NATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL RAPACITY VINDICATED BY THE LAW OF NATURE.

(From a Correspondent.)

Louis Napoleon has raised Savoy, and Sandy Fincher has sold 60 yards of thread for 10*l*. Every just potentate is in a furor at the former, and all innocuous clergymen are scandalized at the latter. The Times has thundered from its 42nd, and with no "bated breath" has the *Guardian* denounced the offenders. For our own part, however, we (pardon the editorial plural) have latterly been sitting at the feet of a teacher whose lessons on an obscure question in Natural History cast a new light upon this department of Morals so called.

Charles Darwin, a master of arts, a fellow of several distinguished societies, and the author of certain well-known works, is no mere tyro in science like the writer of the "Vestiges," but essentially the greatest of extant naturalists. Now, in a most profound treatise on the origin of species, published a few months ago, he has proved to the satisfaction of all believers, that "animals have descended from at most only four or five progenitors, and plants from an equal or lesser number;" nay, he would "infer from analogy that probably all the organic beings (vegetable and animal) which have ever lived on this earth have descended from some one primordial form, into which life was first breathed." He shows clearly in regard to the earth's inhabitants, as the geologists have shown in regard to the earth itself, that, through tracts of time, what may be called infinite, all have been proceeding with indiscernible slowness from lower to higher development from the simplest forms into higher and more complex ones up to their present century-then; continually struggling to throw off imperfect portions of form, the improving functions and faculties have either continued or kept down in numbers, the one supporting more; that these inherited and fast-acting changes are still going on; and that all the transformations have been effected by means entirely natural, apart from the primary germ, under the government of immutable laws. The great transmutation from lower to higher species is thanked to pressed mainly by means of what is termed "natural selection." This principle, our author illustrates by a well-known practice among gardeners. They constantly note the slightest improvement in any plants under cultivation; they then take the seed of this plant and sow it more. Then they go on continually improving the race; and when a race is once pretty well established, they reserve the best, and sell up "the rogues," as they call the plants that fall short of the standard. On the same principle our domestic animals are improved. So does Nature year on year "the rogues" in her wide domain. It is to be particularly observed that "improvement" means increase of strength, which enables certain plants or animals to fight more successfully the battle of life, to displace from the two natural ground cover which had previously kept them at bay, and thus to justify their title to more plots of Nature's base table. It is singular that Darwin does not expressly apply his reasonings to our species. We see, however, most certainly included in his phrase "all animals." Well, then, the true doctrine is this, by the law of nature, all successful organs live by *deprivation*, and depend on ruthless slaughter; and that it is the manifest purpose of this law to secure within the vegetable and animal kingdoms a continuous advance from lower to higher grades of life.

Now, we ask the Times and the Guardian, who dare so heavily with attendants against their lofty moral standard, just to consider what sort of a creature man really is. He is not, as they in their unity suppose, a fallen demi-god, but a promoted emblem or bit of jelly with a mouth. There is strong ground for concluding that, as a later product, he must have figured as a part of red dirt, for we find in him some of the most remarkable instincts and habits of that singular creature. Prey note them. There is a species of red ant which wages war with a black species, seizes the infant stingless larvæ them off, and converts them into slaves who do all the work of the colony. F. Smith gives a most interesting account of this "possible institution." And, as to their affections, Kirby and Spence tell us that, on one occasion of danger, when a whole community was engaged in carrying off the young, "no observer having cut an ant in two, the poor mutilated animal, with that halt of the body to which the head remained attached, exerted previously to expiring to carry off one pupa into the interior of the nest." It would seem that we derive from the species of insect our industrial industry, our social organization, our obedience to the young and helpless, our military qualities, and our system of slavery. We doubt we would be content

