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THE SPECTATOR.

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time to bring them forward. We insure against things, furniture, for instance, being burnt by fire; is it impossible to use the same precaution against their wearing out? That may be regarded as a joke, but the principle has been applied to carriages and many forms of machinery; and the following is no joke. It must be possible and practicable to insure investments themselves, to expand the principle upon which the "Trusts" of the Stock Exchange are built, and within broad margins to guarantee a man for a premium against his investments turning out total losses. The average of picked investments do not fail, and the insurance of them cannot be mathematically impossible, any more than insurance against accident to the body. That business should be wide enough. There has been far too much timidity, too, in considering, as many able men have considered, the possibility of insurance against sickness, not for the whole of life, but for separated decades of years. Malingerers are adroit, but malingering is not an unmanageable offence. The great Benefit Societies are not ruined by it, nor would a sufficiently determined office be, particularly if, instead of refusing to pay, in cases of suspicion, it only returned premiums received, deducting a heavy fine. The malingerer would not risk the penalties of perjury for that, but would eat up his saved money just repaid, and the office would dare to be stern. Above all, for we do not want to be, helping the projectors, who must be far more competent than ourselves, is there not a new and great business to be done in steam or compressed-air tramways, as feeders to railways? In other words, are there not wide districts in this country where it would pay to transport heavy goods on a very narrow line of rails at very low speeds—as low, possibly, as the speed on a canal—and passengers at eight miles an hour? We shall have the engineers against us, with their passion for perfect work, and level gradients, and expensive structures; but if permission to lease land, instead of buying it, could be given by a local authority—say the Highways Board, so superseding the costly Parliamentary authority—and the notion of high speeds were definitively given up, cheap railways must be possible, and over one-half of England they are urgently required. Rails are cheap, land is cheap, and the keep of horses is dear, while communication with the railway dépôt is the farmer's first necessity.

ARISTOTLE ON FREE-WILL.—I.

THE Deterministic controversy, as it is called now-a-days, does not appear to us at all advanced towards a solution by its new title. We prefer our old friend under his old name, Necessity, though not perhaps suggesting a very appropriate set of associations for a state of things which on any theory is to be the result of the wish of the person concerned, still seems to us a better name than Determinism for the view of those who deny Free-will. If indeed they wished to suggest a mind in which the initial determination had taken place, we should not object to the name, but Determinism seems to us a particularly unfortunate designation for the belief of those whose object it is to get rid of these personal associations. However, we are not about to propose an alternative. Our present object is to bring forward the views of one who was much worse off for nomenclature than any of us. The first great thinker who confronted the problem had not even a single name for the Will; we have indeed to disentangle his views from a tentative and uncertain psychology, in which the idea itself is not very sharply marked out to the understanding. But there is something refreshing even in the hesitation of a style which embodies the earliest thought on any subject that has exercised the intellect of many generations. The conceptions with which we come in contact are at least absolutely original. Of course, they will not affect us as what we ordinarily mean by "original" does. If we look upon them independently of their historical value, they will seem very often exceedingly trite. But they are original in this sense, that they are the earliest thoughts of humanity on a weighty problem, and claim an attention, therefore, which is due to no subsequent speculations in the same degree.

It is with this belief that we would to-day call the attention of our readers to the first adequate apprehension of the difficulty involved in the nature of moral responsibility. No thinker of any time, we believe, was ever so well fitted to deal with this problem as Aristotle. There is a quality which we can only describe (very imperfectly, however), as intellec-

tual disinterestedness, in which he seems to us to have scarcely a rival. Perhaps it is not characteristic of the men who have done most to move the world. The impartial love of truth has no greater foe than strong enthusiasm for a truth; nor are we prepared to deny that the last passion may be nobler than the first. But it is also commoner. The power of shutting off all reference to certain great issues when any question is started which has other bearings, of keeping attention disengaged for new evidence and arresting the impatient wish to piece this on to any accepted doctrine, while it is not very often united with genius, is quite as rare as genius. And, on the other hand, no subject demands this quality more imperiously than the problem of man's will does. The true issue is invisible in any but a perfectly clear atmosphere. The mists of passion or prejudice not only obscure the outlines which we need to observe, they refract and distort their images, and present to the eye impressions that are even less dim and confused than they are misleading. Imagine that to the mind of a jurymen called upon for his verdict should be presented, with all their graphic force, the influences which have worked for evil on the mind of the criminal. If he were forced to realise the deteriorating power of education, the torpedo touch of evil companionship, the exclusion of all that should stimulate and nourish the nobler nature, and the violent assault of temptation, could he discern that *any* criminal deserved punishment? The moral difficulty has its intellectual counterpart. It is no less hard to exclude the reasons for one view, when we contemplate the other, on the ground of philosophy than on that of morals. Ask whether *there can be two kinds of impossibility*, and you leave no room for any but the Deterministic answer. Ask whether *guilt can be inevitable*, and you simply invite an expression of belief in Free-will. We believe, for our own part, that the last certainly is the more absolute. But we must not pretend that those who attend only to the first question can receive any other answer than that which it suggests. No one will be able to assert Free-will effectively till he allows that there is a position from which it is invisible.

