

Correspondence.

CONSTANCE NADEN AND HYLO-IDEALISM (AUTO-COSMISM).—
"PERCEPTION AND CONCEPTION.—APPERCEPTION."

To the Editors of "THE JOURNAL OF MENTAL SCIENCE."

GENTLEMEN,—Permit me, as Miss C. Naden's literary executor, to contribute a brief minute on your able and weighty review of her system of thought. At page 275 of "The Journal of Mental Science" for April last, your reviewer terms Miss Naden's variant of Berkeley's "Principles of Human Knowledge" a new philosophy. In one sense it is such, as based entirely on positive science, a consummation impracticable until our present *fin de siècle* epoch. But, in a stricter sense, as a metaphysical or mystical speculation this form of materialism is as old as philosophy itself, and in antiquity has for its most prominent advocate the abderite sophist Protagoras. And, indeed, according to his latest biographer, Sir A. Grant, the stagyrite himself. In a word, it is only Berkeley reversed—reduced, that is to say, as indeed your critic well observes—from absolute to phenomenal idealism, substituting this matter as mother of all "things" for the Bishop's transcendentalism. It posits, as a quite obvious truism, the fact that outside the individual (solipsist) consciousness there cannot, in a relational sphere, be any knowledge whatsoever—a postulate which arraigns much of Professor Huxley's arguments in *animal automatism*, as also the term agnostic, of which he is the coiner—a term which, as connoting *nescience*, has no scientific value at all, as not merely unscientific, but *anti-scientific*, leaving room, as it does, for Mr. H. Spencer's most unsatisfactory theory of the *unknowable*. Your candid critic carps at Miss Naden's "delightful dogmatism." But as founded on exact science, which is nothing unless positive or dogmatic, her position is justifiable and unassailable. To deal in hypotheses would be, for her, to desert the high vantage ground of the certainty implicit in all scientific syntheses. In their field the "glorious uncertainties" of metaphysic or other speculation have no place whatever. I speak above of the Protagorean formula—"man the measure of all things"—a predicate quite misunderstood by Plato, as also by "god-like Verulam," where he blames men for spinning webs, like spiders, out of their own entrails, as if it were not a case of Hobson's choice. But this ideal, or at least its germ, is really pre-historic, implicit as it is in the ephemerism of Brahman esoterism, in which Brahm, in Miss Naden's view represented by the self or ego, is described as "looking round and seeing nothing but himself," Brahm being confessedly only the higher self. Just as in the case of Sir C. Wren in St. Paul's. Indeed, as soon as we assume, as we must do on the plane of contemporary science and evolution, that thought (cerebration) is an organic function, and life the sum total of these functions or organization in action, the question falls as between hylo or relative and absolute idealism. For no one out of a lunatic asylum, and not many within it, will venture to contend that natural offices can ever be vicariously performed. Otherness therefore drops, and egoism (auto-monism) seems to be the open sesame of the immemorial problem. An exoteric creation, such as the Mosaic, though in principle sanctioned by Mr. Darwin on data quite inconsistent with Darwinism in "Origin of Species," must be quite foreclosed. Kant's negation of "Ding an Sich," a high-water mark from which he receded in all his works after the first edition of his "all-shattering" "Critique of Pure Reason," must be upheld. Miss Naden's view is also foreshadowed by Sir Humphry Davy in his ejaculations regarding the universe during the ecstasy induced by inhalation of nitrous oxide gas. The artificial manufacture of urea, out of inorganic compounds, by Wöhler, more than sixty years ago, satisfactorily proves the solidarity of the inorganic and organic realms. And the morphological arrangement of the cones and rods of the retina, directed, as they are, *backwards*

towards the *fundus* of the eye, seems clearly to show that light, itself invisible, but the revealer of all "things" else, is no outside factor, no "offspring of heaven's first-born, or of the eternal co-eternal beam," as the pre- and *anti*-scientific Milton states it, but solely the product of the optic nerve and brain, so that, as Miss Naden affirms, each man or sentient being generally is still more the maker of his own world than of his own fortunes. And this view will be found to be the most sublime and poetical, as well as the simplest and most obvious one, in accordance with the proverb, "Fact is ever grander than Fiction." Lord Byron sees this point when he writes —

"What a sublime discovery 'tis to make
The universe universal egotism."

And the mystic and far-seeing Coleridge sums up the dialectical quasi-solution admirably in the lines —

"We receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does nature live;
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud."

I am, gentlemen,
Yours truly,
R. LEWINS, M.D.

Obituary.

PLINY EARLE, M.D.

This well-known American physician, the Nestor of psychological medicine in his country, died full of years and honour on the 17th May, 1892, at the Northampton State Hospital for the Insane, Mass., of which institution he was the second superintendent, having been appointed a few years after it was opened. "He gave it character," says the *Springfield Daily News*, "and raised it to the first rank in its class for the treatment of that endlessly varied disease, insanity, and also in the secondary matter of financial management. These were the results of a singularly broad and open mind, guided by a noble and earnest nature, and characterized by a constant and ardent devotion to scientific truth, for which he ceased not to seek through experience, being ready at any time to abandon what, in the light of greater knowledge, had grown untenable."

He was descended from Ralph Earle, one of the petitioners to King Charles II. for permission to form Rhode Island into a corporate colony. He was born December 31st, 1809, at Leicester, R.I., and educated at the academy there, and subsequently at the Providence Seminary of the Society of Friends, of which body he was a member till his decease. He graduated in the Penn. University in 1837, and visited during several years the hospitals and asylums in Europe. He was appointed, in 1840, resident physician to the Frankford Asylum, near Philadelphia, where he introduced the practice of giving lectures on natural philosophy. He was elected, 1844, medical superintendent of the Bloomingdale Asylum, N.Y., where he resided five years. He again went abroad and visited asylums for the insane. He became visiting physician to the New York City Asylum, 1853. He delivered in this year a course of lectures on insanity at the College of Physicians and Surgeons. For some years he engaged in practice as a physician, and was appointed professor of psychology in the Berkshire Medical Institute at Pittsfield. It is stated that this professorship was the first of the kind in a medical college in the United States. In 1864 he became the superintendent of the Northampton Hospital, where he lived to his death, although he resigned his office in the institution in 1885. A marked feature of his management there was the institution of lectures and social gatherings every week. "He was the first man who ever addressed a gathering of the insane on