Poetry.

THE RIFLEMAN'S LAMENT.

A NEW NURSERY RHYME.

Who lured me with the foolish boast,
Inserted in the *Daily Post*,
That he of rifle suits made most?
My Tailor.

And when I did bespeak the clothes,
Discoursed so grand of England's foes,
And what a man his country owes?
My Tailor.

Who eulogised the Volunteers,
And blandly soothed my rising fears
Of each invading "Zouaves?"
My Tailor.

Who clad me in a suit of gray,
So tight and stiff in every way,
It almost took my breath away?
My Tailor.

And on my silly skull did slap
A dingy tramp-looking cap,
With beaver-like plume the flies to flap?
My Tailor.

And strapped a stock about my throat
(To "laughing-stock" he pleased to note)
Much stiffer than the padded coat?
My Tailor.

Who cut my coat so short behind,
I feel my outline quite defined,
And blush at meeting womankind?
My Tailor.

Whose trousers fitted like my skin,
And, when I stooped to raise a pin,
Ripped up, and let the cold air in?
My Tailor.

Who came to see me at my drill,
And tittered at my want of skill,
That evening sending in his bill?
My Tailor.

Who, as this story plainly shows,
Seduced me from the safe repose
Of civil life to martial woes?
My Tailor.

From slumbers sweet, or cosy meal,
In stupid ranks to "form" and "wheel,"
Till sick at heart and sore at heel?
My Tailor.

From "tattered ease" and garments loose,
To clothes like these and stay of "goose"
I really wish you at the deuce—
My Tailor.

But retribution spreads her net,
And though I haven't paid you yet,
You'll see my name in next *Gazette*—
My Tailor.

—"Artifex" in *Birmingham Post*.

Literature.

ON THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES BY MEANS OF NATURAL SELECTION; or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life. By Charles Darwin, M.A., F.R.G., L., &c., Societies.

Some few years ago, the scientific and religious worlds were startled from their propriety by the appearance of a work, entitled "Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation," in which the author, like the Topsy of Mrs Stowe's story, insisted that he "growed"—that neither he nor his immediate progenitors were "made," according to the usual acceptance of the term, but gradually "developed" from simpler or lower forms of life, and ultimately, physically speaking, from the necessary action of matter in motion. This is no new theory, but it has, unfortunately for itself, found favour, for the most part, with atheistical philosophers, and has consequently been discouraged as a matter of speculation among the more orthodox. It cannot be denied, also, that most of what has been brought forward on the subject partakes more of the nature of mere hypothesis, or of speculative romance, than of sober scientific observation and induction. One of the most severe things said of the "Vestiges" was, that all scientific men allowed the literary merits of the work, and some of them its general accuracy, with the slight reservation that its botany or geology, chemistry or electricity, or whatever else might be the special study of the critic, was bad.

Our own impression on the religious side of the question is, that if it once for all allowed that the account of the creation in the first chapters of Genesis be not given to be apprehended wholly in its literal sense, theologians may with all safety make the matter over to scientific men to get at the natural history of the world at their leisure. This has already been done in the cases of astronomy and geology, and although we are aware that there is apparently more involved in the discussion of the natural history of man, yet, disclaiming both the title of prophet and the gift of prophecy, we anticipate that this third region will at no distant day be quite as freely surrendered.

Mr Darwin is careful to disclaim any connection with the special theories and beliefs of the author of the "Vestiges"—the idea of manufacturing insects of any kind, by electricity, for instance; and even the theory of Lamarck—which ascribes the changes in animals to their own appetency—he will have nothing to do with; and most assuredly his own is decidedly the best that has been broached. Mr Darwin has approached the subject in a way which must command attention and respect. He is no mere general speculator; but an acknowledged man of science who has devoted his whole life to the study of natural history in its various branches, and he has given the last twenty-two years of his life to investigations specially directed to the elucidation of the origin of species. Could we afford to be facetious, we would observe that his experience as a member of two pigeon (not shooting) clubs, has had the effect of giving us rather too much pigeon. Mr D. begins at the beginning—namely, with those variations produced by domestication with which we are all familiar, in the various breeds of cattle, sheep, pigeons, and florist's flowers. He next takes up the cases of "natural variation," and maintains that established varieties are incipient species. In the "struggle for existence," the weaker, or those most unfitted for the "conditions of existence," go to the wall and get extinguished; and he calls the preservation of those that are fitted to hold on "natural selection." There is a constant production of new and a constant extinction of old species, and so on it has gone since the commencement of organic life.

