

The Origin of Species.

Of late years men of science and others have wrangled much over Mr. Darwin's work on "The Origin of Species." In most of the English and American reviews his treatise has been severely criticised, as having an infidel tendency; not on account of the facts therein given, but the conclusion of the author.—He appears to have been very generally misunderstood, judging from a most interesting little work just issued by D. Appleton & Co., this city, being the publication of six lectures delivered to workingmen, by Thomas H. Huxley, F. R. S., Professor of Natural History in the School of Mines, London. Broadly stated, the subject of these lectures consists of an inquiry into the origin of species and a discussion on the causes of the phenomena in organic nature.

The meaning of organic nature is something that grows, has life and reproductive powers. It is exemplified in the seed of a plant in contradistinction to a grain of sand. Organic nature embraces the vegetable and animal kingdom, as entirely distinct in functions from rocks, fluids, and what chemists call "elementary matter." Animals and plants are divided by naturalists into groups, and these into kingdoms, sub-kingdoms, provinces, classes, orders, families, genera and species. It was once very generally believed (and many persons entertain such views still) that there was such a thing as spontaneous generation—that is, mere elementary matter, such as pure water or mineral dust exposed in favorable positions, to light and heat, would bring forth vegetation and animalcula spontaneously. Hence it has been asserted that, if there is such phenomena as the spontaneous generation of life, according to the "development theory" of some naturalists and the views of Mr. Darwin on the origin of species, man may have been developed from the lowest forms of spontaneous generation. If such views were founded on facts in natural history, pantheism, viz: that "God is nature and nature is God," would be supported upon a very firm foundation.

Mr. Darwin does not discuss the question of spontaneous generation at all, and science completely silences pantheism. Every organism commences existence in an egg-cell or seed, and each seed is believed to have been specially created, with special functions and powers of reproduction, as stated in the Scriptures. M. Pasteur, a distinguished French chemist, has lately made a great number of carefully conducted experiments to test the theory of spontaneous generation. The result of his labors seem to be conclusive against the theory; no such property as spontaneous creation belongs to elementary matter acted upon by the forces of nature. An old and bitterly disputed question thus appears now to be settled scientifically.

Another question of much dispute seems to be settled by Mr. Darwin; thus the Caucasian, the Malay, and the Negro, according to his facts, are varieties of species and may all have descended from a single pair, as set forth in the Scriptures. On the other hand, Prof. Agassiz and others believe that they have descended from different original pairs, and thus they would really be different orders. In 1793, a new variety of sheep was produced by Seth Wright of Massachusetts. He had a flock, the members of which were specially gifted with the power of jumping fences, and thus tormenting the proprietor and his neighbors. In one accidental buck lamb, which had very short bowed legs, the acute mind of Seth Wright saw a remedy for his troublesome fence-jumpers, and by careful breeding he at last obtained an entire flock of long-bodied short-legged sheep, called the "otter breed," from this single buck, which could not jump a foot-rail. Various species of hogs, dogs and pigeons have been in the same manner. In structure they are different from others of the same genus, but psychologically they are identical. There is a well defined limit to organic varieties in animals. Two entirely different races may mix; but their progeny, as in the case of mules, become sterile. Professor Huxley states that there is no reliable exception to this law.

The rapid powers of production in plants from a single specimen, is set forth by Prof. Huxley as follows:— "Suppose the habitable part of the globe to be 51,000,000 square miles, and the climate and soil equal over that space, it may be entirely covered in nine years from the product of a single plant bearing fifty seeds, each plant requiring one foot of soil for support." It is hardly conceivable that the whole stated available surface of the earth could be stocked in about nine years from a single plant, yet the figures demonstrate such a possibility. — *Scientific American*.