
Our Book Table.

SCIENTIFIC.

THE DESCENT OF MAN, and Selection in Reference to Sex. By Charles Darwin. D. Appleton & Co. In this work the author displays the same wealth of learning and ingenuity in reasoning which have placed him in the foremost rank of philosophic naturalists. Nevertheless, some of his conclusions appear to us not proven, and others we believe to be altogether erroneous. It would be out of place, in a brief notice, to attempt a discussion of the general theory of evolution, of which Darwin has been the ablest advocate, and which is the fundamental idea of the present work. It appears to us a legitimate and plausible theory; yet, in the face of the strong objections which have been but imperfectly answered, its advocates have no right to speak of it as a demonstrated certainty. The first part of the present work treats specifically of the application of this theory to man, and on this subject we are disposed to make a single remark. A poet has spoken of man as —

“In doubt to deem himself a god or beast;”

and, in a certain important sense, he is both. He has an animal nature, which is kindred with that of the brutes in all its laws and properties, and which may conceivably be kindred with them in its genesis. Of the earth, earthy. — formed from the

ignoring of this spiritual nature. When Darwin tells us that he "has approached [the discussion of the moral sense] exclusively from the side of natural history," we see the see the *rationale* of his error. Natural history has no more to do with the moral sense than it has with the doctrine of the Trinity. And when we see the author laboring through one chapter to show that conscience is only a development of the social instincts of animals, we realize that from an erroneous stand-point only erroneous conclusions can be reached.

We regret that the great naturalist has adopted these views, since they will be eagerly seized upon by the assailants of Christianity. Yet it would be unjust to confound him with others who advocate the same views with very different spirit. In this, as in his other works, Darwin avows a belief in a personal God, and never speaks disrespectfully of religion. The aim and scope of his writings are purely scientific; and not one page bears a trace of the infidel polemics of Huxley or the blasphemous grossness of Vogt.