

But this conclusion Mr. Morison will not admit. Indeed, he makes a formal complaint that, "in spite of science and the laws of consciousness, people will continue to believe in God." Now, let us see whether "science" and "the laws of consciousness" offer any sort of reason for abandoning our belief in God. And in order that we may make our way good as we go, I will here set down briefly what I understand by the word God. Kant shall supply me with a definition. I mean by the word "a Supreme Being, the author of all things, by free and understanding action." First, then, as to "science," by which Mr. Morison, of course, means physics. What reasons does physical science supply for disbelieving in this Supreme Being? I turn diligently over Mr. Morison's loosely written pages in quest of such reasons, but I find only one presented in any clear or intelligible shape. "The early glimpses of the marvels of nature, afforded by modern science," he writes, "undoubtedly were favourable to natural theology, in the first instance. Knowledge revealed so many wonders which had not been suspected by ignorance, that a general increase of reverence and awe for the Creator was the natural, though not very logical consequence. But a deeper philosophy, or rather biology, has disturbed the satisfaction with which the wisest and most exquisite ends were once regarded. It is now known that for one case of successful adaptation of means to ends in the animal world, there are hundreds of failures. If organs which serve an obvious end, justify the assumption of an intelligent designer, what are we to say of organs which serve no end at all, but are quite useless and meaningless?" The argument from design has been relied upon by many apologists for Theism, what are we to say of the counter argument from failure? That is the question. Well the answer to it seems to me very obvious. It is this. There is no such thing known to us in nature as failure, because there may be always ends which are hidden from our eyes. We can affirm order, for that is a thing positive. But to affirm absolute final disorder is like attempting to prove a negative. It has been well observed by the American naturalist Thoreau, "the greatest and saddest defect is not credulity, but an habitual forgetfulness that our science is ignorance." Moreover there is this weighty fact telling for the divine induction, that as our knowledge advances, more order appears. What could have seemed more purposeless than those vast buried forests in which solar rays have been imprisoned since the Secondary Epoch? For two millions of years, as it is calculated, this profuse and seemingly wasteful growth has lain in the earth entombed and useless. It is now the fuel which gladdens us with light and heat and which is the chief factor in the material civilization whereof we make such proud boasting. Surely such a stupendous fact as this might well check the tongue or the pen that asserts absence of purpose, or failure, or waste in nature. When I hear or read such assertions, the fine lines of the great moral poet of the last century rise to my lips:

Alike in ignorance, his reason such,  
Whether he thinks too little or too much.

It is often maintained that so-called failures arise from the inter-action, or rather counter-action, of lesser laws. That is not an argument which I care to press. It may, indeed, well be urged that one thing has many ends, and that because it is limited, success in one direction implies the possibility of failure in another. That, however, is not by reason of imperfection in the Creator; it does but imply limitation in the creature.

One word more upon this subject before I put it aside. The only anti-theistic arguments derived from the physical sciences which can in any sense be regarded as new, as peculiar to the present day, are those drawn from the doctrine of organic evolution. Now that doctrine, as taught by the late Mr. Darwin, I, for one, largely accept. But evolution is a modal, not a causal theory. It tells us something of the how, it does not in the least explain the why. Nor does it by any means conduct to fortuitousness, or necessity as the last word of the universe. Mr. Darwin expressly tells us that his theory is "not in the least concerned with the origin of spiritual or vital forces." He

was a physicist, not a philosopher. "Everything," said Leibnitz, "takes place at the same time, mechanically and metaphysically: but the metaphysical is the source of the mechanical." The facts given us by physics are the printed syllables. It is the office of metaphysics to construe them. The doctrine of evolution and the doctrine of design are perfectly compatible. Mr. Darwin has himself testified in words of grave and impressive earnestness to "the revolt of the understanding" against the conclusion that "the grand sequence of events" in the physical universe "is the result of blind chance." Nor, assuredly, was he more willing to accept as the explanation of the universal order the *αναγκη* of the ancient Stoics, or the necessity of modern phenomenists. I suppose that one most fruitful source of error in dealing with this matter is the extremely loose way in which the word law is employed. It really means in physics no more than an observed uniformity of sequence or co-existence. But it is constantly used in quite another sense. It receives a sort of personification. It is spoken of as a cause. It passes my wit to understand how new discoveries of laws in nature, or the clearer apprehension of laws already known, can be a disproof of design. To which I will add that the question of design is one with which the physicist, *as such*, is not concerned. His domain is the sphere of sense perception. The science with which he has to do explains to us the materials of the inorganic world; it unfolds to us the movements which succeed one another in a determinate series. But that is all it can reveal to us of the elements of life. It can tell us nothing of the cause which formed the first cell, which developed from it the organism, and which rules its evolution. It may, if it will, call that cause force. But it is utterly unable to tell us what force is. This has been frankly confessed by one whose words upon such matters carry great and well deserved weight. "If you ask," writes Professor Tyndall, in his *Fragments of Science*, "whence is this matter of which we have been discoursing, who or what divided it into molecules, who or what impressed upon them the necessity of running into organic forms [the physicist] has no answer. "Science"—the professor means, of course, physical science—"is mute in reply to these questions." Yes, we must go elsewhere if we want an answer to them. Physical science is not concerned with them; they lie outside her domain. As I have been led recently to observe, in the course of a discussion with Professor Huxley, carried on in the *Fortnightly Review*, "Physics, as such, is not conversant with morals, neither affirms nor denies religion, and can therefore have no creed in regard to either. We do not talk of the religion of the sense of hearing, nor of its irreligion; such an expression would be absurd. In like manner physics, which is wholly the science of the senses, abstracts from religion, from morality, and from every kind of knowledge, so far as the latter is independent of sense. I say 'abstracts from,' I do not say 'rejects,' or 'repudiates,' or 'denies.' Physical science merely attends to its own business, and it is no part of its business to deal with what the late Mr. Lewes denominated the 'metempirical.' It is not agnostic; for agnosticism implies a knowledge of one's own ignorance; and physical science does not know that it is ignorant any more than a mollusc knows that it is not moral. It is wonderful how much has been made out to the prejudice of religion as of morality, from the obvious canon of logic that, every science having its proper object, the proper object of physics does not include God or the moral order."

Thus much must, for the present, suffice as to the anti-theistic argument from physical science.—*W. S. Lilly, in the Tablet.*

As a commentary on a vulgar error, the following paragraph extracted from the June number of the *Antiquary* will be of interest: "M. Rohault de Fleury has made a list of all the relics of the Cross in Europe and Asia, of which he can find any record, and the sum amounts to 3,941,975 cubic millimetres—a very small part, indeed, of what would be required to make a cross."