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LITERATURE.

CHARLES DARWIN.*

THREE volumes, it need hardly be said, are much more than a collection of letters. To the student they form not only a record of the formation of great theories, but an appendix to the life-work of Darwin, rendered encyclopaedic by an admirable index of some hundred and twenty columns. To have made such a valuable addition to the permanent literature of science is much. But the volumes are even more than this. To the layman, who has neither wish nor ability to enter into the intricate details of dismorphology and sterility, their fascination and value consist in the revelation they make of a personality as genial and lovable as it was great.

In the preface to the "Life" (1887), Mr. Francis Darwin wrote that his choice of letters was determined by the wish to illustrate his father's personal character. How admirably that choice succeeded in its purpose has long been known, but not until the publication of the present volumes have we understood the immense difficulty of the choice. For, of the 180 additional letters now published—only a few of which are from other correspondents—there is scarcely one that does not contribute something fresh to our knowledge of the man, of his simple tastes, his habitual considerations, and his uniformly high aims. It is hard to say whether these qualities are more apparent in letters to old and tried friends like Hooker and Huxley, or in those to strangers, to young and unknown naturalists and to critics. In all alike we see the same candour, the same shrinking from giving trouble, and gratitude for the smallest services rendered, that so attached the servants at Down to their master, the same gleams of playfulness that kept sweet and human a life devoted to the most abstruse research.

A stranger to Darwin's habitual tone would say that his modesty bordered on affectation. Here, for example, in a letter to Mr. Rivers, of Sawbridgegorth, in 1844 (seven years after the publication of the "Origin," is a sample:—

"I do not know whether you will forgive me for congratulating you. My name may possibly be known to you. I am now writing about the variation of the animals and plants under domestication, and there is one little piece of information which it is more likely you can give me than any man in the world if you can spare half an hour from your professional leisure and will be so kind . . . (L, 251).

The tone is that of a first-year student to a student. Again, Mr. J. Scott writes in criticism of the work on Oenidia, and the reply may be taken as a fair specimen of Darwin's attitude towards critics:—

"I thank you most sincerely for your kindness and for your very interesting letter. Your fact has surprised me greatly, and alarmed me not a little, for if I am in error about *Oenidia* I must be about *Catantops*. . . Delay is a new subject to me (L . . . I hope you will continue your very interesting observations. (L, 207).

* More Letters of Charles Darwin: A Record of his Work in a Series of hitherto Unpublished Letters. Edited by Francis Darwin, Fellow of Christ's College, and A. C. Stewart, Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. In two volumes. Illustrated. John Murray, 1903. 25s. net.

These extracts will doubtless seem absurdly simple compared with the vast wealth of wisdom the volumes contain. To us they have a significance that can scarcely be overrated. Couple with them the following sentence, written by R. H. Hutton within a few days of Darwin's death: "No scientific man of our century has covered so large a field of research, has surveyed it with so fair, so wide, so patient, as well as so acute an insight, has paid so careful an attention to all the objections to which his own theories are exposed, and exhibited so rare a candour in withdrawing anything in his conclusions, which, on a subsequent investigation, he has discovered to be ill-founded." (Spectator, April 22, 1882.) Without assuming metaphysical distinctions we would say that the marvellous intellect of Darwin drew its life-spasm from moral depths even more profound than the vintage was rich and abundant. Kant's famous tribute to the stars and the moral law must find a similar response in every admirer of Charles Darwin. To eulogise such simplicity would be presumptuous. It is too profound. But it is well to bear in mind, especially to-day, that soundness of mind and greatness of heart are, at least in this eminent instance, as fruit and soil.

To enumerate all the departments through which this vivid personal interest runs is, of course, impossible here. The classification adopted by the editors is a subjective one, but chronologically the letters fall into groups according to the principal recipients of the writer's confidence. Thus we have at first the Henslow group. It was to Henslow that Darwin, while hesitating about taking "orders," fortunately owed his appointment as naturalist on the *Beagle*, and the letters to him during the voyage—some of them read before the Royal Society—form a fascinating supplement to the "Journal of a Voyage." They contain no hint that Darwin then doubted the immutability of species. It is when we pass into the Hooker group that we find a steady approach to the conviction now universally associated with the name of Darwin. That it should be so associated was not in any way due to Darwin, as we see on coming to the Wallace group. There is scarcely a nobler passage in the history of science than the self-abnegation of these men. In 1853 Wallace writes to Darwin:—

"I shall always maintain it (the theory of Natural Selection) to be yours and yours only. You had worked it out in detail I had never thought of since before I had a ray of light on the subject, and my paper would never have mentioned anybody, whereas your book has re-anatomized the study of natural history.

Nothing disturbed the harmony between the co-discoverers till Wallace found it necessary to dissent from the intellectual and spiritual application of the theory, and then Darwin, annotating the former's article "With a shower of notes of exclamation," writes him:—

"If you had not told me, I should have thought your remarks on Man had been added by someone else. As you expected, I differ gravely from you, and I am sorry for it.

