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Before speaking of either his poetry or his science, we have some characteristic traits about the man himself still to mention. As a boy he was fond of mechanics as well as of poetry, but not at all fond of exercise. Then he had an hereditary tendency to gout, but also, fortunately for him-



self, an hereditary tendency to abstinence from wine. Miss Seward relates, however, and apparently with great approval, "he despised the prejudice which deems foreign wines more wholesome than the wines of the country. If you must drink wine, said he, let it be home-made." If this was his taste, his temperance is easily explained. In other matters he does not seem to have been remarkably scrupulous. We are told that he "was passionately attached" to his second wife even during the lifetime of her husband, and, in addition to his two recognized families, some other daughters were born in the interval between his marriages. He was charitable when the whim took him, and full of philanthropic theories which were in advance of his time. One of the points on which he used especially to insist was sanitary reform, and he was anxious that the sewage of large towns should not be wasted, but employed for agricultural purposes. He wished also that "there should be no burial places in churches or churchyards, where the monuments of departed sinners shoulder God's altar, but proper burial grounds should be consecrated out of towns."

As regards Darwin's theological views there ought to be but little doubt, but it is certain that he managed to get the reputation of being an Atheist, and Mrs. Schimmelpenninck calls him a disbeliever in God. De Quincey says of him, "A bold freethinker he certainly was; a Deist at the least; and by public repute, founded on the internal evidence of his writings as well as by his daily conversation, something more." His grandson's opinion seems the correct view:—

"Although Dr. Darwin was certainly a Theist in the ordinary acceptance of the term, he disbelieved in any revelation. Nor did he feel much respect for Unitarianism, for he used to say that 'Unitarianism was a feather-bed to catch a falling Christian.'"

It was in 1788 that he published his 'Loves of the Plants,' and then followed 'The Economy of Vegetation,' two poems which were afterwards combined into 'The Botanic Garden,' a name he took from a small botanic garden of his own, in which he found constant amusement. Later on he published his chief scientific book, 'Zoonomia,' and another poem, 'The Temple of Nature.'

The origin of 'The Loves of the Plants,' if Miss Seward is at all trustworthy, is singular enough. She had gone to visit his botanic garden, and taking "her tablets and pencil, and seated on a flower-bank," she wrote some lines, "a little poem" she calls it, which she showed to Dr. Darwin. He tells her

"it should form the exordium of a great work. The Linnean system is unexplored poetic ground, and a happy subject for the muse.....Ovid made men and women into flowers, plants, and trees. You should make flowers, plants, and trees into men and women."

Miss Seward modestly refused, on the ground that "the plan was not strictly proper for a female pen," but added that it was eminently adapted "to the efflorescence of his own fancy."

Dr. Darwin took his friend's advice and her verses too, and, after first handing them to a magazine, he appropriated them, without asking leave, and made them the exordium of his own poem. Miss Seward was

rather nettled at the proceeding, which, as Mr. Darwin says, "looks more like highway robbery than simple plagiarism." Dr. Darwin himself afterwards explained to Sir Walter Scott that "it was a compliment which he thought himself bound to pay to a lady, though the verses were not of the same tenor as his own."

It is really curious that a poem once so admired should now be entirely without readers. Indeed, we suspect that the few who now open 'The Botanic Garden' do so solely to look at the fine illustration of 'The Fertilization of Egypt,' which Fuseli designed and Blake engraved. However, it was not so at first. Horace Walpole was lost in admiration, and quotes twelve lines (part i. canto i. ll. 103-14) as being "the most sublime passages in any author or in any of the few languages with which I am acquainted." Mr. Edgeworth found that on reading a passage about Medea, "my blood thrilled back through my veins, and my hair broke the cementing of the *friseur* to gain the attitude of horror."

Cowper and Hayley write poems in his honour,

And deem the bard, whoe'er he be,  
And howsoever known,  
Who would not twine a wreath for thee,  
Unworthy of his own.

Mrs. Barbauld was more guarded in her praise, but she and others were enchanted with a description of a balloon, which is desired to urge "its venturous flight" among the stars, and is told that

For thee Cassiope her chair withdraws,  
For thee the Bear retracts his shaggy paws.

The whole passage, which has a certain strange audacity of imagination, is to be found at the beginning of canto ii. of 'The Loves of the Plants.'

Malthus, however, was severe enough upon the poem and its

Sweet tetrandian, monogynian strains;

Byron spoke of

Flimsy Darwin's pompous chime;

and Canning destroyed the poet's immediate fame, and gave a lasting literary interest to his work, by his celebrated parody 'The Loves of the Triangles.' In fact, the entire conception of 'The Botanic Garden,' with its enamoured stamens and enticing pistils, was a ridiculous mistake, and the only passages which are now tolerable are certain digressions, such as the once well-known one beginning,

So stood Eliza on the wood-crowned height,

or those to which we have already referred.

