

Be that as it may, it is evident that the multitude cannot test for themselves what is true and what is false in science, but must accept on faith the opinions of others who profess to be specialists on the subject. If all who speak, or write, on science were qualified for the task, no harm would be done; but, unfortunately for the multitude, there is a class of teachers whose ignorance of subjects on which they seek to enlighten others is only equalled by their manifest hatred of religion. These false prophets cry out from the house-tops that Evolution has completely knocked the bottom out of religion by proving that all things on the earth, plants, animals, and even man himself, can be reduced to matter and force, and the creation of the world by God is a fable and rank scientific heresy! Religion, these pseudo-scientists tell us, is all very well as a nursery rhyme to frighten naughty children to be good, or to please old folks in their dotage, but it cannot stand the searchlight of science, and its doctrine is poor meat for the reasoner and the man endowed with common sense! To these high and mighty thinkers we can with truth apply the words of Bacon, that 'a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion,' for it must be evident to a student with even an elementary knowledge of biology that their writings on Evolution are like the speech of Gratiano in the 'Merchant of Venice,' for they contain 'an infinite deal of nothing.' Their reasons are as two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff: you shall seek all day ere you find them; and when you have them they are not worth the search.

What is Evolution?

In simple terms Evolution may be defined as a theory that seeks to explain the origin of the vast variety of plants and animals on the earth by a process of gradual growth from the lowest and simplest forms of plant life up to the highest forms of animal life. This is what might be termed the general theory of Evolution, and its difference from Darwinism shall be noted when we come to deal with it. Now, the general theory of evolution is as old as the human race itself. Dr. Zahm, in his learned work on 'Evolution and Dogma,' points out that Evolution is not the theory of one man nor of any body of men, nor of one generation or epoch, for the sages of India or Babylonia, the priests of Egypt and Assyria, the philosophers of Greece and Rome, the Fathers of the early Church, and the schoolmen of the Middle Ages, all speculated on whence came this earth of ours and the plants and animals that make on it their home. Have they had a beginning which has remained unchanged, or have they undergone changes resulting from the operations of natural laws by which we can explain the variety and beauty of the universe? Aristotle believed that there was a gradual development of the higher from the lower forms of life, and that plants appeared on the earth before animals. It is of interest to us to note that St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Augustine, and St. Thomas held the opinion that the earth and all that inhabit it—plants, animals, man—were created in different ways. The first material, or nebulous matter, from which all things were afterwards made was created by God directly, and from the first matter all the plants and animals, including man himself, were formed by God directly. The Almighty, according to this view, which is the view held by the orthodox Evolutionist, created matter directly and immediately. He endowed this elementary matter with certain properties and laws, on account of which it evolved into all the myriad forms that we now behold. In later years we find Bacon, Descartes, Kant, Buffon, Saint-Hilaire, and Lamarck speculating on Evolution. Hence it is a theory that has attracted the great thinkers of every age, including Catholic theologians.

Natural Selection.

The fundamental difference of the Darwinian theory from others lies in the cause to which is attributed this gradual growth from the simple to the higher forms of life. Darwin termed this cause Natural Selection, and it is also known by the name of the 'survival of the fittest'—a phrase coined by Herbert Spencer. It is a well-known fact that all plants and animals tend to vary from the type from which they spring. There is a constant variability of individuals within the same species, and by the term species is meant a group of plants or animals having certain common characteristics that differentiate them from other groups. Darwin argued that there was a fierce struggle for existence going on among plants and animals. The plant or animal that won the fight did so because its structure and organs were better adapted for the struggle than those it conquered. Hence as a necessary result of this struggle the structure and organs of the individual became more highly developed, and this was passed on to a future generation to be still more highly

developed, until after a great number of years, perhaps, millions of years, a new type of plant or animal was ultimately evolved. According to this theory, nature in the struggle for existence selected the best types and extinguished the weak ones, just as a breeder of horses or pigeons selects the best types and pairs them together to improve his stock, or the gardener crosses his flowers to produce the prize ones for his garden. The fundamental point for us to note in Darwinism is that we believe that the advantageous points in the structure and organs of plants and animals have been designed by God, while the Darwinian holds that they are the result of the struggle for existence. It is only fair to Darwin, who was a most gifted man and a close observer, to state that he said his theory had nothing to do with the beginning of things. He admitted that he could not account for the origin of matter nor the origin of life. In one of his letters to Professor Asa Gray, he wrote: 'I grieve that I cannot possibly go as far as you do about design. I am conscious that I am in an utterly hopeless muddle. I cannot think that the world as we see it is the result of chance.' Hence it is evident that Darwin had too logical a mind, and his knowledge of nature was too deep and comprehensive, to subscribe to the absurd statement that everything can be reduced to matter and force, including the origin of life. Let us briefly examine the arguments that can be urged against the theory of natural selection, which was also independently advocated by Dr. Alfred Russell Wallace about the time that the 'Origin of Species' appeared in 1859. Dr. Wallace is thus called the co-discoverer with Darwin of natural selection in Evolution. One of

The Most Fatal Objections to Natural Selection

is that characters acquired during life by a plant or animal are never passed on to their descendants. This is a fact that has been proved over and over again, and we can see it for ourselves in the human race. For example, if a man lost his leg and afterwards has become a father, his children are born with two legs and not one leg. If a woman lost her eye and afterwards became a mother, her children have two eyes and not one eye. Again, the offsprings of a Shakespeare had not the genius of their father, nor were those of Isaac Newton, Isaac Newtons; neither is a famous footballer the father of crack forwards and great halfbacks, nor a famous cricketer the father of fine batters and brilliant wicket-keepers. As a matter of fact, whatever special characters we acquire in the race of life, and which are of undoubted advantage to us, for they make our fame and fortune, we do not seem to pass them on to those who come after us, which is in direct opposition to the essential argument of natural selection that we are evolved on account of the special characters developed in the struggle for existence. Darwin tried to meet this argument by suggesting that the advantageous points were so minute as to be imperceptible, and they were spread over a period of millions of years. Against this it may be said that geologists and physicists do not admit the age of the earth to be the millions of years necessary for these minute variations to accumulate for a lower animal to evolve into a higher one. Moreover, Dr. Wallace in his latest work on Darwinism conclusively proves that variations in every part and every organ are not minute, but very considerable, and thus disposes of minute variations.

(To be concluded.)

Diocesan News

ARCHDIOCESE OF WELLINGTON

(From Our Own Correspondent.)

November 7.

On Monday night last at a public reading of the Shakespeare Society one of our convent pupils, Miss Marie Fix, of South Wellington, received the prizes she won recently at the public schools competition in Shakespeare reading.

There will be First Communion to-morrow in the Church of St. Mary of the Angels, Boulcott street. His Grace will administer the Sacrament of Confirmation at St. Joseph's, Buckle street, to-morrow. On Sunday week at St. Anne's Church, South Wellington, there will be First Communion, and in the afternoon his Grace the Archbishop will administer the Sacrament of Confirmation.

The following appreciative paragraph, anent one of our convent pupils appeared in last evening's Post:—Miss Rita Rabone (eldest daughter of Mr. S. Rabone, of Blenheim, formerly of Wellington), who is prosecuting her musical studies at the Wel-