

chemical agencies have, for thousands of years, evaded our discovery and our regard. Having done so, we create an artificial world of our own making which ministers to our wants, comforts, pleasures, and supplies that most inestimable of all commodities of civilisation, varied and stimulating work for ready hands and active brains. The wants and creations of artificial life have thus proved the greatest incentives to that abstract and artificial treatment of natural objects and processes for which the chemical and electrical laboratories with the calculating room of the mathematician on the one side, and the workshop and factory on the other, have in the course of the century become so renowned. All this great activity is—as I have abundantly shown—more and more governed by the scientific, the exact, or the mathematical spirit.

3.
Interest
opposed to
the spirit of
abstraction.

There is, however, in the human mind an opposite interest which fortunately counteracts to a considerable extent the one-sided working of the spirit of abstraction in science and the growing tendency towards artificiality in our practical life. This is the genuine love of nature, the consciousness that we lose all power if, to any great extent, we sever or weaken that connection which ties us to the world as it is—to things real and natural: it finds its expression in the ancient legend of the mighty giant who derived all his strength from his mother earth and collapsed if severed from her. In its extreme and purest form this interest probably lies at the root of all poetry and all art, and it accordingly governs a great part of the literature and thought of the century. It will occupy us later on in our historical