DAVID HUME

Philosophical Classics for English Readers

EDITED BY

WILLIAM KNIGHT, LL.D.

PROFESSOR OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY, UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

HUME

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1921
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WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
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PREFATORY NOTE.

As the title of the Series shows, these 'Philosophical Classics for English Readers' are written, not so much for the initiated, as for those who wish to know something about the great Systems, and their Founders; but who have not leisure to peruse their Treatises in full, or to go into the more recondite aspects of the questions they have raised, still less to master the voluminous critical literature which has subsequently gathered around them.

Probably an increasing number of such readers feel that, as all human knowledge reposes on First Principles —of which Philosophy is the exposition and explanation —some acquaintance with the Speculative Thought of the world is indispensable to every one who would avoid superficiality, or escape from illusion. It is for such that these "short studies on great subjects" are intended. They omit much that would be necessarily included in a full critical discussion, but they aim at such fulness (both of analysis and of criticism) as is consistent with

condensation within prescribed limits, and also at a certain amount of popular treatment.

Few who take up the present volume, for example, will have gone through the late Professor Green's elaborate "introduction" to the works of Hume, or even perhaps have read the whole of Mr Hill Burton's 'Life and Correspondence' of the philosopher; not to speak of more recent critical discussions, English or foreign. The aim of the book is to give to such readers a full and unbiassed picture of the man, and an equally impartial account of his Philosophy—of its sources, its characteristics, and its issues.

Two methods are practicable. Either an account of Hume's philosophical system, and a critical estimate of it, may be woven round the story of his life, and carried on continuously from chapter to chapter, to the end of the volume; or the 'Life' may be detached from the 'Philosophy' altogether. As Hume was not much involved in metaphysical controversy during his lifetime, and as the significance of his system was mainly posthumous, it is easier in his case than in that of any other modern philosopher of note, to separate the biographical sketch, from any but the most cursory account of his system, and to take up the latter by itself. This will accordingly be done. It is true that the gradual development of his system may be traced through the chief incidents of his life; and although, by separating the account of the man from an estimate of his system, there is some risk of repetition when the latter comes to be

discussed, it is to be hoped that a re-statement, so far as it may occur, will tend to further elucidation.

On the most cursory examination of his writings, two things are noticeable. First, they contain few references to his philosophical predecessors. They are neither enriched nor burdened with learning. Secondly, they enter very little into controversy with contemporaries. Hume deals mainly with the perennial aspects of the problems he discusses, and hence the abiding value of his treatment of them.

The delay in the issue of this volume has been a matter of regret. It is not only that the subject has grown larger, the longer it has been studied; but, in collecting materials for another work on the philosophy of Hume, the desire to do justice to both—neither to anticipate the larger by the smaller, nor to lessen any interest the smaller may possess by the reservation of materials for the larger—may explain it.

As to new sources of information in reference to Hume, the author may refer to MSS. in the British Museum, and to the historical MSS. at Newhailes, belonging to Mr Dalrymple, which have been generously placed at his service. He has not, however, been able to obtain access to the volumes of Hume MSS. in the custody of the Royal Society of Edinburgh; the Secretary being of opinion that Mr Hill Burton had sufficiently examined these.

The portrait of Hume prefixed to the volume is a reproduction of one by Allan Ramsay, now in the

National Gallery at Edinburgh. It was painted for Hume as a companion picture to the portrait of Rousseau, which Ramsay also painted for him. The original was presented to the National Gallery by Mrs Macdonald Hume of Ninewells, a grandniece of the philosopher. It is, in all respects, the most characteristic likeness of him that exists. The bust, moulded by a country artist at Professor Ferguson's request, and the medallion by Tassie engraved by Alexander Hay, (which are reproduced in Mr Hill Burton's Life), are inferior to it, both in historical interest and expressiveness.

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HUME.

SECTION A.—HIS CAREER.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

The philosophy of Hume is significant amongst those of Europe, not merely from its intellectual features, as a system of opinion; but also from the way in which it developed tendencies, which were latent in English Philosophy from the first, and from the reaction which it inaugurated—the movement of reconstruction to which it gave rise. In the history of human thought, destructive movements are invariably followed by constructive ones; and, *vice versa,* the sceptic succeeds the dogmatist, whether he appears as a destroyer, or merely sits apart—

> "Holding no form of creed,
> But contemplating all."

In the succession of the schools, however, we do not find a mere repetition of identical experiments, without

forward movement, or "increasing purpose." In one sense, Philosophy is always repeating itself; but in another sense, it never does so. Returning to the same controversies, it never takes them up a second time, in the same manner as before; and the reason is obvious. The philosophic is only one element in the complex intellectual life of a people; and, as it blends with other elements, their respective intensity varies. Therefore, when an old philosophy—lineally descended from an ancestral type—reappears, what may be called its intellectual allies always differ from those which were associated with it at the earlier stage; and the character of every philosophy is greatly influenced by its allies. It is thus that the experientialism of Hume differed from that of Bacon, while both of them differed from that of Comte.

In David Hume, however, our British Philosophy reached the most significant crisis it has as yet passed through, mainly because of the thoroughness and consistency with which he developed to its furthest issues the doctrine of *Experience*, on which that philosophy had been founded by Bacon, expanded by Hobbes, and wrought out by Locke. He saw, with consummate clearness, the logical result of a system of which Experience is the alpha and the omega; and his destructive criticism has been quite as helpful to the progress of the human mind, as the constructive efforts which it overthrew, chiefly because it cleared the atmosphere of mist. It took the mind of England, and subsequently that of Europe, away from secondary and outlying questions, to those which are primary, and compelled it to probe the philosophy of experience to the core—thus preparing the way for the critical ideal-

ism of Kant, and rendering its rise inevitable. Hume may be said to have proved, once and for all, that a philosophy which takes its rise in sense-experience leads nowhere; that its issue must be speculative nihilism, and that its practical outcome is agnostic.

Considering the important place which his writings hold in the literature of Philosophy, his life may seem comparatively uneventful. But the lives of philosophers are seldom stirring; and to the speculative mind, there is a greater charm in the meditations of a recluse, than in the exploits of those who change the map of a continent. Hume's life, however, has a special interest of its own; and the admirable volumes in which Mr Hill Burton has recorded it are a valuable contribution to philosophical biography. We shall find that the life and career of the man explain some of the characteristics of his system. Hume was not a recluse speculative philosopher, like Spinoza and Kant. He was—as were Bacon and Leibniz—a man of affairs, a practical administrator, as well as a thinker and writer. How this influenced his opinions will be seen as we advance; while in the earlier chapters a criticism of the system which he championed will be interwoven less or more with the record of his literary history.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY LIFE.

DAVID HUME was born at Edinburgh on the 26th of April 1711 (O. S.) He was the younger son of a small Border laird, Joseph Hume (or Home) of Ninewells, whose estate lay in the parish of Chirnside, in Berwickshire. The house was named Ninewells (says an antiquarian) "from a cluster of springs of that number. They burst forth from a gentle declivity in front of the mansion, and fall into the river Whitadder. These springs, as descriptive of their property, were assigned to the Humes of this place—as a difference in arms—from the chief of their house."[1] The family was a branch of that of the Earls of Hume; although for the connecting link we have to go back to the times of James I. and James II. of Scotland. Lord Home, the founder of Dunglas[2]

[1] See Douglas's Baronage of Scotland, 1798.

[2] It may not be too trivial to note, in passing, that the philosopher insisted on spelling his name Hume, as "by far the most ancient and most general till about the Restoration, when it became common to spell Home, contrary to the pronunciation" (Letter of David Hume to Alexander Home of Whitfield, April 1758); while his relative Lord Kames, and others of the family, kept to the spelling Home.—See Sir Walter Scott's account of this, Miscell. Works, vol. xix. p. 287.

(Hume himself tells us), "went over to France with the Douglas, and was killed, either in the battle of Crevant, or Verneuil, gained by the Duke of Bedford against the French." [1]

In his brief but excellent autobiography, entitled 'My Own Life,' [2] Hume tells us: "My family was not rich, and being myself a younger brother, my patrimony was of course very slender. My father, who passed for a man of parts, died when I was an infant, leaving me, with an elder brother and sister, under the care of our mother, a woman of singular merit, who, though young and handsome, devoted herself entirely to the rearing and education of her children." Hume's mother was a daughter of Sir David Falconer, president of the College of Justice. It is probable that he inherited a good deal of his mother's constitution and temperament. She was shrewd and homely, very kind, and very practical in her ways. She is reported to have once said of her son, "Our Davie's a fine, good-natured crater, but uncommon wake-minded." If the story be authentic,[3] it would be interesting to know on what peculiarity of character that

[1] In a MS. Diary of a kinsman—George Home of Kimmerghame—there is a quaint notice of Hume's ancestry. After recording the death of the laird of Ninewells, the grandfather of the philosopher, on the 14th February 1695, the writer adds, "Though he seemed not to desire a scutcheon, we have ordered one, with his eight branches, to be put over the door of the church."

[2] It was edited by Adam Smith, and first published in 1777, the year after Hume's death. In the same year it was translated into Latin.

[3] There is a story of Hume's brother Joseph having said something so much resembling this that the source of the tradition in both cases may be the same. "My brother Davie's a good enough sort of man, but rather narrow-minded!"—See the Supplement to the Life of David Hume, p. 33: London, 1777.

maternal judgment was based, as Hume afterwards showed anything rather than weak-mindedness. It may have referred to the instability of his early purposes, and to his preference for a precarious literary calling, over those of which the rewards were more obvious; or it may have arisen from the mother's observing her son's dislike to take an extreme side, either in opinion or action, which afterwards showed itself in the moderation of his philosophical tendencies. Evidently Hume had strong filial feelings. When he heard of his mother's death, on his return to London from Turin in 1749, he was found, we are told, "in an agony of tears."

Little is known of his early education, or of his pursuits, whether in Edinburgh or at Ninewells. His own account is very brief: "I passed through the ordinary course of education with success." He seems to have entered the Greek class in the University of Edinburgh when twelve years of age. It is certain that a David Home was a matriculated student of that class in February 1723; but we do not know how he distinguished himself, or how long he remained at college. It was probably for three years, as the undergraduate University life of Scottish youths was then (as now) limited to three or four winter sessions of about six months each. During the next seven years—usually a formative period in the mental history of every youth—we have little information as to his intellectual habits. After leaving college, he seems to have lived a good deal at the paternal estate of Ninewells, and there he was left entirely to his own discretion in selecting a course of study. His choice led him to the ancient classics, and to such works in philosophy and poetry as he had

access to in the modest family library at Ninewells. But while an industrious, he was not a critical student of the classics then, or at any future time—although he read Latin with ease,[1] and Greek with some difficulty. He has nowhere told us what philosophical books he read, or what were his sources of information as to the systems of the past—a point on which we would like to have had his own testimony at this particular period of his career. We can, it is true, fill up the blank to a certain extent. With little direct knowledge of the writers of antiquity, he imbibed the spirit, and a good deal of the teaching, of the Roman Stoics in his boyhood. Slightly acquainted with their books, he rapidly divined the essence of their system, and became familiar with the ultimate questions of the philosophy of knowledge and of morals, through the hints which a very casual and miscellaneous reading disclosed. It may even be said that, although his mature philosophy was genealogically an evolution from that of Locke, it was evolved *in him* not so much from a study of recent speculation in England, as from his early familiarity with the Greek and Roman writers. The influence of Cicero, Seneca, and Plutarch can be traced, in a marked degree, both in his attitude towards certain problems of thought and experience, and in the literary style of his Essays.

