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MORE LETTERS OF DARWIN.*

It will be a very long time before the personality of Darwin or the theory so intimately associated with his name will cease to interest, and any materials which throw further light either on the man or on his investigations and studies will always be sure of a cordial welcome. Most of the many letters now published in the present volumes appear for the first time, and although a number of them are technical in part there are hardly any of them which do not bear the impress of the great naturalist's personal charm. It is to Sir Joseph Hooker that the largest proportion of the correspondence is addressed; but Sir Charles Lyell, Mr. Huxley, Mr. Wallace, Fritz Müller, Asa Gray, Henslow, George Romanes, and many besides, are also among those to whom Darwin wrote. The plan of the editors has been to classify as far as possible the letters according to subject—an excellent arrangement, and one which adds considerably to the value of the work. The letters are preceded by an autobiographical fragment written in 1838, which came to light during the removal of some books from Down. This document shows that before he was nine years of age Darwin had developed a taste for scientific study, or at least for collecting; although it is rather surprising to find that he was in those far-away years "a very great story-teller—for the pure pleasure of exciting attention and surprise." Moreover, he stole fruit and hid it for these same motives, and injured trees by barking them for similar ends. But in these latter matters at all events the boy was not father to the man. He excited a good deal of "attention and surprise," no doubt, in the course of his long career, but that was by the very opposite method of standing close by facts as he had ascertained them. The autobiographical fragment, which comes down only as far as 1820, is followed by one or two letters concerning his student days in Edinburgh, which were not very congenial, followed by a number to J. S. Henslow while serving on the *Beagle*. Darwin's marriage took place in 1839, and a year, or two afterwards he had settled at Down, where most of his work was done and whence he wrote nearly all his correspondence. There are four groups of letters connected with the subject of Evolution. They cover the period from 1844 to 1862. Some of the most interesting letters in this connexion are addressed to Huxley, of whose dialectical and literary skill he was an enthusiastic admirer. They were intimate friends all through, and to Huxley Darwin never hesitated to open his mind fully. In one letter, written in 1854, Darwin says:

I have just been reading your review of the "Vestiges," and the way you handle a great professor is really exquisite and admirable. I don't know when I have read a review which interested me so much. By Heaven! how the blood must have gushed into the capillaries when a certain great man (whom, with all his faults, I cannot help liking) read it!

The professor alluded to was Owen, who at other times came in for severe treatment at the hands of both Huxley and Darwin. Bishop Wilberforce's review of "Origin" appeared in the *Quarterly* in July 1860, and Darwin writes to Huxley:

The *Quarterly* is immensely clever, and I chuckled much at the way my grandfather and self are quizzed. I could here and there see Owen's hand. By the way, how comes it that you were not attacked? Does Owen begin to find it more prudent to leave you alone? I would give five shillings to know what tremendous blunder the Bishop made, for I see that a page has been cancelled and a new page grafted in.

In the same month Darwin writes again to Huxley:

I must send you a line to say what a good fellow you are to send me so long an account of the Oxford doings. I have read it twice and lent it to my wife, and when I get it home I shall read it again; it has so much interested me. But how dare you attack a live bishop in that fashion? I am quite ashamed of you! Have you no reverence for fine lawn sleeves? By Jove! you mean to have done it well. If anyone were to ridicule any belief of the Bishop's, would he not bludgeon through his shoulders and be insupportably shocked?

Darwin, who on another occasion wrote, "You are my good and admirable agent for the promulgation of damnable heresies," was often indebted to Huxley's powers of defence, and he was never ungrateful of the fact. It was, by the way, Darwin who apprised Huxley that a number of his friends had subscribed £2,100 to enable him to get a rest when his health broke down, and when Darwin died he left Huxley a legacy of £1,000, "as a slight memorial of my lifelong affection and respect for him." The assistance which Darwin obtained from Sir Joseph Hooker will be seen from the very large number of letters which passed between them. Concerning Hooker and some others Darwin writes to Wallace in 1859:

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I forget whether I told you that Hooker, who is our best British botanist, and perhaps the best in the world, is a full convert and is now going immediately to publish his confession of faith. . . . Huxley is changed and believes in imitation of species; whether a convert to us I do not know. We shall live to see all the younger men converts. My neighbour and an excellent naturalist, J. Lubbock, is an enthusiastic convert.

Darwin's prophecy about the "younger men" was, no doubt, a true one. The other groups of letters deal with Geographical Distribution, Man, Geology, Botany, and Vivisection and miscellaneous subjects. One of Darwin's correspondents was John Scott, a humble worker in the field of Botany. He held a position in the Royal Botanic Gardens at Edinburgh, and Darwin's letters to him, as his editors say, are not only of intrinsic scientific interest, but are almost the only letters which show Darwin in personal relation with a younger man engaged in research under his supervision. In a letter to George J. Romanes in 1878 we find Darwin asking :

Have you ever thought of keeping a young monkey to observe its mind? At a house where we have been staying there were Sir A. and Lady Hobhouse, not long returned from India, and she and he kept (a) young monkey and told me some curious particulars. One was that her monkey was very fond of looking through her eyeglass at objects, and moved the glass nearer and farther, so as to vary the focus. This struck me, as Frank's son, nearly two years old (and we think much of his intellect!) is very fond of looking through my pocket lens, and I have quite in vain endeavoured to teach him not to put the glass down to the object, but he will always do so. Therefore I conclude that a child under two years is inferior in intellect to a monkey.

Darwin, it is interesting to note, had some difficulties on the subject of vivisection. He confesses to Lord Playfair that he was not personally interested in the agitation over the Bill to inquire into the subject which was prepared in 1875, as he "never tried an experiment on a living animal," "but I know enough," he added, "to see how ruinous it would be to stop all progress in so grand a science as Physiology." When, some years afterwards, a charge of infringement of the Vivisection Act was brought against Dr. Ferrier, Darwin offered to contribute towards a subscription to "show his sympathy with and admiration of Dr. Ferrier's researches." The glimpses we get of Darwin's home life are chiefly casual. A beautiful tribute to his wife is taken from the MS. copy of the Autobiography; it was not published in the "Life and Letters," as these appeared in Mrs. Darwin's lifetime :

You all know your mother, and what a good mother she has ever been to all of you. She has been my greatest blessing, and I can declare that in my whole life I have never heard her utter one word I would rather have been unaided. She has never failed in kindest sympathy towards me, and has borne with the utmost patience my frequent complaints of ill-health and discomfort. I do not believe she has ever missed an opportunity of doing a kind action to anyone near her. I marvel at my good fortune that she, so infinitely my superior in every single moral quality, consented to be my wife. She has been my wise adviser and cheerful confidante throughout life, which without her would have been during a very long period a miserable one from ill-health. She has earned the love of every soul near her.

The editors have done their work thoroughly, supplying explanatory notes on every page. The index is a very full one. The volumes contain a number of excellent portraits. Altogether, the book is one of much interest and of very considerable scientific value.

"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. (John Murray.)