

AT DOWNE HOUSE, JUNE 7, 1929.

NOT as a monument to Darwin, for he needs no monument, but to satisfy the sentiment which lies at the heart of men of science even as of other men—that, said Sir Arthur Keith the other day, was the true meaning and dedication of the gift from Mr. Buckston Browne who had entrusted Downe House to the British Association. To the speaker himself, Downe had given, as it would give hereafter to many another young and ardent student, a living background for their picture of that great and gentle labourer in the fields of patient research and high thought, who had discovered what Archimedes demanded: 'Give me a fulcrum, and I will move the world.'

If this could so touch the heart and imagination of one who came as a stranger to Down (as Darwin always wrote the name), how much more should a return to Down, fifty years after, or even longer, stir the shining points of memory in one whose childhood was starred with passing impressions of the place and the loving kindness of its master and mistress?

The last time I had been at Down was I know not exactly what year, but at all events after Darwin's death; and it was summer, for, as we sat reading on the lawn, the bees were murmuring loud in the lime trees close by. Mrs. Darwin still lived there; my mother, who was a devoted friend of hers, was paying her a visit, and I went also. But my strongest memories lie farther back, and they are memories of both Mr. and Mrs. Darwin. True, I do not recall that very earliest occasion when a whole bunch of us had had scarlet fever, and the kind Darwins insisted that my mother should bring all the convalescents there to recruit. But I have clear glimpses of the summer of 1870. My father was President of the British Association that year, and had gone with my mother to Liverpool. Mrs. Darwin once more stretched out her motherly hand, and brought the whole seven of us to Down. Two memories clearly belong to that year. I can see in my mind's eye the very spot where I sat at the long breakfast table, and looked round to see Darwin come in, a tall, white-bearded figure, give us good morning, and going up to the curliest headed of the

youngsters pat him on the head and, with a household family jest of ours, bid him 'Make yourself at home and take large mouthfuls.' Then there is a warm August afternoon, when Mrs. Darwin, full of the sufferings of the soldiers in the Franco-Prussian war then raging, set us all down at a table on the lawn with a square bit of linen and a pin wherewith to pick it thread by thread into 'charpi' for the wounded in the French hospitals. More by token, there was the reward of a fat brown penny for each youthful worker!

There were later visits too. I trust we were sufficiently amenable not to disturb the worker in his study; he was regarded, I think, with a respectful child's friendly awe, catching the reflection of our parents' love and admiration, so clear to us when the old leader used to come to our London house for a half-hour's close talk with my father on some tough subject. On wet days probably we were set to play at a distance from the study, whether swinging in the swing-boat at the end of the upper passage or sliding down the back-stairs—delicious joy—on a special chute of well-polished wood, both heirlooms from the young Darwins' nursery days.

We must have spent most of our time out of doors. Down is associated in my mind with a town child's first impression of an English spring in the country. It is always called up by the smell or sight of cowslip and polyanthus, or the fat red globes of peony out of doors, as indoors by the fragrance of hot coffee that met us in the passage on our way to breakfast and the crunch of crystallised sugar, for we children were used to unexciting cocoa and the ordinary forms of sugar.

From the veranda one still steps out as of old into the garden with its lawn surrounded by flower-beds and shrubberies. On the far side, guarded by a little fence, lies the heavy bit of stone, the sinking of which year after year into the ground was to be measured by a special apparatus to show how the humble earthworms altered the level of the soil. The tall walnut trees, into which some strong arm used to fling a thick stick to bring down the green-coated nuts with their gipsy stain, were waiting to be re-discovered behind a thin screen of shrubs. The old orchard, now much cut down and altered, instantly called up in its particular place the now vanished pigeon-house under which were stacked the peasticks which furnished us with spears and swords for games of Red Indians in the orchard itself or in the more distant coppice round which was laid out the

famous Sandwalk, where Darwin used to take his allotted exercise after each spell of work, freshening his mind and shaping his thoughts for the task in hand. In the intervening years the Sandwalk had been suffered to get overgrown; now it has been cleared again to be once more the proper setting for the unforgotten figure of Charles Darwin, in cloak and soft hat as shown in John Collier's picture, tramping along in the open. Perhaps we were Indians in the spinney itself while he went by; once, I remember, as he passed, he was delighted to see us baking potatoes in the ashes of a bonfire, under the indulgent instruction of Frank Darwin, to us a much appreciated senior.

Into the picture inevitably come Bob the black retriever, whom the villagers called Bob Darwin, and Lil the fox-terrier, dogs immortalised by their master's own description of their diverse characters and doings. And the vision of the house would not be complete without the memorable figure of old Parslow the butler, short and stocky, white of hair and full of waistcoat, the very incarnation of a faithful retainer, such as indeed he was.

To-day, the rooms, half empty though they were, flicked shadowy mind-pictures into place. Here was the old study, into which we used to peep. The walls clothed themselves with the shelves, the books, the files of clippings and papers, which used to cover them. Was that memory all the impression of so many years ago, or was it reinforced by the familiar picture in the 'Life'? The other picture in the 'Life,' the outside of the house, shows what memory had retained, a creeper-covered front. Time has swept these away: the clear, fresh white of the walls, the veranda unshadowed by its festoons of leafage, struck an unfamiliar note. Still, going on from the study, there for me sprang up the picture, somewhere near the middle of the room, of Mr. and Mrs. Darwin at a small table, playing their evening games of backgammon, and farther off, sitting beside my mother, the unmarried daughter, 'Bessie,' who, like the rest, shared in the family inheritance of which I think we inwardly felt to be made up of quiet strength and personal charm. That was the atmosphere of the house, absorbed unconsciously into one's early self and remaining like a groundwash in a picture to tone the other colours that life might lay on. To have shared, however lightly, in the life of Down was to gain a rare and ineffaceable impression of the deep and radiant quality, if I may so describe it, that suffused the everyday life of Darwin and his great-hearted wife. Few there are now who looked upon Darwin

as he lived ; fewer still who have even for a little while lived under the same roof with him ; let that justify these little flashes of personal remembrance which are kept alive by the great and lovable personality that gave them being. Dust of the past, perhaps, but even trivial dust can fly as motes in the sunbeam that make manifest the brightness which enfolds them.

LEONARD HUXLEY.

NEW MOON.

THERE'S one will need no summer cloak,
 Nor yet a pair of dancing shoon :—
 She that finds a changeling husband
 Under the new moon.

Lucy's made a frock of lace,
 Charity's gown is gay with frills—
 Plain goes she who gathers acorns
 In the autumn hills.

Chilly nights are these for lovers,
 Cold the harvest moon,
 Those that kiss a changeling
 Tread another tune.

They need no more of us, my love,
 Who dance to drum and fife—
 Those that take a changeling husband
 Need no more of life.

OLIVE CLARE PRIMROSE.