[1] In correspondence with Francis Hutcheson in 1742, about the 'Philosophiæ Moralis Institutio Compendiaria' of the latter, Hume said: "I have not wrote any in that language these many years, but yours seems to me very pure, and even easy and elegant." And to Sir Gilbert Elliot he said (February 1751), referring to an essay he had just written on the populousness of antiquity, that he had "read over almost all the classics, both Greek and Latin, since he formed the plan" of his essay; but that he had no copy of Strabo, which he begs Elliot to lend him.

Absorbed with what the library at Ninewells supplied him, it is evident that, during these years, external Nature had little attraction and certainly no charm for him. The Border county in which he lived, rich in traditions of the raids and forays of the seventeenth century—of which every dale among the Cheviots, and all the peels and castles by Tweed and Yarrow could give account—never seems to have interested him.[1] Hume's temperament, though not frigid, was certainly prosaic. No glow of enthusiasm, no touch of chivalry, no colouring of romance irradiated it. Even in the sentimental days of boyhood his estimates of men and things were based, with scarcely any exception, upon *utility.* He was essentially matter-of-fact from the first, and he remained un-ideal to the last. An acute observer, one of the keenest and cleverest of critics, he was never known to have been carried away by any fervour for what was above and beyond himself. (We shall see how this explains a good deal of his subsequent Philosophy, and how it determined the characteristics of his 'History.') It had its mingled advantages and drawbacks. The unimpassioned temperament is, as a rule, more scientific than the emotive one; but it is less appreciative of that side of nature, and of human life, of which science takes no cognisance. In Hume's case the result was a singular limitation in the range of his sympathies. He had no appreciation of Art, except of the bounded Greek type, and even with that he was unfamiliar. He saw nothing specially to admire in the great pictures,

[1] The one seeming exception—his interest in the old quarry at Ninewells alluded to in his "last will and testament"—really proves the rule.

statues, and buildings of antiquity. To the world of the Beautiful he was almost colour-blind. Music had no revelation to him. It was mere noise—*vox et præterea nihil.* Gothic architecture was a "heap of confusion and irregularity."[1] Throughout his whole career, his judgments as a literary critic were nearly as unfortunate as his prejudices as a historian. His enthusiasm for secondary or obscure Scottish writings—if some personal bias led him to take them up—and his indifference to the greater works in other literatures, was in singular contrast to the keenness of his intellect, and the accuracy of his judgment in social and political philosophy.[2] Thus, however clear and penetrating his intellect, the bounded range of his sympathies cut him off from the very possibility of understanding and appreciating the philosophy of Idealism. The assertion might even be hazarded, that while Hume's intellect was imperial, his sympathies were provincial. From his curious dislike to the English character, as compared with the Scottish and the French—and especially to all Londoners—he failed to understand some of the best features of the Anglo-Saxon race. Not only so; but we find that the same provincialism prevented him from appreciating Shakespeare, whom he ventured to call "a disproportioned and misshapen giant." He was thoroughly French in his estimate of Shakespeare, and of many other literary men and eras, as well as systems.

[1] See his early "Essay on Chivalry."

[2] For example, he preferred the tragedy of 'Douglas,'—written by his relative Home,—to every other tragedy in the language, including even the plays of Shakespeare (as his French admirer Madame de Boufflers also did); and Wilkie's 'Epigoniad' was, in his judgment, second only to 'Paradise Lost'!

It is to be observed however that, during what we may call the Ninewells period of his mental life, the crisis through which he passed was such, that it prevented him, almost necessarily, from taking a vivid interest in other things; in Nature itself on the one hand, or in literary art on the other. Had he communed with Nature as a boy, had he familiarised himself with Shakespeare, or rejoiced in the Border ballads, or pursued medieval Art, or even studied Science, he would never have developed his Philosophy.

A remarkable letter, written in his sixteenth year to his friend Michael Ramsay, throws a good deal of light on his character as a youth. He writes (July 1727):—

"All the progress that I made" (referring to his writing) "is but drawing the outlines on loose bits of paper; here a hint of a passion; there a phenomenon in the mind accounted for; in another the alteration of these accounts; sometimes a remark upon an author I have been reading. . . . I am entirely confined to myself and library for diversion since we parted.

—" 'Ea sola voluptus
Solamenque mali.'—

And indeed to me they are not a small one; for I take no more of them than I please; for I hate task-reading, and I diversify them at pleasure—sometimes a philosopher, sometimes a poet—which change is not unpleasant, nor disserviceable neither; for what will more surely engrave upon my mind a Tusculan disputation of Cicero's 'De Aegritudine Lenienda,' than an eclogue or georgick of Virgil's? . . . Virgil's life is more the subject of my ambition than Cicero's, being what I can apprehend to be more within my power. For the perfectly wise man, that outbraves fortune, is surely greater than the husbandman who slips by her; and, indeed, this pastoral and saturnian happiness I have in a great

measure come at just now. I live like a king, pretty much by myself, neither full of action nor perturbation,—*molles somnos.* This state, however, I can foresee, is not to be relied on. My peace of mind is not sufficiently confirmed by philosophy to withstand the blows of fortune. This greatness and elevation of soul is to be found only in study and contemplation—this can alone teach us to look down on human accidents. You must allow me to talk thus, like a philosopher; 'tis a subject I think much on, and could talk of all day long."

The "grave and high-toned philosophical feeling" of this letter, to which Hume's biographer alludes, certainly warrants him in describing it as a "remarkable letter to have been written by a youth little more than sixteen years old." Mr Hill Burton adds: "Through the whole of the memorials of Hume's early feelings we find the traces of a bold and far-stretching literary ambition. . . . 'I was seized very early,' he tells us in his 'Own Life,' 'with a passion for literature, which has been the ruling passion of my life, and a great source of my enjoyments.' Joined to this impulse, we find a practical philosophy, partaking far more of the stoical than of that sceptical school with which his metaphysical writings have identified him; a morality of self-sacrifice and endurance for the accomplishment of great ends. . . . He was an economist of all his talents from early youth. No memoir of a literary man presents a more cautious and vigilant husbandry of the mental powers and acquirements. There is no instance of a man of genius who has wasted less in idleness or in unavailing pursuits. Money was not his object, nor was temporary fame; . . . but his ruling object of ambition, pursued in poverty and riches, in health and sickness, in laborious obscurity and

amid the blaze of fame, was to establish a permanent name, resting on the foundation of literary achievements, likely to live as long as human thought endured, and mental philosophy was studied."[1] This is as just and discriminating a judgment, as it is happily expressed. There is no doubt that, in Hume's case, we have one of the finest practical embodiments of the utilitarian philosophy on record. His worldly wisdom was great, and it was of an elevated type. We shall see its limitations by-and-by.

In his seventeenth year Hume began, and in the same year he ended, the systematic study of law. Even of that year he said, in words often quoted: "While my family thought I was poring upon Voet and Vinnius, Cicero and Virgil were the authors I was secretly devouring."[2] There is little doubt, however, that had he chosen to pursue what he tells us was the business he first "designed to follow," he might have attained to eminence at the bar, and ultimately to high distinction as a jurist. His remarkable clearness and calmness of mind, his power of arranging materials, of seizing the central points of a case and discarding irrelevancies, his admirable judgment, and his general skill in argument, would have guaranteed success; and he must have turned from this profession not from any reluctance to face its labours, though he described it as "nauseous" to him, but from the hope of achieving greater renown, and a more illustrious name in Literature. His ambition was already fired to encounter both speculative and literary toil in the domain of Philosophy, more arduous than that of the bar.

[1] Life and Correspondence of David Hume, vol. i. pp. 17, 18.

[2] My Own Life.

During the six years that followed his college course, Hume seems to have spent the winter in Edinburgh, and to have lived at Ninewells in the summer months; and as he was much alone—either in his library, or walking by the Whitadder, or riding to drink the waters of the mineral spa at Duns—there can be no doubt that during these years his subsequent philosophy began to take shape, at least in outline. He read extensively, and was dissatisfied with what he read. With no violent mental insurrection against the beliefs of the past, he quietly put authority aside; and believing that nothing had as yet been determined in philosophy, he pushed forward with the ardour of youth in the hope of discovery. For three years he was perfectly happy—speculating continuously, writing tentative essays, and filling many quires of paper with miscellaneous jottings. In his eighteenth year, however, his health was somewhat undermined. His ardour suddenly failed him, and he passed through an experience which will be best described in his own words. In order that, with restored health, he might return to his studies, and achieve something worthy of fame, he resolved—or rather was forced—to attempt for a time the more active life of business. "In 1734," he says,[1] "I went to Bristol, with some recommendations to eminent merchants, but in a few months found that scene totally unsuitable to me." He went from Scotland by way of London, probably sailing from Leith; and while in the metropolis he wrote a letter to a London physician, much more remarkable and important as an autobiographical record, than the former epistle to Michael Ramsay. It is not

[1] My Own Life.

certain to whom this letter was addressed (probably to Dr George Cheyne),[1] nor is it known whether it was ever sent, or what reply Hume received; but its having been *written* by Hume is a most interesting fact, as it exhibits him in a mental crisis, such as most thoughtful and studious persons pass through at one time or another. As found amongst his papers, it is simply entitled a "Letter to a Physician"; and Hume never signed it, wishing to keep his name a secret. As this letter supplies us with a key both to the man and to his philosophy—Hume himself calls it "A kind of History of my Life"—a considerable extract from it may be given:—

"You must know," he says, "that from my earliest infancy I found always a strong inclination to books and letters. As our college education in Scotland, extending little further than the languages, ends commonly[2] when we are about fourteen or fifteen years of age, I was after that left to my own choice in reading, and found it incline me almost equally to books of reasoning and philosophy, and to poetry and the polite authors. Every one who is acquainted with either the philosophers or critics knows" (mark the boldness of the assumption) "that there is nothing yet established in either of these two sciences, and that they contain little more than endless disputes, even in the most funda-

[1] A Scotsman settled in London, and a physician of some note, author of 'The English Malady; or, A Treatise on Nervous Diseases of all kinds,' also of 'Philosophical Principles of Natural Religion,' and numerous other books, amongst which was one treating of the Bath waters, to which Hume repaired, in the last year of his life.

