

THE FOURTH REASON

The fourth reason for the widespread acceptance of evolution has certainly been the most effective of all. This is the fact that its acceptance has been so largely due to the prestige of its supporters. Many men had advanced evolutionary theories over a long period of years, but little attention was generally paid to them. Erasmus Darwin, the grandfather of Charles Darwin, advanced an idea of evolution but it was little noticed. The ideas of the French scientist, Lamarck, had a somewhat greater impact, but the number who accepted his views was quite limited and he himself was buried in a pauper's grave. The wide acceptance of evolution came when conditions were ripe for a complete change from the Biblical attitude that had resulted from the great evangelical revivals of the 18th century. In this situation an intricate book of reasoning appeared over the name of one who had gained a reputation as a careful and methodical scientist. It was Darwin's reputation, combined with Huxley's active propagandizing, that established evolution. Today the great bulk of those who believe in it know little about it, but simply accept what they have been taught. Men who have adopted the naturalistic assumptions upon which it is based have secured positions of authority in the intellectual world and their influence has become very great.