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CHARLES DARWIN.

MORE LETTERS OF CHARLES DARWIN, a Record of his Work in a Series of hitherto Unpublished Letters.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. SEWARD, Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Two volumes, illustrated. (Murray. 32s. net.)

The letters of great men are, perhaps, the most fascinating records of their existence amongst us which they leave to posterity. No painting or sculptured semblance of the man is worth a sample of his letters for the purpose of bringing him before us and allowing us to realize, and in some measure understand, what manner of man he was. His accomplished work which has made his name great does not necessarily carry with it any record of his personality; but letters, abundant letters, written through the years and telling of his thoughts, his plans of work, his hopes and his doubts, written some to the dearest and most intimate friend and others to comparative strangers valued for their sympathy and help in work, are nothing more nor less than a revelation of the man.

No great man has left a more abundant and interesting correspondence than Charles Darwin, and certainly no scientific investigator has ever recorded so fully in his letters to his friends the workings of his mind, and the progress of those inquiries and speculations which have made him famous. This is due chiefly to the fact that Mr. Darwin, on account of delicate health, settled, soon after his marriage in early life, in the country, and from his secluded home in Kent carried on with intimate scientific friends and with all who could help him in his inquiries a most constant intercourse by means of the post. There is, however, something more special to Darwin in the nature of his correspondence than is thus stated. The subject on the study of which he was engaged required the survey of the knowledge and experience of an almost endless army of fellow-workers. Industrious and ingenious as he was in the carrying out of his own experiments and observations, he had further the great gift of being able to make use of the observation of others. He could distinguish the trustworthy from the untrustworthy correspondent. He elicited the facts he desired to know, and stimulated his often unseen helpers to further observation and valuable work. Then, too, he had a genuine simplicity and love of sympathy, which made him delight in discussing his half-formed conclusions with those of his friends in whose judgment and knowledge he most reposed confidence—Hooker, Lyell, and Huxley. He also took keen pleasure in endeavouring to show such men as Wallace, Asa Gray, and George Romanes the probabilities in favour of his own views as opposed to theirs, when these happened to differ from his. Hence many of these letters; but quite a large number, too, are due to pure goodness of heart, an absolute benevolence of the sweetest kind, which made it a lively pleasure to him to say a word of warm encouragement to any young (or, for the matter of that, old) worker in natural history who came into contact with him.

These letters have a definite and immeasurable value for the scientific naturalist, because they are further evidence of Mr. Darwin's views on various points of interest and of his manner of work and of the development of his views on various details. But they are also of extraordinary interest to the student of human character. They show the most beautiful and whole-hearted friendship with one to whom most of the letters are addressed—Sir Joseph Hooker—extending over forty years; and a graciousness and sweet courtesy to comparatively unknown correspondents to which it would be difficult to find a parallel in other collections of letters. At the same time, the student of character will see in these letters the clear indications of that singleness of purpose, fair-mindedness, and obedience to the dictates of his sense of right, which, when added to exceptional intellectual gifts, make a really great man. It should never be forgotten that the last words which Charles Darwin wrote in the journal which he kept in the later years of his life were "I believe that I have acted rightly in steadily following and devoting my life to science."

The two volumes which have now been prepared and issued by Mr. Frank Darwin and Mr. Seward are supplementary to the three volumes of the "Life and Letters of Charles Darwin" published in 1887. It was wise not to publish too large a collection in the first instance; it is only right now to publish all that can be obtained of Darwin's correspondence. The two books together form a record which will not be put to its full and final use for many years to come. The present collection is arranged in subjects, and contains a great deal of very great importance—not only more of the wonderful letters to Hooker but extremely important letters to Alfred Russel Wallace, to Jenner Weir, Thiselton Dyer, Fritz Müller, Max Müller, Hugh Falconer, and many others. It seems almost wonderful that the friend who throughout his life gave the greatest help and courage to Darwin by constant correspondence with him, and constant personal intercourse, Sir Joseph Hooker, is still alive and still doing botanical work. His elder

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> I have almost finished the last number of Herbert Spencer, and am astonished at its prodigality of original thought. But the reflection constantly recurred to me that each suggestion, to be of real value to science, would require years of work.

Nothing could more justly indicate than does this passage the difference between Mr. Spencer's treatment of biological doctrine and Mr. Darwin's. In 1872 Darwin writes to Huxley, "When I was at Cambridge it would have been an unjustifiable sneer to have spoken of the place as one for education." This bears on the question of University education, now agitating so many minds, in an interesting way. Lyell would have said the same thing of Oxford, as the result of his experience as a commoner of Exeter College. Yet it was at Cambridge—not a place of education in those days—that the University Professor of Botany (Henslow) drew young Charles Darwin from fox-hunting to beetles and botany, and it was at the similarly undeveloped Oxford that young Mr. Lyell, of Kinnordy, was inoculated by the University Reader, Buckland, with that interest in geology which not only made Lyell the greatest naturalist of his day but led to the development of Darwin's views and the writing of some hundred and fifty pages of the most interesting letters in the book we are reviewing. It may well be questioned whether the educational college-mill introduced at the Universities since Darwin's and Lyell's day would have done so well by them as the old system of attendance on professorial courses. Here is another short extract. Four months before his death Lyell appears to have written to Darwin on the subject of a future life; in a letter given in the present collection Darwin says:—

> With respect to the great subject to which you refer, I always try to banish it from my mind as insoluble. . . . Many persons seem to make themselves quite easy about immortality and the existence of a personal God by intention; and I suppose that I must differ from such persons, for I do not feel any innate conviction on any such points.

Excellent portraits of Darwin, Mrs. Darwin, Lyell, Wallace, Huxley, Asa Gray, Falconer, and of the dearest friend of all—Joseph Hooker—adorn these volumes, and will give form to the great men of science of the Victorian era for those who will read of, but have not known, them. The work has been judiciously supplied with footnotes by the editors and with a most copious and useful index. On page 11 of Volume I. the editors have fallen into a curious error. In a letter from Montevideo written in 1832 to Professor Henslow, Darwin mentions that he has found some interesting fossils—among them a large skull in association with osseous polygonal plates. The editors state in a note that this may have been the *Grypotherium (Mylodon) Darwinii* of Owen, but that the osseous polygonal plates could not have belonged to it. This is a mistake; for, as a matter of fact, osseous polygonal plates do occur in the skin of Mylodon, and so Darwin may have been right in associating the skull and the osseous plates.