SOME MUSINGS OF AN IDLE MAN.

BY COLONEL R. H. FIRTH.

Under this title, one has ventured to put down on two previous occasions certain reflections which have occurred in idle hours. In submitting a third article upon the same lines, one has no design to make converts to any new philosophic theories. As a scribbler and contributor to our Journal, one is dominated by the view that the whole object of writing is to stimulate thought. The reader can come with me only so far as he is impelled to come. A motor-car best serves the rich man in a hurry, while a donkey cart meets the needs of the coster-monger, to whom time and luxury are not pressing necessities; each man progressing in his own fashion and in accord with his own means. So, in the matter of thought and knowledge, only that which a man finds best suited for his difficulties and attainable by his own means can be of real service to him in the quest for truth and contentment. If a man be happy and satisfied in the ideas which he has, finding that they resist the honest attack of his own powers of reason, he is justified in keeping them; but we must qualify the statement by remembering that a man's capacity to use his mind is the truest evidence of his comparative advancement in the process of mental evolution. Probably, in the present day struggle for life, many people are either too lazy or are not free to think honestly, being compelled by forces largely beyond their control to align themselves with some one or other great group of organized opinion. However regrettable this fact may be, more or less every man, whatever outward service he must give, is consciously aware of his own esoteric interpretations. Personally, in respect of interpretations, one has ever been free from conventional bondage, and these articles are but records of the road and direction in which one's own thoughts have wandered; such tracings may be of little value, but one is induced to outline them as suggesting possibly a path to be followed, or giving a stimulus to the thoughts of others.

I.

Every doctor, at some time or another, has been present at a death-bed and noted the moment when life actually left the body. At such a time, even the most thoughtless cannot be unmindful altogether of self-searching suggestions. A recent incident of the
Some Musings of an Idle Man

kind brings home to one, once again, how profoundly interesting is that mysterious diversion of individual energy into a new channel, which we call death. This definition is surely legitimate, in that the moment of death is nothing but that instant of time when energy leaves the physical and familiar form. Equally legitimate is the definition of life as but the special association for a few years of fractions of energy and substance. The few years of association we call life, and the parting company or dissociation we call death. To each one of us, the time for that dissociation will come, when the ego has to discard the bodily tenement which it now occupies, and the thought is irrepressible, and what then? During all recorded time this question has been present to man. One is not here going to try and discuss it, simply because it is undiscussable, and we not only do not know but cannot know. It is at present unknowable to us, but one is not prepared to admit that it is absolutely unknowable. The only clue towards the answer is an instinct, persistent and universal, that we cannot lose our individuality. Those aggregates of energy, once held together in an earthly body and forming what one may call the essential ego, must always hold together. We cannot conceive their diminishing, we ever think of them as merging ultimately into a wider consciousness.

A thought that has often occurred to one is, in the case of natural death surely the process of death is a gradual one or, to put it in another way, the forces which compose in the aggregate our individual entity leave the physical frame gradually so that few of us know when we are beginning to die. Some of us do know, but few are prepared to admit the fact. Whether natural death be a gradual process or not, the energy which leaves the body as the outcome of dying or death is not lost. If it be lost, why should we bother about reproducing our species? Some may reply, we are impelled to reproduce by an instinct clinging to us from a lower state. Not only is that true, but the impulse is recognizable in our day as antagonistic or incompatible to the sense of the most highly evolved, and, as more and more reach that higher stage of evolution, there will be nothing left to induce man to go on peopling this earth except the knowledge of his imperishable ego.

Discussing this matter with a man recently, he remarked why should there be any death at all, surely evolution could secure its end without death? The reason or answer seems to be, that no type of organism can survive which is not so constituted and so
co-ordinated that it can complete a life-cycle culminating in the transmission of a similar structure to its descendants. Those organisms and their descendants which have varied in a direction which gives them a smaller chance of surviving become extinct in the struggle for existence. On the other hand, those which have varied in such a direction as to give them a greater probability of surviving will increase and multiply, displacing the inferior types. By this blind operation of natural selection, through countless ages, higher and higher types are produced. The deduction is that the opportunity for change or evolvement in any single living organism is extremely limited and that death follows unavoidably. An individual dog or cat cannot change its colouring or kind of coat, but a series of generations of dogs or cats can bring about those changes. Take the case of man, if one of his simian archetypes had lived a million years its brain could never have developed or presented the workings of the human mind. It has been by incessant evolution through countless generations and constant reproduction that the ultimate descendants of that simian are men. Death seems the only way by which to preclude crowding the earth with stationary types, and through reproduction the gradual advances are made. If this be true of morphological evolution, why not of psychical evolution? Our ego or personality is held bound to the physical form and limited by its power of expansion, but death permits the discardment of the bodily frame and the escape of the individual ego to continue its development elsewhere. The critical reader may here say, this brings us perilously near the Aryan views of the transmigration of souls. It does bring us near but not into that enclosure. If we think logically, we must all have died many thousands of times, for the units of energy which constitute our present individualities must have passed through many thousands of metamorphoses. Look where we will, all Nature proves herself to have been an infinitely gradual production, working through countless forms and conditions. Why should our personality, our ego, be an exception to that rule? Most of one's Brahmin friends believe implicitly that they have passed through other physical forms. Possibly they have, possibly they have not; so far, we have no evidence either for or against their contention; but, whatever may have been the method of man's evolutionary advancement, we cannot escape from the view that he has reached his present highly evolved condition only by passage through innumerable changes.
Some Musings of an Idle Man

or grades of development which, from the physical life point of view, we call birth and death.

