

**THE METAPHYSICAL ASPECT OF  
NATURAL HISTORY, AN ADDRESS TO THE  
ROCHESTER NATURAL  
HISTORY SOCIETY, DELIVERED IN THE  
MATHEMATICAL SCHOOL, ROCHESTER,  
DECEMBER 10TH, 1884**

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The metaphysical aspect of natural history, an address to the rochester natural history society, delivered in the mathematical school, rochester, december 10th, 1884 by Stephen Monckton

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**STEPHEN MONCKTON**

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AN ADDRESS  
TO THE ROCHESTER NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY  
DELIVERED IN THE MATHEMATICAL SCHOOL, ROCHESTER  
DECEMBER 10TH, 1884

BY  
STEPHEN MONCKTON, M.D., F.R.C.P., ETC.

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## PREFACE.

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THE object of the following lecture, or address, was to present to the members of a society, more or less conversant with natural science, this consideration; that an intelligent student may commence with a sure starting point, travel onwards from fact to fact, drawing only upon the resources of scientific observation and admitted history, and arrive at the following conclusions:—

1. That there is in nature an intelligent will-force.
2. That such intelligent will is the Author and Subject of the Bible.

If ever re-written, this crude report of an extempore address would need much clearing, and some extension, still, however, avoiding a voluminousness, that might easily prove fatal.



The supreme purpose should be to provide young men, institutes and associations, with a definite skeleton, or ground work, of belief; from any point or portion of which a philosophic excursus might, of course, be made, but always without prejudice to the assured fixity of the foundation. Let it be seen and accepted finally that from London on definite rails, and by definite stations, you do arrive at York; let this certainty suffice for the more simple; while the learned, cleaving to it also, philosophise on the past, the future, and the surroundings of the line.

THE METAPHYSICAL ASPECT  
OF  
NATURAL HISTORY.

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MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

It is my privilege this evening to address a Natural History Society; one constituted to promote the study of natural objects, especially as they exhibit themselves about this town and neighbourhood. So far as may be judged from your Annual Soirées, replete alike with visitors and with interest, and from the Reports or Transactions that periodically arrive, your Association has neither existed nor laboured in vain.

The pursuit of Natural History demands observation, classification and interpretation. The first is the foundation-stone; and in very variable degrees of effectiveness does it occur. Our later lives are for the most part continuous demonstrations of the lessons we learned as children from Sandford and Merton, or Mangnall's Questions, or

elsewhere, on the subject of "Eyes and no eyes;" so true is it that many see, yet see not, while others see and fail to understand. A good observer is rarely found, and when found he should not only be made a note of, but an example.

Classification stands fitly between observation and interpretation; it requires the co-operation of each; without the former we possess ourselves of nothing to classify, and without the latter we produce a mere schedule or list of things, instead of a catalogue raisonné, resting on essential and important characteristics. It would be an instructive task for a young member of your society to work up fully the classifications that have prevailed successively in Botany and Zoology; those for instance of Linnæus, Jussieu and De Candolle, of Cuvier, Grant and Owen; grasping the views which were associated with each arrangement, and the corrections that became called for, and applied, as knowledge grew at once more accurate and more wide. Do not regard classification as if it were an auctioneer's list, an enumeration of miscellaneous lots; it should rather be a well-assorted epitome of fundamental facts.

But unquestionably the hill of difficulty in