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[page] 5

THE SPORTING GAZETTE.  
A TOWN AND COUNTRY NEWSPAPER.

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MR. DARWIN'S INFANT.

WHEN IT WAS ANNOUNCED some little time ago that Mr. DARWIN would shortly contribute to a certain "Quarterly Review of Psychology and Philosophy" a "Biographical Sketch of an Infant," founded upon his own observation and tending to elucidate his own peculiar views of the origin of species, we, in common with the rest of the world which interests itself in such speculations, felt considerable curiosity to read this novel contribution to the literature of "Evolution." We have now Mr. DARWIN'S biographical sketch before us, and we must confess to being somewhat disappointed with it. As it may, however, prove a useful guide and afford some valuable hints to parents who are anxious to test Mr. DARWIN'S theory of evolution for themselves, we conceive that we shall be rendering a public service by offering a few comments upon it. To trace the links between the human infant and the young of other animals, such as the anthropoid ape, and satisfy themselves of the close relationship between them, cannot but be a pleasing and instructive amusement to persons possessed of infants or in a position to study those of their friends. It may especially be regarded as an important branch of the science of natural history to which readers of this journal, by the tendency of their tastes, will be peculiarly attracted, and, therefore, it is in all respects a subject eminently fitted to be discussed in these columns. With this brief exordium, let us plunge in medias res and follow Mr. DARWIN through the successive stages of his biographical analysis.

The first important and striking features of infant existence noted by Mr. DARWIN are the following:-

"During the first seven days various reflex actions, namely sneezing, hickuping, yawning, stretching, and, of course sucking and screaming, were well performed by my infant. On the seventh day, I touched the naked sole of his foot with a bit of paper, and he jerked it away, curling at the same time his toes, like a much older child when tickled. The perfection of these reflex movements shows that the extreme imperfection of the voluntary ones is not due to the state of the muscles or of the coordinating centres, but to that of the seat of the

will. At this time, though so early, it seemed clear to me that a warm soft hand applied to his face excited a wish to suck. This must be considered as a reflex or an instinctive action, for it is impossible to believe that experience and association with the touch of his mother's breast could so soon have come into play. During the first fortnight he often started on hearing any sudden sound, and blinked his eyes. The same fact was observed with some of my other infants within the first fortnight. Once, when he was 66 days old, I happened to sneeze, and he started violently, frowned, looked frightened, and cried rather badly: for an hour afterwards he was in a state which would be called nervous in an older person, for every slight noise made him start. A few days before this same date, he first started at an object suddenly seen; but for a long time afterwards sounds made him start and wink his eyes much more frequently than did sight; thus when 114 days old, I shook a paste-board box with comfits in it near his face and he started, whilst the same box when empty or any other object shaken as near or much nearer to his face produced no effect. We may infer from these several facts that the winking of the eyes, which manifestly serves to protect them, had not been acquired through experience."

These phenomena, remarkable though they be, can hardly be said to have altogether escaped notice previous to Mr. DARWIN'S recondite research. Indeed, unless we are much mistaken, an appeal to the recollection of most mothers and nurses will result in a distinct confirmation of these facts from their own observation. Whether they had made deductions from their observations similar to those of Mr. DARWIN is a question, however, on which we are not prepared to offer an opinion. We next come to evidences of hereditary instincts and skill, as afforded by the following remarkable, but not, we believe, wholly unique actions of the Darwinian infant:-

"When 77 days old, he took the sucking bottle (with which he was partly fed) in his right hand, [...] and he would not take it in his left hand until a week later although I tried to make him do so; so that the right hand was a week in advance of the left. Yet this infant afterwards proved to be left-handed, the tendency being no doubt inherited—his grandfather, mother, and a brother having been or being left-handed. When between 80 and 90 days old, he drew all sorts of objects into his mouth, and in two or three weeks' time could do this with some skill; but he often first touched his nose with the object and then dragged it down into his mouth. After grasping my finger and drawing it to his mouth, his own hand prevented him from sucking it; but on the 114th day, after acting in this manner, he slipped his own hand down so that he could get the end of my finger into his mouth. This action was repeated several times, and evidently was not a chance but a rational one." It is pleasing to find evidences of rationality so early and also to trace the development of the powers of reason, as shown a little later by the curiosity which the sight of his own limbs excited in the breast of this typical infant. "When four months old," Mr. DARWIN says, "he often looked intently at his own hands and other objects close to him, and in doing so the eyes were turned much inwards, so that he often squinted frightfully."

Then we come to the first display of the passions. Of these anger was the earliest exhibited, and this is how Mr. DARWIN describes the first dawnings of that emotion in the infant:-  
"When about ten weeks old, he was given some rather cold milk and he kept a slight frown on his forehead all the time that he was sucking, so that he looked like a grown-up person made cross from being compelled to do something which he did not like. When nearly four months old, and perhaps much earlier, there could be no doubt, from the manner in which the blood gushed into his whole face and scalp, that he easily got into a violent passion. A small cause sufficed; thus, when a little over seven months old, he screamed with rage because a lemon slipped away and he could not seize it with his hands. When eleven months old, if a wrong plaything was given to him, he would push it away and beat it; I presume that the beating was an instinctive sign of anger, like the snapping of the jaws by a young crocodile just out of the egg, and not that he imagined he could hurt the plaything. When two years and three months old, he became a great adept at throwing books or sticks, &c., at anyone who offended him; and so it was with some of my other sons. On the other hand, I could never see a trace of such aptitude in my infant daughters; and this makes me think that a tendency to throw objects is inherited by boys."

