

CHAPTER II.

ON THE GROWTH AND DIFFUSION OF THE CRITICAL SPIRIT.

I.

NOTHING probably strikes the impartial student of the progress of scientific and of philosophical thought more than the changing and opposite attitudes which the exponents of these two forms of thought have assumed in the course of the nineteenth century. This change has been more and more evident as the century has progressed. To a great extent we may even say that the attitudes have been reversed. The difference I refer to may be expressed concisely by saying: Science has more and more acquired the character of definiteness and the attitude of assurance; Philosophy, on the other hand, has become more and more uncertain and timid.

1.
Reversal of
the position
of science
and philo-
sophy.

In the beginning of the century, both in Germany and England, science and scientific thought played only a secondary part in literature and teaching. France was the only country in which it had early acquired that position and commanded that esteem which it now enjoys everywhere.¹ In Germany philosophy led the way, and even in this country, where it could not boast

¹ See vol. i. p. 105 *sqq.* of this History.