DARWIN.

The distinguished founder of the School of Evolution, is now no more. His remains were lately deposited in Westminster Abbey, among the stately tombs of the illustrious dead. Doctor Darwin's name is one of the most eminent on the scroll of scientific fame. It has been familiar in our mouths as a household word for years past, and many people have flippantly chattered about the great philosopher, who were altogether ignorant of his theories, the depth of his research, or the range of his investigations. The work which has made him the most widely-known was his "Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection." In this bold and ingenious essay he propounded his famous philosophical theory, of which the main proposition is that all the various forms of vegetable and animal life, past or present, have been produced by a series of gradual changes in natural descent from parents to

offspring. According to Mr. DARWIN, all the animals, beasts, birds, reptiles, insects, fishes, and zoophytes, have descended from, at most, four or five progenitors; all the plants from no greater number. Doctor DARWIN'S subsequent writings (and they are numerous) had for their object the supplying the data on which he founded his conclusions. Hitherto it was generally supposed that every species of plants and animals originated in a separate act of creation, and that no such thing was possible as the transmutation of one species into another. The production, therefore, of such a work as Dr. DARWIN'S, setting forth theories subversive of the universal belief, created an extraordinary sensation in scientific circles. It was something new to be told that the different species are continually changing, under the influence of changing circumstances, and that all the plants and animals are descendants of a common ancestor, transformed through an infinite series of ages. It was something new to be told that man is descended from a hairy quadruped, furnished with a tail and pointed ears, probably arboreal in its habits. The new philosopher's theories were fiercely attacked, and his assailants were numerous. The controversy which grew from it is to this day unsettled. Both the religious periodicals, the satirical and secular publications denounced Mr. DARWIN'S book, and his views were condemned by the clergy, who, without exception, repudiated the doctrine of evolution.

Doctor DARWIN'S last work, "The Formation of Vegetable Mould through the Actions of Worms, with observations on their habits," has attracted as much attention, if not more, than his first one. Written at the advanced age of 72 years, this book is de-

scribed as being a magnificent specimen of scientific observation and inductive reasoning. The reviews of the day are all treating this subject in its different bearings, and it has been most severely criticised. A writer in the *Quarterly Review* says, "No such storehouse of facts respecting the natural history of vegetable, animal, and even human life has ever, perhaps, been accumulated by one man." Whatever differences of opinion may exist with regard to Mr. DARWIN's writings, all must admit (even the disputants who took the most prominent part in the fierce controversy which his startling theories gave rise to) that they are free from passion and bitterness, and those who have most strenuously opposed Doctor DARWIN's philosophy must at least respect his sincerity, courage, and perseverance, as the most successful of naturalists that has appeared this century. As in civil history records are consulted, medals examined, and antique inscriptions deciphered, in order to determine the epochs of human revolutions and verify moral events, so in natural history it was Doctor DARWIN's work to search the archives of the world, to draw from the bowels of the earth the monuments of former times (*vide* Geological Observations on Volcanic Islands, and Geological Observations on South America), collect the fragments, and gather into one body of proofs, all the indices of physical changes, which enable the student of this class of knowledge to retrace the different ages of nature. It is thus, only, that some points can be fixed in the immensity of space, and the progressive stages in the eternal marches of time be noted. A student of nature, such as Professor DARWIN is reported to have been, could not, we think, be a bad man. Of his private life the

a bad man. Of his private life the world knows little, he was so completely given up to his work; but his pursuit—the study of nature—must have tended to promote a calmness and serenity of mind favourable to the reception of grateful and holy thoughts of the great and good Parent of the Universe. Neither could he have been a cruel man, because he would be unwilling wantonly to destroy even an insect when he had the opportunities so frequently to perceive, and examine how exquisitely each one of them is contrived, how wonderfully and how curiously it is made for the station it is destined to fill in the animal world. It must be remembered that those who have obtained the farthest insight into nature have been in all ages firm believers in God. Let us charitably hope that despite the writings this great philosopher has left behind him, and the conclusions to be deduced from them, gifted as he undoubtedly was with so much mental power, that in following the Heavenly Artist step by step (as he must have done), first in the production of the inanimate elements, next of vegetable, and then of animal life, he finally came to the study of the master-piece of creation, Man! (himself) endued with reason and intellect; and that he came to understand and adore the Supreme Author and Director of all things. When, too, his biography comes to be given to the world, the feather whence the pen is shaped to trace the life of Doctor Darwin, let it be hoped may drop from an angel's wing, and that the biographer will "nothing extenuate, or set down aught in malice."