

THE EVOLUTION OF MORALITY.

A REPLY.

I DESIRE to make a few remarks on a singularly able and striking article in the October number of the CANADIAN MONTHLY—an article in which some of the thoughts flash from the mind of the writer with a rare vigour and freshness, and are clothed in such terse and nervous language that they can scarce fail to impress us vividly with a sense of their author's cultivated powers, and to excite in us high expectations of his future. Still, while acknowledging with pleasure the marked ability displayed everywhere by Professor Watson in this remarkable essay, I am forced to withhold my assent from some of his conclusions, and to criticise his strictures on the theory propounded by Mr. Darwin.

Professor Watson, in speaking (page 323) of Mr. Darwin's idea, that, in the social instincts of the lower animals, continued to early man, we ought to seek *the root* of the morality of civilized man, and that these instincts not being extended, in the case of animals, to all the individuals of 'the same species,' but to those only of 'the same community,' it was naturally to be expected that the same instincts, in savage races of men, would be directed exclusively to the welfare of the tribe, not to that 'of the species or of the individual'; and then, quoting from Mr. Darwin that 'as man advanced into civilization, and small tribes became united into larger communities, the simplest reason would tell each individual that he ought to extend his social instincts and sympathies to all members of the same nation; and that that point being once reached, there was only an artificial barrier to prevent his sympathies extending to the men of all nations and races,' Mr. Watson thus comments: 'According to this theory, moral progress consists in strengthening and widening from generation to generation the social instincts originally inherited from some lower form of animal,' adding: 'This theory attempts to account for moral progress by the convenient method of leaving

out all that makes it moral.' This last is, indeed, a very neat and well-put sentence, as sharp-cut and polished as a diamond, and as clear.

For the present, I apply to this paragraph, as a whole, the general remark, that writers on ethics will be disappointed if they expect to find in Nature everything mathematico-logically demarcated—limited here, bounded there, by well-defined lines; whereas in Nature all is development, and in development we have to do, not so much with the sharp-cut crystal, as with the amorphous colloid and proteid. Development is such a gradual shading off—a growth dim, vague, insensible—a melting of colours into one another, of varieties into species, of sympathy into morality, of sensation into instinct, of instinct into thought, that we cannot draw a line and say of it, on this side instinct absolutely ends, and, on its opposite side, thought begins. This, indeed, is implied in the very idea of development—insensible change, each change so slight as to refuse to be formulated.

Now, when a man like Mr. Darwin, with his finger on the pulse of Nature, who has won for himself a position of acknowledged eminence amongst the leaders of scientific thought, sums up for us the results of generalizations founded on the widest and minutest and most accurately observed facts, it becomes a duty, before pronouncing judgment against him, that we be sure—first, that we fully understand him; and, secondly, that we have a truer insight into the economy of Nature than he has.

Now, what does Mr. Darwin say? 'As man,' says he, 'advances into civilization, and small tribes are united into larger communities, the simplest *reason** would tell

* In this paper, when quoting from Mr. Watson, or any one else, I have taken the liberty of *italicising* any words to which I wish to call the reader's special attention. For this I beg the author's pardon.

each individual that he *ought* to extend his *social instincts and sympathies* to all the members of the same nation. This point being once reached, there is only an *artificial barrier* to prevent his sympathies extending to *the men of all nations and races.*'

Mr. Darwin's argument throughout is of this kind: the social instincts and sympathies having proved advantageous to some of the lower animals, became theirs permanently through natural selection, and were, so, continued to man; and as among animals they were confined in their exercise to the members, not of the species, but of the community, so, in the case of man, they were limited to the tribe; but as soon as *reason* came into play, it was perceived that this sympathy *ought* to be extended to the nation; and once the narrow clan-feeling having broken down under the weightier sense of good-will and obligation to the nation as a whole, there remained nothing but a *feeble conventional barrier* to oppose itself against the rising tide of right-feeling extending itself to *the whole family of man*. If this be not the truth, it is certainly very like it: as the French say, *vraisemblable*. For is it not the old story of the Sioux against the Blackfeet, or of Rome against Alba Longa or the Volces, grown at length into Italy against the world? And now that *reason*, like the morning sunbeams, has lifted the fogs that once had hung over the mental horizon, and has poured a flood of light on the sanctity of the rights of universal man, deeds once done unblushingly in the interests of selfishness have to be weighed in the balance of justice, or at least (for 'hypocrisy is the homage which vice pays to virtue') disguised, like a nasty pill, with a sugar-coating of right:

'Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment,
With this regard, their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.'

It is not so very long since the Englishman regarded the Frenchman as his hereditary foe, or since the increase in power or prosperity of a nation was deemed no very ill grounds for an attempt to cripple it; and even to-day we seem to hear occasionally the distant rumble of such a thought.

In the passage quoted from Mr. Darwin there are three distinct divisions in the chain of the mental powers: Firstly, there are '*the social instincts and sympathies*'; secondly, the '*reason*' to guide us to the end to which, thirdly, they '*ought*' to be directed; that is, he tells us, to the well-being of *man* wherever found. For now that good-will to the clan has expanded into a sense of obligation to the nation, its further extension is a foregone conclusion, and every barrier to stop the flow of good-will to all men is pronounced to be a mere conventional cobweb.

