

*Erasmus Darwin.* By ERNST KRAUSE. With Notes by CHARLES DARWIN. John Murray.

The substance of this work consists of a translation from the German of Ernst Krause of an able essay on the scientific works of Erasmus Darwin, the once famous ancestor of the great living naturalist. The object of Herr Krause is to show in Erasmus the same views and principles struggling into definite outline which are now universally associated with the name of his grandson. His system was, indeed, he claims, 'a most significant first step in the path of knowledge which his grandson has opened up,' though to attempt to return to or revive it in these days is described by Herr Krause as 'a weakness of thought and a mental anachronism which no one can envy.' It will not be denied, we think, that the German writer has succeeded in showing that there were in Dr. Erasmus Darwin decided tendencies towards evolutionary principles, and in a loose way therefore he may be said to have established his main thesis. It may be questioned, however, whether much is gained when this has been secured, for there are many other writers in whom similar tendencies might be proved to have had existence. To purely English readers the main interest of the book will consist in the pleasant, ample sketch of the life and character of his ancestor which has been supplied by Charles Darwin. We do not fancy there is any more likelihood of the poetical works than of the scientific system of Erasmus Darwin becoming popular again. It is well to remember, however, that at one time they had a very large amount of popularity. Readers of the once celebrated Lectures on Moral Philosophy of Dr. Thomas Brown of Edinburgh will recall the extent to which they are studded with quotations from Darwin's 'Botanic Garden.' To the present generation, however, he has become a name and nothing more, and a revival of interest in him is natural, if only in association with the name and fame of his grandson.

*Foreign Classics for English Readers. Montaigne.* By the Rev. W. LUCAS COLLINS. W. Blackwood and Sons.

The usual plan of volumes of this series—one half biography, the other criticisms and extracts—is more than usually suited to Montaigne, a writer whom we love as much for himself as for his writings, and whose writings are all so many revelations of himself. Save, indeed, Horace, whom he resembles in so many ways, there is no author, till within the last two hundred years, whose attraction for us is so distinctly personal. There is no prettier picture in the world than that of the Seigneur de Montaigne in his turret-study, penning his moralizings amidst the crash of the religious wars as though enthroned upon serene philosophic heights scarcely imagined not to say scaled, by the men who, 'because there is a hailstorm overhead, think the whole hemisphere full of storm and tempest.' The philosopher, it is true, is no faultless Epictetus; if he were, we should not like him half so well. Fond of ease and fond of self, though capable of at