

then taking into consideration, what is to be made of all this interesting statement. How is it to be turned to account theologically and morally. Of course the theological argument from it was abundantly clear, the form, structure and arrangement of the various vessels necessary for the digestive process, from its commencement to the final absorption of the elementary parts of the food into the system, giving evidence of contrivance and a wise contriver, such as no rational being can gain-say. And the moral lesson was very effectively stated, a lesson of temperance in the use of intoxicating liquors. It is natural that I should take a like professional view of my own present subject, and point out, so far as may be done without reference to any peculiarities of creed, some of the theological and moral uses, to which it may be turned.

As to the first of these, the theological account, to which it may be turned, we shall say no more than that it gives evidence of a like kind with that of the subject to which your attention was last called, of the existence of a designing mind. I know not that in the simpler processes of the mind, the evidences of a designing Creator are so overwhelming, as in the complicated processes of the animal economy. And to overpower with such evidence, any one who is by the constitution of his mind, or the state of his moral feelings, capable of appreciating and judging of evidence, we can never do better than follow the anatomist, while setting before us the structure of the eye or the heart, or the process by which the aliment gets into the blood, and is fitted for getting into it. Still the evidence which the mental philosopher can bring forward to the building up the great argument for the existence of an infinitely wise and great creator is not to be disregarded. It is the same in kind with that drawn from the body. And the operations of these two laws of mind—the manner in which they act on one another, and are fitted for one another, is really an evidence of design in its nature the same as that derived from the adaptation of each other observed in the vessels of the animal system. A manifest adaptation either in mind or in matter gives the idea of design. The more adaptations you observe in either, the stronger the conviction of a great original Designer.

As to the second, the moral account, to which our subject may be turned, there is first a special lesson to be derived from the special illustration which we have been all along using; and secondly a general lesson as to our use of all moral impressions.

There is, we say, first a special lesson to be derived from the special illustration, which we have been all along using; that namely, which respects

the principle of benevolence. It is this, that in the education of the young we shall do well to draw as much on the real, and as little on the fictitious as possible, and endeavour in every case, in which it is practicable, to have emotions of sympathy for distress, combined with active and self-denying exertions to relieve it. We do not strengthen, but on the other hand, we diminish the power of benevolence within them, and the probability of their becoming afterwards truly and actively benevolent, by exciting within them, emotions of sympathy when these are not intended and directed to lead to exertion for the relief of distress. By such excitement the impressions of sympathy are weakened: and there is no counterbalancing habit of benevolent action formed. They are not made available for the purpose, which they were intended to serve, and for which they are necessary. In this way, perhaps, quite as much as in any other, is the practice of indulging them in the perusal of fictitious tales objectionable. The tendency of ordinary novel-reading is in many ways injurious to the heart and to the understanding. It is the tendency of such productions to give an inordinate stimulus to the imagination and to the passions. And in general they give very false views of life, of society, of duty. But one of their worst tendencies is to harden the heart. The sympathetic feelings are called forth by the fictitious woes of poetry and romance which make no demand upon our active assistance; and the luxury of emotion is enjoyed without any attack upon our selfishness. No habit of benevolence is formed by such indulgence in sympathy with fictitious distress. The heart is hardened. The habit of practical benevolence is not formed. Soon the sentimental novel-reader gets beyond feelings for the ordinary, common place ills which flesh and blood are heir to. His feelings are as it were worn out. And while they existed, they terminated in themselves. They did not lead him in whom they existed out of himself. They did not lead him to war with his in-born selfishness and to subdue it. Then had they answered their purpose, and established the habit of benevolent action. But instead of this they were turned to the very indulgence of selfishness itself. It is instructive to mark the difference of result in the case of one who *acting* in the sympathies of his nature, sets about relieving distress, and one who *enjoying* the sympathies of his nature sits and reads about distress in the fictitious tales of the poet and the novelist. In both alike, the impressions of sympathy are by repetition weakened. But the former acquires a practical habit, which renders it easy, pleasing, nay delightful to him to give aid to the distressed. While