

A
Country Schoolmaster

JAMES SHAW

TYNRON, DUMFRIESSHIRE

EDITED BY

ROBERT WALLACE

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With a Portrait of the Author and Eight full-page Plates

"Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

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‘ Upon this letter the editor, G. H. Lewes, as I assume, remarked :

‘ “ Our objection to the phrase, ‘ Aspiration towards new and superior fields of existence,’ was its metaphysical character, implying *consciousness* of superior existence, ‘ denoting a foregone conclusion,’ and thus aiding and abetting the author’s primary error of a ‘ plan.’ The *fact* of progress is undeniable ; undeniable the effect of

THE letters of Charles Darwin to James Shaw are published with the concurrence and approval of Mr Francis Darwin, his son and literary executor.

W THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF LONDON, ON
 . . . I demur to the Duke’s reiterating his objection that the brilliant plumage of the male humming bird could not have been acquired through selection, at the same time entirely ignoring my discussion (page 98, third edition*) on beautiful plumage being acquired through sexual selection.”—*Vide Life of Darwin.*

‘ The Duke of Argyll, like myself, had very likely never read the short paragraph on sexual selection in the third edition of the *Origin*. When His Grace’s views

* *Origin of Species.*

were published in *Good Words* early in 1865, I felt puzzled at the statement of the case regarding the existence of beauty in animals. It seemed as if it were inexplicable by natural selection, and it began to dawn upon me, both from experiments and from observation, that some kinds of birds, pursuing the gratification of their tastes, had assisted to make their own species beautiful. I ventured at last to write to Darwin on the subject, and received from him, in reply, the following letter :—

‘ “ DOWN, BROMLEY, 30th Nov. 1865.

‘ “ Dear Sir,—Illness has prevented me sooner thanking you for your letter on the *Origin*, written with so much fervour and kindness. I am much gratified to hear that you have been defending my views, and in your country (Scotland), those who are bold enough to take this side of the question are few and far between. I am so weak, I must write briefly. I have reflected much on the question of beauty. It is a very complicated one. I quite agree with what you say on the beauty of birds, and the same view may be extended to butterflies and some other beings. I think I can show that the beauty of flowers and of many kinds of fruit is solely to attract, in the former case, insects for their intercrossing, and in the latter case, to attract birds for the dissemination of the seed. CH. DARWIN.”

‘ Early in 1866 I submitted my views on sexual selection to the Dumfries Antiquarian and Natural History Society, sending Darwin a newspaper report of the evening's proceedings, which drew from him the following reply :—

‘ “ DOWN, BROMLEY, 11th Feb.

‘ “ Dear Sir,—I am much obliged to you for your kindness in sending me an abstract of your paper on beauty. In my opinion, you take quite a correct view of the

subject. It is clear that Dr Dickson has either never seen my book, or overlooked the discussion on sexual selection. If you have any precise facts on birds' 'courtesy towards their own image in mirror or picture' I should very much like to hear them. Butterflies offer an excellent instance of beauty being displayed in conspicuous parts; for those kinds which habitually display the under side of the wing have this side gaudily coloured, and this is not so in the reverse case. I dare say you will know that the males of many foreign butterflies are much more brilliantly coloured than the females, as in the case of birds. I can adduce good evidence from two large classes of facts (too large to specify), that flowers have become beautiful to make them conspicuous to insects. With my best thanks for your kindness and clear exposition of my views, I remain, etc., CH. DARWIN."

'Having acquainted Darwin with the facts upon which my paper was founded, he replied to me in April 1866.

'“Dear Sir,—I am much obliged for your kind letter and all the great trouble which you have taken in sending on all the various and interesting facts on birds admiring themselves. I am very glad to hear of these facts. I have just finished writing and adding to a new edition of the *Origin*, and in this I have given, without going into details (so that I shall not be able to use your facts), some remarks on the subject of beauty.”

'This letter concludes with a promise to send me a copy of the new edition (the fourth), which was duly fulfilled.

'In the winter following I wrote a letter, which appeared in the London *Athenæum*, 24th November 1866.

FEELING OF BEAUTY AMONG ANIMALS

'“From the ancient references in Eastern literature to