

through periodical and popular literature. Others who, before Darwin, treated similar controversial subjects, such as Whewell, Babbage, Herschel, Lyell, Baden Powell, and the author of the 'Vestiges,' had always taken into account the possible inferences which might be drawn from their scientific statements, and had oftentimes toned them down so as not to offend existing opinions.¹ Darwin thought it more modest and more becoming for an independent scientific thinker to state his side of the question completely and simply, without presuming to attack or to support a view of things which lay outside of the dominion and the powers of science. And this is not the least of the many reasons why his work has created an era, especially in this

¹ The position adopted by several of the eminent forerunners of Darwin is interestingly analysed by Huxley in the chapter on the "Reception of the 'Origin of Species'" contributed to the second volume of the 'Life and Letters of Charles Darwin.' Of Lyell, who had come nearest to the doctrine of unbroken descent of species, Huxley says (vol. ii. p. 193): "I see no reason to doubt that if Sir Charles Lyell could have avoided the inevitable corollary of the pithecoïd origin of man—for which to the end of his life he entertained a profound antipathy—he would have advocated the efficiency of causes now in operation to bring about the condition of the organic world, as stoutly as he championed that doctrine in reference to inorganic nature." And Lyell himself wrote to Darwin in 1863 ('Life of Lyell,' vol. ii. p. 365): "I remember that it was the conclusion he [Lamarck] came to about man that fortified me thirty years ago against the great impression which his argu-

ments at first made on my mind." Treviranus, the author of the 'Biologie,' the contemporary of Lamarck, was quite consistent in his views of descent and mutability, for he declares against catastrophism, believes in the evolution of higher species from the zoophytes, and even in that of a higher species than man (see 'Biologie,' vol. ii. p. 225, &c.) Neither in Germany nor in France, at the beginning of the century, did those prejudices exist which in 1859 prevented even Darwin from developing to the full the consequences of his main thesis. This was done in his later works. See his letter to A. R. Wallace, 22nd Dec. 1857 ('Life,' vol. ii. p. 109): "You ask whether I shall discuss 'man.' I think I shall avoid the whole subject, as so surrounded with prejudices; though I fully admit that it is the highest and most interesting problem for the naturalist. My work, on which I have now been at work more or less for twenty years, will not fix or settle anything."