

A NOTE ON 'THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES'

Charles Darwin, the author of this volume, was born at Shrewsbury in 1809; he died at Bromley, Kent, in 1882, aged 73. His years of active work thus covered approximately the five midmost decades of the Nineteenth Century, from 1830 to 1880. He was a naturalist of the very highest rank, and the discoverer of the famous theory of Natural Selection. The great treatise in which that theory was promulgated, however,—‘The Origin of Species’—did not appear till 1859, when Darwin was over fifty. It completely revolutionized the sciences of Botany and Zoology, and made the doctrine of Organic Evolution, till then admitted only by a few advanced philosophical biologists, the universal creed of men of science. By that famous book, and by its equally admirable companion volume ‘The Descent of Man,’ Darwin will always be most remembered. He was not indeed the first to set forth the now accepted idea that all species of plants or animals, including man, are derived by descent, with various modifications, from a single original ancestor; but he was the first to give that idea general currency and to secure its acceptance by means of his luminous conception of Natural Selection. Organic Evolution triumphed through Darwin.

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