[2] It would have been more correct had he said "begins commonly." It often begins much later.

mental articles. Upon examination of these, I found a certain boldness of temper growing in me, which was not inclined to submit to any authority in these subjects, but led me to seek out some new medium by which truth might be established. After much study and reflection on this, at last, when I was about eighteen years of age, there seemed to be opened up to me a new scene of thought, which transported me beyond measure, and made me, with an ardour natural to young men, throw up every other pleasure or business to apply entirely to it. The law, which was the business I designed to follow, appeared nauseous to me, and I could think of no other way of pushing my fortune in the world but that of a scholar and philosopher. I was infinitely happy in this course of life for some months—till at last, about the beginning of September 1729, all my ardour seemed in a moment to be extinguished, and I could no longer raise my mind to that pitch which formerly gave me such excessive pleasure." He at first imagined that this was due to laziness, and redoubled his application to study for nine months. "But there was another particular which contributed more than anything to waste my spirits and bring on me this distemper, which was, that having read many books of morality,—such as Cicero, Seneca, and Plutarch,—and being smit with their beautiful representations of virtue and philosophy, I undertook the improvement of my temper and will, along with my reason and understanding. I was continually fortifying myself with reflections against death, and poverty, and shame, and pain, and all the other calamities of life. These, no doubt, are exceeding useful when joined with an active life; because the occasion

being presented along with the reflection, works it into the soul, and makes it take a deep impression; but in solitude they serve to little other purpose than to waste the spirits — the force of the mind meeting with no resistance, but wasting itself in the air, like an arm when it misses its aim." He then tells the physician of some signs of scurvy—a malady commoner in the last century than in this—which had distressed him in his nineteenth year, and how he had treated it; how he had spent the next winter in Edinburgh—pursuing his studies, taking regular exercise in walking and riding, and cherishing his ambitions; how he returned in the spring to Ninewells, physically regenerated. "In six weeks' time I passed from one extreme to the other; and being before tall, lean, and raw-boned, became on a sudden the most sturdy, robust, healthful-like fellow you have seen, with a ruddy complexion, and a cheerful countenance." He excuses a slight valetudinarianism by a fear of lung-disease, and informs the physician that he was in the habit of riding every day, and "last summer undertook a very laborious task, which was to travel eight miles every morning and as many in the forenoon, to and from a mineral well of some reputation."[1] . . . I now "began to consider seriously how I should proceed in my philosophical inquiries. I found that the moral philosophy transmitted to us from antiquity laboured

[1] Of this mineral well, referred to more than once by Hume, Mr Campbell Swinton of Kimmerghame writes to me thus: "Within two miles of this place, and distant just about seven miles from Ninewells, there exists what I believe to be the only mineral spring in this county. Being about a mile distant from the town of Dunse, it used to be called the Dunse Spa. From the old Statistical Account of Scotland (vol. i. p. 119, and vol. ii. p. 129), it appears at one time to have

under the same inconvenience that has been found in their natural philosophy, of being entirely hypothetical, and depending more upon invention than experience; every one consulted his fancy in erecting schemes of virtue and of happiness, without regarding human nature, upon which every moral conclusion must depend. This, therefore, I resolved to make my principal study, and the source from which I would derive every truth in criticism as well as morality. I believe it is a certain fact that most of the philosophers who have gone before us have been overthrown by the greatness of their genius, and that little more is required to make a man succeed in this study than to throw off all prejudices, either for his own opinions or for those of others. At least this is all I have to depend on for the truth of my reasonings, which I have multiplied to such a degree that within these three years I find I have scribbled many a quire of paper, in which there is nothing contained but my own inventions. This, with the reading most of the celebrated books in Latin, French, and English, and acquiring the Italian, you may think a sufficient business for one in perfect health. . . . I have collected the rude materials for many volumes; but in reducing these to words, when one must bring the idea he comprehended in gross nearer to him, so as

had some reputation as a health resort. Of late years, however, it has attracted little notice. Indeed it has been alleged that its popularity did not survive the publication of a book specially intended to set forth its virtues. This book, 'An Essay on the Contents and Virtues of Dunse Spa,' was published at Edinburgh in 1761."

"For two summers," says Carlyle of Inveresk, in his Autobiography (p. 262), "I went for some weeks to Dunse Well, which was in high vogue at this period" (1753).

to contemplate its minutest parts, and keep it steadily in his eye, so as to copy these parts in order—this I found impracticable for me, nor were my spirits equal to so severe an employment. Here lay my greatest calamity. I had no hope of delivering my opinions with such elegance and neatness as to draw to me the attention of the world; and I would rather live and die in obscurity than produce them maimed and imperfect." He then traces a parallel between his own case and that of the French mystics, in their frequent complaints of a "coldness and desertion of the spirit." He says that he has not "come out of the cloud so well as they commonly tell us they have done." He wishes some more effectual remedy than anything he has hitherto tried. "I found," he says, "that as there are two things very bad for this distemper—study and idleness,—so there are two things very good—business and diversion; and that my whole time was spent betwixt the bad, with little or no share of the good. For this reason I resolved to seek out a more active life; and, though I could not quit my pretensions in learning but with my last breath, to lay them aside for a time, in order the more effectually to resume them." His choice seemed to him to lie between a travelling tutorship and mercantile work. He resolved to try the latter; and he wished to know if the doctor to whom he wrote had ever heard of a similar case, amongst all the scholars he had known; whether he might hope for a recovery; how long he must wait for it; whether, if it came, it would be thorough, so as to warrant the hope that he might return to "the fatigue of deep and abstruse thinking;" and whether he had taken the right way to reach it.

Now we do not know to whom this unsigned letter was addressed, whether it was ever despatched, and, if sent, what answer Hume received. All we know is, that it was written in London, and addressed to a physician of some "fame"; and that, immediately afterwards, Hume went down to Bristol, to be a merchant's clerk or shopman. But it is a curious document, in its directness, its honesty, its explicitness, its self-conscious anatomy, as well as in the revelation it gives of the extent and the intensity of Hume's literary ambition. It is the writing of a mental valetudinarian. We have only to suppose Spinoza in such a crisis, and composing such a letter, to see the radical difference of the two men! It is, however, an interesting psychological study, and there is much in it to admire.

CHAPTER III.

PUBLICATION OF THE 'TREATISE ON HUMAN NATURE.'

A SHORT experience of the place and the work at Bristol —whatever it was—sufficed to show Hume that, if he was not intended to become an Edinburgh lawyer, neither was he fitted for becoming an English merchant. All the writers who have sketched his career take for granted —following, indeed, his own statement in his autobiography—that he lived at Bristol for only two months. There is some doubt, however, as to this. It may have been for two years. There is nothing in Hume's letters inconsistent with the longer period; and there is a curious statement in an unlikely quarter—viz., the 'Memoirs of Hannah More,' by William Roberts (London, 1834), vol. i. p. 16—which seems to confirm it. It is to the following effect: "Among her early acquaintance, to none does she appear to have been more indebted for her advancement in critical knowledge, and the principles of correct taste, than to a linen-draper of Bristol, of the name of Peach, of whose extraordinary sayings and cultivated intellect she was often heard to express herself with great admiration. He had been the friend of Hume, who had shown his confidence in his judgment by intrusting to him the correction of his

History, in which he used to say he had discovered more than two hundred Scotticisms. But for this man, it appears, two years of the life of the historian might have passed into oblivion which were spent in a merchant's counting-house in Bristol, where he was dismissed on account of the promptitude of his pen in the correction of the letters intrusted him to copy." Now, Mr Peach may have been mistaken as to the length of time Hume spent in Bristol, or Mrs More may have mistaken the time stated by Mr Peach; but it is not impossible that Hume may himself have erred in the brief memorandum he gives in his 'Own Life.'[1]

Whether his stay in Bristol, however, was measured by years or was limited to months, it did not profit him much. His surroundings were uncongenial; and at length he broke away abruptly from the fetters which bound him, and crossed over to France, to bury himself in a retreat for the purposes of study. He went first to Paris, then to Rheims,[2] and afterwards to La Flêche (where was the famous Jesuit College), spending in the latter place two out of the three years he was in France at this time. "There," he says,[3] "I laid that plan of

[1] In an unpublished manuscript volume of anecdotes, facetiæ, &c., collected by Lord Hailes—a friend and correspondent of Hume's—and now in the collection of Historical MSS. at Newhailes, the following occurs: "Dr Tucker, Dean of Gloucester, confirmed what I had formerly heard, that the master of David Hume at Bristol quarrelled with him for correcting errors in the style of his letters. His master dealt in sugar."

[2] In a letter written to his friend Michael Ramsay, we have a graphic glimpse of the life Hume led at Rheims; and in this letter there are acute comments on the difference between French and English manners—*e.g.*, "The English politeness is always greatest when it appears the least."

[3] My Own Life.

life which I have steadily and successfully pursued. I resolved to make a very rigid frugality supply my deficiency of fortune, to maintain unimpaired my independency, and to regard every object as contemptible except the improvement of my talents in literature."

It was in the seminary of La Flêche that Descartes had been educated; and it was while living in this village that Hume composed his first, and, from a philosophical point of view, his greatest work—viz., the 'Treatise on Human Nature.' He had planned it at Ninewells, when only twenty-one years of age. He continued it at Rheims, and finished it at La Flêche, before he was twenty-five; and, composed thus early—apart from its intrinsic merit and its subsequent effect—it is certainly one of the greatest achievements in philosophical literature. It is curious, however, that he makes no reference in the 'Treatise,' or anywhere else in his works, to his predecessor Descartes—the founder of modern European philosophy — whose intellectual career so much resembled his own, and who had lived and studied in the same place. Both passed through the same mental ordeal as a preliminary to conviction. The Cartesian doubt and the scepticism of Hume had much in common to begin with—more, indeed, than was common in the methods of Socrates and the Sophists. In the negative stage of dissent and dissatisfaction with received belief, their mental experience ran on parallel lines; and, after passing through a similar crisis, both "sought a more active life" for a time, as a preparation for future work in philosophy—Hume by entering business, Descartes by joining the army. But it is (as his biographer says) "perhaps not the least striking instance

of Hume's unimaginative nature, that in none of his works, printed or manuscript, do we find an allusion to the circumstance that, while framing his own theories, he trod the same pavement that had upwards of a century earlier borne the weight of one whose fame and influence on human thought was so much of the same character as he himself panted to attain."[1]

We may contrast him at this stage with Wordsworth, who, while an undergraduate at Cambridge, was much more impressed by the fact that Milton and Newton had been there before him, than by any mathematical teaching he received. He tells us he

> "Could not tread
> Ground where the grass had yielded to the steps
> Of generations of illustrious men
> Unmoved."[2]

In this we see the radical or constitutional difference between the scientific and the poetic temperament. Poets and men of science belong to different categories in Nature's inventory of genius.