The difficulties of this conception are exaggerated by our habitual attitude of mind towards the whole question; an attitude due largely to our literal interpretation of the beautiful Christian doctrine of resurrection. That interpretation arises again from the personal self-sufficiency of the human mind. Many people have the idea that what they think and what are beliefs of their own time are the last word, and even are annoyed if it be suggested that their own age may some day be labelled pre-historic. From such an attitude it is but a step to assume, as so many do, that we ourselves are the last word or supreme and final product of evolution. Few of us care to think that this world of ours some day may contain beings endowed with higher capacities than ourselves. But what right have we to deny the suggestion? None, for we have no grounds to suppose that evolution, which has been proceeding for millions of years along a path of ceaseless advance is going to stop suddenly at man. On the contrary, the very consciousness within us all that there are powers we do not possess impels us to accept the view that man's evolution is towards a super-man. If this be so, the thought is irrepressible that in the presence of that super-man our types will be existent as an inferior and perhaps disappearing race. The super-men may not possess our powers any more than we men possess at present certain powers of the lower animals, but have to enlist their aid. Developing the thought still farther, one pictures a world where men will not be permitted to oppress and tyrannize others, to fight or even lay down the law, but they will be allowed to make their mechanical contrivances for the convenience of themselves and of super-man, also will be allowed to bargain or make money, and generally enjoy themselves according to their lights. Some may think this a fanciful picture, but it merits thought and is clearly warranted by evolution.

At this point we may return to the question: and what then? Readers of this Journal know that one has a fancy for wandering in old cemeteries and noting graves or monuments of men of the past. Now, nothing has struck one more forcibly than the persistent manner in which the dead are referred to as sleeping. Surely, death is better and more truly regarded as an awakening from sleep or illusion. To appreciate this conception, we need to remember that man's consciousness as manifested during life is not a series of isolated states of consciousness, neither is man or his brain the seat of an independent and self-existent ego of which
consciousness is the activity, and neither is man conscious merely of his own organic activity. Man in life is conscious clearly of an outside environment distinguishable from his organic existence and tending to further or hinder it, also he is conscious of reacting himself in ways to control this environment more or less successfully. Man is thus conscious both of himself as an organism and of a something which does not belong directly to his organism. Further, the world as perceived by man is a world of elements which are not self-existent, but exist only as related to each other temporally and spatially. This world of perception is apparently centred in ourselves or in man's own individual organism. Man in life perceives the world not merely as matter, but as matter in relation with his own organism and practical life. Man cannot separate his world from his interests in it, and it is this which gives unity and coherence to the world of man's conscious experience. By or in thought, man can regard this external world as if the appearances in it existed entirely apart from their purposeful or utilitarian relations to himself, but this is an abstraction from reality. Any apparent self-existence of things in the form in which they appear to man are themselves the creation of his own thoughts, hence we arrive at the conclusion that to man the world of his living experience is nothing but a world of his own personality, or the world he sees is nothing but a world which by painful human effort he has learnt gradually from infancy to fashion in thought and action. When death comes to man, he passes from this condition, or rather his ego or personality awakes from that dream state in which it has regarded the cosmic external world when in a state of association with the human physical frame, and emerges into a state infinitely fuller than the earth life.

One has just used the word dream, and the analogy that death is really a waking from sleep or state of illusion is supported by thoughts concerning the dream state. Every student of psychology knows that dreams occur at or accompany our waking from physical sleep. Emerging from that physical condition, we pass into or are conscious of a state of existence different from and fuller than our daily earth life which we have but just left and to which we return as the dream passes away. Take a personal case, one dreamt vividly a few nights or early mornings ago that one had or was having a set-to with marauders and that oneself had been shot dead. One did not die but one woke up, hence the dying was lost in the waking and, from this and other points of view, death or dying is really waking. At this point one is reminded of
Some Musings of an Idle Man

certain lines by Wordsworth in his Ode on the intimations of Immortality. He looks at it from the religious aspect, a point of view from which one is not discussing the question; but the lines are so apposite to the argument that one is tempted to quote them:

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting
The soul that rises with us, our life's star
Hath elsewhere had its setting and cometh from afar.
Not in entire forgetfulness, and not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our Home."