Now, assuredly, Mr. Darwin speaks here, as elsewhere, of man as governed by something more than mere instinct. He has even exhibited to us the distinct steps in the process, the *first* in order of which is '*the social instincts and sympathies.*'

Elsewhere, too, he says: '*Ultimately* his habitual *convictions* controlled by *reason* afford him the safest rule. His conscience *then* becomes his supreme judge and monitor. Nevertheless, the *first foundation or origin* of the moral sense lies in the social instincts, including sympathy; and these *instincts* no doubt were *primarily* gained, as in the case of the lower animals, by natural selection.' Again, he says: 'The fact that man is *the one* being who, with certainty, can be designated "a moral being," makes the greatest of all *distinctions* between him and the lower animals.'

Now, let me ask, if such passages as the above justify the criticism of Professor Watson (page 324)?—"Granting that man has inherited from some lower form the "*instinct*" of sympathy for others; still so long as we conceive this "instinct" as a *blind impulse that hurries him towards a goal* from which he cannot retract himself, just so long he is neither moral nor responsible.'

Again, Professor Watson asks: 'Why should an instinct which does not extend beyond one's tribe be regarded as lower from a moral point of view than when it is extended so as to embrace a larger number of persons?' (323). But this is not the exact way of putting it, and is hardly fair to Mr. Darwin. The extension is not to a *larger* number of persons, but to *all* persons, to '*the men of all nations and races.*' As stated by Mr. Darwin, it certainly would be lower. The instinct, the sympathy, is right

so far as it goes. Its defect is that it is incomplete; that it goes not far enough; that, whilst unfolding, it is not unfolded; that, while embracing some, it embraces not all; that the narrower obligation has not expanded into the universality of conscience. It is an idea only half worked out by the imperfect reason. The 'sympathy,' not yet instructed by the 'reason,' and not stimulated by the sense of 'ought,' is as yet scarce strong and deep and full enough to flood the life, and, overflowing the narrow tribe-channel, to enfold the whole family of man.

Let us suppose that a certain individual's sense of moral obligation embraced, not only every member of the tribe and nation he belonged to, but every member of the family of man, with the exception of *only one*, whom, an outlaw without guilt, he treats with capricious injustice. Should we not, without hesitation, pronounce his morality 'lower from a moral point of view' than when extended so as to embrace the all without the exception? Nor, so considered, is it 'difficult to see how the mere extension of a feeling should so mysteriously alter its nature.' The feeling that I am at liberty to treat even one person with discriminating injustice is an immoral feeling; whilst the feeling that I cannot relieve myself of the obligations of right towards individuals or nations is an essentially moral one: so that the extension of a feeling may wholly alter its nature; and to say, as Professor Watson does, that the feeling is '*absolutely unchanged*,' seems to me a *petitio principii*, or a pronouncing of judgment beforehand on the very question to be discussed.

Again: Professor Watson objects to Mr. Darwin's 'test of morality, the general good or welfare of the community,' . . . the term 'general good' being 'defined as the means by which the greatest possible number of individuals can be reared in full vigour and health, with *all their faculties perfect*, under the conditions to which they are exposed.' To this Professor Watson replies: . . . 'Provided only that "the greatest number of individuals" is reared "in full health and vigour," the end of morality is achieved,' &c. But Mr. Darwin does not say this, or, rather, he says *a great deal more*; for he adds to 'full vigour and health' the important words, 'with all their

faculties perfect'; and, further, 'under the conditions to which they are exposed'—under the conditions of the interaction of the forces of a complex and ever-advancing social state.

And what nobler end can be aimed at, what grander test of morality proposed? *The greatest possible* number of individuals in the full vigour of elastic life, 'with all their faculties perfect'—feeling, passion, reason, conscience, all working harmoniously—mind attuned to body, and body to mind—reason recognizing the law that only 'in self-identification with others can one's true nature be realized,' and conscience urging the fulfilment of this law—our natures pulsing responsive to the claims of all other men, and the natures of all other men to ours—a world of harmonious adjustments, a more than poet's dream of the Golden Age; and all this without painful strain or effort, the enlarged and adjusted brain making what is hard, uphill work to us, only healthy, happy exercise to them. I think that Professor Watson would be satisfied to pursue amongst such men his lofty speculations, and to trace feeling, reason, conscience, entity, backwards, each to its primal cell, and down through the ages to their maturity of grace and strength.

But, to return, I know of no test by which the morality of any action can be decided as an ultimate fact out of consciousness, but its utility; that is, its utility full, perfect, universal, all-sided, without any drawback. As to the flavour of morality in the consciousness, that is another matter wholly. The test and the thing tested are not identical. Things have their obverse sides. The morality is not in the utility: the utility is in the morality; so that morality has something in it not included in the utility. It has its subjective as well as its objective side. That 'honesty is the best policy' is a maxim of general utility, but is scarcely a high ethical principle of action. Indeed, strange as it may sound, an action may be, at the same time, moral and immoral—moral as regards the doer, the feeling, and the motive; and immoral as regards the thing done. Paul's act, when he persecuted the Christians, was moral so far as related to himself. He says of it: 'I thought I ought'; but the act, looked at, not in its motive, but in itself,—in *esse*, as good or bad,—as the thing done, was a subversion

of all morality : for morality is a compound of two elements, motive and utility. The combination perfects the idea, making it *totus teres atque rotundus*. A man might found a hospital from mere ostentation, in which case his act would lack the leading, *the essential*, element which would constitute it moral ; for it is the absence of right motive, not the mistakes of the understanding, which affects us with the painful feeling of culpability. Of this more hereafter.

