

France waved the banner of the free,  
 When it fell from the hands of Italy:  
 Alas! she fails,—but England, thou  
 Hast a daughter of starry brow,  
 Whose arms receive thy setting sun;  
 She, in a forest vast and lone,  
 With awful gladness hears intone  
 Niagara, and the Amazon!  
 Freedom before her mountain citadel  
 Placed you, two giants, each her wakeful sentinel!

RODEN NOEL.

BOOKS.

MR. DARWIN'S DESCENT OF MAN.\*  
 [SECOND NOTICE.]

We will try and state in this paper the general impression in reference to the Creative force ever present in nature, which seems to be best warranted by the careful study of our great philosophical naturalist's work on the origin of man. Whether he himself regards it as one tending to eliminate the idea of design, as understood in the sense of the older natural theology, we do not feel quite sure; probably he might say that the view he here gives us rather tends to modify than to eliminate the old conception of design,—to extend it to the general scheme of things, but to render it difficult, if not impossible, to find design in the details of every individual natural phenomenon. In a remarkable passage of his second volume, he assails the Duke of Argyll's conception of design in the following words:—

"It would even appear that mere novelty, or change for the sake of change, has sometimes acted like a charm on female birds, in the same manner as changes of fashion with us. The Duke of Argyll says,—and I am glad to have the unusual satisfaction of following for even a short distance in his footsteps—'I am more and more convinced that variety, mere variety, must be admitted to be an object and an aim in Nature.' I wish the Duke had explained what he here means by Nature. Is it meant that the Creator of the universe ordained diversified results for his own satisfaction, or for that of man? The former notion seems to me as much wanting in due reverence as the latter in probability. Capriciousness of taste in the birds themselves appears a more fitting explanation. For example; the males of some parrots can hardly be said to be more beautiful, at least according to our taste, than the females, but they differ from them in such points, as the male having a rose-coloured collar instead of, as in the female, 'a bright emeraldine narrow green collar;' or in the male having a black collar instead of 'a yellow demi-collar in front,' with a pale roseate instead of a plum-blue head. As so many male birds have for their chief ornament elongated tail-feathers or elongated crests, the shortened tail, formerly described in the male of a humming-bird, and the shortened crest of the male goosander almost seem like one of the many opposite changes of fashion which we admire in our own dresses."

To this the Duke of Argyll might fairly reply that Mr. Darwin, in explaining the external variety of the universe by the taste for variety in the sentient creatures of the universe, may very likely have adopted the true scientific course,—that is, the one indicating the true antecedent in order of causation and of time; but that, as far as getting at a satisfying reason goes, he has only reached a cause which will seem to most men more needful of explanation and more worthy of it, than the effect itself. The introduction of varieties into the external world and their perpetuation there, are due, says Mr. Darwin, to the following causes:—(1) The inherent tendency to vary in slight details from the parental type which all hereditary laws show, and which, curiously enough, seems to be shown much more in the male than female offspring of all species; (2) the tendency to fix these varieties which arises either from any inherent advantage in the rivalries of life which they may bestow on the individuals possessing them (Natural Selection), or from the preference they may excite either by their beauty or by the mere fascination of change itself in the minds of the other sex, a preference which wins for their owners the chance of more numerous or healthy offspring to perpetuate them (Sexual Selection). Granted; but, first, to what must we attribute this inherent tendency towards tentative variety, tried, as it were, in all directions,—a tendency which Mr. Darwin calls 'accidental' variation, but which seems to us, tried as it is, and systematically in all the races of creation, just as little accidental as the variations with which a mathematician deals in solving the problems of maxima and minima, when he examines and rejects all that do not lead him to the solution at which he is aiming. Thus:—

"The muscles of the foot were found by Professor Turner not to be strictly alike in any two out of fifty bodies; and in some the deviations

were considerable. Professor Turner adds that the power of performing the appropriate movements must have been modified in accordance with the several deviations. Mr. J. Wood has recorded the occurrence of 295 muscular variations in thirty-six subjects; and in another set of the same number, no less than 558 variations, reckoning both sides of the body as one. In the last set not one body of the thirty-six was 'found totally wanting in departures from the standard descriptions of the muscular system given in anatomical text-books.' A single body presented the extraordinary number of twenty-five distinct abnormalities. The same muscle sometimes varies in many ways; thus, Professor McAllister describes no less than twenty distinct variations of the *palmaris accessorius*." (Vol. I., p. 109.)

