

INTRODUCTION.

Kingdoms of nature. — SCIENCE, in her survey of the earth, has recognized three kingdoms of nature, — the animal, the vegetable, and the inorganic; or, naming them from the forms characteristic of each, the ANIMAL KINGDOM, the PLANT KINGDOM, and the CRYSTAL KINGDOM. An individual in either kingdom has its systematic mode of formation or growth.

The plant or animal, (1) endowed with life, (2) commences from a germ, (3) grows by means of imbibed nutriment, and (4) passes through a series of changes and gradual development to the adult state, when (5) it evolves new seeds or germs, and (6) afterward continues on to death and dissolution.

It has, hence, its cycle of growth and reproduction, and cycle follows cycle in indefinite continuance.

The crystal is (1) a lifeless object, and has a simpler history; it (2) begins in a nucleal molecule or particle; (3) it enlarges by external addition or accretion alone; and (4) there is, hence, no proper development, as the crystal is perfect, however minute; (5) it ends in simply existing, and not in reproducing; and, (6) being lifeless, there is no proper death or necessary dissolution.

Such are the individualities in the great kingdoms of nature displayed upon the earth.

But the earth also, according to Geology, has been brought to its present condition through a series of changes or progressive formations, and from a state as utterly featureless as a germ. Moreover, like any plant or animal, it has its special systems of interior and exterior structure, and of interior and exterior conditions, movements, and changes; and, although Infinite Mind has guided all events toward the great end, — a world for mind, — the earth has, under this guidance and appointed law, passed through a regular course of history or growth. Having, therefore, as a sphere, its comprehensive system of growth, it is a unit or individuality, not, indeed, in either of the three kingdoms of nature which have been mentioned, but in a wider, — a WORLD KINGDOM. Every sphere in space must have had a related system of growth, and all are, in fact, individualities in this Kingdom of Worlds.