

Editor's Literary Record.

WHAT position is to be assigned to Mr. DARWIN as a theorist, the future alone can determine; but as a patient and painstaking investigator of facts, he is without a peer. His *Insectivorous Plants* (D. Appleton and Co.) is a model of what such a book should be: in the previous preparation, over fifteen years of original study of the phenomena described; in the careful examination of these phenomena, exemplified by countless curious experiments; in the spirit of caution displayed in testing the facts and accepting the results to which they point; and in the clearness and simplicity of the descriptions. The latter render the book fascinating to readers who are without any special scientific knowledge, but not without an interest in the curious and the romantic aspects of nature. The title of the book indicates the nature of the phenomena described—plants that live on insects, vegetable carnivora, capturing, eating, and digesting animal food. The sun-dew is one of the most remarkable of these plants. It bears from two or three to five or six leaves, commonly a little broader than long. The whole upper surface is covered with gland-bearing filaments or tentacles, each leaf averaging about 200. The glands are surrounded by large drops of a viscid secretion. This secretion, Mr. Darwin is inclined to think, possesses an odor which attracts insects to the leaf. However this may be, they alight upon it in great numbers. They are caught by the viscid secretion much as flies in a pot of molasses; the filaments then gradually bend over and clasp the insect on all sides. If the insect adheres to the glands of only a few of the exterior tentacles, these, bending over, carry their prey to the tentacles next succeeding them inward; these then bend forward, and so onward until the insect is ultimately carried by a curious sort of rolling movement to the centre of the leaf. All the tentacles then bend forward and inclose the prey. The secretion now not only increases in quantity, but becomes changed in quality. It becomes acid; it possesses the pow-

ers and performs the functions of gastric juice in the stomach; it has the power of dissolving animal matter, which is subsequently absorbed by, and serves the purpose of food for, the plant. Mr. Darwin tried repeated and successful experiments, feeding the hungry plant with bits of roast beef. He tried its digestive powers with various substances, noting carefully the result, and finding that as a general principle those substances which are indissoluble in the human stomach, such as human nails, hair, quills, oil, fat, etc., are equally indigestible to the plant. When the digestion is complete—a process which requires several days—the tentacles expand, the glands become temporarily dry, any useless remains are thus liable to be blown away by the wind, the glands begin again to secrete the liquid, and the tentacles are ready to seize a new prey. Quite as curious, in some respects even more so, is the action of the Venus fly-trap, found only in North Carolina. The leaf consists of two lobes standing at rather less than right angles to each other; they are armed with spikes, extending from the upper side of each lobe; these spikes stand in such a position that when the lobes close, they interlock like the teeth of a rat-trap. When an insect alights between the lobes of this leaf, the lobes immediately bend together at the top, the spikes interlock, the insect is captured; the lobes then press firmly against him, a juice answering to gastric juice is exuded, and the animal is eaten and digested much as in the case of the sun-dew. A very extraordinary fact is that a drop of liquid falling upon the leaf produces no effect whatever; and while any disturbance from any other cause excites a movement of the leaf, any blowing upon it does not cause the slightest change in the lobes. Neither rain nor wind is able to produce the action of the plant, which is endowed with a kind of substitute for intelligence in its power to discriminate between solid and liquid substances, without which it would be constantly opening and shutting its mouth to no purpose. These two

illustrations of insectivorous plants may suffice to show the nature of the phenomena which Mr. Darwin has been investigating, but only a careful perusal of his book can give the reader any idea of the variety and interest of his curious experiments.

