

DARWINISM TESTED BY LANGUAGE

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Darwinism Tested by Language by Frederic Bateman

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BY

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PREFACE.

There are two contrary intellectual tendencies, which characterize minds of different orders, and, when indulged to excess, become intellectual vices. The one is the tendency to see a distinction where there is no real difference. This is the snare of cultivated (or perhaps of over-cultivated) minds, whose constitution may never have been robust, and what vigour they once had has been refined away by speculation. To see a distinction without a difference is the vice of the trained and subtle thinker. Opposed to this is the tendency to ignore real differences; to bring rapidly under the same category two cases which have one

or more superficial features of resemblance, but which are so fundamentally unlike that they cannot with any justice be classed together. It may have often happened to us to meet with a stranger, who has some one common feature with a person of our acquaintance. In virtue of his having such a feature he reminds us for a moment of that person; but, when we take a second look, we see that the resemblance is only on the surface; the whole head and bust are of a different type altogether. But in matters intellectual, a resemblance sometimes seems so captivating (especially if our own researches have brought it to light), that we do not take the trouble to look at the plain and deep-seated differences, but treat it as a real analogy, and rest the weight of a whole theory upon it. It must be, one

would think, under the power of some hallucination of this kind, that the disciples of Evolution venture to deny the existence in man of a new and distinguishing element, over and above the nature which he has in common with the lower animals. How this distinction can be matter of doubt to any one, except under the fascination of a favourite theory which blinds the mind to every thing subversive of itself, is truly surprising. The prerogative of man is not an assertion of theology merely. It is written not more clearly on the pages of the Bible than on the common sense and experience of all the world. There seems to be a wide gulf even between vegetable life and brute matter; a wider still between the sensibility and instinct of animals and vegetable life; and a gulf perfectly impassable

between this sensibility and instinct, and the conscience, reason, and capability of civilization, which we find in man.

We need not deny or undervalue the discovery that certain higher and more advanced forms of vegetable and animal life developed themselves originally out of lower and more rudimentary forms, according to certain laws supposed to be ascertained by Mr. Darwin and others—struggle for existence, survival of the fittest, developement of resources under pressure of necessity, &c., &c.; but, carry back the series as far as you will, must not the earliest germ of vegetable and still more of animal life have been a new introduction into the system, which nothing that existed previously could have given rise to? Out of a piece of ore, out of a clod of earth, can you generate life? And

when we look at man, the differences that part him off from the lower animal creation are so trenchant and so significant, that one would think that those philosophers, who maintain that he is merely an animal, with its powers developed to the highest degree, can never have looked them full in the face, under the conviction that to do so would disturb their theory. These differences may be briefly stated as three. Man can speak; he can make improvements in his own condition, to which it is difficult to set limits; and he can worship.

The first (and perhaps the most fundamental) of these differences Dr. Bateman has exhibited very ably and pointedly in the work which is now presented to the reader. He aims at illustrating the truth in "the grand old book," that "God