And Mr. Darwin goes on to say that so remarkable is this tendency to vary within defined limits from the type or norm, that an old anatomist has written a book on the "beau-ideal of the various viscera, the ideal liver, kidneys, &c." Here we have then, a very positive evidence of the constantly tentative character, as we may call it, of the Creative force in the direction of all conceivable variety of detail,—mischievous variations being quickly extinguished by 'natural selection' and beneficial variations being perpetuated and accumulated by the same means. The tendency to vary within the limits of a certain uniformity is deeply implanted in the Creative force itself.

Next we have, as Mr. Darwin has shown in this book, a very strong subsidiary selecting cause, due to the preferences of animals of both sexes for certain qualities in the other sex, chiefly strength and beauty, but also, within a very limited degree, for variety of type itself. Sometimes it would appear that variety horrifies, as in the case of the pied raven of the Faroe Isles, of which Mr. Darwin tells us that the ravens tinged with white are persecuted with much clamour by the ordinary black ravens. On the other hand, he thinks that the variety of that male humming-bird which has a shorter tail than the female, and of that male goosander which has a shorter crest, has been perpetuated owing to the mere preference of the female birds for a change of fashion. Anyhow, there is ample evidence that varieties which greatly add to the beauty of birds are very often perpetuated in spite of their being most inconvenient and, to some extent, really mischievous, simply from the fascination they exert on the other sex. The most inconveniently long tail of the peacock, which must be as bad as a Court dress that cannot be taken off, is the commonest instance of such a variety. Mr. Darwin shows by ample evidence that these beauties are regarded, by their possessors at least, as a vast advantage in the sight of their mates, since they take the most minute precautions, by elaborately exhibiting the most beautiful feathers to the hens at the proper angles for catching the light, that they shall be fully admired. Mr. Darwin himself is astonished at the extent and development of the taste for delicate beauty in birds; and he attributes directly to it the marvellous development of Nature's art:—

"I know of no fact in natural history more wonderful than that the female Argus pheasant should be able to appreciate the exquisite shading of the ball-and-socket ornaments and the elegant patterns on the wing-feathers of the male. He who thinks that the male was created as he now exists, must admit that the great plumes, which prevent the wings from being used for flight, and which, as well as the primary feathers, are displayed in a manner quite peculiar to this one species during the act of courtship, and at no other time, were given to him as an ornament. If so, he must likewise admit that the female was created and endowed with the capacity of appreciating such ornaments. I differ only in the conviction that the male Argus pheasant acquired his beauty gradually, through the females having preferred through many generations the more highly ornamented males; the aesthetic capacity of the females having been advanced through exercise of habit, in the same manner as our own taste is gradually improved."

Now, is it not quite open to the Duke of Argyll, or any one else who listens to Mr. Darwin's denunciation of the notion that the Creator of the universe had "ordained diversified results for his own satisfaction," to ask whether the objective law of tentative variation, which experiments, as it were, on varieties of organization of every kind and in every direction, and the subjective law of taste for beauty as apart from use, which does, in fact, imply a taste for variety,—beauty chiefly consisting in harmony, or variety in unity,—are not clearly, on his own showing, of the very essence and principle of what he calls 'evolution,' and, therefore, certainly attributable in fact,—whether or not we appreciate the true motive,—to the ordination of the Creator of the universe. Possibly, indeed, it may convey a false impression to say that it is either "for his own satisfaction or for that of man" that the Creator ordains this constant variety, and love of variety. But at all events, there stands the great double law of variation, ensuring variety, and not only variety, but the perpetuation of all varieties which are beneficial, and even of many which are not, in the direct sense, beneficial, which may even be, in a very limited sense, injurious, for the sake of that higher benefit which the development of

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

beauty, as a new principle in the universe, ensures. Thus, even though it conveys a false impression to speak of the variety of the universe as being created "for God's own satisfaction" in the sense that it is any delight to him to look upon it, it clearly must be in some sense or other for his satisfaction, since it fulfils the great central law of creation.

