

"MAN AND THE GORILLA."

Such was the title of the lecture which Mr. John Morley, B.A., F.S.A., of London, was announced to deliver in the Oddfellows' Hall, Heaton-street, on Thursday night last, in connection with the Blackburn Literary, Scientific, and Mechanics' Institution. But at the opening of his lecture he explained that he did not mean to lecture on the Gorilla; the subject of his lecture was the relation in which man stood to the brute, and he had selected the Gorilla as the most popular type of the brute at the time, but with no intention of giving a lecture on that wonderful animal. He then proceeded to explain that he wished to lay before his audience an elementary view of the Darwinian theory, known as the "development theory," and this he did in a manner which interested and instructed the large audience which had assembled to hear about "Man and the Gorilla." After a few remarks in defence of such studies as that to which he had to invite their attention, he remarked that man was conscious he stood midway between heaven and earth, with beings above him of brighter form and loftier intelligence, and beings beneath him of various mould, mental and physical, but all inferior to him. Man felt a sympathy with the whole creation, and it was an interesting inquiry to ascertain in what relation he stood to the world around him. Mr. Darwin's book "On the origin of species" was an attempt to throw some light on this interesting inquiry. But in order to understand it, he must first explain the meaning of *Genus* and *Species*. A *Genus* was "a classificatory group formed by all the creatures which possess certain minor peculiarities of anatomical structure." The dog was found to possess certain characteristics about its feet, its claws and its teeth, in which it differed from a cat; and the naturalist classed along with the dog the fox, jackal, wolf, and other animals which resembled it in these particulars, and they were known as the genus *Canis*. In like manner the cat, the lion, tiger, leopard, &c., were classified and known as belonging to the genus *felis*. A *species* was a classification based on minor distinctions. All dogs belong to the same *genus*, but not to the same *species*. The bulldog was one species, the greyhound another, the terrier another. M. Darwin's theory is an attempt to explain the origin of species, "how came all these distinctions?" The popular theory was that each species was the result of a distinct and particular creative act on the part of the Maker of the universe; "that the delicate spot on the wings of the butterfly, the rich marks of the leopard, the length of horn in a certain kind of cattle, are each and all due to an immediate and especial act of the Divine will." "Mr. Darwin refuses to believe in the origin of species by distinct creative acts;" his theory he designates "the origin of species by means of natural selection, or the preservation of favoured race in the struggle for life." This definition of the Darwin theory the lecturer proceeded to explain by pointing out in the first place that nature presented from time to time variations—the offspring of two white sheep was occasionally a black one. In the next place there was in nature a constant struggle for existence—animals struggling with one another for food, and struggling also, against the weather and climate. These two points were embraced in the third—natural selection; which meant that nature selected that variation, when it occurred, which would be of some service to the animal in the great struggle for food which was constantly going on, and carefully preserved it. With the view of shewing that there was nothing incredible, or improbable in the theory which traced to these natural variations the differences which were found to exist in the same genus, but which placed animals in the rank of distinct species, he referred to the breeding of cattle, by which almost any modification of their shape and properties could be produced. The change between one individual animal and another might be so slight as to be hardly perceptible, but Mr. Darwin says "it is the steady accumulation of such differences, when beneficial to the individual, that gives rise to all the more important modifications of structure by which the innumerable beings on the face of the earth are enabled to struggle with each other, and the best adapted survive." He concluded by a reference to the abuse which had been heaped on Mr. Darwin, on the ground that according to his theory man was merely an improved edition of the ape; and without entering

into the question of how far even that was true, he confessed that he did not see much cause for humiliation in the idea. The ape was not so very far removed from the ancestry they were not ashamed to own; and man possessed a superiority of which he could not be deprived suppose he were brought to acknowledge the ape to be his ancestor.

The lecture was listened to with deep attention and frequently applauded, and at the close a hearty vote of thanks was passed to the lecturer, and to Alderman Hoole, who presided.
