

CONSISTENCY OF A MATERIALIST.

Perhaps the advance of science is marked by no greater difference, than that which is exhibited in the changing ground which materialists have had successively to take, in order to be consistent with its discoveries, and, at the same time, to be able to present a reasonably strong front in its attacks upon religious beliefs. Any one who is at all acquainted with modern philosophy must be struck with the vastly different positions held, and arguments advanced, by materialistic philosophers of each decade. And the activity of thought and extent of research in our own day, and especially within the last few years, is such that each year has been marked by changes so rapid, that materialistic dogmas are but formulated by one thinker, to be rejected by another. While these changes may suggest the inherent weakness of materialism, we cannot justly say that they show inconsistency in single individuals; and we have no desire to do so. We regard it, rather, as a high tribute to the advocates of any system of thought, that they are willing to cast aside ideas which they have discovered to be baseless. Wherein, then, do materialists exhibit inconsistency?

The inconsistency is found, not in the different way in which they regard a subject now, from that in which they viewed it ten, or even five, years ago; but in the different assertions which they make respecting the same subject, within the space of a few hours, and within the limits of one lecture. An instance from an article by Prof. Tyndall published in the *Fortnightly Review*, may make our meaning clear.

He starts off well, stating a *fact* of philosophy, and disclaiming for materialism any capability of explaining the human *mind*. He says: "You cannot satisfy the human understanding in its desire for logical continuity between molecular processes and the phenomena of consciousness. This is a rock on which materialism must inevitably break, whenever it pretends to be a complete philosophy of the human mind."

He thus sets aside the problem of the origin of consciousness, as being beyond the power of materialism. This difficulty removed—by being allowed to remain—he next faces the problem of the existence of God. Let us follow him step by step, so that we may see wherein our ideas conflict with his; and wherein his inconsistency lies.

He opens up the subject by quoting from an address by Mr. Martineau, who says that his students have been trained under the assumptions:—

"1st. That the universe which includes us and folds us round is the life-dwelling of an eternal mind.

2nd. That the world of our abode is the scene of a moral government, incipient but not complete; and,