

THE
JOURNAL OF MENTAL SCIENCE

[*Published by Authority of the Medico-Psychological Association
of Great Britain and Ireland.*]

No. 260 [NEW SERIES No. 224.] JANUARY, 1917. VOL. LXIII.

Part I.—Original Articles.

Optimism and Pessimism. By HENRY MAUDSLEY, M.D.

WHEN two persons meet together to discuss some enterprise or future event, or other speculative matter, without coming to an agreement, they may separate by one thinking or calling the other an optimist and the other thinking or calling his opponent a pessimist. Thereby they settle the matter temporarily, although of course they leave it undecided, and agree only to differ. What they really settle is that two congenitally different temperaments necessarily view the subject from two different aspects and conclude accordingly. They do not stay to enquire which is the true view, the one being inclined by his temperament to look on the dark side of things and see the evils, hates, strifes, sufferings, failures and follies in the world, the other inclined by his temperament to look on their bright side and accordingly see the good, love, joys, and successes in it. Why, indeed, should they stop to enquire? Every mind in the world necessarily construes it in terms of itself, and therefore feels and thinks its individual world—the mind of the fool a different world from that of the sage, the mind of the sinner from that of the saint, the mind of the Andaman Islander from that of the Anglo-Saxon, the mind of the particular person from that of his neighbour. There must naturally be one common world in the necessarily common

LXIII.

notion of a like-structured species, but there are as many particular worlds as there are persons in it.

The question which is the true view of life on earth is too large and abstruse a question to be profitably discussed here. Truth is a pleasant abstraction, a visionary and ever-receding ideal of beauty to be pursued ; the particular truth changing from day to day in a changing world. No truth can ever be whole and complete ; must always be one face only, partial and incomplete at the best ; absolute truth almost as absurd a fancy as would be the truth of a precocious infant in its mother's womb, were it able there to speculate concerning things in the world. Seldom therefore does one generation fail to criticize and amend, perhaps to condemn, the truth of a previous generation and to count itself superior in depth and height of intellect ; mounted on the shoulders of its predecessor, it necessarily sees farther. Yet its truth-culture is sure to be criticized and modified by a succeeding generation, which will then in turn vaunt its superiority.

Here by the way it is curious to observe how apt some eminent scientific thinkers, having renounced all faith in God, miracles, and immortality, are to glorify their eager pursuit of truth and mightily to magnify their arduous labours ; as if truth were a fixed constant, a sacred entity, which they were destined to seize and hold some day. Having discarded belief in supernatural truth from on high and miraculous interposition on earth below, they suffuse their vision of truth with a sacred halo belonging to the beliefs which they have expressly abandoned. Hallowing it unconsciously with the silent emotion of their Christian birth and upbringing in a religious atmosphere, they forget that it is not a fixed abstract something which they can ever grasp, but a succession of small approximations, which are so many additions to knowledge by the slowly made adaptations they painfully make to surrounding nature and call discoveries of its secrets. Moreover, they easily overlook the fact that it is not the capture but the pursuit which is the joy—the active effort which shares and gladly *feels* life's essential motion—and that they would be desolate after each little capture could they not start afresh on a new and enthusiastic chase. So true is the saying of the French philosopher—*Si je tenais la vérité dans la main, j'ouvrais la main afin de poursuivre la vérité.*

Is there any century of human existence which mankind would seriously wish to be repeated? Not even probably the present century, the recent unforeseen explosions of which have given such a rude shock to its native optimism. Amazing, confounding, almost appalling, yet strict effects of natural law which ought rightly to have been foreseen by a generation of beings proud of their intelligent superiority over all past beings. That events so momentous were not in the least anticipated but befell suddenly as an entirely unsuspected catastrophe: is positive and pathetic proof of a stolid blindness to the forces then silently and steadily working, and of a foolish self-complacent optimism. An optimism which after recovery from the collapse of its first rude shock happily springs up instantly afresh to see in the present cataclysm the hope and promise of a forthcoming moral regeneration and righteous elevation of humanity, if not on a great part of the earth, at any rate in happy England. In the piously optimistic mind faith, being "the evidence of things unseen," is sustained and fortified by the disappointments and disasters of things seen.

