NEW BOOKS.

THE DESCENT OF MAN AND SELECTION IN RELATION TO SEX. By Charles Darwin, M. A., F. R. S. In two volumes. Vol. II. New York: D. Appleton & Co. For sale by E. B. Smith & Co.

With this volume Mr. Darwin concludes the work upon which he has been so long and earnestly engaged; a work which, however great the differences of opinion it may excite, must be conceded to be one of the most thoughtful as well as remarkable of the present age. The first volume, which has already been noticed at some length in these columns, was devoted mostly to an attempt to show by examples, facts and probabilities that man is not a special creation, but is simply an animal, modified by slow degrees, and by various causes and processes extending their operations through long periods of time. Prominent among these modifying causes Mr. Darwin finds "selection in relation to sex," to the explanation and illustration of which he devotes the concluding portion of the first volume and all of the second. The doctrine is an offshoot from the doctrine of natural selection, which means, in the Darwinian dialect, the tendency to the preservation of those individuals of a species who are best adapted to surrounding circumstances. Selection in relation to sex goes a step farther, and is based upon a claimed principle, which will be novel to oppressed and down trodden woman, for it teaches in substance, what many have before held, that the man is what the woman makes him.

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Mr. Darwin's strongest illustrations are taken from the birds, among whom, when the female shows her preference for a particularly brilliant style of male dress, the succeeding generations of male birds in a given species become more and more addicted to that style, the cause being that from each generation the female selects the most beautiful specimen, or the one most accordant to her taste. In this manner Mr. Darwin traces the origin, growth and extension of the peacock's gaudy plumage, and, though he hardly brings his doctrine down to the test of direct application to mankind in its present state, he urges very strongly that this sexual selection has played a very important part in the transformation of the brute into the human being.

To assign Mr. Darwin's theories their proper place, and to ascertain their real weight and their bearing upon man's history, is a task requiring too much patient investigation to be attempted here; the author's eminence as a student of natural history, the labor he has bestowed upon his work and the modest earnestness with which he urges his opinions—while they cannot exempt him from the fullest criticism—certainly entitle him to that calm examination which should ever characterize the search after truth. While we have, as before intimated, neither time nor inclination to enter upon this examination here, it may not be amiss to point out the principal difficulties in the way of a general adoption of Mr. Darwin's opinions. And the first of these is that the facts and illustrations adduced by Mr. Darwin to show man's descent from an animal form, seem to stop far short of conviction, advancing no farther than

the outer wall of probability; while "the testimony of the rocks" goes very far to prove that man has been, for ages upon ages, as distinct from the anthropomorphous ape as he now is.

Another great difficulty in the way of accepting the conclusions of this work, is found in the religious opinions so widely held with regard to man's origin and destiny. These views cannot be met and conquered by any argument from mere facts, for one of the principal strongholds of most religious opinions lies outside the domain of the natural sense and acknowledges no submission to logic. There are other, and perhaps graver difficulties to be overcome before the Darwinian light shall fully shine before men, but the statement even of these shows that the pathway of the new idea is not a paved street, nor even a macadamized thoroughfare, but a rough and thorny road through an enemy's country. Of some of these difficulties Mr. Darwin himself seems not unmindful, and at the close of his work he defines so well his position with regard to certain objectors, that we give him the privilege of closing the discussion in his own words:

"The main conclusion arrived at in this work, namely, that man is descended from some lowly organized form, will, I regret to think, be highly distasteful to many persons. But there can hardly be a doubt that we are descended from barbarians. The astonishment which I felt on first seeing a party of Fuegians on a wild and broken shore will never be forgotten by me, for the reflection at once rushed into my mind—such were our ancestors. These men were absolutely naked, and bedaubed with paint, their long hair was tangled, their mouths frothed with excitement, and their expression was wild, startled and

distrustful. They possessed hardly any arts, and, like wild animals, lived on what they could catch; they had no government and were merciless to everyone not of their own small tribe. He who has seen a savage in his native land will not feel much shame, if forced to acknowledge that the blood of some more humble creature flows in in his veins. For my own part, I would as soon be descended from that heroic little monkey, who braved his dreaded enemy in order to save the life of his keeper; or from that old baboon, who, descending from the mountains, carried away in triumph his young comrade from a crowd of astonished dogs—as from a savage who delights to torture his enemies, offers up bloody sacrifices, practices infanticide without remorse, treats his wives like slaves, knows no decency, and is haunted by the grossest superstitions."

It is time, however, to take leave of Mr. Darwin, and we do so with the less regret, knowing the intelligence of that public which will read this book, and feeling convinced that, whether his conclusions are entirely justified are not, they furnish food for the kind of thought which shows, as convincingly as anything can, Darwin can say, how much man has advanced from his original, whether animal or barbarian.