

Book Reviews

ERASMUS DARWIN, *The botanic garden, Erasmus Darwin, 1791*, London, Scholar Press, 1973, 4to, pp. viii, xii, 214, 128, v–vii, 184, illus., £10.00.

Erasmus Darwin (1731–1802), grandfather of Charles, was an outstanding Midlands physician, and, in addition, a prominent scientist, inventor, and founder of the Birmingham Lunar Society. However, he also enjoyed great fame as a poet and this book presents an excellent facsimile reproduction of his most important poem. The first part (1791) deals with all parts of science and technology and the second (1789) with the fertilization processes in plants. Darwin's appended notes cover a wide range of topics: meteors, comets, luminous insects, steam engines, electricity, geology, the Portland vase, winds, etc. When published it was very well received, and it is said that it influenced Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley. Certainly Darwin was able to handle his rather dull material with poetical skill, humour, sensitivity, and ingenuity.

The Scholar Press, which is achieving a reputation for high-quality reprints, has reproduced the work faithfully and elegantly; the price is a modest one, when the quality and the size of the volume are taken into account. There is a brief introduction by Desmond King-Hele, which includes an account of Darwin's life and achievements, with a detailed consideration of *The botanic garden*. This book, therefore, exhibits the qualities of the best kind of reprint: impeccable reproduction, scholarly introduction by a recognized authority, and a modest price.

R. B. FREEMAN, *The works of Charles Darwin. An annotated bibliographical handlist*, second edition, Hamden, Conn., Archon Books, (Folkestone, Dawson), 1977, 8vo, pp. 235, illus., £10.00.

The first edition of this book appeared in 1965 and it proved to be an exceedingly valuable bibliographical tool. It is now revised and enlarged and consequently is even more useful. The first part contains lists of all the editions and issues of books, pamphlets and circulars, both British and translated into foreign languages, from 1835 to 1975, the whereabouts of material from manuscripts unpublished in Darwin's lifetime, and letters published in his lifetime together with the more important collections printed since then. The second part is a list of papers, notes and letters originally published in serials.

Even though it appears to be comprehensive, Mr. Freeman claims that his book is by no means complete. It will nevertheless be an essential reference book for all who are studying Darwin and evolutionary theory.

Despite its title it is much more than a handlist, for there are extended discussions of each item, in which Mr. Freeman demonstrates his very extensive knowledge of Darwin and his work. It is to be hoped that his praiseworthy endeavour will stimulate others to produce similar bibliographies of equally outstanding and influential scientists.

J. R. BUSVINE, *Insects, hygiene and history*, London, Athlone Press, 1976, 8vo, pp. viii, 262, illus., £6.95.

Bed bugs, fleas, lice and itch mites have been the main professional interest of Professor Busvine, who holds the chair of entomology at the London School of