

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

last hundred years under the name of "philosophy" is far from assimilating our hard-earned treasures of experimental research. On the other hand, we have to admit, with equal regret, that most of the representatives of what is called "exact science" are content with the special care of their own narrow branches of observation and experiment, and deem superfluous the deeper study of the universal connection of the phenomena they observe—that is, philosophy. While these pure empiricists "do not see the wood for the trees," the metaphysicians, on the other hand, are satisfied with the mere picture of the wood, and trouble not about its individual trees. The idea of a "philosophy of nature," to which both those methods of research, the empirical and the speculative, naturally converge, is even yet contemptuously rejected by large numbers of representatives of both tendencies.

This unnatural and fatal opposition between science and philosophy, between the results of experience and of thought, is undoubtedly becoming more and more onerous and painful to thoughtful people. That is easily proved by the increasing spread of the immense popular literature of "natural philosophy" which has sprung up in the course of the last half-century. It is seen, too, in the welcome fact that, in spite of the mutual aversion of the scientific observer and the speculative philosopher, nevertheless eminent thinkers from both camps league themselves in a united effort to attain the solution of that highest object of inquiry which we briefly denominate the "world-riddles." The studies of these "world-riddles" which I offer in the present work cannot reasonably claim to give a perfect solution of them; they merely offer to a wide circle of readers a critical inquiry into the prob-