While, however, Hume showed scarcely any sign of a sympathetic historical imagination, he was specially alive to the significance of contemporary events. There is little doubt that it was to the alleged miracles, said to have been wrought at the tomb of the Jansenist Abbé Paris, in the cemetery of St Medard—which were creating some excitement in France before he went over—that we owe these thoughts on the nature and evidence of Miracle, which were first hinted at in the 'Treatise,' and were afterwards expanded in the Essay on miracles.

[1] Life and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 58.
[2] The Prelude, Book i.

Hume refers to these miracles at length in his Essay; and during his stay at La Flêche he had to discuss both the possibility and the reality of the miracles which the Jesuit fathers reported to have occurred within their convent. At this stage, however, there is a disappointing blank in his autobiography. As formerly of his life at Ninewells, so now we would like to know more of the three years Hume spent in France, of the course of his thoughts, and the books he read. The 'Treatise' is all that we have to enlighten us. In his 'Own Life' he tells us that he spent the time "very agreeably." Again, to Henry Home he writes (Dec. 1737),—"I was alone, in profound tranquillity in France;" but he gives no details as to the course of his studies. Probably he was less occupied in reading than in composition, in reducing his system—already well thought out—to literary form and order. Amongst the Minto papers there is a letter from Hume to Gilbert Elliot, in which he says: "'Tis not long ago that I burned an old manuscript book, wrote before I was twenty, which contained, page after page, the gradual progress of my thoughts on that head." (He is referring to his 'Dialogues on Religion.') "It began with an anxious search after arguments to confirm the common opinion; doubts stole in, dispelled, returned; were again dissipated, returned again; and it was a perpetual struggle of a restless imagination against inclination—perhaps against reason." With this disclosure of the kind of manuscript Hume wrote "before he was twenty," we may conclude that his system, as disclosed in the 'Treatise,' was matured, in its main features, before he crossed the Channel, and that, when at La Flêche, he was mainly

occupied in writing it out. This remarkable work—finished when he was only twenty-five years of age—is his chief contribution to Philosophy proper.. It is not a metaphysical treatise, its intellectual result being that metaphysics are sunk in psychology; but since it deals with the ultimate problems of human knowledge, and offers a solution of these for our acceptance, it is a philosophical work in the truest sense of the term.

Hume came over to London in September 1737, bringing with him the manuscript of his 'Treatise,' to arrange as to its publication. Remaining in town till the close of the following year, he busied himself with the revision of his book; and it is evident that he suppressed some portions, and altered others, in his anxiety to make it generally acceptable. Some months after his arrival in England he wrote to his relative, Henry Home (Dec. 1737): "I am at present castrating my work—that is, cutting off its nobler parts; that is, endeavouring it shall give as little offence as possible." [1] Three months later (March 1738), acknowledging an introduction to Bishop Butler, which he had asked from Home, he said: "I am anxious to have the Doctor's opinion.[2] My own I dare not trust to; both because it concerns myself, and because it is so variable that I know not how to fix it. Sometimes it elates me above the clouds; at other times it depresses me with doubts and fears." [3]

At length he got a liberal arrangement made with a publisher—John Noone of Cheapside—and very formally

[1] Tytler's Life of Kames, vol. i. p. 84.

[2] *I.e.*, of the 'Treatise.'

[3] Tytler's Life of Kames, vol. i. p. 88.

concluded; and towards the end of September 1738 he went down to Scotland to await, in the retirement of Ninewells, the news of its success or failure. The work was not actually issued, however, till January 1739, and then only in part—the first two volumes appearing in that year, and the third the year after. Hume was extremely anxious about the fate of his book. He was disappointed to find, six months afterwards, that its sale had been indifferent; and in the story of his 'Own Life' he says: "Never literary attempt was more unfortunate. It fell *dead-born from the press*, without reaching such distinction as even to excite a murmur among the zealots." In point of fact it had been reviewed—with a mixture of severity and appreciation, though without insight—in a notice,[1] which Hume described to Hutcheson (March 1740) as "somewhat abusive." The review had no critical value, because the writer had no knowledge of philosophy; but, while indiscriminate in his assault, he speaks thus of the 'Treatise': "It bears incontestable marks of a great capacity, of a soaring genius, young, and not yet thoroughly practised."

Criticism of the philosophy of the 'Treatise' is reserved for a later chapter, but its literary features and general merits may be indicated now. Its admirable literary form has perhaps not been sufficiently noted—its unequalled *lucidity*, both of thought and of expression. It is clear, forcible, untechnical. It is also unencumbered by learning. We would often like to know, as already remarked, how far Hume had read the ancient

[1] In the 'History of the Works of the Learned'—the earliest of English critical Magazines.

philosophers, and through what medium he reached, or tried to reach, their thoughts; but he never tells us. He makes occasional references to Diogenes Laertius, and to Bayle's Dictionary—with which he was evidently familiar; but he deals with most of the problems discussed by him in their perennial aspects, as questions which might be settled without reference to past opinion on the subject, and not as questions having an ancestry in philosophical literature.[1]

The 'Treatise' seems to have been written at intervals, and therefore composed in fragments; but, whether planned at Ninewells, or written out at Rheims and La Flêche, or revised in London, it was throughout an indigenous Scottish growth. In the literature of modern philosophy there is perhaps no work, except the 'Ethics' of Spinoza, so peculiarly the product of a single mind, working alone, and apparently unindebted to the past. Hume's debt to the past was of course most real and far-reaching, but he was not conscious of it; and it did not affect the spontaneity of his work, or lessen its originality. There are structural faults in the 'Treatise,' however, in virtue of which it ranks beneath the works of those philosophers to which it is so much superior in the points already noted. It is frequently dogmatic, if not arrogant, in tone; and the links of sympathy are awanting, which would in all likelihood have bound it more closely to humanity, had it contained

1 The following sentence from a footnote to his fifteenth 'Essay' is characteristic: "The intention of these Essays is not so much to explain accurately the sentiments of the ancient sects of philosophy, as to deliver the sentiments of sects which naturally form themselves in the world. . . . I have given each of them the name of the philosophical sect to which it bears the greatest affinity."

those historical allusions of which it is destitute. Hume afterwards regretted[1] the "positive air" which pervades the book. In addition to this, there is little or no attempt at method. The 'Treatise' does not advance with systematic, orderly precision. There is an occasional want of consecutiveness. It is sometimes diffuse, and here and there repetitive. A want of precision in the use of terms—that irritating feature of many a philosophy—must also be noted. Some of the most radical and important words are used in more senses than one; and we are occasionally at a loss to understand the precise signification in which they are being employed. Hume, however, does not transgress in this respect so much as his predecessor Locke had done; nor than his contemporaries, Bishops Berkeley and Butler; and less than his successors in the Scottish school of philosophy, till we come to Hamilton. It is also to be noted that almost no opinions are advanced on scientific questions, which future knowledge has upset. Hume knew little of science in detail. There was not much contemporary science for him to know; but he grasped the general principles on which all science, and scientific criticism, rest.

More important still,—while a good deal of contemporary thought was playing on the upper surface of problems, he went down, in a sense, to the roots of things. He saw clearly that, if the philosophy which he announced was accepted, there would be an intellectual revolution in the beliefs of mankind, that the speculative conclusions to which he had come—or rather, the want of "conclusions"—would affect both the theory

[1] In a letter to Gilbert Stewart.

and the practice of his time. He therefore expected that his 'Treatise' would make some stir; and he looked forward to the result not only with equanimity, but with the ambition of an intellectual athlete, ready for the fray. He seems, however, to have anticipated a greater turmoil, in orthodox circles, than was actually produced by the publication of his book. He would have liked to have seen, if not a violent, at least a thorough unsettlement of traditionary opinion. He was disappointed; and chagrin followed the disappointment. From his letters written at this time we see how fully aware he was of the extent of the divergence between his own views, and those generally current. In a letter to Henry Home—who had asked Hume to give him some idea of his system before the publication of the 'Treatise' —he said, "My opinions are so new, and even some terms I am obliged to make use of, that I could not propose by any abridgment to give my system an air of likelihood." Again, fourteen months later (February 1739), to the same friend: "My principles are so remote from all the vulgar sentiments on the subject, that were they to take root, they would produce an almost total alteration in philosophy; and you know revolutions of this kind are not easily brought about."

The reception which the 'Treatise' met with, however, both disappointed and damped his ardour. He looked for an immediate result, which never came; and he failed to see—or to estimate the significance of the fact—that the great mass of his contemporaries were unable to trace any connection between his speculations and their opinions and actions. The result induced him to turn for a time from the questions of speculative

philosophy to the facts of experience. It led him to devote himself to historical study, and to social problems. This was indeed the natural outcome of a philosophy which denied access to the substantial, and shut the door to all ontological reality. The logical consequence was to abandon inquiries as to the relation of essence to appearance—the substantial to the phenomenal—and to study phenomena alone. The future course of Hume's intellectual activity was, to a large extent, determined by this circumstance; and the whole tendency of British philosophising was influenced by it. It is as useless to raise the question what the story of philosophy in England in the latter half of the eighteenth century would have been, if the metaphysical interest had continued all-dominant in Hume, as it is to speculate on the different course which European history would have taken had Charlemagne never lived, or had the Goths not invaded Italy. What the student of the evolution of human thought and character has to note is the fact that the failure of the 'Treatise' to rouse the interest of Hume's contemporaries, and to evoke immediate criticism, led him to abandon Philosophy for a time.

Before following him in the next stage of his intellectual life, we may revert again to the alterations which Hume made on the original manuscript of the 'Treatise' before he sent it to Bishop Butler. In a letter to Henry Home (December 1737), he told him of these changes, and added: "This is a piece of cowardice for which I blame myself; but I was resolved not to be an enthusiast in Philosophy, while I was blaming other enthusiasms."[1] This is a characteristic disclosure in more respects than

[1] Tytler's Life of Lord Kames, vol. i. p. 84.

one. We may or may not blame him for his reticence in holding back opinions, which he says he feared "would give too much offence, as the world is disposed at present;" but we do condemn his impatient thirst for fame, and the means he took to secure it. He would have sacrificed what he regarded as the philosophical completeness of his work, if he could have won rapid and widespread distinction as an author. He was even "apprehensive lest the chief reward he should have for some time" would be—what would have satisfied a nobler nature most of all—"the pleasure of studying such important subjects, and the approbation of a few judges." It is evident that, at this period, he preferred the approbation of the multitude to the recognition of experts; although he told Henry Home that he had been "on his guard against the frailty" of a "blind fondness" for "his own performances." The want of immediate popularity depressed him; and, writing again from Ninewells (June 1739)—after hearing from London that the sale of his 'Philosophy' had not been great—he said: "I am now out of humour with myself; but doubt not, in a little time, to be only out of humour with the world, like other unsuccessful authors."

CHAPTER IV.

LITERARY VENTURES, STRUGGLES, AND SUCCESSES.

