

tion, whom we have to pursue: and it is only in proportion as we ourselves overtake those figures in the race, and pass beyond them, that we are enabled to look back upon their faces; to discern their real aspects, and to catch the true character of their countenances. Except, therefore, I were of opinion that the great truths which Davy brought into sight have been firmly established and clearly developed by Faraday, I could not pretend to give the history of this striking portion of science. But I trust, by the view I have to offer of these beautiful trains of research and their result, to justify the assumption on which I thus proceed.

I must, however, state, as a further appeal to the reader's indulgence, that, even if the great principles of electro-chemistry have now been brought out in their due form and extent, the discovery is but a very few years, I might rather say a few months, old, and that this novelty adds materially to the difficulty of estimating previous attempts from the point of view to which we are thus led. It is only slowly and by degrees that the mind becomes sufficiently imbued with those new truths, of which the office is, to change the face of a science. We have to consider familiar appearances under a new aspect; to refer old facts to new principles; and it is not till after some time, that the struggle and hesitation which this employment occasions, subsides into a tranquil equilibrium. In the newly acquired provinces of man's intellectual empire, the din and confusion of conquest pass only gradually into quiet and security. We have seen, in the history of all capital discoveries, how hardly they have made their way, even among the most intelligent and candid philosophers of the antecedent schools: we must, therefore, not expect that the metamorphosis of the theoretical views of chemistry which is now going on, will be effected without some trouble and delay.

I shall endeavor to diminish the difficulties of my undertaking, by presenting the earlier investigations in the department of which I have now to speak, as much as possible according to the most deliberate view taken of them by the great discoverers themselves, Davy and Faraday; since these philosophers are they who have taught us the true import of such investigations.

There is a further difficulty in my task, to which I might refer;—the difficulty of speaking, without error and without offence, of men now alive, or who were lately members of social circles which exist still around us. But the scientific history in which such persons play a part, is so important to my purpose, that I do not hesitate to incur