

the hypothesis of emission was so easily conceived, that, when recommended by high authority, it easily became popular; while the hypothesis of luminiferous undulations, unavoidably difficult to comprehend, even by the aid of steady thought, was neglected, and all but forgotten.

Yet the reception which Young's opinions met with was more harsh than he might have expected, even taking into account all these considerations. But there was in England no visible body of men, fitted by their knowledge and character to pronounce judgment on such a question, or to give the proper impulse and bias to public opinion. The Royal Society, for instance, had not, for a long time, by custom or institution, possessed or aimed at such functions. The writers of "Reviews" alone, self-constituted and secret tribunals, claimed this kind of authority. Among these publications, by far the most distinguished about this period was the *Edinburgh Review*; and, including among its contributors men of eminent science and great talents, employing also a robust and poignant style of writing (often certainly in a very unfair manner), it naturally exercised great influence. On abstruse doctrines, intelligible to few persons, more than on other subjects, the opinions and feelings expressed in a Review must be those of the individual reviewer. The criticism on some of Young's early papers on optics was written by Mr. (afterwards Lord) Brougham, who, as we have seen, had experimented on diffraction, following the Newtonian view, that of inflexion. Mr. Brougham was perhaps at this time young enough<sup>1</sup> to be somewhat intoxicated with the appearance of judicial authority in matters of science, which his office of anonymous reviewer gave him: and even in middle-life, he was sometimes considered to be prone to indulge himself in severe and sarcastic expressions. In January, 1803, was published<sup>2</sup> his critique on Dr. Young's Bakerian Lecture, *On the Theory of Light and Colors*, in which lecture the doctrine of undulations and the law of interferences was maintained. This critique was an uninterrupted strain of blame and rebuke. "This paper," the reviewer said, "contains nothing which deserves the name either of experiment or discovery." He charged the writer with "dangerous relaxations of the principles of physical logic." "We wish," he cried, "to recall philosophers to the strict and severe methods of investigation," describing them as those pointed out by Bacon, Newton, and the like. Finally, Dr. Young's speculations

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<sup>1</sup> His age was twenty-four.

<sup>2</sup> *Edin. Review*, vol. i. p. 450.