The great thinker of whom we speak discerned the element of truth in the belief of those who assert Free-will, and in the belief of those who deny it. He nowhere attempts to harmonise these truths. His mind is too perfectly candid to be systematic. We will put the double point of view, as far as we have grasped it, before the reader, without attempting to supply any stereoscope which shall convert it to the solid unity of truth. The Deterministic passage is taken from the "Metaphysics;" the references cited as a protest in favour of liberty are all contained in the first five chapters of Book III. of the "Nicomachean Ethics."

On the one hand, Aristotle recognised—surely he was the first to recognise adequately—the dignity of Law. He seems at times to have even considered Liberty as a lower condition than one which should fully and exclusively embody the influence of law. This, at least, is the opinion of a careful and helpful student of Aristotle, whose views we will here transcribe:—"While assuming freedom for human actions, Aristotle seems to do so, not so much from a sense of the deep importance of morality, but rather from an idea of the slightness of man and his actions in comparison with Nature, and what he would call the diviner parts of the universe All that is arbitrary in the human will he does not consider a privilege. And man, especially in regard of his actions, he does not consider the highest part of the universe; he thinks the sun and stars 'far more divine.' This opinion is, no doubt, connected with a philosophical feeling of the inferiority of the sphere of the contingent, in which action consists and with which chances intermingles, to the sphere of the absolute and the eternal." The passage to which Sir Alexander Grant here refers us is a curious and interesting one in the "Metaphysics" xii., 10, 1-5; but it is extremely obscure and condensed, and on first referring to it, the reader inclines to think that its relevance to this subject is exaggerated. As we understand it, it is an emphatic assertion that the order of the Universe is a single whole, and that its moving principle must be one. Were we to allow ourselves a hasty and superficial summary of the purport of the chapter in which it occurs, we would call it the first enunciation of the principle of Evolution, and that it contains and implies this principle we cannot imagine matter of question. The idea of the universe as an organised whole, the development and manifestation of a single force, is vividly conveyed in the

concluding quotation from Homer, pregnant with meaning as to Aristotle's deepest belief,—

"All works divided sway,—the one must rule!"

Yet he evidently considers that the "reign of law" is not perfectly absolute, and it is most striking to observe in the manner in which he graduates its extension according to the nobility of its subjects a parallel to the words of Christ, "He that will be chief among you, let him be servant of all." "Just as in a household, it is the *free who are least able* to do as they like, but most of their work is cut out for them, while slaves and domestic animals" ("cats and dogs," Sir A. Grant translates τῶν θηρίων) "are a good deal left to their own fancy, so it is in the universe." The reader turns eagerly to the following sentence for an expansion of the idea, but it is left in its pregnant brevity. A translator of Aristotle is apparently so much offended by the paradox, that he inverts it (somewhat in the spirit of an ingenious Shakespearian commentator, who proposed to read "sermons in books, stones in the running brooks"), into the information that in a household, slaves have less freedom than their masters! We think our readers will feel the paradox more in the spirit of a great teacher than the platitude.

Whatever may be thought of the significance of this remarkable passage, we are certain that the order of Nature was not a conception that could be undervalued by Aristotle. He is above all other thinkers the philosopher of Nature, and one who should undertake the investigation (suggested and partly sketched out by John Mill) of what is implied in that common and yet little understood word, would do well to take his starting-point from the *Metaphysics*. "Aristotle," says that eccentric and yet instructive commentator (already quoted) Thomas Taylor, the Platonist, "was never willing to depart from Nature, but even contemplated things which transcend Nature through a natural habit of mind, just as, on the contrary, Plato contemplated whatever is natural as far as it partakes of whatever is divine and above Nature." It is strange that the same man should have so utterly misunderstood the passage we have quoted above, and given us this helpful commentary upon it. If Sir A. Grant has rightly understood this bold belief in a nobility incompatible with freedom, it is an exhibition of exactly this temper which seeks to contemplate the things which transcend nature through a natural habit of mind.

