

Evidently something is wrong with the purely scientific explanation of the acquisition of truth and reality. As Mr. Balfour declared, there is "a certain inevitable incoherence in any general scheme of thought which is built out of materials provided by natural science alone." Knowledge, which science regards as the final outcome of irrational (animal) conditions, must be pronounced essentially rational, or science itself disappears.

As the speaker claimed, in an eloquent passage :—

"Extend the boundaries of knowledge as you may ; draw how you will the picture of the universe ; reduce its infinite variety to the modes of a single space-filling ether ; retrace its history to the birth of existing atoms ; show how under the pressure of gravitation they became concentrated into nebulae, into suns, and all the host of heaven ; how at least in one small planet, they combined to form organic compounds ; how organic compounds became living things ; how living things, developing along many different lines, gave birth at last to one superior race ; how from this race arose, after many ages, a learned handful, who looked round on the world which thus blindly brought them into being, and judged it, and knew it for what it was—perform, I say, all this, and, though you may indeed have attained to science, in nowise will you have attained to a self-sufficing system of beliefs."

Thus, the more complete seems to be our explanation of what we know, the more difficult it is to discover by what ultimate criteria we claim to know it. The President concluded by confessing that the dilemma was not one for physical science to remove, for here the confines of a territory were touched where philosophy claims jurisdiction.

If the senses and instincts of the lower animals are inadequate to yield a true conception of the universe in which we find ourselves, and if these, more refined and highly developed in man, are still unreliable and misleading in the ordinary human mind at any rate, and furnish, under the name of "experience" or "common sense," grossly erroneous conclusions as to the realities of existence, the resulting paradox is strange indeed. The latest product of human evolution, the scientific intellect, in its highest and most daring flights, is compelled to rely more and more, not upon actual common experience, but upon idealistic interpretations of the universe. Such interpretations transcend the crude reports of sense-perception : but they mould the results of experience and sense-perception into harmony with ideas, preconceived and necessary and full of light and satisfying meaning.