

SEXUAL SELECTION.

Mankind may differ upon the question whether they were created a "little lower than the angels," or are only developed a little higher than the monkeys. But they will still owe a double debt to Darwin, first, for having occasioned a revival of scientific study among the people; and, secondly, for having brought clearly forward some most interesting and piquant analogies between the inferior animals and man. When a grass widow, or widower, aspires to a fourth or fifth husband or wife, it is some consolation to know that the sweetest songsters of the tuneful grove, against whose innocence not a thought can be breathed, will pick up a new mate within a few hours after

their "first" had been shot, and sometimes sustain seven bereavements only to be comforted with seven new marital consolations on a single day. Starlings and sparrows are most easily consolable. Though two sparrows are sold for a farthing, no weeping Madame Sparrow is permitted by the laws of nature to mourn disconsolate over the loss of her late-lamented for more than half an hour. What must be the diversity of emotion and the spice and fragrant versatility of life where the widow's weeds and bridal veil succeed each other like cloud and sunshine on a summer's day! What a soothing consolation, superior to that of any passage in Job or Ezekiel, such facts in the social science of the feathered world administer to those who are indebted to an Indiana or Connecticut divorce, obtained without notice to their recent partners, for all their hopes of future bliss!

When we learn that, before their first marriage, partridges come together in great routs, balls, soirees, levees, receptions, and parties; that forty or fifty of them dance together in the moonlight, far into

"The wee sma' hours ayant the twal," chasing each other in a general "Roger-de-Coverly" gallopade over the green moss, through the copse, and among the shadows of the dark old woods, or occasionally stopping to "balance their partners" or "forward four," and then resume their "*chassez* all around;"—we wonder whether there is most of human nature in the partridge, or of the partridge in humanity. Surely a French dancing-master, knowing these facts, could only eat roast partridge, on the general French principle that there can be no sin in consuming one's cousin, provided we do not digest a deceased wife's sister.

But though the first marriage among partridges and birds generally involves six weeks' continuous darning, all subsequent alliances grow easier and more spontaneous, until at last a courtship of a second and a half or two seconds is excessive, and gallantries which we would blush to name become not only easy but almost irresistible.

O fie,

"Ye little warbling birds,
That warble on yon dowerly thorn,"

how can ye marry so recklessly the second, third, or twentieth time, when ye were so coy and chaste the first? Is there any precedent for this in human nature?

Looking through nature up to nature's law of marriage and divorce, Mr. Darwin finds that, among those orders of gregarious birds which live in Oneida Communities and on Brook Farms, and are trying to carry out in practice the theories of Fourier and Victoria C. Woodhull, there is a very general preference on the part of the younger of each sex for the older members of the other. Not only do the younger female birds prefer the old "bloated capitalists" of the tuneful grove, a preference which is warmly reciprocated by the old billies, but the younger males actually lay down their hands and hearts at the toes of night-capped old screechers, ancient enough to be their grand-mamas. The antique-feathered baldames actually prefer these young and tender chicklings to companions whose acquirements and reminiscences would bear some comparison to their own. Nothing like this is seen among featherless bipeds, except among the Mormons, or in the Oneida Community. In another respect we may say, to the credit of man, that he is a slight improvement on his feathered progenitors. Among all these, though the female has the power of choice, the male wears all the fine feathers. Indeed, these seem intended solely to influence the choice. It is found that the beautiful dances of the birds of paradise through their leafy bowers, formed by the branches of tropical trees, are merely the dress parades of the mightier sex, held for the purpose of wooing the affections of the gentler but less fair. All the promenading, dashing, and strutting, all the singing, dancing, jewelry, and fancy dressing and millinery of the lower orders, is monopolized by the males. They even carry about their persons all the cologne, musk, attar of roses, balm of a thousand flowers, paphian lotion, kiss-me-quick, and "I love you," which the varied resources of nature have conferred upon their race as an unfailing charm to "win the object of their love."

their love.

It is pleasing to know that many of these amorous courtiers, not content with the graces they have inherited, take personal pains to develop new features of their toilet, and spend a good deal of time before their mirror, bringing out particular tail-feathers into robustitude and prominence with as much artistic taste as a remarkably fine lady would display in the imposing adjustment and general mystery of her panier. Mr. Darwin supposes that the females appreciate this vanity so highly that the bachelors, who display the most assiduous taste in these respects, marry easily and very much, thus resulting in the transmission of the improved style of tail-feather in question, and also of the taste for still further developing it to the next generation. So by the vanities of courtship and the caprices of sexual selection, individuals of the same variety diverge not only into different varieties, but varieties develop into species, species differentiate into genera, and so, finally, man may trace his origin through minute infinitesimal developments down to a polyp, a spore, or a molecule!

Mr. Darwin holds that variations in incidental features of form or color may be produced by the pairing of individuals in whom that variation has begun, and by the continued repairing of such individuals, until what was at first an accidental variation from one type becomes the distinguishing characteristic of another and new type. If this point were proved, which it is not, the leap from thence to a theory of the descent of man is part of the gymnastics of modern science.