
This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google™ books

<https://books.google.com>



AN
EXAMINATION
OF
MR. SCOTT'S ATTACK
UPON
MR. COMBE'S 'CONSTITUTION OF MAN.'
BY
HEWETT C. WATSON.

"Where the feelings are allowed to predominate over the reason, in investigating a subject which appeals only to the understanding, it will generally happen that the judgment is defective."

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR;
AND SOLD BY
LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, GREEN, & LONGMAN,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.
1836.

Price Sixpence.

Digitized by Google

Minnesota Library
Access Center



THE LIBRARY
OF THE



CLASS 194C728
BOOK DSc08w

AN
EXAMINATION
OF
MR. SCOTT'S ATTACK
UPON
MR. COMBE'S 'CONSTITUTION OF MAN.'
BY
HEWETT C. WATSON.

" Where the feelings are allowed to predominate over the reason,
in investigating a subject which appeals only to the understanding,
it will generally happen that the judgment is defective."

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR;
AND SOLD BY
LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, GREEN, & LONGMAN,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.
1836.

LONDON:
Printed by A. SPOTTISWOODE,
New-Street-Square.

194C728
DSc 8 W

AN EXAMINATION, &c.

MR. COMBE's work on 'The Constitution of Man' is well known, widely circulated, and very highly esteemed by thousands of readers. Mr. Scott comes forward as the opponent of most of the views advocated in that work, and gives the following explanations of his reasons for doing so : —

" Although, during the first seven years after its publication, I did not consider an answer called for, seeing that it seemed to have excited little attention ; the case was altered after it appeared that the sale of it increased to many thousands, among a class of readers not the best fitted to detect its fallacies ; and that it was circulated chiefly in those places where the population had far outgrown the means of proper Church accommodation ; and where, of course, it was offered to the people not along with, but in lieu of, religious instruction. It was then pressed upon me by several friends, that the work ought to be answered, and that I ought to undertake the task, as I understood the subject of Phrenology, as maintained and taught by Mr. Combe, and was able to address him in his own language ; and that as I had already studied his book with the view of answering it, the labour was already half performed."

As some hundreds (not to say, thousands) of persons now understand Phrenology, as taught and maintained by Mr. Combe, it is not very clear how the circumstance of Mr. Scott being one of them should cause him to be particularly singled out for the performance of a duty, which the fact of his having already studied the work " with the view of answering it " would stamp as a self-

imposed task. I perfectly agree with Mr. Scott's friends that any published work ought to be answered, if containing serious moral errors. And if the real motive of Mr. Scott's undertaking be a desire of refuting the errors contained in the work of Mr. Combe, with the hope of counteracting an injury thus threatened to others, I also may plead the call of duty, urging me to examine the errors contained in Mr. Scott's work, and to expose its utter unfitness to give evidence against Mr. Combe's views. The notice in the forty-ninth number of the *Phrenological Journal* must be construed as an intimation that Mr. Combe entertains no intention of doing this himself; nor should I have felt any desire to obtrude myself into a position declined by him, had it not been rumoured that a cheap edition of Mr. Scott's work is preparing for circulation among the people; — to return the words of Mr. Scott upon himself, "among a class of readers not the best fitted to detect its fallacies." Much better fitted are they, however, than Mr. Scott appears to believe, though a little assistance may do them no harm, as a preventive antidote.

In taking on myself this task, I must intimate that it is done by one who has already made his own decision on the demerits of Mr. Scott's essay; and who will write accordingly, not for the purpose of giving a full review of its contents, or of discussing the questions treated of in 'The Constitution of Man,' but for the purpose of showing how immeasurably this work of Mr. Scott falls short of its lofty pretension of refuting Mr. Combe's philosophical doctrines. Without subscribing to the whole of those doctrines, I am well satisfied that they are generally sound in principle, and are calculated to effect great good. I am just as well convinced that Mr. Scott's present work is largely diluted with error, is calculated to injure superficial readers, and has been written under a bias greatly distorting the judgment of its author. I

hope elsewhere to enter upon some consideration of the philosophical doctrines maintained by Mr. Combe ; and shall then have the opportunity of mentioning one or two points, in regard to which, it seems to me, that Mr. Scott's opinions are more tenable than those of Mr. Combe. Generally it appears to be quite the reverse.

Mr. Scott's treatise is divided into twelve chapters, and occupies 332 pages, besides a long preface. To go regularly through the whole, and expose all the misconceptions and errors contained in it, would be an unprofitable waste of time, type, paper, and every thing else. I shall therefore take the Preface and First Chapter, for examination ; and shall presume the whole work morally overturned, if I am successful in showing from these that Mr. Scott has greatly misconceived the statements and opinions of Mr. Combe (such misconception being proved by the strange manner in which Mr. Combe's essay is misquoted and misrepresented), and has made numerous errors and inconsistencies in his own arguments.

MR. SCOTT'S PREFACE.

The very first page of the preface accuses Mr. Combe of attacking "divines as guilty of gross neglect of duty in not at once adopting" his phrenological "views, and following them out in all their consequences in their instructions to the people." This statement is so much an exaggeration as to be scarcely any thing else than a misstatement. Mr. Combe says that divines have been too apt to disregard the lights of science, and in neglecting to avail themselves of the advantages afforded by knowledge, they have failed to effect that degree of good which they otherwise might have done. This is a mere truism, applicable not only to divines but to many other teachers ; and, so far as I can find by his works, Mr. Combe limits himself to this intimation, and to pointing out certain circumstances which have stood in the way and prevented

the full benefits expected from the exertions of divines. A short extract from the work in question will show, that whilst he points out the causes of their want of success, he still speaks of divines with due respect. The supposition of extreme cases will serve as an introduction to a passage, which may not be understood in all its force, when presented apart from the general text of the book. Let us first suppose the case of an individual attending church, who is entirely deaf. It is abundantly evident that the most eloquent appeals of a clergyman will be useless with this person; and that if his clerical guide would confer any religious benefit upon him, the defect must be first known, and removed, or some other mode of instruction resorted to. Suppose, again, that instead of deafness, some disease or malformation of brain renders the individual incapable of correctly appreciating the admonitions of his pastor. The instructions of the latter will be just as completely thrown away whilst he remains ignorant of the impediments. These are extreme, but plain, instances, which every one must see. We will now let Mr. Combe add a third supposition, equally plain and indisputable to those who have studied the influence of the brain, though less obvious to ignorant persons. — “If certain physical circumstances and occupations have a natural tendency to blunt all the higher feelings and faculties of the mind, in consequence of their influence on the nervous system in general, and the brain in particular, and if religious emotions cannot be experienced with full effect by individuals so situate, the ascertainment, with a view to removal, of the nature, causes, and effects, of these impediments to holiness, is not a matter of indifference. This view has not been systematically adopted and pursued by the religious instructors of mankind in any age or any country, and for this sole reason, in my humble opinion, that the state of moral and physical science did not enable them either to appreciate its importance or carry it into effect.” How widely unlike *an attack upon divines for gross neglect of duty* does this passage read! Now we must call on Mr.

Scott to make good his words, by adducing some passage in which Mr. Combe *has* attacked divines for gross neglect of duty in not at once adopting phrenological views. And as to following out such views in *all their consequences*, Mr. Combe does not himself attempt this. Nay, he expressly intimates that ages must elapse before it can be done.

