

American and a politician ; for he was already, in 1736, engaged in public affairs as clerk to the General Assembly of Pennsylvania, though it was not till a later period of his life that his admirers had the occasion of saying of him

Eripuit cœlis fulmen sceptrumque tyrannis ;

Born to control all lawless force, all fierce and baleful sway,
The thunder's bolt, the tyrant's rod, alike he wrenched away.

Æpinus and Coulomb were two of the most eminent physical philosophers of the last century, and labored in the way peculiarly required by that generation ; whose office it was to examine the results, in particular subjects, of the general conception of attraction and repulsion, as introduced by Newton. The reasonings of the Newtonian period had, in some measure, anticipated all possible theories resembling the electrical doctrine of Æpinus and Coulomb ; and, on that account, this doctrine could not be introduced and confirmed in a sudden and striking manner, so as to make a great epoch. Accordingly, Dufay, Symmer, Watson, Franklin, Æpinus and Coulomb, have all a share in the process of induction. With reference to these founders of the theory of electricity, Poisson holds the same place which Laplace holds with reference to Newton.

The reception of the Coulombian theory (so we must call it, for the Æpinian theory implies one fluid only,) has hitherto not been so general as might have been reasonably expected from its very beautiful accordance with the facts which it contemplates. This has partly been owing to the extreme abstruseness of the mathematical reasoning which it employs, and which put it out of the reach of most experimenters and writers of works of general circulation. The theory of Æpinus was explained by Robison in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* ; the analysis of Poisson has recently been presented to the public in the *Encyclopædia Metropolitana*, but is of a kind not easily mastered even by most mathematicians. On these accounts probably it is, that in English compilations of science, we find, even to this day, the two theories of one and of two fluids stated as if they were nearly on a par in respect of their experimental evidence. Still we may say that the Coulombian theory is probably assented to by all who have examined it, at least as giving the laws of phenomena ; and I have not heard of any denial of it from such a quarter, or of any attempt to show it to be erroneous by detailed and measured experiments. Mr. Snow Harris