

PALL MALL GAZETTE

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Darwin's Influence on Modern Thought

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THE STONE OF SISYPHUS.

This afternoon we shall be taken once more into the centre of the Irish land question. It is a perplexing and bewildering history, and the worst of it is that the lesson is still unlearned. In the year 1800—only two and twenty years ago—Parliament passed an Act declaring that the relation of landlord and tenant was one founded upon contract, express or implied, and not upon tenure. Ten years later, in 1810, an Act was passed which assumed that tenancies did not rest upon contract, but upon status. Eleven years after that, in 1821, a third tack was made, and an Act was passed which declared that neither contract nor tenure was the quality of the relations between owner and occupier, but that the money element in these relations must in disputed cases be settled by an arbitrary tribunal free without. Let anybody consider the direct contradiction to one another of the principles taken for granted and acted upon in these three successive pieces of organic legislation within two and twenty years, and he will then have some idea, first, of the quality of English statesmanship in dealing with the Irish question, and, second, of the reason why it is that Irish politicians distrust the wisdom of the English system of government, and begin, even the most sober of them, to despair of that system ever doing any good for their country. We need not recall the hundred instances in which important public men have shown how little they can have used their minds about the most harassing problem in English politics, and how many rash things have been said by them in consequence. Only three or four years before the legislation of 1820—our conspicuous political personage said something to this effect:—"The Irish land question! What is the Irish land question? There is no Irish land question." And not many years before that Mr. HOBBSMAN, the "superior person" of the House of Commons, holding the post of Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant, declared that his position was a sinecure, and that he had nothing to do. It is because a whole generation of politicians of this stamp took this jaunty view of Ireland that we are to-day face to face with a "social revolution." But, it is urged, it is the new generation of English statesmen who have created the revolution. If they say, you had allowed the settlement of 1800 to stand good, we should have had no further trouble. The answer is obvious, and has been stated here and elsewhere a thousand times. Not only was a revision of the land system just and equitable on the merits of the case; it was forced upon the British Legislature by political circumstances in Ireland itself. The only centre and stronghold of the British constitution is Ulster. The Act of 1870 was specially framed to meet the requirements of Ulster, and one strong reason why it was necessary to introduce another Act last year was that even the Ulster Conservatives who were returned in the election of 1880 came to Westminster pledged to ask for new legislation. As Sir WILLIAM HARCOURT put it at Derby last night:—"Under the Act of 1870, and in consequence, I believe, to a great degree, of the Act of 1870, the rents were raised to a degree of which even we had not in 1868 until the

an afraid," he said, "that some members will have a feeling of disappointment when I now state what we propose." That disappointment, as things have turned out, was justified, and there can be no doubt that the failure here has been one of the weakest places in the Land Act. That there should be weak places in so complex a piece of work was inevitable, and Parliament will to-day consider how to make them good. The best way of doing that is, if the past has any lesson at all, to accept a definite line of policy, and to work it out boldly and without tinkering. The difficulties are more in England than in Ireland. The greatest of them all, we have to remember, lies in the antagonisms of parties. Lord STRAFFORD, whose "moderation" the Home Secretary well compares to Lord SALISBURY's, went to Ireland not to govern it well, but to make it a point of attack for political enemies in England. It is too much the same with Lord SALISBURY's party to-day. His language last night is one more illustration how much less he thinks of doing good to Ireland than of speaking ill of Mr. GLADSTONE.

MR. DARWIN'S INFLUENCE ON MODERN THOUGHT.

PERHAPS no great thinker or discoverer was ever happier in the exact moment of his discovery than Mr. Darwin. It is hard to speak of him in the past at all; hard to think of his stirring activity as filled for ever; but at least it is some consolation in our national and universal loss to remember that one man ever roused more fully the highest award of splendid and enduring labour in the days of his own lifetime. He lived to see his thought not only triumphant, but leaving the whole alien thought of his time, putting both life and youth into every old and decrepit branch of science or philosophy, and bearing new fruit hourly on many another stock, where it had been eagerly grafted by willing and attentive hands. It is seldom that he who builds for title can receive the vague of human appreciation in his own days; Darwin had this first even to his earnest and single-minded life; and, though he cared less for mere fame than any other man that ever earned it, he was not insensible to the pure pleasure of seeing his own seed thus germinating and bringing forth a beautiful harvest in all men's fields. He fell upon the right epoch—the very turning-point when the world was just prepared to accept and to assimilate his views. It is no disparagement to his wonderful achievements to say that evolutionism was already in the air. The thoughts of the whole thinking world were tending and striving in that direction; had it been otherwise, the "Origin of Species" would have fallen upon barren and stony ground, instead of being tended and cherished by a thousand eager disciples. Lactantius had already roused the attention of all higher scientific minds to the theory of development; still earlier, Erasmus Darwin and Buffon had hinted at the possibility of indefinite modification. Among Mr. Darwin's contemporaries, the author of "Vestiges of Creation" had kept alive speculation on the subject; and Mr. Herbert Spencer had adopted evolutionism in every department of nature. Even opponents of the theory in its cradle form, like Lyell, Owen, and Hooker, were full of interest in the central question, and ready to consider the evidence with calm deliberation when at last it was laid before them. Among the greatest