As self-conscious men we are apt to look on death as something very solemn; it is interesting to examine the reasons for this. That we do regard it as the most solemn of events is because to us it marks the limit of our existence as apprehended by our senses. But the consciousness of man or his sensal apprehension of things covers but a minute period in relation to universal time, and yet upon that tiny period is built all the wisdom of man. The most learned of us know nothing of what precedes the cradle or what succeeds the grave. All we know is a life in a physical frame with physical functions, any other condition appears unreal and unknown to us, consequently as death marks the border-line between what we have experienced consciously and what we have not consciously experienced, we regard it as a most solemn thing. Apart from this, death too often means separation from those to whom we are bound by ties of affection, or its occurrence means the incompletion of a task such as the financial provision for beloved ones. All this tends to make us regard death as something awesome and solemn, but it throws into prominence the narrowness and selfishness of our human nature. As thinkers, we cannot suppress the thought that perhaps we are concentrating our love upon too narrow a field, and what should be distributed over all animate creation is focussed upon a few relatives and friends. One recalls an intimate who endured acute grief at the painless death of his child, yet, a few days later, found pleasure in shooting rabbits and heard unmoved their piteous shrieks of pain and fear when wounded. It suggests a curious mentality and might be amplified by many other examples of incongruity. They really are warped affections or love specializations, and find expression in other anomalies such as the unhesitating prolongation of some naturally exhausted human life by drugs and all the arts of medicine alongside of the unhesitating shooting or poisoning of some animal either aged or incurably ill.
The popular sense of the solemnity of death finds expression in outward and deliberate symbols of grief, called mourning. Some appear to extract a special kind of enjoyment from these dressings of woe, but the practice of thus publishing private griefs in this way is explicable only as mere vanity or that desire in man to attract attention. How often does one see the man with a black band round his arm, clearly wishful to call the attention of his little world that someone connected with himself has died, but all unconscious of the obvious bad form which such a sartorial solecism stamps upon him. Why parade any grief we feel? If a person is dead he is dead, and no amount of sombre raiment or black armlets will bring that person to life again. Our duty is to the living, so why depress and offend their aesthetic sense by such garish means of self-advertisement?

We have passed in review some reasons why death is habitually regarded as a solemn thing, but it is doubtful whether any of them provide real justification for that attitude. Our own instinctive actions suggest that death is not a solemn thing. As one writes this now, a beetle persists in fouling the pen and crawls through the wet ink. One flicks it off wholly unconcerned that such a flick means death to that beetle; so again, one takes a malicious pleasure in crushing on one’s hand the mosquito which has worried and annoyed. The truth is, we attach no importance to death until it approaches our own species, and the individual’s sense of the significance of death increases in exact proportion as it comes nearer to affect himself and the circle of his loves and likings. In plain words, death has no significance apart from love, and if we take the effect of love from death there remains to it little solemnity. These musings, therefore, bring us to this situation, that death is really an awakening to a fuller life, and has no actual claim to be regarded as a sleep or rest and still less as a “destroying angel.” No positive thing can be destroyed and destruction in the sense of annihilation is inconceivable. When we withdraw energy from matter, neither the energy nor the matter are destroyed, both are applied to other services. The same is true of the unit of existence, call it soul or what we will; it is indestructibly permanent; death and birth mean merely stages or times of its translation and change in the course of its evolution to the highest state. Of death it may be truly said, its symbol is a comma rather than a full stop, while the ceremonial of earthly burial is better ritualized by the sounding of reveillé than the last post.
Some Musings of an Idle Man

II.

When inspecting a certain hospital last winter, one was shown a European soldier who, three days before, had been rescued in an unconscious state from threatened drowning in the Kabul river. The occasion was too rare and tempting to refrain from asking the man his experiences, more particularly as to whether, in accordance with popular belief, he had experienced any panoramic review of his previous life. Somewhat to one's surprise, the man said that he had such an experience, but it did not cover the totality of his past life. He stated that suddenly the memory came back to him of many things which he had long forgotten, the sensation being that he felt as in a dream. Pressed as to the time when this so-called dream occurred, the man expressed himself in the following words: "I realized suddenly that I was going to die and had no interest in life." One left the man profoundly impressed, especially with the expression "no interest in life," and passing down the ward came upon a case of amnesia with some aphasia following a fall from a horse. In itself, this case presented no special clinical features, but its presencement within a few minutes and yards of the other started a train of thoughts which merit analysis, and on which it was difficult to refrain from enlarging while making the official inspection. Those thoughts were as to the real nature of memory or recollection and its relation to cerebration; one's musings on the two cases formulate themselves on the following lines.