That exultant optimism springs up afresh in the human breast is evidence of an alert and active vitality in a people as well as in a single person. In both it is the effect of life instant and insistent to assert and increase itself; consciously expressed in hope, which, though it springs eternal in the human breast and is never satisfied, being unlimited, serves at least to lead by a pleasant path to the end of life; many times, too, persists in the last stage of actual dying.

The pessimistic temperament, on the other hand, is notably prone to melancholy, and sometimes to fits of deep melancholic dejection. Its lower lust of a slower life is shown by its less vivacity and promptness to respond instantly to impressions in its relation with the external world, its duller inclination to try new adaptations to its physical and social environment. The truth is that many of these adaptations, being really transient and futile, are wisely disregarded; and for that reason it gains a deeper insight into and truer hold of the substance beneath the superficial show. It feels and thinks less vividly, but in the end more deeply, less superficially but more solidly.

The optimist, it is true, ceases not theoretically to proclaim the vanity of mortal life, the sorrow, care, and toil of the brief life which is here his portion, the joy of the morning when life

springs up green and flourishes like the grass, and in the evening is cut down and withers, but utterly ignores the theory in practice, and lives on as if he would live for ever, though he knows he may not live for a day. By his immanent vital lust repugning the thought of its discontinuance he is compelled to cherish the hope and nurse the theory of an immortal and tearless life elsewhere. He can then, as he does, give "hearty thanks" to Almighty God "that it hath pleased Thee to deliver this our brother (or sister) from the miseries of this sinful world," to beseech Him soon to complete the number of His Elect and end a sinful world's sufferings. Such the blissful compensation which he fondly expects for the prolonged martyrdom of his abortive life on earth.

The pessimist, on the other hand, who feels no such vivid assurance of immortal life, and is perhaps subject to dejected fits of melancholy, may be wholly void of any expectation or wish to live for ever anywhere; nay, sometimes thinks his life of such little worth that he voluntarily ends it. His experience of what life is and his knowledge of what it always has been from its beginning up to its present height convert joy of life into mere stoical endurance of it. He is perhaps called a hypochondriac, which in a literal sense he is, for the several organs of his manifold visceral system, the multiplex underlying functions of which are the base and supply of his emotions, are comparatively sluggish and inert, except when temporarily animated by some physical agent or the stimulus of lively social intercourse.

The plain truth is that he observes sincerely, thinks fully, and feels deeply, unlike in that respect the optimist who, exultant in the immediate joy of living, cares not to learn or think on the dismal history of human life through the ages. Giving no heed to the story of what man has been (which is the use and value of history) the optimist necessarily lacks in consequence the profitable instruction which, by adequate knowledge of the past, he might obtain concerning what man ought to strive to be in the future. Would any person, rightly instructed and intelligent enough to reflect sincerely and fully on the course of nature and human nature, past and present, be content to be responsible for it, the pessimist gloomily asks himself? Were the choice and power miraculously given him to determine and direct a future which should be anything like

the past, would he not be pessimistic enough to commit suicide rather than accept the awful responsibility and exercise the awful power? To the unreflecting optimist pessimistic reflections of that kind seem to mark an inferior quality of being; he regards the person who makes them as something of a "pathological phenomenon," and himself as the embodiment of sound and superior life, lusting to live and joying to live in whatever situation its lot is cast. However squalid his circumstances and mean his occupation, he is not merely content but pleased to live, and seldom voluntarily ends his life. Plainly he is a practical optimist; for he is sure his life is worth living, and his deeds worth doing to keep it alive, though these be only to sweep a crossing or to clean out a sewer.

How entirely dependent a bright outlook on life is on the state of individual vitality is clearly demonstrated by the depressing effect of vital injury or sickness on the estimate of its value. In that case the optimist becomes for a time a pessimist, desiring little, hoping less; sees the world and its events in a quite different aspect, not because it is changed in the least but because the grievous change is in him. The bodily hurt to life repaired, his optimism revives afresh; once more he looks on the bright side of things, and pursues his aspiring aims with jubilant hope and assiduous effort. The life which he felt to be little worth when he was sick and dispirited he feels to be well worth living now that he is convalescent and himself again; the desire to live the first sign of convalescence. That is the natural and normal effect on the individual nature of a vitality inspired by the infused life of nature, and enthused by the vision of immortal value, whether that vision be fact or fancy. A sane outlook on things has superseded the morbid outlook of unsound vitality, and is accordingly concluded to be the right view, whatever doubt a deep-reaching and too curiously inquiring reason may insinuate. Yet when his vital feeling sinks low and gradually approaches extinction in the darkening change and decay of old age he may think differently.¹

