

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE ASTRONOMICAL VIEW OF NATURE.

1.  
The scientific spirit  
in the first  
and second  
half of the  
century.

So far I have only treated of the scientific spirit, or of the method of exact research, in a general way; showing how it was firmly established and developed in France, how it spread into Germany, and received there larger and more systematic application, and how in this country it gradually and almost imperceptibly grew out of the older experimental philosophy. This growth, as we have seen, took place partly under the influence of foreign science, but still more through the individual and unaided labours of a small number of native intellects of the very highest order, to each of whom was for a time allotted the enunciation of some specially fruitful idea. The period referred to in this survey was mainly the first half of our century; in it were most clearly marked the characteristic differences between the three great civilisations of France, Germany, and England. A step further in time would lead into the midst of our own period—into the age which has largely reaped the benefits of those earlier labours, both in theory and in practice, fully realising in many directions the predictions and even the ideals