

Nov. 18, 1880]

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[The Editor does not hold himself responsible for opinions expressed by his correspondents. Neither can he undertake to return, or to correspond with the writers of, rejected manuscripts. He usually is liable of anonymous communications.]

[The Editor requests correspondents to deposit letters as soon as possible. The possession his space is so great that it is desirable otherwise to secure the appearance even of communications containing interesting and novel facts.]

Mr Wynilla Thomson and Natural Selection.

I HAVE at least good reason to be thankful that my captivity has not prevented me from thoroughly enjoying the teachings of Mr. Darwin and Mr. Wallace, which I confess to having regarded as chiefly mastery and glancing "notes in relation." For the last twenty years.

The title of the epoch-making book which came of age last month was, however, "The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection." Mr. Darwin, as I am well aware, has not formed the mode of the origin of species as a part only of a hypothesis which is universally looked upon as a supreme effort of genius.

It seemed to me, rightly or wrongly, that the fauna of the enormous sea, forming the alpine region, and had under conditions which held out the hope that it might throw some light upon a question which appears to underlie the whole matter, and which is still unsatisfied. Are physiological species the result of the gradual modification of pre-existing species by natural selection, or by any similar process; or are they due to the action of a law as yet utterly unknown, by which the long chain of organisms falls off in a series of definite links?

I had I scarcely follow Mr. Darwin's illustration. If one were to pay his first visit to a breeder's, and he shows a flock of Leontine, never having seen or heard of a sheep before, he would see nothing but a flock of sheep, and would certainly, without justly regarding the community of the breed, be entitled to see them shown merely as a group of animals of the same species, that is to say, animals bred with one another and producing fertile progeny. He would judge as from their common resemblance, and without previous observation or information. I do not see how he could know more about them. But give him an opportunity of comparing the results of breeding throughout a long period of time, or of observing the process of breeding over half the world, which comes to much the same thing; the breeder might then have cause to call it he had not picked up the stages of the process.

The above examination of the never initiated and the careful analysis of the fauna of the deep sea seem to me fairly to represent these two methods; both of these promises to yield a rich and information is regard to the nature of evolution, but as to the mode of the origin of species both seem as yet equally silent.

I will ask you to watch me too for space for a short paper on "The Abyssal Fauna in Relation to the Origin of Species."

L. WYNILLA THOMSON