

extent of its own powers: and it is one of the glories of the philosophy of the present day, that, instead of being ashamed of its own limitations, and consequently prone to hurry into unfounded assumptions for the purpose of hiding its ignorance, it explicitly, and at once, acknowledges the point which for the present must be considered as a barrier to further progress; still however looking forward to the period when the increased accumulation of new facts shall enable it to remove that barrier.

#### SECT. II.

*Opinions of Lucretius on the Constitution of Matter in general; and on the Nature of Light, Heat, Water, and Air.*

IN attempting to explain the constitution of the universe, and the general phenomena of nature, Lucretius assumes that matter in its primary form consists of very small and impenetrable particles, which, from their supposed incapability of further division, are called *atoms*; that, from the fortuitous concourse of these atoms, all natural bodies were originally produced; and that into these they are again resolved by those common processes which we are constantly witnessing, as the death and consequent decomposition of vegetables and animals, and the wearing away of the most solid bodies by the effect of exposure to the air, or by the insensible attrition of other bodies: and, lastly, he main-