'But,' proceeds Professor Watson, 'if the standard of conduct is the preservation of the species, the cat in catching mice is *as much* performing a moral act as the patriot who sacrifices himself for the good of his fellow-men.' I have pointed out before, that, in Mr. Darwin's theory, it is not the preservation of the species merely that is contemplated, but their advancement likewise in all that is intellectually and morally high and noble ; and this I conceive to be a sufficient reply. Still I have no fault to find with the cat. She is acting blindly for an end the fulness of which she never contemplates. The cat obeys all the instincts of her nature, sublimely indifferent to the pains or pleasures of other creatures, and disobeys none. This, in its order, constitutes her non-immorality. But Darwin's man acts with conscious intelligence, and with a sense of obligation for that nobler end, in which his own good is merged in and harmonized with the good of all ; hence *the order of the act* is higher far—as far higher as altruism is than egoism ; as noble self-denial is than brutish selfishness ; as a high-souled man than a selfish infant ; as developed humanity, with its moral faculties in full play, differs *toto cælo* from the undeveloped brute.

One of the most differentiating minds and profoundest thinkers the world has ever seen, Bishop Butler, came to this conclusion : that from the idea of the constitution of human nature, 'it *as fully* appears that our nature is adapted to virtue, as from the idea of a watch it appears that its nature is adapted to measure time ;' and he adds, 'what in fact or event commonly happens is nothing to the question. Every work of art is apt to be out of order ;' and this position he has shown to be impregnable.

Now, if man's nature be adapted to virtue as a clock is to measure time, though liable to get terribly out of order through

the unequal strength of particular passions, the want of proportionate keenness of the reason, of vigour of the will, or of power and tenderness of the conscience, what a glorious consummation it would be to witness a whole society, with all their faculties perfect, working together in full proportionate health and vigour, and realizing as their natural outcome this music of virtue of which Butler speaks.

Yes, Mr. Darwin is right. Our noblest end is health and vigour of body and mind—*our wholebeing*, mental and moral, working without a jar, and this extended to the whole family of man—blessing and blest, and blest in blessing. This idea of his has, after all, something in it, and is not a wholly wrong or barren idea—the cat notwithstanding. His end is the harmonious adjustment and full development of the nature of man ; and the best *test* of its morality, whatever is best calculated to achieve this end.

Again (page 326) says Mr. Watson, 'if *man* does not differ *toto cælo*' (by the whole breadth of the heavens) 'from the animals in his capacity of turning against any or all of his *immediate* impulses, of weighing them in the balance and rejecting those that are found wanting, of subordinating them to an end *consciously determined* by himself, not only is his ineradicable sense of responsibility a delusion, but it is inconceivable that it should ever have got into his consciousness at all. I hope to show how it did get there. Again (p. 324) he says, 'so long as we assume nothing but a ceaseless, unarrestable flow of impulses, we can give no valid reason for choosing *man as moral*, and animals as non-moral.' Now let me ask, if this 'ceaseless, unarrestable *flow of impulses*' fairly represents or is at all the equivalent of Mr. Darwin's statement, in which he couples with instinct 'reason' and 'ought.' But passing over this, for the present at least, I wish to remark *in limine*, that it is impossible—and this impossibility grows out of the very idea of evolution—to so define morality as to *include* every 'featherless biped' of the genus *Homo*, and to *exclude* every creature outside him. The definition is always too wide or too narrow. It includes too much or not enough, and this owing to the insensible shading-off of nature, by which one colour gets run into another. *Natura non agit per saltum* ; for

in her domain, there is no vaulting into the saddle by the creature that had only crawled. Her course with each one of us, as with life in the past æons, has been development, growth, as noiseless and unnoticed—piling the invisible atom upon atom—as the expanding of the foliage in the spring.

The astonishment which I felt, says Mr. Darwin, 'on first seeing a party of Fuegians on a wild and broken shore, will never be forgotten by me. . . . These men were absolutely naked, and bedaubed with paint, their long hair was tangled, their mouths frothed with excitement, their expression was wild, startled, and distrustful. They possessed hardly any arts, and like wild animals lived on whatever they could catch. They had no government, and were merciless to every one not of their own small tribe.' Is there in this graphic, though terrible picture, revealing itself on the part of these men, the feeblest glint of a conception of the truth that 'only in self-identification with others can one's true nature be realized?' though there is that in them which, through the working of the slow, complex machinery of society, is capable of this development.

The faithful dog, whom neither blows nor bribes will turn away from guarding his master's person or property, who not only abstains from the tempting joint himself, but prevents another unconscientious dog from stealing it; or that heroic little monkey, who braved his dreaded enemy in order to save the life of his keeper; or that old baboon, who, descending from the mountains, carried away in triumph his young comrade from a crowd of astonished dogs; do they not, one and all, postpone a natural craving, an 'immediate' fear or desire, to a higher or more unselfish motive? And is there not in such the *germ* or *embryo* of a conscience—a kind of half-blurred feeling that there is that which is higher than *bare* appetite; and, if so, is it true that the Fuegian savage or the Carib cannibal 'differs *toto celo* from the animals in his capacity of turning against any or all his *immediate* impulses.'

In short, we cannot draw a definition—evolution forbids it—so sharply that it will prove to be inclusive and exclusive and yet conclusive. If too loose, it shuts in too much for theory: if too tight, it snaps under

the strain. Have we never seen a dog deliberate, swayed by adverse motives, dragged now hither, now thither, by conflicting emotions, now mastered by the 'immediate' desire, and again actuated by the mean of the ensemble of the thoughts and feelings that go to make up his canine character—his permanent self. We cannot draw a rigid line of separation by which to mark off the vague, confused image of right in a dog's inchoate conscience, and that of the very little child or low-type savage. We cannot draw the line hard and fast anywhere. The insensible nature of the changes, the slow, gradual pace of evolutionary upward movements forbid that. What takes place under our own eyes in the case of the individual infant, in his growth into manhood and intellect and the claims of conscience, is only the same that has taken place in the past millenniums in the growth and development of the genus, man.

