

**ENGLISH
WORTHIES:
CHARLES DARWIN**

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English Worthies: Charles Darwin by Grant Allen

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GRANT ALLEN

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English Worthies

EDITED BY ANDREW LANG

CHARLES DARWIN

BY

GRANT ALLEN

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PREFACE

IN this little volume I have endeavoured to present the life and work of Charles Darwin viewed as a moment in a great revolution, in due relation both to those who went before and to those who come after him. Recognising, as has been well said, that the wave makes the crest, not the crest the wave, I have tried to let my hero fall naturally into his proper place in a vast onward movement of the human intellect, of which he was himself at once a splendid product and a moving cause of the first importance. I have attempted to show him both as receiving the torch from Lamarck and Malthus, and as passing it on with renewed brilliancy to the wide school of evolutionary thinkers whom his work was instrumental in arousing to fresh and vigorous activity along a thousand separate and varied lines of thought and action.

As Mr. Francis Darwin was already engaged upon a life of his father, I should have shrunk from putting

forth my own little book if I had not succeeded in securing beforehand his kind sanction. That sanction, however, was at once so frankly and cordially given, that all my hesitation upon such a score was immediately laid aside; and as I have necessarily had to deal rather with Darwin's position as a thinker and worker than with the biographical details of his private life, I trust the lesser book may not clash with the greater, but to some extent may supplement and even illustrate it.

Treating my subject mainly as a study in the interaction of organism and environment, it has been necessary for me frequently to introduce the names of living men of science side by side with some of those who have more or less recently passed away from among us. For uniformity's sake, as well as for brevity's, I have been compelled, in every instance alike, to omit the customary conventional handles. I trust those who thus find themselves docked of their usual titles of respect will kindly remember that the practice is in fact adopted *honoris causa*; they are paying prematurely the usual penalty of intellectual greatness.

My obligations to Professor Huxley, to Professor Fiske, to Mr. Herbert Spencer, to Professor Sachs, to Hermann Müller, to Dr. Krause, to Charles Darwin himself, and to many other historians and critics of evolutionism, will be sufficiently obvious to all instructed

readers, and are for the most part fully acknowledged already in the text. It would be absurd to overload so small and popularly written a book with references and authorities. I hope, therefore, that any other writers to whom I may inadvertently have neglected to confess my debts will kindly rest satisfied with this general acknowledgment. There are, however, three persons in particular from whom I have so largely borrowed facts or ideas that I owe them more special and definite thanks. From Mr. Woodall's admirable paper on Charles Darwin, contributed to the 'Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society,' I have taken much interesting information about my hero's immediate ancestry and early days. From Mr. Samuel Butler, the author of 'Evolution Old and New,' I have derived many pregnant suggestions with regard to the true position and meaning of Buffon, Erasmus Darwin, and the early essentially teleological evolutionists—suggestions which I am all the more anxious to acknowledge since I differ fundamentally from Mr. Butler in his estimate of the worth of Charles Darwin's distinctive discovery of natural selection. Finally, to Mr. Bates, the 'Naturalist on the Amazons,' I am indebted for several valuable items of information as to the general workings of the pre-Darwinian evolutionary spirit.

In a book dealing so largely with a contemporary

movement, the history of which has never yet been consecutively written down in full, or subjected as a whole to searching criticism, there must probably be many errors of detail, which can hardly be avoided under such circumstances. I have endeavoured to minimise them as far as possible. For those which may have escaped my own scrutiny I must trust both for correction and for indulgence to the kindness of my readers.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE WORLD INTO WHICH DARWIN WAS BORN . . .	1
II. CHARLES DARWIN AND HIS ANTECEDENTS . . .	20
III. EARLY DAYS	31
IV. DARWIN'S WANDER-YEARS	38
V. THE PERIOD OF INCUBATION	58
VI. THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES	79
VII. THE DARWINIAN REVOLUTION BEGINS	112
VIII. THE DESCENT OF MAN	122
IX. THE THEORY OF COURTSHIP	144
X. VICTORY AND REST	155
XI. DARWIN'S PLACE IN THE EVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT	177
XII. THE NET RESULT	192
INDEX	203

