

what extent they can be known by us, and to what extent they may include processes of derivation, it is impossible now to say. At present we must recognise in the prevailing theories on the subject merely the natural tendency of the human mind to grasp the whole mass of the unknown under some grand general hypothesis, which, though perhaps little else than a figure of speech, satisfies for the moment. We are dealing with the origin of species precisely as the alchemists did with chemistry, and as the Plutonists and Neptunists did with geology; but the hypotheses of to-day may be the parents of investigations which will become real science to-morrow. In the meantime it is safe to affirm that whatever amount of truth there may be in the several hypotheses which have engaged our attention, there is a creative force above and beyond them, and to the threshold of which we shall inevitably be brought, after all their capabilities have been exhausted by rigid investigation of facts. It is also consolatory to know that species, in so far as the Modern period, or any one past geological period may be concerned, are so fixed that for all practical purposes they may be regarded as unchanging. They are to us what the planets in their orbits are to the astronomer, and speculations as to the origin of species are merely our nebular hypotheses as to the possible origin of worlds and systems.

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