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MATERIALISM.

UNIVERSITY EXTENSION LECTURE.

The lecture theatre at the Adelaide University was crowded on Tuesday evening, when Professor Mitchell gave the second of his series of lectures on "Materialism." The lecturer continued his discussion of the brain and our knowledge of the mind. He classified the mental states under three headings—knowledge, feeling, and will. These were dealt with in turn. There might be so-called innate ideas, but there was no reason by which we could deny that they had a seat which was unknown to us. The temperament depended upon the state of the health, and varied with it. The lecturer considered the argument that for every mental state there was a brain state, and the coincidence of mental facts and brain facts, and then went on to give the explanation of the facts in materialism. This he divided into materialism proper and parallelism, and again subdivided these for further examination. The original form of the theory took shape in the idea that the mind was a material thing, though this had gradually become less prevalent, and had been now entirely discarded by scientists. Among many reasons for the surrendering of the idea were conceptions that any view of a mind must be inferred from the nature of experience, and it was mere confusion to associate the latter with anything that occupied space, was perceptible by any organ of sense, or was transferrable from person to person. The great point was to distinguish between mental and physical facts. The second theory of materialism proper—that the mind, or experience, is a product of the brain—was generally discredited through its making irrational such feelings as responsibility and remorse, but there were other views against it. The first was that matter, and with it the whole material universe had no independent existence. This was more familiarly known as idealism, and supported by such men as Hume, Mill, and Huxley. The second, and that which had turned all scientific men from materialism, was the argument from the conservation of energy. Experience occurred in addition to physical facts, and was not the product of the energy used in the causation of brain changes. Owing principally to the latter reason, no one was now a materialist in the old sense. Those still so called held doctrines which might be classed as either idealism or spiritualism. The professor then discussed parallelism, or scientific monism, based on the model of a substance having two aspects which did not produce effects upon one another, and yet which varied with one another. Complete parallelism held that every material fact had with it a corresponding mental fact. Partial parallelism held the coincidence between experience and the corresponding states of the brain. The latter assumed that for every difference of experience there was a corresponding effect upon the nervous state, and from that was drawn the conclusion that experience could make no difference to our actual conduct. This was absolutely contrary to fundamental belief, yet for many years it had been the most popular view among scientists. Above all, it was impossible to reconcile such a theory with the doctrine of evolution, as it gave no meaning for progress.

Next week Professor Mitchell will conclude his explanation of materialism.

MATERIALISM AND SOMNOLENCE.

The attendances at the University extension lectures dealing with advanced scientific and philosophical subjects is sure proof that Adelaide has a fair portion of thoughtfully inclined citizens. But it is also safe to affirm that, though inclination for knowledge may take them to the emporium of thought, it cannot compel them to assimilate all that they, perhaps, would from the earned atmosphere of the lecture room. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is sometimes weak. To the hearer of the admirable treatise on materialism that Professor Mitchell is giving there is food for philosophical study, not only in the substance of the lectures but also in the attitudes of his fellow-worshippers at the shrine of knowledge. At the beginning of the lecture all faces bear an expectant air, and every word that falls from the professor's lips is swallowed eagerly by the hungry students. But there comes a change. Before long the rows of eager faces take up a strange irregularity of position. Here is a head on one arm, there a leg protruding in ungainly sprawl, and in another place, in several places, eyes are closed, no doubt to shut out all thoughts that might interfere with the abstruse nature of the argument. In this they call to mind R. P. Reid, of New South Wales, who, when apparently having a nap in Parliament, will utter his smartest repartee. In other faces one might almost read the famous answer which Socrates gave the Delphic oracle that pronounced him the wisest man in Greece. The discussion of materialistic philosophy has convinced them that if they are wise it is in truth because they know nothing. Yet there is every evidence that few words of the lecture is missed, for no sooner is there the slightest sign of humour than there is a spontaneous outburst of mirth. It is almost dangerous for lecturers on such weighty subjects as materialism to refer to facts which may be looked upon as jokes. On Tuesday evening the professor said, in support of a contention that the brain of the European man was as little superior to the European woman's as to savage, uncivilized man's, and the effect on the audience was electrical. They laughed all serious considerations to the much-afflicted Jericho. The American manager of a light opera company who provided his patrons with a dose of champagne and a five minutes' serious lecture as a suitable preparation for his performance evidently knew human nature.

