

TIFFIN TRIBUNE

TIFFIN, Thursday Eve., Feb. 2nd 1870

MAN AN IMPROVED APE.

The Last Result of Darwinism.

Mr. Charles Robert Darwin, the eminent naturalist, and author of "The Origin of Species," has just published in England his last and greatest work—"The Descent of Man," which the Appletons have in press, and will issue in a few days. The work, we understand, has created a profound sensation in England, where the first edition was sold in a day, and will undoubtedly, when it appears, be received here with equal interest.

The following extracts, from advance sheets of Mr. Darwin's new book, will sufficiently indicate its scope and character:

As soon as some ancient member in the great series of the Primates came owing to a change in its manner of procuring subsistence, or to a change in the conditions of its native country, to live somewhat less on trees and more on the ground, its manner of progression would have been modified; and in this case it would have had to become either more strictly quadrupedal or bipedal. Baboons frequent hilly and rocky districts, and only from necessity climb up high trees; and they have acquired almost the gait of a dog. Man alone has become a biped; and we can, I think, partly see how he has come to assume his erect attitude, which forms one of the most conspicuous differences between him and his nearest allies. Man could not have attained his present dominant position in the world without the use of his hands, which are so admirably adapted to act in obedience to his will. As Sir C. Bell insists, "the hand supplies all instruments, and by its correspondence with the intellect gives him universal dominion." But the hands and arms could hardly have become perfect enough to have manufactured weapons, or to have hurled stones and spears with a true arm, as long as they were habitually used for locomotion and for supporting the whole weight of the body, or as long as they were especially adapted, as previously remarked, for climbing trees. Such rough treatment would also have blunted the sense of touch, on which their delicate use largely depends. From these causes alone it would have been an advantage to man to have become a biped; but, for many actions, it is almost necessary that both arms and the whole upper part of the body should be free; and he must for this end stand firmly on his feet. To gain this great advantage, the feet have been rendered flat and the great toe peculiarly modified, though this has entailed the loss of the power of prehension. It accords with the principle of the division of physiological labor, which prevails throughout the animal kingdom, that, as the hands become perfected for prehension, the feet should have become perfect for support and locomotion. With some savages, however, the foot has not altogether lost its prehensile power, as shown by their manner of climbing trees and of using them in other ways.

In regard to bodily size or strength, we do not know whether man is descended from some comparatively small species, like the chimpanzee, or from one as powerful as the gorilla; and, therefore, we cannot say whether man has become larger and stronger, or smaller and weaker, in comparison with his progenitors. We should, however, bear in mind that an animal possessing great size, strength and ferocity, and which, like the gorilla, could defend itself from all enemies, would probably, though not necessarily, have failed to become social; and this would most effectually have checked the acquirement by man of his higher mental qualities, such as sympathy and the love of his fellow-creatures. Hence it might have been an immense advantage to man to have sprung from some comparatively weak creature.

The slight corporeal strength of man, his little speed, his want of natural weapons, &c., are more than counterbalanced, firstly, by his intellectual powers, through which he has, while still remaining in a barbarous state, formed for himself weapons, tools, &c., and secondly by his social qualities, which lead him to give aid to his fellow-men, and to receive it in return. No country in the world abounds in a greater degree with dangerous beasts than Southern Africa; no country presents more fearful physical hardships than the arctic regions; yet one of the puniest races, namely, the Bushmen, maintain themselves in Southern Africa, as the dwarfed Esquimaux in the arctic regions. The early progenitors of man were no doubt inferior in intellect, and probably in social disposition, to the lowest existing savages, but it is quite conceivable that they might have existed, or even flourished, if, while they gradually lost their brute-like powers, such as climbing trees, &c., they at the same time advanced in intellect. Not granting that the progenitors of man were far more helpless and defenseless than any existing savages, if they inhabited some warm continent, or large island, such as Australia, or New Guinea, or Borneo (the latter island being now tenanted by the orang) they would not have been exposed to any special danger. In an area as large as one of these islands, the competition between tribe and tribe would have been sufficient, under favorable conditions, to have raised man, through the survival of the fittest, combined with the inherited effects of habit, to his present high position in the organic scale.

At the period and place, whenever and whenever it may have been, when man first lost his hairy covering, he probably inhabited a hot country; and this would have been favorable for a frugiferous diet, on which, judging from analogy, he subsisted. We are far from knowing how long ago it was when man first diverged from the Catarrhine stock; but this may have occurred at an epoch as remote as the Eocene period; for the higher apes had diverged from the lower apes as early as the Upper Miocene period, as shown by the existence of the *Dryopithecus*.

We are also quite ignorant as to how rapid a rate of evolution, whether high or low in the scale, may under favorable circumstances be modified; we know, however, that some have retained the form during the enormous lapse of time. From what we see going on under domestication, we learn that within the same period some of the co-representatives of the same species may not be at all changed, some a little, and some greatly changed. Thus it may have been with man, who has undergone a great amount of modification in certain characters in comparison with the higher apes.