There is no need to describe for the general reader the literary style—if anything so artless can be called "style"—of the

letters happily rendered familiar in the "Life." Were we to attempt the more difficult task of briefly expressing the intellectual impression these volumes leave upon us, we should say it is that of an almost incredible breadth of grasp; a wide-angle lens of intellectual vision enabling the author to include all the evidence contributed on any one question by all the departments of natural science in a single survey. This was no doubt Darwin's distinctive power.

Reverting, in conclusion, to the personality in which this marvellous power developed, we gladly welcome certain passages which did not appear in the autobiographical fragment published in 1887. The first of these consists in some notes of his early years, written in 1838 (when 29), and found during the removal of his books and papers from Down. This narrative, which runs from his fourth to eleventh year, shows him a born observer and collector; his chief interest, however, consists in an amusingly candid application of his methods to his own retrospect. His earliest recollection, he tells us, was when (about four years old) sitting on his sister Caroline's knee, while she was eating an orange, "a cow ran by the window which made me jump so that I received a bad cut, of which I bear the scar to this day." Much of what we suppose to be early memory is, no doubt, tradition told us by others. Mark, however, the characteristic observation: "I think my memory (of this) is real . . . because I clearly remember which way the cow ran, which would not probably have been told me." Another recollection belongs to his fourth year. "I have an obscure picture of a small shop, where the owner gave me one fig, but which to my great joy turned out to be two; this fig was given me that this man might buy the said-oreen." This, certainly, could scarcely have been oral tradition, but what facility for observation! Here, again, is a curious bit of psychology:—

"I was in those days a very great story-teller, for the pure purpose of exciting attention and surprise. I cannot now recall one without saying I had seen some strange bird. These lies I recollect vividly, and not coloured with shame, though some I do, but as something which, as having produced a good effect on my school, pass pleasure like a tragedy. I recollect when I was at Mr. Cooch's (a Unitarian school at Shrewsbury), inventing a whole fabric to show how hard I was of speaking the truth!"

This was the boy who wrote in 1863, "Accuracy is the soul of Natural History. He who modifies a hair's-breadth will never be accurate. Any deviation from absolute accuracy is ruin!"

With one other caution from the '87 volumes, we must conclude our survey. We refer to his very beautiful tribute to his wife, who was still living when the previous memoirs were published:—

"You all know your mother, and what a good mother she has ever been to all of you. She has been my greatest blessing, and I can declare that in my whole life I have never loved her after one word I would rather have been married. She has never failed to insist vigorously towards me, and has borne with the most patient and my frequent complaints of ill-health and discomfort. I do not believe she has ever missed an opportunity of doing a kind action to anyone near her. I marvel at my good fortune that she, so infinitely my superior in every single moral quality, possessed to me

my wife. She has been my wise adviser and cheerful comforter throughout life, which without her would have been during a very long period a miserable one from ill-health. She has earned the love of every soul near her.

Higher praise cannot be accorded the work of the editor than by saying that the volume, as an evidence of scrupulous care and editorial courtesy, form a fitting shrine for such a memory. Indeed, throughout the excellent biographical notes about many of the men to whom the letters are addressed there is something gratefully reminiscent of the high qualities of which we have tried to speak. It was an admirable thought, too, to render the letters still more vivid by excellent portraits of the principal correspondents.

T. J. HARRY.

THE PUBLIC AND THE PUBLICANS.

IT is becoming evident that a great struggle is impending between the English public and the English publicans; between the nation as a whole and a class which has been allowed to acquire influence and privileges whereby it is not only corrupting the social life but threatening to control the politics of the country. That is a large statement, but to those who are familiar with the dowdy influence of the ordinary public-house in a crowded town population and have noted the promptitude with which distinguished politicians answer to the whip of "The Trade," it will not seem an exaggerated one.

Let it be said at the outset that the writer is not a "life-long abstainer," nor is he inspired by the zeal of a recent convert. He is one of those who hold that the reasonable use of alcoholic liquor is a luxury permissible to those who can afford it, and has not been convinced that the terrible effects of its abuse are a sufficient reason for its total prohibition. That, however, is not the point which he desires to discuss here. What is now to be considered, what must be most gravely considered by all who take any national interest in public affairs, is the claim of the publicans to a practically permanent tenure of their privileges, as they obtain from certain statutory offences, or, in the alternative, to compensation as the public expense.

From a purely legal point of view it is generally admitted that, except in a limited class of cases, there is no ground for such a claim. But the publican takes higher ground. He appeals to us on the ground of equity. Such an appeal can not be disregarded, but it must be closely examined. There are two maxims known to English jurisprudence, which should be borne in mind in considering this appeal to equity. "He who seeks equity must do equity." "He who comes into Court must come with clean hands."

