

## ALLEGED DESCENT OF MAN FROM THE MONKEY.

Mr Darwin's new work on "The Descent of Man" has just appeared. It thus introduces us to those whom the learned author believes to be our very earliest ancestry:—"The most ancient progenitors in the kingdom of the Vertebrata, at which we are able to obtain an obscure glance, apparently consisted of a group of marine animals, resembling the larvæ of existing Ascidians: These animals probably gave rise to a group of fishes as lowly organised as the lancelet; and from these the Ganoids, and other fishes like the Lepidosiren, must have been developed. From such fish a very small advance would carry us on to the amphibians. We have seen that birds and reptiles were once intimately connected together; and the Monotremata now, in a slight degree, connect mammals with reptiles. But no one can at present say by what line of descent the three higher and related classes, namely, mammals, birds, and reptiles, were derived from either of the two lower vertebrate classes, namely, amphibians and fishes. In the class of mammals the steps are not difficult to conceive which led from the ancient Monotremata to the ancient Marsupials; and from these to the early progenitors of the placental mammals. We may thus ascend to the Lemuridæ; and the interval is not wide from these to the Simiæ. The Simiæ then branched off into two great stems, the New World and the Old World monkeys; and from the latter, at a remote period, man, the wonder and the glory of the universe, proceeded. Thus we have given to man a pedigree of prodigious length, but not, it may be said, of noble quality. The world, it has often been remarked, appears as if it had long been preparing for the advent of man; and this, in one sense, is strictly true, for he owes his birth to a long line of progenitors. If any single link in this chain had never existed, man would not have been exactly what he now is. Unless we wilfully close our eyes, we may, with our present knowledge, approximately recognise our parentage; nor need we feel ashamed of it." Mr Darwin ends his work with these words:—"The main conclusion arrived at in this work, namely, that man is descended from lowly-organised form, will, I regret to think, be highly distasteful to many persons. . . . For my own part, I would as soon be descended from that heroic little monkey who braved his enemy in order to save the life of his keeper, or from that old baboon who, descending from the mountains, carried away in triumph his young comrade from a crowd of astonished dogs—as from a savage who delights to torture his enemies, offers up bloody sacrifices, practices infanticide without remorse, treats his wives like slaves, knows no decency, and is haunted by the grossest superstitions."