

CORRESPONDENCE.

DARWINISM.—APES OR FROGS?

To the Editor of Appletons' Journal.

SIR: Your criticisms of Darwin's "Descent of Man," in the JOURNAL of February 11, 1871, are very just. That word *assumption* tells the whole tale. The facts on which he relies to prove his theory of development are not selected as judiciously as they might have been. There are difficulties in the ape theory that he does not remove, and some of them would not be in his way if he had given us frogs, instead of monkeys, as our ancestors

It is certain the frog contains many bones which correspond with the bones of man, and, if there is any difference, it may be accounted for on the ground of development. The same is true of the brains of the two types. As to the similarity of disease, there is not a school-boy who has not heard that, by a certain process, the frog can cause the hand of a man to become full of warts, and although the frog has great tenacity of life, yet in the process of pouncing, or lofty tumbling, both frogs and men find death, or bruises. That frogs will eat something that men eat, though men sometimes eat them, can easily be proved. As for parasites, internal and external, the frog has them in abundance.

The frog is developed from an ovule; and no observation, as yet, proves "that, at a later period when the extremities are developed, the feet of frogs, and lizards, and birds, no less than the hands and feet of men, do not arise from the same fundamental form."

Man has a love and a talent for music. So has the frog. I had for several years a frog under my steps, that always came out of an evening when I was playing the flute, and jumping upon my foot would remain there as long as I played. Then, for their own music! For hours I have listened to them in concert, and in time, causing the marshes and the lakes and ponds to resound with every note and every key of the gamut. Even blind Tom is compelled to own himself vanquished at his efforts to imitate their multitudinous variations. Jenny Lind and Mr. Kellogg give it up in despair. The tongue of the frog much resembles that of a man, and the vocal organs need only further development to make them perfect. With but little stretch of imagination the searcher of lost cattle has heard the frogs say, "Bob Jones, Bob Jones, here's your cows, here's your cows." And when he has waded into the swamp, and become nearly overwhelmed, he has been derided with "Ay, ye fool; ay, ye fool." If this is not so, then often in my infancy my nurse deceived me by a most Münchhausen story.

That frogs sometimes try to metamorphose themselves into other animals by swelling, we have the authority of Æsop, that most veritable of all fable-writers. Their bursting up without succeeding is very much like some of Darwin's developed apes. The assumption, from analogy, that either man or ape came first from frogs, is as strong as assumption ought to be. And, if Darwin had only started with the frog, he would have saved himself from that cruel blow you gave him when you said, "He has not been able to find, in the whole course of Nature, one single proof to confirm his assumption—not a monkey changing into a man—or a fish growing into a land animal." Here, sir, I beg you to turn Darwin's attention to the frog. What do we see? All the conditions of his theories complied with. What is that we see in the still water? A nebula or molluscous something; in it an ovule, in that ovule protoplasm, or force, or motion, or life, or something, call it *nature*, if you please, that develops into a living being and grows. It seems to be a kind of fish. It grows, and has gills, and mouth, and a finny tail. We call it a tadpole. Watch it! Its tail grows shorter, contracts, becomes entirely absorbed, disappears as completely as the hole of the Know-Nothing's cave, into which, after he had entered it, he took the hole in with

him, and left not a trace behind. No "one or two basal ones only embedded;" but, as the old negro shouted, in response to the prayer that the power of Satan might be curtailed, "Amen, cut he tail smack, smooth off!" The whole tail is gone, so that even McAllister's microscopes cannot detect in the os coccyx any remains of it! And still, look! See the arms and legs, the hands and feet, the thumb and great toe, waiting to be modified, developed, whenever it shall be necessary for this now four-footed or rather biped and bimanus animal to become a man! See this singular development, adapted to live in water, living on land, climbing trees, trying to stand upright, using its hands; acquainted with botany, not only with the plant's appearance or form, but its medicinal virtues, as is manifest from its eating plantain to cure the bite of a spider; and say, what presumption there is in the assumption that it may not yet be developed into a man; nay, that it has not been! Is not this theory all the more probable, because facts, things visible and tangible, prove the change, and the entire absorption of the tail? It is true, Darwin maintains that the "tail is not of much importance to some animals." My great favorite, *Æsop*, whose animals had all been developed into talkative and talking things, contradicts this assumption. A certain fox called a convention of his kind. He spoke to them about the uselessness of tails; told them, as Darwin does, "that all tails taper toward the end" (except the broad-tailed sheep) whether they be long or short; that they might become subject to "atrophy of the terminal bones, and so become completely embedded within the body, and leave nothing but an os coccyx, consisting of a few basal and tapering segments of an ordinary tail." He advised them to escape this atrophy by cutting their tails off at once. An old fox, given to assumptions, suggested that it was possible this truly benevolent advice might have resulted from the fact that this friend of tailless foxes had lost his own in some predatory excursion. On examination and an appeal to facts, the convention voted against the recommendation, and kept their tails. The acknowledgment "that no explanation has ever been given of the loss of the tail of man or monkey" is a presumptive assumption that man had a tail, or is developed from a race that had. Take the frog for the origin, and we have the facts of the tail and its disappearance; and of a wonderfully progressive development, from the mollusca to the thing that in many things resembles some things in man. Why reject facts and frame theories on assumptions? As Nature, without any wise forethought, or well-planned, watchful, designed system, only develops, or, in other words, as there is no superior, superintending power but Nature working by protoplasm, one presumption or assumption is as good as another. Let us, therefore, take the frog instead of the ape for our ancestor. Or, if Darwin prefers it, let the apes which have lost their tails be developed from the frog, and the frog from the tadpole, and the tadpole be developed throughout all developments down to the time when Nothing gave the order, "Go it blind, but develop as you go." Surely we ought not to be ashamed to own our origin to a blind chance, a nothing, nor blamed for the developments of a being whose "eminent distinction is the want of tail," nor for being like our ancestors.

Still, in spite of "science," and of Mr. Darwin's "facts," I must be permitted to believe that there is a God who made, sustains, and governs all things, and that He made us, and is our Father.