



VIEWS & REVIEWS

WHEN the *Life and Letters of Charles Darwin* appeared in 1887, nothing in the book took such hold upon the public attention as Darwin's confession that the taste for poetry had become atrophied in him by disuse. In the supplementary collection now published under the title of *More Letters of Charles Darwin* there is nothing so sensational. To the non-scientific reader perhaps the strangest discovery is that Darwin believed for a long time that the date of the Creation was given in the Bible text. It was not until after the publication of the *Origin of Species* that he learnt that the theory that the world was created in 4004 B.C. rests upon the authority of Archbishop Usher, and is in no way binding on those who believe in the inspiration of Scripture.

In the new set of letters Darwin says little about the problems of religion. "My theology," he tells Hocker, "is a simple muddle; I cannot look at the universe as the result of blind chance, yet I can see no evidence of beneficent design, or indeed of design of any kind, in the details." Elsewhere, however, he commends the "second sense" of a story told by Kingsley of an Eastern khan. This potentate was visited by two proselytizing moollahs, the first of whom said, "Oh! Khan, worship my God. He is so wise that He made all things." But the second moollah won the day by declaring that his God was "so wise that he makes all things make themselves." Another expression of Darwin's religious opinion concerns the intuition of immortality and the existence of a personal God. He does not feel, he says, any "innate conviction" on such matters.

It is evident from many passages that Darwin had great difficulty in writing and in making himself understood. In the first place he did not keep his material in such an orderly fashion as one might have expected from a

scientific man. "I keep my notes in such a way, viz., in bulk, that I cannot possibly lay my hand on any reference." Then it is not unlikely that his indifference to the routine of school work, of which opponents of classical studies have made so much, had something to do with his difficulty in later years in expressing himself clearly. Again and again he notes with surprise that perfectly honest and intelligent persons had much difficulty in understanding what he meant. "I am become quite convinced," he says to Asa Gray, "that I must be an extremely bad explainer."

Yet in spite of his deficiencies on the literary side, there is occasionally an acute literary comment. Thus of a certain suggested amendment to an inscription he remarks: "If one reads a sentence often enough it always becomes odious." In his advice to John Scott occurs a passage which has in it much that is sensible together with something that is misleading. "You cannot go on better," he says, "for educational purposes than you are now doing—observing, thinking, and some reading best, in my opinion, all systematic education. I never study style; all that I do is to try to get the subject as clear as I can in my own head, and express it in the commonest language which occurs to me. But I generally have to think a good deal before the simplest arrangement and words occur to me. Even with most of our best English writers writing is slow work; it is a great evil, but there is no help for it."

The atrophy of the poetic sense in Darwin has a strange parallel in Westcott's loss of the ability to sing. In the biography recently written by one of his sons, much surprise is expressed at the discovery, from letters of his undergraduate period, that when he left Cambridge his voice was greatly missed by the Choral Society, which put off a performance of Judas Maccabaeus in consequence. In later years, his biographer reports, his singing was such that it was difficult to determine what tune he was endeavouring to execute. It is easy to understand that a singer's skill, like skill of any other kind, might be diminished by want of practice, but such a complete loss of an

sensations more acutely simply because my health was perfect. It may be said that the sensations afforded by such a life as mine were not upon a grand scale. They were not to be compared with the acute and poignant sensations afforded—perhaps I should say inflicted—by a city. I can only say they were enough for me. All pleasures are relative, and the simplest pleasure is capable of affording as great delight as the rarest. The sight of a flower can produce as keen a

pleasure as a Coronation pageant, and the song of a bird may become to the sensitive ear as fine a music as a sonata by Beethoven. May I not also say that the simplest pleasures are the most enduring, the commonest delights are the most invigorating, the form of happiness which is the most easily available is the best? The further we stray from Nature the harder are we to please, and he knows the truest pleasure who can find it in the simplest forms.

(To be continued.)

IN THE HOLD OF HABIT.

"COULD the young but realize how soon they will become mere bundles of habits," says Professor William James, of Harvard, in his text book on psychology, "they would give more heed to their conduct while in the plastic state. Every smallest stroke of virtue or of vice leaves its scar. The drunken Rip Van Winkle, in Jefferson's play, excuses himself from every fresh dereliction by saying, 'I won't count this time.' Well, he may not count it, and a kind heaven may not count it, but it is being counted, none the less. Down

among the nerve cells and fibres the molecules are counting it, registering and storing it up, to be used against him when the next temptation comes.

"Nothing we ever do is, in strict scientific literalness, wiped out. Of course, this has its good side as well as its bad one. As we become permanent drunkards by so many separate drinks, so we become saints in the moral, and authorities and experts in the practical and scientific spheres by so many separate acts and hours of work."

THE COMPLACENT BRITON.

We happened to be born in an island. It is just breaking on the average Briton that one need not hide all his valuables beneath his pillow because the three other men in his compartment do not speak English; that the men who constructed Mont Cenis and St. Gothard tunnels

must at least have understood the rudiments of engineering science. The puzzled expression on our countryman's face when he discovers that the foreigner can give us points in conveyance of luggage or making of coffee goes to your heart.—From *Jan MacLaren's Our Neighbours*.

RESERVE POWER.