Into the argument, in the space at our disposal, we cannot enter more especially, seeing that the book is one long and sustained arrangement from beginning to end, but we would submit the following highly suggestive paragraph to the attention of the reader:—

"We have seen that it is the common, the widely diffused, and widely ranging species, belonging to the larger genera, which vary most; and these tend to transmit to their modified offspring that superiority which now makes them dominant in their own countries. Natural selection, as has just been remarked, leads to divergence of character and to much extinction of the less improved and intermediate forms of life. On these principles, I believe, the nature of the affinities of all organic beings may be explained. It is a truly wonderful fact—the wonder of which we are apt to overlook from familiarity—that all animals and all plants throughout all time and space should be related to each other in group subordinate to group, in the manner which we everywhere behold—namely, varieties of the same species most closely related together, species of the same genus less closely and unequally related together, forming sections and sub-genera, closely related, genera related in different degrees, forming sub-families, families, orders, sub-classes, and classes. The several subordinate groups in any class cannot be ranked in single file, but seem rather to be clustered round points, and these round other points, and so on in endless cycles. On the view that each species has been independently created, I can see no explanation of the great fact in the classification of all organic beings; but, to the best of my judgment, it is explained through inheritance and the complex action of natural selection, entailing extinction and divergence of character."

The difficulties pertaining to his theory are not shirked, and we can hereby refer to his chapters on transitions in habits and in the use of organs, on instinct, and on hybridism. One passage must suffice for quotation:—

"I believe the most wonderful of all known instincts—that of the hive bee—can be explained by natural selection having taken advantage of numerous, successive, slight modifications of simpler instincts—natural selection having by slow degrees, more and more perfectly, led the bees to sweep equal spheres at a given distance from each other in a double layer, and to build up and excavate the wax along the planes of intersection; the bees, of course, no more knowing that they swept their spheres at one particular distance from each other than they know what are the several angles of the hexagonal prisms and of the basal rhombic plates. The motive power of the process of natural selection having been economy of wax; that individual swarm which wasted least honey in the secretion of wax having succeeded best, and having transmitted by inheritance its newly acquired economical instinct to new swarms, which in their turn will have had the best chance of succeeding in the struggle for existence."

What Mr Darwin calls "the Imperfection of the Geological Record" furnishes, he thinks, sufficient answer to those who ask for the missing link connecting species, &c.; and his chapters on "Geographical Distribution" form one of the finest geological studies we have met with for a long time. Mr Darwin, however, does not content himself with merely answering objections. He occasionally—or repeatedly, rather—carries the war into the enemy's camp. Take the following, for instance:—

"I have now given the leading facts with respect to rudimentary organs. In reflecting on them, every one must be struck with astonishment, for the same reasoning power which tells us plainly that most parts and organs are exquisitely adapted for certain purposes, tells us with equal plainness that these rudimentary or atrophied organs are imperfect and useless. In works on natural history, rudimentary organs are generally said to have been created 'for the sake of symmetry,' or in order 'to complete the scheme of nature;' but this seems to me no explanation—merely a re-statement of the fact. . . . . Rudimentary organs may be compared with the letters in a word, still retained in the spelling, but become useless in the pronunciation, but which serve as a clue in seeking its derivation. On the view of descent with modification, we may conclude that the existence of organs in a rudimentary, imperfect, and useless condition, or quite aborted, far from presenting a strange difficulty, as they assuredly do on the ordinary doctrine of creation, might even have been anticipated, and can be accounted for by the laws of inheritance."

We need not say that there is a great amount of curious and interesting information in the volume, for the which, independently of its bearing on the theory, it deserves to be studied. In reference, for instance, to what Mr Darwin calls "the co-relation of growth," most of our readers know that all tortoise-shell cats are she ones, but does any one of them know that all blue-eyed cats are deaf? We wonder if the disagreeableness of cat-concerts is owing to the blue-eyed ones, who of course can have no ear for music taking part in them; and take the following:—

"Points of resemblance between instinct and habit could be pointed out. As in repeating a well-known song so in instincts—one action follows another by a sort of rythm; if a person be interrupted in a song, or in repeating anything by rote, he is generally forced to go back to recover the habitual train of thought. So P. Huber found it was with a caterpillar, which makes a very complicated hammock; for, if he took a caterpillar which had completed its hammock up to, say, the sixth stage of construction, and put it into a hammock completed only up to the third stage, the caterpillar simply re-performed the fourth, fifth, and sixth stages of construction. If, however, a caterpillar were taken out of a hammock made up, for instance, to the third stage, and were put into one finished up to the sixth stage, so that much of its work was already done for it, far from feeling the benefit of this, it was much embarrassed, and, in order to complete its hammock, seemed forced to start from the third stage, where it had left off, and thus tried to complete the already finished work."

