

veloping where the conditions were favourable. Helmholtz also asked whether the question as to the origin of life was not as ultimate as the question as to the origin of matter, and lent his authority to the hypothesis that germs of life might have reached the earth from other spheres. But the best-known name in this connection is that of Lord Kelvin, who did not see any serious improbability against the theory that life was borne to the earth by meteorites. This would, so to speak, shift the responsibility of the problem off the earth, leaving the solution *elsewhere*.

The bold conception suggested by Richter and Helmholtz was further elaborated by Prof. W. Preyer. Far from supposing that the inorganic might have given rise to the organic, he asked whether the dead was not as probably the product of the living. And everyone knows that many rocks could not have been as they are apart from life. Even in the times when the earth was a fire-ball there may have been, Preyer supposed, molecular combinations which bore in their inter-relations the secret of life, of life very different from that in any form which we know, but still of life. It is doubtful, however, whether this hypothetical extension of the conception of vitality can serve any useful purpose.

The *opinion* towards which the majority seem to swing round is that which was expressed with great clearness by Hæckel in 1866, that analogy points to an erstwhile origin of living matter from not-living matter. The botanist C. von Nägeli, the zoologist Ray Lankester, the physiologist Pflüger, may be mentioned as prominent workers who have more or less fully accepted Hæckel's position.

We cannot close this chapter without recalling the now familiar fact that the discussion is not a merely theoretical one, but has been unusually rich in practical results. It led on to discoveries in the preservation of food and the improvement of food-products, to an entirely new view of parasites, to the use of antiseptics, and to the cure of many diseases.