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CREATION AS ILLUSTRATED BY EVOLUTION.

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Charles Darwin taught that new species of plants and animals have come, and continue to come, by the same route as that taken by all babies, namely, by being born of older individuals; only differing by the circumstance that the new individuals have varied somewhat from the parental features. In the concluding chapter of his *Descent of Man*, he draws the parallel between the origin of a distinct species by descent from a lower form, and the origin of an individual by the laws of ordinary reproduction. And he tries to forestall the charge of atheism by adding that the birth both of the species and of the individual "are equally parts of that great sequence of events which our minds refuse to accept as the results of blind chance."

To this general doctrine he appended a series of interesting speculations, naming them collectively *natural selection*, which in effect made the result mainly depend on second causes, and largely upon the chapter of accidents. Perhaps we should add that sometimes he seemed, notwithstanding his disavowal, to regard the accidents as blind. He often seemed to regard chance not as an instrument of Providence, but as a substitute for Providence. He indeed admitted, as mathematicians can prove, that there is no absolute chance in the course of nature; but he was not of a philosophical mind, and hence people were puzzled, when by the aid of chance he explained phenomena which had been usually ascribed to supernatural activity. It was this feature which gladdened the foes of religion, and dismayed many of its friends.

I shall always feel grateful that before the appearance of Dar-

SELF-CONSCIOUS PIETY.

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Some one has said that the worst enemy of the best is the good. The most dangerous counterfeit is the one that most nearly resembles the genuine.

There is a kind of piety that is so much like the finest thing in religion that it is frequently mistaken for it; and because it so nearly resembles the best, anything said against it is in danger of being misunderstood and regarded as an attack on the best. Instead of being the best, however, it is, in reality, the best's worst enemy; and one of the most insidious and dangerous forms of spiritual disease. It is a malady to which people who devote themselves chiefly or entirely to a religious calling are peculiarly exposed. It is an infirmity from which people, with the most consecrated intentions may suffer. I refer to what may be called "self-conscious piety."

The subject may be illustrated by that incident in the life of Moses, when he came down from the Mount with a face so radiant that the people could not stand the sight of it. He had been for forty days and nights alone on the Mount with God. The experience had been a rhapsody. So intense was the life of the Spirit that the needs of the body were forgotten, and for the forty days and nights he did neither eat bread nor drink water. He comes down with the tables of stone containing the words of the law. He is bringing from God to man, from the heights of holy communion to the levels of the common life, that moral code which has never needed a revision.

It is no wonder that he comes down from such communion a changed man. The mark of God is on him. He is coming down with the tables of stone in his arms, but with a light in his face that never shone on land or sky. He has caught from contact with the eternal a holy radiance, an unearthly beauty. No man can talk face to face with God and stay unchanged. No soul

can live forty days and forty nights in divine fellowship without a transfiguration. He who comes down from his retreat, conveying God's will in his arms, will come down carrying God's beauty in his character and God's peace in his heart and God's light in his soul.

Moses brings the light from the heights to the plains, from God to man. His shining face is a reflection, a revelation of life on the heights. It is the story of God. The people saw it and were frightened. They talked about it and wondered at it, and were uncomfortable. They told Moses so.

It was his first intimation that his face shone. He did not know God's light was on him. He supposed that he looked the same. He was not thinking about his looks, but about the law, about the people who had lapsed and whom he hoped might never lapse again. He was thinking of his message and of the God who dwelt in light inaccessible, but with whom he had talked face to face. And now the people were telling him that he had caught God's light in his own face.

What does he do about it? Does he lay aside the tables of the law and take his shining face for a text? Does he go into ecstasy over his spiritual development? Does he parade his lustrous countenance before his darker brethren and say: "Look at me and see what forty days and forty nights with God will do for a man?" No, he was unlike some other people who have been told that they were spiritually-minded and had shining faces. Moses hung a veil over his face and went about his work. He was so busy trying to serve that he had neither time nor inclination to think of himself. He was too much in earnest to make a display of his piety. "Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone," and when it was told him he veiled it.

There is a kind of piety which is in complete and striking contrast with that which Moses exhibited on this occasion. Instead of dropping the veil, it lifts it. Instead of shunning comment, it seeks publicity and wears its Christian graces where they are most accessible to observation. It needs none to tell it of its shining face, for itself is the first and often the only one to make the discovery.

THERE IS A SELF-CONSCIOUS PIETY.

There is a piety that knows what Moses was ignorant of. It is familiar with all its features and fond of pondering its good looks. There is a religion that spends much time before the glass. It is the religion of self-culture. It is the piety which stresses its own states and moods and seeks grace only for personal experience and development. There is a self-culture that is eminently sane and Christian. It is culture for service. The culture of self-conscious piety terminates on itself. Self-conscious piety is a votary of "the higher life," and by the higher life it means a state of divine favoritism for an inner circle of unusually saintly people to whom are given extraordinary privileges and exceptional grants. Its religious duties are a series of exercises, prayers, penances, morning watches, and what not, for the cure of its own soul. It believes that the best thing it can do for this weary, sinful world is to unveil its own excellences and display its shining face. It is the piety which nurses itself, coddles itself, indulges itself. It neglects the common duties of the house, the street, the school and the shop, and insists that they must not be allowed to come between it and its God. It argues that it cannot be expected to get spirituality into its face if it must be engrossed with these coarse and lowly tasks. It possesses virtues and is fully conscious of them. It has humanity and is proud of it. It is generous and insists on its generosity being known—not that it may be honored, God forbid!—but that God may be glorified for what he enables his proudly humble and unworthily unworthy servant to accomplish! All its prayers are answered. It gets all it wants. It has perfect peace. It travels on a religious special with parlor and Pullman accommodations and is sorry for the ordinary Christian who is trying to get to heaven on a common train.

