

CHAPTER X.

A QUESTION IN SCIENCE.

Does Nature embrace a purpose?

Here is a question of greater moment to the well-being and happiness of intelligent man than is a mere knowledge of Nature's scientific processes.

Upon this question the findings of physical science and those of Natural Science radically disagree.

Physical science concerns itself with the evolution of the physical man. It seeks only to analyze the physical processes by which the physical body is evolved. It seeks only to trace the physical causes which give rise to the phenomena of sensation and intelligence.

It does not concern itself to discover any ultimate purpose of Nature in these processes. It does not seek to know why Nature has finally produced this complicated physical, intellectual and moral being—man.

It finds no other uses for man in Nature than his operation of those functions by which the physical body is sustained and the species propagated and improved. The entire range of physical science leaves no other impression upon the mind than that Nature exists for the sole purpose of physically improving species.

This, indeed, is the entire argument and intent of physical materialism.

Natural Science, on the contrary, does something more than to enumerate facts and analyze processes, whether those facts and processes be physical or spiritual. It is not content to investigate material phenomena alone. It is not satisfied to simply discover the physical and spiritual processes involved in the build-

ing of the body and the individualizing of intelligence. The higher science seeks to know the why as well as the how. It aims to know why man exists in two worlds as well as how he exists. Natural Science, like physical science, is concerned with the study of natural phenomena. Unlike physical science, however, it is even more deeply engrossed with the study of the higher ethical phenomena attaching to intelligent life.

Physical science has one motive. The higher science has two. Where physical science ceases its inquiries Natural Science goes forward. Where physical science presents only the past physical history of man upon this planet, Natural Science forecasts his spiritual, intellectual and moral possibilities in two correlated worlds of life.

Darwinism declares that the seemingly purposeful in Nature is merely a series of adaptations forced upon species in the struggle for nutrition in the midst of a hostile environment. It perceives nothing in evolution which indicates anything that could be properly called an intelligent purpose. It foreshadows a result, truly, but simply a result affecting physical life. It does not contain one hint of any natural purpose which meets the natural intuitions and aspirations of human life and intelligence.

"Natural Selection," as laid down by Darwin, foreshadows simply and only a "physically improved species" brought about through the "survival of the fittest" in that universal battle of the physically strong against the physically weak. This "physically improved species" is held to be the "fittest" under Nature's fundamental principle of hostility. A physically improved species is, therefore, accepted as the noblest result possible under Nature's working formula.

Darwinism finds in Nature no more subtle principle than physical appetite. It finds no higher struggle than a physical one. It conceives no higher standards than physical improvements. It forecasts no higher evolution than a physically strong and healthy race. With one-half of Nature obscured from his senses, it is little wonder that the physical scientist promulgates

a doctrine which is, at once, a stultification of intelligence and the death knell of human ambition, hope and aspiration.

Absorbed in the examination of purely physical facts and functions, physical science ignores, as far as possible, the universal accompaniments of physical life, viz., spiritual and psychical phenomena. Accepting the organs of digestion as the primary cause of the evolution of man, it becomes necessary to refer all super-physical phenomena attaching to the evolution of man to the same cause. As a result, physical science passes over the spiritual and psychical implications attaching to human life, as minor issues, or as a mere efflorescence of physical feeding, breeding and battle.

Darwinism considers the individual solely as an agent for the perpetuation of species. He defines the individual as a mere result of past condition incident to the struggle for nutrition. His destiny is completed in what he may contribute to the physical improvement of species.

This is what a man counts, and all that he counts in Darwinian doctrine.

The value of individual life under this theory is summed up in the general assumption that the sole intent of Nature is the improvement and preservation of species. Upon this fallacious premise Darwinism argues, first, that philanthropy which cares for the weak and unfit children of men, is a violation of natural law. Next, it declares that the highest duty of the individual man is "the rearing of the greatest number of improved progeny."

Thus, in a physically improved species we find the ultimate object of Nature. In the rearing of the largest number of improved progeny, we discover individual destiny—according to Darwin.