Arguing on his assumed ground, that Mr. Combe attacks the divines for being unacquainted with Phrenology, and for not teaching it to their flocks, our author contends that it is a recent science, yet imperfect; and that the clergy, as a body, are necessarily ignorant of it, and consequently unable to teach it if approved of, or to refute it if deemed erroneous. If Mr. Combe has *not* attacked the clergy, as stated by Mr. Scott, this ingenious defence is just a waste of words. But the clergy have had the same opportunities as other persons, for learning the doctrines of Phrenology; though, under all the circumstances of the case, no tolerant person would condemn them for being yet little acquainted with these doctrines, as a body. Moreover, many individuals among the clergy are warm advocates of Phrenology; although several circumstances combine to make the medical profession first adopt and appreciate the subject.

Mr. Scott next proceeds to explain his own connection with Phrenology; which being merely a personal matter need not detain us. He follows this with an insinuation that the extensive circulation of Mr. Combe's work has been brought about by eleemosynary aid. There is no direct statement to this effect; but readers ignorant of the facts of the case could scarcely fail to draw such a conclusion, from the following passage, if not previously warned against doing so:—"It was not until, by aid of the 'Henderson Bequest,' he was enabled to reduce the price, that it came to have any considerable circulation." The earlier circulation of Mr. Combe's work depended almost entirely

on phrenologists, as Mr. Scott well knows ; and at the date of its first publication, they were few in number, and struggling against vehement opposition and obloquy. Since then, phrenologists have increased ten or twenty fold, and the public has been taught to appreciate the work. The "Henderson Bequest" reduced the price of only 2000 out of 26,000 copies sold ; to say nothing of 8000 (or 13,000) copies now in press, or lately printed.

But the fact of the increased and increasing demand cannot be got over ; so in the true spirit of disparagement, we have the following causes alleged :—" I am not surprised at this extensive sale of the Essay, as, along with many errors, it contains much that is both instructive and amusing. It contains an account of the interesting discoveries of Gall and Spurzheim, together with other matter well adapted to the class of readers for whom it seems principally intended. This, with the extraordinary cheapness of the work, may account for its extensive sale." The "interesting discoveries of Gall and Spurzheim" are more amply set forth in works of less price than the 'Constitution of Man : ' and, though the extraordinary cheapness of the work is one cause of its extensive sale, yet it would be absurd to suppose that persons bought even a cheap book of this nature merely on account of its cheapness. The primary cause of the whole circulation cannot be disguised by a covering so flimsy ; and that primary cause is the esteem in which the work is held. It was the value of the work which induced the late Mr. Henderson to appoint part of his bequest to procure a cheap edition of it. And as to the "People's Edition," it was solely owing to the high estimation in which the work was held, that the publishers ventured to bring out an edition at a price so low. It is the certainty of an extensive demand that authorises the reduction of price. The intrinsic merit of the work has thus created both the cheapness and the great sale. And further, it is to the value of Mr. Combe's work, that Mr. Scott will be indebted for the circulation of his

own. One word more on this topic: great sale is no proof of absolute value; but, generally speaking, among works treating of the same subjects, the best will sell best; puffing and such-like other extraneous aids being out of the calculation. Now, works on Moral Philosophy have not usually proved saleable ones, and Mr. Combe is too honourable and independent to buy newspaper-puffs or other underhand assistance.

Next comes the paragraph already quoted (page 3.) as Mr. Scott's reason for publicly answering the work of Mr. Combe. There are some other statements in that paragraph which require a moment's attention. I am at a loss to understand how Mr. Scott can know where the work is chiefly circulated, and whether it is bought chiefly by persons destitute of the opportunity of religious instruction. But even supposing his statements on this head to be accurate guesses, it would still be a ridiculous perversion of words to say that the work is offered to them *in lieu* of religious instruction. Were Mr. Scott to go and lecture on Astronomy or Phrenology, in a village destitute of a church, who could be so absurd and disingenuous, as to say that he was offering the inhabitants Astronomy or Phrenology *in lieu* of religious instruction! Here we suppose the case of Mr. Scott actually seeking that particular place, and really offering his lectures to the particular persons destitute of church accommodation. Mr. Combe, however, offers his Essay to the public at large, by far the greater portion of whom can have church or chapel accommodation, if they wish it; and he offers it *in lieu* only of ignorance and error.

On the succeeding page (xiv.) we find the following passage, which so nearly describes the difficulties of answering Mr. Scott's own book as almost to supersede the necessity of explaining wherefore a part only has been selected:—"Mr. Combe's work takes so wide a range, embraces or touches so vast a variety of subjects, and contains

so great a multitude of errors, that in order to answer it completely — to separate the chaff from the wheat — and, admitting what may be true, to expose and refute all that is erroneous, — it would be necessary to write, not a book, but a library." Had the work of Mr. Combe contained a tithe of the proportion of chaff to be found in that of Mr. Scott, the latter would have had little reason to be angry at its extensive sale. And though I have intimated how impossible it is, in a brief space, "to expose and refute all that is erroneous" in the work of Mr. Scott, he has fortunately facilitated an approximation to this, by so dexterously making one part refute another, that a pair of scissors might do a great deal towards refuting the whole.

Some theological points are then alluded to, and Mr. Combe is accused of attacking the doctrines of the Scottish ["our"] clergy. If to make certain statements of fact, and to express certain opinions, neither of which exactly accord with the creed of some particular church or sect, be to attack the clergy, Mr. Combe has been guilty of this sin, like almost every other writer on moral or natural science. But Mr. Combe's alleged attack upon the doctrines of the clergy, in this instance, is just about as much of an attack as was that already noticed on page 5. After attempting to explain the circumstances which led theologians to suppose that human nature contained no elements of improvement in itself, he concludes thus:—"I am far from casting blame on the individuals who fell into these mistakes; such errors were inevitable at the time in which they lived, and with the lights which they possessed; but I point them out as imperfections which ought to be removed." I think, with Mr. Scott, that Mr. Combe would have acted more judiciously in avoiding any allusion to theological doctrines in a purely philosophical work. [Such, at least, appears to be the feeling of Mr. Scott, in the earlier part of his treatise (page 2.); although he afterwards (page 322.) writes, "I conceive that Mr. Combe is

inexcusable in omitting to take any notice of a future state.”] So long as theologians keep their doctrines apart from rules of conduct in this life, it is easy to avoid collision therewith; but when they are forced upon others, as the basis of practical rules of conduct, it is obviously impossible to avoid a virtual, if not an avowed, assent or dissent to them.

Our author next proceeds to specify what he calls Mr. Combe's *objections* to the “Paradisaical State of our First Parents,” &c. As they involve questions of theology, I shall decline entering into their consideration; but may give one instance showing the method by which Mr. Scott vamps up these objections for Mr. Combe. His eighth chapter is headed “Mr. Combe's Objections to the Paradisaical State;” and under *this head* he introduces certain extracts from Section V. of the ‘Constitution;’ which section is headed by Mr. Combe “Faculties of Man compared with external Objects.” The following is one of the extracts:—“It is clear that the gift of an organ of *Cautiousness* implied that man was to be placed in a field of danger. It is adapted to a world like the present, *but would be at variance with a scene into which no evil could intrude.*” Now, this passage, introduced under Mr. Scott's head-title (the italics also being his own), does read very like an “objection.” But, deprived of its italic letters, and placed under Mr. Combe's own head-title, it only proves that man is well adapted to the world in which he is living, and such was Mr. Combe's evident meaning. The extract, in fact, becomes “an objection,” through Mr. Scott's own misposition of it!

