

# The Darwin Centenary.

## Speech by Mr. Balfour.

The celebration of the centenary has been magnificent from first to last; worthy in every way of the great man who occupied so great a place in the scientific world of his time, and worthy of the great subject with which his name has been so closely connected. No one living is better qualified than the Right Honourable Mr. Balfour to deal with this subject. The famous author of "Philosophic Doubt" has the breadth of view and insight indispensable to one who would do justice to the great abilities, vast industry, logical force and constructive power of the great author of "The Origin of Species" on the one hand, and on the other be justly discriminating in the matter of the claims, which ought never to have been put forward by his disciples and admirers on his behalf. Mr. Balfour made a splendid speech on the subject, of which the few extracts we are able to give from a local report of the proceedings, give a vivid idea.

Mr. Balfour said the branch of research which Darwin initiated was the most difficult of all. Measuring the heavens and weighing the suns were tasks surely incomparably easy compared with the problems which affected the physiologist and morphologist in dealing with the living cell, be it of plant or be it of animal or man. That problem, the problem of life, was one which was impossible for them to evade, and which it might be impossible for them ultimately to solve, but in dealing with it in its larger manifestation Charles Darwin made greater strides than any man in the history of the world had made before him or any man so far has made since. He felt it would be impertinent for him to add anything to what had been said of the genius of Darwin. One

aspect alone of his scientific genius seemed to him to be insufficiently appreciated, at all events by the general public, of whom the speaker was one, and on whose behalf he might be supposed to speak. He meant those great achievements which he made in science, distinct from that great generalization with which his name was immortally connected. Let them assume that Darwin was not the author of the theory of the origin of species, let them assume that the great work which he did in connection with the ideas of the evolution of living beings had never taken place, would he not still rank as one of the most remarkable investigators whom they had ever seen? (Cheers.) He appealed to experts whether it was not true, quite apart from his theories of evolution, that in zoology, in botany, in palaeontology, in anthropology, in the whole sphere of those great allied sciences Charles Darwin, one of the most masterly investigators, showed himself able to cast a new and ardent investigating gaze into facts most commonplace and most familiar, and to elicit from them lessons which men of science must always value, quite apart from the great issue to which his genius was able to put them. (Cheers.)

Mr. Balfour concluded with some remarks as to Charles Darwin, the man. He was proud to be one of many in that room who knew Charles Darwin personally. He was not in the least going beyond the bare and naked truth when he said that quite apart from his great scientific achievements

there never lived a man more worthy of respect and more worthy of love than that great naturalist. The evolution theory in his time was prolific in misrepresentation, but no misrepresentation moved that equable temperament. He never was betrayed into an uncharitable observation; he never was embittered by any controversy, however unfair; he pursued the even tenor of the man whose business it was to investigate the truth of nature and to state facts as he saw facts, to be unmoved irrespective of all the storm of misplaced indignation to which his speculations at the moment inevitably led. He was, above all, a man whose heroic disposition and lovable qualities would, even if he had not otherwise joined that immortal niche in the Temple of Fame, have commended him to every man. Whoever knew him personally or by tradition had been able to form some estimate of the rare qualities which he exhibited.