The seemingly unsuccessful author was not to be defeated, however, by the cold reception of his book. His temperament was too active, and his thirst for recognition too keen, to permit him to acquiesce in the verdict of the hour. He had gone down to Scotland; and living with his brother and sister at Ninewells—in a cheerful home, though in comparative retirement—he recovered from his disappointment, and began to address himself with some ardour to a study of the moral elements in human experience, in the same place where he had previously wrought out his intellectual system. In the course of these studies, he had an interesting correspondence with Francis Hutcheson, who then filled the chair of Moral Philosophy in the University of Glasgow. To him Hume sent a manuscript from Ninewells containing the results he had reached—which afterwards became the third volume of the 'Treatise on Human Nature'—the two volumes published in London in 1739 containing only the intellectual part of his philosophy. As was to be expected, he found more to learn from the criticism of Hutcheson than from his other

correspondents; and while that criticism did not induce him to change his opinions, or even to modify his utilitarianism, it led him to alter certain passages which Hutcheson considered imprudent. Hume thought his friend too fastidious; but their correspondence at this time exhibits these two Scottish philosophers in a genial light. Hutcheson complained that there was a want of warmth in what Hume had written, a lack of enthusiasm in the cause of virtue. Hume defended himself by saying that he was neither the anatomist of human nature, nor its painter; and that warm eulogies did not help a metaphysician in dealing with the moral problem. He said, however,—"I intend to make a new trial if it be possible to make the moralist and the metaphysician agree a little better." (In passing, it may be noted that, in the preparation of this third volume —and in his moral studies generally—Hume lets us know the authors he was studying, and even following, as he does not do in the case of the earlier volumes. He says to Hutcheson (September 1732): "Upon the whole, I desire to take my catalogue of virtues from Cicero's 'Offices.' . . . I had, indeed, the book in my eye in all my reasonings.")

In the midst of these ethical studies he apparently thought of leaving Ninewells, and, following the example of his friend Michael Ramsay, becoming a travelling tutor for a time—the wish to see something of other lands, and to widen his knowledge of the world, being his probable motive. Nothing came of it, however. In another interesting letter to Hutcheson (March 1740)—in which he asks his assistance in arranging the publication of his third volume through

a new publisher — Hume wrote: "I assure you, that without running any of the heights of scepticism, I am apt in a cool hour to suspect, in general, that most of my reasonings will be more useful by furnishing hints, and exciting people's curiosity, than as containing any principles that will augment the stock of knowledge that must pass to future ages. I wish I could discover more fully the particulars wherein I have failed. I admire so much the candour I have observed in Mr Locke, yourself, and a very few more, that I would be extremely ambitious of imitating it by frankly confessing my errors."

The third volume of the 'Treatise,' dealing with Morals, appeared in 1740. Being psychological rather than metaphysical, it has less philosophical vigour than its predecessors. It deals with the facts of experience, not with the philosophy of Ethics; and is more miscellaneous than what was written at La Flêche. The existence of an intuitive "moral sense" is admitted; but the subjectivity (and therefore the relativity) of the standard of duty, and the utilitarian test of the worth of actions, founded on their tendencies alone,—which had been foreshadowed in the correspondence with Hutcheson, — are conjoined with this intuitive sense. In discussing 'Justice and Injustice' in the second part of this volume, Hume deals with the origin of Law, Government, and Property, and anticipates his own subsequent treatment of these subjects in his 'Essays.' Criticism of the volume, and of Hume's ethical doctrine, is reserved for a future chapter.

A very interesting series of "extracts from a collection of memorandums" found amongst Hume's papers, and

evidently jotted down about this time, is given in Mr Burton's 'Life.' They are notes of his reading, chiefly on political and economic subjects. Some of these were afterwards made use of by himself; and others by Adam Smith, in his 'Wealth of Nations'—Hume having generously put the whole at his friend's disposal.[1]

Meanwhile Hume's studies in morals and politics advanced, and his literary productiveness kept pace with his research. Early in 1741 he published anonymously, at Edinburgh, the first volume of his 'Essays, Moral and Political,' which was followed by a second volume in 1742—the reason of the anonymity being his anxiety to disclaim, or at least to conceal, the fact of his having written the 'Treatise.' In this we see additional evidence of his craving for literary fame. He was ready to forget, and even to repudiate, the work that "fell dead-born from the press," lest it should interfere with his chance of success in the new venture he was making—although he must have known that the 'Treatise' surpassed the 'Essays' in philosophic merit. These 'Essays' were republished towards the close of 1742, recast in 1748 (with two of the original essays omitted, and three new ones added), and they became the well-known 'Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary,' which passed through so many subsequent editions.

And now, at last, Hume had the reward he sought. From the very first this volume was a great literary suc-

[1] It may be worth while to note that Adam Smith was first introduced to Hume in his seventeenth year by Francis Hutcheson, while the former was attending his class at Glasgow. Hutcheson thought that Hume might with propriety send a copy of his 'Treatise' to this most promising of students in the Western University, which Hume accordingly did.

cess. If Bishop Butler was silent as to the 'Treatise,' he is said—and it is Hume himself who tells us—to have recommended the 'Essays' everywhere;[1] and admirable assuredly they are, as specimens of the literary "essay"—clear, forcible, bright, trenchant—full of sparkle, interest, and animation. Perhaps their special feature, however, is their fair-mindedness, their intellectual impartiality, and the combination of breadth of view with critical acuteness in matters of detail. They have very little bias of any kind, and almost no provincial colour. In the 'Philosophical Essays' his pictures of the "Epicurean," the "Stoic," and the "Sceptic" are dispassionate analyses of character; and many things are said in them which have a distinct autobiographic value. In his 'Social and Political Essays,' Hume's treatment of "The Origin of Government" and the "First Principles of Government" is admirable; but perhaps the essays on "The Parties of Great Britain" and on "National Character" are most noteworthy. They are full of political wisdom, and are not likely to be superseded in literature. Before their publication Bolingbroke had written some acute things about the English Constitution; but Hume owed little to Bolingbroke, and in these 'Essays' he shows not only much originality and grasp, but also a remarkable prevision in forecasting the results of social and political movements, which were subsequently wrought out on the stage of British history. In addition to this, the

[1] Hume and Butler had more in common than meets the superficial eye—although the ultimate doctrine taught in the 'Analogy' is very different from that maintained in the 'Treatise' or the 'Essays.' The points of correspondence and the extent of the difference will be noted further on.

germs of several of Adam Smith's economic doctrines, and of some of Bentham's, are to be found in these 'Essays.' In literary form their merit is great; but it is greater as regards their substance. They are weighted with economic wisdom, with happy and suggestive thoughts on questions of Government; and on the relations of party to party their political sagacity is great. If the 'Wealth of Nations' was the chief contribution to the economic literature of England of the eighteenth century, these 'Essays' prepared the way for it; and Smith's debt to Hume was both direct and indirect.

For two years and more he lived quietly at Ninewells, pondering many questions, and in part recovering his loss in a knowledge of the Greek language. A brilliant circle of literary and political friends surrounded Hume at this time, amongst whom may be mentioned William Mure of Caldwell, Sir Gilbert Elliot, Lord Elibank, Colonel Edmonstone, and Mr Oswald of Dunnikier, as well as Francis Hutcheson, and Dr (afterwards Principal) Leechman of Glasgow. With some of these Hume carried on an interesting correspondence. The culture and the scholarship of the Scottish gentry of that period were remarkable—many of them, after studying at their own colleges, completing their education at the foreign universities of Europe; and there is no doubt that their accomplishments were largely due, as Mr Burton suggests, to the happy continuance, through part of the eighteenth century, of that custom so prevalent in the sixteenth and seventeenth, when many Scotsmen were to be found not only as students, but as teachers, at Paris, Bologna, and Leyden.[1] Hume's correspondence

[1] One of the evidences of that scholarship and culture to which Mr

with this circle of friends shows much vivacity and not a little humour. In his letters to Mure of Caldwell, his friendly advices were always enlivened by wit: *e.g.*, he says, September 1742,—"Tell your sister that I am as grave as she imagines a philosopher should be. I laugh only once a-fortnight, sigh tenderly once a-week, but look sullen every moment. In short, none of Ovid's metamorphoses ever showed so absolute a change from a human creature into a beast—I mean from a gallant into a philosopher." Hume occasionally crossed from Edinburgh to Kirkcaldy to spend a few days with Oswald at Dunnikier (who was member of Parliament for the burgh); and he owed much to his intercourse with that sagacious friend.

About this time he wrote his 'Dialogues on Natural Religion.' They were not published till after his death; but Sir Gilbert Elliot saw the manuscript in 1751. The book is a remarkable one; and, as a revelation of the man and his opinions, is perhaps more valuable than any of his writings except the 'Treatise.' In their literary form we can again trace the influence of Cicero; but in substance they are, like the 'Treatise,' an indigenous Scottish growth: and, kept beside him for so many years—twenty-seven in all—and repeatedly revised and corrected, they represent his mature opinions, so far

Burton refers is noteworthy—viz., the editions of the classics issued from the Scottish press by the Ruddimans and Foulises, and of foreign works such as Montesquieu's 'Esprit des Lois.' As demand regulated supply, then as now, such books would never have been issued had there not been an educated reading public amongst the Scottish gentry and professional men in the first half of the eighteenth century. In 1765, Carlyle of Inveresk laments that the habit had died out, and that in consequence the majority of lairds "could talk of nothing but bullocks" (Autobiography, p. 459).

as a philosophical dialogue could do so. The writing of these dialogues would doubtless solace him during the years in which he was still looking out for a career, and making curiously fitful efforts to secure one. In a subsequent chapter an attempt will be made to appraise their philosophical merits.

His position was now peculiar. He had made both an unsuccessful and a successful literary venture, and he must have been conscious of ability to achieve something durable both in philosophy and in literature; but he had not yet realised an income, or even seen his way to an honest independence. Possibly he may have sometimes regretted that he had turned his back upon the more lucrative professions, and embarked in the uncertainties of a literary career; while the maternal judgment as to "weak-mindedness" seemed almost realised in practice. When the professorship of Moral Philosophy in Edinburgh was about to become vacant, the Lord Provost, John Coutts (whose son founded the London Bank of Coutts & Company), asked Hume to let the University patrons know that he would become a candidate for the chair. It was then held by Dr (afterwards Sir John) Pringle; but the efficiency with which its duties were discharged may be judged of by the fact that Pringle also held the office of army physician to the Earl of Stair,[1] who happened to command the British troops in the Low Countries; and, preferring to attend the Earl abroad, rather than to teach philosophy at home, he had been absent from Edinburgh for two years, his class being taught by deputy. Provost Coutts

[1] Mr Murray says he was physician to the Military Hospital in Flanders.

seems to have wished Hume to be appointed, and all the councillors, excepting two or three, were, according to Hume, in his favour; but on Pringle's demanding another year's absence from the duties of his office, the Provost yielded to a proposal made in the Council, by which he got the alternative of either resigning the chair at once, or binding himself—if the work were done by deputy for twelve months longer—to resign his army commission, and return next year. Meanwhile Hume, having been offered a travelling tutorship (with the grandson of Lord Galloway as his ward), wrote to his friend Mure of Caldwell, that Francis Hutcheson of Glasgow, the "celebrated and benevolent moralist," and Dr Leechman, were opposed to him, as a candidate for both offices, on the ground of his opinions. Next year Pringle resigned the chair, and the Council offered it to Hutcheson (April 1745). Hutcheson declined it, on the score of age and infirmity, although only fifty years old; and died two years later. The Council then deliberated whether they should fill up the chair at once, or delay in order that they might have "the ministers' avisamentum"—whatever that was—to guide their choice. The latter proposal was carried; and two months later they appointed William Cleghorn, who had been Pringle's deputy, to the office. Before the election took place, Hume had probably discovered that he had no chance of success. At any rate he thought it advisable to be out of the way while the matter was under discussion;[1] and even before the chair was offered to Hutcheson, he

[1] In a letter to Matthew Sharp of Hoddam (April 1745), he speaks of "the secrecy with which I stole away from Edinburgh, and which I thought necessary for preserving my interest there."

had left Scotland (January 1745), and a new and somewhat extraordinary chapter in his life began.

