prising her desultory reflections on many subjects, recorded from time to time; and "Sisters of Charity Abroad and at Home," the substance of a lecture delivered before a female audience in February, 1855. A new work on Art, in continuation of the series above mentioned, is announced (1860) under the following title: "The Scriptural and Legendary History of our Lord and his Precursor, John the Baptist, with the Typical Characters and Subjects of the Old Testament as illustrated in the Fine Arts."

Literary Record.

THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES, by means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of favored Races in the struggle for Life. By Charles Darwin, M.A. D. Appleton & Co., New York.

WHEN a man of real scientific ability devotes twenty-five years of his life to one branch of knowledge, and when he deliberately favors the world with the well-matured fruits of his studies, it is but just that the world should lend a patient, if not a reverential ear. It is but too true that the severe scientific discussion of any topic, however closely connected with our well being, seldom obtains from the public long sustained attention. To think is much more painful for the bulk of mankind than to act, and the channels of their mental regions are only susceptible to light and occasional percolations of knowledge. It is owing to this that our mental conservatism checks the growth of knowledge quite as often as it does that of error, and that it coweringly seeks shelter under the august wing of authority. When, in 1762, the Swedish oracle told the world that *corals* were *plants*, and that *swallows* passed the *winter under the ice*, the world believed it quite as implicitly as if it were the truth. When the errors of the *Systema Naturæ* of the same authority were exploded by Cuvier, it took the English brain seventeen years before it could discriminate between the newly discovered truths of the Frenchman and the worn out errors of the Swede, to whose authority the English conventionally yielded themselves. To the philosophic generalization in Natural History of Aristotle it took some two thousand years, to add the analysis of Swammerdam. If in the past, therefore, the mind of our race showed so much debility in either accepting new truths, or laying aside old errors, we must not be surprised if the public hesitate or even refuse to accept the theories in the work before us. The scientific and social position, happily, of Mr. Darwin, will save him from the low and vulgar ridicule of a certain class of critical weaklings; and so far as we have seen as yet, his recondite views seem to be offensive only to a certain fraction of our theologians. No man of scientific culture equal to that of Mr. Darwin himself has undertaken to controvert his well reasoned theories, nor is it at all likely that any writer of reputation will do so. His thorough exploration of the kingdom of nature, and his sober logical deductions from his long and laboriously accumulated facts give to his views, however novel to some readers, a backbone of proof which cannot be easily shaken.

In substituting the theory of Natural Selection for that of independent creation, Mr. Darwin furnishes a method in Natural History which must be fruitful in good results to every sound investigator into nature. The first is susceptible of a clear scientific conception, the latter not—it is the mysticism of ignorance, and the subtle manipulation of words without reference to things. Let all living organizations be studied as one continuous chain, and if we cannot discover a unity of origin, we shall certainly detect a strong tendency to unity of termination which no word-splitting as to species or varieties can overshadow.

"In the language of Natural History," says a late English authority, "a species is an assemblage of individuals whose likeness to one another is sufficient to justify the conclusion that they all have had, or may have had, the same original parentage; whilst it is distinguished from any other species by sound definite character, so uniformly transmitted from generation to generation, that it cannot be supposed to have acquired this from the influence of any external conditions." And Mr. Darwin says that each *new species* is formed by having had some advantage in the struggle for life over other and preceding forms. The necessities of scientific classification have caused the Beings, Objects and Things of this planet, whatever may be their nature, to be methodically distributed into Classes, Orders, Genera, Species and Varieties, but certainly not with a view of disturbing or overlooking the links which bind all created things into one unbroken, continuous chain. The common fact that one thing is unlike another in the order of nature shows the progression of life, but not the want of affinity of one thing to another. For instance, we know that the cellular, vegetable, and nervous elements are the agents of nutrition, contraction and sensibility, but who in contemplating the former statically could infer the latter, dynamically; who in contemplating an egg molecularly could infer the organic life which flows from it, complete with bone, muscle, nerves, feathers, beak, claws, etc.

If theology looks backward for a higher state of human nature than we now have, the theory of Mr. Darwin leads us to look to the future for a comparative state of perfectibility, for he says, and we agree with him, *that there is a struggle for existence leading to the preservation of each profitable deviation of structure or instinct.*

That the moral and intellectual systems of man should undergo favorable and progressive changes as time wears away, and his corporeal structure remain stationary, seemed always to us to be very questionable if not positively irrational. If his reproductive system has been rightly interpreted by Mr. Darwin, there must be a very slow but certain advancement in all three, and this we think is fairly proved by an enlightened examination of the whole animal kingdom, for, as Mr. Darwin says, the real affinities of all organic beings are due to inheritance or community of descent. The natural system is a genealogical arrangement, in which we have to discover the lines of descent by the most permanent characters, however slight their vital importance may be. We can so far take a prophetic glance into futurity as to foretell that it will be the common and widely-spread species, belonging to the larger and dominant groups, which will ultimately prevail and procreate new and dominant species. As all the living forms of life are the lineal descendants of those which lived long before the Silurian epoch, we may feel certain that the ordinary succession by generation has never once been broken, and that no cataclysm has desolated the whole world. Hence we may look with some confidence to a secure future of equally inappreciable length. And as natural selection works solely by and for the good of each being, all corporeal and mental endowments will tend to progress towards perfection.

