

Another great teacher has passed away. CHARLES ROBERT DARWIN, the eminent naturalist, scientist, and author, died at his home, amid his books and plants, in Kent, Eng., on Wednesday, April 19. Thus closed the career of one of the most untiring and keen, if not dispassionate students of nature of this or any other age. An undaunted and observing questioner, he endeavored to probe nature's inmost secrets; and though possibly given to irrepressible speculation, which cannot properly be called science, it was undoubtedly his direct and consistent appeals to nature herself for proof that lent such force to his bold, and, when given, unparalleled theories,—theories which, if at last totally rejected, must certainly influence the thought of man for centuries to come.

Mr. Darwin was born in Shrewsbury, Eng., Feb. 12, 1809. He was the son of Dr. R. W. Darwin, and grandson of the famous Dr. Erasmus Darwin, and would seem to have been a remarkable example of the law of hereditary,—a doctrine he much advocated,—for his direct ancestors were all men of eminent learning and scientific attainments. Thus seemingly favored by nature, he did not prove false to the fair promise of his life. This, probably hereditary tendency for scientific research and investigation manifested itself throughout his school and college career, in the direction of natural history. Soon after leaving college, in fact in the autumn of the same year, he embraced an opportunity of joining H. M. ship "Beagle," as naturalist, on her exploring expedition which sailed Dec. 27, 1831, for the survey of South America and the circumnavigation of the globe. Thus a stripling of 22, he was embarked on an expedition worthy the ambition of a sage. His star of destiny, Napoleon would have probably called it. Darwin in his love of research had offered his services free, but wisely stipulated that he should retain his scientific collections, which afterward proved so valuable and furnished the material for so many of his writings, and probably for the great theory upon which his name rests.

The voyage lasted five years, and from every spot visited he carried away some trophy,—nothing came amiss to his observant eye. His specialty was supposed to be botany, but his observations in geology and zoölogy seemed quite as accurate and valuable as his botanical researches. On his return to England he wrote the "Journal," recording the discoveries in natural history and geology of the voyage, and also published three other books on geology and paleontology, based upon his studies during this most fruitful expedition. These were followed by and culminated in his great theoretic work *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, which has been truly designated as an epoch-making book. This great work, now indispensable to every student of nature, has been translated into almost every important language, and has been the subject of probably more reviews and criticisms than any other book of the age. It was the *raison d'etre* of that bitter controversy,—named Darwinism, from its author,—which has since raged among high and low, ignorant and educated, and bids fair to continue "till man is no more." Its doctrine may be summed up somewhat as follows: All existing animals and plants have descended (or ascended) from a few progenitors, if not from some one primordial form from which all life has proceeded,—which developed and by natural selection propagated certain types, while others, less suited to the conditions of life, died. This process, termed natural selection, is incessantly at work, and from the steady accumulation during ages of time of slight differences, arise the various modifications of structure which distinguish the countless forms of life,—thus dispensing with the teaching of a special creation, and holding that no species is permanent, but a development from a lower order of beings.

In later works he elaborated this line of thought, and finally supplemented them with his famous book on the *Descent of Man*;—an attempt to trace the descent of man from a lower order of animal life, in which he advanced the certainly uncomplimentary theory that man is probably descended "from a hairy quadruped, with tail and pointed ears, probably arboreal in its habits." Abhorrent as is this thought to the human mind, it has evidently had great influence upon, if it has not revolutionized, the study of anthropology, biology, philology, and all kindred subjects. German thought, more especially, seems to trend in this direction.

Since the announcement of this theory, Darwin has written an extraordinary number of treatises on scientific subjects, all evincing profound knowledge and marvelously patient research. *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, and *The Power of Movements in Plants*, may be mentioned as among the most interesting. Last but not least is his remarkable book on the *Formation of Vegetable Mold Through the Action of Worms*, detailing experiments extended over a series of years, and conclusively showing that these insignificant creatures play a very important part in the building up of the earth's soil and the burying of surface matter.

Mr. Darwin was the recipient of numerous honorable testimonials, some of which were given in spite of much opposition from those to whom his views were distasteful. During the whole of his life he was in easy circumstances, above the necessity of earning an income. Thus favored, as but few are, he was enabled to devote his whole time to his favorite studies. In early life he married his cousin, Miss Emma Wedgwood, and happily leaves behind him sons trained in his school who will undoubtedly add lustre to the name.

It has often been asserted that Darwin was fortunate in speaking to an age which was prepared to receive and under-

stand him. But the question of preparation is, we think, a debatable one. As to the eventual influence of his writings and researches, only posterity can properly judge. So far as they have made clear to man the truths of nature, they have been undoubtedly beneficial, but some of his speculations would seem not to have been an unmixed good on the immediate age. Certain it is that many of his enthusiastic but possibly more superficial disciples seem to have done more harm than good for the cause of science. For, notwithstanding the loud assertions to the contrary, the complete development of this theory according to the views of Haeckel, Spencer, or Huxley, would dismiss all religion and degrade rather than elevate our idea of mankind, and as such it will ever be repulsive to the highest and best minds. But, as Prest. Dawson has well pointed out, "so long as common-sense remains to man, it is impossible that monism and agnosticism can be the doctrine of more than a very few eccentric minds. Nor so long as the ideas of causation and natural law and the unity of nature remain to science, can it be separated from theism and true religion."