How far have the publicans as a class acted equitably? How far do they come into Court with clean hands? How far can a class of persons whose profits have been to a considerable extent won at the cost of the misery and degradation of their fellow men be said to have clean hands? For, that the liquor traffic as at present conducted is directly responsible for an immense amount of crime, poverty

and disease, is a proposition which does not need further argument. We have at least got so far.

"The Trade" tells us from time to time, in a somewhat sanctimonious manner, that drunkenness and drunkards are its worst enemies. What it really means is that drunkenness and drunkards detected by the law, with the consequence of an impeded license, are its worst enemies. For if all its customers drank only in moderation; if the public-houses of this country became what they are intended to be—places for the reasonable satisfaction of reasonable wants only—it follows that the consumption of intoxicants must be enormously reduced, and with that reduction would go "a corresponding reduction in profits. There is no getting over the fact that a large proportion of the profits at present drawn by the trade is directly dependent on excessive drinking, and was at the cost of the degradation and misery which are attributable to such drinking.

When thus the trade proclaims its zeal for sobriety, this question may be fairly put: "You deplore the evils of excessive drinking; are you, then, prepared to concur in measures which would have the effect of reducing the consumption of drink, say, by one-third, with its consequent reduction of your profits? That proportion is probably not more than represents the excess to which so much mischief and misery are due. Will you prove your sincerity by giving it up?"

If we may judge from the steady efforts to extend the traffic and to draw people into these houses and retain them there by various accessory attractions, and from the panic outcry of the trade when the magistrates seemed to be waking up to their responsibilities, we may guess what the answer would be.

No serious curtailment of the evil can come about without a curtailment of profits. It is this direct connection between the profits of one set of men and the wretchedness and degradation of another, that bears any equitable claim for compensation by the publicans as a class. Licenses are given for the public good and convenience. They are largely abused to the public detriment and inconvenience, and the claim for compensation is, at least, as good against us on the part of the licensees.

Mr. Arthur Chamberlain has put the case well in one of his recent speeches. "Magistrates tell me sometimes," he said, "that they hesitate to take away a house because they feel so strongly the hardship they are inflicting on the man whose so-called property it is. I wonder if they ever feel the hardship they are inflicting on the much more numerous body of our people who live under the shadow of those houses, and I wonder how they feel it when, as in the case I have given, they have to pass sentence on people who by giving way to drink often give way to crime. Do they refuse to carry out the law because they feel so strongly the misfortune of the man? No. Then why feel so much sympathy for the financial interest of somebody who has begged and prayed to be allowed to go into this trade? I think there is a

great deal to be said for the claim of the public against the publicans."

If it is argued that not all license holders are bad men, that among them are to be found many who in other departments of life are excellent, good parents of families, good neighbours among friends, nay, further, that many houses are well conducted and not a source of evil, all this may be readily conceded. But they elected to stand together as a class strongly banded together for mutual assistance and defence, and as members of that class they must suffer for the wrong it does. As a class they are injuring England, and in self-defence England must deal severely with them.

Who are these publicans? The common representation of a bloated individual in his shirt sleeves, serving out gin and beer to besotted men and women, rises to our minds, but is no fair answer to the question all who are directly engaged in the trade are not of that type. Many are not to be distinguished, in such a way, from other men who in other walks of life have been misled by the false idea that in the pursuit of wealth, in the struggles of business, the strictest rules of morality do not hold good. Otherwise possibly excellent men, they say to themselves, "Business is business, and must not be mixed up with sentiment." Let us not judge them personally too harshly, having regard to the standards of conduct prevalent elsewhere, though in the national interest it may be useful to deal with them severely.

Nor is it behind the "bar" or in the "song" alone that we must seek an answer to our question. We must look in Parliament and in the pews of the churches, in the offices and drawing-rooms of the rich, in the ranks of the learned professions, also, for the publicans of to-day. We must trace the profits of the trade to the pockets of those who receive them, and there proclaim and fix responsibility for its sins. In these days of tied houses in the hands of great companies, it is to those who complacently own the shares and receive the dividends of these companies that we must point our finger. "Thou art the man!" It is idle to stop short at the nominal licensee, who is often a mere figure-head receiving but little of the gain and too great a share of the odium. Behind him stand the great body of persons who draw an income from the trade, though keeping at a convenient distance from its unpleasant details. They may suffer from any great reform. They will deserve to suffer, for they have cared but little how others suffered that they might thrive. To compensate these people would be to ignore the fact that the investment of money has its moral as well as its financial responsibilities, and that the loss, which is admittedly an appropriate penalty for lack of prudence, may be but a light one for the lack of moral insight and sensitiveness.

The best conscience in the world soon becomes valueless, and useless, and silent, unless there be a will proceeding from a formed character to carry out its decrees.
—Dr. Schaffeld.