

## DARWIN AND HIS WORK.

A FEW days have passed since Charles Darwin has been consigned to his last resting-place in 'The Great Abbey,' made sacred by the graves of so many illustrious thinkers and teachers of mankind. Of all these, it may well be said, that few have exercised so powerful an influence on the thought of their age as the author of the 'Descent of Man.' The later Victorian era, rich in philosophy, poetry, history, and criticism, is above all characterized by another and a later type of literature, the scientific. This has coloured and permeated all else; it has supplied a new method, and treats everything from a new point of view, that of the Evolution Philosophy. Darwin's relation to this Philosophy is a very central one; he has called it down from the clouds of speculation to something very like a basis of fact, by an induction drawn from a large range of research all round the world; he has been able to supply exactly what was wanting to a theory more or less plausible, and this with such ampleness of evidence in its favour, that although it is but ten years since the publication of the first result of his reasoning, educated men in all parts of the world accept, as the nearest approach to the truth yet propounded, the doctrine of the origin of species called Darwinism.

The vulgar idea of Darwin's teaching is simply the stale caricature drawn by so many mountebanks of the press and the pulpit—that man is a developed monkey, as Lord Monboddo taught, to the great amusement of the wits and *dilettanti* a century ago. To see Darwin's true position, we should remember that a theory similar to Evolution was put forward by Em-

manuel Kant, with regard to the formation of the Universe of Stars; it was further formulated by the French naturalist Lamarck, who taught that all organized beings, from man downwards, are derived, or as he called it, 'developed' from those below them. He accounted for this by supposing that organs were applied by the animal possessing them to new conditions with such perseverance, that the organs at last assumed new forms and new functions. This was an ingenious, but utterly unscientific, guess, which, of course, was met with abundance of ridicule from the orthodox reviews such as the *Quarterly* on the appearance of the 'Vestiges of Creation,' which about 1847, presented Lamarck's views in an attractive English dress! 'We have been fishes, and we shall be crows!' was the comment of fashionable society in one of Disraeli's early novels. And to the brilliant reasoning in which Herbert Spencer soon afterwards embodied the speculative aspects of this theory, to which he gave the happier name of Evolution, there was the serious scientific objection that it gave no account of the means of transition from a lower species to a higher. This Darwin met by his *opus magnum* on the 'Origin of Species.' In the preface to this book he tells us, that when in his voyage as a Naturalist, employed by Government on board the *Beagle* (1825-31), he was much struck with certain facts in the distribution of the organic beings inhabiting South America, and in the geological relation of the present to the past inhabitants of the continent, which seemed to him to throw light upon the great mystery of mysteries, the origin of species. After his return home, he devoted