ELDER CONSERVATORIUM.

There was a fairly large attendance at the Elder Hall on Monday evening, when the professional staff of the Conservatorium, assisted by three Elder scholars, gave their fifth concert of chamber music for this season. The audience included His Excellency the Governor and suite. Herr Hans Huber's "Pastoral sonata," op. 81, for piano and cello, which opened the programme, was given a scholarly interpretation by Messrs. Bryceson Treharne and H. Kugelberg, and the striking characteristics of the three movements—allegro ma non troppo, adagio, and allegro moderato—were presented with such artistic skill as to compel general applause. Miss Gull Hack, A.R.C.M., was accorded well-deserved recognition for her finished vocalization in a bracket of two songs by Edgar Tinel, entitled "Lament" and "Autumn leaf." The lady proved equally effective at a later stage of the concert, when the appropriate devotional fervour which marked her rendering of Dvorak's song, "O, virgin mother, gracious be," from "The Spectre's Bride," elicited hearty plaudits and a beautiful floral offering. Messrs. Treharne and Heinicke introduced Cesar Franck's "Sonata" for piano and violin, and succeeded admirably in portraying the varying beauties of its four movements, with a fine display of technique. The programme was concluded by a generally appreciated rendering of Paul Juon's "Sextet in C minor," op. 22, for two violins, viola, two cellos, and piano. The performers were Mr. Heinicke and Miss Winifred Cowperthwaite (violins), Messrs. Kugelberg and Harold Parsons (cellos), Mr. Eugene Alderman (viola), and Mr. Treharne (piano). The ensemble throughout the opening movement, moderate, as also in the theme and variations, and finale—allegro non troppo, was strikingly effective, and at the conclusion of the number the executants were greeted with well-deserved applause.

Reg. 30th Sept. 1903

MATERIALISM.

UNIVERSITY EXTENSION LECTURE.

At the University on Tuesday evening Professor Mitchell concluded his series of lectures on "Materialism." There was a large attendance. The lecturer explained that materialism had been rejected by all because it contradicted the law of the conservation of energy, the fundamental principle of physics, but so far the same law had also seemed to deny that experience could do anything, and this was absurd. One explanation was that mind or experience could influence the course of energy without affecting its quantity. However, the real issue had centred around the fact that there were two doctrines, apparently right in themselves, but which appeared to contradict. According to them there was a specific brain change for every mental change, and experience was valuable. The professor touched on the errors in the common idea of a thing, and showed how parallelism, or scientific monism, repeated them in its notion of an unknown and unknowable substance contrasted with phenomena, and the conception of material and mental phenomena as parallel. In the idea of materialism the fundamental error was a wrong physical explanation. Physics reduced heat, sound, light, electricity, in fact all phenomena, to matter and motion. Materialism said that this matter and motion were all that was real in the world. By reducing all sensations to the common denominators—time, space, and mass—they could be considered and compared. But this was very different to the great mistake which upheld that these three—time, space, and mass—were themselves the only real things. They were only terms in which phenomena were read. The lecturer further considered the meaning of reality itself, and contrasted the third explanation with materialism and parallelism regarding the limit of knowledge, the nature of God, and immortality. According to materialism the soul dissolved with the body. Parallelism practically resulted in agnosticism. And the latter, or idealism, steered a medium course. There was no argument in favour of individual immortality. It appeared more a question of value than of cause. Some philosophers saw no probability of individual immortality, and with theologians it was a question upon which there was need for revelation. But from the point of view of value, the conception that we were responsible for our actions, otherwise than through the influence of external circumstances, was the healthier, and was better for the progress of the race. Individuality was the highest development, and without its freedom of thought and action there would be no progress. He would close with the words of the wise man—"He that observeth the wind will not sow; and he that regardeth the rain will not reap."