In the street, when a firm has failed or when a business man has been pushed to the wall, how often we hear the expression, "He had no reserve." It would make a fitting epitaph for the grave of many a failure. A man without reserve is like a condemned, leaky vessel. On a calm day it can be towed from port to port, but it would be utterly helpless in a storm. Many fail from lack of reserve, of education, of early training, of solid, ingrained habit.

Others fail from lack of reserve of savings, of capital. Many have gone down for lack of character reserve, of health reserve, of friendship reserve. It pays to store up reserve of every kind, to be prepared for every emergency. Too exhausting effort, too extravagant expenditure, too reckless daring, or too much reliance on unknown factors leaves no margin of reserve, so that a slip would mean a certain fall.

No thoughtful person who has lived to middle age can ever fail to note the effect upon the character and career of young men of the young women whom they chose as their early companions. Many young men of large promise, of good abilities, of earnest aspirations, of generous impulses, have been turned aside from their career, their ardour quenched, their aspirations shorn of wings, their impulses chilled to death, by the young women whom they chose to make their companions and friends. On the other hand, many young men

of plain and ordinary gifts, of common earnestness, have been led to higher excellence, to nobler manliness, to success of the truest kind by the young women whom they chose as their friends. Young men should know that the whole matter of their success or failure in life, the making of something worthy out of themselves, or the wrecking of all, depends far more than they can know or dream upon the women they choose in early life as their companions—and then upon the women they take from among these for the inner, sacred, holy place of wife.

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early acquirement is amazing. It might have been supposed that Westcott's frequent attendance at church services throughout his life would at least have given him enough opportunities of hymn singing to prevent such an entire falling away.

The Westcott who is represented to us in this attractive book bears more than a faint likeness to "Rabbi Saunderson." In learning, modesty, disregard of personal comfort, and absent-mindedness he might well have been the original of this famous character of Ian Maclaren's. We feel quite sure that, if some strange ecclesiastical revolution had made the Rabbi a Bishop, he would have preferred, as Westcott did, to huddle himself up in a corner of the episcopal carriage rather than flaunt his eminence before the public. Nor would he have shown any more hesitation in using a stylograph to stir his tea. It is of the Rabbi, too, that we think when we read of Westcott's difficulties in travelling, due mainly, we are told, to the extremely deferential manner in which he addressed railway porters. "He seems not infrequently to have conveyed to them the impression that it was perfectly immaterial when or whether his effects were despatched. Yet he invariably added to his gentle words what he would call 'a little silvery persuasion.'" Westcott's remarkable memory seems to have been equalled only by his capacity for forgetting. While an undergraduate he writes one day: "Do you know when my mother's birthday is? I always forget." And when a master at Harrow, while talking the Sixth in Aristophanes, he was so absorbed by a passage that he went on reading and forgot all about his form.

From the first he showed both an industry and a scholarly conscience that would have delighted the Rabbi. As a schoolboy he did an immense amount of reading, and at Cambridge, when preparing for an examination, he went to bed regularly at half-past one and was up at half-past four. When he was a Canon of Peterborough his children, on coming down in the morning, would find him writing away with a pile of finished letters before him, and when they went to bed he was working still. The crowning instance of Westcott's anxiety for accuracy is to be found in the history of the publication of the Westcott and Hort text of the Greek Testament. In this his eminent collaborator was no less particular than himself. In June, 1878, the edition was on the eve of appearing, and the publisher thought there was a "clear prospect" that it would appear in the autumn. But Westcott assured him that there were some passages in the plates

that would require consideration, and insisted that the time of going finally to press must be left to Hort and himself. In July, 1879, Westcott declined Hort's suggestion that he should go over some of the revision again. "I should never again be able to do the work as well as I did when my mind was full of it." In July, 1880, Westcott confessed himself to be growing anxious about the text, but he had no doubt that Macmillan would push on the printers. He had still a suggestion to make about Hebrews vi. 7. In May, 1881, the book was actually given to the public.

In the histories of the American Civil War surprise is always expressed at the remarkable development of General Grant's power during that conflict. At the close of the war his was the foremost reputation; when it began he was very little thought of. One of the secrets of his success has been revealed in an interesting interview with a veteran army officer by the Washington correspondent of the *New York Evening Post*, Mr. F. E. Leupp. "He was a great man," says this old soldier, "to notice little things that would escape an ordinary apprehension." When asked for illustrations, Mr. Leupp's informant spoke of the evidences of it in Grant's letters and formal reports. At first his spelling was fearful, and his expressions were unsmooth and ungrammatical. "A chronological order in reading his papers would show you how he had overcome one fault after another merely through noticing what other officers did with whom he was in correspondence. The correction of a spelling, for instance, though conveyed through no other medium than the proper spelling of the same word in the letter that came back to him was never ignored—you cannot find the place where he makes the same mistake again. It was likewise with the straightening out of his awkward phraseology."

The same officer suggests that if Grant's career were analysed with care many proofs would be found of the part this faculty played in winning his victories. One remarkable instance of this will be remembered by readers of Colonel Higginson's *Contemporaries*, where mention is made of Grant's observation and judgment at Fort Donelson. Finding that the knapsacks of the slain enemy were filled with rations he saw at once that they were trying to get away, and renewed his attack successfully. There can be little doubt that in many occupations, as well as in social affairs generally, the habit of observation not only marks but makes the difference between the man who succeeds and the man who fails.