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CURRENT NOTES ON ANTHROPOLOGY (IV.)

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF VARIATIONS IN THE HUMAN SKELETON.

It is a little odd that two papers on the same subject, with almost the same title, prepared independently at the same time, should agree in defending a new view of the significance of variations and anomalies in organic forms.

The one of these is that which I read before the American Association for the Advancement of Science in August last, published in the *American Anthropologist* for October, entitled *Variations of the Human Skeleton and their Causes*; the other was the Shattuck Lecture, delivered before the Massachusetts Medical Society by Dr. Thomas Dwight, Professor of Anatomy at Harvard University, with the title, *the Range and Significance of Variation in the Human Skeleton*.

The two papers, although drawing their material from wholly independent sources, and reasoning along different lines, reach quite the same conclusion, to wit: That variations, which in the human skeleton resemble forms in lower animals, are not to be interpreted as 'reversions' or 'atavistic retrogressions,' but that other laws should be invoked to account for them, such as nutrition, mechanical action, etc.

Dr. Dwight adds the following significant words: "The opinion is growing daily stronger among serious scholars that if man's body came from a lower form it was not by a long process of minute modifications, but by some sudden, or comparatively sudden transition."

This is the opinion which, under the name *heterogenesis*, I have defended for many years (see my *Races and Peoples*, pp. 80, 81). It has lately received strong support from some of Bateson's admirable studies in variation.