With a few sentences from the author's "Conclusion," we will also conclude this notice, trusting that our readers will be induced to make a larger acquaintance with the good things of the volume itself:—

"Authors of the highest eminence seem to be fully satisfied with the view that each species has been independently created. To my mind it accords better with what we know of the laws impressed on matter by the Creator that the production and extinction of the past and present inhabitants of the world should have been due to secondary causes, like those determining the birth and death. When I view all beings not as special creation, but as the lineal descendants of some few beings which lived long before the first bed of the Silurian system was deposited, they seem to me to become ennobled. . . . .

"There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms, or into one; and that while the planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved."

Foreign Intelligence.

AUSTRIA.

VIENNA, February 14.—It is said a new loan is projected.

VIENNA, February 14.—To-day the French Ambassador, Marquis de Moustier, commenced the official reception of the Diplomatic Body, the Austrian Ministers, and high functionaries. The attachés of the Embassy were present in gala costume.

THE ENGLISH PROPOSALS.

BERLIN, February 14.—The reports circulating in Paris concerning an approaching conference of the four Great Powers (without Austria) on the English proposals are here stated to be false. Prussia has not given in her adhesion to the English proposals, and probably will refuse to do so.

SICILY.

TURIN, Monday evening.—Letters from Sicily announce that political arrests and excesses of the police are increasing. Women have been ravished and beaten by them. Political prisoners have died under torture. Several Magistrates have in vain protested.

A proclamation is in circulation exhorting the Sicilians to rise, to re-invest Southern Italy with her former rights in Europe. All parties are alike favourable to the cessation of despotism. The proclamation says:—"Let us hope that Naples will follow our example. The time for moderation has passed away; henceforth we must be daring, let us rise in the name of Italian nationality, and to the cry of 'Italy and Victor Emmanuel for ever.'"

NAPLES.

Advices from Naples state that the King has ordered the liberation of the political prisoners arrested upon suspicion.

DENMARK.

COPENHAGEN, February 13.—Bishop Monrad, at present in Paris, has been asked by telegraph if he will undertake the formation of a new Ministry, with unlimited power.

CHINA.

ST PETERSBURGH, Feb. 14.—The *Journal de St Petersbourg* of to-day publishes news from Pekin to 4th December. The Russian mission was going on well. The health of the Emperor of China had improved, and his Majesty had left his palace in the country to return to the metropolis. The rebels were not agreed among themselves, and the Imperial troops had been victorious over them. European men-of-war were off the mouth of the Peiho.

MAIL NEWS.

The following telegram has been received by the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, dated Malta, Feb. 13:—The Valetta, with the incoming Calcutta and China mails, has arrived, with rudderhead damaged; when repaired, the Valetta would take the mails to Corfu. The Alhambra left Malta for Marseilles at daylight on the 13th, and the China left for Southampton at eight A.M. the same morning. The Ottawa, with the next homeward Bombay mails, arrived at Aden on the 3d February. The Malta, for Bombay, and the Emeu, for Australia, arrived at Aden on the 3d February, with the outward Bombay mails of the 27th January. The Euxine and the Panther left Malta for Alexandria on the 3d February. The Colombo, with the 4th December mails from England, arrived at Galle on the 12th.

FRANCE.

PARIS, February 13.—The *Gazette de France* has received a second warning for an article signed by its editor, Lourdoueix. The *exposé* of the warning state that the author of the article, in disfiguring the history of France, calumniates the great act by which Napoleon first re-established Catholic worship in France.

It is stated the news published by a Belgian paper, that an official reply of Austria to the English proposal for the settlement of the Italian question had arrived in Paris, is false. The Grand Duke Ferdinand of Tuscany has arrived. Dictator Farini is likewise staying here.

PARIS, Monday.—The *Moniteur* states that the Sardinian minister, Chevalier de Sambrois, presented his letters of recal on Sunday to the Emperor.

