

MR. DARWIN'S INFANT.

MR. DARWIN has recently devoted himself to the study of infants, apes having apparently rather palled upon him. Not owning any personal infant, and fearing lest the purchase of a collection of assorted infants, or even of a single specimen of the common British baby, would give occasion for scandal, Mr. DARWIN has preferred to investigate an infant belonging to his son—in fact, his own grandson. For several months the veteran philosopher has experimented with the baby in question to an extent that implies that its mother is either deaf, dumb, and blind, or else is hopelessly bed-ridden; for it is inconceivable that any efficient mother would permit an habitual scientific person to try experiments upon her baby without trying a few select experiments upon that scientific person's head, of a nature not wholly unconnected with large broom-sticks. On second thoughts, it is only too probable that Mr. DARWIN'S grandson is completely motherless, for in Mr. DARWIN'S report of his experiments he mentions a milk-bottle as one of the instruments used to test the infant's reasoning powers. Now, if that infant had a mother, why should there have been a milk-bottle in the house? Still, the fact that this instrument was in the house is not a conclusive proof of the absence of a mother, for if Mr. DARWIN junior is as profound a thinker as his venerable father, he may have bought a milk-bottle at an early period of his married career, with a view to contingencies. However, the existence of the mother of Mr. DARWIN'S grandson is not a matter of very great importance, and may be safely left for future investigations.

A careful study of the manners and customs of his grandson during the first four weeks of that unhappy morsel's life convinced Mr. DARWIN that it cried "automatically," or, as our Western scientific persons would say, "out of pure cussedness." Its cries meant nothing—so Mr. DARWIN insists, though all experienced matrons will sneeringly remark, "Much he knows about it." It cannot escape notice that Mr. DARWIN, thorough as he believed his investigations to be, entirely omitted to consider the influence of colic. He found that the baby cried whenever he attempted to hold it, and that it made no difference which end he held uppermost, or whether he laid it quietly on his lap, or, after placing it in the coal-scuttle, swung it violently around his head. Hence he argues that its cries did not proceed from dissatisfaction, but were due to the involuntary action of its vocal organs. How does he know but that baby was writhing in the painful embrace of colic, and that its cries were the expression of an instinctive longing for paregoric? This is a view of the matter which evidently never occurred to him, and yet he deems himself a close observer of nature.

He also informs us that the first material object which attracted his grandson's attention was a gold ring which decorated the philosopher's finger. If Mr. DARWIN junior is a wise man and is counting upon inheriting any of the old gentleman's property, he will do well to follow up the clue and ascertain how his father came into possession of that ring—a topic upon which the latter maintains a significant silence. Now, it may be confidently asserted that the gold ring in question was not the first object which the infant under examination noticed. Beyond all question its first perception was a sudden and acute perception of pins. There can be no doubt that our earliest impression in regard to this world is that it consists of too little milk and too much pins, and it is not until comparatively late in our infantile life that we discover marbles, matches, and other objects suitable for swallowing. Nevertheless, we search Mr. DARWIN'S voluminous report in vain for the slightest allusion to pins, and if we were to derive our knowledge of infants solely from him, we should be entirely ignorant of the great central fact of nursery science that an infant is held together solely and exclusively with pins.

It was subsequent to the Darwinian infant's perception of that suspicious gold ring that it exhibited a knowledge of the uses of the bottle. At least so Mr. DARWIN would have us believe. After the first month of its existence, the infant began to

howl with a well-defined object, and this object was his milk-bottle. Mr. DARWIN found that though he offered the clamorous baby a complete set of his scientific works, a photograph of Prof. HUXLEY, a large pitchfork, the skeleton of an orang-outang, and a score of other attractive objects, the infant continued to howl until provided with his bottle. We thus see—remarks Mr. DARWIN, in effect—that the first vocal request of the human infant is for a milk-bottle. Had Mr. EMERSON or any other New-England philosopher made this assertion, it would not have been wholly unjustifiable; but when Mr. DARWIN makes it, he grossly libels the matrons of England, who, with the trifling exception of a probably allegorical allusion to honey, are accurately described in the Old Testament under the figure of the Land of Canaan.

It is hardly worth while to describe any more of Mr. DARWIN's experiments, although some of them are certainly interesting, and at least one of them—his experiment of suspending the infant by the heels from the chandelier in order to utilize the force of gravitation in promoting a rapid growth of hair—possesses real value. Enough has been said to show that his views of the nature of infants are strikingly erroneous, that he is often mistaken in his data, and wholly untrustworthy in the conclusions which he reaches. It is quite clear that apes, and not infants, are his specialty, and henceforth he will do well to confine himself to the former, and to leave the investigation of baby to more competent hands.