¹ Here may be given a true story told to the writer by a friend of John Bright from whom he had it. On a certain occasion, after a rather contemptuous comment by Palmerston on a speech by Bright in the House of Commons, Disraeli, meeting Bright in the lobby, said to him: "Why not, Mr. Bright, join our party; *they* will never do anything for you?" "Ah," replied Bright, "you come into the House, Mr. Disraeli, for one purpose, I for quite another." "Yes," answered Disraeli, "I regard it as the finest arena in Europe." Yet Disraeli, when triumphs were over and he was near his end, recognized and owned what phantoms his exploits had been.—(*Life of Lord Beaconsfield.*)

Life in fact realizes its nothingness only when it has no time left to tell it.

" Life is a landing on a silent shore
Where billows never roll nor tempests roar,
Ere well we feel the friendly stroke, 'tis o'er."

Notably, furthermore, does some momentous event in individual life, pleasing or painful, in like manner change the whole aspect of things for the time, raising or lowering vital interest in them.

The progress of human life to maturity and its subsequent decline is a succession of individual changes by insensible gradations; in reality therefore a chain of different selves. At twenty-five or thirty-five years of age the person is visibly more intensely and largely optimistic than he is at threescore or, should he live so long, at fourscore years when, so far from being joyous, "his strength then is but labour and sorrow, so soon passeth it away": an addition every day to life when he ascends, a subtraction from it every day when he descends. Too plain it is then that "Verily, every man living is altogether vanity."

That such changed view of life's worth is owing to lowered vitality of the organism is obvious enough. What that vital reduction signifies physically is not yet known; must remain obscure until scientific enquiry has discovered what are the intimate physical conditions of the structure of living tissue and of nerve-tissue in particular: why, for instance, a poison and a despair should similarly disorder and reduce life. All that can be said at present is that one person is so constituted as to react quickly and superficially to impressions, another person more slowly and deeply; not otherwise in fact than as coal of one kind of structure flames quickly and brightly when lighted, giving out less heat, and coal of a different structure, less easily lighted, burns deeply with a dull red glow, giving out more heat but less cheerful light. The temporary elation of spirit, again, which alcoholic stimulation in one form or another physico-chemically produces is after all the effect and explanation of the universal craving by stimulated life for an ideal gratification which real life denies it. Natural or artificial, the ideal ever pursued is never attained.

Life consists essentially in motion; is a physical pheno-

menon, and its manifestations in mind simply physical phenomena which take effect in the nervous system. As Claude Bernard emphatically said, there is no more a "vital principle" than there is "mineral principle"—that is to say, "an entity distinct from the phenomena themselves." In the restless child, even in the infant fumbling with its toes, life's nature is most clearly shown by the perpetual need of activity. In manhood, again, idleness becomes a burden; relief then to be found only in active work. As the Chinese proverb puts it: "The dog confined to its kennel, which cannot spend itself in the chase, barks at its own fleas." To every sound organism effort is a pure and simple joy; it is fundamentally to *feel* life's motion. By the sweat of his face to gain his bread, until man returns to the earth whence he was taken, was the happy edict of the lost Eden. Great intellects have often been compelled, or have wisely willed, to apply themselves to some practical, even mechanical, work which has been a wholesome diversion and benefit. Thereby they kept themselves in contact with realities and dissipated the mists and defects of a too exclusive thinking on their own thoughts: Milton to the instruction of pupils and Latin Secretary's work, Shakespeare to the active management of the theatre and occasional acting in it; Spinoza to the grinding and polishing of telescope glasses, Montesquieu to gardening. No quiet joy equals that of soft repose after labour, no physical ease probably that of the last stage of actual dying. Life being thus essentially motion, the infinite number and multiplex motional complexities of the various organs and tissues coordinated and unified in the whole human organism, naturally and necessarily express themselves consciously in eager mental activity and an optimistic feeling of life.

