

## DR ROBISON ON MR DARWIN AND TRANSMUTATION.

Dr Robison, writing to the *Guardian* of last week on this subject, says:—

“There is nothing startling in being told by Mr Darwin, for he has told us before, that “mice and whales, birds and fish”—and men—are all sprung by natural descent from a single pair of common vertebrate ancestors. Nor can it be disputed that a scientific doctrine must be judged by scientific evidence, quite apart from its moral and religious consequences. Still those consequences are in this case very grave, and the issues raised pierce to the very vitals of religion. If Mr Darwin's doctrine is true, the teaching of the clergy is fabulous; at least, so it appears to many. This being so, even a provisional reticence seems inadvisable. We want to know whether or not, on the compulsion of this new light, we are expected to surrender our old belief concerning God's work and man's place in creation. It is desirable to have a distinct utterance on the all-important question whether the Darwinian hypothesis of Transmutation be indeed science, resting on the observation of nature and fact, or only science falsely so called.

“Mr Darwin's personal merits as a great naturalist, and as master of a beautiful style, are not in dispute. As to his new doctrine of Pangenesis, that must be left to physiological experts. Whether verified or not, it can minister no support to the main speculation associated with his name. That speculation may be tested in ways which exact no minute knowledge of animal physiology or natural history, but which, nevertheless, are calculated to carry conviction to the common sense of educated mankind. I only throw out one or two hints, which may be taken for what they are worth.

“First, Mr Darwin's hypothesis demands almost illimitable time. For the Tertiary strata alone he requires three million centuries at least, thrusting, of course, the first traces of animal life twenty times deeper into the past. Well, it is worth inquiring how this squares with the profound researches of Sir William Thomson of Glasgow into the secular decrease of the sun's heat. It will be found that the Darwinian period for the possible play of the life-forces must be contracted a hundredfold.

“Again, in all the range of human observation athwart the whole surface of the earth, in all that even Mr Darwin has ever known or read of, is there the faintest trace of any truly ascending development—e.g., an animal not suckled itself acquiring the differential function of the mammalia, and giving suck to its young? What signifies an unlimited lapse of time when all experience shows that there is no tendency to the result required? Time to a herd of kangaroos, so far as approximation to man is concerned, is like time to a corpse in the grave.

“Once more, European civilisation is an extant fact. Can it be seriously upheld that were this to perish, were man to be swept from the earth, this civilisation, with all its monuments, material and intellectual, is potentially restorable from monkeys and baboons, or is slumbering in the skulls of the apes of Africa?

“Again, if we are to banish the Creator from the origin and gradation of species, why not from the origin of *Life*? And does not the supposed difficulty of *express* creations on the earth extend to the possibility of life in other parts of the universe?

“Finally, for the present, let us put the case thus. Were earth and sea depopulated, e.g., of the mammalian tribes, there is or there is not a “law of nature,” or “natural selection,” which would reproduce the suck-giving apparatus from the tribes below. But, if so, as that law cannot be supposed evasions of the superiority of its own action, we should expect instances of its power independently of any such catastrophe. Failing such instances, on the scale of the whole earth, and of universal observation, we are impelled to believe that what more laws of nature are not doing, and *could not do*, in the present, they *cannot have done* in even the remotest past.

“If this representation cannot be met, it settles the question, I do not say of the *cause* material, but of the *eyes* natural, in creation.”