

**A CONVERSATIONAL
LECTURE ON THE ORIGIN
OF LIFE, AND CELESTIAL
MECHANICS, PP. 4-51**

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A Conversational Lecture on the Origin of Life, and Celestial Mechanics, pp. 4-51 by O. S. St. John

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Chas. H. Johnson

A CONVERSATIONAL LECTURE
ON
THE ORIGIN OF LIFE,
AND
CELESTIAL MECHANICS,

BY
DR. O. S. ST. JOHN,

*Delivered March 11th, 1892, in the Library of his daughter,
Mrs. W. C. Andrews, 2 E. 67th St., N. Y. City.*

T. A. WRIGHT,
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1892.

P R E F A C E .

The dual quality of electricity has been a subject which has engaged my attention for many years, and it has been the purpose of the following address, which I gave at the request of friends, before a small assemblage of invited guests, at the home of my daughter, to set forth some of the latest facts and my final ideas concerning this subtle force.

My opinions have been strengthened by every discussion of the many facts connected with it, and every expression of my conviction has still further confirmed me, notwithstanding the differences of opinion entertained by electricians and their criticisms of the ideas I have endeavored to set forth.

In the year 1840 I first contended for the probability of an electrical principal as a means of explaining the phenomena of the force we term Life—whether that life is cosmical, animal or vegetable,—and I have said that electricity was the *vis vitæ* of ALL the phenomena we call life. I have addressed many letters to various scientific men asking their opinions upon this subject, and have asked if they concurred in my views, but it has been very difficult to elicit a response upon a

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subject which has been, and is, largely experimental, and a part of which still remains as an hypothesis. This hypothesis is strengthened by many known facts, and by many probabilities, and the near future will doubtless prove it to be a scientific truth capable of actual demonstration. The present popular objection—"difficult to prove"—will, I am sure, soon pass away.

In the following address I have endeavored to show the effects of dual electricity in celestial mechanics, and in the origin of life upon this planet in a long past geological age. I have endeavored to show that it is sufficient to account for many cosmical phenomena, and that it is the vital principal we call Life acting upon organic structures. Such a discussion of so important a subject must necessarily stimulate others to continue the work I have been engaged in, and to carry it forward to a point when it can stand as a solid scientific truth.

The following pages, with a few minor alterations, are a copy of the stenographer's notes taken when the address was given, and are intended, for those friends who were present, and for others whom they think would be interested in the subjects discussed.

New York, August 23d, 1892.

INTRODUCTION BY W. C. ANDREWS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

Mrs. Andrews' father, DR. ST. JOHN, who is a member of this family when we have the pleasure of his company, has somewhat original, and possibly rather unique, ideas concerning Celestial Mechanics and the Origin of Life upon the earth. These subjects have long been a matter of discussion in our family. He has kindly consented to talk to the family circle and invited guests, and hence this little gathering that I am so delighted to see before me. We will now listen to DR. ST. JOHN.

THE ORIGIN OF LIFE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

I shall have the honor to say something to you this evening on THE ORIGIN OF LIFE upon the earth, and of the dual qualities of that potent and subtle force we call ELECTRICITY. By life I mean the action between particles of matter, whether cosmic, chemical, vegetable or animal.

This is not a time for declamation ; it is a time to advance quietly, if possible, thoughts which you will have no difficulty in comprehending, and if you are to get the spirit of what I wish to advance, of course the more simple the language the better. It would be absurd for me to deal in scientific terms on such an occasion as this ; and as I have only, in fact, one or two cardinal points that I wish to impress, which convey the whole, and are the foundation of the little theory that I propose to set forth, you can easily understand that if I communicate the ideas to you that I wish to, to enable you to see the whole fully, it cannot take a great while.

It is a very difficult task to undertake at once to discuss such occult ideas as that of the *vis vita* of everything. Life is not confined to one field ; neither to animals, vegetables, nor minerals ; nor is

it alone cosmic. It ranges through the whole field of matter. It is a very subtle question, and yet, although it has never been successfully illustrated, or hinged upon, in my humble opinion, if we take the base of my argument, and the other principles which belong to that theory, and adhere closely to them, under all circumstances and all difficulties of investigation, we will, I believe, arrive at a clear and final solution of it. It is simply this :

Life is a result. It is not a specific entity. It comes of the action of physical matter upon physical matter. There is one material force that, like Newton's gravity, pervades the whole system of natural existence, and "exists wherever matter exists;" that force we call "ELECTRICITY." At this day more is known about that branch of science than was known in the days of Milton, Herschel or Newton.

The question has arisen oftentimes, among men talking upon this subject, as to whether there is any such thing as death; that life pervades everything; that when we cease to live, as ordinarily understood, and lay down in what we call death, ordinarily speaking, we say life is ended; but when you understand, or take into consideration the activity of particles of matter, everywhere, and that, the very process which has built up the body, into the shape we call life, is the very process by which everything moves forward in what we call death; and, speaking of it scientifically, the very law which builds up a planet, a mineral, a vegetable or an animal, is the law which is at work, after we