Again, it is worth noting that Mr. Darwin's own conception of 'evolution' does not imply that the highest intellectual phenomena necessarily come last in the order of creation. It is a result of his investigation that the mental qualities characteristic of the highest order of created beings are so little a consequence of mere developed organization, that they are clearly anticipated, as it were, in one of the very lowest orders, though not fully combined and co-ordinated with æsthetic and moral development:—

"A difference in degree, however great, does not justify us in placing man in a distinct kingdom, as will perhaps be best illustrated by comparing the mental powers of two insects, namely, a cocoon or scale-insect and an ant, which undoubtedly belong to the same class. The difference is here greater, though of a somewhat different kind, than that between man and the highest mammal. The female cocoon, whilst young, attaches itself by its proboscis to a plant; sucks the sap, but never moves again; is fertilized and lays eggs; and this is its whole history. On the other hand, to describe the habits and mental powers of a female ant would require, as Pierre Huber has shown, a large volume; I may, however, briefly specify a few points. Ants communicate information to each other, and several unite for the same work, or games of play. They recognize their fellow-ants after months of absence. They build great edifices, keep them clean, close the doors in the evening, and post sentries. They make roads, and even tunnels under rivers. They collect food for the community, and when an object too large for entrance is brought to the nest, they enlarge the door, and afterwards build it up again. They go out to battle in regular bands, and freely sacrifice their lives for the common weal. They emigrate in accordance with a preconcerted plan. They capture slaves. They keep Aphides as milch-cows. They move the eggs of their aphides, as well as their own eggs and cocoons, into warm parts of the nest, in order that they may be quickly hatched; and endless similar facts could be given. On the whole, the difference in mental power between an ant and a cocoon is immense; yet no one has ever dreamed of placing them in distinct classes, much less in distinct kingdoms." (Vol. I., pp. 186-7.)

Thus the ants, with a nervous centre less than a pin's point, and belonging to the same order as a creature hardly endowed with animal life at all, seem to anticipate the strict organization of military and Slave States, and appear to owe their success to closely sifted and 'selected instincts,' acting on creatures too weak to accomplish anything except by the most extraordinary industry and the most wonderful co-operation. We may say that they are in some sense the prototypes of races like the Egyptians, who appear, on the higher level of humanity, to have accomplished like great results by like means. In the same way, Mr. Darwin shows that certain species of birds, especially the Bower-birds, under the imperious influence of the instinct which has chiefly been concerned in introducing the love of beauty into the universe,—the pairing instinct,—have positively anticipated many of the complex phenomena of pleasure-loving human society, having not only fixed upon regular places for social meeting, but highly and artificially ornamented them with shells and other ornaments, the disposition of which they constantly vary and improve. In some sense, we may call these temporary efforts at ornamental architecture, accompanied as they are by the most wonderful selective instincts for the beautiful, anticipations in the lower animal world of the sort of sudden flush of artistic civilization among the Greeks, whose civilizing impulses were certainly more or less deeply connected with the love of beauty. Between these cases of the wonderful flowering of the highest instincts of the animal world, we seem to find great gaps filled up by much more ordinary races; nor does the physical approximation to man seem necessarily to involve the preservation of the most wonderful powers acquired by lower races. Horses and dogs, though they may have the germs of higher affections in them, show nothing like the organizing instincts of ants; and even the highest apes show nothing like the sense and love of beauty evinced by many tribes of birds. Yet when we come to the highest stage, and Mr. Darwin gives us his account of the probable genesis of human character, he suggests, most wisely, as it seems to us, that weakness was again probably one of the first conditions of the higher development of human reason. He thinks the gorilla much less likely to have been the direct ancestor of man than the orang, because the gorilla is too strong to need the protection of large social groups, and immense strength is therefore a disadvantage for the purpose of intellectual development. And the first great source of firm cohesion and progress among a group so formed, he supposes to have been the moral feeling that the welfare of others has claims over us to our own cost. Curiously enough,—though, as it has been wittily remarked, Mr. Darwin ought to have called his book not the

