

# SCIENCE

A WEEKLY JOURNAL DEVOTED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE, PUBLISHING THE  
OFFICIAL NOTICES AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION  
FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 1904.

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## THE UNITY OF PHYSICAL SCIENCE.\*

THERE is a tradition, still tacitly sanctioned even by men of science, that there have been epochs when the more eminent minds were able to compass the entire range of knowledge. Amongst the vanishing heroic figures of the past it seems possible, indeed, to discern, here and there, a Galileo, a Huygens, a Descartes, a Leibnitz, a Newton, a Laplace or a Humbolt, each capable, at least, of summing up with great completeness the state of contemporary knowledge. Traditions, however, are generally more or less mythical, and the myth in this case seems to be in flat contradiction with the fact that there never was such an epoch, that the great masters of our distinguished predecessors were, after all, much like the masters of to-day, simply the leading specialists of their times. But however this may be, if we grant the possibility of the requisite attainments, even in a few individuals at any epoch, we shall speedily conclude that there never was an epoch so much in need of them as the immediate present, when the divisional speakers of this congress are called upon to explain the unities which pervade the ever-widening and largely diverse fields of their several domains.

The domain of physical science, concerning which I have the honor to address you to-day, presents peculiar and peculiarly formidable difficulties in the way of a summary review. While we may not be dis-

\* Address before the Division of Physical Science, International Congress of Arts and Science, St. Louis, September 19-25, 1904.

# Science

**20 (509)**

*Science* **20** (509), 417-448.

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