

SCIENCE

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ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR THE AD- VANCEMENT OF SCIENCE¹

AT Melbourne I spoke of the new knowledge of the properties of living things which Mendelian analysis has brought us. I indicated how these discoveries are affecting our outlook on that old problem of natural history, the origin and nature of species, and the chief conclusion I drew was the negative one, that, though we must hold to our faith in the evolution of species, there is little evidence as to how it has come about, and no clear proof that the process is continuing in any considerable degree at the present time. The thought uppermost in our minds is that knowledge of the nature of life is altogether too slender to warrant speculation on these fundamental subjects. Did we presume to offer such speculations they would have no more value than those which alchemists might have made as to the nature of the elements. But though in regard to these theoretical aspects we must confess to such deep ignorance, enough has been learned of the general course of heredity within a single species to justify many practical conclusions which can not in the main be shaken. I propose now to develop some of these conclusions in regard to our own species, man.

In my former address I mentioned the condition of certain animals and plants which are what we call "polymorphic." Their populations consist of individuals of many types, though they breed freely together with perfect fertility. In cases of

¹ Second part of the address delivered at Sydney on August 20. The first part of the address, delivered at Melbourne on August 14, was printed in the last issue of SCIENCE.