

MR. DARWIN ON CONSCIENCE.

It is not at all surprising that no part of Mr. Darwin's book should attract more attention than that which contains the exposition of his ideas on conscience. People have an instinctive feeling that any speculation which affects this must also affect sooner or later the practical principles and conduct of men in their daily lives. This naturally comes much closer to us, than any question as to the comparative nearness of our kinship to the gorilla or the orang can be expected to do. No great modification of opinion takes place with respect to the moral faculties, which does not ultimately and in some degree modify the ethical practice and political working of the society in which it comes to prevail.

What is called the question of the moral sense is really two: how the moral faculty is acquired, and how it is regulated. Why do we obey conscience or feel pain in disobeying it? And why does conscience prescribe one kind of actions and condemn another kind? To put it more technically, there is the question of the subjective existence of conscience, and there is the question of its objective prescriptions. First, why do I think it obligatory to do my duty? Second, why do I think it my duty to do this and not do that? Although, however, the second question ought to be treated independently, for reasons which we shall presently suggest, the historical answer to it, or the various grounds on which men have identified certain sorts of conduct with duty, rather than conduct of the opposite sorts, throws light on the other question of the conditions of growth of the idea of duty as a sovereign and imperial director. Mr. Darwin seems to us not to have perfectly recognized the logical separation between the two sides of the moral sense question. For example, he says (i. 97) that "philosophers of the derivative school of morals formerly assumed that the foundation of morality lay in a form of selfishness; but more recently in the Greatest Happiness principle." But Mr. Mill, to whom Mr. Darwin refers, has expressly shown that the Greatest Happiness principle is a *standard*, and not a *foundation*, and that its validity as a standard of right and wrong action is just as tenable by one who believes the moral sense to be innate, as by one who holds that it is acquired. He says distinctly that the social feelings of mankind form "the natural basis of sentiment for utilitarian morality." So far from holding the Greatest Happiness principle to be the foundation of morality, he would describe it as the forming principle of the superstructure, of which the social feelings of mankind are the foundation. Between Mr. Darwin and utilitarians, as utilitarians, there is no such quarrel as he would appear to suppose. The narrowest utilitarian could say little more than Mr. Darwin says (ii. 393):—"As all men desire their own happiness, praise or blame is bestowed on actions and motives according as they tend to this end; and, as happiness is an essential part of the general good, the Greatest Happiness principle *indirectly* serves as a *nearly* safe standard of right and wrong." It is perhaps not impertinent to suspect that the faltering adverbs which we have printed in italics indicate no more than the reluctance of a half-conscious convert to pure utilitarianism. In another place (i. 98) he admits that "as all wish for happiness, the Greatest Happiness principle will have become a most important secondary guide and object, the social instincts, including sympathy, always serving as the primary impulse and guide." This is just what Mr. Mill says, only instead of calling the principle a secondary guide he would call it a standard, to distinguish it from the social impulse, in which, as much as Mr. Darwin, he recognizes the base and foundation. So far, then, as the objective side of the matter goes—so far, that is, as the question what quality in an action defines and constitutes it right or wrong—Mr. Darwin has not, nor does he pretend to have, contributed anything new to the now prevailing doctrine that the right and wrong of an action or of a motive depend upon the influence of the action or the motive upon the general good. For the distinction which he draws (i. 98) between general good and general happiness is surely rather a distinction of the dictionary than of thought. At all events, the believer in the standard of utility would have little difficulty in accepting Mr. Darwin's definition.

