

# SCIENCE

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FRIDAY, JUNE 13, 1902.

THE LAWS OF NATURE.\*

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We say that nature is unchanging, and so perhaps it is, in the eye of some eternal being, but not in ours, for the things that we see from day to day, appear permanent only by comparison with the duration of our own brief life, and our own little experience.

An inhabitant of the land where nature has just passed through such an awful convulsion, with a loss of life greater for so short a time than history has ever recorded, might have said in the morning that nature never changes, because it had never changed in his own little experience; but he would not have said so at that day's close. Now the experience of the entire human race is far briefer relative to nature's duration than that of one of these islanders who knew the green mountain with its fresh lakes only as a place of quiet rest, up to the moment when the gates of hell were opened under it.

Nature, then, really changes, and would apparently do so if man were not here; for it is not man's varying thoughts about nature that make her change. But there is something quite different which does change because of man, and which apparently would not change if he were not here. This is what he calls the 'laws of nature.'

MSS. intended for publication and books, etc., intended for review should be sent to the responsible editor, Professor J. McKeen Cattell, Garrison-on-Hudson, N. Y.

\* A paper read before the Philosophical Society of Washington, May 10, 1902.