In his autobiography he says: "In 1745 I received a letter from the Marquis of Annandale, inviting me to come and live with him in England. . . . I lived with him a twelvemonth." A study of Hume's correspondence during that year[1] shows that, in a peculiarly trying position, he exercised a singular amount of generosity, forbearance, and self-restraint. A certain Captain Vincent, cousin of the Marquis's mother, who had nominal charge of him, gave Hume a vast amount of trouble; and his conduct toward Vincent, during that year of ignominy, was as magnanimous as Vincent's was selfish and mean. At first Hume was pleased with Vincent, described him as a "mighty honest, friendly man" (and Vincent was much pleased with Hume); but closer intercourse undeceived him.[2] Hume has been blamed for ever accepting such a post. But, in judging of his conduct, it must be remembered that what led him to undertake the office was his desire to attain an honest independence; and, however disagreeable it was, there were very few situations open at that time to the sons of the poorer Scottish lairds.[3] The

[1] His letters were collected and edited by Thomas Murray in 1841.

[2] There is no doubt that Vincent had personal motives to serve in the administration of the Annandale estates (which were the subject of a lengthened lawsuit both in the Scottish and the English courts); and it was Hume's perceiving this, and wishing to defeat his selfishness, that was the cause of Vincent's antipathy to him.

[3] It was not uncommon for the younger sons of the Scottish nobility and gentry—before the '45 and after it—to become "village tradesmen." Goldsmith tells of a Scottish peer who kept a glove-shop. Thomas, the second last Earl of Hyndford, was a Writer to the Signet. Andrew, the last Earl, had been a millwright. It is a curious illustration of how "times go by turns," that in the last cen-

post was certainly not one which Hume would have *chosen* for himself. But what was he to do? He had to live by his wits. If University chairs were closed against him, and the editorship of a literary journal was not open, and no office in the Civil Service of his country presented itself, he was obliged to find some other means of honestly maintaining himself. It is certain that the proposal to live with Lord Annandale was unsolicited by Hume. It was made by the lunatic youth himself, who had been "charmed with something contained in his 'Essays';" and Hume accepted the post, simply because he wished some definite employment which he might conjoin with literary work. Three years afterwards Lord Annandale was found, by a decision of the Court of Chancery, to be a lunatic, and to have been so during all the time that Hume lived with him. It is also clear that, having once entered upon the office, Hume felt that he owed a duty to the Annandale family, and that it would have been a wrong done to the Marquis to throw up the office—as he was frequently tempted to do—because of its uncongenial and even irritating accompaniments. He often regretted that he had left the honourable poverty of his Scottish home for the slavery at Weldehall. He described his situation to Lord Elibank as "melancholy," although he charitably ascribed the caprices of the unfortunate nobleman solely to "physical causes."

A great deal has been said about Hume's pertinacity, in after-years, in endeavouring to obtain the residue

tury to become a pedlar was deemed one of the honourable ways by which a gentleman could acquire a fortune.—See Heron's Journey in Scotland, vol. i. p. 89.

of the debt due to him from the Annandale family—which Captain Vincent would not pay—especially since he attained to comparatively easy circumstances in later life; and when Hume's habitual generosity is spoken of, this claim against the Annandale estate is sometimes quoted as an element in the opposite scale. The legality of the claim was undoubted, but its payment formed the subject of litigation in the Court of Session as late as 1761. Whether Hume was paid or not we do not know. The case was not enrolled in the Minute-book of the Court; and if settled in Hume's favour, it must have been settled "extra-judicially." He was perfectly justified, however, in insisting on his legal rights; and it is easy to understand why the man who subsequently gave up his entire salary, as Keeper of the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh, to assist the blind poet Blacklock, would not see that he ought to abandon a perfectly legal claim against a rich estate, of which the surplus accumulations amounted to £400,000. The incident recalls a somewhat parallel one in the career of Spinoza, who, when his sisters tried to defraud him of his patrimony—owing to his having left the synagogue—contested the case at law, won his suit, and then handed over all the money as a free gift to the sisters. Both in reference to the Annandale debt, and to his subsequent demand for the payment of arrears of salary as Judge-Advocate under General St Clair, we see that when Hume was once convinced of the justice of a claim, he showed great tenacity in insisting on it. This was, however, but a mark of his strong sense of justice, and of the importance he attached to its practical realisation.

CHAPTER V.

OFFICIAL LIFE AND APPOINTMENTS; VARIOUS PUBLICATIONS.

Being freed from the lunatic Marquis, we find Hume, in 1746, thinking next of enlisting in the army!—an intention which suggests Coleridge's curious escapade after leaving Cambridge. Instead of enlisting, however, as Coleridge did, Hume received an invitation from General St Clair to attend him "as a secretary to his expedition, which was at first meant against Canada, but ended in an incursion on the coast of France."[1] Between the offer and its acceptance by Hume, only a day or two intervened; and having accepted it, he tells us he was at once asked whether he would definitely enter the military service or not. We may note that Adam Ferguson, who was then chaplain to the 42d Regiment, accompanied him in this visit to Brittany;[2] but it is unnecessary to particularise the details of an ignominious expedition, not creditable to England, nor to any one connected with it. Such a mode of warfare — making a raid on a peaceful seaboard, and ravaging its villages—is not only, as Mr Burton calls it, "a relic of

[1] My Own Life. [2] Carlyle's Autobiography, p. 282.

barbarism," carrying us back to the fierce Border forays of a savage time; but it is very seldom of any use, from a military point of view. The only advantage which Hume derived from his connection with it was that it widened his experience; and as he was both Secretary to St Clair and Judge-Advocate of the Forces—the latter post requiring administrative tact, as well as a knowledge of law, and a power of rapid decision and action—the experience which he gained during this term of office was of much use to him subsequently as an historical writer. He described the incidents of the expedition in graphic letters to his brother and to others. He had "a great curiosity," he tells us, "to see a real campaign;" and after a short interval was introduced, much more effectually, as we shall see, to the life of camps and courts. Writing to Henry Home, however, he says that his experience with General St Clair had not spoiled his relish for study and retirement. He would return "very cheerfully to books, leisure, and solitude in the country; . . . and frequent disappointments have taught me that nothing need be despaired of, as well as that nothing can be depended on."

The expedition over, Hume returned to Ninewells, and again enjoyed the quiet of the old family home amongst his books. His mother, brother, and sister lived together there, and the brief visit of the younger son to that somewhat secluded circle would be an event of interest to every member of it. We have no very distinct picture of their life or doings, in a home which Hume called, and must doubtless have found to be, a "retreat." He would probably spend a good deal of his time out of doors, by the banks of the Whitadder, sauntering down

to 'Tibbie Fowler's Glen,' or riding to his old haunt, the mineral well at Duns.

A paper, preserved amongst the Edinburgh Royal Society's manuscripts, gives us a tolerable index to Hume's character at this time. Though written out by some one else, it is corrected by Hume, and may very possibly have been intended as a bit of mental anatomy or self-portraiture. It is entitled, "Character of ——, written by himself;" and the following occurs in it: "6. Has never been hurt by his enemies, because he never hated any one of them. 7. Exempt from vulgar prejudices, full of his own.[1] 8. Very bashful, somewhat modest, no way humble. 9. A fool, capable of performances which few wise men can execute. 10. A wise man, guilty of indiscretions which the greatest simpletons can perceive. 11. Sociable, though he lives in solitude. 12. An enthusiast, without religion; a philosopher, who despairs to attain truth; a moralist, who prefers instinct to reason; a gallant, who gives no offence to husbands and mothers; a scholar, without the ostentation of learning."

We must pass over the attempts made by him about this time to compose some stanzas in verse—we cannot say to write poetry—as they do not rise above mediocrity, and are scarcely superior to the stanza said to have been scratched by him on a pane of glass in a Carlisle inn, which so amused Sir Walter Scott that he proposed as "a good quiz" to advertise 'The Poetical Works of David Hume, with notes critical, historical, and so forth.'[2]

He was summoned a second time from his literary pur-

[1] *E.g.*, His admiration for, and eulogy of, Wilkie's 'Epigoniad.'

[2] See Lockhart's Life of Sir Walter Scott, vol. v. p. 98.

suits, somewhat suddenly, by General St Clair, who seems to have liked him greatly. St Clair had been appointed the chief of a military embassy, about to proceed to the Courts of Vienna and Turin, to see that the Austrians and Piedmontese furnished their stipulated number of troops to the general European war; and to Hume he offered the post of Secretary to the Forces. It was at once accepted; and Hume's tenure of this office for a second time had a marked effect in enlarging his knowledge of foreign countries, and also in interesting him in contemporary European politics. He had looked forward (as he tells his friend Oswald) to "seeing courts and camps,"[1] believing that this would be of the greatest service to him as a man of letters and a historian. To Henry Home he said (February 1748), the only thing that made him hesitate to accept the post was "an inward reluctance to leave my books, and leisure, and retreat;" and in his autobiography he says, of the two following years spent in the capacity of secretary, that they were "almost the only interruption to my studies which occurred in the course of my life." He sent home a somewhat minute Journal of his travels and experiences abroad to his brother Joseph at Ninewells. They went through Holland, up the Rhine, to Frankfort, and on to Ratisbon, thence to Vienna, returning through the Tyrol to Italy, and ending at Turin. Many of his observations in these letters are acute, if some are commonplace: *e.g.*, of travelling he says, "Nothing serves more to remove prejudice." Of Germany—then broken

[1] In this, the student of the history of philosophy and of the lives of the philosophers will see a resemblance to an incident in the career of Descartes.

up into a number of petty principalities—he wrote: "Were it united, it would be the greatest power that ever was in the world"—a curious forecast, in the light of recent history. It is remarkable, however, that while passing through some of the finest European scenery, he seems to have taken no particular interest in it. In his appreciation of mountains, he is on the æsthetic level of Dr Johnson. They are "savage mountains." It is always *the official* that is writing home, not the traveller with an eye for the beautiful, or even with any special regard for places historically interesting. For example, he gives a longish account of Cologne, without ever mentioning its cathedral! He passes up the Rhine, and notes neither the ruined castles nor the Siebengebirge. Nature, in its grand or sublime aspects, had no charm to him. Medievalism—whether its spirit was to be seen haunting a cathedral, or lingering in the nooks and crannies of an old-world town, or surviving in customs consecrated by age and venerable by long tradition—had no attractions for him. Its memorials did not rouse his curiosity, any more than the wayside flowers at Ninewells awakened his enthusiasm.[1] Not only so; but, although he was travelling on a military expedition for a military purpose, one might infer — so far as these familiar letters to his brother indicate—that the Continent was in the profoundest peace!