Though the ample book of nature is open to all, it is the privilege of but few to interpret it intelligently and scientifically. Borne down by the weight of educational prejudices, and limited in view by the narrow range of faculties, most men crawl

through life from the cradle to the grave without knowing anything beyond the petty specialties peculiar to their trades or professions. The august phenomena of the universe are for them but a dumb show—a childish panorama swinging before their uncultivated senses without meaning or purpose. The prowling trader of our day is dead even to that sensational poetry of the primitive man which even now penetrates into our hearts through the sweetly strung lyres of the Hebrew and other ancient poets. That true science is the twin-sister of poetry, may be seen in the following beautiful quotation from Mr. Darwin, with which we conclude this brief notice of his very able work:

"It is interesting to contemplate an entangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing on the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent on each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by laws acting around us. These laws, taken in the largest sense, being Growth with Reproduction; Inheritance, which is almost implied by reproduction; Variability from the indirect and direct action of the external conditions of life, and from use and disuse; a Ratio of Increase so high as to lead to a Struggle for Life, and as a consequence to Natural Selection, entailing Divergence of character and the Extinction of less-improved forms. Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows. There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved."

LIFE OF GENERAL JACKSON (2d vol., 672 pages). By James Parton. Mason Brothers, Publishers.

Timid readers will be frightened at the magnitude of Mr. Parton's volumes. All that is worth knowing in the lives of ordinary Presidents can be got without the slightest difficulty into a 12mo. vol. of 400 pages. We know of more than one literary gentleman who, having undertaken the life of a President, was inclined to regard his effort as the greatest joke of his whole life. We have always believed that Hawthorne's Life of President Pierce was his best romance, with the author's fine humor performing its legitimate office. We confess to a limited knowledge of Presidents. Still there are within our knowledge some two or three Presidents whose history, political and individual, the public would be content to have served up in a two shilling pamphlet; and in that style would form fit companions to the railroad edition of light literature and romance. The less the reader in pursuit of valuable information, has to do with them the better—most of them being, as we have said before, literary jokes practised at the expense of public credulity. But General Jackson was one of the greatest attractions of our political history; he figured at a time when our country was struggling for the maintenance of rights, and the assertion of a policy which has given her preëminence among nations. In truth he was the central feature of events out of which sprang a change in the policy of European nations toward our government. With this view of the interest attaching to General Jackson's life, and not as a mere President or military chief, Mr. Parton sets out to interest the nation with three ponderous volumes. Jackson was neither a great general nor a great politician, but he was successful in what he undertook, and nothing was too great or hazardous for him to undertake. He frequently owed more to indomitable energy, sudden action, reckless disregard of conventionalities, and contempt for instructions, than to any well-conceived plan of military operations. He did things differently from other men, acting frequently more from impulse than judgment. He hated his enemies, and wanted no friends whom he could not mold to his uses. A stickler for right, we frequently find him committing a political and social wrong in the hope of bringing from it a national good. He was just the man to keep a timid cabinet in continual alarm, and to afford its members complications enough for displaying their skill in diplomacy. In a word he raised armies and made war in his own way, resolved to take the chances of the fight, regardless of the indefinite instructions carried in his pocket. It has been said of Jackson that he never read his instructions until he had achieved the object of his mission. But the career of General Jackson is by no means free from acts of unnecessary harshness, and even cruelty. These have cast a dark shadow over his history; one that will not be easily wiped out. No amount of sophistry can wipe out the fact that several of his acts were despotic, performed regardless of the rights and feelings of others, and unnecessary under the circumstances. There have been men enough ready to plead the general's eccentricities in excuse for his rash acts. But however much we may admire eccentricities, when accompanied by acts of daring and the display of courage of a high order, we cannot forget that General Jackson permitted his to carry away his better judgment, to violate those courtesies which should rule among gentlemen, and at times to show indifference to the value of human life. In fine, General Jackson was as true an Irishman as ever was born on the sod; and he could be a gentleman if no one offended him. He was fond of a fight, never had a very powerful opponent to deal with, and generally thrashed his antagonist before he had made up his mind how he should enter the lists.

The second volume opens with an interesting and graphic description of the valley of the Mississippi, in the vicinity of New Orleans. A minute account is also given of the feeling that then existed among the French of New Orleans toward the United States government. The object of the author here is to prepare the reader's mind for the Battle of New Orleans, which occupies about 260 pages of the volume. Louisiana had just come into the Union, and the French inhabitants, most of whom were averse to the separation from their mother country, were regarded with suspicion by the Americans, who, unjustly, as it was afterward shown, accused them of a lurking sympathy for our national enemy. The municipal and legislative authorities of New Orleans seem to have been quite as much given to dissensions, and were as intractable at that day as our New York authorities are now. New Orleans at that time was sadly wanting in men of strong nerve and high administrative ability. The people wanted some one mind in which to place their confidence, and yield obedience to. The legislative body was not ignorant of the danger of an advancing enemy, or the necessity that called for proper defences. But, like Congress at the present day, it had more brawlers than patriots, more men bent on disseminating their political animosities than devising wise measures for the defence of the city. Here the author pays a merited