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Beatrice Bateson

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### **William Bateson, Naturalist**

William Bateson (1861-1926) began his academic career working on variation in animals in the light of evolutionary theory. He was inspired by the rediscovery of Gregor Mendel's work on plant hybridisation - which he translated into English - to pursue further experimental work in what he named 'genetics'. He realised that Mendel's results could help to solve difficult biological questions and controversies which others had glossed over, and to challenge assumptions underlying evolution as it was understood at the time. After two years as Professor of Biology at Cambridge he left in 1910 to become Director of the newly-founded John Innes Institute. Bateson's argumentative personality and unorthodox approach did not make him popular, and his reputation declined after his death. Was Bateson misunderstood? Was evolution misunderstood? This 1928 volume - including a substantial memoir by Bateson's wife - gives readers access to selected papers and addresses and allows them to consider him afresh.

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# William Bateson, Naturalist

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WILLIAM BATESON

*Drawn by W. Arnold Forster Dec. 1923*

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WILLIAM BATESON, F.R.S.

*Naturalist*

HIS ESSAYS & ADDRESSES

together with

A SHORT ACCOUNT

OF HIS LIFE

by

BEATRICE BATESON



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## PREFACE

In the following pages I have attempted only to sketch a rare personality. Later, a more competent hand may, I hope, undertake a full biography and account of William Bateson's work.

For help and encouragement in compiling this short Memoir I am much indebted to my friends. The early letters I found amongst miscellaneous documents stored by his mother. I am especially grateful to my sister-in-law, Anna Bateson, for her splendid collection of her brother's letters; and for other letters which I have generous permission to use, I wish to thank Sir W. P. Herringham, M.D., Sir David Prain, Dr Ostenfeld of Copenhagen, and Professors R. C. Punnett, F.R.S., G. H. Hardy, F.R.S., G. C. M. Smith, and Major C. C. Hurst; and I thank Mr W. Arnold Forster and the Trustees of the National Portrait Gallery for kind permission to reproduce the frontispiece. I am very grateful to Miss Mary Fletcher for helping me with the proof-reading.

In 1920 my husband collected ten of his "lay" papers in the hope of finding a publisher. In the rough draft of a letter intended to accompany them he wrote:

"Here are ten papers. They are all more or less lawfully begotten by Mendelism out of Common Sense, *me obstetricante*. They may be classed as:

*Digestible:*

- (1) Herbert Spencer lecture (Biological fact and the structure of Society). 1912.
- (2) Science and Nationality. 1918.
- (3) Place of Science in Education. 1917.
- (4) Address to the Salt Schools. 1915.

For the *Eupeptic* only:

- (5), (6) Australian Addresses to the British Assoc. 1914.
- (7) Methods and Scope of Genetics. Inaugural Address. 1908.
- (8) Heredity and Variation. (*Darwin and Modern Science.*) 1909.

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## PREFACE

*Indigestible:*

(9) Gamete and Zygote. 1917.

(10) Address to Zoological Section, Brit. Assoc. 1904.

No. 9 has never been printed. No. 10 is a bit technical, and anyhow must be cut down. Nevertheless if such a volume appears I should like to put it in, because of its date. My friends are finding these things out for themselves now and I have a vain desire to tell them I was there first. All, except *Science in Education*, fell dead in the hour of birth. The Australian Addresses were delivered in the first week of the war....A title is wanted. A Scotch soldier, when I was lecturing in Y.M.C.A. huts, said: 'Sir, what ye're telling us is nothing but *Scientific Calvinism*'. Sometimes I think that would serve."

This was in 1920 before the Galton lecture (Commonsense in Racial Problems), which he intended to include. Since then there are additions to both classes, *digestible* and *indigestible*. Though some of the latter may intimidate, yet all the papers included in this volume were addressed to a lay public, i.e. hearers and readers not supposed to be versed in his studies. Had the volume been accepted for publication when he offered it, he would certainly have edited the papers freely, deleted repetitions, "cut them down" and "dressed them up", treatment that he felt necessary. To do this I have not ventured.

The papers are not in chronological order but are roughly classed. For their courteous permission to reprint them I have to thank: The Council of the British Association for the Advancement of Science; the Council of the Eugenics Society; the Council of the Royal Horticultural Society; the Delegates of the Clarendon Press; the Editor of *Brain*; the Editor of *Nature*, and Messrs Macmillan and Co., Ltd.; the Editor of *The Nation and the Athenaeum*; the Editor of *The Edinburgh Review*, and Messrs Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd.; and the Editor of *Science*, New York.

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