

the great success which attended Laplace's work, the elaboration of a system of the universe out of the principles of Newton, was largely due to the perfection which the analytical methods had gained in the hands of his predecessors, and to the skill with which he himself reduced the several problems to purely analytical questions.

But however much exact methods, learned societies, and regal endowments may do to promote the growth of the scientific spirit, experience has shown that popular favour and interest furnish a still more effective stimulus. Even the most abstract reasonings of the mathematician require to be brought into some connection with the general concerns of mankind, before they can attract talent from outside, or enter into that healthy action and reaction which are the soul of all mental progress. In this respect, also, France during the second half of the eighteenth century was far in advance of other countries. No other literature of that age can be compared with that of France, when we look at the influence or the expression which modern scientific views and interests had already attained in it; and no other country could at the end of the eighteenth century boast of such splendid means of scientific instruction as then existed in Paris. In two important departments—the popularisation and the teaching of science—France for a long period led the way.¹ A general inter-

14.
Influence
of science
on French
literature.

To Bodenhausen (about 1690): "I am of opinion that in the problems of ordinary Geometry the *methodus Veterum* has certain advantages over *Analysin Algebraicam*, and I think I have remarked to you that there remains an *Analysis geometricæ propria, toto cælo ab Algebra diversa et in multis longe Algebra compendio-*

sior utiliorque" (ibid., vol. vii. p. 359). "It is certain that algebra, by reducing everything *a situ ad solam magnitudinem*, hereby very frequently complicates things very much" (p. 362).

¹ Perhaps it would be more correct to say that science was fashionable than that it was popular in the