astronomical discoveries of the last century are by no means poor, even in interest of this kind, the generalizations which they involve are far less important for our object, in consequence of being included in a previous generalization. Newton shines out so brightly, that all who follow seem faint and dim. It is not precisely the case which the poet describes—

As in a theatre the eyes of men,  
After some well-graced actor leaves the stage,  
Are idly bent on him that enters next,  
Thinking his prattle to be tedious :

but our eyes are at least less intently bent on the astronomers who succeeded, and we attend to their communications with less curiosity, because we know the end, if not the course of their story; we know that their speeches have all closed with Newton's sublime declaration, asserted in some new form.

Still, however, the account of the verification and extension of any great discovery is a highly important part of its history. In this instance it is most important; both from the weight and dignity of the theory concerned, and the ingenuity and extent of the methods employed: and, of course, so long as the Newtonian theory still required verification, the question of the truth or falsehood of such a grand system of doctrines could not but excite the most intense curiosity. In what I have said, I am very far from wishing to depreciate the value of the achievements of modern astronomers, but it is essential to my purpose to mark the subordination of narrower to wider truths—the different character and import of the labors of those who come before and after the promulgation of a master-truth. With this warning I now proceed to my narrative.

*Sect. 2.—Reception of the Newtonian Theory in England.*

THERE appears to be a popular persuasion that great discoveries are usually received with a prejudiced and contentious opposition, and the authors of them neglected or persecuted. The reverse of this was certainly the case in England with regard to the discoveries of Newton. As we have already seen, even before they were published, they were proclaimed by Halley to be something of transcendent value; and from the moment of their appearance, they rapidly made their way from one class of thinkers to another, nearly as fast as the nature of men's intellectual capacity allows. Halley, Wren, and all the leading