It is of the essence of mental things that they do not lend themselves to measurement. Realizing as we do that consciousness is bound in some way or other to a brain, the temptation has been great to consider the cerebral fact as the equivalent of the mental. All our mental science and all our metaphysics for the last three hundred years is saturated with the idea of this equivalence. We speak of thought and of the brain indifferently, either considering the mental a simple epiphenomenon of the cerebral, as materialism does, or putting the mental and the cerebral on the same level, regarding them as two versions of the same original; this latter attitude is known as parallelism. The two clinical cases, referred to above, suggest thoughts bearing closely on this hypothesis. Taken literally, it seems a self-contradiction and it is contrary to all likelihood that Nature has indulged in the luxury of repeating in the language of consciousness what the cerebral cortex accomplishes in the form of atomic or molecular movement. Supposing...
it had ever been produced, surely a consciousness which is only a
duplicate, not intervening actively, would long since have disap­
peared from the universe. Further, in that our actions tend to
become unconscious in the measure and degree that habit makes
them mechanical, the general facts neither confirm nor suggest the
validity of parallelism.

If mind be the same as cerebral activity, man cannot by any
possibility think outside the limits of that cerebral activity. Again,
if man can only think or have awareness in parallelism to cerebral
activity, he cannot be aware that he is thinking within limits, as
the limits of his thought are not recognizable as limits by his own
efforts. For man to determine his own thoughts as limited, he
must have an idea or awareness of thought which is not limited;
this is tantamount to saying that man must have an idea or aware­
ness of something outside his limits of thought. This is impossible
and absurd. It is a matter of indifference in what world such a
man might exist; his power of thought would still be subject to
his limits of thought. There is left but one alternative for man
and that course he adopts by determining his thought as relative,
which is the same thing as limited. All man’s thoughts are dis­
integrable into relative definitions, and so it comes about that our
mind is aware that its knowledge is no more than relative know­
ledge, and man arrives at the knowledge of his own ignorance.

Superficial reflection suggests that cases of amnesia and aphasia,
known to be associated with definite lesions of certain cerebral
convolutions, are confirmative of memory being localized in the
brain and corroborative of a kind of adherence of the mental to
the cerebral life. A more profound study of a case of aphasia or
amnesia shows, however, the impossibility of considering recollec­
tion or memory as so many records deposited in the brain, or even
admitting the possibility that it can really be in the brain that
recollections are preserved. An attentive study of the facts indi­
cates that the characteristic cerebral lesions of the various forms of
amnesia and aphasia do not touch recollections or memory them­
selves. The true facts seem to be that those lesions merely and
really make the evoking of memory or recollections difficult or
impossible; they concern the mechanism of recall and that
mechanism only. To be precise, the function of the brain in
these cases is to give the mind, when it has need of such a recollec­
tion, the power of obtaining from the body certain nascent move­
ments or attitude, which offer an appropriate frame to the desired
recollection. The cerebral organ prepares the frame; it does not
furnish the recollection. If the frame be there, the recollection or memory will come of its own accord to insert itself into it.

If we examine other functions of thought or confine ourselves to the particular case of memory, as suggested by the two clinical cases which were the starting of these musings, we are forced to the conclusion that the brain is charged with the task of impressing on the body the movements and attitudes which act what the mind thinks, or, better still, what the circumstances invite it to think. This conception is peculiarly well put by Bergson, who says: "The brain simply extracts from the life of the mind that which is capable of representation in movement. The cerebral life is to the mental life what the movements of the baton of a conductor are to the symphony. The brain, then, is that which allows the mind to adjust itself exactly to circumstances. It is the organ of attention to life. . . . But from this it results that one of the roles of the brain is to limit the vision of the mind, to render its action more efficacious." From this point of view, except its sensorial functions, we can say that the brain is an organ of pantomime having no other part then to play the mental life.

The conception of pantomimicry, as applied to cerebral activity, is full of suggestion. We conceive, by it, how we insert ourselves in reality and how we adapt ourselves to it, responding to the call of circumstances by appropriate actions. Even if consciousness is not a function of the brain, we must admit that the brain maintains consciousness fixed on the world in which we live, or that it is the organ of attention to life. Thinking of the brain in this manner seems to be of importance; it enables us to understand why a cerebral modification, such as an intoxication by opium or alcohol, or even an insanity, may and often does involve a complete perturbation of the mental life. In these cases, the mind is not affected directly; neither need we believe that the patient raves because the poison has selected and damaged some mechanism in his cortex which is the material aspect of reasoning. The effect of the lesion is merely that the mechanism is thrown out of gear, and thought can no longer insert itself exactly in reality or things. Many intoxicated and insane persons can reason very logically, but their reasoning is outside reality, very much as we reason in a dream. By directing our thought towards action and bringing it to prepare the act that the circumstances demand, our brain confines our mind to channels or limits, thereby preventing us from being distracted by collateral attractions or turning to look back.

