

RECORD: F. D. D. 1882. [Obituary] Charles Darwin. *The Tenby Observer*, (24 April), p. 3.

REVISION HISTORY: Transcribed by Christine Chua and edited by John van Wyhe 2.2020. RN1.

[page] 3

CHARLES DARWIN.

In Charles Darwin passed away one of the greatest scientific men of this or any other age. He claims especial notice from this place, where so many of his relatives, the Wedgwood, were known and honoured.

Darwin first attracted public notice through the publication of the charming Voyage of the Beagle, which, besides its attractions as a book of travels, enabled everyone to anticipate that its author would do much good scientific work if life was spared. He had the advantage of an ample fortune, which allowed him to concentrate his attention on his chosen pursuits, but the disadvantage of health so profoundly bad, that most men would have been utterly prostrated by it and felt themselves justified in idle uselessness.

As far as memory serves, it was about 1857 that Darwin published at the Linnean Society a short abstract of his theory announcing the great principles of Variation, Survival of the Fittest, and Octavism. The writer of these lines was present, and will never forget the impressions of astonishment, horror, and incredulity produced on the majority of the meeting, In 1860 the Origin of Species, which was destined to produce as great a revolution in Biology as Newton's Principia had done in Astronomy, appeared. A storm arose, and Punch and Parsonuom, little Scientists, and men of "common sense" poured out the vials of their ridicule, wrath, and stolidity on the innovator. In the twenty years that have passed the Origin of Species has been translated into every European language, and there is scarcely a man of science who is not more or less a supporter of Darwin's views. Huxley, Lyell, Haeckel, Lubbock, Virchow, all gave in adherence, more or less complete, to his principles, and probably such a revolution was never before accomplished in so short a period.

The Origin of Species was followed at various periods by the Descent of Man, the Fertilization of Orchids, the Effects of Domestication on Man and Animals, the Expression of the Emotions, and finally, and very recently, by the most remarkable book on Earth Worms and their Work in Nature. And each of these books would have founded the fame of an ordinary man. It makes one giddy to contemplate the enormous labour which that giant intellect forced the feeble frame in which it dwelt to accomplish.

Perhaps the rarest and most beautiful trait in Darwin's character was his perfect fairness. Whether you agreed with him or not you never failed to recognise that you were in the presence of a man whose single aim was Truth. He was always ready to acknowledge, yes even to indicate, detective links in his chain of arguments, and as ready to modify or withdraw conclusions pushed farther than his premises would justify, and to give the fullest consideration to all objections of the humblest opponent. He never contended for victory

apart from Truth, and his mind was so constituted that he would have welcomed any theory, however much opposed to his own, if it would have brought him nearer the object of his lifelong search. He lived and died Charles Darwin, M.A. It is not the fashion in England to bestow outward distinctions on her greatest men. Newton was a Knight, Mr Baring was made Lord Ashburnham. Darwin would have conferred splendour on the highest rank, but the highest rank could lend no glory to him.

F. D. D.