

# CHARLES DARWIN.

BORN, FEBRUARY 12, 1809.

DIED, APRIL 19, 1882.

FAR-reaching intellect, a mind serene,  
Sublime in patience, fresh and evergreen !  
Thoughts sprang like flowers from a virgin soil,  
But still he delved with unremitting toil,  
Searched for his facts with microscopic eye,  
With power to learn, and wisdom to apply.  
From things familiar he enlarged his range,  
Through truths before unknown, and passing  
    strange,  
Marked how the animate creation's strife  
Improved the species, giving strength and life ;  
Showed that the creatures which the most persist,  
Are those the best selected to exist,  
By means that Nature ever has at hand ;  
Small each effect, but cumulative grand !  
Proved well each step before proceeding on,  
Supplying links that make all Nature one,  
Until all living things in their relation  
Led him from frequent up to one creation  
With depth of insight, seer-like, to unfold,  
Life's history from its dawn in days of old,  
With glimpses of a future yet untold.

Thoughts like to these had passed through human  
    brain,  
Before digested facts the truth sustain,  
And though to some extent he missed the mark,  
Much honour still is due to brave Lamarck,  
For lacked he not the theory of selection,  
Which to descent of creatures gives direction ?  
Wisely, O Darwin ! thou thy work began,  
And talked of *species*, when we thought of *man* !  
Prepared foundations sure on which to build  
Before unpleasant truth could be distilled.  
For would proud man the information suit  
To find he was descended from the brute ?

Why waste a thought or even once repine  
To find our origin was un-divine ?  
'Twas, no doubt, pleasant for an earthly clod  
To think himself descended from a God !  
As Alexander, when he grandly strove  
To prove his father was Olympian Jove,  
Though facts of Nature through which all are  
    taught,  
Show that the "wish was father to the thought."  
Darwin has opened to the human mind  
Ideal longings of another kind.  
Sprung from the brute, yet with a feeling heart,  
Man's destined still to fill a worthy part,  
For SYMPATHY from history we find  
Makes noble deeds and leavens all mankind.

Leads to effacement of unworthy self  
While honest trade replaces early self.  
To learn this lesson why should man be loth,  
Increase of knowledge means the moral growth,  
Then why forge chains the intellect to fetter?  
To follow truth is juster, wiser, better.

Oh fertile thought! that first in Lyell's mind  
Arose to teach and permeate mankind,  
Gave man a hope that from effect to cause,  
Through smallest change to trace great Nature's  
    laws,  
Showed how continuous action without break  
Made eloquent the rocks, the ocean speak!  
Showed order in disorder through the whole,  
And gave to Mother-Earth a living soul.

Anthropomorphic notions of a God  
That ruled his creatures with an iron rod,  
Were well devised to govern stiff-necked Jews,  
Who should have followed right, but did not  
    choose.

Such infant views our souls scarce now demand,  
Though in the storm we still may see His hand.  
Say not that man is obstinately blind  
To all but second causes close confined,  
For still the Final Cause his thoughts must leaven,  
And lift him up from Earth to brighter Heaven.  
With sacred things true science will not meddle,  
Nor even stop to guess the mighty riddle,  
Humbly content with steady light to shine,  
And show some beauties of the Great Design.

Thus Darwin worked, and all his mind was bent  
To find the truth through full experiment,  
Pushing afar into the realms of thought  
With facts he laboured on, for truth he wrought,  
Till Nature pleased had lifted up the veil  
To show to other minds a further trail.  
A nobler life of thought could scarce be found,  
Calm yet eloquent, simple though profound.  
Most just to others, honest to a fault,  
Of scientific men the very salt,  
Thy dear example, Darwin, shall infuse  
New life in those who ways of science choose;  
To England's honour shall these names appear,  
Newton and Darwin, Bacon and Shakspeare.

*April 27, 1882.*

A. CONIFER.