We are impelled to look ahead in the direction in which we have to go and attend to the present.
These arguments do not mean that there is any real forgetting; on the contrary, the facts are overwhelming that the past is preserved down to its slightest details. One has quoted already the man, rescued from drowning, who recalled memories long forgotten in the moment of what he realized to be death or, to use his own words, when he "had no interest in life." Here seems to be the clue to the whole problem; the moment the attention to life grew weak, then the mind, which up to then had been kept looking forward, let go the tension and turned itself to look back and saw the past. These panoramic visions of the past are due then to sudden loss of interest in or attention to life and, in the case noted, were produced by the menace of sudden death. Until then the brain, so far as it is the organ of memory, had been keeping the attention fixed on life and all its purposive actions.

These conceptions as to the relation of memory to cerebration appear equally true of perception. Our sense organs and their associated cerebral centres control and limit influences from without, and thus mark the various directions in which our activities can be exercised. But, in so doing, they narrow our present outlook, just as the cerebral mechanisms of memory limit our vision of the past. The thought here arises, surely, just as certain inconsequent or dream memories may slip into the field of consciousness, availing themselves of a moment of inattention to life, may there not be around our normal perception a fringe of perceptions which, ever ready to enter into our consciousness, enter in certain exceptional or super-psychic individuals? This is but a thought, but it is a logical thought and one worth bearing in mind, when confronted with assurances otherwise unintelligible. We have to remember that it is space which creates distinctions in these matters; our bodies are spatially external to one another and so are our minds, in so far as they are attached to those bodies. But if our minds are attached to our bodies only by a part of themselves, may it not be that for the remainder of them there is not this sharp distinction or separation. Without going so far as to think that personality is an ephemeral reality or a dependence on cerebral activity, it is conceivable that between various personalities continual exchanges may take place. If so, we can imagine that Nature has taken precaution to neutralize or throw back into the unconscious what would be awkward presentations for most of us in everyday life. One or more of these presentations may, however, at times pass through the guard if the inhibiting mechanism be functioning badly.
The musings in this note bring us near to the position postulated in the first section of this article for, the more we grasp the idea of a consciousness overflowing the organism, the more natural and probable appears the idea that the soul survives the body. As the facts and the thoughts on those facts compel one to regard the mental life as something more vast than the cerebral life, survival after death becomes so probable that the onus of proof rests with those who deny it rather than on those who affirm it. This position is all the stronger since the independence, however partial, of consciousness in regard to the body is a fact of experience.

III.

Not having read them for many years, one has recently enjoyed re-perusing the great classics of Darwin. Having done so, one is compelled to make the paradoxical assertion that the claims of science to universal dominion over the whole field of knowledge seem far more difficult to maintain now than they were before the publication of the great naturalist's theory of evolution on the hypothesis of the survival of the fittest. Further, the debt of philosophy to Darwin is almost as great as the debt of science. To many these may seem startling assertions but, before analysing the thoughts which suggest them, one would remark that the practical value of a scientific theory admits of being considered apart from the question of its truth. A present day illustration may make this plain. We are all familiar with the new physics and the mechanical conceptions based upon them; assuming they are correct and true, it is possible that they may have the effect of so complicating astronomy, without obtaining an approximation superior in practical value to that given by the classical celestial mechanics, that their superior convenience may still make it necessary to teach the latter although known to be incorrect or untrue. This is obviously a question of value, or a matter concerning philosophy and not admitting of disposal by scientific methods. One's thoughts tend, therefore, to a consideration of the value of Darwin's theory apart from the question of its scientific truth.

Any advance in evolution means the production of a fact of which the race has no previous conception. The wild game of Africa and other parts of the world could not have foreseen the introduction into their environment of "sportsmen" armed with breechloaders and, so long as the danger was not foreseen, no provision could have been made in Nature against their advent.
So, in our own case, the developments of evolution are neither conceivable in advance nor calculable, and we are unable to take measures to meet them. We are here confronted with what is the great defect in Darwin's hypothesis of the survival of the fittest, for we do not know what is the external correlative for which fitness in the organism is desiderated and, until we do know, we cannot define what we understand by the "fittest." Obviously, to attain complete fitness, we must be able to foresee all the forms which the future may evolve, and these to us are unimaginable. In spite of the expression "survival of the fittest" being without meaning, the value of Darwin's work remains because it effected a revolution in both our scientific and non-scientific beliefs, thereby advancing the evolution of thought. The revolution lay in the fact that, for an idea of universal flux or change confined within permanent limits, was substituted the conception of a universe arisen from an undifferentiated first principle by a process of differentiation which is still active and may be continued active for an indefinite future. Ideas of stationary change gave place to those of an orderly growth, and thought has been transferred from things as they are to their histories in the past and their potentialities in the future. This does not mean that questions of what we are have lost any of their importance; it merely means that they have been subordinated to new questions of how we became what we are, how we have survived, and why we present forms differing as much from primitive types as we differ from the amoeba. From this point of view, one is tempted to say that the outstanding merit of Darwin's work was not the solving of any outstanding biological problem, but the forcing into prominence a whole class of questions which had previously been unsuspected; thereby, first scientific and then philosophical thought was started along new and unexplored channels.

