

THE PICCADILLY PAPERS.

MR. DARWIN ON THE ORIGIN OF MAN.

WITHOUT going so far as to assert that every man and woman who, in the least degree, possesses a scientific or literary turn of mind, has, morning after morning, been anxiously inquiring about the appearance of Mr. Darwin's forthcoming great work on Man, there is, nevertheless, no doubt that it has been looked for with the keenest interest, and that its publication forms a kind of scientific era. Mr. Darwin has taken a strong personal hold on the imagination of scientific people. The fluctuations in his health have been anxiously watched. The noble head and bust by Woolner; the eyes so sunk beneath the shaggy brows, as in the received head of Socrates, formed one of the most prominent and interesting objects at a recent Academy exhibition. The knowledge that on every side he had sent out circulars to scientific men for the sake of collecting facts to support his theory had reached the outer world. Especially men believed that all his previous works had been avenues leading up to this present one, and that this present one would probably establish upon an irrefragable basis a simple triumphant solution of the problem of human existence. The work is now before us, and perhaps a little disappointing. It is not so large, perhaps not so fraught with valuable facts and deductions, as the 'Variations of Animals and Plants under Domestication.' The work is of course crowded with facts, some of which are rather queer, and all of them very interesting. In one point of view we are constantly reminded of the Naturalist's Voyage in the *Beagle*, and in

another of the essay on the 'Origin of Species.' We may add that the way in which Mr. Darwin has frankly recalled some of his earlier conclusions is very interesting and suggestive. The doctrine of Natural Selection becomes subordinated to the doctrine of Sexual Selection, which will probably become a favourite subject of speculation. Very few of the facts are really new in substance or in inference, and the interest is chiefly in the way in which Mr. Darwin marshals and manipulates his legions of facts, in order to insure the victory of his hypothesis. It is now brought before the world in all its naked force; it is somewhat repulsive, somewhat dishonouring to any notion of the dignity of human nature. It has long been clearly foreseen to what point Mr. Darwin's views were tending, and that, having brought all lower animal forms into unity, he would logically bring the origin and constitution of man within the same limits. There has for some time been a powerful scientific school which has been a Propaganda for his opinions. We must of course yield to him if the evidence is really overwhelming, but we imagine that most scientific men will be very slow to concede all the inordinate demands which Mr. Darwin and his school make upon their tolerance.

The general theory of the work is thus broadly stated (ii. 389): 'We thus *learn* (query) that man is descended from a hairy quadruped, furnished with a tail and pointed ears, probably arboreal in its habits and an inhabitant of the Old World. This creature,

if its whole structure had been examined by a naturalist, would have been classed amongst the quadrumana, as surely as would the common, and still more ancient progenitor of the Old and New World monkeys. The quadrumana and all the higher mammals are probably derived from an ancient marsupial animal, and this through a long line of diversified forms, either from some reptile-like or some amphibian-like creatures, and this again from some fish-like animal. In the dim obscurity of the past we can see that the early progenitor of all the vertebratæ must have been an aquatic animal, provided with branchiæ, with the two sexes united in the same individual, and with the most important organs of the body (such as the brain and heart) imperfectly developed.' He thinks that this queer kind of animal must have resembled the larvæ of the marine Ascidiæ. Here then, in the infinitely remote past, is the honoured ancestor of all living forms. He altogether denies that man is a separate order in the universe. Man has his relations in all lower life, and sums up in himself all the past forms of his progressive development. Mr. Darwin conceives that in the monkey he has found the missing link which unites man through all varieties to the first vertebrates: 'There can be hardly a doubt that man is an offshoot from the old world Simian stem; and that under a genealogical point of view, he must be classed with the Catarhine division.'

There is, however, an immense deal to prove or to make highly probable before Mr. Darwin can win our acceptance of his opinions. He seems himself at times to be conscious that he is treading upon very thin ice, on which he cannot rely for durable support. No one

will venture to criticise his multitudinous facts, honestly and laboriously brought together. But even unscientific men are capable of giving an opinion of the argumentative value of his reasonings. To prove his theory, he must not only prove the argument from structure, but show how, in speech, mind, conscience, progressive improvement, and so on, man and the brutes can be drawn within parallel lines. In his structural argument he holds that the os coccyx represents the rudimentary form of the tail of animals, and most positively asserts that the time will come when it will be thought astonishing that man had a creation distinct from other mammals. But when he comes to language of articulately-speaking men he can only say, that it 'does not offer any insuperable objections to the belief that man has been developed from some lower form.' This, however, is mere assertion, and Mr. Darwin has not proved that the difficulty is superable. He here seems to evade the most difficult of all the obstructions to the progress of his argument. Then, coming to the question of progressive improvement, Mr. Darwin has gained a step for his friends, by showing, that a monkey has been known to crack a walnut-like fruit and to use a stick like a lever. This is highly honourable to their sagacity, but does not warrant the large conclusions sought to be drawn from such premisses. Mr. Darwin argues that there is no distinction in essence or kind, merely in degree, between the mental powers of man and the higher mammals. But there is an impassable gulf between the 'instinct, probably passing into reason, of the animals, and the abstractions of general ideas of a thoughtful man. Sydney Smith somewhere

says, that when he has been amused and even alarmed by the human-like sagacity of animals, a few pages of Milton or a few chapters of Locke sufficed to dispose of the question.