When my dog, seduced by his appetite or betrayed by some momentary impulse, violates some better habit of his, does he not experience a dim, diffused feeling of wrong-doing—a vague, momentary, depressed sense of dissatisfaction. Indeed the full-grown dog shews a nearer approach to intellect and moral sense than the 'little child. True, my dog has reached the utmost length of his tether, whilst the child keeps on developing, reaching many a milestone further on the road of progressive life, and often attains high mental and moral stature. Still they both alike began low down in the scale of being, were fellow-travellers for some time toward a goal that lay beyond them; and though the one has outstripped the other far, yet is it only a case of arrested development in the one instance, and of development continued in the other. And speaking my honest thought, without regard to theory or consequences, I think there is a greater difference in the degree of the development of the honest, intelligent dog over the crawling worm, the oyster, or the jelly-fish, than in that of the Fuegian savage over the dog.

Away with our prejudices in the presence of immortal truth! If you let in our moral Fuegian, can you shut out the honest dog? If you exclude the dog from the *root-germ* of a sense of right, I doubt. Our Fuegian's title is terribly secure; and 'he selection of

impulses 'consciously and with the mind alert,' is truer of a Locke or a Butler than of our 'merciless' and remorseless friend. I do not assert that the dog's sense of right and wrong is not *very* slight, imperfect, embryonic; for his brain is small, undeveloped, and undifferentiated; but I do think that the sense in some dim way is there, that our humanity has its roots deep down in animal nature, and that the doctrine of evolution and of the survival of the conditionally fittest, affords the truest scientific key to the history of our origin, progress, and present life.

Nor have we much to boast of on the score of morality. Our life is conducted pretty much on a system of *manœuvring and out-manœuvring*, and our lofty morality and high bearing need not be a trouble or perplexity to our judges or jailors yet. And I fear the definition of a moral being given by Professor Watson would cut off a good slice from the human world, and consign a large portion of the outsiders to the limbo of the brute; especially if (p. 325) 'the beginning of all morality, whether in the individual or the race, *lies in the condemnation of mere impulse or passion*—in looking down upon it as *beneath the dignity of a rational being*;' and if, 'until this *divine contempt* of the old Adam has been felt, the *notion* of a moral law is an *impossibility*.' I wonder if our Fuegian or Carib savage feel this 'divine contempt,' or discuss among themselves 'the dignity of a rational being.' But perhaps their feelings are too deep for words. The Carib, however, is said to have very strong impulses towards his fellow man; but there are those who hardly regard this in the light of a virtue.

But, trifling apart, I cannot avoid thinking that Mr. Watson, when writing with such masculine vigour and beauty these true and noble passages on the play of the moral sentiments, had before his mind, not man, but me. And I am the more confirmed in this view by a passage in a pamphlet on 'Hedonism and Utilitarianism' (page 5), in which he says, if it is 'only meant that *man* in a primitive state . . . is *destitute* of moral ideas, and that *these are only slowly and gradually* developed by the interaction of *social forces*, no reasonable objection *could* be raised.' Why, this is the very thing I have been contending

for. They are the very matured views of Mr. Darwin, expressed too in most exact and apposite terms. Man in his *primitive* condition destitute of *moral* ideas, but *acquiring* them by a long, slow, gradual process, through the inevitable interaction of the more complex social forces. When, a few days since, I read this passage, I was completely staggered, and asked myself if I really understood Professor Watson, or if he excluded the savage races from the category of *man*. For if, as Professor Watson thinks (page 324), *man* is distinguished from the 'non-moral animals' by the possession of 'moral' ideas, and if the savage be destitute of them, then this savage is not a man. I confess I am puzzled; for evolutionist as I am, I am not prepared to go so far as this: for though we are related to the lower animals; though, in the rudiments of the mind and feelings, in the structure of the brain and nervous system, in the viscera and the limbs, in the kind and number of the senses, we exhibit together a common working plan; yet our dumb, stationary fellow-traveller has been left far, very far behind, more especially since men have been gifted with the power of articulate speech—*μεροτες ανθρωποι*—speech, that mighty instrument of progress, that stimulator of the brain, constantly forcing currents of rich arterial blood to flood it to its remotest parts, and so to nourish and augment this prime organ of the mind; speech, that great world-lever that gave the most advanced thought of the one to be the property of the tribe, and gives it to-day to be the common heritage of all, enabling each new generation—'the heirs of all ages'—to begin their career from a fresh table-land of new and more differentiated ideas, with the advantages of a clearer horizon and of the accumulated experiences and implements of the past, and urging the lowliest on a path of progress, so that he soon distances all his mere animal competitors, even subduing them to his ends. We have, however, amongst ourselves our higher and our lower types, with distances between them approaching those which separate the lowest men from the highest of the Quadrumana yet discovered on the earth or amongst its strata; though I must say I think the missing link (or links) is missing yet.