Owing to the new thought taking its rise in biology it has been employed mainly in respect of questions belonging to that branch of science, but its connection with questions of philosophy is not less obvious though, oddly enough, little realized. If our physical form and construction differ from that of a newt, toad or other simpler type, so also does our mental constitution differ in no less degree. Our mode of thought and our resultant beliefs admit, no less than our nervous system, of being dealt with under the Darwinian aspect of evolution; and this side of the process is of far greater importance to us than the physical, as human evolution is almost exclusively psychological. As civilized men, we differ
Some Musings of an Idle Man

from savages much more in our mental than our physical development; our superiority is to be found not so much in our brains or nerves even if we could demonstrate any such superiority, as in our accumulation of scientific knowledge and our ethical beliefs. Further, our scientific knowledge, so far as it has been converted to use, is far more easily acquired by a savage than our ethical endowments.

Thus, a dispassionate survey of evolution, even as presented from the narrower standpoint of biology, makes one realize that it reveals no final redistribution of its constituent factors but forces home the belief that no such end is possible. The process it reveals is endless, or terminable only by a cataclysm or reversion to the point from which it started. In essence, evolution is the growth of opposite principles; man being a complex of conflicting tendencies, his welfare, so far as his advance in evolution is concerned, depends on the equal development of those tendencies, and the excessive growth of any one of them means the arrest of his forward evolution. It is doubtful whether there can be an absolute excess of any quality; when either of a pair of opposites, be they what we call good or what we call bad, falls into defect, then the whole process of evolution is checked. The demand asserts itself for a final end coupled with the question, what is the final end and how do these conclusions affect our attitude concerning the universal final end of our conduct? Without some final end there can be no values of the antecedent conditions, and yet there is nothing more certain than the existence of values. All values depend on approximation to a final end. To get out of this ethical difficulty, we must either accept the view that there is an indefinite number of unconnected final ends and simply sit still and twirl our thumbs; or we must reject the teaching of history, throw overboard our conscience and assert that pleasure is the final end; or we must assume that there is some final end external to the process of evolution and beyond the limit of our reason. Most of us do accept this last as the only way out of the difficulty, but of such an end no phenomenal attributes can be predicated. Within the animal kingdom, the universal final end seems to be the preservation of the individual in subordination to the interests of the race. With man, the universal final end becomes the perfection of the individual as an intellectual or reasoning being. This end man attempts to secure or advance to by the observance of ethical principles and rules which are the product of his conscience, and are paralleled in animal life by the numerous instincts which impel
animals to make provision for the needs of generations yet unborn. We, therefore, come to this: our value judgments when interpreted by the light of history, force on us the conception of a cosmic drama of which we know neither the beginning nor the end, nor the guiding principle. Our conscience alone dictates to us an interest in the drama and the part each one of us is to play, our self-consciousness assures us of our freedom to comply or refuse, and our philosophy or religion holds out a reward for faithful service. Practically, that reward is for each of us the real final end of our conduct, and the transcendental or unknown perfection of the individual is the purpose of evolution and, being external to the course of evolution, it may be realized or defeated at any moment and at any stage in the process.

As one sets these books of Darwin aside, the question suggests itself, can his great generalization or discovery itself be explained by reference to the law of survival? That is to say, was it the outcome of some accidental variation which favours its possessors in the struggle for existence? The attempt to find an answer is obviously to inquire what were the causes which produced the work as their necessary result. Here we encounter the initial obstacle that, without exact measurements, no necessary connexion can be established anywhere, and neither the work nor its antecedents admit of measurement. The only hope of an answer lies in an inquiry into the conditions under which that and other works like it have taken their rise. The favouring condition would seem to have been that political and religious freedom which came so prominently into being during the earlier half of the nineteenth century. This leads us to ask the meaning and conditions of that freedom and each step of the inquiry takes us farther and farther away from any scientific explanation; for freedom depends on justice and justice on a belief in free will. The philosophic or ethical, as much as the purely scientific, value and association of Darwin's great generalization is manifest; yet, how many of its readers have ever thought of the "origin of species" in this light?

One other thought suggests itself: how are we to account for the great appreciation in which Darwin's work is held, that many of us regard his books as but second to the Bible, and the honoured fame in which all intellectual civilization holds his name? The only answer is, because the work itself is a step forward in evolution. We are here face to face with that problem of ethical philosophy, the explanation of values and, possibly, the same answer explains the case of other discoveries or values, be they good or bad in any branch of thought. That we so explain the merit of this or any
other discovery is surely due to the belief that evolution supplies, what had formerly been wanting, a universal final end which does not contradict our value judgments while professing to explain them. Through and by evolution, we find not merely an understanding of why this or that creature exists in its present form, but we find possible an intelligent theory of conduct. Further, the more we contemplate evolution the more we realize that it has other values than the purely scientific.

IV.