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were every man, like Ishmael, at war with every man, and the hand of all against all, in pursuit of [illegible] possessions, a couple of entirely new faculties, [illegible] of moral discernment and universal invention. Man has thus risen to an Imperial position; but it is one of dark as well as bright hues. He is ranked up by hostile elements. In our contentment of his creation, are found—justice, love, and piety; in the opposite one—injustice, hatred, and the spirit of idolatry. The result is a strange exhibition of uncertain, variable, and contradictory actions, even by the very same individual. We once knew a big fellow, a sound christ and a drunkard, the terror of his neighbourhood for [illegible] and blasphemy. But a sermon awoke his higher and better nature. He then became, to the end of his days, a fiery and sincere fighter against wickedness. At the same time his instinct of thrift came to life, and he made money by purchasing wool, purloined by headless thieves. Whatever our great contemporary may think it appears to us a marvellous thing that a creature, which has grown up unconsciously in the ditch she lair, and she hound should have risen so high as to hide his original meanness in an intellectual halo, to say grace over the proceeds of "picking and stealing," and sing a "Te Deum" for the success of a sanguinary marauding adventurer.

The great doctrine stated at the end of the last paragraph but one will be at once illustrated and confirmed in regard to man, if we trace the development of the rapacious dispositions forth in the individual and the community.

Everbody has observed that the infant seizes and thrusts into its mouth whatever comes in its way, kicking and screaming with all its little might if you try to undo its obstinate grasp. Just the same is it with infant societies, ever fighting to dispossess one another of lands and flocks. Those who have been thus distinguished above others have always proved the most successful of men and of nations.

It is very early that the moral phenomena begin to appear. As the sensibility and the fights go on, there arises in the child's mind the moral notion of a right to the doll is has made, the flower it has plucked, and the sweet which has been given to it, with the perception (at least after some extra pommelling) of a like right in others, followed by a feeling of uneasiness on violating such right. Precisely the same processes take place in the boyhood of [illegible]. And, henceforth, in addition to fightings without for the means of subsistence, men are subjected to subtler moral conflicts within. They are now tormenting

> "The good old rule, the simple plan,
> That they shall take who have the power,
> And they shall keep who can."

It would seem as if Nature had committed a blunder in making man cognizant of right and wrong, and conscious of responsibility for his actions, inasmuch as these endowments imply liberty of choice, and must entail much hesitation and frequent failure in that predatory work which is imposed upon him; snapping indeed the chain of connection, and leaving the ordained result a mere contingency. But it is not so. That result remains certain. These moral perceptions and feelings are as necessary to our surprogress in the appointed path as is the drag to that of the stage-coach. Then, are our moral sentiments and our sense of freedom mere shams? In essence they are; but we are framed to believe them real, and, as checks, they do real work. Such is the satisfactory doctrine of Fate. Further, this sort of government in the individual is extended to society. And without these two kinds of restraint freebooting would proceed so rapidly as to leave none to be robbed, no "rogues" for the strong to batten upon.

In resuming our sketch we must be content with few instances. These miserable "rogues," the Canaanites, were marvellously plucked up by the valiant Jews. The latter, however, degenerated (as planes and lower brutes sometimes do), and were uprooted out of their land by the all-conquering Romans. When these also lost their manhood, the former and hardier Gothic tribes took their place, and founded the present strong and war-loving states of Western Europe. If ever these should degenerate into effeminate Peace Societies they will become food for the Russians. There is, perhaps, no danger of the Savoy war of life ceasing among nations any more than among individuals. The venerated Malthus has shown that the natural increase of our species so immensely outstrips the increase of food that, long before the present period, there would not have been standing room for us, nor space for food to grow upon, had not war and want and famine, with their resulting diseases, kept down our numbers. The thing to be desired is that we English should not be victims but victors in the daily struggle. The

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as very significant by that world which has been looking on with breathless interest. Our offensive has been long, and still are, "as busy as the devil in a gale" among the wretched tribes that have escaped short in the race of development, viz. the red Indians of America and the savages of New South Wales.

