

## THE DOCTRINE OF DESCENT AND DARWINISM.\*

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BEING thoroughly persuaded that the Author of Nature is the Author of Revelation, and that He cannot be inconsistent with Himself, we cannot doubt that, when properly interpreted, the teaching of the former of these will be found to be in complete accord with that of the latter ; we are, therefore, always sorry to meet with a book, especially if it be one of unquestionable ability, which, whether written from the scientific or the theological standpoint, is calculated to widen the breach between the scientist and the theologian. Such, we regret to say, seems to be the inevitable tendency of the volume under review. The style is clear and vigorous, the presentation of the salient points of the theory of Evolution which is associated with the name of Mr. Darwin, is able and perspicuous, and so far, we find no cause of quarrel with the author ; the facts which he groups together are interesting, and his reasoning upon them, though not always conclusive, is ingenuous, but the spirit in which the book is written is objectionable in the extreme. The author regards religion with something like the feeling with which an enraged bull regards a red cloth. He never has occasion to mention it, or anything that pertains to it, without manifesting his evil *animus* toward it in a way that makes him appear simply ridiculous, and which is apt to suggest the idea that his judgment is worth as little in scientific matters as it is in respect to matters of religion his opinions are beneath contempt.

Mr. Oscar Schmidt is one of those towering geniuses who think themselves quite competent to deal with

all mysteries and all knowledge ; and he grows quite indignant at the idea of any one presuming to set limits to the domain of science. Of course no one denies to him, or anybody else, the right of carrying his investigations of Nature just as far as his faculties will permit him to carry them ; but sober-minded people do object to having the theories and hypotheses of any man or set of men palmed upon them for real science. No one, whose judgment is worth anything in such matters, is disposed to question the value of hypothesis, so long as it is modestly held as such. Probably most, if not all, the scientific doctrines which are now generally accepted existed at one time as mere guesses at truth. But every tyro in scientific study knows that only a very small proportion, indeed, of the theories which have been invented to account for the observed facts of Nature have ever been verified. Upon no point probably is the history of the past more admonitory than on this. The pathway of human progress from the earliest historic times to the present is strewn with the wrecks of theories which have been held by some of the greatest minds of the race, and, in some instances, were unquestioned for ages, but had to be abandoned when tested by clearer light and more extended observation of the facts of Nature.

Probably what has been will be. As history has repeated itself in the past, it will most likely continue to repeat itself in the future. Many of the theories of the present, and some, it may be, which seem to rest upon an immovable foundation, will, no doubt, be exploded by-and-by ; and

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