Riding one day last cold weather out of the Kabuli gate of Peshawar city, my attention was attracted to two mendicants soliciting alms. Being in an altruistic mood, one gave them more than passing notice. One was a man of about forty who had lost both his hands, while the other was perhaps younger but quite blind from shrinkage and atrophy of both globes. Inquiries from some bystanders elicited the facts that the one man was a Malaghori and the other a Shinwari, both from across the border. The pair appeared to keep to each other's company and were well known mendicant cripples in the quarter. The handless man appeared to have been the victim of penal discipline in the days of the late Amir, while the other had lost his sight when a child during an attack of small-pox, probably the direct result of corneal sloughing. The pathos of the incident was obvious and, as one rode off homeward, thoughts came crowding through one's mind which it was impossible to suppress.

As one looked at one's own hands, one realized how pitiable must be the case of the man without hands. The more one looked, the more one found the true picture of man, the story of human advancement, the symbol of the world's greatness and weakness to be expressed by those eight digits, two thumbs and the muscular mechanism which formulated their movements. As an anatomist and a doctor, one thought of the first thumb and forefinger that caught the trick of thought, and all that is associated with the evolution from ape to man. Just as every hand wears a birth-seal and, by the lines of our thumb, each one of us can be identified from infancy to old age, so by the marks on the band of the world is revealed its unmistakable personality; for do not the ability, firmness, and pertinacity of the human hand make all the welfare of the human race? The trustworthiness of the very reins between my fingers was the outcome of some pair of hands. I crossed the railway and saw a distant train, and there again the lives of all on that train depended on the hand that grasped the throttle lever of
the engine; nay more, the locomotive itself and the carriages it
drew were products of the human hand. The realization of such
responsibilities kindled the imagination and forced home the
profonder thought that the destiny and the daily life of mankind
depend upon countless pairs of obscure hands that are never lifted
up in dramatic gesture to remind the world of their existence. It
became impossible to hold back the thoughts which rushed through
one's mind. One thought of all the wonders that the hand of man
has wrought, one realized how the temples and the palaces, the art
treasures of the world, the cunning masterpieces of mechanism, and
even the crops following the ploughings and the sowings in the
fields near by were all the effects of man's hand. One felt that all
the acts of man show the hand alive, manifest, creating, destroying
and itself the instrument of order and destruction. Let it move
a rock or stone and the universe undergoes a readjustment; let
it break a clod and new beauty breaks forth in a flower or fruit and
the sea of fertility flows over the desert.

Upon the living hand of man hangs all our earthly well-being;
every industry, every process is wrought by a human hand or by
a superhand, a machine whose cunning fingers the human hand
makes and uses. Even between these thoughts and the printed
words which convey them to the reader there have intervened
many hands. Again, if we think of our harbours, our canals, our
telegraphs, our ships and our railways we see but the hand of man
binding the waters with thought incorporate in arms of granite,
or extending the grip of brotherhood between the nations, and
making swift and strong the feet of messengers on man's service.
With our hands we raise each other to the heights of knowledge
and achievement and yet, with those same hands, we plunge each
other into the pit. If anyone doubt this, think of the linotype
printing presses, those digits of steel or huge derricks which rear
our palaces and our factories, or the ocean greyhounds conveying
incredible burdens across the seas, and think also of the warships
and our heavy ordnance. The sentence is but a metaphoric word
picture of hands triumphant in measureless enterprise yet wound­
ing, making sore and suffering all injuries. It came home to one
that, surely, there is nothing on earth like unto man's hand in its
possibilities for good and evil. One tried to conceive a world
inhabited by people without hands, but failed; unless provided
with some new prehensile organ, such beings could produce
nothing as we understand the needs of our race to be.

One thought all this and more, and yet but a few moments
before one had left a human being devoid of hands, incapable of
any one of those efforts so typical of his race, a mere walking mechanism, a human derelict useless to himself or to others; and incapable of utilizing his physical strength to any creative action. Then, there was his companion; a man with hands but sightless eyes. One thought of him and wondered whether he was in better case. By this time one had reached home, but in later hours of idleness the thoughts came back of the blind man. One shut one's eyes and supposed the lids would never open again, and realized the unspeakable calamity that had befallen. If true, then I must begin life all over again in a strange dark world, accommodating myself little by little to the conditions of darkness. I should have to learn my way about the house, with arms outstretched groping from object to object; even my books would be useless to me. Out of doors, my feet would be shod with fear, for I should be menaced on every side by unseen dangers; in a word, I realized myself as a human derelict adrift in the world, borne as the currents may chance to set "imprisoned in the viewless winds." One recalled the sense of lostness experienced years ago when caught in the darkness of an unfamiliar countryside or when, lost in the impenetrable fog of London, one heard the sounds of the traffic and scarce could tell whence they came, or where danger or safety lay.

