

Caricatures of Men of Science

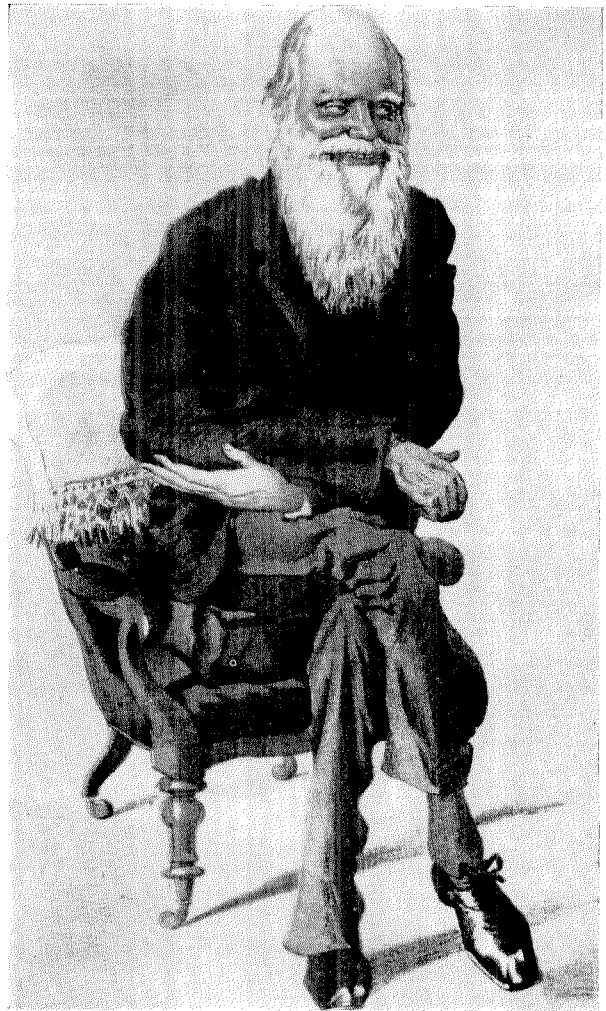
by E. C. WATSON

LIKE John Tyndall, whose caricature introduced this series (E & S, July '49), Charles Darwin was "inseparably connected with the battle which began in the middle of the nineteenth century for making the new standpoint of modern science part of the accepted philosophy in general life." The justly famous caricature of Darwin reproduced here, together with the written account (below) which accompanied it when it was originally published in *Vanity Fair* in 1871 clearly shows the prestige science acquired during the Victorian era.

"In all times, and among all peoples, whenever and wherever the faculty of thought has existed, men have asked the question: How come we here?" and there is scarcely a form of society but has produced one or more kinds of answer to the inquiry. Up to within the last hundred years these answers have one and all been presented in the form of a Revelation from an Authority entirely outside the men and the world to whom and to which the matter relates. The fables that have thus been presented to mankind have been of the most various and the most conflicting character, and have been referred to the sanction of the most dissimilar Authorities. They have agreed in one only respect—that they have all been of the most childish invention, and that the elaboration of the systems built up thereupon has been of the very rudest kind.

"While the vulgar many of all countries have universally received the local Fable as it was presented, the stronger-headed few have as invariably rejected it. For hundreds of years, as we know, and as we may infer, for thousands, the few were fain to content themselves with the conclusion that they knew nothing whatever about the earth and its inhabitants. In modern times, however, the method has been adopted of interrogating that earth and those inhabitants themselves without reference to any real or supposed external Authority; and although in so vast a field of labour it has as yet not been possible to achieve any very great results, certain new theories have been built up of which it can at least be said that they are more presentable than any of the old fables.

"Among these theories one of the most striking is that which Mr. Darwin has given to the world with reference to the Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection. Mr. Darwin, who was born sixty-two years ago, has spent



Darwin: "His writings have all the charm of romances."

the whole of a most laborious life in close converse with the material world in which we live, and the beings that it has from time to time seen upon its surface. He has thus become one of the most accomplished naturalists now in existence, and any theoretical structure that he builds upon his researches must be regarded with great respect. His books are written to a large extent for and appeal to ordinary men. This, indeed, it is which gives them their great importance. This, however, makes it also allowable to say that to ordinary men the chain of inferences seems to be very loosely hung together by which he seeks to establish that the various species of animals now existing on the earth inherit all their immense dissimilarities from a common ancestor, and that they have acquired their wide differences of development simply from individual aberrations. Nevertheless, so unknown to us are our fellow-beings that even for ordinary men his writings have all the charm of romances; while they will remain to all time, if nothing else, at least a record of earnest and honest devotion to the solution of the most momentous of the problems by which mankind are surrounded."