to diminish their hairy covering when exposed to hot climates; on the other hand monkeys live in hot climates and prefer retaining their hair. When pressed with the argument that the supposed progenitors of Man, being probably very helpless and defenceless, would have been exposed to great risks, Mr. Darwin suggests that they "would have been protected from any special risk" "if they had inhabited some warm continent or large island." On the other hand, "the fact" of our progenitors belonging to the Catarhine stock of monkeys "clearly shows that they inhabited the old world; but not Australia, nor any oceanic island, as we may infer from the laws of geographical distribution." And again we read, in considering another difficulty, that Man does not appear to have aboriginally inhabited any oceanic island. We are as much puzzled about the original domain of this primeval monkey as Trim was about the maritime advantages of Bohemia. After all has been said and imagined, "an unexplained residuum of change, *perhaps a large one*, must be left to the assumed uniform action of those unknown agencies which occasionally induce strongly marked and abrupt deviations of structure in our domestic productions." Is this scientific? and is this the kind of evidence on which a professed man of science is justified in asserting that "Man is certainly descended from some ape-like creature?"

If, in short, in its general application, Mr. Darwin's hypothesis is utterly unsupported by observed facts, it is still more destitute of such support in its application to Man. Mr. Darwin himself admits two things—first that the difference is immense between the highest monkey and the lowest savage; and, secondly, that "this great break in the organic chain cannot be bridged over by any extinct or living species," or, as he again expresses it, that "the connecting links between Man and some lower form have not hitherto been discovered." No monkey has been discovered which is even comparable with Man; no race of savages, however degraded, can be regarded as on a level with monkeys. If Mr. Darwin's hypothesis were true, it is almost incredible that no evidence should be producible of the existence of apelike creatures closely allied to Man, and showing a tendency to further development. On the other hand, we have the undoubted and recorded experience of at least four thousand years of history, during which many races of Man have been subjected to influences the most diversified and the most favourable to the further development of their faculties. After the lapse of that time, Man remains as distinctly Man as he was before, just as all the animals with which he is acquainted have preserved their specific characteristics. It is more than questionable whether his faculties have in any degree improved. He has accumulated knowledge, he has increased the instruments of his thought and action, and his power has thus been augmented. But there is some reason to think, with Plato, that these numerous arts have actually debilitated his natural vigour of body and mind. At all events, it is in glaring contrast with Mr. Darwin's theory of continuous development to observe that the earliest known examples of Man's most essential characteristics exhibit his faculties in the greatest perfection ever attained. No poetry surpasses Homer; no religious sentiment is more sublime than that in the book of Genesis; no art is more perfect than that of Greece; no specimens of the human form are more beautiful than the models which Greek sculptors have preserved for us. History is a continuous refutation of the theory that faculties are gradually called into existence by circumstances. On the contrary, they seem to start fully formed from the brain of Man, and to work out their inherent power for the modification of circumstances. Race after race appears on the scene—the Egyptian, the Jew, the Greek, the Roman, the German, each with some special endowment working, as it were, in its blood with inexhaustible vigour. The endowment is applied in various ways, and its forms are multiplied; but it seems to lose, rather than to gain, in fulness and fervency by the lapse of time and the course of experience. The real problem of life lies in that mysterious fertility, at once so constant and so variable, by which the same nature is constantly reproduced, and by which from time to time great new energy seems developed. The solution of this problem is to be sought, not in Mr. Darwin's facile method of observing superficial resemblances, but in the difficult task of penetrating into hidden differences. It is a problem which will be solved, if at all, not by romances in human and natural history, but by minute investigations with the microscope and in the laboratory.

