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Charles Darwin

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The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin

Including an Autobiographical Chapter

VOLUME 1

CHARLES DARWIN

EDITED BY FRANCIS DARWIN



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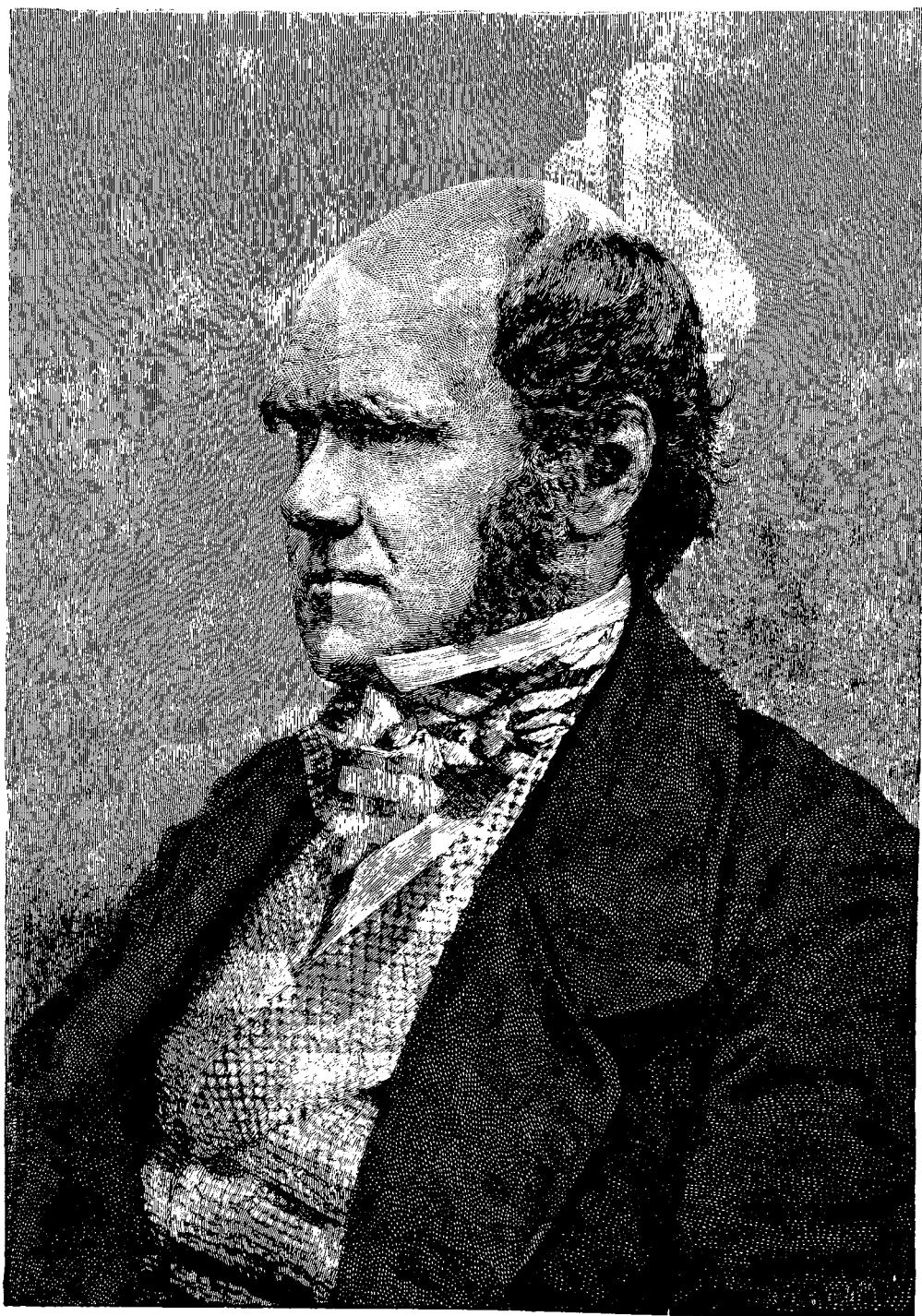
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FROM A PHOTOGRAPH (1854?) BY MESSRS. MAULL AND FOX. ENGRAVED FOR
'HARPER'S MAGAZINE,' OCTOBER 1884.

