

## Reviews.

*Darwin's Journal of a Voyage round the World.*  
Part I. Murray. 12mo.

NONE of our voyages of discovery, or of survey, have produced a result more satisfactory to the naturalist than that of the *Beagle*, a ship commissioned about 14 years ago to survey the coast of Patagonia and Terra del Fuego, and to examine some other parts of the South American continent. On that occasion Mr. Darwin, the author of the very entertaining and instructive *Journal* before us, volunteered to act as naturalist, and it was a white day for zoology when his services were accepted.

Mr. Murray could scarcely have chosen a better work than that of Mr. Darwin for a portion of his Home and Colonial Library, a periodical especially intended for those who seek for solid information at a cheap rate. It is an inexhaustible mine of observations and anecdotes concerning the natural history of the South American continent, written with the intelligence of a quick-sighted observer, and the tone of a gentleman. The only thing to be regretted is that to his graphic accounts of the zoology, ornithology, malacology, and geology of the survey Mr. Darwin should not have added more botany, a theme which to so many readers is even more interesting than the subjects specially treated of. We are, however, thankful for the abundant entertainment actually provided for us, from which we must make a few extracts, with the persuasion that they will lead to a careful perusal of the work itself.

At Rio Janeiro Mr. Darwin first saw *Tree-ferns*, which he speaks of thus,—

“During the second day's journey we found the road so shut up, that it was necessary that a man should go ahead with a sword to cut away the creepers. The forest abounded with beautiful objects; among which the *Tree-ferns*, though not large, were from their bright green foliage, and the elegant curvature of their fronds, most worthy of admiration. In the evening it rained very heavily, and although the thermometer stood at 65° I felt very cold. As soon as the rain ceased, it was curious to observe the extraordinary evaporation which commenced over the whole extent of the forest. At the height of 100 ft. the hills were buried in a dense white vapour, which rose like columns of smoke from the most thickly-wooded parts, and especially from the valleys. I observed this phenomenon on several occasions: I suppose it is owing to the large surface of foliage, previously heated by the sun's rays.”

At Bahia Mr. Darwin had an opportunity of studying the habits of that queer creature which one of the old travellers maintained was a plant with a worm for its root.

Captain Lancaster, in his voyage in 1601, narrates that on the sea-sands of the Island of Sombbrero, in the East Indies, he "found a small twig growing up like a young tree, and on offering to pluck it up, it shrinks down to the ground, and sinks unless held very hard. On being plucked up, a great worm is found to be its root, and as the tree groweth in greatness, so doth the worm diminish; and as soon as the worm is entirely turned into a tree it rooteth in the earth, and so becomes great. This transformation is one of the strangest wonders that I saw in all my travels; for if this tree is plucked up, while young, and the leaves and bark stripped off, it becomes a hard stone when dry, much like white coral: thus is this worm twice transformed into different natures. Of these we gathered and brought home many."

Of this our author gives the following interesting explanation:—

"I will only mention one other animal, a zoophyte (I believe *Virgularia Patagonica*), a kind of sea-pen. It consists of a thin, straight, fleshy stem, with alternate rows of polypi on each side, and surrounding an elastic stony axis, varying in length from 8 ins. to 2 ft. The stem at one extremity is truncate; but at the other is terminated by a vermiform fleshy appendage. The stony axis which gives strength to the stem may be traced at this extremity into a mere vessel filled with granular matter. At low water hundreds of these zoophytes might be seen, projecting like stubble, with the truncate end upwards, a few inches above the surface of the muddy sand. When touched or pulled they suddenly drew themselves in with force, so as nearly or quite to disappear. By this action, the highly elastic axis must be bent at the lower extremity, where it is naturally slightly curved; and I imagine it is by this elasticity alone that the zoophyte is enabled to rise again through the mud. Each polypus, though closely united to its brethren, has a distinct mouth, body, and tentacula. Of these polypi, in a large specimen, there must be many thousands; yet we see that they act by one movement; they have also one central axis connected with a system of obscure circulation, and the ova are produced in an organ distinct from the separate individuals. Well may one be allowed to ask what is an individual."

But it is not the mere natural history of the countries he visited that Mr. Darwin has recorded. Unhappily in the barbarous regions of Spanish America there is too much to study in the inhabitants themselves, who seem to have been brutalised by their Spanish masters to a degree that would be incredible upon worse testimony than that before us. Take the following scene as a specimen of the discipline of a Spanish American detachment of soldiers:—

"The next day 300 men arrived from the Colorado, under the command of Commandant Miranda. A large portion of these men were Indians (*mansos*, or tame), belonging to the tribe of the Cacique Bernantio. They passed the night here, and it was impossible to conceive anything more wild and savage than the scene of their bivouac. Some drank till they were intoxicated; others swallowed the steaming blood of the cattle slaughtered for their suppers, and then being sick from drunkenness, they cast it up again, and were besmeared with filth and gore.

Nam simul expletus dapibus, vinoque sepultus  
Cervicem inflexam posuit, jacuitque per antrum  
Immensus, sanie eructans, ac frustra cruenta  
Per somnum commixta mero."

We trust that the reader will not rest satisfied with these extracts, which are taken quite at random from the first part of Mr. Darwin's Journal; another equally rich is to appear, and the two are perfectly indispensable to all who are interested in natural history.