

After the death of Agassiz no rival remained for Charles R. Darwin, who died yesterday. As students of vegetable and animal life in all their forms these two great minds carried more knowledge in their brains than all their predecessors in the same field knew. They entered into the heritage and greatly enlarged its boundaries. To their keen and patient eyes the coral yielded the secret of its formation, the smallest fish and the most delicate flower gave up the story of their lives, while the glacier and the ocean bed, the depths of Southern forests and caves far in the north were searched for tidings of the origin and ancestry of man. Agassiz maintained that man, though resembling in many ways in the structure of his body certain of the lower animals, was distinguished from the highest of them in a manner that nothing but a special creation could account for. Darwin contended for an unbroken line of ascent from the most rudimentary form of life to the highest. Observing how every living thing is modified by its surroundings and noting thousands of instances in which highly complex creatures had plainly been developed from exceedingly humble progenitors, he came to the conclusion that the same creative process, and not a new and separate creative act, accounted for the appearance of man. As he saw the world with its ever changing conditions it seemed manifest that if time enough were allowed every existing variety of structure could be conceived of as flowing from the protoplasm which is undoubtedly the base of all physical life. He never, however, took the ground of being able to submit full proof except in the case of the horse. With reference to the more important families of living things he admitted the absence of links of perfect kinship. The absence he accounted for by death and the disintegration of long ages. Pointing to the slow and chance processes by which from rocks and pits and caves proofs of connection between many animals now differentiated had been recovered, he deemed it not unreasonable to believe that in time the proofs needed to set his theory on the firm basis of demonstration would be secured. As to man, he admitted that there was no existing monkey, nor any one known to geology, which could be spoken of as his ancestor. There was, he conceded, a missing link of the largest kind; but by a process of highly ingenious reasoning, he concluded that this valuable piece of evidence had been lost with a continent which is supposed to have been overwhelmed in the Southern Pacific Ocean. Against all this reasoning and theorizing Agassiz pressed the stern logic of facts. Nature, he held, varies within certain limits, but not beyond them. He pointed out four well marked orders of beings, and defied any one to produce proof that the lines of either had been crossed, a challenge which Mr. Darwin did not take up and which for persons of less ability to meet would have been sheer impertinence. The gulf between man and the highest monkey known to us is so great that to theorize upon how it might be bridged is sheer idleness. There is no gradual approach of the monkey's brain to the size of the human. The Terra del Fuegian has a brain double the size of that of any monkey ever known to exist. Agassiz also pointed out the fact that there is an essential difference between the foot and the hand, that no tendency can be shown to the merging of the one into the other, and that every monkey has four hands and in no case anything that can be called a foot. To these distinctions is to be added the enormous gulf made by articulate speech. Between this and guttural sounds there is no analogy or likeness at all. The capacity of Shakspeare can be seen latent in any brain that can be taught to read him, which has been proved to be true of representatives of the lowest race of men in existence; but the tie between Shakspeare and an ancestor who never spoke a word, had nobody to speak to, nobody to teach, and so far as appears, no impulse to speak, seemed to Agassiz altogether too imaginative to be admitted to a place in sober science.

No mistake, however, could be greater than to believe that Darwin's position as a thinker and scientist depends upon the acceptation or rejection of the theory with which his name is generally associated. In the first place, the theory is as old as the hills. It was necessarily held by the first materialist, and cannot be avoided by any Pantheist. The Greeks wrangled over it three thousand years ago, and the Egyptians turned it over long before Babylon perished or Rome was built. It is novel only to those who are learning the alphabet of literature. It disturbs those only who have not discovered how little the equanimity of life depends upon any theory, and how greatly it depends upon truthfulness and good feeling. Altogether apart from this, Mr. Darwin's additions to the sum of human knowledge will give him a high place among the teachers of the world. He devoted himself to the service of Wisdom at the outset of his life and has never turned his back upon her altar. For more than fifty years he has thought, struggled, made long, laborious journeys, endured hardships and faced many perils, to the end that he might contribute something to the enlightenment of his fellow man. Every page of his work bears the stamp of honesty. When Charles R. Darwin can be cited as authority for any statement of fact, no intelligent man will doubt it.

He had the enormous merit of holding truth far above all theories, his own included. To be veracious was more to him than the praise of princes or the gold medals of royal societies. In this respect he may be likened to a capable newspaper editor, who reserves his opinions for the editorial columns, but takes every care to keep

the news columns free from the least distortion. It is also to Darwin's honor that he took frequent pains to point out the weak spots in his own philosophy. He believed that in time the missing evidence would be produced, but he desired no man to be blind to the gaps actually existing.

Among the other misapprehensions existing concerning Darwin is that he was an atheist or materialist. He was, if anything, an Agnostic—one who did not pretend to knowledge of the origin of life or the future of it, but who could see in the sum of things that which no tongue can utter nor any human brain comprehend.

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