

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

plan, which I projected many years ago, of constructing a complete "System of Monistic Philosophy" on the basis of evolution will never be carried into effect now. My strength is no longer equal to the task, and many warnings of approaching age urge me to desist. Indeed, I am wholly a child of the nineteenth century, and with its close I draw the line under my life's work.

The vast extension of human knowledge which has taken place during the present century, owing to a happy division of labor, makes it impossible to-day to range over all its branches with equal thoroughness, and to show their essential unity and connection. Even a genius of the highest type, having an equal command of every branch of science, and largely endowed with the artistic faculty of comprehensive presentation, would be incapable of setting forth a complete view of the cosmos in the space of a moderate volume. My own command of the various branches of science is uneven and defective, so that I can attempt no more than to sketch the general plan of such a world-picture, and point out the pervading unity of its parts, however imperfect be the execution. Thus it is that this work on the world-enigma has something of the character of a sketch-book, in which studies of unequal value are associated. As the material of the book was partly written many years ago, and partly produced for the first time during the last few years, the composition is, unfortunately, uneven at times; repetitions, too, have proved unavoidable. I trust those defects will be overlooked.

In taking leave of my readers, I venture the hope that, through my sincere and conscientious work—in spite of its faults, of which I am not unconscious—