

West, George E.
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EVOLUTION AND GRAVITATION.

THE LAW OF THE ONE NOT LESS
SECURELY ESTABLISHED THAN
THAT OF THE OTHER.

To the Editor of the New-York Times:

A friend having kindly sent to me your issue of March 30, I learn from it that some "Outsider" thinks it not too late to overthrow the Spencerian philosophy. As most of his objections have been sufficiently answered by "Kappa," Dr. Eccles, and Prof. Messenger, let me confine myself to the charge that Spencer's discovery is not entitled to rank with Newton's of the law of gravitation.

Every one knew before Newton's day that when an apple became detached from its parent stem it would move toward the earth. Newton's service consisted in calling attention to the fact that the movement of the apple was but a special instance of a universal process, the law of which he formulated. Similarly every one knew before Spencer's day that animals grew, reproduced, and fought with one another, and his service consisted in calling attention to the fact that this was but a special instance of a universal law which he formulated. Newton's merit is unquestionably great, but after all, the law of gravitation is of little use to any one but the astronomer and physicist, while the law of evolution applies to every branch of science. "Outsider" may object that the argument would be valid only in case Spencer had demonstrated his law as Newton did his. Absolute proof is not possible in either case; except by inference the law of gravitation cannot be applied to the myriads of stars in the universe, and, except by inference, the law of evolution cannot be applied to such portions of the past as fail to supply us with data. All that can be said of either is that it agrees with all known facts and is contradicted by none. So far as the labor of amassing direct evidence is concerned, "Outsider" will hardly claim that Spencer stands behind Newton. The fact that contradicts the law of evolution has yet to be discovered, but there is no denying that the law of gravitation is seriously interfered with, to say the least, in the domain of electrical and chemical phenomena. Finally, the law of gravitation rests on induction alone; the law of evolution, on the contrary, has not only an equally firm foundation in facts, but is also deduced from the postulates of the indestructibility of matter and force.

If "Outsider" really wishes to overthrow the evolution philosophy with which Spencer's name is indissolubly connected, let him adduce a single fact in direct contradiction, for a single adverse fact is the Samson that can pull down the most imposing structure of theory.

GEORGE E. WEST.

COLVILLE, Washington, Wednesday, April 9, 1890.

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