[1] There is an apparent exception to this lack of enthusiasm. When he came to Mantua he wrote: "We are now in classic ground; and I have kissed the earth that produced Virgil, and have admired those fertile plains that he has so finely celebrated." But the exception is only apparent. It was Virgil, not the place, that interested him. He says to his brother, "You are tired, and so am I, with the description of countries."

This expedition, however, did one important service to Hume. It showed him that the historical critic had something more to do than merely to record military movements, and that the inner forces which sway the life of a people are of more importance than the most brilliant incidents of the battle-field. It is true that as a historian he did not sufficiently note the evolution of human character, and the play of the myriad forces that make up the drama of existence; but he noted these more than his predecessors had done. He was less of an annalist, and more of an interpreter, than they had been.

We have a curious account of his personal appearance at this time from the young Irish politician Lord Charlemont, who met him at Turin, but whose account must be received with some very obvious deductions. He first praises Hume's extreme kindliness, and then says:—

"Nature, I believe, never formed any man more unlike his real character than David Hume. The powers of physiognomy were baffled by his countenance; neither could the most skilful in that science pretend to discern the smallest trace of the faculties of his mind in the unmeaning features of his visage. His face was broad and flat, his mouth wide, and without any other expression than that of imbecility; his eyes vacant and spiritless; and the corpulence of his whole person was far better fitted to convey the idea of a turtle-eating alderman than that of a refined philosopher. His speech in English was rendered ridiculous by the broadest Scotch accent, and his French was, if possible, still more laughable; so that wisdom most certainly never disguised herself before in so uncouth a garb."[1]

During his absence in Italy in 1748, his 'Philosophical

[1] See the Memoirs of the Political and Private Life of James Caulfield, Earl of Charlemont. By Francis Hardy. P. 8.

Essays concerning Human Understanding,'—afterwards (in the 3d edition) called 'An Inquiry concerning Human Understanding,'—were published anonymously, just as his previous volume of 'Essays, Moral and Political' had been. The second edition (1751) contained his name.[1] His desire was that the earlier 'Treatise on Human Nature' should be forgotten, and that his later 'Essays' should take its place, as an exposition of his philosophical system. In an "advertisement" to a later edition of the 'Inquiry,' he expresses the wish that it alone should be regarded as containing his philosophical principles and sentiments; and, in a letter to his friend Elliot in 1751, he said :—

"I believe the 'Philosophical Essays' contain everything of consequence relating to the Understanding which you could meet with in the 'Treatise,' and I give you my advice against reading the latter. By shortening and simplifying the questions, I really render them much more complete. *Addo dum minuo.* The philosophical principles are the same in both ; but I was carried away by the heat of youth and invention to publish too precipitately. So vast an undertaking, planned before I was one-and-twenty, and composed before twenty-five, must necessarily be very defective. I have repented my haste a hundred and a hundred times."

This judgment of the author is not, however, the verdict of posterity, any more than it endorses Milton's opinion that his 'Paradise Regained' is superior to 'Paradise Lost.' There was no recantation of previous doctrine in

[1] It is curious to note a change introduced in this edition into the title of one of the Essays, which is altered from "The Practical Consequences of Natural Religion" to "Of a Particular Providence and a Future State."

the 'Inquiry,' no explicit disavowal of his earlier opinion; but there was a loss, both of force and of luminousness, in the way in which the doctrine was unfolded. Hume's philosophy appears in the 'Inquiry' diluted of its former strength. He was mortified, however, to find that this second philosophical work—expressly prepared to make his system less "caviare to the general"—created scarcely any more interest than the 'Treatise' had done; while popular discussions, like those by Dr Middleton,[1] stirred the country: and he had to endure the further mortification of finding that (happily for the literature of Philosophy) he could not obliterate his early work. His constant wish to suppress the more juvenile performance, with its "positive air," throws a good deal of light upon his character. It is not to his credit. It shows him as a victim to the too common infirmity of literary men—preferring a sudden success to enduring reputation and posthumous fame; but when we look back upon his work, in the light of the subsequent evolution of European thought, we see that it is upon the 'Treatise,' and not upon the 'Inquiry,' that his philosophical fame reposes.

While Hume was in London in 1749, his mother died. He felt the loss acutely. Dr Carlyle of Inveresk—Jupiter Carlyle—wrote of the event thus: "David and he" (referring to Hume and the Hon. Robert Boyle) "were both in London at the period when David's mother died. Mr Boyle, hearing of it, soon after went into his apartment, for they lodged in the same house, where they found him in the deepest affliction, and in a flood of tears." Hume at once returned to Ninewells. In his account of his 'Own Life,' he puts it—with laconic

[1] A Free Inquiry into Miraculous Powers, &c.

force, in which tenderness is hid—"I went down in 1749, and lived two years with my brother at his country house, for my mother was now dead." During these years he carried on a varied correspondence with a number of his contemporaries, such as Dr Clephane of London—a physician and brother officer, who had been with him in the expedition to L'Orient—James Oswald of Dunnikier, Sir Gilbert Elliot, and others. This correspondence is characterised by strong common-sense, and apt allusions to the events of the day; and it is lit up with a good deal of humour.[1] His friend, Sir Gilbert Elliot, was in many respects a remarkable man; and as they differed on some philosophical points, Elliot's letters to Hume are nearly as interesting as Hume's replies. Their correspondence arose out of the 'Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals,' which was published in 1751, and the 'Dialogues concerning Natural Religion,' which, though not published till after Hume's death, were in manuscript before 1751. It is noteworthy that in one of his letters to Elliot written in that year, Hume distinctly states that he meant to make Cleanthes the hero of his 'Dialogues,'[2] and that the theistic position which Cleanthès adopts was most

[1] Those who doubt whether or not Hume had a strong sense of humour, and who set down his sallies of wit as mere pleasantries or drolleries, should read these, and his subsequent letters to Clephane and to Gilbert Elliot, or his 'Bellman's Petition,' or his letter to Mrs Dysart on his brother's marriage, or his petition to the Chief-Justice Reason in reference to the Westminster election. There is also his letter about Wilkie's 'Epigoniad'; and still better, perhaps, what he wrote in 1759 to Mr Ruat on the invasion of England by France. He was not, of course, a humorist *par excellence*, and he even admitted to Elliot that his performances in that direction "were dull."

[2] See also his letter to Balfour of Pilrig, March 1753, in reply to Balfour's answer to his 'Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals.

agreeable to himself; and he asks Elliot if he can give him any aid in strengthening the position of Cleanthes. The question whether this is consistent with the fundamental teaching of Hume's philosophy will be considered later on.

In 1751 he came in from Ninewells to live in Edinburgh. "I removed," he says, "from the country to the town, the true scene for a man of letters." He never desired wealth, but he thirsted for independence; and ten years before this he expressed his belief, in one of his Essays, that those who lived in the middle rank of life were the most fortunate, because they could practise all the virtues, those towards superiors, equals, and inferiors. Now, in 1751, he writes to Michael Ramsay: "I might perhaps pretend, as well as others, to complain of fortune; but I do not, and should condemn myself as unreasonable if I did. While interest remains as at present, I have £50 a-year, £100 worth of books, great store of linen and fine clothes, and near £100 in my pocket; along with order, frugality, a strong spirit of independency, good health, a contented humour, and an unabating love of study. In these circumstances, I must esteem myself one of the happy and fortunate; and so far from being willing to draw my ticket over again in the lottery of life, there are very few prizes with which I would make an exchange. After some deliberation, I am resolved to settle in Edinburgh, and hope to be able, with these revenues, to say with Horace—

> 'Est bona librorum et provisæ frugis in annum
> Copia.'

Besides other reasons which determine me to this resolution, I would not go too far away from my sister,

who thinks she will soon follow me; and in that case we shall perhaps take up house either in Edinburgh or the neighbourhood. . . . And as my sister can join £30 a-year to my stock, and brings an equal love of order and frugality, we doubt not to make our revenues answer."

He took up his residence in Edinburgh for a year or two in Riddle's Land, Lawnmarket, near the head of the West Bow. Mr Burton thus happily explains the term "land," as applied to the houses of Old Edinburgh: "Edifices, some of them ten or twelve storeys high, in which the citizens of Edinburgh made staircases supply the place of streets, and erected perpendicular thoroughfares."[1]

During his first winter in town we find him again[2] a candidate for academical honours. His friend Adam Smith having been transferred from the Logic chair in Glasgow to that of Ethics, Hume sought the vacant post, but was again defeated. He sought it probably quite as much from a wish to be colleague to such men as Adam Smith and Cullen, as from any desire to teach Logic in the University.[3] It was perhaps as well that he did not succeed in his candidature on either occasion. As already remarked, he was not the kind of man to be a successful University teacher. Founders of systems rarely are so; and had Hume entered the academic circle early in life, the literature of Philosophy might have had less original contributions from his pen.

[1] Life and Correspondence of Hume, vol. i. p. 343.

[2] See p. 39.

[3] Smith, at any rate, said to Cullen, "I should prefer David Hume to any man for a colleague."

Though now a twice-defeated University candidate, the year 1751 was significant in Hume's literary history. In that year his 'Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals' was published; and of this work he said—"In my own opinion (who ought not to judge on that subject) it is, of all my writings, historical, philosophical, or literary, incomparably the best. It came unsolicited and unobserved into the world."[1] For obvious reasons, however, it brought him no immediate popularity. It was throughout a vindication of utility, as a test of the morality of actions, and it led him into some controversy with his contemporaries. In 1753, it was examined by James Balfour of Pilrig, who succeeded to the University chair for which Hume had been a candidate.[2] Into the merits of the controversy we shall enter further on; meanwhile we may note the characteristic and friendly way in which Hume received this reply to his system. Balfour's book had been published anonymously, and Hume left a letter for the author with the publisher (March 1753), in which the following occurs:—

"Sir,—When I write you, I know not to whom I am addressing myself; I only know that he is one who has done me a great deal of honour, and to whose civilities I am obliged. If we be strangers, I beg we may be acquainted, as soon as

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[1] In May 1753 he wrote to Lord Hailes asking him to run over his 'Inquiry,' and to note what he thought amiss, either in its language or its argument. He added, "Besides that I am extremely anxious to attain some degree of correctness in all my attempts, I must confess that I have a partiality for that work, and esteem it the most tolerable of anything I have composed."—(From an unpublished letter in the Hailes Collection of Historical MSS.)

