

ORGANIC EVOLUTION

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OUTSTANDING DIFFICULTIES
AND
POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS

BY
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PREFACE

THOUGH I have never received any systematic instruction in biology, yet I have heard problems connected with organic evolution discussed ever since I can remember anything. Moreover I have had to consider certain racial questions with great care in connection with Eugenics. The difficulties which the Eugenist has to face are, however, in large measure moral and practical rather than scientific and theoretical; for no biologist known to me doubts that great changes could be made in the human race by weeding out bad stock and by making the higher types multiply more rapidly. It is folly to dream about evolving superman from man in the future; but directly we begin to speculate about how new species came to make their appearance on earth in the remote past we enter on debatable ground differing in many respects from that which must be traversed by those who are seeking to improve the inborn qualities of future generations. In the course of my studies of course I learnt that my father's theories had been subject to severe criticism, especially in recent years; but as regards the probability of making his whole work fall to pieces, these criticisms, so I judged, might be compared to the removal of a dozen bricks from a well built house. Knowing that I might be led away by prejudice in forming this opinion, I searched for some book where none of the objections to accepting Darwin's teachings were either shirked or exaggerated and where an honest attempt was made to fill the gaps created by temperate criticism; but I searched in vain. Though it was straying somewhat outside my proper domain, this led me a few years ago to begin writing and re-writing some brief notes on the points in regard to

which it seemed no longer possible implicitly to rely on the *Origin of Species* as a biological guide; and these notes I am now venturing to publish, not so much in the hope that my suggestions, in so far as they are novel, will be endorsed by experts, but rather with the desire to induce some competent biologist to write a book suitable for the general reader in which recent changes of opinion in regard to organic evolution are clearly discussed and wisely criticised—such a book as would prove, as I believe, that with a few exceptions, unimportant as regards broad final results, the views set forth in the *Origin of Species* still hold the field.

When discussing this pamphlet with a scientific friend I was advised to support my arguments by every single fact I could lay my hands on. After careful consideration I decided, however, to adopt the opposite policy and to mention nothing which was not necessary in order to illustrate the views advocated. The amateur who enters the scientific arena can do but little harm and will save himself from heavy blows if he confines his efforts to the suggestion of explanations of unsolved problems. The final decision on all questions connected with organic evolution must rest with students of natural science and genetic experimentalists. I have stated nothing which is contrary to such facts as are known to me; whilst the advocacy in great detail of theories held by me to be true would require more knowledge than I possess in order to be beneficial rather than harmful.

I am glad to take this opportunity of thanking Prof. E. W. MacBride, Mr R. A. Fisher and Mr M. A. Carr-Saunders for help so willingly given in various ways.

L. D.

August, 1921.

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