The following passage relates to a more important practical question, than the purely theological doctrines, and cannot be passed over:—“Mr. Combe's system proceeds on a principle directly opposite to that of Christianity. That system aims at improving the moral nature of man in the *first place*, holding that, if this were attained, all other improvement would necessarily follow. Mr. Combe, on the

contrary, maintains that, in order to improve the moral nature of man, we must first improve his physical condition; and, accordingly, he directs our attention almost exclusively to the petty details of diet, clothing, exercise, &c., ‘what we shall eat, and what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed.’ ” I have already instanced the extreme case of loss of labour in preaching to a deaf man, or to one so insane or idiotic as to be utterly incapable of appreciating the precepts of Christianity. It is just as evident that the newly-born infant cannot have its moral nature improved by religion, without first being fed, and clothed, and having attentions bestowed on its physical condition. The growing child must still be fed, and clothed, and instructed in many things, before it can be made to understand moral or religious duties. So also must the ignorant savage. So also must the untaught inhabitant of a Christian country. So also must the most highly educated and intellectual persons, if their faculties are prostrated in utter drunkenness, or raving in the delirium of fever. It would be absurd to say, that we are to neglect the physical condition of these individuals until their moral nature has been improved; and if in these cases we are forced to attend to the physical condition first, why is it to be neglected in those other cases, where some preliminary change therein is just as indispensable, although it may not be required to an equal amount? The vessel must first be made capable of receiving the things it is intended to contain; and every one—Mr. Scott not excepted—practically believes, that if he fail to take proper food, &c., he will also speedily fail to understand Christianity and every thing else. Moreover, it is an ascertained fact, that physical suffering is invariably accompanied by moral inferiority, in nations.

A few lines afterwards, in reference to Mr. Combe’s essay, we have the following notable mis-statement;—“intended, it will be observed, as a practical manual of conduct, for the use chiefly of the lower classes.” That “The

People's Edition" is intended chiefly for the use of persons of limited means, is implied in its name; but that Mr. Combe wrote his essay chiefly for such persons, or with any prospect that its circulation would be chiefly among the working classes, is contradicted by the very facts mentioned by Mr. Scott. He expressly states, that it was not brought within the means of the poorer classes—that is, not republished in its cheaper form—till seven years after first publication; and *then* the experiment was made by the suggestion of another person, not of the author himself. It would have been wiser in Mr. Scott to have shewn some good reason for his assertion, instead of making it altogether as a volunteer-explanation of Mr. Combe's intentions; an explanation which appears to be entirely gratuitous, and destitute of any plausible foundation either in fact or in probability. In the very first line of the first edition, the author says that he offers it to the "Public;" not a word about any particular class of the public being mentioned. And, more than this, the actual sales shew it to have been bought to a greater extent by the middle classes, if we are to take the prices of the editions, and the comparative numbers of the different ranks, as the proper tests.

On the next page, there is a far worse misrepresentation, induced by the suppression of part of a passage quoted, the portion given by Mr. Scott conveying quite a different meaning when seen by itself. He has it thus:—"He labours to shew that his system is in harmony with the precepts of Christianity; and yet he most inconsistently declares, that these precepts are 'scarcely more suited to human nature and circumstances in this world, than the command to fly would be to the nature of the horse!'" Any reader may judge of the fairness of this representation, by seeing the whole passage. Mr. Combe remarks that the people hear the precepts of Christianity in churches, on Sunday, but that the great body of the community—lawyers, merchants, manufacturers, farmers, mechanics, and others—spend

their whole energies, in their several callings, during the rest of the week, devoting little or no leisure time to religion; and that Sunday again “dawns upon them in a state of mind widely at variance with the Christian condition.” And he adds, afterwards;—“It is in vain to say to individuals that they err in acting thus: individuals are carried along in the great stream of social institutions and pursuits. The operative labourer is compelled to follow his routine of toil under pain of absolute starvation. The master-manufacturer, the merchant, the farmer, and the lawyer, are pursued by competitors so active, that if they relax in selfish ardour, they will be speedily plunged into ruin. If God has so constituted the human mind and body, and so arranged external nature, that all this is unavoidably necessary for man, THEN the Christian precepts are scarcely more suited to human nature and circumstances in this world, than the command to fly would be to the nature of the horse.” The words, as quoted by Mr. Scott, are the words of Mr. Combe, but they are not the *whole* words, and herein lies all the difference. Any candid reader must see, that Mr. Combe’s intention was to shew that the habits of society are at fault, not that Christianity is to be rejected as unsuitable to man. By omitting the previous words, and especially the doubtful or conditional IF and THEN, Mr. Scott has given an entirely opposite signification to the passage. This might be held an ingenious trick in pleading a cause; but let others decide how far it is justifiable.

Mr. Scott thus sums up, as a finale to his prefatory remarks on ‘The Constitution of Man:’—“The above may serve as a specimen,—but it is quite clear that we are yet merely on the threshold,—that Mr. Combe has but just *broken ground* before the walls of our Zion, and that he already contemplates still greater triumphs. Indeed, he has not left it to inference, but has openly declared his aim to be nothing less than to plant the standard of Phrenology on the very pinnacle of the Temple, and to make our pulpits resound with the preaching of ‘The Natural Laws!’ He loudly accuses our divines as blind guides, because they have not already adopted these in their instructions to their flocks, instead of the clear and simple morality, and the sublime and consoling doctrines of the Gospel.”

I retort the words, — “ THE ABOVE MAY SERVE AS A SPECIMEN ;” and a pretty specimen of Mr. Scott’s mode of refuting philosophical errors I am now holding up to view. But let us have a sample of Mr. Combe’s *loud accusations* against the divines, (I have shewn examples of his “ attacks,”) *because* they have not *already* adopted the natural laws in their instructions, *instead* of the morality of the Gospel :—“ If the doctrine unfolded in the present treatise be in any degree true, it is destined to operate proportionally on the character of clerical instruction. Individuals whose minds have embraced the views which it contains, inform me that many sermons appear to them inconsistent in their different propositions, at variance with sound views of human nature, and so vague as to have little relation to practical life and conduct. They partake of the abstractedness of the scholastic philosophy. The first divine of comprehensive intellect and powerful moral feelings, who shall take courage and introduce the natural laws *into his discourses*, and teach the people the works and institutions of the Creator, will reap a great reward in usefulness and pleasure.” And again :—“ The views developed in the preceding chapters, if founded in nature, may be expected to lead, ultimately, to considerable changes in many of the customs and pursuits of society ; but to accomplish this effect, the principles themselves must *first* be ascertained to be true, and *then* they must be sedulously taught. It appears to me that *a long series of years will be necessary* to bring even civilised nations into a condition to obey systematically the natural laws.”