It is in reference to the question of the origin of the moral sense or faculty of conscience that Mr. Darwin takes what is to a certain extent a new position. How has man acquired this quality of judging his own conduct with approval or disapproval, of looking back upon it with content or remorse, of feeling pain when he has fallen below his standard, and satisfaction when he has resisted temptations thus to fall below it? The very approaches to the question are the field of a controversy. Mr. Bain, for instance, thinks the conscience is acquired by each individual, while Mr. Darwin and Mr. Spencer hold it to be the inheritable product of transmitted qualities. The former follows what we may perhaps call the geographical or map-making method—describes the lie of the land, and marks conscience as the confluence of this and that surface tributary. Mr. Darwin pursues what may, in the same way, be styled the geological method. The mind, including the moral feelings, as we know it to-day here, or at any other time or any other place, is the uppermost of many strata, and the individual inherits a faculty which remote progenitors acquired and nearer progenitors modified, just as has been the case with the peculiarities of his physical structure. Apart from this question, whether the moral sense is acquired by the individual in his lifetime, let us see Mr. Darwin's view of the composition of conscience. He analyzes it into two elements: a social instinct, which man shares with some of the lower animals; and an intellectual energy, which is his chief differentiating characteristic by reason of the superior degree in which it possesses him. The social instinct strongly predisposes man to seek the sympathy of his fellows, and to shape his conduct so as to win their praise. His anti-social instincts would constantly impel him to conduct, that would outrage or clash with the social instinct. His intellectual faculties come to the rescue. They enable him, by the powers of comparison and so on, which they bring, to contrast the persistent and tenacious social feeling with the transient anti-social impulse, of which the impression is ever growing paler and

fainter. The recollection of this contrast, which is the result of the intellectual energy of memory, recurring from time to time, as the anti-social impulse recurs, generates a habit, and this habit is a more or less rudimentary conscience. The subjective basis, then, of the moral sense is social instinct or social feeling. Now, how has this been acquired? By natural selection and inherited habit; that is to say, the progenitors of man, in whom sociality presented itself as a variation, were enabled by virtue of it to outstrip their competitors in the struggle for existence, and to rear a great number of offspring inheriting the quality. The advantages of such a quality need not be dwelt upon; they are too obvious. And, this being so, its permanent acquisition, like that of other highly beneficial qualities, will fall under the ordinary operation of natural selection. The continuance of the great process of developing the moral sense would be due to intellectual improvement, because this would enable men to see with an increasing clearness the consequences of their own conduct. The foundation of morality, according to Mr. Darwin, is a sympathetic instinct, leading primeval man to do to some men as he would have them do to him. The extension of this sentiment until it embraces not only the same men of his own tribe, but all men; and ultimately not only all men, but all the animals that are the ministers of men, will be due to accumulated habit, quickened and enlarged by the progressive improvement of intellectual perceptions.

We may remark here that Mr. Darwin is, from his own point of view, hardly justified in speaking of intellectual activity as "one of the fundamental though secondary bases of conscience" (ii. 393). It is difficult to be sure in any case that form is secondary to matter, or that hydrogen is secondary to oxygen in the composition of water, or indeed that any indispensable factor is secondary to any other. There could have been no moral sense without a certain intellectual development, and this is why the brutes, some of whom have the social instinct, are without moral sense. If one were to draw a distinction at all, it would even be better, one should suppose, to consider intellectual activity as the primary requisite of conscience. Mr. Darwin, moreover, seems to us in more than one place to point very clearly to the superior influence of intellectual perception in the formation of the moral sense. For, though he always combats, and with more earnestness than so whimsical a notion now demands, the idea of Whately and others that man came into the world a civilized being, and that savages have undergone degradation since (i. 181), yet he accepts, of course in a sense, something like the Fall of Man. In the times when man had only doubtfully attained his manhood, Mr. Darwin says (ii. 367), he would be governed more by his instincts and even less by his reason than a savage of to-day. He would have preserved the love of his offspring, and not practised infanticide. The females would have got the benefit of the natural affection between them and the males, instead of being converted into the slaves of the males. In short, after the primordial times there came a later period, when "man had advanced in his intellectual powers, but had retrograded in his instincts." Does not this remarkable statement, then, which we are far from wishing to impugn, throw the heat and burden of the construction or growth of the conscience upon the intellectual powers rather than upon instincts which retrograded, and were only restored to a yet loftier and more beneficial supremacy by the growth of foresight, comparison, and other qualities of intelligence?