Compare the low-browed, ferocious, mer

ciless Carib, mean and cunning, and roused to action only by strong animal excitements, with that hearty, open-browed, large-souled Norman McLeod. Put him side by side, and say if he belong to the same order of being, if he be at all related to this lordly man. Yes, he is related, but only as the savage is related to the higher brute. Appeal to his finer feelings! He is as deaf to such an appeal as a member of Parliament, and stares at you half-vacantly as if you deemed him a fool. Touch the other on the side of his moral feelings, and his organ-soul vibrates and responds in rich and noble melody. Whence the difference? The one has passed many a milestone of the successive stages of development into the opening morning of civilization, *on the road to* the serene and steady light of day. The other still lingers on the borderland of the half-human, in the flickering twilight, with a narrow horizon, a pinched understanding, and a cold and selfish heart. But education, you know! Yes, and you might educate him to the crack of doom and yet knock into his undifferentiated brain only the most simple ideas, for it is not sufficiently developed and the nervous connexions are not adequately established.

You may, indeed, educate persons of a very low tribe, up to a certain point, which means, up to a certain age, and impart to them many simple and useful ideas. They may even improve up to this age more quickly than most of the children of the civilised man: but when the latter are only beginning to unfold their powers; when the intellect is just expanding into vigour, and gathering day by day new stores of assimilated ideas; the others, children that never grow, become suddenly stunted, making henceforth little or no advance. Their ideas, except the simplest, get confused and tangled and run into one another, being seldom seen in their distinctness; nor are the links in a concatenated argument seen simultaneously in their separateness and in their connexions, or the conclusion reached, to be a compelled result. In short, 'pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw,' they are children with an arrested development, who never grow beyond the child-state.

Look at Jamaica, with its religious and educational machinery in full operation for the last forty years, and with what results?

The Negro, religious after his fashion, is, owing to his highly emotional and childish nature, quite capable of being worked upon, to the pitch of even enthusiasm by preachers of the highly sensational order. But the moral feelings seem so dominated by the emotional as scarcely to oppose any practical barrier to very gross vice, even amongst those who are admitted within the inner circle of religious profession. Indeed, this child of nature has but a slight hold on morality. 'Consciously and with his mind alert,' his 'capacity' for, or sense of the obligations of ethical law—of the tie which binds him to his fellow man—is thin as gossamer, if not wholly embryonic; but he is, when wound up to it, often deeply moved, and highly and sincerely excited by the rocking and swaying of his religious emotions. But, by the side of these, how tame and cold are the claims of morality, and of 'determining which' of his impulses 'is most congruous with his rational nature.' I think our Hottentot or Bushman has not even a 'feeble conception of the truth that only in self-identification with others can his true nature be realized.' I think he simply never thinks about it at all, and has, speaking of him as an individual, scarcely a developable 'capacity'—so embryonic is it—for such high speculations at all.

Again, says Professor Watson (324), 'it is manifestly in defiance of the facts to go on talking of *man* as if he were still governed by instinct.' To this I replied before. But so much has been written, and written so well, about the dignity of man and the beauty of free-will as contrasted with mere instinct, that one feels torn by opposite sentiments—'*la variété est charmante*'—by a desire to get out of the old worn wheelways or common ruts of thought, and, driving recklessly over all the wayside fences and barriers, strike out into the free and beautiful open country; and, then again, by the danger of saying something so horribly unorthodox as to shock and wound.

Still, since '*magis amicus veritas*,' I must say, I should be satisfied to resign my free-will to do wrong for a nature so constituted that I must always love and do the right. What, by instinct? Yes, by instinct or by anything else. I should like to be always *instinctively* inclined to good, as the bee

to make honey. But if I am denied this; if our nature is not yet adjusted to the requirements of the golden age; it is something to possess an unchangeable instinct of right at the very core of our being, in the Holy of Holies of our innermost nature, which can neither be plucked out, nor enslaved by the will, nor silenced by terror, or bribes, or flattery. But instinct! How undignified to be forced to do right by compulsion! What? By the compulsion of our own nature, by the imperious and imperial sense of our obligations to our fellow men? On the contrary, I think we should be ennobled by the possession of such a moral force. Even conscience, however blind or feeble, raises us in the scale of being, though, in its roots and essential nature, it be simply an instinct, and an instinct too of a very composite character: for though recognized now by consciousness as a single force, it is made up of many impulses or sentiments. But as the properties of a proteid, of a salt, or other compound, afford us but slight indications of the properties of its elements, so we must be prepared to find the conscience made up of elements unsuspected, perhaps, before analysis.

Now, if we accept the theory of evolution, we are forced to admit that as our limbs and mental faculties have been evolved, so the moral sense has been evolved likewise; and it is further necessitated by the theory, that we go back to a creature that had *no* moral sense, and, further still, to a creature so wholly animal as to be simply selfish. Now, if this be true (and no evolutionist will withhold assent), the moral sense must have had its roots in selfishness—must have been evolved out of it. But at this period of our human history, none can be sure that his analysis is perfect, or that it embraces all the elements of conscience, so indissolubly knit together, or, like a bundle of fused metallic rods, so welded into one by time and association and heredity, that we intuitively accept it as a single soul-force. And yet as evolutionists—and, of course, Professor Watson is one—we are obliged to believe that it sprang not at a bound into being, full-formed—a Minerva from the head of Jove—but was, by small increments and modifications, fashioned slowly and insensibly by the hands of time. Let me illustrate.