SPAIN.

MADRID, February 11.—A congratulatory address to the army is published.

AUSTRIA.

VIENNA, Monday.—The reforms promised in the Ministerial programme are about to be granted. Every province will receive a separate constitution and administration according to the wants of the different nationalities.

SPAIN AND MOROCCO.

MADRID, Feb. 11.—Marshal O'Donnell announces in an order of Thursday that he will continue offensive operations until the enemy shall ask mercy of Spain, and until reprisals shall have been taken for the insults of the enemy, and an indemnity obtained for the sacrifices of Spain.

The trophies from Tetuan have arrived here, and were received with enthusiasm.

The Spanish Government is about to issue notes to the amount of 200,000,000 reals, payment to be ensured by the sale of national property.

MADRID, Monday.—The Spanish Cabinet will listen to no proposals of peace from Morocco until Tangier has been taken, against which place military operations are to commence immediately.

RUSSIA AND THE ITALIAN QUESTION.

ST PETERSBURG, Feb. 12.—Prince Gortschakoff has informed the French Government that Russia does not consider the English proposals to be altogether a solution of the Italian difficulty, and that a real understanding could only result from a conference of the five Great Powers. It is said the French Ambassador has expressed to Prince Gortschakoff the readiness of his Government to adhere to the proposals of Russia.

AUSTRIA'S REPLY TO THE PROPOSITIONS OF ENGLAND.

The Paris correspondent of the *Nord* says he is assured that Prince Metternich, on Friday, handed to M. Thouvenel the reply of Count Rechberg to the French note of the 30th January. Count Rechberg calmly discusses seriatim the propositions of England, and exposes that the principle of non-intervention is violated daily by Piedmont in the States of Central Italy. While taking into account the attempts made by the French Government in favour of the dethroned Princes in the Duchies, Austria cannot retract from the engagements taken at Villafranca, and from the stipulations signed at Zurich. If the treaty of Zurich is respected as regards Venetia, why should it not be so regards the Duchies? If the propositions of England are carried out, it is a great experiment that is about to be made in Central Italy. Austria will not oppose that experiment by force of arms, convinced that events will not fail soon to give support to the cause of right and justice.

AMERICA.

The Africa arrived in the Mersey on Monday from New York, with dates to the 1st inst., thirty-two passengers, and 235,000 dols. in specie. On the 1st inst. the Africa passed a screw steamer bound west, supposed to be the City of Manchester.

No Speaker had been elected; but the last vote taken on the 31st ult. showed that Mr Pennington was the favourite, as that gentleman only wanted one vote to be elected. The numbers were—Pennington, 116; M'Clernand, 31; necessary to a choice, 117.

The general news is scanty.

Eighteen citizens of Mason and Bracken counties, Kentucky, had been expelled from the State on account of their opinions on slavery.

The Virginia House of Representatives had passed a bill appropriating 2,000,000 dols. as a loan to the Covington and Ohio Railway.

A bill had been introduced into the Texas Legislature providing for the imprisonment of northern preachers.

Business was dull at Havannah.

FRENCH APPEAL TO AUSTRIA.

The *Courrier du Dimanche* gives an analysis of two despatches lately addressed by M. Thouvenel to the French Ambassador at Vienna. By the first (says the *Courrier*) the Minister for Foreign Affairs takes pains to show that Napoleon III. is in no way responsible for what is now passing in Italy, and urges upon the Austrian Government the necessity of so far yielding to the course of events as to prevent the rights and interests of Austria from receiving still further damage. The despatch terminates by the expression of a desire that the French and Austrian Governments should come to an understanding on the subject of the English propositions. In the second despatch M. Thouvenel makes some friendly but energetic representations to Austria regarding the enlistment of soldiers in the Austrian territories for the Neapolitan and Papal service, and also on the subject of some measures of severity lately adopted in Vienna. The Cabinet of the Tuilleries has no intention to interfere in any such questions, and only alludes to them out of a desire to facilitate the pacification of the Peninsula, which is likely to be continually delayed so long as an element of excitement remains, and so long as popular discontent shall think itself justified by appearances of aggression either on the part of Austria, or on the part of Naples, which is suspected of receiving encouragement from the Court of Vienna. The date of these despatches is not given, but they were evidently written previously to the refusal of Austria to listen to the English suggestions.