These objections to the preponderance which Mr. Darwin has given to the innate social instincts are strengthened by another set of considerations which we will very shortly indicate. Is morality an absolute and fixed quality of conduct? Is there, in other words, an objective basis in the effects of actions, as definite as the subjective basis which we find in the conscience of the agents? It is hardly possible to deny that there is such a basis; that in a given stage of society, under a given set of circumstances, there is a line of conduct, which a being, in full possession of all these circumstances in their remotest bearings, would pronounce to be absolutely more conducive than any other to the general good; that is, to be more decisively right and moral. Mr. Darwin, at all events, would accept this view. For in the "Origin of Species" (p. 249) he has pointed out that "we ought to admire" the savage instinct which leads the queen-bee to destroy her young daughters as soon as born, because "this is for the good of the community." And in his new book he says firmly and unmistakably (i. 73), that "if men were reared under precisely the same conditions as hive-bees, there can hardly be a doubt that our unmarried females would, like the worker-bees, think it a sacred duty to kill their brothers, and mothers would strive to kill their fertile daughters, and no one would think of interfering." If from one point of view this is apt to shock a timorous and unreflecting mind by asserting that the most cherished of our affections might have been under certain circumstances a vicious piece of self-indulgence, and its place in the scale of morality taken by what is now the most atrocious kind of crime; nevertheless, from another point of view, such an assertion is as reassuring as the most absolute of moralists could desire. For it is tantamount to saying that the foundations of morality, the distinctions of right and wrong, are deeply laid in the very conditions of social existence; that there is in face of these conditions a positive and definite difference between the moral and the immoral, the virtuous and the vicious, the right and the wrong, in the actions of individuals partaking of that social existence. The advance of morality means, on one side, the progressive discovery of these true or normal relations between human conduct and social circumstances; and, on the other side, an increasing willingness on the part of men to make such discoveries the maxims of their conduct. Now the first of these two processes is in itself as entirely a process of the intelligence, as the inquiry into the facts of gravitation, and is not in any way dependent for the correctness of its results on social feeling. This we might know from the quantity of immoral action—that is, action injurious or destructive to a society—committed by those who were most sincerely penetrated by interest in the common weal. If we were asked to point out the most quick and assured means of producing a decisive improvement in morals,

we should have no scruple in fixing on a vigorous and rapid perfecting of human language. And this would be an intellectual process. Current speech would then show the rogue, or bad man, that he is, as Coleridge said, "only a fool with a circumflectus." Why, then, throw the intellectual factor into the second place? Nor is all this mere logomachy. The more conspicuous you make the share of the intelligence in erecting conscience, and in imposing a decisive form upon it, the more strikingly and unmistakably do you impress on everybody concerned the superlative importance of constantly penetrating public opinion with intelligence, and of systematically stirring and improving the intellectual parts of the individual character.

To conclude. If what is most valuable in the conscience of fully-developed man be due to intellectual energies, and if the conscience of fully-developed man have been preceded by a retrogression in instincts going on correspondingly with the unfolding of the intellectual faculties, so that savages indulge in practices from which the brute is mostly free, there is surely some difficulty in tracing the growth of the moral sense up to that sort of social instinct which has been acquired by natural selection, which is really of the nature of an animal impulse, and which man shares with humbler organizations. It will always be necessary to lay the basis of conscience in the social feelings. But is it not simpler, considering this admitted fact of a transient retrogression or depravation, to find in the peculiar sociality on which conscience rests a composite, derivative, and secondary quality, acquired not through natural selection by the semi-human progenitors of man, but by the pressing exigencies of external conditions suggesting the advantages of a social or quasi-social union to the first creatures with sufficient intelligence to grasp the rudimentary idea and develop it? This points to one of the new forms of the old issue between innate and acquired conscience.

THE PARIS INSURRECTION.

Paris, Tuesday.

