

## LITERARY NOTICES.

*HOME LITERATURE.*

## BOOKS.

- 1.—*The Descent of Man, and Selection in relation to Sex.* By CHARLES DARWIN, M. A., F. R. S., etc. New York: D. Appleton & Co. In two vols. 8vo. pp. 409. 1871.

It certainly ought to be evident to all thinking minds that Darwinism can no longer be met by mere ridicule. We do not think it is spreading to such an alarming extent as some suppose, and yet it can not be denied that in both Europe and this country it has infected many minds. Nor should we wonder at this. Mr. Darwin's theory is so novel, and is, withal, sustained by so many apparently conclusive facts, that we are not surprised it should find earnest advocates even among the best educated minds of the age. But this is not all. Mr. Darwin's personal influence has about as much to do in convincing the reader as any of the arguments which he presents. There is such an air of evident sincerity in all that he writes, and such a personal magnetism in his style, that it is almost impossible to disbelieve his conclusions, especially since they are generally based upon the most patient, laborious, and thorough induction of facts.

Mr. Darwin's last work may be accepted, we presume, as that upon which his reputation will chiefly rest. On this, he has expended his most mature thought. Certainly the work contains much that is valuable. Many of the facts are entirely new, while old ones are frequently made to render a new meaning and arrange themselves in new classifications. Nor can it be denied that there is much plausibility in Mr. Darwin's theory of the Descent of Man. Of course this theory is familiar to our readers. What was the logical conclusion of Mr. Darwin's "Origin of Species" is boldly affirmed in the volumes before us. However unpleasant the reflection may be, his theory forces us to accept a somewhat uncomplimentary ancestry. Still, this fact should not deter us from accepting the truth. Hence, the first matter which should interest us is an inquiry concerning the truth of Darwinism. Is it true?

To answer this question fully would require more space than we can at present command; and yet we think it is easy to show in a few words that Mr. Darwin's conclusion does not follow from his premises. The argument

upon which he chiefly relies, is founded on the *similarity* or homogeneity between man and the animals below him. Now no one who is at all acquainted with the facts will seriously question many of Mr. Darwin's premises. For ourselves we are quite ready to admit all he claims in the way of similarity, and yet we do not come to the same conclusion he does. In fact, reasoning *à priori*, we would expect to find this similarity. The great Creator has fixed the impress of unity on all his works, and it is not at all surprising that we frequently find striking resemblances, especially among things in the same kingdom. There is a striking resemblance between many of the features of the Jewish and Christian religions, but it does not follow that one is the offspring of the other. The Christian religion is *new* in comparison with the Jewish. Christ did not build on the Old Covenant, but on the New Covenant, which God had declared he would make with the "house of Israel and with the house of Judah." Resemblance, therefore, can not be taken as positive proof in any question such as Mr. Darwin discusses.

But suppose Darwinism is true? What then? Are we at once to discard the Bible testimony concerning the creation of man? We do not think this necessarily follows, but we can not give our reasons at present. The one single thing which Mr. Darwin's work aims at, it certainly fails to accomplish. That it aims to do away with the miraculous in the creation of man is too apparent to need discussion. In fact, the whole aim of modern Rationalism is to destroy faith in the Bible, by eliminating its supernatural element. Hume's doctrine was that a miracle is *impossible*, but modern skepticism is not willing to risk its plea upon this view of the matter. Hence, it seeks to show that miracles are altogether *unnecessary*, since every thing can be accounted for without the aid of the supernatural. This is certainly a more ingenious and plausible method of opposition than that adopted by the old school of skeptics. And if it can be clearly shown that the facts of nature can be explained by natural laws, without the interposition of miracles, then modern Rationalism is likely to have a very powerful influence in shaping the religion of the future. The whole matter is reduced to a question of *fact*, and it ought, therefore, to be settled without much difficulty.

Now let us look at Mr. Darwin's theory a moment, and we shall soon see how far it is possible to get rid of the supernatural. Let us allow, for the sake of testing his theory, that man did descend from an ape. From whom did the ape descend? Of course from something still lower in the scale of being. But let us press the question still further and ask where did this come from? It is plain that we have already gone far enough to show that there must be a point somewhere that requires a miracle. And it is just as rational to believe that man was created according to the commonly

received Bible view of the matter, as that he was created according to Mr. Darwin's theory. A miracle is required in both cases, but Darwinism has this miracle expended in the creation of a *monad*, while the Bible teaches that it was expended in the production of man. It does not require much reflection to discover which view of the matter is the more in harmony with the Divine character.

Hence, we ask again, suppose Darwinism is true, what has infidelity gained? Simply a transfer of the point where the supernatural is necessarily involved. It is the old story of the acorn and the oak. If it be said the oak is from the acorn, then we ask whence came the acorn? But if it be said the acorn is from the oak, then we ask whence came the oak? In either case a miracle is essential to any reasonable explanation. No matter whether we begin with the acorn or the oak, we can go only one step without the aid of the supernatural. Mr. Darwin may be able to give us more intermediate links in the chain of creation than the case we have supposed, but he will with no less certainty come to a point which nothing short of the miraculous can explain.

But if Mr. Darwin's theory be true, what will be the effect upon Biblical criticism? Not very serious, we apprehend. It may be that we will have to readjust some of our settled interpretations, "only this and nothing more." Revelation will stand, nevertheless. Every now and then some philosopher rises up who promises to convince the world that the Bible is wholly unreliable. But who does not know how futile these efforts have been? In nothing, perhaps, will history more surely repeat itself than in the efforts of infidels to overthrow the Word of God. "The world passeth away and the lust thereof," but "the Word of God lives and abides forever."

We are not among those who are alarmed at the spread of Darwinism. The theory is novel, and has some elements of power over scientific minds. But its central thought will have soon lost its force, while many of the facts which it has discovered will tend to advance alike the cause of science and the Christian religion. Hence we are disposed to think that Mr. Darwin's books will soon cease to attract any particular attention, except so far as they contain valuable scientific information. In this respect they excel even the works of Wallace, Huxley, Lyell, Vogt, Lubbock, Büchner, Rolle, and Hæckel.

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