

which moreover generally indicate, according to our theory, the actual steps by which the instinct has been acquired, in as much as we suppose allied instincts to have branched off at different stages of descent from a common ancestor, and therefore to have retained, more or less unaltered, the instincts of the several lineal ancestral forms of any one species: bearing all this in mind, together with the certainty that instincts are as important to an animal as their generally correlated structures, and that in the struggle for life under changing conditions, slight modifications of instinct could hardly fail occasionally to be profitable to individuals, I can see no overwhelming difficulty on our theory. Even in the most marvellous instinct known, that of the cells of the Hive-bee, we have seen how a simple instinctive action may lead to results which fill the 'mind with astonishment.

Moreover it seems to me that the very general fact of the gradation of complexity of instincts within the limits of the same group of animals; and likewise the fact of two allied species, placed in two distant parts of the world and surrounded by wholly different conditions of life, still having very much in common in their instincts, supports our theory of descent; for they are explained by it: whereas if we look at each instinct as specially endowed, we can only say that it is so. The imperfections and mistakes of instinct on our theory cease to be surprising: indeed it would be wonderful that far more numerous and flagrant cases could not be detected, if it were not that a species which has failed to become modified and so far perfected in its instincts that it could continue struggling with the co-inhabitants of the same region, would simply add one more to the myriads which have become extinct.

It may not be logical, but to my imagination, it is far more satisfactory to look at the young cuckoo ejecting its foster-brothers, ants making slaves, the larvæ of the Ichneumidæ feeding within the live bodies of their prey, cats playing with mice, otters and cormorants with living fish, not as instincts specially given by the Creator, but as very small parts of one general law leading to the advancement of all organic bodies—Multiply, Vary, let the strongest Live and the weakest Die.