

TOPICS OF THE TIME.

Scientific Foolishness.

WE have been exceedingly amused by an article from the pen of Professor Grant Allen, published in a recent number of the "Fortnightly Review," and entitled "A Problem in Human Evolution." In consequence of the opposition which Mr. Darwin's theory has met with, concerning the causes which, in the course of the development of man from his hirsute anthropoid ancestors, have despoiled him of his hairy covering, Professor Allen says: "It seems highly desirable," therefore, to prop up Mr. Darwin's theory by any external supports which observation or analogy may suggest, and, if possible, to show some original ground-work in the shape of a natural tendency to hairlessness, upon which sexual selection might afterward exert itself, so as to increase and accelerate the depilatory process when once set up." So the writer goes to work in the highly "desirable" enterprise of propping up Mr. Darwin's theory that men were not made, but were developed from a lower form of life, as it was embodied in a hairy animal. The problem to be solved is: "How did men get rid of their hair?" Well, how do you suppose it was done? It was done mainly by lying down on it. The most hairless portion of the body is the back, and the professor thinks that, as man assumed the erect position in walking, he became an animal lying less and less on its belly, and more and more upon its back, so that the growth of the hair was checked, or the hair itself was worn away. The manner of wrapping and protecting the human infant is also supposed to have had something to do with the effect. After a few had got rid of their hair, hairlessness became popular, and what artificial denudation had begun, sexual selection completed. Bare skins were too strong for bear-skins, and the hair wearers were left out in the cold. Now we submit that there never was a speculation more irredeemably nonsensical than this. And it is gravely put forth in a journal of the best class as worthy of respectful reading and consideration! Those who believe that man was created by an all-wise power who gave to the skin the beauty and delicacy which distinguish it from the hairy integuments of the brute creation, are accused very freely by the scientific world of credulity, but there are very few among them who are sufficiently addled to accept Professor Allen's speculations upon this topic as worth the paper they were written on. A child on reading them would naturally ask why, if lying upon the back should produce the results attributed to it, would not lying on the back of the head affect the covering of that portion of the human structure in the same way. Now, it so happens that where the weight of the head rests the most heavily, the hair sticks the tightest. When a man grows bald, he grows bald on the top of his head, where he gets no pressure whatever. Now, not one of our hairy ancestors ever lay down on his back without his head, and the

head, with all its weight, was pressed upon the hair. Does it not occur to Professor Allen as strange that pressure, as a depilatory, should be so partial in its operation? Nay, does it not seem strange to him that the same agent which denudes the body of its hair acts as a genuine tightener of that covering upon the head?

Speculation is cheap, so let us indulge in a little. Assuming as sound, the theory that we are descended from a hairy anthropoid ape, we must admit that we started from rather a savage condition. Why is it not possible that the hair was pulled out in fighting? What with active hair-pulling, and the cicatrices of wounds received in combat, it is not difficult to conceive of a hairy man and woman pretty well cleaned off. So, as a hairless skin began to be appreciated as a badge of bravery, it furnished "a ground-work upon which sexual selection might afterward exert itself." Is there any thing unreasonable in this? Isn't it about as scientific as Professor Allen's hypothesis? We take out no patent on it, and "The Fortnightly" is welcome to it.

But we have a better speculation than that one, which Professor Allen went all around without seeing, and the only rational one in the case. If we were writing for the object which inspires Professor Allen's efforts, viz: that of "propping up" Mr. Darwin's theory, we should speak of the probable and entirely natural effect of clothing upon the human frame. Hairy brutes suffer with cold as men do who have no hair. When man began to be man, with the hair on, he began to be bright enough to kill animals and take their skins off. Then he became bright enough to supplement his own hair with the hair he had captured. At last, he began to wear clothes as a regular habit. As soon as he did this, he rendered the hair upon his own person unnecessary, and nature ceased to produce it, as nature ceased to furnish eyes to the fishes that take up their homes in the Mammoth Cave. Nature is full of analogies which teach us that when a function is superseded it ceases. Now, how is that for a theory? Is it not a good deal more rational than Professor Allen's? We state it to show how easy it is to build a theory which shall, in all respects, be as rational as those gravely put forth by men who claim to be scientific. And we do claim that this theory is a better one than Professor Allen's, in all respects, for his own purposes.

Still, we do not believe in it. We have never yet seen anything that looks like proof that we were not created by a direct act of the Almighty. We believe that man was made originally with a hairless skin for beauty's sake, and because he was endowed with the ability to manufacture his own clothing, and with the power to tint and fashion it in correspondence with his ideas of fitness and attractiveness. There is no more reason for doubting that man began to exist by a direct act of creation, endowed with all his present characteristics of form and natu-

ral covering, than that life began to exist on the earth in any form. Somewhere, behind all the links of causation, exists the causeless cause; incomprehensible to us, but possessing intelligence and consciousness out of which our own consciousness and intelligence are born, and without which they never could have existed.

