

PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWS.

The following is an imperfect summary of my philosophical views contained in several pamphlets published at various times within the last twelve years.

1. The laws of nature, which are the proper objects of investigation in the physical sciences, are the ordinances or decrees of the Author of Nature, that emanate from His will.

2. All the power in nature is in connection with the laws of nature, and in no instance is it in connection with any form of matter whatever. Man can arrange the conditions necessary to bring into operation a law of nature, and can then control the power associated with this law, as long as it is in operation; but can transfer this power to no form of matter. When the law ceases to operate, the power ceases.

3. The laws of nature are divisible into two grand classes, as they are applicable to, or as they are intended to operate on the two grand divisions of the created world—mind and matter.

4. The laws of nature that are designed to operate on matter may be designated as the natural laws, and are divisible into three classes, that is, into physical, chemical, and vital laws. A principal object attained by the laws of physics is agglomeration, by which the integrity of the bodies of space or globes, and the proper relative position of the minor bodies or parts of such globes, are preserved. A main object attained by chemical laws is chemical combination, by which the union of the molecules of bodies takes place; and the great object attained by vital laws is assimilation, by which foreign or external matter is converted into the tissues and nerve fluid of the living body.

5. The laws of nature that are designed to operate on mind are the instincts. These may be properly divided into several classes; but I will not stop here to enumerate and designate them.

6. There is a marked distinction between the natural laws and the instincts in regard to the power accompanying them. When the conditions necessary to the operation of the natural laws are provided, the laws take effect with a power that is absolute;

but this is not the case with the instincts. When the conditions favorable to the operation of the instincts are provided, these conditions serve only to suggest to the mind obedience to the law; they are merely suggestive impressions. The mind is left free to carry out the law or not; but there is this further provision—that a due observance of the law is attended with the temporal happiness or well-being of the individual; while its non-observance is followed with suffering, to a greater or less degree.

7. Every living being consists in a psyche, soul, or mind, in which alone is its personal identity. The difference among such beings is to be found in their mental endowments and in the instincts that are made to operate on them.

8. Every living being is possessed of a nervous system or its analogue, which, in the class of plants called exogens, is the pith and medullary processes; and in the class called endogens is seen in the ganglia or centres to be met with at the leaf-buds, and which correspond to the ganglia of the inferior orders of animals.

9. The mind is endowed with the ability to determine the nerve fluid to any part of the material body with which it is in connection. In voluntary motions, this determination is made to the voluntary muscles, in accordance with the designs of the will, simply under the guidance of the instincts. In involuntary motions, some impression on the material body is necessary to or must precede the determinations to the involuntary muscles; thus, the impression of atmospheric air on the lining membrane of the nostrils is essential to the act of inspiration; the impression of vitalized blood on the several points in the tubes in which it circulates is necessary to its proper circulation, and so on; but the mind in all cases determines its nerve fluid under the guidance or direction of its instincts.

10. When a living being determines its nerve fluid to a muscle or to muscular fibres, this determination, or the presence of the nerve fluid, is, by virtue of a *vital* law, attended with an *active elongation* of the fibres; and when the nerve fluid is determined to a nerve centre, and is thus withdrawn from the muscular fibres, these, by virtue of another *vital* law, become contracted. The active elongation of muscular fibres or muscular action, and muscular contraction, are vital states of a muscle to which there is nothing analogous either in physics or in chemistry. Hence, the very great difficulty in most minds in realizing or in forming any just conception of the true character of these phenomena.

11. The nerve fluid is produced by assimilation; that already in the system being combined, by virtue of a vital law, with the foreign or external matter introduced into the system, the matter is converted in part into nerve fluid.

12. This fluid is principally derived from the secretions, where it is for the most part elaborated, and is taken into the nervous circulation by means of certain afferent nerves. As the secretions are constantly being mixed, in the living body, with the blood, and with the other contents of the tubes and hollow organs, the nerve fluid is derived from all these sources.

13. The combinations that occur in the living body, by virtue of vital laws, are always dual; the elements of such combinations being the nerve fluid, and the matter, whether vitalized or not, with which this fluid combines; thus, by the combination of the nerve fluid contained in or mingled with the gastric secretion, with the contents of the stomach, chyme is the result; by its combination with the chyme in the intestines, chyle is the product; with the chyle, blood; with the blood, fibrine; with the fibrine or the plastic portion of blood, tissue; and with another portion of the blood, the secretions.

14. Under the direction of the instincts, and with the aid of the natural *vital* laws, living beings construct their own material bodies in precisely the same sense as a carpenter or builder constructs a house, as a honey-bee builds its comb, or as a bird its nest. The builder, the bee, and the bird bring together and arrange the materials of their structures, and they do this under the guidance of their instincts; and then these materials are retained in their position, and are made to cohere by the operation of the natural laws of *physics*.

15. In the living body a certain quantity of nerve fluid is always retained in the nerves and nerve-centres which is essential to their proper function; and this retention is effected by means of the control that the mind exerts over these organs. When this control is lost, as it is at death, the fluid is free to pass from the centres, &c., to the muscles, or wherever the nerves may be most permeable. This important fact should not be lost sight of in investigating the law that governs the phenomena of cadaveric rigidity or rigor mortis. This flow of the nerve fluid to the muscles may give occasion to their peculiar state or condition, which is certainly not analogous, nor even similar to that of contraction of the muscles in the living body.

But, it will be said, the philosophy presented in the above propositions is new to physiology, and, as such, it will meet with strenuous opposition. True, it is new to physiology, and I am the first probably to attempt its introduction into the physical sciences; but the philosophy, in itself, is "as old as the hills." It is the Jewish philosophy, as it is expressed in the Bible—and has been handed down to us from the first creation of the world.

“Let there be light” was a law of nature, according to the Bible; and I have attempted to represent all the laws of nature as being of the same character with this—as being the ordinances of God, and as deriving power immediately from God.

If the above propositions are true, then a knowledge of them must inevitably lead to a radical change—a complete revolution in the present opinions of scientists in regard to the philosophy of all of the physical sciences; and more especially in regard to the philosophy of physiology. These sciences will then be wrested from the dominion of senseless Epicureanism and Materialism, and will be transferred to that of Rational Philosophy.

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January, 1860.