

the heavenly bodies; although those laws are more complicated and difficult to bring out in distinct formulæ in the former case than in the latter. Yet even in astronomy, it is not many years since the mutual disturbances among the heavenly bodies were supposed to be the certain precursors of ruin to the system. It was not till the famous problem of the three bodies was solved, by the use of the most refined mathematical analysis, that astronomers learned the true operation of those causes of disturbance among the heavenly bodies which exist in their mutual attractions. It was then found that, so balanced are they in their action, and so narrow their limits, that they can never affect the stability of the system; or, rather, they secure that stability. It is, indeed, true, that when changes in nature go on increasing or decreasing in magnitude indefinitely, they clearly indicate a beginning and an end to the system to which they belong. And it was on this principle that the earlier astronomers predicted that the celestial perturbations would ultimately bring the universe to a state of chaos. They found, for instance, that the moon's orbit was decreasing in size, and they inferred that, ultimately, that luminary must come to the earth. But they now know it to be mathematically certain that, after a long period, the diminution of the orbit will cease; it will begin to expand, and go on expanding, until the opposite point of oscillation is reached, when it will again diminish; and in this manner, if God's will permit, perform its eternal round. Just so it is with all the irregularities of the solar system.

"Yonder starry sphere  
Of planets, and of fixed, in all her wheels,  
Resembles nearest mazes intricate,  
Eccentric, intervolved, yet regular;  
Then most, when most irregular they seem."

And so it is with all the natural changes which we witness around us, and with all which science shows us to have taken place on the globe, excepting some which geology discloses, and perhaps one which astronomy renders probable. Let us look at some of those changes which the argument under consideration regards as inconsistent with the world's eternity.

Nearly all the changes in nature with which we are acquainted belong to three classes, the mechanical, the chemical,