

AUGUST 30, 1881.

WE yesterday announced the death of a venerable and estimable man, who bore a distinguished name which did not, however, owe any of its distinction to him. ERASMUS DARWIN, who died on Friday at his residence in Queen Anne-street, Cavendish-square, was the grandson of the celebrated person of that name whose scientific researches have given him a place in the history, if not precisely of discovery, yet of the speculative thought which leads to discovery, and whose strange poem, "The Botanic Garden," ranks among the curiosities of literature. The later ERASMUS DARWIN, who died the other day, at the age of 77, was the brother of the illustrious naturalist, CHARLES DARWIN, who still lives, and continues in the active pursuit of those researches which have given his name a place among the great originating minds who mark an era in the interpretation of nature. The elder brother had gifts which with a more energetic temperament, or, what is often the same thing, better health, might have won for him personal distinction, and might have made him conspicuously useful to the world at large. As it was they enlivened the society of his friends, and with his kindly and cheerful temper promoted the happiness of the smaller circle in which he lived. Perhaps, when the diaries and recollections and letters of the notable persons who were his contemporaries are given to the world, some clear image of him may be obtained. He was one of those men who, obscure and unknown in his own day, are likely to become the familiar personages of a subsequent generation. To be known to the best-known men of any time is often to become known with them, and not less intimately than they, to a subsequent age. The *mitis capientis teli* is as well known now as the public virtues and achievements of SOCRATE or as

the wit and literary successes of TERENCE. For the present what the world knows of ERASMUS DARWIN it learned while he remained for yet a little time in it, through the publication this year of Mr. CARLYLE's "Reminiscences." One of the few pleasant passages in those unfortunate volumes describes ERASMUS DARWIN. Our readers will be glad, for the sake of the writer, as well as in honour of the subject of the record, to have it under their eyes. Speaking of the people whom his fame attracted about him during the earlier years of his London life, Mr. CARLYLE says:

"Erasmus Darwin, a most diverse kind of mortal, came to seek us out very soon ('had heard of Carlyle in Germany etc.') and continues ever since to be a quiet house-friend, honestly attached; though his visits latterly have been rarer and rarer, health so poor, I so occupied, etc. etc. He had something of original and sarcastically ingenious in him, one of the sincerest, naturally truest, and most modest of men; elder brother of Charles Darwin (the famed Darwin on Species of these days), to whom I rather prefer him for intellect, had not his health quite doomed him to silence and patient idleness;—grandsons, both, of the first famed Erasmus ('Botanic Garden', &c.), who also seems to have gone upon 'species' questions, '*omnia ex conchis*' (all from oysters) being a dictum of his (even a stamp he sealed with still extant), as the present Erasmus once told me, many long years before this of Darwin on Species came among us! Wonderful to me, as indicating the capricious stupidity of mankind; never could read a page of it, or waste the least thought upon it. E. Darwin it was who named the late Whewell, seeing him sit, all ear (not all assent) at some of my lectures, 'the Harmonious Blacksmith'; a really descriptive title. My dear one had a great favour for this honest Darwin always: many a road, to shops and the like, he drove her in his cab ('Darwingium Cabium,' comparable to Georgium Sides), in those early days when even the charge of omnibuses was a consideration, and his sparse utterances, sardonic often, were a great amusement to her. 'A perfect

gentleman,' she at once discerned him to be, and of sound worth and kindness, in the most unaffected form. 'Take me now to Oxygen-street, a dyer's shop 'there!' Darwin, without a wrinkle or remark made for Oxenden-street, and drew up at the required door. Amusingly admirable to us both, when she came home."

Every portrait painter in drawing the likeness of another man draws his own also, and in this interesting passage Mr. CARLYLE reveals quite as much of himself as he discloses of ERASMUS DARWIN. One characteristic which appears in almost every page of the "Reminiscences" is manifest here. To earn and keep Mr. CARLYLE's friendship and affection, if we may judge of himself as he stands disclosed in his melancholy confessions, it seems to have been an almost indispensable condition that a man should not be distinguished, or if distinguished at all it must be as a follower and echo, a disciple and interpreter, of Mr. CARLYLE. The language which Mr. CARLYLE uses of JOHN STUART MILL while he was in the attitude of reverential affection, and that which he employs with respect to him when their intellectual and moral divergence became marked, illustrate this weakness. The lowest place in the order of merit was to be remarkable as a follower of Mr. CARLYLE. Those occupied a still higher place in his regard who had not gained distinction at all. But the persons for whom he expresses most affection and esteem are the men who have miserably failed, who have taken to drink, or gone mad, or made an end to themselves after the Roman fashion, or otherwise, as he has it, gone down into the pit and plains of Tophet. It seems not unlikely that the ground of his preference for the elder and unknown DARWIN over the younger and famous one was that the one was famous and the other was not. Mr. CARLYLE speaks of ERASMUS DARWIN as having been doomed by ill-health to silence and patient idleness. The distressing and life-long physical suffering under which Mr. CHARLES DARWIN has followed a career of patient work and scientific discovery was probably known to Mr. CARLYLE.