The best clue to this great difficulty seems to us contained in the saying of Hegel, the profound significance of which is perhaps deadened to the reader by frequent quotation, that Nature is the Other of Spirit. Nature is bound in indissoluble sequence—Spirit is a force whose governing impulse lies wholly within itself, and if we contemplate the last through the first, we shall always be inclined to confuse the characteristic quality of spirit with the arbitrary, the accidental, the casual,—in a word, the lawless. From such a view, unquestionably, the natural seems higher than the spiritual world. The region of order is better than the region of disorder, and that quality in Will which we point out, but also which we somewhat disguise by the term Freedom, will always appear allied to disorder, if the medium through which we try to regard it is the system of the material universe, known to us as Physical Science. And some trace of this confusion we find here.

And yet, on the other hand, by a curious paradox—but not more a paradox than much besides that we have to take account of in this great problem—while Aristotle, the philosopher of Nature, appears to us the first distinct assertor of this characteristic of Spirit which we call Free-will, it is his great predecessor, the seeker of an order above Nature, the thinker who is continually endeavouring to pierce the veil of visible things, that he may gaze on the divine countenance behind it, and who often finds the veil a mask,—it is Plato in whose teaching we find an implicit recognition of Necessity. Perhaps it is misleading to put our meaning into these words. Plato says nothing about Liberty and Necessity; he is occupied with a different set of ideas altogether. But if a logical thinker should endeavour to carry over into the region we are considering the conclusions reached in that where Plato dwells, he could only say that he teaches a system of Necessity. The assumption which we meet with everywhere implicitly in his writings, and not seldom explicitly—that every soul is unwillingly deprived of good—allows of no other inference. If it is not possible "to see the good, and yet the ill pursue"—if the will has no more choice in pursuing the good than the mind

has in believing the truth (and this is the belief that meets the writer everywhere in the Platonic Dialogues,) then, surely, it is meaningless to speak of Free-will. We may say that the Will has attained something better than freedom; but we cannot possibly say, with any attention to the meaning of words, that this better thing includes Freedom.

We have begun by quoting the passage—obscure and difficult, it is confessed—which seems to give this Platonic point of view in the writings of Aristotle, because we wish the reader to give the Aristotelian statement of the opposite truth all the value to which a belief is entitled which is the result of a wide and impartial view. Aristotle did not undervalue the order of Nature, he did not overlook the truth which he expresses in the saying of Ulysses,—he saw, that is, all that makes it *difficult* to believe in Free-will. Yet he is, in his *Ethical treatise*, an emphatic assertor of Free-will,—in some ways, as the earliest, the most emphatic assertor. Human nature takes, to his vision, a more complex aspect than it did to that of his master. Plato knows only two pair of spiritual antithesis,—the pleasant and the painful, appealing to the sensuous, animal nature; and the true and the false, appealing to the spiritual principle in man. His successor on the throne of Thought regarded mankind with a view less piercing to the depth of eternal reality, but more cognisant, we think, of the various elements of human experience. He saw that there is a contrast which depends on a certain inward consent, before it can be translated into that form which is its only adequate expression. The right and wrong, indeed, exist independently of man's choice, just as the true and false do; but it lies with him to blur the contrast, to refuse the supremacy to the right, to surrender a false allegiance to the wrong, and to decide that the great distinction shall be denied in that language of action which can alone express it. The objective contrast does not in the one case, as in the other, depend on man's choice in order to become subjective. We do not, for our own part, consider that this distinction can be made absolute. Will has, we hold, a part in belief, no less than in action. A relation to Will, as we have recently urged, constitutes the very essence of conviction, as opposed to opinion. But certainly there is no need for a reason why men should believe what is true, and moral science would lack a part of its meaning, if there were no need for a reason why they should do what is right. Truth cannot be discerned and disbelieved. Right may be discerned and left undone. It is not possible knowingly to believe the false. It is possible knowingly to choose the evil (δοκῶντι τε οὐχ οἱ αὐτοὶ προαίρεσθαι τὰ ἀδύνατα καὶ δοξάζειν· ἀλλ' ἐννοῖ δοξάζειν μὲν ἀμείνον' διὰ κακίαν δ', αἰσίουσθαι οὐχ ἂν οὐκ· "Nic. Eth.," iii., 2, 14). It will seem strange to many readers that the sentence which we have endeavoured to rescue, by the dignity of a learned tongue, from that triteness which in any English rendering inevitably cleaves to it, should ever have come upon a great genius as a discovery. Let them correct that surprise by the study of a single dialogue of Plato. The "Protagoras" might be chosen as a fitting background which shall restore its colour to the faded thought, and convert the truism to a truth. But we do not believe there is one which does not imply what Aristotle contradicts. All imply, and many assert, that it is impossible to think truly, and to act wrongly.