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What is the secret at the bottom of this prolonged and lamentable miscarriage? One thing is that the English statesmen, from the days of the Encumbered Estates Act downwards, have mistaken what it is that the tenant has a just right to, and what it is that he really wants and desires. Another thing is that they have, for reasons which it is not now necessary to investigate, not often gone straight to the mark, but have sought to reach their end indirectly and gratuitously—"a mode of legislation," as has been truly said, "which generally makes matters worse than they were before." The moral of all this is only too apt for the question which is to be revived this afternoon. When the arrear portion of the Bill of last year came up for consideration, it was shown not only by the Irreconcilables but by members like Mr. LITTON that everything would go wrong unless arrears were efficiently dealt with. Mr. FORSTER, in speaking on the matter, seemed conscious that the proposal which he announced on behalf of the Government would hardly be considered effective to this degree. "I

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PERHAPS no great thinker or discoverer was ever happier in the exact moment of his discovery than Mr. Darwin. It is hard to speak of him in the past at all; hard to think of his inspiring activity as ended for ever; but at least it is some consolation in our national and universal loss to remember that no man ever reaped more fully the highest reward of splendid and enduring labour in the days of his own lifetime. He lived to see his thought not only triumphant, but leavening the whole alien thought of his time, putting fresh life and youth into many old and desiccated branches of science or philosophy, and bearing new fruit heartily on many another stock, where it had been eagerly grafted by willing and attentive hands. It is seldom that he who builds for time can receive the wage of human appreciation in his own days: Darwin had this final crown to his earnest and single-minded life; and, though he cared less for mere fame than any other man that ever earned it, he was not insensible to the pure pleasure of seeing his own seed thus germinating and bringing forth a bountiful harvest in all men's fields. He fell upon the right epoch—at the very turning-point when the world was just prepared to accept and to assimilate his views. It is no disparagement to his wonderful achievements to say that evolutionism was already in the air. The thoughts of the whole thinking world were tending and striving in that direction; had it been otherwise, the "Origin of Species" would have fallen upon barren and stony ground, instead of being tended and cherished by a thousand eager disciples. Lamarck had already roused the attention of all higher scientific minds to the theory of development; still earlier, Erasmus Darwin and Buffon had hinted at the possibility of indefinite modification. Among Mr. Darwin's contemporaries, the author of "Vestiges of Creation" had kept alive speculation on the subject; and Mr. Herbert Spencer had adopted evolutionism in every department of nature. Even opponents of the theory in its crude form, like Lyell, Owen, and Hooker, were full of interest in the central question, and ready to consider the evidence with calm deliberation when at last it was laid before them. Among the younger men of science, opinion was blindly groping its way towards the true solution of the problem. Biologists like Bates and Lubbock and Huxley and Leveson and Wollaston were collecting facts and discussing results that led them gradually up to the frame of mind necessary to prepare the way for acceptance of Mr. Darwin's magnificent system. Nay, even the distinctive doctrine of natural selection itself, the key of the Darwinian position, had flashed independently across the mind of Mr. Wallace in the recesses of the Malay Archipelago. But, for all that, Mr. Darwin's work was the great turning-point of contemporary opinion, the real precursor of the greatest revolution in thought that has ever yet been accomplished. It was the vast collection of facts, the luminous reasoning, the simplicity, the transparent honesty of purpose in Mr. Darwin's great series of books that took the world by storm, and accomplished in a moment what it might otherwise have required years and generations to bring about.

