

and their marvellous mechanism, if no comprehending eye is lifted to behold and admire their magnificence?

And yet, conceding man's pre-eminence as the noblest fruit and the only interpreter of nature, he must still seem insignificant when measured by the highest standard. The slow, creeping progress of humanity, the dullness of faculty, the rarity of virtue, the variety and abysmal depth of vice, the debasing superstition, the constant and almost universal missing of high and worthy ends of being, are the conspicuous characteristics of our race. The names that history has preserved are, for the most part, those of monsters whose cruelty and rapacity have rendered the life of man a dreadful drama of unutterable woe. The results of pre-historic speculation do not ennoble the picture. To the facts of tradition and record, we must add the inferences of the anthropologist, which display to the imagination rude tribes of savages as the primitive men, more animals than rational creatures, living in cannibalistic borders, without art, literature or law, battling with one another in a cruel struggle for existence, and possibly retracing their origin to the muttering apes of primeval forests, where murder was the law of life. But without adding to the certain facts the conjectures of theory, we find truth enough to bring a blush of shame to the cheek of humanity. Comparing the career of our race with the beauty, the magnificence, the harmony, the serenity and the constancy of nature, we are compelled to repeat with the Psalmist the expression of wonderment, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?"

Man's opinion of his own importance and inherent dignity has fluctuated, because he is moved by feeling. His thought has ever vibrated between two opposite conceptions of himself. Today, in the fullness of his energy, he fancies himself the noblest of beings, and the measure of all things. Tomorrow, in a moment of weakness and humiliation, he becomes conscious of the hollowness of this high pretence,

and confesses to himself his utter incapacity to comprehend the simplest facts of his own being. And not only is he thus swayed by the emotions that sweep over him; he is also ignorant of the truth by which he can estimate his own worth and relative significance. Striving by natural knowledge to comprehend his own nature, he compares himself with every mode of being that comes under his observation. He finds himself unlike them all, yet having, to some extent, the attributes of each. His body is made up of chemical elements. It grows under the biological laws that rule in the vegetable and animal world, and these furnish him with a constant replenishment of energy, and when they fail him, he droops and dies. In higher attributes he is more like the animal creation, and some of its higher orders approach him in power to feel and to know; so that he almost fancies that he and they are of one nature, and his supremacy only that which is decreed from a larger accumulation of advantages.

He attempts to discover his own origin, and retraces with studious care the indications left in the mute history of the earth, engraved on sea-cliff and alluvial valley, or left in the mighty sarcophagi of geological strata. With patient diligence he strives to connect their fossil contents into lines of gradual evolution and descent; if, perchance, he may find herein the evidence of his own ultimate ancestry and thus know whence and how he came to be. But he finds a broken and imperfect record, which no human intelligence can decipher, requiring at almost every point the aid of an ingenious imagination to make the scattered leaves present an intelligible story. At last, after all his efforts, when he has reached the remotest backward limit to which his fancy journeys, he finds himself upon the border of a measureless past, stretching far away beyond the ken of mortal vision, perplexing and confusing his unsatisfied intellect, and leaving him weary, baffled, and as helpless as before.

The effort, by mere natural knowl-