HE WORLD: NEW YORK,

UNDAY, MARCH 19, 1871.

THE IMPROVED APE.

DEDICATED TO DOCTOR DARWIN.

e'er to the Central Park you have been,
You know the chacma full well, I ween.
I don't mean to speak to, but you must have seen
And remarked with repulsion that grinning gossoon,
That hideous, hairy-faced, vicious baboon
On the right as you entered the Arsenal basement
To look at the animals down in that place pent.
Now of course you'll admit
That he don't look a bit
Like a human—but what if, without any bother,
I inform you at once he's a man and a brother.
At least, Doctor Darwin, that first-rate authority,
For whom many persons (but not the majority,
I hope) among naturalists claim the priority,
In a book which they tell me commands heavy sales
Asserts we were formerly apes and wore tails!
Now, when I say "we" I don't mean you and me,
But our ancestors very remote, don't you see?
You may laugh if you like or exclaim that a lie it is,
But you're not a member of learned societies
Like Wallace and Lyell and Huxley and Lubbock,
Who believe what the Doctor has writ in his new book.
At least so he tells us, and they don't deny it,
Or have yielded assent by so far keeping quiet.
You'll think if they really believe it, why then
They're what Dogberry calls "very credible men."
By the bye, let me say,
In a casual way,
Though I ne'er would advise
Men to plagiarize,
That I think Docter Darwin in search of a name
For his book might have fairly made use of the same
Douglas Jerrold gave that which established his fame;
The author of which caused so many conjectures,
Till D. J. acknowledged the Candle Lectures.
Since the caudal appendage once worn in the tropics
By our ancestry's one of the principal topics
Discussed by the doctor, though its disappearance
Isn't clearly accounted for, yet, from their rear ends,
He seems to imply,
Though he don't tell you why,
That as apes became men, tails no longer availed,
And so they at length were completely curtailed.
It is perfectly clear he don't credit the theory,
Which is quite as veracious, or not more mendacious,
That some books I've read (my goodness gracious
The way some folks lie in print's really audacious),
That our anthropoid ancestors taking their ease,
Used to sit on their tails, which at last by degrees
Were away altogether from too constant friction,
A tale which may be, or may not be, a fiction.
To return to the Doctor: He says that we can
Partly see how that wonderful animal, man,
His now erect attitude came to assume,
A thing which is not quite so clear, I presume,
To folks who're unhappily not scientific,
In regard to myself I will be quite specific;
And declare I can't see it, though others, of course,
Think they see how the apes gave up playing "all fours."
Though afterwards, when they in time became men,
I don't wonder they took a great fancy to Euchre;
A game I like muchly, I've played it for hours
On a stretch, though infrequently holding the bowers.
Neither here nor there that is—let's hear Dr. Darwin,
He observes that baboons—the hideous "varmin!"
Like to dwell where the country is rocky and hilly,
Which suggests the idea, pray don't think it silly,
That our ancestors must, I'll wage a dime,
Have had a decidedly "up-hill time."
Darwin says that baboons never climb trees unless it is
They're driven to that course by urgent necessities.
He probably means (you may call this a joke or not,
As you please), when in search of "the milk in the cocoanut."
But whether we're sprung from the chimpanzees,
Gorillas, chacmas, or what you please
Among the ape tribe, which you know's subdivided
Into numerous classes, he's quite undecided.
"The highest in the social scale," opines
The Doctor (though which he nowhere defines),
Obtained pre-eminence over the rest,
And became human beings. Now, I'll be blest
If you wouldn't be puzzled, when put to the test,
To say which stands first in the "social scale,"
Chimpanzees or Gorillas. You'd certainly fail.
To a man like the Doctor 'twould be no task;
In fact, I should very much like to ask
Him to make it a matter of notoriety,
What's the *creme de la creme* of ape-ish society?
Chimpanzee, gorilla, or other variety,
How can we determine this question occult,
What tests to apply to obtain that result.
I should also be gratified to get
Some knowledge of baboon etiquette.
In a chimpanzee lady considered the ton,
Does she all but the "very best circles" shun?
Is she "At home" to Messieurs, the gorillas,
Or does she consort with some other "fellahs"
Pray enlighten us Doctor, until you can, sir,
We await with incredulous horror your answer.