Mr. Darwin shows that he is something of a moralist as well as a very prince of naturalists. His thesis is, that cats and dogs have a conscience or moral sense just as Christians have. This brings him into relation with our modern ethical theorists, such as Mr. Bain, Mr. Mill, and Mr. Herbert Spencer. Mr. Darwin hardly pins his faith on any of these modern lights. Going beyond Mr. Bain, who defines conscience as the opinion of the majority, beyond Mr. Herbert Spencer, who considers the moral faculties as the organised experiences of utility, he considers that the moral sense is rooted in the elementary functions of life, identical with the social principles, resting on an elementary sympathy common to all animals. But in this moral discussion the thought emerges: What of the soul—what of the hopes and fears and prayers and aspirations of humanity? Soul is as important as sex, and as evident. Very curious talk on the conscience of dogs, the affection of birds, the love of music by seals, is altogether different in kind to those spiritual facts which would belong to the domain of morals as defined by Mr. Darwin. From his point of view psychology would be a part of mental science.

The work is, of course, a perfect magazine of naturalist's knowledge. What we read of the courtship of birds and brutes is like a sort of delicate satire on modern society. Thus we hear of their imprudent marriages and their romantic attachments. 'Birds display their various charms with

the utmost skill. They have frequent opportunities for admiring themselves and of studying how to display their beauty.' They show off their feathers to the best advantage. The contests of some birds are all a sham, performed to show themselves to the greatest advantage before the admiring females who assemble around. Mr. Darwin considers that the lady birds are at times selfish and pert. A male silver pheasant 'had his ornamental plumage spoiled. He was then immediately superseded by a rival.' 'With the capercaillie, the females flit around the male whilst he is parading at one of the places of assemblage, and solicit his attention.' How very bird-like is the human family! Here is a curious point—one of many curious points. Most of our readers will remember Mr. Hawthorne's story of 'Transformation.' Donatello resembled the Faun of Praxiteles, and his ears terminated in little peaks like those of some species of animals. Mr. Darwin gives us something analogous. Mr. Woolner, the sculptor, told him that he had noticed a certain peculiarity in the ears of some men and women. This peculiarity consists in a little blunt point, projecting from the inwardly folding margin or helix. Mr. Darwin holds that this is a vestige of formerly pointing ears like those of the monkey, occasionally reappearing in man.

The argument is threefold—physical, mental, moral—by which all the distinct families of animal life are brought into relationship. The immense quantity of facts, the dialectic skill in handling them, the keenness of the arguments, give a great intellectual value to the work. But we shall not be surprised if most people consider that after all it is an atrocious libel on the human race. Mr. Dar-

win's theories are fraught with wide-reaching consequences. We do not here enter on the general subject of Evolution, which at this time he seems to take pretty well for granted. Neither do we enter on the views of Sexual Selection, where he has seen occasion to desert the vernacular for the Latin. It is with much diffidence that those who have studied a great subject slightly must dissent from one who has studied it deeply; but on all the main theses of Mr. Darwin we must return our private verdict of *Not proven*.

THE OVERWORKED BRAIN.

In too big a book, written in too big a style, the biographer of Hugh Miller has lately told the tragic story of the suicide of his hero. The poor man died of an over-wrought brain. He became highly nervous, after the fashion of a nervous, frightened child. He was afraid of robbers; he was afraid of witches. He kept swords and revolvers with him, in case burglars should try to rob his museum. He thought that he had been driven through fifty miles on the night-wind by a hag. He felt a pain, as of a dagger piercing through his brain. One night he shot himself through the chest. It is a sad story that is now revived. We believe that stories equally as sad, or more so, could be told of various eminent men of the present day. They are as much self-slain by overwork as if, like Hugh Miller, they had shot themselves. That delicate, subtle brain, that loves hard work and plenty of it, and which, braced with work, will energise all the vital functions, desires rest and change, and will not work without resentment beyond a certain point. You may spur it, and it will obey the spur; overwork it and it will yield all the

work it can; but when it has exerted all its energies to the utmost it can do no more. It will fail you, will cease and determine. There are men whose powers of work have seemed prodigious, gluttons of work, crowding their lives with head-work, and who surely and prematurely exhaust the soil; and when some slight indisposition arises, which a healthy constitution would throw off at once, succumb, and flicker out like a spark. That wonderful double brain, the grey matter of many folds, which causes all feeling and is yet utterly insensitive, which you can cut, cauterise, electrify, and it feels no pain, and of which man can take parts away and it will yet work unimpaired, is, after all, not mind, but the servant of mind. You can alter the very shape of brain by a resolute course of action. Perhaps most women, after marriage, show a marked change in the configuration of brain. We consent to be governed by the brain; but the will of our secret individuality is something higher and something different. The spade is not the workman; the organ is not the musician. As Mr. Hinton thoughtfully says, 'The brain is not constructed for a world that demands incessant work and worry; it rejects that view of it and of our life with an emphatic negative. The world for which it was designed was one on which thought might rest in peace, and exertion be restrained within limits. It was a world about which we need not fret ourselves, and our interests in which we might hold lightly.' Yes, our brain was never meant to be whipped and spurred. It was designed to combine rest and work; to rest, not indolently, to work, but not rapaciously, and so fulfil its functions in a healthful state. It is a remarkable fact that people who only read novels and newspapers,