Darwinian doctrine, reduced to a decalogue, declares:

- (1) Life is a struggle for nutrition and physical benefit.
- (2) The business of life is the struggle for nutrition and a struggle for reproduction.

(3) The purpose of evolution is the physical improvement and preservation of species.

(4) The individual exists for species.

(5) There is nothing to live for except physical posterity.

(6) Intelligence is an emanation of food combinations.

(7) Love is essentially lust.

(8) Philanthropy is unnatural and therefore is a disease.

(9) The expectation of life after death is a superstition.

(10) Individual ambitions, hopes and aspirations which transcend the requirements of nutrition and reproduction, are delusions and dreams based in superstitions or indigestion.

These are deductions and dogmatisms which are rejected as insufficient by the common intuitions and the common experiences of human intelligence. These are doctrines which the intelligent soul of man denies. These denials of the soul are supported, analyzed and explained by a broader science. The limitations of physical science are responsible for the theory that evolution is based in digestion and conducted by competition. Those limitations are responsible for the idea that intelligence is merely an emanation of physical food, that love is an efflorescence of lust and that morality and philanthropy are abnormal.

Inevitably this out-of-focus view levels man to the needs and requirements of his physical body. Inevitably such deductions end in gross materialism. Scientific skepticism does not contain the merest shadow of a purpose in Nature that appeals to either an intelligent or a moral being.

The protest against Darwinism has never been on account of the facts set forth. It was the appalling theories which accompanied those facts that shocked the spiritual intelligence of the world. Even average intelligence has not found it so difficult to accept the physical facts which show the gradual evolution of the physical body. It is the intelligent soul which refuses to accept the explanation which Darwin makes in connection with the physical facts. The man of keen spiritual intuitions does not reject Darwinism because it allies man, structurally, to the

ape. He rejects it because it reduces man to the kingdom of the ape, makes him the plaything of blind physical forces and limits his destiny to improvement of species. He rejects it because it levels life, intelligence and love to the gross needs of the body, and passes the death sentence upon the living soul.

After the first shock to its spiritual faith, the church began to consider Darwinism in the light of cold reason. To-day an enlightened clergy, for the most part, have laid the terrors of the theory and accepted the facts of Nature as recorded in "The Descent of Man." The enlightened Christian world now agrees that the evolution of the physical body from lower forms does not necessarily mean that man is merely an improved animal, that life has no other purpose than feeding and breeding, that competition is the principle of progress and that death ends all.

That new moral philosophy (already referred to), based alike upon the facts and theories of Darwinism, finds what it believes to be a purpose in Nature. The reading of Nature by the moralist embraces certain improvements upon Darwinism. It does not, however, touch upon the fundamental errors of physical materialism.

"The Descent of Man" postulates a physically improved species as the best result obtainable under evolutionary law. "The Ascent of Man" declares that the great purpose involved in evolution is the creation of a family.

The moralist who seeks to both support and criticise Darwinism has a difficult task. He is right when he declares that love, and not warfare, is the greatest thing in the world. He is wrong, however, in the pathway he selects for love. He is wrong when he introduces love into the world "at the point of the sword." He is mistaken when he formulates a principle of sacrifice as the true principle of love. He is wrong when he declares that the creation of a family is the purpose of evolution.

He finds that the great moral task of Nature, as revealed in evolution, consists in forcing love upon the world "at the point of the sword." This end, he claims, is effected by and through

the endless pain and sacrifices of maternity. That is to say, love is forced upon the world through the physical disabilities of the female half. To achieve this moral result it is claimed that Nature is, therefore, principally engaged in the manufacture of mothers. This manufacture of mothers is explained as the necessary process in achieving the final, moral purpose of human life and earthly development, viz., the creation of a family.

The moralist, along with Darwin, accepts Nature as a series of compulsions. He agrees with his adversary, that physical competitions accomplish all physical and intellectual results. He insists, however, that the enforced physical sacrifices of woman accomplish the moral results. He finds, as it were, a double purpose in Nature, viz., the manufacture of mothers and the creation of an improved family. It is not always clear which he regards as the more important, since at different points he assigns each to the leading rôle. The preponderance of argument, however, indicates that he regards the family as the ultimate purpose in the evolution of man.