Truly, a pitiable picture and yet exact for the poor wretch in the city bazaar and for many about us. Mentally, one groups the blind as either those who are rendered sightless in the midst of an active life, or those blind from infancy or later childhood. How many of us realize what blindness means falling on a man in the midst of an active life? In spite of kindness and sympathy, such a man feels himself a burden, finds himself as but a helpless child, with the heart and mind, the desires, instincts and ambitions of a man. He has hands, but even with them he is in little better case than that other man deprived of hands, for his blindness bars every common way to usefulness and independence. Left without intelligent help, the blind man lives in a night of thwarted instincts and shackled ambitions. One wonders, to how many such sightless ones remains there a purpose, an object in life, a justification for living, or anything but a dreary course of existing for no reason except they cannot die. Such were one's thoughts, and little cheered by the remembrance of Homer, Ossian and Milton, who wrote great poems with no ray of light to their eyes; or of Fawcett our one-time Postmaster-General, or of Euler the Swiss mathematician, or of Huber the naturalist and Thierry the historian. These men were all blind, and so was Didymus of
Alexandria the teacher of St. Jerome, also Diodotus the Stoic and teacher of Cicero; but each and all were men of exceptional capacity and energy. Other blind men have been musicians, carpenters, journalists and teachers, but these are the exceptions for not all the blind are gifted or intellectual, and few have the energy and perseverance necessary to overcome the heavy handicap they encounter at the start. Many among us think that the sightless have or acquire one or more senses in place of the one they have lost, and that the senses which of right belong to them are more delicate and acute than the senses of seeing people. It is not true, for there is no evidence of a compensatory sense development. Similarly, many think that Nature seeks to atone to the blind for their misfortune by giving them a special sensitiveness and a sweet patience; if this were true then surely it would be an advantage rather than an inconvenience to lose one's sight; but it is not true.

From the race betterment point of view, one conceives blindness in or from infancy to be worse than blindness in late childhood or adult life; it arrests development. Even in the best of homes, it is not possible to give the blind baby or child the special care, teaching and encouragement which it requires. Without these, the circumstances are all in favour of its growing up warped both mentally and physically. Fortunately, the number of these sightless infants is few compared with the cases where the sight is lost in later years. In these cases, as in the adult, there is a sudden shutting out from all familiar things, from games and the educative society of other children. The experience and incentive to action that come to us through the eye are arrested, a world of stimuli is lost and such a child ceases to imitate because he sees nothing to imitate, and of all things imitation is the most essential to growth. One conceives such a child deprived of impulses that pushed him to action, to be now bewildered and forced to form his world anew.

In both the sightless child and the blind adult, a new sense must be developed that shall bring back the stimuli; that new sense is touch and the hands must replace the eyes. Given that supersensitive hand, one conceives a world of blind people holding their own against the competition of their fellow men.

One wonders for what purpose the irony of Fate had brought together the two mendicants who suggested originally these reflections. Clearly, the handless man could in no way provide that which the sightless man so much needed, namely, hypersensitive and superlatively trained fingers. At most, he could be of help only by his eyes and warning speech. Conversely, what special help could the blind man be to the handless man, except
by virtue of superlatively developed hands, and these his parasitic existence on society and absence of special training under philanthropic effort did not provide. One may be wrong, but one is tempted to think that some unconscious working of the instinct of the reciprocal and compensatory action between the hand and eye may have impelled the handless man and the sightless man to consort specially together. If so and as things are in the world as we know it, the bargain or partnership would seem to be in favour of the handless man, as the seeing but handless man must play the rôle of director and manager in the combination, while the sightless man with hands would be but a hewer of wood and drawer of water under the other's direction and dominancy. If we picture a world peopled by such defectives, say, half without hands and half without eyes, we can conceive clearly the automatic social stratification which must and would ensue among them. The sightless, having hands, alone could be productive workers and ultimately must and would, by virtue of that industrial functioning, become the dominant class; the survival of the more fit would result in a gradual elimination of the handless race. These reflections raise an interesting series of conclusions, not the least being that which indicates the hand to be more important economically than the eye. Fortunately, the number of handless people in the world is very small but, for them, except as thinkers, talkers, and perhaps professional footballers, there is no place. For the blind, their future in the world is really a question of how well and how systematically their hands can be trained to work without the guidance of the eye. One reaches this conclusion by a semi-philosophical path but its importance is manifest in relation to the practical problem of what are we to do with our blind. The hand points to the hand, and urges efforts to increase the number of all possible lucrative occupations for the sightless. We know ourselves best how we each are contributing to those efforts; and, thus, the casual giving of alms to two unfortunates in an Indian bazaar and a contemplation of their physical disabilities has raised a train of musings which, though sad, are not devoid altogether of practical teaching. For the man without eyes there is room and place in the world, but for the man without hands there is no room, and it were better, perhaps, that he were dead. One cannot resist wondering whether the old Amir had reasoned this all out for himself long ago. Possibly he had, and possibly more than one unfortunate may still live to testify to the accuracy of that potentate's reasoning.