

genetic aspect, which have since become familiar, were very ably stated by scientific as well as by popular writers. Earlier anticipations of the genetic view were recalled, the historical sketch given in Lyell's 'Principles' was supplemented by reference to many great and many forgotten authorities, who in more or less distinct terms had given expression to their belief in a gradual development of the existing forms and phenomena of nature out of simpler beginnings, which they described with more or less precision. It cannot be denied that the enormous literature which accumulated during the ten years following the publication of this book unsettled the popular mind in this country, and prepared it for a really able, dispassionate, and exhaustive exposition of the whole subject, and especially of the crucial problem to which it was narrowed down, the question regarding the fixity or variability, the historical origin and development or the sudden creation and persistence, of animal and vegetable species. The genesis of the cosmos as suggested by Laplace, the geological history of our earth as worked out by Lyell, the fact of organic growth and development as given by embryology, seemed clear

25.  
Popular  
influence.

(see 'Life of Darwin,' vol. i. p. 333), gave probably the fairest verdict on the book in the historical preface to the later editions of his own great work, where he says: "The work, from its powerful and brilliant style, though displaying in the earlier editions little accurate knowledge and a great want of scientific caution, immediately had a very wide circulation. In my opinion, it has done excellent service in this country in calling attention to the subject, in removing prejudice, and

in thus preparing the ground for the reception of analogous views" ('Origin of Species,' 6th ed., 1872, p. xvii). In a history of European thought it is well to mention that the 'Vestiges' had no influence on the Continent, for reasons partially stated in the text. A little later, however, a similar "scandale" (as the 'Grande Encyclopédie' has it—art. "R. Chambers and L. Büchner") arose in Germany on the publication of 'Kraft und Stoff.'