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RECIPROCAL RELATIONS OF MAN AND THE UNIVERSE.

BY PROF. WARD.

I.

BEFORE we are fully prepared to consider, in all its length and breadth, the important proposition that society can and should seriously undertake the artificial improvement of its condition upon scientific principles, strictly analogous to those by which the rude conditions of nature have been improved upon in the process which we call civilization; before we are wholly ready to enter upon an argument to prove the feasibility, the desirability, and the right of society, as such, to adopt an aggressive reform policy, guided entirely by scientific foresight, rendered possible by an intelligent acquaintance with the fundamental laws of human action; before we can justly contemplate man in his social corporate capacity assuming the attitude of a teleological agent, and adopting measures in the nature of final causes for the production of remote beneficial effects,—before we can properly rise to this position, it seems necessary that we should first seek to obtain as just and true a conception as the mind is capable of grasping, of the real and precise relations which man and the rest of nature mutually sustain to each other. This general and complex problem naturally resolves itself into two more special and simple problems. These are:

First,—What is the attitude which nature assumes toward man? and

Second,—What is the attitude which man should assume toward nature?

These are the fundamental questions, upon the answers to which all human conduct other than that prompted by mere impulse depends. They are, therefore, the questions which society must carefully consider and correctly answer, before it can hope successfully to cope with the obstacles to its self-directed progress.

We will consider these questions in the order in which they have been stated.

First, then, what is the attitude of nature toward man?

In the first place, nature stands to man in the relation of the whole to a part. Man is an integral part of the universe, and, in order to be correctly conceived and properly studied, he must be conceived and studied as an objective phenomenon presented by nature, "*Der Mensch ist selbst Erscheinung*" (Kant, "Kritik," s. 382). Neither the animal and vegetable forms, nor the rock formations, nor the chemical elements, are