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DIPS INTO CURRENT LITERATURE.

THE DARWINIAN THEORY.

[*The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex.* By Charles Darwin, M. A., F. R. S., etc., with illustrations. Vol. I. New York: D. Appleton & Co. Columbus: Gleason.]

With the controversial aspect of the Darwinian Theory we have nothing to do. If we shall succeed in giving to every reader of this article a clear idea what the Darwinian Theory is, we shall not have lived in vain.

It is not too much to say that, among non professional people of average intelligence, fully one half are of opinion that the Darwinian Theory teaches a sort of transmigration or transformation, through which the very identical ape of some generations ago is reproduced in his advanced stage as the man of to-day. Nothing of the sort.

The ape of some generations ago dies,

The ape of some generations ago dies, and that is the end of him. The man of to-day is born and that is the beginning of him. The end of the ape and the beginning of the man have no connection. Darwin's theory is not a theory of transformation—it is a theory of *development*—the same sort of thing practically as that process by which honest Hodge, (who came out to Her Majesty's Plantation of Jamestown in 1640, and was sold for five pounds of tobacco to pay his passage,) became a thrifty freeholder in the first generation, became Hodgesson the planter in the second generation, and branched out into full blown cavalier and Virginia gentleman of the First Families in the third generation.

In other words, it is not the same identical ape who is reproduced as a man; but that ape improves his opportunities, and marries into a superior family, so that his son is a grade higher; by a similar process the grandson is still farther improved; and so on, until some great great grandson, after having had greats enough added, drops his tail, and sets up for a man of the lower order, with only a rudimentary tail to show for his ancestry. In course of time come language, Freedmen's Bureau, Fifteenth Amendment, and other aids to progress, so that after a while this infinitely developed ape parts his hair in the middle, dances the German, and finally makes his appearance among the first families as a gem of purest ray serene.

It will be observed that we do not use the professional language with which these learned gentlemen are in the habit of obscuring their thoughts. Our object is to give the non-professional read-

ject is to give the non-professional reader a clear idea of the theory, by avoiding all technical language.

It is now nearly forty years since Mr. Darwin conceived his theory. He immediately (1837) began patiently to gather facts and make investigations. He ransacked every department of human knowledge—zoology, botany, and geology in particular. After seven years of unremitting labor he submitted his conclusions to Sir Charles Lyell, the great geologist, and Dr. Hooker. In 1858, Mr. Wallace, who had been for several years studying the natural history of the Malay Archipelago, wrote an essay and sent it to Mr. Darwin, in which he announced views similar to those held by Darwin. Accordingly, in 1859 Mr. Darwin yielded to the urgency of his friends and published his own views, in his first volume—"Origin of Species." Within ten or twelve years of that time his views had been adopted by nearly the whole scientific world.

The volume we are now considering is the first application of Mr. Darwin's theory to a particular species, considered by itself—although the theory is held to be applicable to species of every organic kind. In fact, there are no special creations of species—the germs of species, just as the germs of the individual animals of each species, are all alike, and the differential characteristics are evolved by Natural Selection, the processes of which have been in operation thou-

sands of years.

A familiar illustration of this process of natural selection, is that of breeding for speed in horses—through which a breed of fleet race horses is evolved, by the simple expedient of selecting and breeding from the fastest runners, generation after generation. Fine woolled sheep are produced on the same principle. And so on.

We confess a small difficulty in the way, right here. No doubt certain qualities of a species may be so improved as to greatly modify the characteristics; but does it ever occur that a new species is evolved? For example: by selecting the fleetest ewes and rams of the flock, might one in course of generations evolve a race-horse, or even a rein deer? If not, we are left in doubt as to the capacity to evolve even a nice little dancing man from a long course of natural selection in a family of apes. Of course this is the brutal doubt of ignorance; but we find no solution of it. Again: If the ape may develop into manhood by natural selection, why may not man fall back to apishood by the same means, reversed?

We confess a horrible doubt on these points which much fasting and prayer, to say nothing of loss of scientific reputation, have not been able to remove. It is certain that a very fleet race of sheep might be the result of the selection in the one case, as a fleet race of horses is in the other. But would the sheep ever

might be the result of the selection in the one case, as a fleet race of horses is in the other. But would the sheep ever drop his horns, as the monkey does his tail, and develope into a racing stallion? The man may degenerate into a very stupid and degraded condition of manhood—but will his tail ever grow out again in all its aboriginal length, until the man sinks back into the ape, from whence he sprang?

These doubts were of course long since surmounted by the Darwinians, or had no force with them. And Mr. Darwin has shown to the satisfaction of the scientific world, that a process of natural selection, analogous to that of breeding for size, or speed, or bottom, or fineness of wool, or what not, is continually going on in the organic world, without the knowledge or intervention of man. There is an unceasing struggle for life going on throughout the organic world, in which the weaker fall and are destroyed. The survivors propagate to their offspring the virtues through

which they have survived. And this is the process of Natural Selection, which results in a steady increase of development in all organic things.

This is the theory in brief. It would require more space than we have at command to attempt to show the infinite modifications claimed under it, the changes that result in one organ or form through the modification of another,—the increase for example, in the size of the skull, that may result from increased strength of the jawbone and its muscles, and the consequent necessity for heightened nutrition affecting the shoulders and chest, and this in turn tightening tendons, changing the relative length of bones, changing the creature's centre of gravity, modifying legs, shoulders and haunches, until these various changes result in increased aeration of blood, increased strength of lungs and viscera, and finally affect the very nervous system itself, and modify the temperament and characteristics of the animal and its modes of life.

The reader who may desire to see the most ingenious application of this theory may search the book for himself. For our part we are content to remain in the belief that we are descended from a God, rather than developed, however ingeniously, from a monkey.