It is the piety which never forgets itself. The first question it asks of any enterprise is, "What will this do for me? Will it bless my soul? Will it make me happy? Will it add to my spiritual assets? Will it roll up my credit deposit in the bank of heaven?" Self-conscious piety seeks a shining face for its own sake. It is the religion of the billposter. It feels it has scored success when it can say of itself what those young men

said to Mr. Moody that morning at his gate in Northfield. He asked them where they had been, and they replied: "To an all-night prayer meeting. Don't you see how our faces shine?" Mr. Moody replied from an early record: "Moses wist not that his face shone," and those young men suddenly discovered that they were in peril of one of the subtlest and most dangerous forms of spiritual disease.

A BAD BRAND.

It is not necessary to pass on the question as to whether the self-consciously pious are regenerate. It is enough to say that their religion is not the best brand. God has no special solicitude that we should know how good we are. He did not speak to Moses about his shining face as the old patriarch started down the mountain. Christ was not in the habit of telling his disciples that they were spiritually-minded. He did not call them to a religion of self-culture, but to a religion of self-restraint and self-surrender and self-sacrifice and self-effacement. The apostles were not men who made a display of their graces. They seem not to have known that they had any to display. We call them "saints," but they called themselves "sinners." Indeed, is it not of the very essence of true piety that it should be unconscious of itself? The kingdom "cometh not with observation."

The blemishes of self-conscious piety are early discoverable by an honest examination. In the first place it is introspective. It is a form of selfishness. It is absorbed with self. It is a spiritual distemper, reversing the soul's normal activities and setting it grinding on itself.

It is an intolerable form of conceit. He who is proud of his spiritual attainments is a stranger to the very genius of Christianity. Any kind of egotism is bad enough. Family conceit is vulnerable, especially when all one has to show for the glory of his progenitors is a "tree" that lacks both leaf and fruit. Conceit of position tires us, especially in a land of democratic institutions; conceit of wealth amuses or exasperates us; but when one is proud because he is good, he unmasks a form of conceit for which even the wardrobes of heavenly charity can furnish no cloak of concealment.

It is bigoted. It imagines that it has a monopoly of God. It concludes that its little Sinai is all there is of the eternal. It

unchurches and discredits the common Christianity of the world.

It is censorious. It is perhaps "preserved" for the heavenly kingdom, but preserved in vinegar. It is disposed to be scant of eulogy in its treatment of the Christian who "lacks spirituality," who has no states and visions, but who plods on trying to do the best each day with the tasks as they come, and who feels after he has done this that he is but "an unprofitable servant."

Sometimes it is spurious—all this pious parade is downright counterfeit. The false prophet, Mokanna, wore a silver veil over his face because, he said, his face shone with such a light that the ordinary mortal should he see it would be struck blind. It was afterwards discovered that behind the silver veil, instead of a supernatural light, were the shining scales of the leper. Any creed lays itself open to suspicion which brags about its shining face and tries to prove its character by claiming its virtues.

A Christian scientist says to me: "I have such wonderful peace. I have such wonderful calmness. I have such wonderful mental rest and self-control. I have such wonderful soundness. I have such wonderful freedom from sin. I love everybody. I have such happiness. Don't you know Christian science must be true when it has done all this for me?" And I remark in reply: "Old-fashioned Christianity has been doing this for people all these years. It has been giving them peace and self-control and happiness; but they have not thought it necessary to rush into print or make a speech about it. And as for freedom from sin, they are about as good as you are, only they don't know it."

They wist not their faces shine. They are not thinking about themselves, but about their work, their service, their Master.

THERE IS A SELF-OBLIVIOUS PIETY.

There is a religion that is self-unconscious. It does not brag. It has no nursery. It does not indulge in laudations of itself. A temperance fanatic who found himself unable to enlist Dr. Hodge of Princeton in his scheme exclaimed impatiently: "Have you no religion?" The Doctor replied: "No, none to speak of."

One day, at a lonely spot on the mountain, I chanced to push aside some dead leaves and uncovered a beautiful white flower. I could not classify it, but it was of rare beauty and grace. There

was no gardener to display its beauty, no florist to advertise its charms. It was doing its best without an audience. It was a perfect flower in the dark. This is nature's way. It is also the way of grace.

Yonder is a mother with a group of children around her. Hers is a busy life. She has little time to indulge even her religious proclivities. She cannot always go to church when she would. Often she must read her Bible in snatches as she sews. She keeps the morning watch by putting herself into the lives of her children. She is no shining light in spiritual circles. There is no fame to her piety. She is doing her best without an audience. She is a white flower under the brown leaves; but when God calls the roll of real saints her name will lead the rest.

It is a striking tribute Christ pays to self-oblivious piety in the parable of the sheep and goats. He has disposed of the goats. They have gone to the left with the melancholy reflection, that a claim to piety does not pass at its face value in heaven.

Then Christ turns to the sheep, his true friends, his loyal disciples and says: "I was an hungered and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye come unto me."

They begin to say: "When, Lord?" They did not know they had done anything good. They wist not that their faces shone. But the Master knew, and to them and to all such he says: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."