WE learn that the gentlemen who were to have gone to Versailles yesterday to try to open negotiations with the Government were prevented by administrative difficulties from leaving Paris, but that they positively started this morning. The negotiators have placed themselves pretty much in the same position as did M. Jules Favre when he pronounced his famous ultimatum—"not a stone of our fortresses, not an inch of our territory." The programme of the conciliators demands for Paris all the advantages for which Paris is fighting and which the National Assembly resists. Give Paris all it desires, say the men of peace, and it will lay down its arms. Now some of the demands of Paris are quite absurd—the demand, for instance, that the elected municipal council shall regulate the liberty of conscience. There is a charming contradiction in the very term, but let that pass. The municipal council exists to-day, and is persecuting the Catholic clergy with a vigour which must rejoice the heart of the Antichrist Mother and the votaries of the goddess of Reason—why not the Abbess of Unreason? We have arbitrary arrests, sequestrations, confiscations of Church property, the plundering of religious institutions and the closing of churches, and it is asked that these queer constructions of liberty, equality, and fraternity shall be sanctioned by law. Paris too wishes to regulate public instruction, forgetting that schools belong to France and not to the capital. Add to the above the ridiculous proposition that the entire National Guard shall remain armed, and it will no doubt appear to you that there is but a small chance of our negotiators finding a basis on which to proceed.

In the meantime fighting goes on, and it is a symptom of the progress made by the "bandits" of Versailles that the crowd of amateurs who used to watch their military operations from the base of the Arc de Triomphe now congregate round the monolith in the centre of the Place de la Concorde. At the Arc de Triomphe no one is now to be seen but a solitary sentry, who keeps well under the shelter of a lateral arch and throws himself flat on the ground when he hears a projectile approaching. The monument has now been struck about a dozen times, but remains uninjured. This morning in the course of about ten minutes I saw a couple of shells burst within two or three yards of it. Yesterday, the firing having ceased for some time, a crowd formed round the monument, when Mont Valérien pitched a shell into the midst of them, and four people were killed and ten wounded. An attack in force by the Porte Maillot was anticipated last night, or rather at four this morning, but for the moment the Chouans, gendarmes, &c., seem to be employed in strengthening the position they hold at Neuilly, and have taken no advantage of the breach made in the gate.

The Commune is growing very apprehensive lest the Prussians, who have advanced their posts to within 200 yards of the enceinte, should lose patience, or resent certain irregularities committed by patriots. In the *Official Journal* of this morning the Commune condescends to remind its friends that the Prussians have rigidly executed the terms of the convention, and that no armed National Guard must venture on the neutral zone. The tone of this note is most conciliatory. The unofficial portion of the Government organ contains an appeal to the women of Paris by "un groupe de citoyennes." This wild rhapsody, among other things, declares that the masses of England, hardworking and salaried, are becoming revolutionary from social position. These ladies, who scout all clemency, conclude their appeal thus:—"Citoyennes, resolved and united, let us look to the safety of our cause! Let us prepare to defend and revenge our brothers! At the gates of Paris, on the barricades in the faubourgs, no matter where, let us be ready at a moment's notice to join our efforts to theirs; if those scoundrels who shoot their prisoners, assassinate our leaders, sweep down with grape a crowd of defenceless women, so much the better! A cry of horror and indignation from France, from the world, will finish what we have commenced. And if the arms and bayonets are

all utilized by our brothers, there will yet remain paving stones for us to crush the traitors!"

The conduct of the National Guards in the villages of Colombes and Argenteuil is said to have been so outrageous that the women of these places appealed for protection to the Prussians, who immediately marched a body of 6,000 men from Sannois to protect the inhabitants. The "federal" troops appear to have dragged several villagers from their homes, and on their refusal to serve the Commune to have shot them. What will the assassins of Versailles think of this ferocious conduct on the part of "les frères et amis"?

This morning a curious incident took place at the little chapel in the Place d'Eylau, which lies about half a mile south of the Arc de Triomphe. A hearse drove up with no one but the coachman and the body, and the priest and the driver had to carry the coffin into the church. On inquiry it appeared that a shell had burst among the mourners and the undertakers, who, in accordance with custom, had thrown themselves flat on their faces, but the coachman, unable to follow their example, had whipped up his steeds and had galloped on to get out of the line of fire, leaving the bereaved and terrified relatives to follow as best they could.