Of the two opposite views of life on earth pessimism is alike the stern conclusion of thinking reason and the pious confession of reverent religion. "Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up and is cut down, like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay." Optimism, on the other hand, is the practical expression of unthinking feeling, minding not its theoretical depreciation of mortal life, exulting on its direct joy of life. Nor can the pessimist who has neither hope nor wish for an immortal life somewhere in an undefined

and undefinable Heaven—even though he be then so completely transformed as to be quite a new self gloriously infused with heavenly thoughts, and blessedly oblivious of or indifferent to what he was and did on earth—always gratify himself with the substituted thought, so heartening to some persons and enthusiastically uttered by them in sentimental prose or poetry, that he shall live for ever in the life and worship of an ever progressive humanity. He cannot bring himself really to feel and believe that its future progress is indisputably certain and stable, or shall ever be worth the labour, pains and sufferings which it has cost through the myriads of years required to make man the being that he is ; or, furthermore, that it is in the Universal Plan to bestow on him the perfect happiness which it is apparently assumed shall then go along with the increasing perfection and might not really be a blessing. He counts such vision of a new and perfect human future the illusion of an unwarranted optimism, eager and instant to have the Paradise of a Golden Age to come in lieu of a Golden Age past. Exultant life has notably always needed and at the opportune season created the fit fictions to inspire and spur its efforts to increase mentally by new and useful adaptations, abandoning them one after another in the everlasting flux of things when they were effete and no longer useful ; such fictions manifestly the natural and necessary means of the successive steps of its progression. Had it not seasonably made them, it must have lost its instinctive impulse to live and increase. What reasonable ground then is there to believe that an unlimited future progress, with a proportionately increasing happiness, may not likewise be only a useful fiction to animate human effort, and encourage patient endurance in its sorrowful pilgrimage through a “vale of tears”? Hope has ever been the animating pulse of conscious life, that pulse fundamentally vital—sun-derived naturally or infused supernaturally.

The really important question is whether the optimistic view of unlimited human perfectibility, which inspires the emotional outpours of those who picture it in imagination, is justified by the history of the human past, in which the archæologist now discovers conclusive evidence that many civilizations have in turn sprung up, each flourished for its season and then vanished in oblivion. In his interesting Presidential Address to the British Association at Newcastle (1916) Sir Arthur Evan-

informs us that "the polychrome masterpieces" on the ceilings of the inner vaults of the Altamira Cave supply evidence not only of a high level of artistic attainment in South Western Europe some ten thousand years earlier than the most ancient monuments of Egypt or Chaldæa, but conclusively indicated the use of artificial illumination of a high order. Cretan architecture, again, by its combination of usefulness, beauty, and sanitation, far excelled the similar works of Egyptian and Babylonian builders. Much the same, too, as now were the robes, the gloves, the mannerisms and gestures of the ladies, as seen in the frescoes. Justly, then, may the pessimist, thus confronted with the plain and positive evidence of the successive rises and falls of civilizations through the ages, ask for something more definite and certain than a vague hope or optimistic vision of human perfectibility.

Confident reliance on feeling is the optimist's support and comfort; he feels sure that what he wishes to be shall be, however long and tedious the process in the destined procession of events. A keen vital vivacity expressing itself instantly in consciousness, not caring to reach deeply below it, naturally repugns the notion of life's discontinuance or serious reduction while the sun continues to be the source and life of nature. Yet it is seldom satisfied with the promise of an eternal life in ever progressive life of humanity on earth. Life in being, ever craving the continuance and increase of its being, mostly needs and uses the theory of an immortal life of sinless felicity to supplement its mortal life of misery in a sinful world. Thereupon, converting the theory into a creed, it defies and despises, as the way of a creed is, all assaults of reason.

The momentous question, when all is said, between optimist and pessimist is a deeper question than it is generally thought right to raise and consider. It is whether a Divine Creator and infinitely loving Ruler of the Universe, who hath made and loveth all his creatures, great and small, purposes with Providential benevolence to establish an ultimate and universal reign of righteousness on earth—a Kingdom of Heaven here some day when, as Isaiah optimistically prophesied, the lion shall lie down with the lamb, men beat their swords into ploughshares, the little child thrust its hand unharmed into the cockatrice's den. Is that a true theory rightly to be cherished as a creed? Or is it just the ever-springing illusion of human optimism,