The Sight and Mirth of Literature (Harper and Brothers) is a much better book than its overcrowded title-page and its eulogistic preface led us to expect. It would have been better if the author had left the critic to announce the fact that his volume is "on an entirely new plan," and discusses its theme "far more thoroughly than ever has been done." We are bound, however, to say that the author has made good the claim which a better taste would have suppressed. Mr. MACBETH is unmistakably an enthusiast in literature. He is apparently an enthusiast in that particular branch of literature to which he here addresses himself. Considering that all true eloquence consists in the successful use of figures, that unfigurative language is dull, unsuggestive, unkindling, and that ill-chosen figures constitute the very shortest step from the sublime to the ridiculous, it is difficult to believe that there is no other single treatise devoted to figurative language. Mr. Macbeth, however, assures us that this is the case, and we have no reason to doubt his assurance. From the days of Quintilian down we are unable to recall any one who has devoted an entire work to the discussion of figure, and scarce one who has subjected it to a searching scientific analysis. This constitutes the value of Professor Macbeth's work, the real significance of which is concealed, not conveyed, by its alliterative title. He divides figures into three general classes, figures of etymology, figures of syntax, and figures of rhetoric. The first embraces all alterations, for rhetorical purposes, of the original spelling of words, and includes such changes as the cutting off of the first syllable, as 'ghast for aghast, 'fore for before; cutting off a middle syllable, as in our common substitution of don't for do not; or cutting off the last syllable, a device almost wholly confined to the poets. The second class, figures of syntax, embraces all alterations of the original construction of sentences, as the omission of words grammatically necessary, or the insertion of words not grammatically necessary, most frequently a superfluous pronoun. The third class, figures of rhetoric, includes a host of deviations from the ordinary use and application of words, embracing the simile, the metaphor, the trope, of which our author furnishes a new definition, and others too numerous to be mentioned here. Our author's classification is discriminating; and though somewhat unduly elaborate, so that the reader gets mazed in the divisions and subdivisions, it is always clearly put, and always marks a real distinction. The title-page tells us that two hundred and twenty figures are illustrated; in more than one case Mr. Macbeth has grouped together more than a score of sub-varieties of a single class. The danger of such an elaborate study of style he illustrates in his own, which is always vigorous and clear, but sometimes strained and unnatural; e. g., "Pope Gregory First refuses us not a noble antithesis;" "Dryden's character of the Duke of Buckingham let next flit before your vision." But against this danger the student may easily guard himself, and, indeed, the more thorough his study of

the science, the less likely will he be to seek such variety of form at the cost of simplicity. Quite as valuable is Professor Macbeth's volume as a thesaurus of quotations. But unhappily his quotations are sometimes incorrect. His reading and study must have been omnivorous. Not only the student who really comprehends and familiarizes himself with the classes and varieties of figure here set forth will find this book useful, but he who simply reads it can hardly fail to find his mastery of language largely increased, his forms of expression more varied, and his imagination greatly quickened; and he will be almost hopelessly dull if the result be not to make him a much more careful and observant reader of the best of both prose and poetic writings.

The Theistic Conception of the World, by Professor B. F. СОСКЕР (Harper and Brothers), will be commended for breadth, independence, and scholarly research to all those who are familiar with his previous and cognate volume, *Christianity and Greek Philosophy*. He begins by defining the fundamental problems of life as they are presented by modern forms of thought. These, which he enumerates under seven divisions, all relate to the origin of things. Had the universe an origin? Was that origin outside itself? Has the Originator now ought to do with the universe? Is there any moral order in the universe, and any moral relation between the Originator and the creature? These questions lie back of all religion, of all moral and spiritual life. Atheism, which involves the denial of all spiritual existence, and pantheism, which involves the denial of all spiritual individuality and freedom, are alike fatal to moral responsibility, to the very notion of obligation. He shows, by reference to two of the most radical thinkers of the age, George Henry Lewes and Herbert Spencer, that these problems can not be dismissed as unworthy of thought or incapable of solution—nay, that the soul must and will have some answer to them. He then presents the four possible theories of the origin of the universe: first, that it began in matter, which, with its immanent force, is regarded as immortal and indestructible; second, that it began in force, mounting up from the lowest forms to the highest, viz., that which we call mental action; third, that it began in thought, that is, in the higher type of force, working down into and manifesting itself through all various force forms; and fourth, that it began in will, absolute, unconditioned, infinite, but individual. The first two theories are those of atheism and materialism, the third that of pantheism, the fourth that of theism. The first two say, There is no God; the third, All is God; the fourth, There is one absolute, infinite, personal God. To prove that the latter affords the only rational and adequate explanation of the facts of the universe is the object of the book. We shall not attempt to follow the course of Professor Cocker's argument; a condensation could hardly present in intelligible form a discussion which he has rendered as compact as is compatible with clearness. It must suffice to say that he undertakes to meet rationalism on its own grounds, to rest the belief in a personal God, the moral governor of the universe, not upon the intuitive beliefs of men, which is the real and secret cause of that universal belief in a Divine Being which no argument has ever been able