We wish we could think that these speculations were as innocuous as they are unpractical and unscientific, but it is too probable that if unchecked they might exert a very mischievous influence. We abstain from noticing their bearings on religious theory, although it is hard to see how, on Mr. Darwin's hypothesis, it is possible to ascribe to Man any other immortality or any other spiritual existence, than that possessed by the Brutes. But, apart from these considerations, if such views as he advances on the nature of the Moral Sense were generally accepted, it seems evident that morality would lose all elements of stable authority, and the "ever fixed marks" around which the tempests of human passion now break themselves would cease to exert their guiding and controlling influence. Mr. Darwin is careful to observe that he does not wish "to maintain that every strictly social animal, if its intellectual and social faculties were to become as active and as highly developed as man, would acquire exactly the same moral sense as ours." If this be the case, why should our existing moral sense be deemed a permanent standard? "I," for instance," says Mr. Darwin, "to take an extreme case, men were reared under precisely the same conditions as hive-bees, there can scarcely be a doubt that our unmarried females would, like the worker bees, think it a sacred duty to kill their brothers, and mothers would strive to kill their fertile daughters, *and no one would think of interfering.*" What is this but to place every barrier of moral obligation at the mercy of the "conditions of life?" Men, unfortunately, have the power of acting not according to what is their ultimate social interest, but according to their ideas of it; and if the doctrine could be impressed on them that right and wrong have no other meaning than the pursuit or the neglect of **that ultimate interest, Conscience would cease to be a check upon the wildest, or, as Mr. Darwin's own illustration allows us to add, the most murderous revolutions.** At a moment when every artificial principle of authority seems undermined, we have no other guarantee for the order and peace of life except in the eternal authority of those elementary principles of duty which are independent of all times and all circumstances. There is much reason to fear that loose philosophy, stimulated by an irrational religion, has done not a little to weaken the force of these principles in France, and that this is, at all events, one potent element in the disorganization of French society. A man incurs a grave responsibility who, with the authority of a well-earned reputation, advances at such a time the disintegrating speculations of this book. He ought to be capable of supporting them by the most conclusive evidence of facts. To put them forward on such incomplete evidence, such cursory investigation, such hypothetical arguments as we have exposed, is more than unscientific—it is reckless.

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* *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex.* By Charles Darwin, M.A., F.R.S. &c. 2 vols. John Murray. 1871.

THE

TRUTHSEEKER.

EDITED

BY THE REV. JOHN PAGE HOPPS.

JUNE, 1871.

DARWIN ON "THE DESCENT OF MAN."*

NEARLY half of volume I., and the whole of volume II., are devoted to the subject of "Sexual Selection." Critics, before the book had been out a month, pronounced it "hasty," "fanciful," &c., and hinted, in a very sublime manner, that Mr. Darwin was getting out of his proper field of enquiry. It is very difficult to say, at any time, what a man's field of enquiry is. Indeed, it is no new story that a man toiling in a field may light upon a "pearl of great price." Nevertheless, he would be a "hasty" critic who should blame even a day labourer for pearl finding. We do not presume to sit in judgment upon Mr. Darwin; we can only say that, having looked through these two tempting volumes, we could almost wish that some friendly justice of the peace would snatch us away from our daily toil, and commit us to solitary confinement for a month, with these volumes in the cell. Mr. Darwin's arguments seem to us like mathematical demonstrations, conducted with the help of birds and butterflys in the place of letters and signs. His reasoning is close and sustained, his illustrations captivating, his facts wonderful in number and variety. He modestly says that many of his views are "highly speculative," and that "some no doubt will prove erroneous;" but he also adds, "I have in every case given the reasons which have led me to one view rather than to another."

Respecting his general conclusion "that man is descended from some lowly-organized form," he says, that he regrets to think it "will be highly distasteful to many persons." But, he adds, with delightful simplicity,—"there can hardly be a doubt that we are descended from barbarians." Then, after describing the beastly behaviour of a party of Fuegians, he says,—"He who has seen a savage in his native land will not feel much shame, if forced to acknowledge that the blood of some more humble creature flows in his veins;" and then follows a delightful passage which we quote in full, as the conclusion of his work and this notice of it,—"For my own part I would as soon be descended from that heroic little monkey, who braved his dreaded 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.

"Man may be excused for feeling some pride of having risen, though not through his own exertions, to the very summit of the organic scale; and the fact of his having thus risen, instead of having been aboriginally placed there, may give him hopes for a still higher destiny in the distant future. But we are not here concerned with hopes or fears, only with the truth as far as our reason allows us to discover it. I have given the evidence to the best of my ability; and we must acknowledge, as it seems to me, that man, with all his noble qualities, with sympathy which feels for the most debased, with benevolence which extends not only to other men, but to the humblest living creatures, with his god-like intellect which has penetrated into the movements and constitution of the solar system—with all these exalted powers—man still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin."

The work is enriched with a magnificent Index, covering 70 pages.

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* The Descent of Man, and Selection in relation to Sex. By Charles Darwin, M.A., F.R.S., &c. In two volumes. London: John Murray.

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