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Darwin

Not that it has any particular bearing on the subject, but to hear them talk you would think that Charles R. Darwin was a table-thumping, foul-mouthed apostle of infidelity, who invented the hypothesis of evolution for the express purpose of undermining Christianity.

You would think that his chief occupation was going about the country and hiring halls to proclaim the descent of man from monkeys, and that he conducted himself as a devil incarnate, whose primary object was to disturb and destroy men's faith.

Such is a picture which malicious gossip, or wilful lying, can create of a studious invalid who never did any man harm and who, whatever views he might have adopted with regard to Nature, or whatever doubts he might have entertained toward prevailing religious conceptions, was extremely careful not to wound a neighbour's feelings.

There is no use trying to cover up or smooth over the fact of his disbelief, but he was never noisy about it. He consistently refused to take part in religious controversy on the ground that a man had no business to discuss things which he not given deep and constant thought. What is more to the point, perhaps, he co-operated in such charity and social work as the parish church carried on.

His domestic life was not only beyond reproach, but such an illustration of undying love is seldom found, except in the simple annals of the poor.

For 40 years, he clung to earthly existence thru the ministrations of his faithful wife. During all that time he scarcely knew what a day of perfect health is like, yet he not only bore his misery with a cheerful countenance, but accomplished an incredible amount of work.

His scientific theories, which startled the world and which still form the storm center of dispute, were advanced, not as products of the imagination, but as seemingly sound after the most patient investigation.

He made no claim of infallibility for them, and sound no converts, except as reason might compel acquiescence. He never asserted that man descended from the monkey, but he pointed out certain facts – many, many facts – which in his opinion, appeared to indicate evolutionary processes and the law of natural selection.

Whatever implication his writings may carry, they are uniformly temperate. He has no bitter word for those who disagree, no ridicule for conflicting views, no jibes and sneers for those who won't or can't understand.

Whether one accepts his theories, it is impossible to read Darwin without gaining the impression of a fair-minded, painstaking student who is not striving to gain glory at any price, but who seeks the truth according to his lights and tells what he has discovered, or thinks he has discovered, with the utmost candor.