Marriage as a Test.

IF Nature teaches us anything, it is that the life-long marriage of one woman to one man is her own ordination. The sexes, in the first place, are produced in so nearly equal numbers that provision is made for just this. Then the passion of love makes the one woman and the one man supremely desirable to each other, so that to the man or the woman moved by it, all men and women, other than the object beloved, are comparatively of no value or attractiveness whatever. It is the supreme desire of a man in love to possess and for ever to hold the object of his love. On this passion of love of one man for one woman, and one woman for one man, is based the institution of the family, which we regard, in common with the mass of society, as the true social unit. It seems to us that nothing can be more demonstrable than that the family which grows out of what we call Christian marriage is, in all ways, better adapted to secure safety, comfort, happiness, and morality to the community, than any substitute that was ever tried or was ever imagined. The consummation of love is the production of offspring. The family is the institution which protects and rears within an atmosphere of natural affection the children born of love. The care and support of children are thus in the family brought upon the hands of those who are responsible for their introduction into life.

We call this Christian marriage and the family a Christian institution; but in establishing these institutions, as such, Christianity has done nothing more than to re-enact laws of nature written with great plainness. The growth of the family is as natural as the growth of a plant. Mutual love, whose supreme motive is mutual possession, ultimates in the production of offspring, whom it is a joy to rear under a separate roof, subject to the economies of a home. It is in a home, constituted in this way, that the human virtues are best cultivated, that the finer affections are most naturally developed, and that those attachments are formed and those sentiments engendered which make life a beautiful and significant thing. The associations of the family and home, in which a man is reared, are the most inspiring that he knows; and a man whose childhood knew no home, knows and feels that he has lost or missed one of the great satisfactions and one of the most sweetening and uplifting influences of his life. The history of millions of human lives stands ready to attest the salutary influence of home, and the unmeasurable loss that comes to all men who are deprived of it. It is a case past arguing. We need only to appeal to the universal consciousness. Nothing is better under-

stood, or more widely admitted, than that home, based on the life-long marriage of one woman to one man, and the family that naturally grows out of such a union, is the great conservative influence of the world's best society. Its government, its nurture, its social happiness, its delightful influences and associations, make it the brightest, loveliest, holiest, divinest thing that grows from any impulse or affection of human nature under the sanctions of Christianity.

A few days ago we received a letter from a correspondent, asking us to do for the Oneida Community what we had permitted a contributor to do for the followers of George Rapp,—to write or procure to be written,—a complete exposition of its principles and practices. We respectfully decline to do any such thing. The amount of dirt involved in an exposure of the Oneida Community's views of marriage and the practices that go with them would forbid the enterprise. This community stands condemned before the world, tried simply by the marriage test. It revolutionizes the family out of existence. It destroys home, and substitutes for what we know as Christian marriage something which it calls "complex marriage." We know by the phrase something of what it must be, but its abominations are too great to be spread before the general reader. Into such a sea of irredeemable nastiness no editor has a right to lead his readers.

How remarkable it is that whenever an enthusiast in religion gets new light, and adopts what he considers "advanced views," he almost invariably begins to tamper with marriage! In this tampering he always betrays the charlatan, and sufficiently warns all who are tempted to follow him to beware of him. There is no better test of a new system or scheme of life than its relation to Christian marriage. If it tampers with that it is always bad, and can by no possibility be good. The Shakers form a community built on this rotten foundation. They destroy the family, root and branch. They have no place for love, and enter into a determined and organized fight with the God of Nature, who, by the strongest passions and impulses He has ever implanted in the human soul, has commanded them to establish families and homes. Shakerism is good for nothing if it is not good universally,—if it ought not to be adopted universally. But universal adoption would be the suicide of a race, and a race has no more right to commit suicide than a man. Besides, the damming of one of the most powerful streams in human nature only sets the water back to cover the banks it was intended to nourish and to drain. It is too late to talk about the superior sanctity of the celibate. We have no faith in it whatever. The vow of chastity simply emphasizes in the mind the passion it is intended, for spiritual reasons, to suppress, and fixes the attention upon it. The Shaker, in denying love to himself and all the hallowed influences that grow out of family and home gains nothing in holiness, if he do not lose irretrievably. He is the victim of a shocking mistake, and he disgraces himself and his own father and mother by his gross views of an institution before whose