

**THE METHODS AND SCOPE
OF GENETICS: AN
INAUGURAL LECTURE
DELIVERED 23 OCTOBER 1908**

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The Methods and Scope of Genetics: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered 23 October 1908 by W. Bateson

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THE METHODS AND SCOPE
OF
GENETICS

AN INAUGURAL LECTURE DELIVERED

23 OCTOBER 1908

by

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1908

PREFATORY NOTE

THE Professorship of Biology was founded in 1908 for a period of five years partly by the generosity of an anonymous benefactor, and partly by the University of Cambridge. The object of the endowment was the promotion of inquiries into the physiology of Heredity and Variation, a study now spoken of as Genetics.

It is now recognized that the progress of such inquiries will chiefly be accomplished by the application of experimental methods, especially those which Mendel's discovery has suggested. The purpose of this inaugural lecture is to describe the outlook over this field of research in a manner intelligible to students of other parts of knowledge.

W. B.

28 October, 1908

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THE METHODS AND SCOPE OF GENETICS

THE opportunity of addressing fellow-students pursuing lines of inquiry other than his own falls seldom to a scientific man. One of these rare opportunities is offered by the constitution of the Professorship to which I have had the honour to be called. That Professorship, though bearing the comprehensive title "of Biology," is founded with the understanding that the holder shall apply himself to a particular class of physiological problems, the study of which is denoted by the term Genetics. The term is new; and though the problems are among the oldest which have vexed the human mind, the modes

by which they may be successfully attacked are also of modern invention. There is therefore a certain fitness in the employment of this occasion for the deliverance of a discourse explaining something of the aims of Genetics and of the methods by which we trust they may be reached.

You will be aware that the claims put forward in the name of Genetics are high, but I trust to be able to show you that they are not high without reason. It is the ambition of every one who in youth devotes himself to the search for natural truth, that his work may be found somewhere in the main stream of progress. So long only as he keeps something of the limitless hope with which his voyage of discovery began, will his courage and his spirit last. The moment we most dread is one in which it may appear that, after all, our effort has been spent in explor-