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By the death of Charles Robert Darwin science has sustained an irreparable loss. Within its own sphere his mind was one of the most acute, profound, learned, and sober, if not the most so of all, in the present day. The assertion of Thomas Carlyle that he was "a well-meaning man of feeble intelligence" has justly been characterised as utterly "indecent," and only showed the gross ignorance of physical science and shallow self-confidence of the dyspeptic philosopher of Chelsea.

Darwin's works, besides being very widely read in his own country, have been translated into the French, German, Spanish, and Italian languages, and on the Continent of Europe his reputation stands as high as in England. And the man himself, as is often the case with great men, was even greater than his work. A surgeon of unusually high scientific attainments, once remarked to us:

"I have a higher respect for Darwin than for any man living. That he should have seen the germ of a great discovery on his voyage in the *Beagle* in 1836, and then instead of rushing at once into print, as most people would have done, should have waited for twenty-three years accumulating an enormous mass of ascertained facts bearing on the subject, and all tending to support the same conclusion, seems to me the grandest thing I know of in the scientific history of the day."

It is probable, indeed, that even at that period the patient philosopher would have waited still further before announcing his discovery, but Mr A. R. Wallace — a brilliant but far less sober-minded savant, as his effusions on "Spiritualism" and "Protection to Native industry" prove — was already on his track, and it was therefore high time to publish the results of a very mature enquiry.

For the late Mr Darwin, whilst free from literary vanity, prejudice, and passion, was in an eminent degree a person of sound judgment. He knew how to be silent and wait, and he knew also how at the proper time to write clearly and with decision. Even in carrying out his views to what seemed to be their logical consequences he was far more moderate and cautious than most of his followers, never indulged in any ill-timed attack on religion, and declined to account alike for the origin of all natural life and for the source and destination of the highest, the moral and spiritual life, as outside of the sphere of physical science. But though the man was greater than his work, that work was a magnificent contribution to scientific knowledge, it seems simple now, but so seemed the discovery of America after

Columbus had sailed there; but it is certainly none the worse for its simplicity. Before Darwin's time enquirers were evidently on the wrong track in their attempts to account for the origin of all the species of animals and plants to be found on the face of the earth. The doctrines of chance, of development, and of direct miraculous creations at various periods in the world's history, had all been weighed in the scientific balances, and found wanting. Darwin propounded the theory that all the various kinds of animals and plants sprang originally from at most four or five progenitors in each case, perhaps from only one; that the inhabitants of the earth increased more rapidly than the means of their support, and that thus there was a constant straggle for existence; that those most fitted for existence in accordance with their surroundings survived; that the rest died out, or only remained in greatly lessened numbers; that natural selection by animals of their mates caused variations in their offspring, these variations determining which were most likely to die and which to endure.

This doctrine Darwin fortified by an overwhelming array of evidence. It is quite true that unremoved objections still exist, and that it is quite possible, even probable, that his theory will yet need large modification. But it is tolerably certain that he furnished the right clue to the solution of his problem. The Darwinian theory respecting species, indeed, is not a demonstrated law, like the law of gravitation, but, a most legitimate hypothesis, supported by a vast number of facts, and approximately explaining them. Such at least is the conviction of the very large majority of the first scientific men of the day.

Professor Haeckel, who, it must be admitted, does not always preserve the same calm sobriety of mind which distinguished his teacher, asserts that Darwin's discovery is the greatest of the day, and the greatest since Newton first expounded the law of gravitation. With regard to the bearing of Darwin's theory on religion it is not the province of a secular newspaper to enter in detail. Suffice it, however, to say, that as yet Darwinianism has not been completely proved, and that if it were the Darwinianism of Darwin shrinks altogether from dogmatizing in the hasty and rash manner of some of his followers.

Religion, however, as has been already pointed out by many lights of the church, has nothing to fear from scientific enquiry — no matter how far that may be pushed — because it is based on the wants and aspirations of man's higher nature, and obviously no discoveries of physical science can ever satisfy these. The eagle may be chained to the earth, and be abundantly fed; but for all that, he will only pine away and die, unless he has access to his proper and higher sphere of action.