Frontispiece, Vol. I.

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THE
LIFE AND LETTERS
OF
CHARLES DARWIN,
INCLUDING
AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL CHAPTER.

EDITED BY HIS SON,
FRANCIS DARWIN.

IN THREE VOLUMES:—VOL. I.

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.
1887.

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P R E F A C E.



IN choosing letters for publication I have been largely guided by the wish to illustrate my father's personal character. But his life was so essentially one of work, that a history of the man could not be written without following closely the career of the author. Thus it comes about that the chief part of the book falls into chapters whose titles correspond to the names of his books.

In arranging the letters I have adhered as far as possible to chronological sequence, but the character and variety of his researches make a strictly chronological order an impossibility. It was his habit to work more or less simultaneously at several subjects. Experimental work was often carried on as a refreshment or variety, while books entailing reasoning and the marshalling of large bodies of facts were being written. Moreover, many of his researches were allowed to drop, and only resumed after an interval of years. Thus a rigidly chronological series of letters would present a patchwork of subjects, each of which would be difficult to follow. The Table of Contents will show in what way I have attempted to avoid this result. It will be seen, for instance, that the second

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volume is not chronologically continuous with the first. Again, in the third volume, the botanical work, which principally occupied my father during the later years of his life, is treated in a separate series of chapters.

In printing the letters I have followed (except in a few cases) the usual plan of indicating the existence of omissions or insertions.¹ My father's letters give frequent evidence of having been written when he was tired or hurried. In a letter to a friend, or to one of his family, he frequently omitted the articles: these have been inserted without the usual indications, except in a few instances (*e.g.* Vol. I. p. 203), where it is of special interest to preserve intact the hurried character of the letter. Other small words, such as *of*, *to*, &c., have been inserted, usually within brackets. My father underlined many words in his letters; these have not always been given in italics,—a rendering which would have unfairly exaggerated their effect. I have not followed the originals as regards the spelling of names, the use of capital letters, or in the matter of punctuation.

The Diary or Pocket-book, from which quotations occur in the following pages, has been of value as supplying a framework of facts round which letters may be grouped. It is unfortunately written with great brevity, the history of a year being compressed into a page or less, and contains little more than the dates of the principal events of his life, together with entries as to his work, and as to the duration of his more serious illnesses. He rarely dated his letters, so that but for the Diary it would have been all but impossible to unravel the history of his books. It has also enabled me to assign dates to many letters which would otherwise have been shorn of half their value.

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Of letters addressed to my father I have not made much use. It was his custom to file all letters received, and when his slender stock of files ("spits" as he called them) was exhausted, he would burn the letters of several years, in order that he might make use of the liberated "spits." This process, carried on for years, destroyed nearly all letters received before 1862. After that date he was persuaded to keep the more interesting letters, and these are preserved in an accessible form.

I have attempted to give, in Chapter III., some account of his manner of working. During the last eight years of his life I acted as his assistant, and thus had an opportunity of knowing something of his habits and methods.

I have received much help from my friends in the course of my work. To some I am indebted for reminiscences of my father, to others for information, criticisms, and advice. To all these kind coadjutors I gladly acknowledge my indebtedness. The names of some occur in connection with their contributions, but I do not name those to whom I am indebted for criticisms or corrections, because I should wish to bear alone the load of my short-comings, rather than to let any of it fall on those who have done their best to lighten it.

It will be seen how largely I am indebted to Sir Joseph Hooker for the means of illustrating my father's life. The readers of these pages will, I think, be grateful to Sir Joseph for the care with which he has preserved his valuable collection of letters, and I should wish to add my acknowledgment of the generosity with which he has placed it at my disposal, and for the kindly encouragement given throughout my work.

To Mr. Huxley I owe a debt of thanks, not only for much kind help, but for his willing compliance with my request that

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he should contribute a chapter on the reception of the ‘Origin of Species.’

Finally, it is a pleasure to acknowledge the courtesy of the publishers of the ‘Century Magazine’ and of ‘Harper’s Magazine,’ who have freely given me the use of their illustrations. To Messrs. Maull and Fox and Messrs. Elliott and Fry I am also indebted for their kindness in allowing me the use of reproductions of their photographs.

FRANCIS DARWIN.

CAMBRIDGE,
October, 1887.

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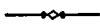
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