

of thought has set in,—notably in the natural sciences and through the pressure of practical interests,—this has hardly made itself felt in the region of philosophical thought. Philosophy, though the parent of all the different natural and historical sciences, has nevertheless only tardily adopted the methods and points of view which have in the latter led to conspicuous success. Philosophical specialists have only sprung up long after scientific and historical specialisation had become the order of the day; and now it appears as if unification of thought on philosophical subjects may have to wait till such has been partially attained in other and more restricted regions. Thus the breaking up of the great philosophical problem into a variety of special questions is, to some extent, a tribute to the spirit of the age. Nevertheless it cannot be doubted that this atomising process of thought is least of all satisfactory in dealing with philosophical questions, and that this is being more and more realised by philosophical writers of opposite schools and in different countries.¹ The dictum of Herbert Spencer, that science is partially unified knowledge and

¹ In the Retrospect at the end of the second volume of this History (vol. ii. pp. 741 *sqq.*), I pointed out that in the course of the last century Science, in the narrower sense of the word, as exact Knowledge based upon observation, definition, measurement, and calculation, has, by a general but tacit consent, abandoned the ambitious task of uniting natural knowledge into a comprehensive system; and further, that this task has been handed over as one of the principal inducements and interests of philosophical thought. It is obvious

that the latter cannot similarly relieve itself of this highest responsibility—viz., to bring unity into thought and knowledge, and that though it may have found it necessary to break up the main problem into separate problems it cannot permanently shirk its main duty. This explains the necessity of adding to the foregoing chapters which deal with the separate philosophical problems, a chapter which answers the question: what has the century done in the direction of defining, understanding, or solving the main problem?