

Creator. With regard to the creative force or power, we are still more ignorant. We do not witness its operation. We know nothing, except by inference, of its laws; and whatever we may succeed in ascertaining as to these, we may be sure that in the last resort we shall, as in the case of all other natural effects, be obliged to pause at that line where what we call force resolves itself into the will of the supreme spiritual Power. The "miracle" of enactment must necessarily precede law; the "miracle" of creation, the existence of matter or force. Those who deny this have no refuge but in a bald scepticism, discreditable to a scientific mind, or in metaphysical subtilties, into which the zoologist need not enter.

We must not suppose, however, that the species is absolutely invariable. Variability, in some species to a greater extent than in others, is a law of specific existence. It is the measure of the influence of disturbing forces from without in their action on the specific unity. In some cases it is difficult to distinguish varieties from true species, and with many naturalists there has been a tendency to introduce new species on insufficient grounds. Such errors can be detected ordinarily by comparing large suites of specimens and ascertaining the gradations between them, which always occur in the case of varieties, but are absent in the case of species truly distinct. Such comparisons require much time and labour, and must be pursued with much greater diligence than heretofore, in order to settle finally the question whether the varietal perturbations always tend to return to a state of equilibrium, or whether in any case they are capable of indefinite divergence from the specific unity.

The species is the only group which nature furnishes to us ready made. It is the only group in which the individuals must be bound together by a reproductive connection. There might or might not be affinities which would enable us to group species in larger aggregates, as *genera* and *families*; and the tie which binds these together is merely our perception of greater or less resemblance, not a genetic connection. We say for example, that all the individuals of the common Crow constitute one species, and we know that if all these birds were destroyed except one pair, the species would really exist, and might be renewed in all its previous numbers. We can make the same assertion with reference to the Raven or to the Blue Jay, considered as species. But if, because of resemblances between these species, we group them in