The sense of property-rights seems to me an essential one of the elements that go to make up conscience; thus, this coat belongs to A., and this other coat to B., but C. attempts to take by force the coat of B., and, by the very act of doing so, menaces A.; for as A. and B. hold by the same tenure, whatever weakens or extirpates the rights of B., tends, by parity of reasoning, to render precarious the rights of A.; for A. must feel (*tua res agitur paries cum proximus ardet*) that the wrong done B. in action, is done to A. in principle; and thus are enlisted the feelings of A. in behalf B., and his indignation against C. *Sibi quisque timet quamquam est intactus et odit*.

In short, we can only retain rights for ourselves by retaining them for others. Hence our own rights are bound up in the *common bundle* of human rights, and the sense of this growing in us throughout the ages, has become part and parcel of our moral economy, and the more fiercely self-love burns in us,—the higher the estimate we place on our own rights, and the more horrible we conceive their violation,—the more indelibly are we engraving on our moral nature the equal obligation of the rights of everyone else, so that even self-love ministers to universal well-being.

I shall put this in another shape. Every man is an I (an ego). The world is full of I's—I₁, I₂, I₃, I₄, and so on. Now the different I's are indiscriminately entitled, so that we cannot single out from amongst them any particular I—whether I₁, or I₂, or I₃, or I₄—and affirm of him that he is differently entitled, more or less. In the scales of justice, I₂, I₃, I₄ weighs each exactly the same, and each one singly as much as I₁. Thus justice—the equal interest of every man—takes in the whole circle of human relations, helping the whole social machine to work smoothly, reconciling the rights of the ego and of the alter, treating the I, and the other I, and all the I's, alike, making them all interchangeably equal, however posited in consciousness, so that change or exchange or shuffle them as we will, wherever you draw, an I is drawn with his entitlement, nor more nor less. Whereas it is of the very essence of injustice that the rights of one I (the ego) be held to override the rights of any or of all the other (1,000,000,000) I's.

Now, this alternating process of substitution has been going on in men's minds—consciously, sub-consciously, unconsciously—for ages, until, the multiplicity and the endless variety of the cases that come up for decision invigorating the reason and purifying and sensitising the moral sense, the original purely personal element gets eliminated out of consciousness, and by degrees is forgotten and ignored; while the sacred sense of right, as right, remains, purged of the selfishness out of which it sprang.

'Ipsa utilitas jūcti prope mater et equi.'

The maxims of morality, more or less true, come down to us by tradition and root themselves in our youthful minds; but the solidified moral sense is transmitted by heredity, and forms an integral part of our very selves. It is, so to speak, our experiences—not from, but—in our grandfathers; the result stereotyped in our constitutions of all the ictuses of the various forces in this direction which had affected the whole line of our ancestry from the very first—transmitted feelings in transmitted structure.

Again, natural selection would adopt and continue the sentiment of justice as tending to benefit the race; for in the wake of injustice follow murder and rapine and idleness: for who would be at pains to acquire what he could not be secure to enjoy? who would sow what another might equally reap? This in process of time must lead to thinness of population in the tribe and possible extinction. Whereas a tribe practising justice and giving security to property acquired by industry, with abundance in her train, would in time increase in number, and thus be in a position to *transmit* to a numerous and growing posterity the sentiment intensified.

Pity, too, forms an element in conscience. Our pity in its origin was, probably, pity for ourselves. Then, in the process of evolution, pity for ourselves in others, pity for others through pity for ourselves—a kind of reflex pity; but now, in its perfect phase, transmuted into pity for others irrespective of ourselves. And I think that, when we hear of the sufferings of others through wrong-doing, we cannot divest ourselves of the belief that in the amalgam of conscience pity is an integral and powerful element—a force in the rear.

Fear seems another element. Thou shalt do no murder, is the voice of conscience. The mind had painted the whole horrid scene,—the deadly blow, the struggle, the agony of the hour,—and transferring it all to self, had shuddered at the deed and hated the doer, and registered it in the brain *with the feelings it had awakened* as a foul and hideous act that *ought not* to have been committed. and had emphasised the ought with the fiercest energy of the will, and affixed to it her blackest mark, tabulating it in the memory as the first and worst of crimes, to be followed by dire, indiscriminating vengeance, including thus the I (ego); for if the I be exempted, he who commits the crime is always an I to himself, and is by parity of reasoning to be exempted too.

Hate, too, is an element in the indignation felt against the wrong-doer for his wrong.

Hope, too, sees in the establishment of right as an immovable principle, the only sure foundation on which to build for the realization of her golden dreams; and the love of liberty enfolds the liberty of others equally, and so on to the end.

Thus is added strand after strand of transmuted feeling, till, growing into a coil solid and homogeneous, it tends to become strong enough to resist the strain of all the forces of self. And right, grown into a necessity of social well-being, and now recognized more and more as such, still extends her sway on all sides, till, hallowed by hoary usage and religious adoption, her claims to supremacy are no longer disputed by civilized men, and thus the inner feelings and the outer facts become harmonized and afford to each other a mutual support. Thus conscience, the moral sense, becomes the very key-stone of the arch of the whole social edifice, *to disturb which were to imperil the very existence of society* itself, and reduce all to universal anarchy. Thus from a seed of self-interest has grown this lordly tree whose roots have penetrated into the deepest soil and twined themselves round every fibre of our most inward nature, and under whose shadow only can the nations repose in peace.

From primal selfishness (1); to self-interest, including by very necessity the interest of others (2); to enlightened self-love, with the well-being of others as a con-

scious end (3); to the moral sense enthroned supreme and demanding obedience to right as right (4); the change has been so great and so gradual that the simplicity and poverty of the elements out of which this mighty power has been evolved, become all but lost to view in the grandeur of the solidified and transformed moral sense.

