

MR. DARWIN'S SECOND VOLUME.

SIR,—Mr. Darwin's second volume on the Selection of Species, is being written by that gentleman. It has not yet, I believe, been issued from the press, but if those who have been allowed to read the MS., write correctly of it, I am not wrong in stating that his later essay will mar whatever reputation he had acquired from his first work, "The Selection of Species." Mr. Darwin now appears to lean to the belief that man is but a higher or more developed growth of the ape. If this is really Mr. Darwin's belief, the least that can be said of him is, that his reasoning is likely to prove beneath criticism. Mr. Darwin will probably appeal to the progress of ages, and to the tendency of development with each cycle of time. But if the historical light of three thousand years reveals no progress of the kind as argued for by Mr. Darwin, and as there is nothing in analogy which would lead us to believe that there is tendency to assimilation between the lower species of animal and man, surely a few more cycles would not tend to alter laws which have been fixed unalterably?

Mr. Darwin in his new work is likely to prove puerile, flippant, and atheistical. It was the singular and plausible fallacy of his arguments in his work on the "Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection," which first brought him to notice. Although he had published his monograph, and was the author of treatises on recent pedunculated and sessile cirrepedia published by the Paleontographical Society, he would not have been known to the reading public but for the boldness of his views and the singularly specious reasoning in his "Origin of Species."

PHILO-INDICUS.

SIR,—Your correspondent "Philo-Indicus," in your journal of the 20th April, assails Mr. Darwin and his theories in a style with which readers of criticisms on works advocating novel ideas are not unfamiliar. The most important element of the process is to ignore both facts and argument, and to stick to dirt-throwing. It is a good old plan, and has had its uses; many a venerable but rotten old institution has been propped by it. There is one way of answering it, which is to show that the critic does not know what he is writing about, a test I propose to apply to "Philo-Indicus."

In the first place, "Philo-Indicus" informs us that "Mr. Darwin's second volume on the 'Selection of Species' is being written by that gentleman." Well, poor Mr. Darwin has been accused of many things, but it is a novelty to suggest that he gets somebody else to write his books. But what is this book, the "Selection of Species" (there is no mistake in the name, it is repeated a few lines lower down)? I have heard of the "Origin of Species," but not of the "Selection." I conclude either that your correspondent has information not available to the rest of the world, or else that he is not conversant with Mr. Darwin's publications. That the latter is at least possible, I infer from the reference made towards the end of the letter to Mr. Darwin's authorship of "Treatises on recent pedunculated and sessile cirripedia, published by the Palaeontographical Society." The treatises in question must be amongst the "things not generally known," the Society named being usually supposed to confine their publications to fossils.*

Again, your correspondent asserts that Mr. Darwin "would not have been known to the reading public but for the boldness of his views and the singularly specious reasoning in his 'Origin of Species.'" Surely "A Naturalist's Voyage round the World"† was not unknown to that portion of the "reading public" which does not limit its attention to novels and newspapers, years before the "Origin of Species" was heard of. So much for the knowledge of Mr. Darwin's works possessed by "Philo-Indicus." Now for his arguments. He says:—

"If this" (that man is but a higher or more developed growth of the ape) "be really Mr. Darwin's belief, the least that can be said of him is, that his reasoning is likely to prove beneath criticism."

What Mr. Darwin's belief has to do with his reasoning powers may be clear to your correspondent, but I confess to be unable to understand the connection. I believe that losers in a law suit have a common prejudice against the judge or jury as the case may be, and consider their reasoning "beneath criticism." Reduce the argument of "Philo-Indicus" to a syllogism, strip it of verbiage, and what is the major proposition. *Any man who believes that man has descended from an animal of inferior grade is incapable of reasoning.* I think I am stating the argument fairly. Pray, do not suppose that I wish to assert that man is or is not descended from any other animal. I am simply defending a writer whom I believe to be honest and truth-seeking against an adversary who has recourse to dirt-throwing in preference to argument. Whether Mr. Darwin be right or wrong, I leave to every man to judge for himself. There are his books; read them. But I assert unhesitatingly that the italicized proposition is absurd, inasmuch as mere belief in an abstract proposition, or, to speak more correctly, a belief as to the conclusions to be deduced from certain evidence, is only proof of incapacity of reasoning if it can be shown that the facts produced in evidence cannot possibly support the conclusions drawn. Now "Philo-Indicus" knows nothing of Mr. Darwin's facts, he has not only not read the book on the "Origin of Man," or as he absurdly calls it, "the second volume on the Selection of Species;" but he is not even aware that the book was published on April 20th, when it had been in India at least a month.

Again I quote "Philo-Indicus:" "There is nothing in analogy which would lead us to believe that there is a tendency to assimilation between the lower species of animal and man." If this means anything, of which I am not sure, it looks like an attempt to conceal obscurity of ideas under a redundancy of words; it is an assertion that there is no physical or mental similarity between any of the lower animals and man. If this be not absurd, I really do not know what is. If "Philo-Indicus" will consult any work on comparative anatomy, he will find there is not an organ in his body, not a bone in his skeleton, scarcely a muscle or a nerve or an artery that has not its counterpart in several of the lower mammals. He will ascertain on enquiry that Professor Owen could only find three characters of the brain by which to discriminate man from monkeys, and that with respect to one character he was proved to be wrong, while with the other two it was conclusively shown that there was more difference between the lowest monkeys and the highest than between the latter and man. And as to mental qualities, while animals possess the social instinct shown by so many mammalia, birds, fishes, and even by insects, while the higher forms possess memory, attachment to particular persons, the singular power of dreaming, and even some power of reasoning in common with man, it cannot be asserted that there is no similarity, which I presume is what "Philo-Indicus" means by "tendency to assimilation." Of course the difference is very great, but that is no reason why the points of resemblance should be denied.

"Philo-Indicus" informs the public through the medium of your columns that "Mr. Darwin in his new work is likely to prove puerile, flippant, and atheistic." As to the atheism most people will prefer judging for themselves; those who have read the concluding chapters of Mr. Darwin's last work on "Domestic Animals and Plants" will, if not blinded by prejudice, probably differ from your correspondent. However, I do not know what he means by atheism. I have always looked upon an atheist as a lay figure occasionally evoked in the course of a sermon for the purpose of being refuted. In any case, atheism is too frequently used in a loose sense, merely as an abusive epithet. If "Philo-Indicus" really means what he says, I can only say that it is a pity that he does not read Mr. Darwin's books before abusing them. There is an old unfashionable rule about bearing false witness against one's neighbour, but of course Mr. Darwin is neither physically nor figuratively a "neighbour" of "Philo-Indicus."

But with respect to Mr. Darwin's proving puerile and flippant, I know of no writer to whom such epithets can be less applicable. If I know the meaning of the words, it is puerile to make ridiculous assertions in inflated language, and to bring accusations which cannot be substantiated, and flippant to abuse a book without reading it, and these appear to be the chief claims which "Philo-Indicus" has to be considered a critic of Mr. Darwin.

W. T. B.

* Mr. Darwin's Monograph of the Cirripedia was, I think, published by the Ray Society.

† I am writing without means of reference, and may not quote titles of books quite accurately. The work to which I refer is Mr. Darwin's well known description of the voyage of the "Beagle."