

P R E F A C E

THE object of this work is to examine in a popular manner, and to test by scientific facts and principles, the validity of that multiform and brilliant philosophy of the universe which has taken so deep hold of the science and literature of our time. The task is a somewhat ungracious one, especially in England, whose people are naturally proud of discoveries and generalisations which, originating among themselves, have taken the world by storm. It is also extremely difficult, because of the dazzling and attractive nature of the hypothesis of evolution, the dashing and plausible character of the arguments by which it is sustained, and its all-embracing scope, which enables it to account for everything that has previously been mysterious. Besides this, it is of the nature of this protean philosophy that it should itself be in process of evolution from day to day, and thus to be in so