The Evolution of Man

Bölsche Wilhelm
Title: The Evolution of Man

Author: Bölsche Wilhelm

This is an exact replica of a book. The book reprint was manually improved by a team of professionals, as opposed to automatic/OCR processes used by some companies. However, the book may still have imperfections such as missing pages, poor pictures, errant marks, etc. that were a part of the original text. We appreciate your understanding of the imperfections which can not be improved, and hope you will enjoy reading this book.

Book Renaissance
www.ren-books.com
THE EVOLUTION
OF MAN

BY

WILHELM BÖLSCHE

Translated by ERNEST UNTERMANN

SIXTH THOUSAND

CHICAGO
CHARLES H. KERR & COMPANY
1906
PREFACE

Whoever claims to be an educated man, a man who thinks, must acquire a knowledge of the outline of modern scientific research and of the theories concerning the descent of man. No thought is so essential and sublime as that about ourselves. One may be skeptical as to the value of these things, but before any discussion of them is possible, one must, above all, think.

There must be no class distinction in view of these questions. Wherever great philosophies and movements in their interest have appeared in history, they have not addressed themselves merely to the kings of the spirit, but instinctively to the simple man of the people, to that place where the heart of the people is beating. Since natural science to-day claims to offer a new basis for a scientific world philosophy, it must again address itself to the common people. It may seem that scientific methods of expression and thought are an obstacle to popularization. If so, we must take so much the more pains to over-
come this obstacle and find a popular interpretation for our thoughts. The present little volume is addressed to the widest circle of readers, even to those who are as yet unacquainted with a goodly number of excellent but much more voluminous works concerning the same subject. This little work is reduced to such a size that it may easily be perused in one leisure hour. Nevertheless I think that the facts which it presents will furnish material for independent reflection in serious hours.

As for its scientific basis, I have only to mention the name of Darwin. Whoever thinks himself beyond this name in our days is specially invited to analyze his theories once more by the help of this short and comprehensive sketch. In its more intricate details my presentation of the matter is naturally based on certain ideas of Ernst Haeckel, but I must also give due credit to the great influence which the more recent researches of Herman Klaatsch of Heidelberg have exerted upon me. Whenever I have ventured beyond the line of facts, or combination of facts, I have done so from my own firm conviction that a thinking man is not dragged down by all these relations with the animal world, but is
rather strengthened and furthered in the consciousness of his own ethical powers. He then appears to me so much more triumphant above his animal nature, standing victoriously above the dark foundation of his own existence. Man and his history reach back into the primitive world of animal monsters, but this animal nature, this primitive world, lies prostrate at his feet overcome by himself.

Wilhelm Boelsche.

Friedrichshagen,
New Year's Day, 1904.
THE EVOLUTION OF MAN

A lovely picture extends before my eyes. A virgin meadow stretches down a valley clad in emerald green. Innumerable blossoms of dandelions and blue-bells rise from it like golden and violet flames. A gray granite wall, a witness of primordial days, forms the background to this fresh wave of full life. Above it, like a dark blue stage setting, rise the fir forest and the opposite mountain wall. And far, far beyond it, almost merging into the soft blue sky with a slightly deeper tint, appears the outline of the giant mountains. Now, a snow-white cloud, glistening in the sunlight, floats slowly and phantom-like towards me, coming down from the unknown distance beyond, and disappearing above me in the glittering light. The bright glow of the sun is diffused throughout it all, lending charm to the flowery meadow, the granite and the
THE EVOLUTION OF MAN

mountain forest—a great unity sunk in harmonious tranquility. Now, I hear far-off voices. Human beings are passing by, shielded from my sight by the great stone blocks. They are strangers, I do not know them. How much may be hidden by such distant voices—good and bad! What an infinite variety is comprised in this little word “man,” how much that is noble and sublime—and how much that is brutal! And yet, while those feeble undulations of the air which carry those voices toward me are still trembling in my ear, I am thinking of the simple message of the gospel, according to which all men without distinction are my brothers. Our civilization has at last risen to the point of impressing us with the fact that this many-headed mass of fifteen hundred million people on the surface of this globe are bound by one common tie of sacredness which is expressed in the word, man! They are all one unit, these human beings, one great family assembled on the surface of this globe, ready to share their sins, to forgive one another, to enjoy their pleasures together, to go hand in hand on their way through this great valley of riddles, the universe.

But a clearer and sharper sound, not articulated into words, mingles with those indistinct