Citizen Ladislas Dombrowski, according to the official and ultra-journals and a despatch of his own, has inaugurated his appointment to the command of the Army of Paris by a victory which throws into the shade the brilliant exploits of Bergeret *lui-même* at Neuilly, from which position, however, he was finally driven. Dombrowski professes to have captured the village of Asnières, and to have driven out the Versailles men with great slaughter. I believe that when this feat of arms, which has excited the same sort of enthusiasm as when the news of the capture of Orleans by d'Aurelle de Paladines reached Paris, is seen in its proper light it will dwindle down to an insignificant outpost affair. As the National Guards felt rather hurt at Bergeret being succeeded by a Pole, a proclamation has been issued announcing that Citizen Dombrowski is a member of the Universal Republic and a friend of Garibaldi. He would have fought under that hero in the Vosges, but Trochu refused to let him leave Paris, and even imprisoned him. As for his military services, he fought against the Russians both in Poland and the Caucasus. Bergeret, his predecessor, is said to have been arrested on principle, as it is a Republican axiom that no Republican commander should survive defeat. But if Houchard and Custine were guillotined during the first Revolution, Hoche, after a defeat on the Rhine, was complimented by the Commune of that day and reinforced. However, it is whispered that Bergeret disobeyed orders, and when called to account by war delegate Cluseret, swaggered and swore that he would not accept orders from a man who had fought in favour of re-establishing slavery in America, and who, in fact, was an American citizen.

The *Vengeur* relates the following lamentable circumstance:—"At noon yesterday Captain Viel while going his rounds received a bullet in the thigh. He fears that this bullet was fired by his nephew, a young soldier carried off by force by the men of Versailles. The citizen Viel was transported to the Hospital Beaujon." This will give you a faint idea of the atrocities to which those Chouans and bandits resort, when they compel a kidnapped youth to shoot his uncle. It is true that the accusation reposes on very vague grounds. The same paper tells us that an "honest citizen" was reposing on his bed in the Avenue de la Grande Armée when he was aroused (*sic*) by a shell which entered his room "et lui a labouré le ventre." These cannibals respect nothing.

The elections for the Commune first ordered for the 5th, then for yesterday, have been again adjourned, either because hot work was expected, or on account of several candidates proposed by the constituency declining to come forward and accept the responsibility already incurred. Henri Rochefort, Edouard Lokroy, and other Republican notabilities have from various reasons declined a seat at the Hôtel de Ville. The Moderate party was in hopes of being able to return conciliatory members, but this hope is deferred. In the meantime, the Central Committee continues to retain its influence over the National Guard.

THE FRENCH GALLERY.

THE success of M. Durand-Ruel's first exhibition in Bond-street, strong as it is in the best class of French landscape, and stronger than ever since it was reopened and rearranged a few weeks ago, will not have diminished any of the public favour towards the familiar gallery of foreign pictures just opened for its eighteenth annual season in Pall Mall. The word familiar is the more appropriate, by reason of that speciality which this exhibition has long had to itself, which it does not seem at all likely to forfeit, and to which it owes a great part of its popularity. It is the special market for a certain class of works even more admired in London than in the seats of their production—the class of small and polished costume and furniture painting, of which the subject, where any exists, never rises beyond triviality, and the execution hardly ever falls below a dexterity which, while it is above everything delightful to the rudimentary connoisseur, does in a few cases become seriously and even superlatively admirable.

We find at No. 80 the inevitable Gérôme of the exhibition. M. Gérôme's historical sense, taken together with his austere or tragic manner of dealing even with slight or slippery subjects, and his firm aversion from the paths of pleasantness, of course separate him *toto cælo* from the company with which he is year by year associated in this gallery. We do not think he is at his best when the Orientalizing fit is upon him, to which so many French artists are subject: yet this "Eastern Girl" leaning against a doorpost in the shade, with a long pipe in her hand, and the upper half of her figure immodestly half-veiled by a dark transparent gauze, is a real masterpiece at once of finished drawing and modelling, and of the refined laying on of impressive but disagreeable colour.

A Belgian romance-piece—small but of some pretensions—is contributed by her Majesty the Queen (24): the "Vision of St. Hubert," by M. Gallait.