

---

ORCHIDS AND INSECTS.—Our scientific readers will recollect the work on the Fertilisation of Orchids, issued by Mr. Darwin seven years ago. A French translation of this most interesting contribution to science has just appeared, and the author adds some valuable notes, correcting errors into which he had fallen, and giving new facts which have resulted from his unremitting observations. We find plenty of fresh proof that insect agency is necessary to the development of the seed in many orchids. For example, Mr. Darwin has been able to ascertain that the wasp is indispensable to the reproduction of *Epipactis latifolia*. Although hive-bees and humble-bees of many kinds constantly flew over a patch of plants, which were regularly watched, they never visited the flowers, but the common wasp was frequently seen to suck the nectar out of the labellum, and Mr. Darwin thus saw the act of fertilisation effected by the pollen being removed and carried on the foreheads of the wasps to other flowers. This agency is so important in the reproduction of the plant that were wasps to become extinct in any district, so would the *Epipactis latifolia*. It is interesting to see that many of these new and valuable observations have been made by Mr. Darwin's sons, two of whom, Mr. George Darwin and Mr. W. E. Darwin, are already accomplished naturalists. Sir Charles Lyell also has a son of great promise, so that we may anticipate a succession of diligent observers and acute thinkers, inheriting some of their fathers' ability as well as the traditions of great discoveries, and that interest in the problems of the universe which is often hereditary.

---