

## DARWIN IN THE DRAWING-ROOM.

It is almost a pity, for some reasons for which the author might not care much, that Mr. Darwin's new work was not postponed until the London season. His treatises are universally said to be more interesting than novels, and his books are, in fact, in as much request at the circulating libraries as the regulation three volumes of romance. Young ladies are able to talk a little in the descent of man, and, although the peculiar philosophy of the origin of species might be too much for them, they contrive, at any rate to get the amusing facts and illustrations of the theory into their heads for conversational use. It is after all only natural that so universal a concern should be experienced about the productions of a man who is so picturesque and vivid in enforcing his views. Society picked up its ears literally when it was informed that we have a reminiscence of our monkey stage of existence in certain formations of the organ of hearing, and raised its eyebrows on being told of the connection between a nictitating action and a similar movement constantly indulged in by Jacko. But we imagine the new work on expression must be still more attractive to polite circles. Here, for instance, we are instructed in the profound doctrine of The Smirk, considered from a very different stand point from that from which it has been hitherto regarded. It may be well said we knew not indeed what we did when we smiled. Our gestures for a boot-jack or the exact may have a carnivorous significance; our smile possess a touch of the alligator about it; our riability be suggestive to a Darwinian student of the laughing jackals. And then to mothers what beautiful fields and provinces of speculation are opened by Mr. Darwin's contribution to our stock of knowledge. The various shades of expression on the countenance of a baby mean every one of them far more than the famous nod of Lord Burleigh. The old myth that when a child smiled in its cradle asleep an angel was whispering to it is more ruthlessly upset by the magnetic eyes of the naturalist than by the interpretation of the nurses, who attributed smiling in the cradle to infantile dyspepsia. And then the playfulness of our young people and their conscious and unconscious attitudes, which we were content to wonder or be pleased at, should now remind us of the habits of cats and whelps. Why will some individuals insist on showing their teeth? And are we acquainted with the full historical meaning of the "cold shoulder"? We perceive in Mr. Darwin's book how astonishingly ignorant we are on these matters. We may, indeed, assume that we comprehend them on the surface, but that is in truth not comprehending them at all. The "cold shoulder" now flourishing, if such a phrase may be employed in a London drawing-room, was cultivated ages upon ages back in the forest primeval.

We are not, as it may be perceived, treating Mr. Darwin's volume seriously. It is beyond question that to thousands of readers it will appear in a somewhat absurd light, and so far we confess we believe no harm can be done by it. But a little learning, especially a very little, is a dangerous thing, and drawing-room Darwinism occasionally degenerates into materialistic slipshod, of a contemptible instead of a comic description. For this the author of the "Origin of Species" is not perhaps responsible. If persons unfit by intellect or preparation choose to read his works and misinterpret them, he cannot help their case. But might we not enter thus early a mild protest against Darwin at dinner and Darwin at tea? It is now the rage amongst the people in town to talk of this wonderful book, and a wonderful book it made of it when its facts and theories are imperfectly recollected and incoherently stated. It is, after all, easier to understand a novel than to understand the endeavour to reduce the notions of Sir Charles Bell. We dare not say what ladies ought to read or ought not to read now-a-days, but we may venture to hint that they should not be seen floundering beyond their depth. If Mr. Darwin is to be a household favourite, so ought his opponent. Both sides should have a hearing. Under such circumstances a universal course of anatomy and physiology should be undertaken. Without an acquaintance with these studies the terminology of Mr. Darwin must often appear obscure,

if not unintelligible, not only to most ladies, but to a great many gentlemen. And it must, moreover, be said that the mere "lay" taste for a work like the "Descent of Man" has in it a savour of vulgar curiosity rather than traces of a sincere desire to search after truth. This point, still, we do not desire to follow up. Comic Darwin is well enough, and in its exposition might supply an observer with further illustrations of the doctrine caricatured. This circumstance might restrain amateur readers of passages from the "Book of Expression." For the rest, it may be quoted that as the eye only sees that which it brings with it, the power of seeing a study of this volume will affect the circulating library readers very differently indeed, and it is so far well, for us, at any rate, that its materials do not consist of facts and statements resembling the Trebizond honey, which we know was composed of the sugar of noxious blossoms, and so was death to those who partook of it.

## THE GLOBE, FRIDAY,

## EXPRESSION.\*

There is a good old story of a horse dealer who displayed criticism by insisting that the most glaring weaknesses of an animal were proofs of excellence. Mr. Darwin seems to have taken a lesson from the trade when he puts forward a comparison between the expression of emotion in man and other animals as evidence of their common parentage, and further proof of the theory of evolution. It is interesting to look back on the steps in the author's course. He rides his hobby so hard and so straight, that we have some hope it will land him at last safe in old-established beliefs. The theory of evolution started on the principle of natural selection—the victory of the strongest in the struggle of life. This principle was intelligible enough, but unfortunately, there were a great many things not only inconsistent with the theory, but absolutely contradictory to its peculiarities of structure perpetuated which, instead of being useful to the possessor, were exactly the reverse—a cause of danger or weakness instead of safety or strength. Admitting that "natural selection" was delightful as an explanation of the fact that the Ptarmigan grew white among the snows of winter in order to conceal itself from its foes, still the principle failed to account for the conspicuous gaudiness of others of the feathered tribe. At first it might have been thought that a theory not founded on experiment, but on guess, as an explanation of phenomena, must be given up as soon as phenomena were discovered which were inconsistent with the theory. Mr. Darwin, however, modified his theory to suit the facts. Considering for a moment what was the cause that all people would allow to be the most variable and uncertain, he found it in feminine caprice. Here was the very thing he wanted. Who could venture to say that anything was too weak, useless, ugly, or absurd for some member of the sex to choose it. Inconsistencies might be expected if we had to take into account the various fancies of female coquettes of all classes, from the Newfoundland to the butterfly, the sturgeon to the baboon. There was no doubt a slight difficulty in the fact that it is by no means common for two females to have the same fancy, and that in order to perpetuate a useless variation, generation after generation ought to be capricious by rule, and follow one method in their madness, thus apparently acting contrary to experience. There was also another little difficulty. The principle of selection is by no means universal. Among dogs and fishes and a vast number of the lower animals, including gaudy-coloured moths, there is no selection whatever. However, the general principle was undeniable; feminine caprices might be the cause of numberless inconsistencies, and Genesis being excluded from the controversy, there was no man living who could say that he had watched the baboon from close to the present time, and that it had sprung into existence as a complete ape, and had never developed into a human animal. People might point out that, as far as evidence goes, there is no development of species; they might show from ancient statues that man was the same centuries before the Christian era; from the mummies of the Pyramids that a cat, precisely similar to the tabbies of to-day, lived four thousand years ago; or from the geologist records of primeval time that as many species of fish existed then as now in any given district. To this Mr. Darwin had his answer; 2,000 years were not sufficient for the most microscopic change; 5,000 a/c but a moment in the scheme. His theory promised existence millions of years beyond the sight of the most imaginative geologist. It was difficult to contend with a man who confessed that his evidence was lost, and only existed in his own fancy.