

of working, and can count the threads of a fine canvas without spectacles. I receive every one who comes to see me, and often have the pleasure of a visit from old friends very unexpectedly. In the evening I read a novel, but my tragic days are over; I prefer a cheerful conversational novel to the sentimental ones. I have recently been reading Walter Scott's novels again, and enjoyed the broad Scotch in them. I play a few games at Bézique with one of my daughters, for honour and glory, and so our evenings pass pleasantly enough.

It is our habit to be separately occupied during the morning, and spend the rest of the day together. We are fond of birds and have several, all very tame. Our tame nightingales sing very beautifully, but, strange to say, not at night. We have also some solitary sparrows, which are, in fact, a variety of the thrush (*Turdus cyaneus*), and some birds which we rescued from destruction in spring, when caught and ill-used by the boys in the streets; besides, we have our dogs; all of which afford me amusement and interest.

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Mr. Murray has kindly sent me a copy of Darwin's recent work on the "Descent of Man." Mr. Darwin maintains his theory with great talent and with

profound research. His knowledge of the characters and habits of animals of all kinds is very great, and his kindly feelings charming. It is chiefly by the feathered race that he has established his law of selection relative to sex. The males of many birds are among the most beautiful objects in nature ; but that the beauty of nature is altogether irrelative to man's admiration or appreciation, is strikingly proved by the admirable sculpture on Diatoms and Foraminifera ; beings whose very existence was unknown prior to the invention of the microscope. The Duke of Argyll has illustrated this in the "Reign of Law," by the variety, graceful forms and beautiful colouring of the humming birds in forests which man has never entered.

In Mr. Darwin's book it is amusing to see how conscious the male birds are of their beauty ; they have reason to be so, but we scorn the vanity of the savage who decks himself in their spoils. Many women without remorse allow the life of a pretty bird to be extinguished in order that they may deck themselves with its corpse. In fact, humming birds and other foreign birds have become an article of commerce. Our kingfishers and many of our other birds are on the eve of extinction on account of a cruel fashion.

I have just received from Frances Power Cobbe

an essay, in which she controverts Darwin's theory,\* so far as the origin of the moral sense is concerned. It is written with all the energy of her vigorous intellect as a moral philosopher, yet with a kindly tribute to Mr. Darwin's genius. I repeat no one admires Frances Cobbe more than I do. I have ever found her a brilliant, charming companion, and a warm, affectionate friend. She is one of the few with whom I keep up a correspondence.

To Mr. Murray I am indebted for a copy of Tylor's "Researches on the Early History of Mankind, and the Development of Civilization"—a very remarkable work for extent of research, original views, and happy illustrations. The gradual progress of the pre-historic races of mankind has laid a foundation from which Mr. Tylor proves that after the lapse of ages the barbarous races now existing are decidedly in a state of progress towards civilization. Yet one cannot conceive human beings in a more degraded state than some of them are still; their women are treated worse than their dogs. Sad to say, no savages are more gross than the lowest ranks in England, or treat their wives with more cruelty.

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In the course of my life Paris has been twice occupied by foreign troops, and still oftener has

\* "Darwinism in Morals," &c.