The author of "The Origin of Species" had acquired probably the very first place among aving observers and discoverers in Geology and in all the sciences which we group together under the name of Natural History before the great doctrine now associated with his name was given to the world. Mr. CARLYLE's judgment upon it is an amusing piece of wilfulness. "Wonderful to me, as indicating the capricious stupidity of mankind; never could read a page of it, or waste the least thought upon it." Wonderful to most men, as indicating a capricious something, which almost deserves to be called stupidity, in Mr. CARLYLE, is the state of mind which condemned a book of which he had never read a page, and a doctrine on which he had never wasted a thought. Against stupidity the gods themselves, as Mr. CARLYLE was fond of quoting from SCHILLER, fight in vain. But Mr. CARLYLE was not stupid, and Professor TYNDALL, as he has lately recorded, did not fight in vain against the quality which simulated stupidity in the distinguished man of letters whom it is not now so much the fashion as it used to be to call "the Sage of Chelsea." Having one day, by some mysterious process, got Mr. CARLYLE to turn his face to the doctrine on which he had hitherto insisted on turning his back, Mr. TYNDALL interested him in it, and at last elicited from him the admission that there was probably more to be said for it than he had supposed. Mr. CARLYLE apparently thought that the theory of the origin of species was in some way discredited by the fact that chance shots had been made two generations earlier in the same direction by Dr. ERASMUS DARWIN, as by many persons before and after him. The process is familiar in the history of science. Obscure and unverified guesses are the precursors of clearly conceived and carefully deve-

loped theories. The relation of the two naturalists to each other illustrates in a remarkable manner the doctrine which the younger DARWIN has elaborately set forth of the transmission of inherited qualities. What, however, was scientific fancy in the elder DARWIN becomes in the other scientific imagination in that large sense in which, as Professor TYNDALL has pointed out, imagination is the condition of scientific discovery. The ingenious guesswork of the author of "The Loves of the Plants," now best known through the parody of it in "The Loves of the Triangles," becomes in the author of "The Origin of Species" large and fertile conceptions, based on accurately-discerned resemblances and differences. Perhaps something of this faculty was shown in the humorous perceptions of character, and the power of guessing at truth from slight indications, which Mr. CARLYLE playfully notes in the second ERASMUS DARWIN, who was not unworthy of his kindred with the first man of science of our day and of the affectionate friendship which he won from the somewhat capricious temper of our most illustrious man of letters.

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Literature.

THE DARWIN THEORY.

THE VARIATION OF ANIMALS AND PLANTS UNDER DOMESTICATION. By Charles Darwin, M.A., &c. Two Vols. London: John Murray. 1868.

HAS Mr Darwin made any progress towards the establishment of his theory in these two stout volumes? We humbly think he has not. They afford only a feeble reply to the formidable objections made in pamphlets, reviews, and newspaper articles innumerable. It is but fair, however, to keep in mind that they contain only a part of his case; and as such we would now give some account of them, for the information of our readers.

Those who have studied Mr Darwin's now famous book on the "Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection," are aware that it contained only a provisional, or, at most, a preliminary statement of his theory. The facts adduced were presented chiefly in illustration or in explanation of the principles advanced; the main body of the evidence, which was to demonstrate the principles, was reserved for a future work. Accordingly, after an incubation of nine or ten years, we have the two volumes before us as an instalment of the promised evidence. They cover only a limited section of the subject, viz., the variation of animals and plants in the hands of men. In a second work the author proposes to discuss variation in a state of nature; and in a third he promises to try how far the principles of natural selection will afford a fair explanation of the classes of facts that may have been ascertained. It is rather tantalising to find that the author adjourns the discussion of exactly those points in which the theory halts most, and regarding which information and evidence are most to be desired.

His present work, however, is well worthy of perusal,—more particularly on account of the multitude of facts which are collected in it respecting the domestication of animals and plants. With wonderful industry, Mr Darwin has brought together almost everything that is known on that subject. He begins with dogs and cats, he proceeds to horses and asses, and so on through the whole category of domestic quadrupeds. A pigeon-fancier himself, he has given a minute account, illustrated by woodcuts, of the various races of pigeons kept in England, as well as fowls, ducks, &c. He is equally painstaking in regard to culti-

