DARWIN'S DESCENT OF MAN.

The first announcement of Darwin's doctrine of the descent of man from monkeys and apes is shocking enough. The instinct which rejects it is founded in the very constitution of the soul itself. All revolutions are abhorrent to mankind until a conviction of their necessity is produced. But the age of science is begun: that of unquestioning faith is passing away. Fearlessly do men interrogate nature now, and boldly do they penetrate her secrets, resolved to follow the inductions they indicate, no matter what the conclusions involved. Of course theological ideas must be modified occasionally, to suit the changing forms of belief about the origin of our race, its divisions and destiny upon the earth. Let no man be alarmed. The advancement of knowledge has never yet been a hurt to mankind. Scientific questions must be scientifically determined, and none can escape the necessity of examining the proofs upon which new dogmas of opinion arest. Confusion besets all men upon a sudden emergence from darkness in to light, and yet a prolonged and steady gaze always rectifies the confusion. Now it must be confessed that Mr. Darwin has given a new point of departure to the scientific inquiries of the age. The foremost minds of the world are now applying their researches by the light of his theories. Some positive addition to the sum of valuable discoveries in the strange, eventful history of man, must be expected to result. For of all men living, Mr. Darwin seems to be the best fitted to investigate the origin of the species, and the whole subject of life in connection with the past changes of the globe. And it is significant that other men are now adopting his views and abandoning the older ones as untenable, who have powerfully contributed to give to geology its present shape and development. They are embodied in a new edition of an authoritative text-book on Comparative Anatomy issued this year in Germany, wherein the author speaks of the "theory of descent with modification, though natural selection," as constituting the most important era in comparative anatomy that has hitherto occurred; and regards comparative anatomy itself as one of the touch-stones of its truth. Considering, he says, that the number of those who have mastered the theory, and its real meanings and bearings is, though at present small, yet constantly increasing, and that too by accessions from the ranks of its former opponents, he feels justified in looking for the accomplishment of an auspicious revolution by its means. Unquestionably Mr. Darwin has evinced a patience in accumulating and a skill in using large masses of facts of the most varied kind, a wide and accurate physiological knowledge—an acuteness in devising and a skill in carrying out experiments, together with an admirable style of composition, clear, persuasive and judicial, which eminently fitted him for the undertaking he has made. In the future siftings of the discussion, the error of his doctrines will be easily eliminated, and while some new generalization of facts will remain to form a starting point for the philosophers and savans of the period it inaugurates.

In reading this work, whatever conclusion we may arrive at as to the ingenious theories of the author, no one can deny the ability, learning, varied research and acumen with which the whole circle of natural history is ransacked for facts and their bearing upon the theories propounded are brought into view. If the reader is not convinced, he will be entertained with a wonderful accumulation of facts presented in new lights and with a new bearing. Much of his discussion of sexual relation is striking and exceedingly original. That a general discussion of the modes of praising and courtship between the sexes should have some remote application to the fashions of the day might or might not happen. We submit the following extract as suggestive of the origin of the steatopygous fashion of the present day:

"It is well known that with many Hottentot women the posterior part of the body projects in a wonderful manner; they are steatopygous; and Sir Andrew Smith is certain that this peculiarity is greatly admired by the men. He once saw a woman who was considered a beauty, and who was so largely developed behind, that when seated on the level ground she could not rise, and had to push herself along until she came to a slope. Some of the women in various negro tribes are similarly characterized; and, according to Burton, the Somal men are said to choose their wives by ranging them in a line, and picking out her who projects the farthest a tergo. Nothing can be more hateful to a negro than the opposite form."—Vol. 2, pp. 329-330.

As we said before, let no one be alarmed. Our views of creation must be readjusted from time to time in the light of advancing science. In whatever way it has pleased the Almighty to generate man, it is impossible he should cease to feel that his chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. For it is not more evident that humanity exists, than that religion is its noblest attribute. We must bring science, therefore, to interpret the Bible, and not the Bible to interpret science.