On the one hand, therefore, Will is distinguished from Knowledge; on the other, it is distinguished from Desire. If we may know what is true and do what is wrong, so may we feel what is pleasant and do what is painful. It is equally possible for the Will to neglect the solicitations of the contemplative and of the sensual part of our nature. It may oppose either conviction or wish. And in all those more striking exercises which force us to realise its distinctness, it must oppose either the one or the other. The current of Will would be indistinguishable, if it flowed in one channel either with Desire or with Conviction. Only because it may traverse them, as the waters of the Rhone the Lake of Geneva, are we able to discern their differing hue. We may act against *desire*,—herein lies the capacity of virtue. We may act against *conviction*,—herein lies the capacity of crime. Both possibilities would vanish at once, and it is only at the meeting of their slopes that we are enabled to distinguish the great watershed of our moral being,—the Will.

To sum up the teaching of Aristotle on this subject in a single sentence, we may say that he seems to us absolutely original in his distinction of Desire from Will. The distinction has been cited for its intrinsic value. But it has also an interesting aspect from another point of view. Desire, says Aristotle ("Nic. Eth.," iii., 2, 7), though possessing a common region with

Will, is not conterminous with it. On the one hand, Desire has a smaller range; it can never transcend the region of pleasure and pain. Recoil from this, pursuit of that, are the sole movements possible to it by its very nature; while Will may invert the magnet, and approach or recede, according to reasons contained within the mind which pursues or recoils, and not the thing pursued or escaped. On the other hand, Desire has a wider range than Will, as it is not confined within the limits of the possible, but may be attracted by things for ever beyond the reach of experience. The latter half of the distinction seems to us erroneous. But it is interesting to trace the influence of the joyous childhood of our race in this imperfect psychology. If we might indulge in speculation which to many would seem fanciful, it appears to us that the history of Greece is an embodiment of the idea of Freedom, as that of Rome is of Fate. And it is at least an interesting illustration of this idea to find the great teacher of Greece unable to realise the full force of a knowledge which surely moulds desire no less than will, and note the incapacity of the ardent and triumphant Greek nature to realise the moral effect of an inexorable necessity.

We have endeavoured to lay before the reader, as far as our narrow limits permit, the opinion of the most powerful thinker of antiquity, who was also the first to deal with it on this great problem of all time. In a future article we shall consider his speculations in another than a historic point of view, and endeavour to gather up the contribution which they contain towards the solution of a problem which, perhaps, in the full sense of the word, and for intellects such as ours in their present limits, may be pronounced insoluble.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

THE LIBERALS AND THE IRISH BILL.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—I regret very much the attitude assumed by a section of the Liberal party towards the Compensation for Disturbances (Ireland) Bill. That the Conservative party should forget the studious care with which Mr. Forster refused to make the Irish distress a party question while they were in office is, perhaps, not surprising; but that loyal members of the Liberal party should allow themselves to show so strong a hostility to the Bill, seems to me to be greatly deplored.

The difficulty of carrying out the law in the distressed districts of Ireland during the coming autumn and winter, under any circumstances, must be great. It is doubled by the fact that the Home-rule agitation makes it difficult to discriminate between a refusal to pay rent and a real inability to pay it. It has been still further increased, I fear, by the way in which the opponents of the Bill have magnified and distorted its meaning.

That injustice would be done by carrying out, in all cases, the law as it stands, is manifest. For ejection without adequate compensation, whether it means turning the tenant out of doors or putting him back as a caretaker, means, undoubtedly, an extinction of the tenant-right which the Act of 1870 acknowledged to exist. And wherever the value of this tenant-right may exceed the arrears of rent-ejection without adequate compensation obviously means the confiscation of the remainder. To carry out the law, as it stands, to the letter in every case, and in this exceptional time of distress, would, therefore, clearly be contrary to its spirit and unjust in itself.

Does any one in sober judgment believe that it is the duty of a Government to allow the law to work injustice under exceptional circumstances like the present, without trying to prevent it? Does any one believe that it is true policy to enforce provisions which work injustice in Ireland at the present moment?

