

**THE ROUND TABLE  
SERIES, NO. V: CHARLES  
DARWIN, NATURALIST**

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The round table series, No. V: Charles Darwin, Naturalist by J. T. Cunningham

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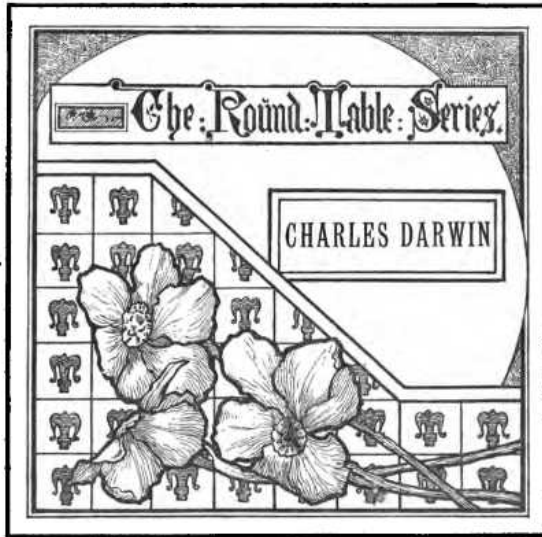
**J. T. CUNNINGHAM**

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No. V.

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CHARLES DARWIN

*NATURALIST*

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MDCCLXXXVI

**O** *RUGGED* sage, strange confidant wert thou  
Of Nature's choice to learn long secret lore,  
Age-baffling riddles answerless before!  
Ah, woman-like, she in the end must bow  
To patience of pursuit, to constant vow,  
To cunning study, yielding more and more,  
To thy long siege, until the very core  
Of her thought showed, invisible till now.

And thou art, crowned with measureless acclaim  
The greatest son of Science' brightest day,  
To Newton's self at least co-equal fame:  
Nay more, thou art a rock above the seas  
Of superstition, and by thee the way  
To a new church is given, and the keys!



*M*AN'S thought is like Antæus, and must be  
Touched to the ground of Nature to regain  
Fresh force, new impulse, else it would remain  
Dead in the grip of strong Authority.  
But, once thereon reset, 'tis like a tree,  
Sap-swollen in spring-time : bonds may not restrain ;  
Nor weight repress ; its rootlets rend in twain  
Dead stones and walls and rocks resistlessly.

Thine then it was to touch dead thoughts to earth,  
Till of old dreams sprang new philosophies,  
From visions systems, and beneath thy spell  
Swiftly uprose, like magic palaces,—  
Thyself half-conscious only of thy worth—  
Calm priest of a tremendous oracle !



## CHARLES DARWIN.

AMONG the men who have endeavoured to establish a new or neglected theory, few have been rewarded by more rapid or more complete success than Charles Darwin in his efforts to obtain recognition for his views of the Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection. Few teachers have been regarded with such admiration by their disciples, or treated with so much respect by their opponents. No innovator has had less reason to complain of the indifference of his contemporaries. Round the "Origin of Species," was waged for years the keenest phase of the contest between the followers of science and the adherents of tradition. More than one generation of naturalists have drawn the inspiration of their best work from their enthusiasm for Darwinism. From Darwin's books evolutionary ideas have permeated into all streams of thought, until natural selection, and the struggle for existence are discerned in operation in all the manifestations of life. The theory of the evolution of living beings by gradual modification was not new. Buffon had suggested it as the necessary conclusion to be drawn from a review of the phenomena of the organic world. Dr. Erasmus Darwin had proclaimed it with a power and eloquence due too much to vividness of imagination, and too little to profundity of research.