only that and nothing more? Sincere, adequate, and un-biassed contemplation of the procession of events on earth from their first known beginnings to their present far from satisfactory state forces the brooding pessimist at least to suspect, sometimes openly to declare, that it is not true, but just a theory of egotistic human wish, actually and visibly contradicted by experience of what has hitherto been and still is in the procession of events. Nevertheless, a fiction useful and necessary now and hereafter to lure, incite, and sustain progress, as past fictions have been in their season. True experience undeniably is of an unlimited and incomprehensible Universe which proceeds on its fated way, without haste and without rest, by course of fixed law to an end utterly beyond the very limited compass of human comprehension; a rigorously inexorable course in which human life is the smallest fraction and nowise the end, but it necessarily construes in terms of its minutely fractional self. "The universe," says Hume, "so far from demonstrating the existence of an omnipotent, wise, and loving father, rather suggests a blind nature impregnated by a great vivifying principle and pouring forth from her lap, without discernment or parental care, her maimed and abortive children." Immensities, eternities, omnipotences, absolutenesses, and like sounding phrases are vague, substanceless words which, uttering the emotional outpourings of the awestruck creature, have that value; at bottom the particular value and valuation of the self-valuing person. Be this personal value what it may, they are at any rate the collective expression of an awful emotion which, being a fundamental fact of human psychology, the very basis of religion in the procession of events, have their significance, whether eternal and supernatural, or not.

That they are supernaturally derived is the solemn conviction of feeling which is aptly and devoutly expressed in the well-known lines of Pope—

"Father of all in every age,
In every clime adored,
By saint, by savage, and by sage,
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord.

Thou great First Cause, least understood,
Who all my sense confined
To know but this, that Thou art good,
And that myself am blind."

Yet in matter of fact man's confined *sense* cannot possibly make him *know* a Great First Cause, and that it is good. To pure *knowledge* the positive facts of experience plainly demonstrate that many things on earth are not what he thinks good. Personal ecstasy of emotion straightway translates itself into knowledge, and the preconceived idea of a good God inevitably then finds all things good—even validates the consoling belief that God has sent the present war to punish a perverse and unbelieving generation for its sins, and to bring it to repentance and a righteous resolution to know and do His ways, which is the express teaching of theology. That God sent the war may be deemed undeniable, but that an all-wise, all-loving Omnipotence, "whose eye views all things at one view," deliberately chose and decreed such horrors of slaughterous devastation, rapes, rapines, and murders as the proper means to create a humbler spirit, and enforce a more servile adulation and adoration is nowise so evident and universally indisputable as it is to the specially trained theological mind.

Persons of that habit of mind, without minding closely what they say, complacently ascribe to God's sending the abominable deeds for which mankind are solely responsible, as they once used to ascribe to the Devil the instigation of man's evil thoughts and deeds, satisfied thus to thrust the actual responsibility off themselves, and justify by faith a final pious optimism. The nation at war then goes on to flatter and praise itself that in its ravages and slaughters it is fighting bravely and gloriously for the right and justice—always in each case of its specially projected God. "Il est parfaitement vrai que les hommes se pillent et s'égorgent, mais c'est toujours en faisant l'éloge de l'équité et de la douceur" (Voltaire). All which at bottom proceeds from the inveterate anthropomorphic habit of making Omniscience think in their ways of thinking, and Omnipotence act in their ways of doing.

Sacred Scripture is nowise consistent in its optimism, most consistent indeed in its pessimism; for it contains often reiterated utterances of mournful pessimistic feeling, and agreeably postulates immortal life as compensation for the miseries of this mortal life. But can it possibly be that man hath no profit of his labour which he taketh under the sun? Yes, is the sorrowful answer; "I have seen all the work that is done under the sun; and behold all is vanity and vexation

of spirit. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts, as the one dieth so dieth the other ; yea they have all one breath.'

The truth is that optimistic and pessimistic feelings have been expressed in all ages and in all climes—notably by writers of eminent intellect in ancient Greece and Rome, superlatively by that supreme optimist Plato, more soberly by Aristotle, piously by Augustine, Aquinas, and other schoolmen (whose ingenious and elaborate attempts to affect a reconciliation of the painful facts of actual life with ideal fancies and Christian dogmas exhibit such marvellously subtle sleight of thought and subtle argumentative skill); most pessimistically by Brahminism and Buddhism, which last is unqualified pessimism. Jansenism *versus* Jesuitism, again,—especially in the person of Pascal—was virtually pessimism *versus* optimism. Yet the conclusion of the whole matter is that no conclusion has been reached. Arguments and attempted reconciliations have gone on vainly as before, not a step forward has been made, and writers now pass and repass the same barren ground in futile and endless reiterations to solve the same insoluble problem. Doomed, moreover, to remain insoluble so long as mankind, cherishing the monstrous belief that the Universe was created and works for their benefit, endeavour to construe it in terms of their very *partial* feelings and thoughts, which can have no intelligible relation with a *whole* Universe. To think otherwise is nothing else than to make the human relative into the absolute.