For there was still a strong opposition to the evolutionary idea. The foremost minds were tending thither, but only the foremost minds; and many even of those had deliberately taken the opposite path. While Mr. Darwin was actually turning over in his own mind the *Origin of Species* and the *Descent of Man*, Auguste Comte was declaring the question of genesis an insoluble problem, and Buckle was deciding the doctrine of heredity as an unproved delusion of the popular mind.

With the publication of Mr. Darwin's epoch-making work a new era began for almost every department of human thought. The world was convulsed; the higher minds readily, the mass slowly and gradually, but convulsed at last against its will. Indeed, it was curious to observe how much more spontaneously the new light were followed even by those who had no special knowledge of biology, but whose minds were of the right type for appreciating the full value of the harmonious evolutionary system, than by those more brilliant minds who could only think of the difficulties involved in the interpretation of this particular wondrous flower, or that particular butterfly's wing. At first, the seed sprang according to the previous preparation of the ground upon which it fell. Psychologists and philosophers trained in the school of Locke and Hume, of Hartley, Mill, and Bain—say, even of Kant and Fichte, or of Berkeley and of Coleridge—took kindly to the new doctrine. The most patient and minute of inductive workers made easy converts of the men whose own knowledge of inductive method was mainly gained in the wider fields of history, ethics, and political philosophy; he was often longer in impressing the men who might have seemed more likely *a priori* to be won over by such careful and exhaustive collections of instances as those which make up the later volumes of his great connected series. Calvez told more than specially: the picked men of all classes were the first to come over to the new opinions.

Of course it was natural that Mr. Darwin's theory should produce a complete revolution in biology; no other science was so immediately and obviously affected by its implications. Almost all other scientific sciences came over at once; a few heidated and hung back for a time, but finally gave in their adhesion; a very small number held out, and still hold out, in scattered isolation, for the older views. Among the younger men the evolutionary theory conquered almost without a blow; the most eminent accepted it heartily in its Darwinian and Spencerian form; the less eminent often with such, more or less clumsy, modifications as were necessary to bring it into some artificial accord with their insensate preconceptions. Ahead, thinkers like Haeckel, Geadly, Gray, and Sachs worked out its consequences through all the domains of animal and vegetal life. But it was not in biology alone that Mr. Darwin's seed bore great fruit. It sprang up like Jonah's gourd, till its branches overshadowed almost every region of scientific and philosophic thought. In the sciences which deal with human life, especially, it introduced a totally new set of conceptions. Our ideas of ethics, of politics, of history, of sociology were all largely modified, and, often even revolutionized. Man was no longer an unchangeable ruled, as he had been called, but a descendant of savages and of still lower ancestors, struggling slowly upward by his own unaided effort to such heights of knowledge and of disinterested work for society's sake as Charles Darwin himself so nobly exemplified for us. To this new conception all our social and historical thinking had to be adapted. A new teacher had taught us how to know ourselves. His work inaugurated a fresh outburst of thinking and speculation on all such subjects. Sir John Lubbock and Mr. Tylor applied his doctrine to the early stages of man's history. Writers like Mr. Bagehot and Mr. Leslie Stephen employed it to elucidate politics and ethics. Professor Bain remodelled all his psychology to suit the new ideas. Mr. Herbert Spencer interwove the survival of the fittest into the vast and all-embracing fabric of his system of Synthetic Philosophy. There was no science which was not touched in greater or less degree by the Darwinian spirit. Geologists and paleontologists applied it to the past history of the earth; ethnologists to the races of men; archaeologists to the interpretation of the oldest human relics; philologists to the development of language; historians to the records of events of European and Asiatic lands. Even in astronomy, it suggested new conceptions as to the life and duration of planets; in chemistry it led us freely to look about the nature of organic compounds. Where it did not set directly at naught, indirectly, thinking and striving down to the present, it permeated even the whole of the

of thousands who are ready and fit to work beside their leader for the accomplishment of a common design; but it is seldom indeed that so great a revolution has been so largely guided and directed by a solitary thinker as this one has been guided and directed by Charles Darwin. His life work gave the final impetus which set all this mass of thought and action seething and fermenting in every direction. It was fitting that the remains of so great a man should find their last resting-place in Westminster Abbey; and Englishmen may reflect with pride that they lie there at last beside the dust of the only other philosopher in the past whose revolutionary effect on thought can at all be compared with his own. No other country in the world can point to two such names at once as Darwin and Newton.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE SCHOOL BOARD AND LOCAL MANAGERS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE PALM MALL GAZETTE.

