

least an age in a state of partial hybernation, sucking her paws in closets and class-rooms, and getting so marvellously thin and spiritual under the process, that her attenuated form has long since failed to make any very distinct impression on the retina of the community. The case was widely different once. During the latter half of the last century no other class of questions possessed half such an interest in Scotland as metaphysical ones. Metaphysical had succeeded to theological disquisition, and was pursued with equal earnestness ; partly, no doubt, because the metaphysics of the age had set the theology of the age that had gone before virtually on its trial, but in great part also because the largest minds of the time had given themselves to the work ; and further, because the limited character of that cycle in which the mental philosophy is doomed to expatiate was not yet known. Early in the present century the interest had in some degree begun to flag, and the keen eye of Jeffrey was one of the first to detect the slacking of the tide. And in his ingenious critique on "Stewart's Life of Reid," he attempted to render a reason for it. The age had already started forward in that course of natural, physical, and mechanical experiment in which such distinguished trophies have since been won, and which have given its peculiar character to the time ; and it had become impatient, said the critic, of barren, non-productive observation. And it was a grand distinction, he held, between the physical and the metaphysical walks, that, while *experiment* reigned paramount in the one, and formed the all-potent key by which man could lay open at will the arcana of nature, and arm himself with her powers, *observation* only could be employed in the other,—a mere passive faculty, that had an ability of seeing, but none whatever of controlling. Hence, he argued, the unproductive character of metaphysical science, and the natural preference which the public had begun to manifest, on ascertaining such to be its character, for pursuits through