

Charles Robert Darwin.

Our telegrams from London this week announce the death of the patriarch of naturalists, Charles Darwin, at the ripe age of 73 years. In him England loses another of the bright lights which have made the age of Victoria illustrious in the annals of science and literature. To say that the name of Darwin is a household word would be true enough, but it would not fully describe his place in popular estimation. Hitherto it has been rather a symbol of battle than a lodestone of affection; and though the last twenty years have witnessed great changes in

abstruse theme, devoid of dramatic interest. The father of the great naturalist followed the medical profession, and was himself a man of science and culture, a Fellow of the Royal Society. Genius cannot be properly termed hereditary, but blood tells in the race of life for all that, and unless it is too heavily handicapped by adverse influences, it helps to win the victory. Young Darwin of the third generation was sent to the Grammar School of his native city, and as it has long been one of the best in England, he had, doubtless, the benefit of a sound training. At the age of sixteen he went to Edinburgh, where he attended lectures at the University for two years; after

"A Naturalist's Voyage Round the World," and from that day he became one of the foremost authorities in the field of natural science.

In 1839, and at the age of thirty, Darwin married the granddaughter of Josiah Wedgwood, inventor of the beautiful species of Staffordshire ware which bears his name. The one work which made him the most widely known was the "Origin of Species," published in 1859. Up to that time it was all but universally believed 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

of the secular journals. The theory has gone far beyond ridicule now; and it may perhaps be safely affirmed that the idea of the origin of the flora and fauna of the globe in a separate and distinct act of creation for each species of plant and animal is no longer entertained by one man in ten of those who stand foremost in the ranks of physical science.

The latest work from his pen appeared only last year, and the reviews are still occupied in discussing its merits. Its full title is "The Formation of Vegetable Mould through the Action of Worms, with Observation on their Habits." It is an octavo volume of 880 pages, and is as fine a



THE LATE CHARLES ROBERT DARWIN.

public opinion, to this day the name of the founder of the school of evolution is perhaps more widely feared than loved.

He was born at Shrewsbury on the 12th February, 1809, a date five years later than that of Richard Owen's birth, 12 years later than that of Charles Lyell's, and 13 later than that of Michael Faraday's—three other great names which stand, perhaps, as high as his in the muster roll of scientific fame. His grandfather, Dr. Erasmus Darwin, has a place among the didactic poets of England, and still finds readers and admirers for his "Botanic Garden," although it was published a hundred years ago upon a somewhat

that he was entered at Christ Church, Cambridge, taking the B.A. degree there in 1831. Exactly at this time an incident occurred which gave tone and direction to the whole of his life. The Government were anxious to complete some surveys in the Pacific, and commissioned Captain Fitz Roy of the Beagle to perform the work. With a regard for the progress of science, which has had the happiest results, Captain Fitz Roy offered a place in his cabin to any competent scientific man who would join the expedition. Darwin volunteered, and was accepted. The ship sailed on the 27th December, 1831, and reached England again on the 2nd October, 1836. Immediately after landing he published his first work,

into another. But the theory now put forward by Darwin was that the various species are continually changing, under the influence of changing circumstances, and by a natural law of adaptation, so that all the plants and animals on the globe are but modifications of the same prototype, descendants of a common ancestor, transformed in millions of ways, through an almost infinite series of ages. The appearance of such a work may be termed an event of the century. It initiated a controversy which still rages as fiercely as ever. The book was assailed from every pulpit, denounced in all the religious magazines, and derided in most

specimen of scientific observation and inductive reasoning, although the author was 72 years old, as his first work, "A Naturalist's Voyage," begun at the age of 22 years, or his "Origin of Species," published when he was 50. In a recent review of it a critic who repudiates the doctrine of evolution says of the author's works in general:—"No such rich storehouse of facts respecting the natural history of vegetable, animal, and even human life has perhaps ever been accumulated by a single man." That is high praise, coming from the *Quarterly Review*, and it does not surmise the truth. Darwin's whole life has been one long honest, unobtrusive, patient, fearless questioning of nature.