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DARWIN'S DESCENT OF MAN.

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In this age of resuscitated theories we can be astonished at nothing. There is no speculation too ridiculous to lack admirers.

We read of India's inhabitants fearing an unlucky transmigration of soul after death into the body of some unfortunate quadruped, the shadow of whose auricular organs goes far ahead of the balance of the body, but we had to wait till the present day to learn that enlightened Americans could be taken with the idea that at some early day in the distant past, some one of their fortunate ancestors had, for the benefit of future generations, become minus a tail.

We are led to write this speculative and abstruse article by "Darwin's Descent of Man," in which the author claims that our forefathers, becoming discontented with their caudal appurtenances, by judicious crossings succeeded in eliminating the offensive and discreditable appendage. Of course, once rid of the member which most prevented the wearing of close fitting garments, the question of removing the disagreeable overgrowth which exposure had caused to be spread over the body was a minor difficulty. Withal, as a reminder of the lowly condition whence he had risen, it was thought proper that the face should ever be afflicted with

a covering of this offensive hair, speaking in unmistakable language "how fearfully and wonderfully" we are "ascended."

Darwin's book, however ridiculous in our estimation, and in that of all those who are unwilling to believe themselves curtailed monkeys, has not been entirely fruitless, for a clergyman, the defender of some "ism," writes a letter in which he states that Darwin's book has had a wonderful effect in rendering him (the minister) kind to animals. As a consequence, the reverend gentleman applauds the book highly, and if the same privilege were granted to the animals under the good minister's control as was once granted to Balaam's stager, they would undoubtedly lend a cheering voice in praise of Darwin, who made a minister of peace humane. We have often read of the wonderful effects produced on ministers and their families by Helmbold's Buchu, Holloway's Pills, and Hostetter's Stomach Bitters, but only to-day do we find out that it has had a humanizing effect on the Rev. Mr. Blank's feelings toward the brute creation, and know that he is only a spoiled monkey, being an itinerant organ-grinder's dancer less the tail.

And here, with all due deference to the critics, let me quote an eminent

zoologist, who, in writing for that staunch defender of Democratic principles, the Metropolitan Record, says:

"Speaking of tails leads us by a most natural transition to Dr. Darwin. That eminent authority in speaking of the happy change, in undergoing which our ancestors, the apes, left off playing at 'all fours,' and by degrees became completely curtailed, says (if I quote him correctly), 'We can, I think, partly see how man' (from being an ape, of course) 'came to assume his present erect attitude.' Perhaps he can, but we doubt if the world at large will ever see it, even though Huxley, Lyell, Wallace and Hubbock, who, the Doctor declares, believe the theory expounded (albeit in a very shadowy way) in his new book, the 'Descent of Man,' should pronounce it true. Surely there is something much more tangible, and even more reasonable in the old hypothesis, that the tails wore away in consequence of being sat upon so much, than in his account of their disappearance. Nay, it has been asserted that monkeys (and he is undecided whether we are sprung from some of the smaller species or not) when hungry have been known to eat their tails. The disappearance then is accounted for. Besides, why does he call his book the 'Descent of Man.' Erstwhile, according to him, we groveled, now we walk erect. An ape of the largest kind is not of our stature. The book should have been called the Ascent of Man, or better still, it might have been entitled, without plagiarism, the Caudal Lectures."

However agreeable it may be to Darwin to think of the time when he might have had more of himself to take care of, we think that the generality of husbands prefer being minus the tail, else how many of them would find it a powerful retainer in the hands of an offended

partner. Many a public meeting would be slimly attended, and theatre managers and showmen would find their occupation gone. Now, if science succeeded in doing away with this appendage, we claim that some steps should be taken to bring things back to their original plentitude. Let this be done, at least for those who believe themselves deprived of something which nature intended they should never part with. For our part, knowing that artificial limbs can be supplied, and feeling deeply for Darwin in his bereaved condition, we will cheerfully head a subscription to procure him what he asserts he has been deprived of—a tail.

RINGGOLD.

"Ringgold" views "Darwin's Descent of Man" as a huge joke, perpetrated on gullible people generally. The work has elicited so much comment that thousands, who otherwise would never have heard of the "Descent," will read this publication, and thus become thoroughly acquainted with its contents. To reflecting minds, the avidity with which a vitiated public taste devours such works, there is much to excite sympathy and regret. "Darwin's Descent of Man" is a work which, if followed to its logical termination, will completely materialize our ideas on religious questions.

Taking words in their popular acceptance, without confining ourselves to their strict psychological definitions, we ask by what process have we received a soul, if we are merely derived from the ape kingdom? Or does Darwin believe that the mere instinct with which animals are gifted is nothing less than the first germ of the intelligence with which man finds himself blessed? At what stage of our gradual "ascent" did this fortunate coincidence, in which instinct was merged into intelligence, take place? But, does Darwin believe in the immortality of the

soul, in its spirituality? A man who is so lost to reason as to imagine that the mere chatter of the monkey tribes is the starting-point, or superstructure of languages, can scarcely be supposed to have sufficient higher reason to perceive the more subtle problems in the divine economy manifested in our formation. In Darwin's vagaries we have sufficient evidence of the weakness of the strongest minds when not guided by that divine light without which we cannot be acceptable to Him in whose likeness we

are made. If this is a specimen of the progress which the nineteenth century so proudly boasts, we prefer to go back, and listening to the immortal bishop of Hippo, learn that "No more could the angel-child hold within the hollow of his tiny hand the surging waves which broke on the inviting beach, than can the intelligence of man peer through the mysterious web by which we are united with Him from whom we hold our lease of existence." N.

