

“EVOLUTION AND CHARACTER.”

*To the Editor of THE FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW.*

DEAR SIR,—Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace, in his essay on “Evolution and Character” (FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW, January, 1908, p. 11), writes, “During the last decade evidence has been accumulating to prove that, among the higher animals at all events, it is only the inborn characters—whether physical or mental—that have any part in producing the varying characters of the offspring, and at the present day it may be said that almost all the chief biological thinkers and

investigators hold this view, including Professors Ray Lankester, Lloyd-Morgan, E. B. Poulton, and Sir W. T. Thiselton-Dyer."

It is only right to cite as of equal eminence among biologists who have opposed "this view," the late G. J. Romanes and Professor S. H. Vines in England, H. F. Osborn and C. Sedgewick Minot in America, Ernst Haeckel and Oscar Hertwig in Germany, Yves Delage in France. It is most desirable that the cultured layman should not accept as a settled basis of theory a biological doctrine which, though accepted as of almost dogmatic value by a majority of "biological thinkers and investigators" in these islands, is still rejected and combated by equally brilliant workers and thinkers in Weismann's own country and elsewhere.

I believe, further, that most psychologists who accept the evolution theory still hold with Darwin that the inheritance of acquired characters plays an essential part in the evolution of the mind, and that the opinions of Archdall Reid and Lloyd-Morgan are held by few of their colleagues. No one can have a higher respect for Dr. Wallace and his work than myself, but his deserved authority makes it imperative that it should not be allowed to colour in too optimistic tints his personal view of the present state of this controversy.

I am, dear sir,

Faithfully yours,

MARCUS HARTOG.

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