

SCIENCE

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ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR THE AD- VANCEMENT OF SCIENCE.¹

II.

At Cape Town I attempted to make a general survey of evolution in its various branches, and laid down certain general propositions as to what seems common to all of them.

I then went on to consider how these general laws found an application in the most recent speculations as to the constitution of matter. The atoms of the elements and the molecules of chemical combinations are constructed on so minute a scale that it is no easy task to picture them to our minds. On the other hand, we see in the heavens arrangements of matter on a scale so vast that it is equally difficult to grasp. Both the inconceivably small and the inconceivably large should fall under a general law, if it is a true one; and the history of satellites, planets and stars presents at least as great an interest as that of atoms and molecules. Accordingly the transition from the small to the large seemed to afford a convenient halting place in my address, and I propose to-night to resume the discussion by considering various theories of celestial evolution. But I will first try to render the point of view intelligible which I desire to take. A short preliminary explanation for those who were not at Cape Town thus becomes necessary.

I desire to present the essential features which are common to evolution in all its branches, and this may be done most easily

¹Johannesburg, South Africa, August 30, 1905.

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