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Agassiz on Darwinism.

Another fertile topic in connection with this theory is that of heredity. No one can deny that inheritance is a powerful factor in the maintenance of race and in the improvement of breeds and varieties. But it has never been known that acquired qualities, even though retained through successive generations, have led to the production of new species. Darwin's attractive style is never more alluring than in connection with this subject. His concise and effective phrases have the weight of aphorism, and pass current for principles, when they may be only unfounded assertions. Such is "the survival of the fittest." After reading some chapters of "The Descent of Man," could any one doubt, unless, indeed, he happened to be familiar with the facts, that animals possessing certain advantages over others are necessarily winners in the race for life? And yet it is not true that, outside of the influence of man, there are in nature privileged individuals among animals capable of holding on to a positive gain, generation after generation, and of transmitting successfully their peculiarities until they become the starting point for another step; the descendants losing at last, through this cumulative process, all close resemblance to their progenitors. It is not true that a slight variation, among the successive offspring of the same stock, goes on increasing until the difference amount to a specific distincting. On the contrary, it is a matter of fact that extreme variations finally degenerate or become sterile; like monstrosities they die out, or return to their type.

The whole subject of inheritance is exceedingly intricate, working often in a seemingly capricious and fitful way. Qualities, both good and bad, are dropped as well as acquired, and the process ends sometimes in the degradation of the type and the survival of the unfit rather than the fittest. The most trifling and fantastic tricks of inheritance are quoted in support of the transmutation theory; but little is said of the sudden apparition of powerful original qualities which almost always rise like pure creations, and are gone with their day and generation. The noblest gifts are exceptional, and are rarely inherited; this very fact seems to me an evidence of something more and higher than mere evolution and transmission concerned in the problem of life.

COLLEGE SECRET SOCIETIES.—Every col