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978-1-108-00067-3 - Evolution: Its Nature, its Evidences, and its Relation  
to Religious Thought

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# EVOLUTION

ITS NATURE, ITS EVIDENCES, AND ITS  
RELATION TO RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

BY

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## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

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THE three years which have elapsed since the publication of the first edition of this work have been years of great activity of thought on many of the subjects treated therein. Some changes and additions seemed therefore imperatively called for.

For example: There has sprung up recently among the foremost writers on evolution a warm discussion on the *factors* of evolution, their number and relative importance. I have therefore added a chapter (Chap. III, Part II) on this subject—not, indeed, to discuss it fully (for this would be impossible in the limits of a chapter), but to put the mind of the reader in position to understand it and to judge for himself.

Again: Every reader of the first edition must have remarked that there are many fundamental religious questions which I have not touched at all in Part III. I had avoided these because my own mind was not yet fully clear. I regarded what I then wrote as only a little leaven in a very large lump. I was willing to wait and let it work. In the mean time it has worked in my own mind, and I hope in the minds of others. I have therefore added two chapters to this part. In one I simply carry out to their logical consequences

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the doctrine of the Divine Immanency. This brings up the questions of *First and Second Causes*; of *General and Special Providence*; of the *Natural and the Supernatural*; of *Mind vs. Mechanics in Nature*, etc., and shows the necessary changes of view which are enforced by the theory of evolution.

In the other I take up very briefly "*The Relation of Evolution to the Doctrine of the Christ.*" In the discussion of this I restrain myself strictly within the limits of the subject as stated above.

The only other important changes are in Chapter IV, Part III, "*On the Relation of Man to Nature.*" As I regard this as the most important chapter in the whole book, I have endeavored still further to enforce my view of the origin of man's spirit, and especially to make it clearer by means of several additional illustrations.

JOSEPH LE CONTE.

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## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

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THE subject of the following work may be expressed in three questions: What is evolution? Is it true? What then? Surely, there are no questions of the day more burning than these. Much has been written on each of them, addressed to different classes of minds: some to the scientific, some to the popular, and some to the religious and theological; but nothing has yet appeared which covers the whole ground and connects the different parts together. Much, very much has been written, especially on the nature and the evidences of evolution, but the literature is so voluminous, much of it so fragmentary, and most of it so technical, that even very intelligent persons have still very vague ideas on the subject. I have attempted to give (1) a very concise account of what we mean by evolution, (2) an outline of the evidences of its truth drawn from many different sources, and (3) its relation to fundamental religious beliefs. I have determined, above all, to make a book so small that it may be read through without much expense of time and patience. But the subject is so large that in order to do so it was necessary to sacrifice all but what was most essential, and to forego all redun-

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dancy (the bane of so-called popular science) even at the risk of baldness and obscurity. Nevertheless, I hope that the first and second parts will be found not only interesting to the intelligent general reader, but even profitable to the special biologist. I have tried to make these parts as untechnical as possible, but I hope not on that account the less scientific. For I am among those who think that it is not necessary to be superficial in order to be popular—that science may be adapted to the intelligent popular mind without ceasing to be science.

The third part seems to me still more important just now. There is a deep and widespread belief in the popular mind, and even to some extent in the scientific mind, that there is something exceptional in the doctrine of evolution as regards its relation to religious thought and moral conduct. Other scientific theories have required only some modifications of religious conceptions, but this utterly destroys the possibility of all religious belief by demonstrating a pure materialism. Now this, I believe, is a complete misconception. Thinking men are fast coming to see this; some, indeed, have mistaken the change for a reaction against evolution. It is a reaction not against evolution, but only against its materialistic implication. Evolution is more and more firmly established every year. The tide of conviction is one which knows no ebb. Some clear statement, in brief space, of its true relation to religious thought seems, therefore, very important at this time.

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