We have left ourselves but little space in which to speak of Dr. Krause's essay. It was originally published in a German scientific journal, and was called 'A Contribution to the History of the Descent Theory.' Its object was to show that the vein of intellectual thought and speculation which has made Charles Darwin famous may be more faintly traced throughout the writings of Erasmus; and thus these writings themselves become an illustration of the theory they support. Dr. Krause says:—

"Almost every single work of the younger Darwin may be paralleled by at least a chapter in the works of his ancestor—the mystery of heredity, adaptation, the protective arrangements of animals and plants, sexual selection, insectivorous plants, the analysis of the emotions, and sociological impulses."

Dr. Krause gives various instances to prove his position, and they are certainly extremely curious. There is this great difference, however, between the two men: Dr. Darwin was for ever generalizing without having a sufficient series of facts before him, and he made few converts; Mr. Darwin is always collecting and arranging facts till they become powerful, often almost irrefragable, evidence of the truth of his propositions. Dr. Darwin had nevertheless a remarkable knowledge of Nature, and his active fancy seemed to give him a sort of intuition into her more secret mysteries.

Nor is Mr. Darwin the only one of the old man's grandchildren whose favourite theories he has foreshadowed. Another grandson (so Mr. Darwin tells us) is Mr. Francis Galton, and it is amusing to find his celebrated hypothesis about heiresses thus first mooted by his grandfather:—"As many families become gradually extinct by hereditary diseases, as by scrofula, consumption, epilepsy, mania, it is often hazardous to marry an heiress, as she is not unfrequently the last of a diseased family."

One other instance of Darwin's prescience and we must then leave Dr. Krause's essay to the attention of our readers, who will find it very interesting. In canto i. of 'The Economy of Vegetation' appears what, when it was written, must have seemed a rather wild prophecy, but is now perhaps the most memorable couplet in 'The Botanic Garden':—

Soon shall thy arm, Unconquer'd Steam, afar  
Drag the slow barge, or drive the rapid car.

Some further predictions as to steam bearing a "flying-chariot through the fields of air" have still to be made good!

#### NOVELS OF THE WEEK.

*George Rayner.* By Leon Brook. 2 vols. (Chapman & Hall.)

*Through the Storm.* By Charles Quentin. 3 vols. (Hurst & Blackett.)

*Vivian the Beauty.* By Mrs. Edwardes. (Bentley & Son.)

*The Root of all Evil.* By Florence Marryat. 3 vols. (S. Tinsley & Co.)

*Wappermouth.* By W. Theodore Hickman. 3 vols. (Chapman & Hall.)

In the first five chapters of 'George Rayner' four women are introduced or spoken of: the first is a girl "extremely fair.....very pretty, if not actually beautiful"; the second an old lady, still "remarkably handsome"; the third a "beautiful girl"; the fourth was "the most beautiful girl" Mr. Rayner had ever seen, and was, in fact, the author says, "surpassingly lovely." One of these girls sang "a beautiful German *lieder*"; another "rode in a carriage," and it was the ambition of the old lady and her daughter to do the same. The ancestral castle was in Kent, on the coast, within a drive from Canterbury, and four hours' railway journey from London, starting from King's Cross; when he alights at the London terminus on returning from the castle the reader finds himself in "the busy Strand." Lord Harewood, says the author, was heir to an earldom; but it seems he was heir to two, for his father is called both Earl of Brownscombe and Earl Walford. The time of the story is the present or the immediate past, not long after



in an affectation of mediævalism which is only surface deep. The mediæval preachers were apt to draw morals and to illustrate doctrine from the sculptured stones and the architectural arrangements that were visible to the eyes of their unlettered congregation; but that they pretended to think that the mason or sculptor had himself intended such lessons to be drawn, either from the exuberance or conventionality of his art (except in the case of pictures in stone, which are representations and not symbols), cannot be substantiated. A celebrated mediæval sermon explains the widely displayed interior of a narrow Norman light, as contrasted with the small external aperture, to signify that the Christian warrior should ever be careful to present as small a surface of his soul as possible to the wiles of the outer world, and to expand all his faculties for the inner musings of divine meditation. But no one would have been more astonished than the preacher if he had been represented as saying that the Norman builder made his windows after this fashion in order to give preachers an opportunity for such remarks—the costliness of glass, the necessity for the occasional use of churches as fortresses, and other practical causes which it would take too long to detail, being the true reasons for these narrow constructions.