The remainder of the Preface is occupied by personal matters, of little interest to others, and chiefly connected with a different publication. Touching these, it may be remarked, that Mr. Scott is neither liberal in his comments nor warranted in his conclusions from the letter of Dr. Thomson ; and though unable to speak positively to the facts of the case, I strongly suspect that Dr. Thomson and his party seceded from the Infant-School party, in consequence of being outvoted by the latter, and not from any dislike to Mr. Combe in particular, who was only one of a party obnoxious to them. Though in Edinburgh at

the time, and hearing the subject discussed by persons concerned ; yet, as a stranger to the local politics of conflicting parties, in Church and otherwise, I may not have fully understood, or now correctly remember, the particulars. If the surmise be wrong, I beg pardon of Mr. Scott for thus mentioning a suspicion that may appear like a contradiction of his statement, on insufficient grounds. As to the cause of Dr. Chalmers's silence, the inference of Mr. Scott appears to be correct. He was little likely to *approve* a book which is so much better, as a philosophical work, than any which his clerical shackles would allow him to write.

So much for the accuracy and consistency of Mr. Scott's Preface. The rest of the book is on a par with it, if not worse ; and I presume, it will now be admitted, that to wade through twelve chapters written in such a strain, would be a thoroughly irksome and unprofitable use of time. Whether Mr. Scott so grievously distorts and misrepresents the statements of Mr. Combe, by design, or through some unavoidable obliquity of reasoning, I cannot pretend to say ; not taking on myself to fathom his intentions so easily as he would have us believe himself able to penetrate those of Mr. Combe. Neither do I wish to accuse any one of want of candour and veracity, while it is possible to attribute to misconception all his misstatements. Whatever the cause may be, it is an indisputable fact, that Mr. Combe's opinions and arguments are greatly misrepresented in the "Harmony ;" more than one instance of which I have already given, and others will presently appear.

MR. SCOTT'S FIRST CHAPTER.

The essay of Mr. Combe has, for its principal object, a consideration of the most effective measures for increasing the happiness of the human race. As a preliminary investigation, it is necessary to inquire into the nature of

man, and his relation to the rest of creation ; because, in the absence of this knowledge, any attempt at improving his condition must be mere guess-work. Such an inquiry may be reduced to three questions :—What is human nature? What is external nature? What are the connexions or mutual influences of the two? A complete answer to these questions would require a complete knowledge of all the laws which determine the several events occurring in the universe. Such an answer is obviously impossible at present ; and there seems to be no prospect of this impossibility ever being removed. Our approximation towards such a state of complete knowledge is becoming closer,—or, rather, it is becoming less remote, daily ; but the distance must still be enormous. We may not yet have a greater insight into the order or plan of nature, proportionally speaking, than a domestic dog has insight into the order or plan of all human actions. Under such circumstances, any attempt to specify a fixed principle, which shall apply to the whole order of nature, can be at best only a plausible conjecture.

Mr. Combe says that “ the world appears to be arranged, in all its departments, on the principle of gradual and progressive improvement.” He thinks, with many others, that the records of Geology (fossil remains of organised bodies, &c.) tend to shew such a course of progressive improvement prior to the ascertained existence of man upon earth. And he further supposes that man has inherent tendencies to improvement, and that the human race, as a whole, is now in a course of progressive improvement, and has been so through the historical era. I quite agree that man *has* these tendencies to improvement, and that the race *has* kept on in a progressive course from past to present times ; but must differ from Mr. Combe in one important point, namely, the general application of this progressive principle ; my reasons for which, it will be

better to explain elsewhere, without interfering with the object at present in view.

Mr. Scott contends for a first state of perfection in man and the rest of creation, a subsequent degeneracy, followed by an increasing deterioration or an utter standstill, and an incapability of improvement without the direct and repeated interference of Divine Power. He differs entirely from Mr. Combe, on this point, and it seems on almost every other point also ; but his first chapter is occupied by a consideration of this progressive-improvement principle, and it is to the first chapter that I have to direct attention at present, while entering on an examination of the success with which he does battle against Mr. Combe's views.

The chapter is divided into five sections. The first of these sections is headed, "Mr. Combe's analogies in support of his hypothesis." In order to appreciate the counter-arguments of Mr. Scott, it will be requisite to call to mind what Mr. Combe's hypothesis and analogies are. He writes,—“The constitution of this world does not look like a system of optimism. It appears to be arranged in all its departments on the principle of slow and progressive improvement. Physical nature itself has undergone many revolutions, and apparently has constantly advanced. Geology seems to shew a distinct preparation of it for successive orders of living beings, rising higher and higher in the scale of intelligence and organization until man appeared.

“The globe, in the first state in which the imagination can venture to consider it, says Sir H. Davy, appears to have been a fluid mass, with an immense atmosphere revolving in space round the sun. By its cooling, a portion of its atmosphere was probably condensed into water, which occupied a part of its surface. In this state no forms of life, such as now belong to our system, could have inhabited it. The crystalline rocks, or, as they are called by geologists, the primary rocks, which contain no vestiges of a former order of things, were the result of the first consolidation on its surface. Upon the further cooling, the water, which, more or less, had covered it, contracted ; depositions took place ; shell-fish and coral-

insects were created, and began their labours," &c. &c. "Five successive races of plants and four successive races of animals appear to have been created, and swept away by the physical revolutions of the globe, before the system of things became so permanent as to fit the world for man," &c. &c. "At last man was created, and since that period there has been little alteration in the physical circumstances of the globe."

The reader will please to remember that such descriptions as this are not statements of facts, but of inferences—guesses—drawn from certain facts ascertained by geologists; and that geologists widely differ amongst themselves as to what are the proper inferences. Mr. Combe speaks only of the *appearance* of progressive improvement, and Davy's description commences with the admission that it is an *imaginative* one. Moreover, Mr. Combe intimates, by a foot-note, that he takes this description, "on account of its popular style;" and he further adds that Lyell "controverts the doctrine of a progressive development of plants and animals." He afterwards says,—"This brief summary of the physical changes of the globe, is not irrelevant to our present object. The more that is discovered of creation, the more conspicuously does uniformity of design appear to pervade its every department. We perceive here the physical world gradually improved and prepared for man."

These extracts suffice to shew that Mr. Combe adduces the inferences of geologists, simply as an analogical or apparent ground in support of his supposed principle of progressive improvement in the world at large. The principle of progression is just as complete, whether effected by a single original fiat of the Creator, or by repetitions of such; and all the events of the series are just as much brought about by that Creator. Now, who would believe that Mr. Scott could overlook all this evident meaning, could pick and cull a few detached sentences from the imaginative description of Davy, and then quote them as if they had been stated by Mr. Combe to be ascertained facts, and as if they had been adduced by him as his

proof in support of a totally different supposition, namely, *that the world, IN ITS PRESENT STATE, contains within itself the elements of improvement which time ALONE will evolve and bring to maturity !* Mr. Combe neither gives them as positively ascertained facts, nor does he state them as proofs of this latter proposition.