Optimistic feeling is loth to admit, nay stubborn to reject, such limitation. It infuses into its wants and wishes, even believes to achieve in its apocalyptic ecstasies, an actual communion with a Divine Reality, which needs no argument to prove it. The really important question therefore is what is the value of that sublime and self-proving intuition with which the particular person is gifted, whatever his quality of mind and whatever his expressed character in life ; an intuition which no one else can test, and is thought to need no other proof than his inspired personal conviction. Is the ecstatic feeling of mental transport by him undeniable certainty of its value, as he in prodigal admiration of his transported self confidently declares? Or is it not, when soberly viewed by impartial observation, and weighed by cool reason, perchance

something of the nature of a distracted tract of thought in his mental organization, which is then severed for the occasion and exercise from all life of relation and, thus severed, pleased to count the joy of its spasmodic utterance a communion or union with the Divine? Is it truly the ineffable yet absolutely indisputable relation which it is fondly or fatuously assumed to be? As the history of a person is the express revelation of his character, the dispassionate observer may justly insist on his right and duty to consider and weigh strictly the particular life-value, as disclosed in deeds, up to the blissful moment of the impassioned transport. That value may not probably prove to have been great; commonly indeed prove to have been quite the reverse.

Furthermore, it ought to be remembered that the transcendental rapture notably sometimes rises to such a pitch as to produce actual "voices" of communication, as in Theresa's case, sensible and practical a person as she was in her—strictly kept apart—worldly affairs, and sternly contemptuous of the hysterical outbursts of her neurotic nuns. Such audible communications are not generally thought to have real value; they are regarded as incidental hallucinations of the mental exaltation; much like the vision which Luther had of the Devil when he impetuously flung his inkstand at the spectre, and pretty certainly would not have done had it been the real Devil in person.

Moreover, in weighing justly the abstract value of these transcendental raptures it is proper to take strict account of certain concrete and rightly relevant physical facts which are apt to be overlooked. It is well known that a dose of opium will in a fitly sensitive brain, like that of De Quincey, produce a similar subtilized feeling of absorption into the infinite, lengthening time into eternity, expanding space into infinity, melting individuality into universality. The person, too, who is being put under an anæsthetic, before actual loss of consciousness, sometimes feels himself or herself to be wonderfully transported into a realm of spirit, as he or she imagines, and mysteriously absorbed for the moment into the infinite reality, or otherwise volatilized into an unspeakable intuition of it. Mind, entirely severed for the time from its normal life of relation which is its substantial life, then struggles in vain to formulate its mysterious experience in thought; the physical stimulated and disordered federal organization with its answering feeling of special exal-

tation then rendered incapable of orderly sequence of thought and feeling ; full rational life temporarily suspended, an exclusive spiritual life sublimed. It is the custom to speak as if such suspension of one tract of thought by another in that case were actively inhibited, which no doubt it proximately is ; but the more correct statement might be that the motion of one train of thought is diverted on to another line of thought, thereby automatically inhibiting by physically transferring the first motion.

What is the real value of the transcendental rapture which the ecstatic person experiences remains yet undetermined and no-wise indisputable. Has it in fact the value which he or she, however meanly endowed, imagines it to have ? If that were so, it would follow that the right aim to pursue and the duty to do might be for everybody to take a fit dose of opium or like-acting drug, or to put himself under an anæsthetic from time to time in order to achieve the beatific vision of a spiritual intuition. Not too frequently, be it understood, for such imprudent repetition might undoubtedly issue in a fixed and lasting mental alienation—in positive insanity instead of sanity of sense and thought.

Of the two lights available for human guidance in the gloomy vale of tears, toils and fears is the faith the greater and reason the lesser light ? That is the still disputed and unresolved question, which the optimist will continue to answer confidently by the inspiration of feeling, the pessimist less confidently and more soberly, after his doubting fashion, by the dry light of reason.

