

ERASMUS DARWIN

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Erasmus Darwin by Ernst Krause & Charles Darwin

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ERNST KRAUSE & CHARLES DARWIN

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By ERNST KRAUSE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY W. S. DALLAR.

WITH A PRELIMINARY NOTICE

By CHARLES DARWIN.

PORTRAIT AND WOODCUTS.

NEW YORK:
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY,
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PREFACE.

IN the February number, 1879, of a well-known German scientific journal, 'Kosmos,' Dr. Ernst Krause published a sketch of the life of Erasmus Darwin, the author of the 'Zoonomia,' 'Botanic Garden,' and other works. This article bears the title of a 'Contribution to the history of the Descent-Theory;' and Dr. Krause has kindly allowed my brother Erasmus and myself to have a translation made of it for publication in this country.*

As I have private materials for adding to the knowledge of Erasmus Darwin's character, I have written a preliminary notice. These materials consist of a large collection of letters written by him; of his common-place book in folio, in the possession of his grandson Reginald Darwin; of some notes made shortly

* Mr. Dallas has undertaken the translation, and his scientific reputation, together with his knowledge of German, is a guarantee for its accuracy.

after his death, by my father, Dr. Robert Darwin, together with what little I can clearly remember that my father said about him; also some statements by his daughter, Violetta Darwin, afterwards Mrs. Tertius Galton, written down at the time by her daughters; and various short published notices. To these must be added the 'Memoirs of the Life of Dr. Darwin,' by Miss Seward, which appeared in 1804; and a lecture by Dr. Dowson on "Erasmus Darwin, Philosopher, Poet, and Physician," published in 1861, which contains many useful references and remarks.*

* Since the publication of Dr. Krause's article, Mr. Butler's work, 'Evolution, Old and New, 1879,' has appeared, and this includes an account of Dr. Darwin's life, compiled from the two books just mentioned, and of his views on evolution.

PRELIMINARY NOTICE.

ERASMUS DARWIN was descended from a Lincolnshire family, and the first of his ancestors of whom we know anything was William Darwin, who possessed a small estate at Cleatham.* He was also yeoman of the armoury of Greenwich to James I. and Charles I. This office was probably almost a sinecure, and certainly of very small value. He died in 1644, and we have reason to believe from gout. It is, therefore, probable that Erasmus, as well as many other members of the family, inherited from this William, or some of his predecessors, their strong tendency to gout; and it was an early attack of gout which made Erasmus a vehement advocate for temperance throughout his whole life.

* The greater part of the estate of Cleatham was sold in 1760. A cottage with thick walls, some fish-ponds and old trees, alone show where the "Old Hall" once stood. A field is still called the "Darwin Charity," from being subject to a charge, made by the second Mrs. Darwin, for buying gowns for four old widows every year.