Let us examine whether there are any grounds of excuse for such a jumble of confusion and misrepresentation. In another page of his volume, Mr. Combe has the following passages :—“ In our own country two views of the constitution of the world and of human nature have long been prevalent, differing widely from each other, and which, if legitimately followed out, would lead to distinct practical results. The one is, that the world, including both the physical and moral departments, contains within itself the elements of improvement, which time will evolve and bring to maturity ; it having been constituted by the Creator on the principle of a progressive system, like the acorn in reference to the oak,” &c. &c. “ The other hypothesis is, that the world was perfect at first, but fell into derangement, continues in disorder, and does not contain within itself the elements of its own rectification,” &c. &c. “ It appears to me extremely difficult to reconcile these conflicting views.” Mr. Combe does not expressly adopt either of the views stated ; but he obviously leans to the former, and Mr. Scott assumes him to have adopted it. It must be observed, however, that it relates to the world in its present state,—that is, since inhabited by man. Mr. Scott ingeniously modifies the hypothesis by changing “ time ” into “ sole operation of time,” —as if time were an active cause, and stated to be the only agent required. He further quotes garbled extracts, as above intimated, from a passage relating to the *past* condition of the earth, suppressing the fact of the passage being put forth merely as an imaginative or inferential description. And lastly, he adduces these garbled extracts as containing Mr. Combe’s arguments in support of the hypothesis, altogether unconnected with them, and improved by Mr. Scott’s own peculiar additions, as just shewn !

Founding upon such perverted readings of Mr. Combe's essay, our author then makes merry with what he is pleased to call the logic of Mr. Combe; reducing it into the following form,—“The world originally *did not* contain within itself the principles of improvement, therefore *it does* contain with itself the principles of improvement.—Q. E. D.” The logic created by Mr. Scott, for Mr. Combe, is accurately enough represented here; but his own logic admits of another form, equally inconsequential, and less innocently so, namely,—Mr. Combe *did not* reason thus, therefore I say that Mr. Combe *did* reason thus.—Q. E. D.

By so assuming the inferences of some of the geologists to be ascertained facts, and further assuming that the supposed changes, inferred to have taken place in physical nature, required a direct interference of the Creator, Mr. Scott contends that the analogy is in favour of his presumption of such interference being now required in the moral world. However feeble and remote, still the analogy would lean this way, IF the premises were sound. I have intimated that such premises are mere inferences, and they are inferences of very doubtful character for accuracy. I must add that the facts of geology, explained by the only test which science can legitimately apply to them—namely, the causes now in action—lead to inferences shewing a very different course of events prior to the time when man is supposed to have commenced his existence. And thus explained, they give some probability that the earth *has* contained within itself the elements of all the changes hitherto unfolded to us by geological researches. In the present state of scientific knowledge, a philosopher, reasoning solely on philosophical grounds, is not entitled to say that the productions of our globe were created by the direct exercise of Divine Power. The existence of the earth itself *may* be only one of a long series of changes in our planetary system, ultimately

referrible to the Power that has fashioned all things, but which *may* have required no more direct interference than the creation of Mr. Scott's essay itself has required. Even that must ultimately be traced back to the Universal Power, indifferent as it is.

But all such analogies as these, traced between things so unlike, are to be received with much caution. And remote as the analogy is, on the geological side it depends, as I have explained, on premises which are themselves the mere speculative inferences of particular individuals, reasoning upon few facts, and those facts being of a kind exceedingly likely to be misunderstood. Mr. Combe's inferred analogy is logically deduced from his real premises, and Mr. Scott, with all his ingenious distortion, has failed to prove it otherwise. Whether the premises are sound is another question, to be left to the geologists.

The second section of the chapter is entitled, "Analogies tending to prove the opposite of Mr. Combe's doctrines." The following passage occurs near the commencement of the section ;— "From all that can be gathered of the history of the earth and its productions, either from observation of their past and present state, or from the researches of geologists, there appears nothing like progressive creation or evolution of individuals or species in any department of nature. When a new species of plants or animals appears to have been created, there is nothing like gradation or progression. The new species is not derived from an older and more imperfect one, but starts at once into existence, at the Almighty fiat, in all its completeness and perfection." When Mr. Scott adduces speculative opinions, such random assertions may be swallowed by the superficial; but when trenching upon the ground of natural science, it behoves him to be a little more cautious what he writes. Does he pretend to be acquainted with *all* that is known of the past and present state of the earth and its productions? May it not be suggested in reply, that his utmost knowledge herein consists in having read a few pages of some popular

work on natural history? Geology, be it observed, has shewn nothing whatever concerning the creation of races or individuals. Neither the mode of creation, nor the first state, nor yet the last state, of any race or species, has been in the slightest degree explained by geological discovery. The fossil records of past life are limited to incomplete representations of the state of individuals at death; and in the older deposits the remains are scarcely more than mere copies of their shapes. In the more recent deposits, good skeletons, &c. are found; but in all likelihood, the stony models and skeletons, which have hitherto met the eye of man, will not bear the proportion of one individual out of every million that have existed. Granting this, how can any sober reasoner assert positively, on such meagre evidence, that intermediate forms and structures have not existed? Geology is far too imperfect yet, to allow of any fair presumption, from its individual facts, either of the transition or non-transition of one species into another. On the great scale, it is as clear as such evidence can make it, that one species has been substituted for another, but we know not how this substitution has been brought about; and, *allowing for the difference of time*, it may well be questioned whether the changes brought to light by geological researches, at all exceed the changes now effected in the vegetable world by human efforts. So far, therefore, Mr. Scott's analogy goes for nothing. *Ex nihilo nihil fit.*

He next endeavours to shew that the present species have not changed. At least, this seems to be the proper inference from his general argument (though in some cases he appears to suppose a change for the worse), and is borne out by his reasons for quoting the scriptural notices, presently to be mentioned, where he says, "I refer to the above passages, merely as occurring in the most ancient writings in the world, to shew that the productions of nature described in them, possessed, upwards of three thousand years

ago, the same qualities as they do now, and that *no improvement or alteration* ever has taken place in these qualities."

Our author's proofs that the present species have not changed, commence with the quotation of certain scriptural notices written in the figurative style of the East; and if we are to take these descriptions as being literally true, and then compare them with the matter-of-fact descriptions of our present naturalists and travellers, we must not only decide against any improvement, but allow very great degeneracy. Now-a-days, we have no beasts that drink up rivers at a draught, and none with tails like cedar-trees; yet if we must take the scriptural notices literally, such creatures did live three or four thousand years ago. Neither, in the present day, have we any horses whose necks are clothed with thunder; but since such descriptions fail to give us any exact information as to the number of pounds which the horses of ancient days could bear or draw, or to tell us what was their speed as measured by time, we know not how to construe the figures employed in Scripture. When Mr. Scott has enlightened us on these little matters, we shall be put into a condition for deciding whether the horse has improved, degenerated, or remained the same.

In a foot-note, our author refers to a more precise kind of evidence, namely, the circumstance of Cuvier having examined the Egyptian mummies, and found the embalmed animals exactly accord with those of the present day, including dogs, cats, monkeys, and others. But I fear this "proves too much." Mr. Scott himself, with all his easiness of assertion, will not venture to affirm that all our breeds of dogs were known to the Egyptians three thousand years ago. How then is it possible that "not the smallest difference is to be perceived?" We may have some dogs which closely resemble the canine mummies of Egypt; but the question is not whether every individual dog of to-day is an improved animal.