That touch as to the inherited tendency to throw among boys is worth noting, and we wonder that Mr. DARWIN did not lay more stress upon this as an obvious link between the infant man and the infant monkey, for it is certain that in this resemblance between them which might well have been utilised towards establishing the doctrine of the common origin of the two.

However, to pass on the passion of fear, which Mr. DARWIN thinks is, perhaps, displayed as soon as anger. On this point, too, we shall quote Mr. DARWIN'S ipsissima verba:-

"It is well known how intensely older children suffer from vague and undefined fears, as from the dark, or in passing an obscure corner in a large hall, &c. I may give as an instance that I took the child in question, when 2¼ years old, to the Zoological Gardens, and he enjoyed looking at all the animals which were like those that he knew, such as deer, antelopes &c., and all the birds, even the ostriches, but was much alarmed at the various larger animals in cages. He often said afterwards that he wished to go again, but not to see 'beasts in houses;' and we could in no manner account for this fear. May we not suspect that the vague but very real fears of children, which are quite independent of experience, are the inherited effects of real dangers and abject superstitions during ancient savage times? It is quite conformable with what we know of the transmission of formerly well-developed characters, that they should appear at an early period of life, and afterwards disappear."

Here, then, we have the infant, at any rate, showing in a very marked way his relationship with the savage stages of mankind - a proof, if any were needed, that even in the highest stages of civilisation we still retain distinct reminiscences of our savage origin.

It is not, however, till we come to the "Pleasurable Sensation" of the infant that Mr. DARWIN

endeavours to trace anything in the conduct of his child which distinctly allies him with the young of other animals. The features on which Mr. DARWIN lays stress will be found in the following passage:-

"It may be presumed that infants feel pleasure whilst sucking, and the expression of their swimming eyes seems to show that this is the case. This infant smiled when 45 days, a second infant when 46 days old; and these were true smiles, indicative of pleasure, for their eyes brightened and eyelids slightly closed. The smiles arose chiefly when looking at their mother, and were therefore probably of mental origin; but this infant often smiled then, and for some time afterwards, from some inward pleasurable feeling, for nothing was happening which could have in any way excited or amused him. When 110 days old he was exceedingly amused by a pinafore being thrown over his face and then suddenly withdrawn; and so he was when I suddenly uncovered my own face and approached his. He then uttered a little noise which was an incipient laugh. Here surprise was the chief cause of the amusement, as is the case to a large extent with the wit of grown-up persons. I believe that for three or four weeks before the time when he was amused by a face being suddenly uncovered, he received a little pinch on his nose and cheeks as a good joke. I was at first surprised at humour being appreciated by an infant only a little above three months old, but we should remember how very early puppies and kittens begin to play. When four months old, he showed in an unmistakable manner that he liked to hear the pianoforte played; so that here apparently was the earliest sign of an æsthetic feeling, unless the attraction of bright colours, which was exhibited much earlier, may be so considered."

We cannot say that our own observation has led us to detect any signs of "æsthetic feeling" in puppies and kittens, but possibly we may have mistaken the indications of this feeling in their case for something else, as, for example, when a dog howls at the sound of music he may be merely expressing in the most emphatic manner open to him the keen æsthetic pleasure which the ravishing melody affords him.

It is, however, when he reaches the Association of Ideas, Reasons, &c., that Mr. DARWIN'S Biological Sketch becomes most intensely interesting. Take these incidents for example:-

"When four and a half months old, he repeatedly smiled at my image and his own in a mirror, and no doubt mistook them for real objects; but he showed sense in being evidently surprised at my voice coming from behind him. Like all infants, he much enjoyed thus looking at himself, and in less than two months perfectly understood that it was an image; for if I made quite silently any odd grimace, he would suddenly turn round to look at me. He was, however, puzzled at the age of seven months, when being out of doors he saw me on the inside of a large plate-glass window, and seemed in doubt whether or not it was an image. Another of my infants, a little girl, when exactly a year old, was not nearly so acute, and seemed quite perplexed at the image of a person in a mirror approaching her from behind. The higher apes which I tried with a small looking-glass behaved differently; they placed their hands behind the glass, and in doing so showed their sense, but far from taking pleasure in looking at themselves they got angry and would look no more.

It is a little mortifying, perhaps, to find that the "higher apes" (does Mr. DARWIN, then, class man among the lower apes?) display considerably more sense in connection with mirrors than the human infant. But Mr. DARWIN makes amends for this by showing that after all there are some animals less sensible than the said human infant. He says:-

"The facility with which associated ideas due to instruction and others spontaneously arising were acquired, seemed to me by far the most strongly marked of all the distinctions between the mind of an infant and that of the cleverest full-grown dog that I have ever known. What a contrast does the mind of an infant present to that of the pike, described by Professor Möbius, who during three whole months dashed and stunned himself against a glass partition which separated him from some minnows; and when, after at last learning that he could not attack them with impunity, he was placed in the aquarium with these same minnows, then in a persistent and senseless manner he would not attack them."

