

background and are almost forgotten. Among the former we may single out the sociological problem as by far the most important and generally attractive. Connected with it, as of hardly less importance, are the ethical and the religious questions. On the other hand, as belonging to the less attractive philosophical problems, we may name the philosophical problem of Nature and the problem of the Beautiful. To many thinking persons it may appear that there is no room for a philosophy of nature outside of the scientific treatment of the subject such as I have endeavoured to trace in the first volumes of this History. Similarly æsthetics, the philosophy of art and poetry, finds nowadays little favour, and a widespread opinion prevails that the philosophical treatment of these subjects has been of little, if of any, use at all. In both instances, as regards the philosophy of Nature as well as that of Art, what little interest still survives seems to be more readily satisfied by historical analysis, and this is either purely descriptive or critical; the standards of such criticism being fixed, not by abstract reasoning, but by a careful study of the creative work of the great masters of ancient and modern times.

3.
Tendency to
specialism.

There has been, secondly, as I have had repeated occasion to remark, a prevailing tendency, in all but the most recent thought of the last century, to deal only with definite and well-marked subjects, be they restricted regions of scientific and historical research or particular questions of practical interest. And although, as I have also had occasion to point out, a reaction against this specialising and atomising tendency