LOCAL SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES AND THE COMMUNITY

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Through the whole range of nature, classification shows an underlying simplicity of principle expressed through various materials and in diverse grades. Gravitation controls galaxies and sand-grains, and evolution is the common destiny of genera and of individuals. Both of these fundamental principles tend inevitably to pile up aggregates of ever-increasing size and complexity. But such aggregates are collections of units, and, while appearing to acquire new properties, remain subject to the laws that govern units and dependent on the reaction of their components to those laws.

Human nature, despite the bombastic claims often urged by its exponents, illustrates the operation of the principle of evolution with painful fidelity, especially in its social reactions. From the lone hunter through the clan to the totalitarian state the process of aggregation goes on, with increasing complexity and decreasing flexibility, until Nemesis clears the stage for the next performance. Within the frame of natural or imperial unification are innumerable smaller aggregates, each so similar in type to the whole that one is reminded of a crystalline fabric, where each molecule has a shape consistent with that of the complete crystal.

A scientific society is but one example of this tendency towards congregation of kindred types. Whatever may be its peculiarities, its success or failure, each society has originated in much the same way as all the others. In most cases, its history can be traced back to the enthusiasm of an individual, who has attracted
Editor's Summary