

its acceptance and recognition in larger circles. Hence the odd contradictions and the strange opinions which are still on every side heard about Darwinism. This is the reason which induces me to make Darwin's theory, and those further doctrines which are connected with it, the subject of these pages, which, I hope, will be generally intelligible. I hold it to be the duty of naturalists, not merely to meditate upon improvements and discoveries in the narrow circle to which their speciality confines them, not merely to pore over their one study with love and care, but also to seek to make the important general results of it fruitful to the mass, and to assist in spreading the knowledge of physical science among the people. The highest triumph of the human mind, the true knowledge of the most general laws of nature, ought not to remain the private possession of a privileged class of learned men, but ought to become the common property of all mankind.

The theory which, through Darwin, has been placed at the head of all our knowledge of nature, is usually called the Doctrine of Filiation, or the Theory of Descent. Others term it the Transmutation Theory. Both designations are correct. For this doctrine affirms, that *all organisms* (viz. all species of animals, all species of plants, which have ever existed or still exist on the earth) *are derived from one single, or from a few simple original forms, and that they have slowly developed from these by a natural course of gradual change.* Although this theory of development had already been brought forward and defended by several great naturalists, and especially by Lamarck and Goethe, in the beginning of our century, still it was through Darwin, in 1859, that it received its complete demonstration and