

THE NATURALIST.

THE DARWIN-WALLACE CELEBRATION.

ON WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON the presentation of the joint communication by Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace "On the tendency of species to form varieties, and on the perpetuation of species and varieties by natural means of selection," was commemorated by a special meeting of the Linnean Society at the Institution of Civil Engineers, Great George-street, Westminster. Dr Dukinfield H. Scott, the recently-elected president, occupied the chair, and was supported by the officers of the society. The spacious meeting room was crowded, and though one missed the fine portraits of the society's rooms in Burlington House, there was, so to speak, a Darwin atmosphere, for among the company were Sir George and Lady Darwin, Dr Francis Darwin, Major Leonard Darwin, and Mr William Darwin, while Dr Alfred Russel Wallace and Sir Joseph Hooker, were inseparably connected with the famous naturalist, the former in the publication of the epoch-making papers, the latter as the friend to whom, with Lyell, Darwin's views had long before been communicated, and who urged on him the duty of early publication. Beside these there were present the Danish and Swedish ministers, official representatives of the learned and scientific societies and universities, and a number of eminent botanists and zoologists.

Dr D. H. Scott, on behalf of the Linnean Society, welcomed the delegates and the guests, who had come there to celebrate the greatest event in its history, the reading of the papers of Mr Darwin and Dr Wallace on July 1, 1858, which were communicated to the society by Sir Charles Lyell and Sir Joseph Hooker. He regretted the absence of Professor Weismann and Professor Haeckel, valiant champions of evolution, but was glad to welcome Professor Strasburger, and in so doing referred to the work of Wilhelm Hofmeister, whose researches had prepared the way for *The Origin of Species*.

The special medals were then presented, the first recipient being Dr Alfred Russel Wallace, who was enthusiastically cheered.

Dr Wallace, in acknowledging the award, referred to the popular misconception as to the relative share of Darwin and himself in the discovery of the principle of natural selection. He went on to show that though the publication was simultaneous, the idea had occurred to Darwin very many years before he himself conceived it, and as far back as 1844 had been communicated in outline to Lyell and Hooker. Lyell strongly urged Darwin to publish it, lest he should be forestalled; this, however, he declined to do till he had accumulated material in support of his views. Dr Wallace recounted his own experiences in the matter, and created some amusement by describing himself as "the young man in a hurry," and Darwin as the careful, painstaking student; and apportioned their shares in the discovery as roughly proportional to the time each had given to the elaboration of the idea—a week in his own case, and twenty years in the case of Darwin. He also made an interesting comparison between his own career and that of Darwin, whom he called his "honoured friend and teacher." They had both been travellers and observers; both were attracted by the problems of geographical distribution; and the

combination of certain mental faculties and external conditions led them to an identical conception with regard to the origin of species, and was a sufficient explanation why none of their predecessors or contemporaries had hit upon the simple solution of a great problem. Dr Wallace thanked the president for the crowning honour conferred on him, and resumed his seat amid loud and continued cheering.

The president, in handing the medal to Sir Joseph Hooker, referred to his friendship with Darwin, and his early appreciation and steady support of the Darwinian theory.

Sir Joseph Hooker, who was very cordially received, told from personal knowledge the story of Darwin's right of priority, and how the death of Robert Brown was the cause of the adjournment of the ordinary meeting on June 17 as a mark of respect to the eminent botanist, who had previously filled the presidential chair, to July 1, when the joint papers were communicated by Sir Joseph Lyell and himself. Thus, owing to the death of Robert Brown, these papers were read at that meeting, instead of being in the ordinary way postponed to the first meeting of the next session, some four months later. The presentation of these papers was, in his opinion, the most notable event in the history of biology since the publication of the *Systema Naturæ* of Linnæus in 1735.

The other medallists were Professor Ernst Haeckel and Professor August Weismann (in whose absence the medal was handed to an officer of the German Embassy), Professor Strasburger, Dr Francis Galton, and Sir E. Ray Lankester. To each in turn the president addressed appreciatory remarks with regard to their work, to which suitable replies were made.

The delegates of various corporate bodies (universities and schools and academies and societies) were introduced by the general secretary (Dr B. Daydon Jackson), and presented addresses. For the former Dr F. Darwin and Sir W. T. Thistelton-Dyer spoke; for the latter, Professor Einar Lönnberg (who brought special greeting to the society from the King of Sweden), and Sir Archibald Geikie. Lord Avebury then delivered an address, which consisted of personal reminiscences of Darwin. Thus the public function came to an end. It was in every way a great success, and will never be forgotten by those who were so fortunate as to be present.