Sir,—My attention has been called to a letter in your number of April 8, from the managers of a Board school in Fresno, complaining of the disregard of their wishes by a London School Board. I know of hardly a case where local managers have been more harassed and favoured than those of this gentleman. As long ago in 1877 there was a strong wish for a Board school, the application was actually supported by the Nonconformists, and by Mr. Somerscain among others, and actively opposed by the Church party, locally led by Mr. McNally, who signs the letter I refer to, and as the Board by the Hon. and Rev. A. Legge, then a listed member from Greenwich, and by Mr. Peck, who lives in the neighbourhood. The conflict over the establishment of a school raged long and furiously—the resolution by the Church party being that the whole application was an imposition by the Church party being that the whole application was a Disenting job, the Congregationalists having recently built a new chapel, and consequently wanting a room for their old one. The conflict ended in the success of the Church party. Their clash, however, was soon turned, for the local Dissenters and Mr. Somerscain proposed to open a voluntary school in the old chapel premises, and the Board raising no objection, the Department recognized their school as a public elementary school entitled to annual grants. This school had hardly been open a few months when the managers applied to the Board to accept it as transfer. A representation was made of the great expense that had been incurred, and as application that the Board should pay rent for the premises. This was agreed to, and, in addition, the school, which was being conducted in accordance with Mr. Somerscain's theories of education, continued to be so conducted, and special votes were voted by the Board to make up the deficiencies of earnings of the teachers which resulted from the inability to earn a good Government grant while teaching according to his method. After two or three years of working in this chapel, and after complaints from the Government of the unsuitability of the premises, and of the unwholesome state of the offices, the Board determined to transfer a temporary room building on to a site they had purchased and to give up the tenancy of the chapel. This site was nearly all bought by private agreement, at a much less cost than the site to which the managers in their letter refer would have been. This site so bought by the Board had, moreover, better frontages, the other site being back land and placed in a hollow between the roads. But though the site so selected by the Board was better and cheaper, yet a determined opposition was set up against it by those who would prefer to re-occupy a Board school site as observed by their letter than to sit in the neighbourhood of their own houses. With the object of getting it so planned Mr. Somerscain complained of the arrangements. Here he is so right, so far, that it is as desirable that the class room of a school should be planned of a square shape, with a side-light from the left, rather than oblong, and with a light partly from the back; but the plan was in accordance with the rules laid down by the Education Department, which have greatly fettered the freedom of action of the Board. The question had long been taken up, and treated, and a very great cost and delay would have been incurred had the school been transferred to the other site.

accord with their ineradicable prepossessions. Abroad, thinkers like Haeckel, Gaudry, Gray, and Sachs worked out its consequences through all the domains of animal and vegetal life. But it was not in biology alone that Mr. Darwin's seed bore great fruit. It sprang up like Jonah's gourd, till its branches overshadowed almost every region of scientific and philosophic thought. In the sciences which deal with human life, especially, it introduced a totally new set of conceptions. Our ideas of ethics, of politics, of history, of sociology were all largely modified by it, often even revolutionized. Man was no longer an archangel ruined, as Pascal called him, but a descendant of savages and of still lower ancestors, struggling slowly upward by his own unaided effort to such heights of knowledge and of disinterested work for right's sake as Charles Darwin himself so nobly exemplified for us. To this new conception all our social and historical thinking had to be adapted. A new teacher had taught us how to know ourselves. His work inaugurated a fresh outburst of thinking and speculating on all such subjects. Sir John Lubbock and Mr. Tylor applied his doctrine to the early stages of man's history. Writers like Mr. Russett and Mr. Leslie Stephen employed it to elucidate politics and ethics. Professor Bain remodelled all his psychology to suit the new ideas. Mr. Herbert Spencer interwove the survival of the fittest into the vast and all-embracing fabric of his system of Synthetic Philosophy. There was no science which was not touched in greater or less degree by the Darwinian spirit. Geologists and palaeontologists applied it to the past history of the earth; ethnologists to the races of men; archaeologists to the interpretation of the oldest human relics; philologists to the development of language; historians to the recorded events of European and Asiatic annals. Even in astronomy, it suggested new conceptions as to the life and duration of planets; in chemistry it led to fresh notions about the nature of organic compounds. Where it did not act directly it acted indirectly. Trickling and filtering down to the masses, it permeated even the daily press, the current political and social ideas, the beliefs and aspirations of the sects and the Churches. Those who themselves explicitly reject the Darwinian creed yet cannot possibly escape from many of its implications. It runs through almost all the best thought of our time; it tinges our unformed public notions; it reappears under a hundred disguises in works on law and history, in political speeches and religious discourses, in artistic theories and vague social speculations. Our very novels and poems are full of latent Darwinian germs. If we try to think ourselves away from it we must think ourselves away entirely from our own age—away alike from Tennyson and George Eliot, from Tyndall and Huxley, from Maine and Galton, nay, even from Freeman, from Thomson, from Balfour Stewart, from Helmholtz—perhaps even in so very far-fetched a sense from Bismarck, from Gladstone. Whoever builds at all must build largely from materials supplied by Darwin or by Darwinians. Whoever deals with social forces must deal with forces greatly moulded and remodelled by Darwinian ideas. The physician who wholly neglected Darwinian results would fall behind in the race, would, in fact, be naturally selected for quiet extinction; the statesman who wholly overlooked the political and ethical implications of the Darwinian beliefs, the strength of the new intellectual factors introduced by Darwinism, would be incapable of really guiding the political thought of to-day. Whoever does not definitely and consciously acknowledge the magnitude of the change, at least implicitly and unconsciously acknowledges it. And this change is more due to Mr. Darwin than to any other single person. No great revolution was ever wholly, or even largely, wrought by one man: it implies the co-operation

