

II.

23.
Evolution
and the
power of
words.

No better instance of the control—not to say the tyranny—which language exerts over our thoughts can be found than the modern use of the word *Evolution*. In every department of literature, scientific, philosophical, or general, systematic or unsystematic, the word occurs again and again; it seems to satisfy authors as well as their readers. By it they seem to have found the right position from which to treat or comprehend almost any subject, to have gained the right attitude of contemplation.¹ In most cases, when the word is used on the title-pages of books, in introductions, reviews, or leading articles in the daily papers, it would be needless to ask the question what is really meant by the term; every-

¹ This refers mainly to English literature, where the term has been appropriated by Herbert Spencer to characterise his synthetic philosophy, and has since been generally used to signify development, physical or mental, much on the lines indicated by Schelling and Hegel in Germany at an earlier period. Latterly the term has also been largely used in French literature in a similar sense, though it had been current there already in the eighteenth century. In Germany the word has never become current in philosophical literature, and remains identified with the philosophy of Spencer, although isolated instances of its use are already to be found in the writings of Herder. On the history and the older meaning of the word, see Huxley's '*Science and Culture*' (1888). "In the former half of the eighteenth

century the term '*Evolution*' was introduced into biological writings in order to denote the mode in which some of the most eminent physiologists of that time conceived that the generation of living things took place, in opposition to the hypothesis advocated in the preceding century by Harvey, &c." (p. 274).

"*Evolution*, or development, is at present employed in biology as a general name for the history of the steps by which any living being has acquired the morphological and the physiological characters which distinguish it" (p. 282).

"The terms '*Development*,' '*Entwicklung*,' and '*Evolutio*,' are now indiscriminately used . . . by writers who would emphatically deny . . . the sense in which these words were usually employed by Bonnet or by Haller" (Ibid.)