If we have one single breed superior to the breeds of past ages, then has the dog been improved as a species. Moreover, Cuvier expressly intimates that he cites only the evidences of two or three thousand years ago, a space of time which shrinks to a mere point, if compared with the eras of geologists; possibly, not bearing so high a proportion to geological durations of time, as a single hour, or a single second, bears to a thousand years. Further, we have good grounds for inferring that only a very slight alteration of climate has occurred during these two or three thousand years, while enormous variations are supposed to have taken place during the geological eras. An illustration may assist in shewing the liability to false inferences, by predicating of a long series of events from inspecting a small part of the series. In the middle period of life, many individuals change so gradually that we see little difference between the same person on the first and last day of the same year. Yet is a year one-seventieth part of a life; and in the seventy years an individual passes from infancy to manhood, and thence wanes again to feebleness. Now, two or three thousand years may not be the seventieth, or even the seven-hundredth part of the duration of a species; so that an inappreciable change for two or three thousand years, were it established, would be no very cogent argument against a great change during the full series of time and events.

So much for the evidences of geology and history, and of embalmed remains. They are much too meagre and inconclusive to be founded upon; and howsoever they may tend, in the opinion of Mr. Scott, "to prove the opposite of Mr. Combe's doctrine," most assuredly the tendency is immeasurably short of proof; and in my opinion, they actually tend the other way. But the question as to what now occurs, as to what is effected by human labours under the present lights of science, is a

much more tangible subject. Is it not an indisputable fact that man has effected very great changes in the breeds of animals, where interest has prompted him to make efforts for this purpose? We cannot say that he has ever yet succeeded in changing one species of animal into another known species, or of establishing a new species by any modifications of one already in existence; but if he had effected this, the chances are a thousand to one against our knowing the circumstance, since available descriptions of species are the work of the last hundred years only, and even yet there is not the zoologist or botanist who can give any definition or explanation of what constitutes a species. The nearest approach towards bringing about a sudden change of species, occurs in the production of hybrids or mule-breeds. This is something; but it is not the way for permanently converting or creating species, if it be possible to do so at all. These hybrids rarely breed with each other; and, when mixing with the original stocks, they soon revert back so far as to be undistinguishable. If man is ever to create a permanent species, he must go to work in a much more gradual manner, by coupling together varieties becoming more and more unlike the original stock at each descent. We have yet to learn what would be effected by following this course through several hundreds of successive descents. It would almost seem as if the dog had been thus created. If not, where is the original stock to be found? The domestic dog has become wild in America and elsewhere, but in what place is the wild stock—the forefather race—of our domestic dog to be looked for? We must allow that the evidence afforded by the higher (vertebrate) orders of animals is very slight either way; but so far as there is evidence, it “tends” to show a possibility of change and progression.

In the vegetable world, however, it is peculiarly man's interest to bring hundreds or thousands of species (as

they are called) into a domesticated state, to use his utmost skill in bringing about considerable changes in many of them, and to keep extending these changes. The extent to which their external circumstances can be varied, and the facility of rapidly producing many successive generations, with other peculiarities appertaining to vegetable life, afford additional aids to his exertions. Accordingly, we find varieties produced, and regularly continued by descent, having greater differences between themselves, than are seen between other races generally supposed to be distinct species. So much do our gardens now abound with intermediate varieties or transition-species, so gradually is one kind run into another, that the united skill of all the botanists in the world would fail to distinguish them. Nor are such changes effected only by the exertions of man. So little are species distinguishable, so liable are some of them to run into variations, that no botanist can now tell what are the distinct species of rose, bramble, willow, mouse-ear, sedge, and many others, *even in their wild states*. How truly ridiculous, then, is it for Mr. Scott to say that “**each species**, at its first creation, receives a distinct and definite constitution, which it transmits, without the capacity of improvement, through all succeeding generations;” and to add further, that this utterly unproved proposition, — nay, this proposition contradicted by every-day experience, is “consistent with all the known facts!”

In one sense, it is correct to say that species have received a definite constitution; but a capability of being changed and improved appears to be part of the constitution of each individual and race. The constitution of all bodies, organic or inorganic, is definite while they remain *in statu quo*; but if a change occur in the material body, a corresponding change of constitution also occurs. Now, so far as we can understand nature, absolute rest does not exist; everything is undergoing

change. Hence, the definite constitution of species can essentially mean only a close resemblance of condition and qualities between certain individuals ; and the definite constitution of individuals can mean only an amount of change not measurable by our faculties.

But let us return from a question of little practical importance. Whether the constitution of each species be called definite or not so, Mr. Scott cannot escape the obvious fact, that human exertions *have* effected great changes in the breeds of domestic animals and plants ; and these changes having been effected, the elements of such changes must have been in the world. How does he meet this difficulty ? By two gratuitous assumptions, one of them so random and improbable, as to set at defiance all grave reasoning and sober observation. The other is more plausible, namely, that many of the changes, called improvements, are in reality no such thing. But this is a proposition with which we need trouble ourselves very little. In the absence of any proper definition of the term *improvement*, we may safely leave it to the general verdict of the public, whether the green-gage plum-tree, with its luscious fruit, is not an improvement upon the austere-berried sloe-bush ; whether the pippin and codlin apples are not improvements upon the wild crab ; and whether the swift-footed greyhound, the intelligent lap-dog, and the powerful mastiff, are not improvements upon any known wild race of dog, wolf, or fox, — for it is doubtful whether the dog has not descended from one or both of the two latter stocks. I shall presume public opinion to be given in favour of improvement here. Mr. Scott probably anticipated such a verdict, and is prepared to meet it by the other assumption above alluded to ; to wit, that such apparent improvements are nothing more than a partial restoration towards an original state of perfection, from which the animals and plants have degenerated !

Certainly, this is a most complete way of overturning all evidence derived from our imaginary improvements upon organized beings. The only blemish in this beautiful speculation is, that neither geology, history, mummies, nor present observation, affords a shadow of evidence in support of it. Mr. Scott himself has first contended that the evidences of geology, history, and embalmed remains, go to prove the absence of any alteration in the different races of plants and animals; and immediately thereafter, with marvellous inconsistency, he boldly asserts that such changes have occurred, and that twice over, first downwards to degeneracy, and then upwards on the way to perfection again! Of course, it is incumbent on Mr. Scott to show *where* and *when* the green-gage, pippin, codlin, greyhound, lap-dog, and mastiff — or superior kinds of plums, apples, and dogs — existed in a wild state; otherwise we shall be compelled to refer their originally-perfect stocks to the creative energy of our author's own imagination.

Every fact of natural history seems opposed to Mr. Scott's curious notions on this topic. Whatever is known of the productions of the earth, is in favour of the presumption that the fruits and animals above mentioned, and hosts of others, are almost as much the creations of man, out of the materials of nature, as is the bread that he eats or the wine that he drinks. Whether this be the case — as, we may presume, most reasonable persons will hold it be — or whether these be mere restorations from degeneracy; in either case, we are entitled to say, that the world *does now contain* within itself the elements of improvement, which man, aided by time and natural processes, *is evolving*. If external nature supplies the materials to be improved, and man supplies the power which fashions those materials, still man is only the agent of nature, and a part of the world; so that in every sense the world contains *in itself* the elements of all these im-

provements. And as they are yet proceeding, even at an increasing rate, the presumption becomes very strong that they will still go on to an extent the end of which we cannot at all see or conjecture.