success of the Church party. Their flank, however, was soon turned, for the local Dissenters and Mr. Sonnenschein proposed to open a voluntary school in the old chapel premises, and, the Board raising no objection, the Department recognised their school as a public elementary school entitled to annual grants. This school had barely been open a few months when the managers applied to the Board to accept its transfer. The transfer was accepted. A representation was made of the great expense that had been incurred, and an application that the Board should pay rent for the premises. This was agreed to, and, in addition, the school, which was being conducted in accordance with Mr. Sonnenschein's theories of education, continued to be so conducted, and special grants were voted by the Board to make up the deficiencies of earnings of the teachers which resulted from the inability to earn a good Government grant while teaching according to his method. After two or three years' teaching in this chapel, and after complaints from the Government inspector of the unsuitability of the premises, and of the unsatisfactory state of the offices, the Board determined to transfer a temporary iron building on to a site they had purchased and to give up the tenancy of the chapel. This site was nearly all bought by private agreement, at a much less cost than the site to which the managers in their letter refer would have cost. This site, so bought by the Board had, moreover, better frontages, the other site being back land and placed in a hollow between the roads. But though the site so selected by the Board was better and cheaper, yet a residential opposition was set up against it by those who would prefer to relegate a Board school into an obscure corner rather than see it in the neighbourhood of their own homes. When the school came to be planned Mr. Sonnenschein complained of the arrangements. Here he is right, so far, that it is no doubt desirable that the class rooms of a school should be planned of a square shape, with a side-light from the left, rather than oblong, and with a light partly from the back; but the plans were in accordance with the rules laid down by the Education Department, which have greatly fettered the freedom of action of the Board. The quantities had all been taken out, and tenders invited, and a very great cost and delay would have been incurred in replanning the school, which had long been a desideratum in the neighbourhood.

While I admit that square rooms lighted from the left are preferable to long rooms, I must not be taken as admitting that the school now building is ill arranged or badly lighted. On the contrary, it is a very good school, well lighted, as any one may judge by visiting other schools similarly planned. But the fact is that with our English system of education we are debarred from the best form of school-planning. The existence of the pupil teacher system enforces a departure from a perfect arrangement. If we are to employ pupil teachers we must arrange the rooms for larger classes, so that a pupil teacher will work under the supervision of an adult teacher. I may say that the four Greenwich members were unanimous that the building of this Pease Board school should not be delayed in order to replan it in accordance with Mr. Sonnenschein's wishes. There is a further matter which hampers us in the planning of our schools. Not only are we somewhat tied by considerations of economy in working through the employment of pupil teachers, but we are forced to consider economy in building.

The Board is anxious to make its schools as good as possible, as healthy for the children, and as convenient for teaching. I recognise Mr. Sonnenschein's zeal, and acknowledge his sound views on certain points of school-planning; and I think if he were a member of the Board he might do valuable work; but I cannot admit that the letter, for which I should consider him mainly responsible, fairly represents the history of the relations of the Pease managers with the Board, or justifies his suggestion that the Board is either too obstinate or too ignorant to plan its schools properly without submitting them to the modifications of local managers.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

E. L. STANLEY.

April 24.