A THEORY OF THE UNIVERSE

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"And for the heavens' wide circuit, let it speak
The Maker's high magnificence."—MILTON.

"The heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment."—ISAIAH, lxi., 6.

NEW YORK
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1868

PREFACE.

THE author of this essay is not the originator of the THEORY propounded in it. The work from which he has principally compiled this was published in London several years ago. The subjects, as here presented to the public, have no tincture of opposition to religious views, and the author humbly hopes that what he has offered for perusal may awaken in the mind of the reader an adoration for that BEING who created and sustains all things.

In this work it is our object to show, by facts and inferences, that the earth has been formed from gaseous matter, which had, in the first instance, issued from the sun, but subsequently passed from the gaseous to the liquid state, and is now passing into an entire solid form; that the earth is gradually approaching the central sun, as is also the case with all the planets of the solar system.

We assume that a gaseous fluid is continually issuing from the sun, and pervading the whole solar system; that this fluid cannot return to the sun in the gaseous state; that when it has been condensed it must of necessity be attracted toward the sun; that the materials of which comets are formed are derived from the sun; that the conglomeration of the particles is effected by mutual attraction, aided by a rolling or twisting motion in the solar gaseous fluid in its passage through the field of contracting

particles; that as a comet approaches the centre, the action of the sun causes the formation of a tail—therefore the comet cannot fall into the sun, but is drawn off by the tail; that the comet continues to condense or harden; that at each succeeding revolution the tail is less and less expanded, and the eccentric orbit is continually widened by the action of the sun upon the tail, till, after a series of revolutions, the orbit is reduced to the planetary form, and the pulpy mass to the consistence of a planet, capable of supporting vegetation and ultimately animal life; that the planet is continually hardening or contracting, and in the same proportion gradually approaching the sun; that the earth before she reaches the sun will have become a solid body—all life, both animal and vegetable, will have become extinct; and as from this solid body no tail can be formed, the earth will fall into the sun, where she will be decomposed, and again issue in the form of a gaseous fluid. And we assume, that at an early period of the earth's existence she was attended by several satellites, each of which has, in the order of their succession, been precipitated upon the earth; that the remains of these former satellites form a great portion of the present surface of the earth, and that the remaining moon is now approaching, and will finish her course with a similar catastrophe, as will also be the case with the satellites of Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune.

"There is," says De La Beche, "so much grandeur and simplicity in the idea of the condensation of gaseous matter into those spheres or spheroids which exist not only in our solar system, but also by myriads throughout the universe, that we are irresistibly left to adopt some view of this kind, more particularly as it would accord with the unity of design so evident throughout the creation. Encke's comet, that remarkable body of vapor which revolves around the sun in about three and one-

third years, proves by its existence that gaseous matter or vapor of extraordinary tenuity may float around our great luminary in given times, and in a given orbit, checked only by a resisting medium of still more extraordinary tenuity. There is, therefore, no argument *a priori* against the hypothesis that the matter composing our globe may once have existed in a gaseous state, and in that state have revolved around the sun."

A geological truth must command our assent as powerfully as that of the existence of our own minds. President Hitchcock says: "Geology is not indeed insensible to the displays of the divine character which are exhibited on the present theatre of the world. Indeed, she distinctly recognizes the act which is now passing as the most perfect of all. Yet this scene of the great drama she regards as only one of the units of a similar series of changes that have gone by, or will hereafter come; the chain stretches so far into the eternity that is past and the eternity that is to come, that the extremities are lost to mortal vision."

Those who have not devoted much time to the study of works on chemistry, geology, and astronomy, may be induced, on reading this essay, in which deductions are drawn from such works, to enlarge the field of their inquiry respecting them. And those who are already familiar with the sciences referred to, may find in this brief essay something to engage their minds awhile. So hopes

THE AUTHOR.

Cambridge, Mass., 1868.

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