In opposing these two sections of Mr. Scott's first chapter, I have been in some measure compelled to touch upon questions, the facts of which can be little familiar to general readers; but to explain them fully would require long statements out of place here. It is easy for Mr. Scott to make an affirmation or negation, and it would have been easy for me to rest satisfied with a simple contradiction thereto; but it appeared better to show, however partially, the nature of the ground upon which my contradiction must depend for its support. One word in conclusion. Zoologists and botanists have usually a predominance of the knowing over the reflective faculties. They observe well, but often reason wretchedly. Many geologists also partake of this mental peculiarity. Hence, while we rely on their observed facts, we must receive their inferences and conclusions with some caution.

In his third section, Mr. Scott labours to show that the evidences of history prove the human race to have been either stationary or degenerating, instead of advancing. Truly, many of us will remember the days, when, as schoolboys poring over the literary remains of Greece and Rome, and the magniloquent descriptions of their writers, we did entertain some vague ideas respecting the wonderful greatness and superiority of those nations; chiefly, it may be conjectured, owing to that trifling circumstance in the 'classical education' of youth, the being left in utter ignorance of all that related to our own country. Mr. Scott has escaped the contamination arising from intercourse with the world, and appears still to retain his childhood's veneration of antiquity, carried even to the length of a glowing admiration of the barbarian greatness

of Babylon and Egypt, of Greece and Rome ; and he devotes sundry pages of eloquent declamation and ingenious argumentation, to support his hypothesis that the earliest were also the best and greatest nations. But nothing seems to have captivated his fancy so highly as the Pyramids of Egypt ; on which account I shall select his arguments drawn from these structures, for a little critical examination. He writes thus :—" I allude to the temples and catacombs of Egypt ; and, above all, to the Pyramids—those stupendous monuments, which seem to have been executed by a race of giants, and left standing as if in scorn of the weakness and degeneracy of all succeeding generations," &c. &c. " Nothing so simple was ever so sublime." " These monuments are vast in the aggregate—vast in the individual parts,—and the weight of the materials, and the power and science which must have been used in their construction, absolutely oppress the imagination."

What a grandiloquent flourish at the expense of us degenerate " succeeding generation !" But may it not be suggested to the author, that one reason of our modern kings not building great pyramids, even if so silly as to wish it, is the difficulty of persuading their people to let them waste the wealth of a kingdom, and the manhood of hundreds of thousands, in BUILDING A PYRAMID ! This waste is presumed, supposing the erection of a pyramid to be still as difficult and tedious an undertaking, as it must have been in the days of his majesty Cheops, of pyramidal memory. But let us inquire about this, and see whether our author's imagination is not oppressed by the grandeur of his own description, more than by " the weight of the materials, and the power and science," &c. Our engineers of to-day would hardly find their imaginations thus oppressed. They would quietly sit down, and calculate the time and power necessary for effecting the object ; and if the nation would provide the money, London would speedily provide the requisite quantity of science, skill and enterprise to boot ; leaving plenty to spare for

rail-roads, American steam-packets, and any other hobby of the day.

If the Great Pyramid had been solid, and built wholly of granite, its weight would have approximated to six million tons. It is neither; and the probable weight may be guessed at from four to five million tons. The materials of the Breakwater at Plymouth weigh two million tons, and there cannot be a moment's doubt that it might have been made twice the size if necessary. So little did this undertaking exhaust the energies or resources of the nation, that in all likelihood not a tenth of the whole population knew what our government was about; and it is not an improbable thing, that this page may fall into the hands of some intelligent and sensible man, who has never yet heard of the Breakwater. As in this case, the undertaking of piling up five million tons into a pyramid would be merely a question of pounds, shillings, and pence for the British government. The Breakwater cost upwards of one million sterling. Had it been made equal to the Great Pyramid in weight of materials, the expense might have been two and a half or three millions. During several years of the late wars with Napoleon, our government contrived to draw something like twice this sum *monthly*, out of John Bull's pocket, in the shape of taxes, and a further sum not much less in amount, by way of loans.

Then, as to the vastness of their dimensions. The Great Pyramid is estimated—for the reported measurements differ—at 480 feet in height, and 750 feet in the length of its side, or 3000 feet in circuit. The spire of St. Paul's, destroyed by fire, is said to have been raised to the height of 520 feet (forty feet higher than the pyramid); the height of the present cross being 370 feet. The circuit of the whole building is nearly 2300 feet. Including ten years for the formation of the road and hewing of the stones, thirty years were consumed in building the Great Pyramid; and, apparently, hundreds of thousands of men were

employed. At a conjecture—for I lack the *data* necessary to make any proper calculation—the steam power of England would enable a much smaller number of men to imitate this pyramid in as many months as it formerly required years.

It is hoped that Mr. Scott's oppressed imagination will find some relief from these hints; but I may add one other little fact, calculated to show how common-place an occurrence it is for the people of Britain to transport a weight of materials, such as exists in the Pyramids, without being at all oppressed in imagination or otherwise. Our annual consumption of coal is fifteen million tons; or three hundred million tons in twenty years. Need *we* feel such wonder that Cheops could, in the same space of time, carry the materials for a pyramid only one sixtieth part of this weight, while commanding the wealth and labour of a whole nation? Why, instead of regarding the Pyramids as structures "left standing as if in scorn of the weakness and degeneracy of all succeeding generations," the coal-carriers of Britain will be apt to claim for themselves a much greater physical power than was expended in these mighty efforts of departed greatness! Then, with respect to the use of physical power, it may be mentioned that the Manchester rail-road was opened in 1829; and that in six years thereafter the Americans had a thousand miles of rail-road in use; an extent likely to be more than doubled before 1840. Mr. Scott may contrast this ten years spent in road-making, with the ten years consumed by Cheops in making a road from his stone-quarries to his pyramid.

But he appears to have his own misgivings that it is the moral and intellectual *superiority* of the modern West over the ancient East, which prevents such absurd and tyrannical misuse of power. And anticipating this awkward comment upon his exaggerated pictures of ancient greatness, he proceeds:—"It may be alleged, that these

monuments only prove the intellectual greatness of the people by whom they were erected, but show nothing respecting their moral qualities. If, however, intellectual eminence be conceded to them, we are not lightly to presume moral inferiority. And here we are not altogether without some light to show, that in this respect also the most ancient nations were at least equal to all that have come after them. The traditions or histories of all nations bear witness to the comparatively pure morals and simple habits of their ancestors at the rise of each state, and the universal complaint has been, that as wealth and greatness have increased, virtue has disappeared."

Here we have another beautiful example of that consistency and logic so peculiarly our author's own. First, we are told that the greatness, indicated by extravagance in building, is a proof of intellectual eminence. Next, we are cautioned not lightly to presume moral inferiority when such intellectual eminence is present. And forthwith follows the information, that nations are most moral in their earliest career—that is, when they are *not* great and intellectual—and that virtue disappeared from these ancient nations as they acquired greatness. If we are to accept the last statement of this medley, for the real proposition of our author,—namely, that greatness and morality were in an inverse ratio to each other, in the nations of antiquity—then has he deliberately walked into a sinking bog, and will have some difficulty in scrambling out of it; because, allowing us to be only on a par with the ancients, in these points of intellectual eminence and morality, we contrive to combine both in a tolerable degree, and *one and one make two*.