Meanwhile, what is certain is that no greater waste of ingenuity can well be conceived than the laboured and futile attempts which have been made (especially in Germany) to compute arithmetically whether the sum of happiness or of misery is the greater on earth. That they are pretty evenly balanced is proved by the continuance of the dispute, and that mankind has continued to go on living may be accepted as evidence that they have felt life to be worth living. "La question du bien et du mal demeure un chaos indébrouillable pour ceux qui cherchent de bonne foi ; c'est un jeu d'esprit pour ceux qui disputent ; ils sont des forçats qui jouent avec leurs chaînes" (Voltaire). For the present, at any rate, life likes to live, and for a long time to come, propelled by the outside

forces immanent in its nature, will continue to live ; not otherwise in fact than as lighted coal burns until the sunbeams consolidated in its structure are resolved, released, and spent.

The truth is that the literature of all countries in all climes is full of lamentations that the miseries of life are as numerous as, or more numerous than, its happinesses ; that pleasure always brings pains in its train ; that one joy is counterbalanced by many griefs ; that pleasures are superficial and pains deep ; that happiness and unhappiness are naturally and inevitably connected ; and the like utterances of woe. All which pessimisms, though sorrowfully admitted to be true, moral and philosophical reflection has now sedulously set itself, with utmost and unceasing effort, to counteract by demonstrating that the rightly-disciplined and well-governed mind can deal with and subdue to its use and benefit whatever ill befalls ; the strong will then be well fortified not to suffer long, nor in any case to suffer wrong.

The right-thinking mind is thus taught that fortune neither does it good nor ill, itself ever the sole cause of its own happy or unhappy condition ; the benefits of fortune to one who knows how to make good use of them, the evils to him who misuses them. As the Oriental proverb says, every grief contains some instruction ; tears are the dew of the soul. Happiness thus lies in the individual, not in the things themselves ; each person in the same circumstances visibly making his own good or ill. If good fortune makes men joyful, bad fortune should make them wise ; for it is wisdom alone which in the end can procure the quiet and stable happiness which abides. All sensual pleasure is vivid but brief, that tranquil harmony of being sure and lasting.

Such and such like are the thousand moral and philosophical reflections which have over and over again been reiterated to prove to man that he never has been, nor is now, the unhappy being which he has superficially thought and proclaimed himself to be, nor need now, if properly instructed, think himself to be. A true reflective optimism will surely demonstrate that life, rightly considered and rationally governed, is not only well worth living but capable of incalculable improvement, when its moral and intellectual faculties are duly developed. It may be so in the long long time to come, but the pity is that for the present, and probably for a long time to

come, the millions of men who cannot realize the sublime truth are likely vastly to exceed in number the few wise men who have preached and still preach the consoling doctrine. Fine principles and precepts have never been wanting; the difficulty has always been, still is, and probably ever shall be, to apply them effectively in practice.

But why gloomily doubt, or, worse still, despair, says optimism, seeing that a right use of reason cannot fail to demonstrate that man is not the unhappy creature of a pessimistic morbid fancy, nor the miserable sinner which he has professed himself to be. Pessimism the while looks on in brooding inarticulate silence, admiring the optimistic aspiration but unapt to join heartily in the reasoning. Nay, in its extremest outcome it may dimly feel an unconscious sympathy with the pessimistic Indian utterance (bitter fruit of several vanished civilizations) that it is better to be sitting down than to be standing up, better to be lying down than to be sitting up, better than all to be lying dead. Which is, after all, the conclusion of religion when it gives hearty thanks for deliverance of a brother (or sister) from "the miseries of this sinful world." Optimism, having definitely abolished the fiction of Hell, still clings by vital impulse of nature to its indefinite and undefinable vision of Heaven, or, failing that, to an indefinite perfectibility of humanity on earth. Being withal the fundamental expression of insistent and exultant life, it is the essential condition of human progress on earth.

Notes on Mental Defect in Criminals. By Sir BRYAN DONKIN, M.D. Oxon., F.R.C.P.

I. IN pursuance of the intention, signified in my "Notes on the Mental Deficiency Act" in the Journal for July, 1916, to consider, as practically as may be, the subject of mental defect as a factor in the production of crime, I find it desirable to make some introductory remarks concerning the recently increasing literature of what is known as "Criminology." This term may be properly applied to investigations undertaken with a view to giving such an account of criminal conduct and criminal men as may assist in the formation of practical measures towards the prevention of the one and the appropriate