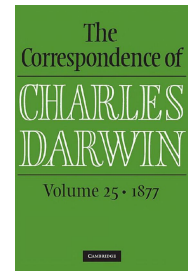


Letter to Charles Darwin from 'An Irishman'

Tuesday 13 June 1877

Sir,



Will you allow me who have not the honour to know you except from your books, to call your attention to a passage in one of them, which would, as I respectfully submit to you, be better left out.

It is, so far as I am aware, the only passage in your writings which is calculated to wound the feelings of any man of common sense. Furthermore, this single objectionable passage is not of your own composition at all, but is a quotation, which you have incorporated in your book, from some ephemeral production of Mr Greg; nor is it in the slightest degree necessary to your argument, but a mere illustration.

The passage to which I refer occurs on page 174 of the 1st Volume of the "Descent of Man", 1st Edition and begins thus "or as Mr Greg puts the case 'The careless, squalid unambitious Irishman' &c &c"¹

Now Sir, I am an Irishman accustomed to see, and not much vexed at seeing, this sort of thing in a newspaper. But your book is not newspaper. It is a great Scientific work destined to go to all Time and into all languages, and the passage to which I refer you, is, I take the liberty of saying, quite unworthy of such a book, and of you. You are in it allowing Mr Greg to do for you, what in no instance, as far as I am aware, have you done for yourself - viz generalize from insufficient data.

That there are in the large English and Scotch towns, Irishmen who are "careless squalid and unambitious" is unfortunately true. But such is not the character of the Irish race as a whole, nor even of the majority of the Irishmen who come to this country. No unprejudiced man who has lived among or studied them would so describe them.

Therefore I respectfully invite you for the sake of your own fame as well as of our feelings, to leave this passage out in the next Edition of your great book, for the qualities displayed in which, as in all your books, you have no more sincere admirer than the Irishman who now addresses you.

As for Mr Greg - the fly whom I invite you to take out of Amber - I bear him no malice. Indeed I have a sneaking kindness for him. True he is the sworn foe of every thing Celtic. Yet he writes with such pungency and smartness, that I'll engage Sir, if we had his pedigree before us, we'd find a *Mac** in it somewhere, as indeed so we would in the pedigrees of most Scotchmen & not a few Englishmen too

May be there is a *Mac* in yourself, Sir. I would be proud to believe there was, and would even have more satisfaction than I have now in signing myself, your warm admirer and obedient Servant.

An Irishman.

* 'Mac', meaning 'son', is common in Irish and Scottish surnames Celtic origin.