'Descent' but the 'Ascent of Man,' not his 'fall' but his 'rise,'—he finds himself after explaining his rise compelled to reintroduce a new doctrine of his fall. He shows that the instincts of the higher animals are far nobler than the habits of savage races of men, and he finds himself, therefore, compelled to re-introduce,—in a form of the substantial orthodoxy of which he appears to be quite unconscious,—and to introduce as a scientific hypothesis,—the doctrine that man's gain of knowledge was the cause of a temporary but long-enduring moral deterioration, as indicated by the many foul customs, especially as to marriage, of savage tribes. What does the Jewish tradition of the moral degeneration of man through his snatching at a knowledge forbidden him by his highest instinct, assert beyond this?

On the whole, then, Mr. Darwin's investigation presents us with a Creative force, constantly and apparently to human eyes tentatively producing all possible variations in the specific living forms of every kind which it has brought into existence with a view, as it were, to see whether any of them will have the advantage over others,—creating very high forms of intellectual instinct at the very threshold of the world of life,—gradually mingling the love of beauty with the instinct of self-preservation, and fashioning out of that love of beauty some of the most wonderful of the artistic instincts of the world,—rooting, however, all its greatest achievements, both intellectual and moral, in the sense of weakness, and overcoming this sense of weakness only by the most wonderful and noble of all the forces of the universe, disinterested affection,—finally, when this moral affection is once fairly generated, gradually depriving the higher beings of the instincts by which the lower had been preserved, and giving them in the place thereof the power to create and mould their own instincts, and even to spoil and grievously sin against such instincts as were left them, if they would,—in other words, giving them love, reason, freedom, conscience, the power to sin. Is this in any sense whatever,—even conceivably an atheistic philosophy? Is not intellect ingrained in the creative force from the first? Is not the love of beauty deeply enfolded in it? Is not the authority of conscience wholly bestowed by it? Is not St. Paul's paradox of weakness being stronger than strength, and in some sense the foolishness of God than the wisdom of men, almost implied in it? Is there any one really great puzzle in it except the apparent tentativeness of the method,—as if the Creative force found it necessary to try everything before producing what it foresaw? And is not this seeming tentativeness probably the merest seeming? Can we not easily believe that the value of this seemingly exhaustive process may prove to have been infinitely greater, that its beneficent results for a future still far beyond our comprehension may prove to have been infinitely greater, than that of any creative process in which all the links and possibilities of the intermediate stages of development should have been less fully revealed? For our own parts, we find Mr. Darwin's investigation of the origin of man a far more wonderful vindication of Theism than *Paley's Natural Theology*, though we do not know, so reticent is his style, whether or not he so conceives it himself.

#### BJÖRNSSON'S TALES.\*

To the ladies and gentleman who have introduced us to the *Fisher Girl* and *Love and Life in Norway* we are indebted for very great pleasure, and pleasure of almost a unique kind. English people have written of Norway either at first or second hand, but the novelty of the subject and the glamour of strangeness have tintured their accounts of scenery inhabitants and customs with a poetical and *couleur-de-rose* sentiment; and though the salient points both of the country and of the social life may have been caught and described with more or less accuracy, the interiors—the details especially of domestic life—have necessarily been sealed books to them. In these stories the case is reversed; the grandeur and picturesqueness come out only in their true proportions, but we learn to know the mind and characters of the people and their relations to and bearing upon each other; and we see and become familiar with their dirty seaport towns—not as travellers, but as residents,—as well as with their mountains and forests. Not that the prose prevails; very far from it. A countryman alone can understand the national characteristics, and genius only paint them as they are painted here. The motive

\* *Love and Life in Norway*. Translated from the Norwegian of Björnstjerne Björnson by the Hon. Augusta Bethell and Augusta Plesner. London: Cassell.

*The Fishing Girl*. Translated from the Norwegian of Björnstjerne Björnson by Augusta Plesner and Frederika Richardson. London: Cassell.

*The Fisher Girl*. Translated from the Norwegian of Björnstjerne Björnson by Sivert and Elizabeth Hjerleid. London: Trübner.