

# SCIENCE

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FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE.

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## THE PROGRESS OF PHYSICS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.<sup>1</sup>

### I.

*Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:* You have honored me by requesting at my hands an account of the advances made in physics during the nineteenth century. I

<sup>1</sup> Paper read at the International Congress in St. Louis.

have endeavored, in so far as I have been able, to meet the grave responsibilities implied in your invitation; yet had I but thought of the overwhelmingly vast territory to be surveyed, I well might have hesitated to embark on so hazardous an undertaking. To mention merely the *names* of men whose efforts are linked with splendid accomplishments in the history of modern physics would far exceed the time allotted to this address. To bear solely on certain subjects, those for instance with which I am more familiar, would be to develop an unsymmetrical picture. As this is to be avoided, it will be necessary to present a straightforward compilation of all work above a certain somewhat vague and arbitrary lower limit of importance. Physics is, as a rule, making vigorous though partial progress along independent parallel lines of investigation, a discrimination between which is not possible until some cataclysm in the history of thought ushers in a new era. It will be essential to abstain from entering into either explanation or criticism and to assume that all present are familiar with the details of the subjects to be treated. I can neither popularize nor can I endeavor to entertain, except in so far as a rapid review of the glorious conquests of the century may be stimulating.

In spite of all this simplicity of aim, there is bound to be distortion. In any brief account, the men working at the beginning of the century, when investigations were few and the principles evolved necessarily fundamental, will be given greater consideration than equally able and abler