But great as has been the change, it is not without parallel in the physical world, for who, prior to analysis, would have suspected that a glass of water was a hydrogen cinder, a burnt metal, an oxidized gas. Of course, what I have written of the imperiousness of the moral sense is true only of it in its principle—true only of it in the souls of the most morally advanced—of the noble few, the vanguard of the world. Still we all are, all *must* be, marchers upward, though the stragglers and laggards are to be found on every stage of the great highway, and some are content even to belong to 'the invincible rear.'

But conscience is still simply an *instinct*, though a lordly one. Existing outside the sphere of the will, she acts automatically and uncontrolled, not as one among competing impulses, but supreme above them all. With her prime-minister, Reason, on her right hand, she sits on her throne, conscious of the legitimacy of her sway. He makes the laws, and she enforces them. She impresses on him the necessity that the laws enacted by him, both in their present effects and future consequences, shall bear with even impartiality on all; and he on his part (I speak, of course, of functions and assigned duties) weighs in the balance the probable effect of each enactment before making it; whilst she, whose influence pervades all consciousness, from its centre to its circumference, suffers the pain of each infraction, and, by suffering, inflicts it. She guides not to the theoretic right, nor informs us respecting it; is passive rather than active; and, strange as it may appear, is sometimes gratified even when we are pursuing a course of evil. But this is the fault of her prime-minister, not her own. For conscience (all heart but no head) is essentially an instinct—what Professor Watson calls a 'blind, unreasoning impulse' (324) to all right doing—but which, when enlightened by her prime-minister as to what is right in

any particular case, always urges its being done.

Let us take as an illustration the case of Paul. Paul's conscience looked on approvingly when he was committing to prison men and women for honestly obeying the profoundest convictions of their souls; and it afterwards looked on equally approvingly when he was preaching the very faith he had formerly destroyed. Though my reading serves me with no instance in which these two powers of the soul—reason and conscience—have been adequately differentiated and held apart, yet great confusion is bred by not keeping them distinct. For conscience is only a kind of moral thermometer (ethometer) in which the mercury of pleasure or of pain rises or falls in exact proportion—constitutional and acquired sensitiveness being taken into account—as we obey the dicta of the reason, be those dicta right or be they wrong. The obedience, *as obedience*, yields the needful warmth to the gratified conscience: whilst disobedience, *as disobedience*, chills it down to dissatisfaction; to the freezing point of pain; or to the zero of anguish and remorse. In short, reason guides; conscience feels. Reason without conscience might develop a man into a Mephistophilean fiend: conscience without reason, into a scourge and curse of the world—into a Mahomedan propagating his faith by fire and sword; a Thug committing murder as a religious duty; an Inquisitor, for some old lumber of a dogma, roasting his human victim at the stake. To be of any real, permanent utility, these two powers of the mind must work in harmony. Though the imperious sense of right rings with the voice of authority through every corridor of the soul, yet must it not be forgotten, that it is only an *instinct*, to be instructed by the reason; hence the necessity of a well informed, well balanced judgment, else the great engine, if running off the track of right, may, as in the case of Paul, produce mischief in proportion to the greatness of its power.

The selfish appetites and passions of our nature may, indeed, seduce and suborn the cunning intellect to go in quest of arguments to becloud and sophisticate the judgment, and, so, mislead the conscience; or the commands of conscience may be

wholly disregarded and trampled on. But when reason affirms that this and nothing but this is right, conscience must urge, you *ought* to do it. But without this imperious ought-power—this lord of the vassal will—to enforce the decision of the reason, I believe the machine would prove a failure, needing the propelling energy of conscience to enable it to work.

Though man's nature is as truly made for virtue as a clock to keep time (Butler), yet our passions and our moral nature are not so evenly balanced, so nicely adjusted, but that they come into constant and fierce collision. The lower animals yield themselves unreservedly to the immediate or momentary passion; the higher animals, not always absolutely; the lowest savages are swayed almost wholly by their passions and by little else: persons of low natures among civilized men are, as a rule, governed more by their passions than by their moral sense; and it is only the élite of humanity, the aristocracy of nature, who strive habitually to subordinate their passions to their higher nature, who seek to be true to their whole selves, and to discipline their minds to the control of that principle within them, which, under the guidance of reason, is plainly stamped with an authority from which there is no appeal. I speak not of punishment or reward, but of an education of obedience to right as right; else

‘Tolle periculum,
Jam vaga prosiliet frenis natura remotis.’

As civilized men we are yet only in the *transition* stage of our moral life. Our brain it not enough differentiated, grown, and sensitive. But the process is going on, and the result certain. Vice is such a disturbing element in the adjustment of the social and human systems, that it tends perpetually to be squeezed out of both.* Being

* Let not our police be frightened. Our moral Utopia may need a thousand millenniums or more for its establishment. But as we have grown out of the brutish animal and the degraded savage to our present *very* imperfect state, so are we advancing, if slowly yet surely, to that state in which life will flow on more calmly, but suitably to our milder and more adjusted nature, and in which the well-being of others will be pursued eagerly as an end in itself. We have, it is true, a long, long, weary way to travel yet. Our Lincoln elections forbid the belief that the golden age is about to

an impediment to the movements of the social machine, it tends to extinction. Our nature is adapted to virtue, but, adds the great thinker, ‘every work of art is apt to be out of order; but this is so far from being *according* to its system, that, let the disorder increase, and it will totally destroy it.’ (Butler, Pref. to Sermons). Vice jars the machinery, and the multiplied vices of individuals—the multiplied jars—are sometimes so great and so many, as to throw even the whole social machine out of gear; whereas virtue—the smooth, free working of the machine—tends to advantage, and therefore to be selected.