Kings have always tried hard to put down robbery among their subjects, and to make it a game between themselves. They have usually failed, however, though they have succeeded in establishing a most just and unscientific though proximately useful distinction, between respectable robbers and plundered robbers.

There need to be much in the life of the latter to redeem it from the odium from cast upon it. Down to the days of our grandfathers, the highwayman was always a rollicking, daring, stich a romantic, and, towards the fair, a gallant fellow, who fascinated the gentlest dames while they smiled their heads to creep on their bosses. Who among them, even nowadays, does not admire Dick Turpin? Indeed the profession was sometimes temporarily assumed by needy gentlemen, and even heirs apparent, whose purses had been hopelessly emptied by dissipation.

"Prince Henry: Whereabout shall we take a purse to-morrow, Jack?

Falstaff: Where thou will, lad. I'll make one; an' I do not call me villain, and bafile me.

Prince Henry: I see a good amendment of life in thee; from praying to purse-taking. To-morrow morning at four o'clock, early, at Gadshill."

There is ground for believing that the kind rule imposed by the above distinction is declined to pass away. Accordingly to the Revolution of Time, the more [illegible] feelings belong to a low state of civilization, and do not gradually disappear before the advancing means. Religious and moral sentiments hardly ever did exist, nothing will be left in the end but the calm, positive and the intellect. But even the latter will never, we believe, destroy the [illegible] of the strong will check up the weak with the approval of all men, who will then be sufficiently enlightened to comprehend the utility of the great principle of "selection." And, verily, we are rising to this high appreciation far more rapidly than some of us thought so lately as Christmas! The great European murderer has one hand on Savoy and another on Nice; and, when these pass "rogues" cast an imploring look towards the once just and generous England, the presiding spirit of our policy coolly asks, "What interest can we have in interfering?"

Honorable Englishmen have not yet so far degraded as openly to avow this principle in private affairs; but increasing numbers have entered the phase of hypocrisy; and this is an advance. While multiplying their depredations they make a larger use of the old plain phraseology. They seem to feel a greater need thereof, as a blind to others and a veil even to themselves. They find a comfort in it. But the final stage is immediately before them. Secret misgivings and regrets will gradually cease their torments; and then hypocrisy, being no longer needed, will fall into disuse. The law—moral as well as criminal—will have served its office of schoolmaster, bringing us into the perfect liberty of refined selfishness. Liberty for transcending that which we lost in infancy. The Millennium of atheism will have dawned upon the world.

Meanwhile, this transition state presents to the curious observer some amusing exhibitions. For instance, when any smart trader grows rich, he deputes the direct oversight of business theft to his principal servants, who must see to it that their subordinates are doing as such work. He becomes an exemplary Churchman or dissenter—an active patron or a zealous deacon. Then he feels that it is suitable to his position to sit on the magisterial bench, adjudging to six weekstill the burglars who disgrace his own practice by snatching against the statutes. He is appointed to his hospitalities; and to published lists of donations and subscriptions his name is given for round telling sums. In this he exercises his privilege of steering between the injunction "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth," and that other one "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works." It will be interesting to inspect a schedule showing how his year's gains are acquired and how disposed of.

SCHEDULE.

	£	s.	d.
Profits [illegible]			11500
1. [illegible]			
2. [illegible]			
[illegible]			
[illegible]			
[illegible]			
[illegible]			
[illegible]			
Transfer to capital account	12,000	0	0
Outlay for [illegible]	1000	0	0
Annuity to [illegible]	500	0	0
Annuity to [illegible]	500	0	0
Unexpended balance in your [illegible]		0	0
			11500
people dying of want [illegible]			0

Our literature possesses a "Natural History of Enthusiasm," by Isaac Taylor; a "Natural History of Nonsense," by one Cooke Taylor; a "Natural History of Insanity," by one Sir Alexander Morrison, Dr. Noble; as well as other Natural histories, too numerous to mention; but we have no natural History of Plunder. To write the supply of this deficiency one brief sketch may, perhaps, form a small contribution.

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