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It will be an agreeable surprise to many readers to find that the main part of this book does not consist (as the title-page would lead one to believe) of a scientific essay by Dr. Krause, but of a pleasant life of Dr. Darwin by his more eminent grandson. Not, of course, that Dr. Krause's essay is devoid of importance, but the "proper study of mankind" has always peculiar attractions, and never more so than when the man to be studied has a strongly marked individuality of his own, and this Dr. Darwin most certainly had. Like him or not—many people disliked him very much—it was, and still is, difficult not to feel interested in him. Of large clumsy frame, lame, and marked with small-pox, of stammering speech, with rough manners and strong will, but showing a certain kindness at times, and possessed of great abilities, he was a prominent character in a town like Lichfield. His scientific attainments were considerable, and if the world now thinks less highly of his poetry than his contemporaries did, it is impossible not to allow an ingenious fancy and a faculty of fairly graceful versification. He is said to have had great powers of conversation, and Lady Charleville, who was an authority in her day, declared he was one of the most agreeable men she had ever met. Dr. Johnson, on the other hand, as perhaps was natural, disliked him cordially, and, indeed, they seem to have met only on one or two occasions. Nor do Dr. Darwin's relations with his children, so far as we can gather, appear to have been particularly happy. Even supposing that Miss Seward's account of the way in which he took his son Erasmus's suicide was altogether untrue—and, indeed, the lady had to apologize for it—it at least shows what public opinion considered probable. If false, yet the story was *ben trovato*. Of his own father, Robert, Mr. Charles Darwin says, "I infer that Dr. Darwin had acted towards him in his youth rather harshly and imperiously, and not always justly," and adds that he "was much separated from Dr. Darwin after early life"; he also quotes a letter to Robert Darwin, written when Dr. Darwin was sixty-one years old, which certainly does not strike us as being overwhelmingly affectionate: "Dear Robert, I think you and I should sometimes exchange a long medical letter, especially when any uncommon diseases occur, both as it improves one in clear, intelligible Eng-

lish and preserves instructive cases." But Mr. Edgeworth and Josiah Wedgwood were Erasmus Darwin's friends, and Darwin and Rousseau used to correspond. And he had another friend, to whom we have already referred, and whose friendship has proved rather dangerous to his reputation.

Miss Anna Seward was the great lady of Lichfield. She had written poems now utterly forgotten, and was called (or called herself) "the Swan of Lichfield." She had been, or was supposed to have been, betrothed to Major André, and some incorrect statements of hers about him gave Lord Stanhope and Mr. Ticknor no little trouble. Her admiration for Dr. Darwin was apparently considerable, and in 1804 she was good enough to write 'Memoirs of the Life of Dr. Darwin, chiefly during his Residence at Lichfield, with Anecdotes of his Friends and Criticisms on his Writings.' This is really one of the drollest biographies ever written. The "anecdotes of his friends," especially the account of Mr. Day, the author of 'Sandford and Merton,' take up many pages, and very amusing they are. But the biography stops short when Dr. Darwin in 1781 went to Derby, and only a page or so of gossip at the end is supposed to describe Darwin's death. As the lady herself is pleased to say:—

"From the time of Dr. Darwin's marriage and removal to Derby his limited biographer can only trace the outline of his remaining existence; remark the dawn and expansion of his poetic fame, and comment upon the claims which secure its immortality."

But Miss Seward had worse faults than that of being a "limited biographer"; she was persistently inaccurate and generally spiteful, and Mr. Darwin says:—

"It was unfortunate for his fame that she undertook this task, for she knew nothing about science or medicine, and the pretentiousness of her style is extremely disagreeable, not to say nauseous, to many people, though others like the book much. It abounds with inaccuracies."

The fact was that Miss Seward had wished to marry Dr. Darwin after his first wife's death, and, when he married some one else, the "*spretæ injuria formæ*" was the cause of the feminine malice which constantly peeps out through the flattery of her book.

The external incidents of Dr. Darwin's life are soon told. He was born of a good family at Elston Hall, in Nottinghamshire, in 1731. He was educated at Chesterfield School, and then went to St. John's at Cambridge. He afterwards studied medicine at Edinburgh, and later on became a physician at Nottingham. In 1756 he settled at Lichfield, and the following year he married Miss Howard. She died after thirteen years of married life, and, at the end of eleven years more, he married a second time. His new wife was the widow of Col. Chandos Pole, of Radburn, to which place he at once removed; he afterwards went to Derby, and ultimately to Breadsall Priory, where he died in 1802.

Before speaking of either his poetry or his science, we have some characteristic traits about the man himself still to mention. As a boy he was fond of mechanics as well as of poetry, but not at all fond of exercise. Then he had an hereditary tendency to gout, but also, fortunately for him-