The primary indications of the possession of "moral sense" are of course looked for with the utmost interest and impatience by the rapt parent, and Mr. DARWIN'S experience on this point will be found worth comparing with those of the ordinary run of parents. We give them in toto as follows:-

"The first sign of moral sense was noticed at the age of nearly 13 months: I said "Doddy (his nickname) won't give poor papa a kiss,—naughty Doddy. These words, without doubt, made him feel slightly uncomfortable; and at last when I had returned to my chair, he protruded his lips as a sign that he was ready to kiss me; and he then shook his hand in an angry manner until I came and received his kiss. Nearly the same little scene recurred in a few days, and the reconciliation seemed to give him so much satisfaction, that several times afterwards he pretended to be angry and slapped me, and then insisted on giving me a kiss. So that here we have a touch of the dramatic art, which is so strongly pronounced in most young children. About this time it became easy to work on his feelings and make him do whatever was wanted. When 2 years and 3 months old, he gave his last bit of gingerbread to his little sister, and then cried out with high self-approbation "Oh kind Doddy, kind Doddy". Two months later, he became extremely sensitive to ridicule, and was so suspicious that he often thought people who were laughing and talking together were laughing at him. A little later (2 years and 7½ months old) I met him coming out of the dining room with his eyes unnaturally bright, and an odd unnatural or affected manner, so that I went into the room to see who was there, and found that he had been taking pounded sugar, which he had been told not to do. As he had never been in any way punished, his odd manner certainly was not due to fear, and I suppose it was pleasurable excitement struggling with conscience. A fortnight afterwards, I met him coming out of the same room, and he was eyeing his pinafore which he had carefully rolled up; and again his manner was so odd that I determined to see what was within his pinafore, notwithstanding that he said there was nothing and repeatedly commanded me to "go away," and I found it stained with pickle-juice; so that here was carefully planned deceit. As this child was educated solely by working on his good feelings, he soon became as truthful, open, and tender, as anyone could desire."

It would have been interesting if Mr. DARWIN had given us his opinion as to whether this very early propensity to deceit is derived from the father or the mother. For it is a point on which both poets and philosopher are much divided as to whether deceit is more pre-eminently a masculine or a feminine failing. It is said on the one hand to have originated with EVE, but on the other hand it is pointed out with some force that the great master of the art was the Serpent, and he is invariably assigned the higher gender. Mr. DARWIN, we regret to find, throws no light on this moot point.

We lastly come to the infant's "Means of Communication," and here at last we trench upon the evolution theory:-

"I was particularly struck with the fact that when asking for food by the word mum he gave to it (I will copy the words written down at the time) "a most strongly marked interrogatory sound at the end". He also gave to "Ah," which he chiefly used at first when recognising any person or his own image in a mirror, an exclamatory sound, such as we employ when surprised. I remark in my notes that the use of these intonations seemed to have arisen instinctively, and I regret that more observations were not made on this subject. I record, however, in my notes that at a rather later period, when between 18 and 21 months old, he modulated his voice in refusing peremptorily to do anything by a defiant whine, so as to express "That I won't"; and again his humph of assent expressed "Yes, to be sure". M. Taine also insists strongly on the highly expressive tones of the sounds made by his infant before she had learnt to speak. The interrogatory sound which my child gave to the word mum when asking for food is especially curious; for if anyone will use a single word or a short sentence in this manner, he will find that the musical pitch of his voice rises considerably at the close. I did not then see that this fact bears on the view which I have elsewhere maintained that before man used articulate language, he uttered notes in a true musical scale as does the anthropoid ape *Hylobates*."

Mr. DARWIN is provokingly reticent as to the bearing of these observations upon his own theory of evolution, and as his paper abruptly concludes with the passage last quoted it will be seen that he makes no attempt to sum up his deductions from this study of the idiosyncrasies of his infant. Possibly at this point his own good feeling prompted silence, and he was rather ashamed of his eagerness to trace a resemblance between his own child and the anthropoid ape. We can appreciate and commend such a feeling, for it is not a pleasant picture to contemplate, that of a father subjecting his infant son to a microscopic investigation with the object of proving him allied to, and sprung from, the lower forms of animal life. Still, there are persons to whom such a study may have a morbid fascination, and if there be any such among the readers of this journal we would counsel them to supplement Mr. DARWIN'S researches on this point by bringing up an infant anthropoid ape and an infant man together, and carefully noting the points of resemblance between the two. The result might possibly be convincing evidence in favour of the DARWINIAN theory of the origin of species, and our close kinship with the ape might be incontrovertibly established. In any case

the strong similarity between the infantile characteristics of man and the lower animal might lead to a higher and kindlier consideration for creatures ostensibly so little removed from ourselves in origin, whilst at the same time it might tend to give us a humbler and juster estimate of the real position of man among animals and of his proper place in the economy of Nature.