Not so fast, will cry some friend of Mr. Scott, an eel in the mud is not caught up so readily as you may fancy. Take the following passage, and see how dexterously he first establishes these two things to have existed in the nations of antiquity, *at separate eras*, and then as smoothly runs them together, *at the same date* of three thousand years ago:—"In regard to intellectual attainment, at least, we have seen it proved that the most ancient nations equalled, or

rather surpassed, all that have come after them. The proofs from history, from existing monuments, from phrenological observation on undoubted cranial remains, all unite in leading to this conclusion. We have further seen that in every great people, the earlier periods of their history have been most remarkable for a pure state of morals, and that no great improvement in this respect has taken place since the earliest ages. If, then, we find the Egyptians and Babylonians, three thousand years ago, equal, in intellectual and moral qualities, to the principal nations at this day, what reason have we to suppose that their ancestors, the original stock from which they were derived, had ever been materially below the same standard?"

Mr. Scott flatters himself with having thus established the intellectual and moral equality, if not superiority, of the ancients. Touching the former quality, I may briefly name such small matters in art and science, as steam-engines, rail-roads, spinning-jennies, power-looms, hydraulic-presses, printing-machines, gas-lights, galvanic-batteries, air-pumps, balloons, telescopes, microscopes, magnets, chronometers, barometers, thermometers, electrometers, &c. &c. &c. Or the titles of a few popular books, of our own day, may suggest similar hints; such as Parry's Voyages, Cunningham's New South Wales, De Tocqueville's America, Faraday's Chemical Manipulations, Babbage's Economy of Machinery and Manufactures, Combe's Phrenology, Lyell's Geology, Proceedings of the British Association, Times Newspaper, Penny Magazine, &c. &c. &c.

But dare we confront Mr. Scott in defence of our *moral* superiority? For such "a tug of war," we must let "Greek meet Greek." If the moral superiority of the ancients be advocated by Mr. Scott, he alone shall meet himself, in the following eulogy of ancient virtues:—"They personified and deified the passions, and even the lowest vices of human nature. War, drunkenness, and debauchery, and even theft, had each their tutelary gods, and the mode of worship was made to correspond to the supposed attributes of the deity. In such circumstances, the morality

of the ancient nations soon became equally depraved as their faith ; and we may conceive what was the ordinary standard of conduct among the laity, when we find crimes of every shade and die perpetrated under the name of religion, and under the sanction of their priests. It is remarkable, too, that all this took place, not merely among the ignorant and barbarous tribes, many of whom remained comparatively free from such enormities, but that the abominations I speak of were carried to the greatest height by those nations which attained to the highest point of intelligence and refinement. It was not among the barbarous hordes of Scythia and Bactria, that the wickedness of a demoralising idolatry was carried to its greatest excess, but among the comparatively civilized and cultivated nations of Babylonia and Egypt, of Greece and Rome.”—(Pages 51, 52.)

It is only justice to Mr. Scott, to say that this passage is not actually among his proofs of the intellectual and moral superiority of the ancients. It occurs some twenty pages further in the book, where it had become convenient to bid them lay by their greatness, in order to supply proofs that the Christian nations (the moderns) have surpassed the Heathens (the ancients). However, it is to be borne in mind, that Mr. Scott adduces this as a true picture ; and, as such, it must form part of the historical proofs of the great morality of those nations “which attained to the highest point of intelligence and refinement ;” those of which “we are not lightly to presume moral inferiority ;” and which were “equal, in intellectual and moral qualities, to the principal nations of Europe at this day.”

Sections IV. and V. are given to shewing that civilization has travelled, and that hostile invasions have been a principal means of civilizing nations ; and with reference to our own country in particular, the author writes ;—“From the above slight sketch, it will be abundantly evident that all these advances in the moral and intellectual condition of our countrymen, have not proceeded, as Mr. Combe supposes, from any ‘principle of improvement inherent in the race, which time alone

evolved, and brought to maturity,' but that they have been begun, continued, and carried on, from one step in their progress to another, by a successive application of *foreign influences*, and of *stimuli*, many of them of the most violent kind, arising in one way or another from external causes." Now, something of what is implied here may be admitted (although during the last twenty years of peace, we have advanced far more rapidly than we have ever done during twenty years of war), and what does it then amount to? Simply that the RACE did contain *within itself* the elements of improvement. Man is a social being, and can effect little as a solitary individual; but whether A improves B, or B improves A, is of no consequence whatever to the true point at issue. The human race improves itself, whichever individual man or nation most influences the other; and if one part of the race improves another part of the race, then that race must contain within itself the capability both of improving and of being improved; and such capability is just 'a principle of improvement inherent in the race,' which is the very thing Mr. Combe wished to establish.

I have now gone over the Preface of Mr. Scott's book, almost paragraph by paragraph, and have shewn how greatly it distorts and exaggerates Mr. Combe's statements; and that even in the paragraphs which give truth, the *whole* truth is not shewn. I have also gone, though less closely, over the First Chapter, and have shewn that similar defects characterise that part of the book. I have further shewn that the author so far has utterly failed in his attempts to refute Mr. Combe's views, whether those views be right or wrong in themselves; and that he has equally failed of establishing his own. I have, moreover, exhibited glaring contradictions and inconsistencies between one part of the work and another, and even between passages almost immediately following one the other. And I have also shewn that where his reasoning may appear

conclusive, it is really worthless from being founded on very doubtful or inaccurate premises. Having established such defects in the very outset of the work, I may consider myself to have proved the book to be utterly unfit to give evidence against Mr. Combe; and that it cannot be necessary to go into further examination of its contents. Suffice it to say, that examples of such defects can be doubled, trebled, or quadrupled, if it become necessary. But I rest here; and will conclude by expressing my astonishment—though little apt to be astonished at aught—that any person of Mr. Scott's ability should have put forth such a book; and should have been able to coax himself into a notion, that he could thereby overthrow 'The Constitution of Man,' or cast down its author from his throne of intellectual and moral eminence. If a writer of much ability—and such we cannot deny Mr. Scott to be—is found able to do so little against Mr. Combe's Essay, people will be disposed to think that Mr. Scott has a *wee bit* exaggerated its "multitude of errors."

THE END.

WORKS

LATELY PUBLISHED FOR THE SAME AUTHOR.

THE STATISTICS OF PHRENOLOGY, being a Sketch of the Progress and present State of that Science, in the British Islands. Price 5s.

REMARKS ON THE GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF BRITISH PLANTS, chiefly in connection with Latitude, Elevation, and Climate. Price 6s. 6d.

THE NEW BOTANIST'S GUIDE to the Localities of the Rarer Plants of Britain. Volume I. *England and Wales*. Price 10s. 6d. (N.B. The second Volume of this Work will include Scotland and adjacent Isles, with a Supplement to Volume I.; and is expected to be ready in the Spring of 1837.)

NOTICE. — The above works are not of general interest, but will be useful to persons devoting attention to the departments of science to which they relate; and they are the only works of the kind in print. Persons, to whom they are likely really to prove useful, but who are unable to purchase them from the booksellers, will be welcome to copies *gratis*, provided their applications be made through some of the correspondents who are mentioned as having supplied information to the Author, connected with the contents of the works.

194c728

DSco8w

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

wils

194C728 DSc08w

Watson, Hewett Cottrell, 1804-1881.

An examination of Mr. Scott's attack upo



3 1951 002 378 997 P

**WILSON
ANNEX**

Minnesota Library Access Center



9 ZA R10 D14 S03 T1 2