

## MR. WALLACE ON ORGANIC EVOLUTION.

IN the *Fortnightly Review* for February and March, Mr. A. R. Wallace deals with the views of Bateson and Galton. His essays form a closely-reasoned and interesting statement of the case for Natural Selection as against positions of organic stability. He urges that Mr. Bateson has not been directing attention to a class of facts hitherto neglected by Darwinians. Darwin himself considered with great care the kind of variations that Bateson calls discontinuous, and came to the conclusion that they had little or no effect on the origin of species. For the most part they are sports or abnormalities, and grade into monstrosities. Mr. Wallace points out that Mr. Bateson is quite wrong in saying that discontinuous variations are similar to the characters used to define species and genera. Systematists know well that "among the higher animals, at all events, it is not so." As a matter of fact, specific characters, and, indeed, generic characters, in the vast majority of cases, both among higher and lower animals, are of a kind similar to individual and continuous variations.

Galton and Bateson have "devoted themselves too exclusively to one set of factors, while overlooking others which are both more general and more fundamental. These are the enormously rapid multiplication of all organisms during more favourable periods, and the consequent weeding out of all but the fittest in what must be on the whole stationary populations. And acting in combination with this *annual* destruction of the less fit is the *periodical* elimination under recurrent unfavourable conditions of such a large proportion of

each species as to leave only a small fraction—the very elect of the elect—to continue the race.”

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