Thus vices, *i.e.* moral *weaknesses*, tend to die out, if there be any truth in the survival of the fittest; whilst virtue, *i.e.* moral *strength*, tends to live. Sympathy for our fellow-men, affectionateness, the love of right, strengthen the individual and benefit society, and therefore look towards survival; whereas envy and hatred depress and lower the vital powers, as well as injure society, and therefore tend towards extinction. Love warms the heart, and exalts the life; but envy and hatred, ever their own worst avengers, prey upon both mind and body.

‘Invidus alterius *macrescit* rebus opimis;
Invidia Siculi non inveneren tyranni
Majus tormentum.’

‘The permanent self of reason’ (p. 325) only means *ourselves*, our whole selves, ourselves regarded as a ‘system or constitution,’ as Bishop Butler would say. Now, if our nature, regarded as a *constitution*, be adapted to virtue as a clock’s to keep time, adapted constitutionally to all the requirements of morality and universal well-being; if this be the great present realized outcome of the ages—the development out of selfish self-gratification—the necessary result of the creature’s constitution *once*—into a constitution *now* which impels to, and tends to compass, and can never be satisfied with anything short of compassing, the well-being of all; and if this grand upward movement be, not an accidental, but a compelled result—a result that, as I have shown, grew up

commence to-morrow, or the day after. Our politicians and legislators, with a few exceptions, play ‘the game of Politics’ as they do the game of chess; nor are we ourselves in a position to complain that we are unfairly represented; so that life is a very small and sorry affair at best.

naturally and necessarily ;—I think we may acquit Mr. Pollock (p. 322) of any grave error, when he affirms that there is ‘some scientific presumption* in favour of existing morality.’ Indeed, the whole outcome would be the same, if the evolution had to be gone over again, similar principles similarly conditioned being ever productive of similar effects—a necessary corollary of the adequacy of cause. And if the line along which the animal has travelled up to the human, and by which humanity has reached its fullest development, be the line of strength ; if morality has proved a source of advantage and has, therefore, been selected and made permanent, and anything short of morality a source of weakness ; if, in the stationary or savage races, immorality—an immoral, tribe-confined habit of regarding things, coupled with an ignoring of obligation to anything outside the tribe—has shown itself a ground of feebleness ; if vice has ever proved a moral dry-rot of the body politic, and, like a ship studded with barnacles, is encumbered everywhere with disadvantages ; if our social life (as it has become) is still becoming more and more complex, and therefore needs nicer adjustments to the requirements of a more exercised and advanced reason, and of a more delicate moral sense ;—then, in proportion as our nature grows increasingly into harmony with virtue, more adapted to the complexities of this advancing life, so will those who lag behind in the race of virtue, and whose lives are in discord with their more complex environment, be (*cæt. par.*) at a vast disadvantage, and, as the struggle goes on with increasing severity for the less developed natures,† will gradually thin out and probably become extinct.

But if this be in any large measure true ; if no time can arrive when the savage races in their savagery can supplant the Cauca-

sian in his civilization—the Blackfoot and the Carib, the Teuton and the Gaul—how can we assent to the argument of Professor Watson (p. 321), that ‘the truth of the physical laws of inheritance and variability will not be overthrown, if the golden age is placed in the past and not in the future.’

So many start aghast from the very name of Evolution, as if they believed that they had been dropped suddenly from the heavens with full-grown minds and bodies, and had not been evolved out of a protoplasmic germ, and, by gradual increment and modification, become slowly unfolded into rational and moral men. So much difference does our familiarity with any fact make in our mode of regarding it. For what is the difference, in the question of dignity, whether the development took for its completion a few years or as many æons. Is not the end achieved everything ? Who could have imagined prior to experience, that—to go no further back—a lump of dull-eyed, sucking humanity, would, instead of being arrested in its development like the lower creatures, unfold into a man of flashing thought and profound investigation. And does it not come to but this, that the period of our germ-life ought not to have been placed so far back in the eternities ; and that what we see taking place under our own eyes *now*, could not have taken place then, because we were not there to witness it.

In this connexion, I must quote a late beautiful utterance of Professor Maudsley : ‘There are,’ says he, ‘men who have not only shirked positive enquiry from indolence, but have hated it from hostility. They dread the thought of being shown to be *one with nature*, and repudiate with abhorrence the suggestion that their bodies and minds will ever receive scientific *explanation* ; as if their bodies and minds would be degraded to something quite different from what they are by being *understood*, like other natural phenomena, and described in terms of scientific thought.’

But whatever others may dread, men who, like Professor Watson, spring with joy and alacrity into the open arena of free thought, are hardly the men to start back from the pursuit of truth, scared by any spectres of the imagination. To such I appeal.

J. A. ALLEN.

* A ‘presumption’ standing for the lowest and weakest link in the chain of probabilities, and that even qualified by the word ‘some.’

† In this connexion Prof. Watson quotes a passage from the works of that man of profound thought and colossal intellect, Herbert Spencer. But Mr. Spencer is there speaking of the lowest creatures, and is careful to add, ‘when the life led by the species does not demand higher attributes,’ whereas the question in debate is in reference to the higher animals and to man, whose life does demand them. But that Mr. Spencer is no believer in the golden age in the past, and not in the brightening future, is left nowhere doubtful by him.