The place assigned to woman in Nature is frequently explained by the moralist through analogies. One of these interesting analogies is presented when seeking to show the moral intent of Nature, even in the lower kingdoms.

"For reproduction alone is a flower created; when that process is over it returns to the dust." This is what the moralist says when considering the endless sacrifices of maternity and the universal office of the female in Nature. A natural corollary to this would read: For reproduction alone is a woman created. When that office is discharged her usefulness to society is ended. The moralist does, in reality, say the same in effect when he declares that a woman fulfills her destiny "in paying the eternal debt of motherhood."

Again the moralist discusses the natural office of the female, by analogy, when he says:* "No one * * * reverences a

*"The Ascent of Man," p. 248.

"flower like a biologist. He sees in its bloom the blush of the "young mother; in its fading the eternal sacrifice of maternity. "A yellow primrose is not to him a yellow primrose. It is an "exquisite and complex structure added on to the primrose plant "for the purpose of producing other primrose plants."

Logically applying this analogy to human life, it would read: No one reverences a woman like a sociologist. He sees in her bloom but the blush of the young mother, in her fading the sign of past usefulness. A woman, to him, is not a woman, but a group of complex female organs added on to the woman for the purpose of producing other human beings. Or again, this means about what it would to say: No one reverences man like the anatomist before the dissecting table. To him man is not a man, but a highly specialized complex organism of bone, tissue, muscle and nerve, which was previously occupied by an intelligence for the purpose of feeding and breeding and operating that mass of bone, tissue, muscle and nerve.

When the moralist leaves the vegetable kingdom and reaches man, his vision as to the purposes of Nature is not enlarged. In the midst of this nineteenth century development, in close acquaintance with women of individual genius and of individual aspirations, the propounder of this new philosophy found it possible to say:* "In as real a sense as a factory is intended to turn "out locomotives or clocks, the machinery of Nature is designed "in the last resort to turn out Mothers. You will find Mothers "in lower Nature at every stage of imperfection; you will see "attempts being made to get at better types; you will find old "ideas abandoned and higher models coming to the front. And "when you get to the top you find the last great act was but to "present to the world a physiologically perfect type. It is a fact "which no human mother can regard without awe, which no "man can realize without a new reverence for woman and a new "belief in the higher meaning of Nature, that the goal of the

*"The Ascent of Man," p. 268.

"whole plant and animal kingdoms seems to have been the cre- "ation of a family."

Had the writer of this curious theory really possessed any exact or definite knowledge concerning the principles of evolu- tion, he had possibly been able to perceive that part of the intent of Nature is the evolution of a *woman*. He had then perceived that this intent necessarily involves not merely mothers, but also wives, sisters, aunts and other female relatives in every stage of imperfection.

With such a reading of Nature it was inevitable that the au- thor should say in so many words: "A woman completes her destiny in her children." The moralist, of course, in this in- stance, refers to earthly destiny. But even in this limited sense, such a deduction offends against the intelligence of woman her- self.

It is a common error of the masculine mind, however, to as- sign woman to her particular place in the order of Nature without consulting woman herself. The assumption of the moralist upon the question of woman's place in Nature, is one which woman— generally speaking—is alone qualified to endorse or contra- vene.

This new moral philosophy, if reduced to its basic proposi- tions, would read something as follows, viz.:

- (1) Life is a struggle for physical and moral benefit.
- (2) The struggle for physical benefit is egoistic and selfish; the struggle for moral benefit is altruistic and sacrificial.
- (3) The business of evolution is the manufacture of mothers.
- (4) The object of Nature is an improved family.
- (5) Life is controlled by its functions, and the destiny of the individual is fulfilled in following lines laid out by nutrition and reproduction.
- (6) The female is created for reproduction.
- (7) Love is forced upon the world through the physical dis- abilities of the female.
- (8) Sex is the physical device for reproduction.