It may be a difficult thing to do, but the attempt surely is laudable, to search out by judicial authority the cases of real inability, and in these cases to acknowledge the just value of the tenant's interest in his holding, to make the arrears of rent the first set-off against it, and if there be a residue, to secure the tenant from its needless confiscation. This, I take it, is exactly what the Bill tries to do. But the hue-and-cry is raised that it is done at the expense of the landlord. Is it so? The landlord uses the law to eject his tenant. In a real case of inability, whatever else the landlord can do, he cannot immediately get his money. Ejection does not bring him his rent. He ejects in order to get his money's worth by cancelling, or

rather by appropriating to himself, the tenant's tenant-right. Is it unjust to the landlord that the tenant-right should be valued by a Court, and any excess of value over and above the arrears of rent left to the tenant? If the landlord does not like to face this payment, he need not eject. Under the English Agricultural Improvements Act, in a similar case, if the value of the tenant's improvements should exceed the arrears of rent, would not the landlord have to pay over the difference? And is not this fact a wholesome and just check upon the too free use by the landlord of the "notice to quit?"

I venture to submit that what real Conservatives, as well as all loyal Liberals, should have united in doing was, not to play into the hands of the Home-rulers by magnifying the difficulties, but to strengthen the hands of the Government, first in making the law reasonable and just in these exceptional cases, and then in carrying out the law with a good conscience and a strong hand against that wilful refusal to pay rent for which the Home-rulers are in part responsible.

Mr. Forster's task is hard enough, in any case. I regret that any section of the Liberal party should have joined with the Conservative opposition and the Home-rulers in making it harder than it need have been.—I am, Sir, &c.,

F. SEEBOM.

LORD LANSDOWNE'S KERRY ESTATE.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—My attention has been called to an article in the *Spectator* of July the 17th, from which the following is an extract:—

"Those who remember a very remarkable book called '*Realities of Irish Life*,' by W. Steuart Trench, Land Agent in Ireland," published some twelve or more years ago, will remember *how Draconic used to be the conditions of tenants' life on Lord Lansdowne's estates*,—conditions so severe that on one occasion, of course long before the present Lord Lansdowne's régime, a boy came to a cruel death through the terror felt by his relatives, of whom his grandmother was one, of sheltering, even for a few days, any one in their cabins whose presence there had not been permitted by the agent. On the Kerry estate of Lord Lansdowne no tenant might shelter his daughter-in-law, if the son married; and the orphan children of deceased sons were excluded as sternly by the rules as their mother."

A person reading the above words would probably infer that statements justifying them were to be found in Mr. Trench's work. It contains, to the best of my belief, no such statements. In one of the chapters relating to the Kerry estate now in my possession, this passage occurs, with regard to the difficulty of preventing subdivision:—"Tenants possessed of holdings valued at only £1 or £2 per annum frequently endeavour, openly or by stealth, to subdivide these little plots of land, and erect huts or sheds upon them for their young people to marry and settle in, utterly regardless of the certain poverty which must necessarily await them, where there are no other means of support. And yet if any landlord or agent is determined to resist this system, and to evict those who, in spite of all remonstrances or entreaties, persist in this pernicious course, though the plot of land be scarcely sufficient to feed a goat, and the hut be of the most degraded class, he is attacked with a virulence and bitterness of hostility which none who do not live in Ireland can imagine."

At the present moment, when a considerable portion of the country is suffering from the consequences of such a subdivision of holdings, it is more than ever obvious that a landlord who permits it is surely bringing ruin upon himself and his tenants. To this extent, I plead guilty to having followed what you are pleased to call "the traditions of an immorally despotic landlord authority."

As for the boy who "came to a cruel death," &c., the story, I believe, first made its appearance some thirty years ago, and it is impossible for me to disprove it, after such a lapse of time. I do not, however, hesitate to assert that it is, to say the least, a gross exaggeration, and a specimen of those virulent attacks of which Mr. Steuart Trench complained.—I am, Sir, &c.,

Lansdowne House, July 22.

LANSDOWNE.

[The passage quoted by Lord Lansdowne from Mr. Trench's book is remarkably illustrated by the volume of Mr. Senior's "*Conversations relating to Ireland*," in which he gives his conversations with the son of Mr. Steuart Trench. "One of my father's great difficulties at Kenmare," said Mr. Thomas Trench, "is his determination that if a younger son or daughter marry, the new couple shall quit the parent cabin." The book called "*Realities of Irish Life*" is one long illustration of the bitterness of feeling between the agent and the tenants on the estate