[2] In a book entitled, 'A Delineation of the Nature and Obligations of Morality, with Reflections upon Mr Hume's book, entitled an "Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals."'

you think proper to discover yourself; if we be acquainted already, I beg we may be friends; if friends, I beg we may be more so. Our connection with each other, as men of letters, is greater than our difference in adhering to different sects or systems. Let us revive the happy times, when Atticus and Cassius the epicureans, Cicero the academic, and Brutus the stoic, could all of them live in unreserved friendship together, and were insensible to all these distinctions, except so far as they furnished agreeable matter to discourse and conversation. Perhaps you are a young man, and being full of those sublime ideas which you have so well expressed, think there can be no virtue upon a more confined system. I am not an old one; but, being of a cool temperament, have always found that more simple views were sufficient to make me act in a reasonable manner; νῆθε, κὰι μέμνησο ἀπιστεῖν: in this faith have I lived, and hope to die." He adds: "I have surely endeavoured to refute the sceptic with all the force of which I am master; and my refutation must be allowed sincere, because drawn from the capital principles of my system. . . . With regard to our philosophical systems, I suppose we are both so fixed that there is no hope of any conversions betwixt us; and, for my part, I doubt not but we shall both do as well to remain as we are."

All this is very characteristic; the intellectual candour, the controversial courtesy, the modesty allied to firmness, the dash of egotism, the persuasion that his belief would remain untouched by any argument which his opponent could adduce, and—if the whole letter be looked into—the delicate underlying satire, along with the supreme conviction that the chief thing to be secured in all controversy as to things ultimate was genial human intercourse, since certainty and finality were both clearly beyond our reach.

In the same year (1751), he published his 'Political

Discourses'; and these, like the 'Essays,'—and unlike both the 'Treatise' and the 'Inquiry'—met with immediate and wide recognition. They were translated into French, first by Eleazer Mauvillon, and published at Amsterdam in 1753; then by the Abbé le Blanc in 1754 (reprinted at Berlin in 1755); and again by Mademoiselle de la Chaux at Amsterdam in 1766; and at Paris in 1767. These 'Discourses' aroused more interest on the Continent than anything published on the subject since the 'Esprit des Lois.' What is more important, they had a remarkable effect in determining the current of economic discussion, and gave rise to numerous other works, such as Mirabeau's 'L'Ami des Hommes.' They have been aptly called the "cradle of political economy." They will be noticed in a subsequent chapter. It is enough for the present to say that they have never been superseded.

Then followed an appointment (in January 1752) which compensated Hume for his loss of the Glasgow chair—viz., his election, in succession to the celebrated scholar Thomas Ruddiman, as Keeper of the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh, and Clerk to the Faculty. The appointment was opposed on the ground of his opinions, and he was not a little proud of his success. He wrote to Dr Clephane (February 1752) that he had carried it against the President and Dean of Faculty "by a considerable majority." "The violent outcry of deism, atheism, and scepticism was raised against me, and 'twas represented that my election would be giving the sanction of the greatest and most learned body of men in this country to my profane and irreligious principles. . . . Nothing since the Rebellion has ever so much

engaged the attention of this town, except Provost Stewart's trial;[1] and there scarce is a man whose friendship or acquaintance I could desire who has not given me undoubted proofs of his concern and regard. . . . It was vulgarly given out that the contest was betwixt deists and Christians; and when the news of my success came to the play-house, the whisper ran that the Christians were defeated. Are you not surprised that we could keep our popularity, notwithstanding this imputation, which my friends could not deny to be well founded?" The chief attraction of the post to Hume was not the salary attached to it—it was only £40 a-year—but its putting over 30,000 volumes at his disposal, at that time the "largest collection of books in Scotland," and especially rich in historical literature. It thus enabled Hume more easily to carry out an intention he had previously formed of writing the 'History of Britain' (his Scottish prejudice would not allow him to say of England) 'from the Union of the Crowns to the present Time;' and for the next eleven years he laboured at this work at intervals, with steadfast zeal, and laborious if uncritical industry. His opponents having said some bitter things about the Library appointment, Hume showed his real generosity and kindliness of nature by

[1] Hume is credited with a pamphlet on the trial of this Provost Stewart, a copy of which is in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh. It is entitled 'The Trial of Archibald Stewart, Esq., late Lord Provost of Edinburgh, before the High Court of Justiciary in Scotland, for neglect of duty, and misbehaviour in the execution of his office, as Lord Provost of Edinburgh, before and at the time the Rebels got possession of that city in the month of September 1745' (Edinburgh, 1747). It is attributed to him by Sir Walter Scott and others, and bears strong internal evidence of Hume's style of writing.

giving up the salary, handing it over to the blind poet Blacklock.[1] He had formerly raised a subscription in Edinburgh of £60 for Blacklock.[2]

[1] "To my certain knowledge," wrote Dr Carlyle of Inveresk, "he gave every farthing of his salary to persons in distress."—(Autobiography, p. 274.)

[2] The following is an extract from an unpublished letter of Hume's, dated October 1754, to John Wilkes (British Museum: Select Correspondence, 1754-1797): "I do not remember whether I mentioned to you a poet of this country, one Blacklock, a poor tradesman's son, and born blind. I think he is the greatest curiosity in the world. By his industry he has acquired Greek, Latin, and French, and has become a good general scholar. . . . He even employs the ideas of light and colour with great propriety."

CHAPTER VI.

LIFE AT EDINBURGH—1755-1763.

Living now at Edinburgh in the independent position he had won for himself, he soon gathered round him a circle of friends, old and new — Mure of Caldwell, Oswald of Dunnikier, and Henry Home (Lord Kames), and subsequently, Sir Gilbert Elliot, Adam Smith, and Colonel Edmonstone. He was eminently social, universally liked by his friends, and esteemed by most men of education. But while their admiration was sincere, and their regard for him great, he had some undisguised opponents, and many others suspected him secretly. As one result, when the first 'Edinburgh Review' was started in 1755, Hume—though by far the most eminent literary Scotsman of the day—was not asked to contribute to it.[1]

In 1754, the year before this 'Edinburgh Review' was started, an old Philosophical Society—which had

[1] Only two numbers of this 'Review' were published. Adam Smith, Robertson, Blair, and Jardine wrote articles. Mackenzie, in his 'Account of John Home,' p. 24, suggests that Hume was left out of the circle of writers, not from any hostility, but because the editor or projectors found that either his "extreme good-nature" would have weakened the criticism in which they wished to indulge, or his "extreme artlessness" would have revealed their secrets.

been founded in Edinburgh in 1731 as a medical society—was widened for the discussion of speculative questions. Hume seems to have occasionally attended it, but he did not take part in the debates—although, in January 1755, we find him apologising to Adam Smith for not sending him an "anniversary paper" for the society.

A somewhat vivid glimpse of Hume's domestic life at this time is obtained in a letter written from Edinburgh to Dr Clephane (January 1753): "About seven months ago I got a house of my own, and completed a regular family, consisting of a head—viz., myself—and two inferior members, a maid and a cat. My sister has since joined me, and keeps me company. With frugality I can reach, I find, cleanliness, warmth, light, plenty, and contentment. What would you have more? Independence? I have it in a supreme degree. Honour? That is not altogether wanting. Grace? That will come in time. A wife? That is none of the indispensable requisites of life. Books? That *is* one of them; and I have more than I can use. In short, I cannot find any blessing of consequence which I am not possessed of, in a greater or less degree; and without any great effort of philosophy, I may be easy and satisfied.

"As there is no happiness without occupation, I have begun a work which will employ me several years, and which yields me much satisfaction. 'Tis a History of Britain, from the Union of the Crowns to the present time. I have already finished the reign of King James. My friends flatter me (by this I mean that they don't flatter me) that I have succeeded. You know that there is no post of honour in the English

Parnassus more vacant than that of History. Style, judgment, impartiality, care—everything is wanting to our historians; and I make my work very concise, after the manner of the ancients. . . . The work will please neither the Duke of Bedford nor James Fraser; but I hope it will please you and posterity, *κτῆμα εἰς ἀεὶ.*"

This letter is valuable in many ways. It shows both the spirit in which Hume began the writing of his History, and the aim he had in view from the first. He began it in the prime of his intellectual life; and the reasons which led him to devote the next eight years to it—1754 to 1761—were various. He had said his say on metaphysics, on morals, on economics, and religion; but he had not met with the recognition which he sought, or the fame he coveted. He now had access, for the first time, to a large historical library; and he had a comparatively untrodden field before him. The history of England had not yet been adequately written. He therefore hoped to effect "a new departure" in the literature of his country. He began with the accession of James I.; and his first volume, published in 1754, brought him down to the execution of Charles I.—his original intention being that the second should end at the Revolution, and the third at the accession of the Hanoverian dynasty; "for I dare come no nearer the present times."[1] He wrote rapidly, producing a quarto volume in a year; and although he had little knowledge of the period at first hand, he worked his way with singular assiduity and tact amongst the conflicting authorities which the Library afforded him, and presented the results of his study with a literary grace and charm

[1] Letter to Clephane, January 1753.

which won the admiration of posterity, until history began—as it has now begun—to be written with a scientific eye. His previous work, as a psychological analyst of character, helped him as a historian. It enabled him to deal, more wisely than his predecessors had done, with complex social forces, to explain the mixed motives of action, to select relevant facts, and to ignore irrelevant arguments. Perhaps it also led him to be less strict in his investigation of facts than expert in deducing conclusions, and to be more discursive than concise.

In the John Wilkes' Select Correspondence[1] (1754-1797), there is a letter from Hume — who had sent Wilkes a copy of his History — dated Edinburgh, October 1754, in which he says: "If I had had the honour to be longer known to you, you would have found that nothing could oblige me more than a free criticism or censure. Will you take my word for it, and venture the experiment? I know that, in many particulars, especially the language, you would be able, if you pleased, to give me good advice. I beg of you to mark, as you go along, such words or phrases as appear to you wrong or suspicious, and to inform me of them. You could not do me a better office. Notwithstanding all the pains I have taken in the study of the English language, I am still jealous of my pen. As to my tongue, you have seen that I regard it as totally desperate and irreclaimable."

In a previous letter from Edinburgh, written a fortnight earlier in the same October, he says: "I am glad you got so good weather in your journey to the west. That would make some compensation for bad

[1] In the British Museum MSS.

roads and bad inns. If your time had permitted, you should have gone into the Highlands. You would there have seen human nature in the Golden Age, or rather, indeed, in the Silver. For the Highlanders have degenerated somewhat from the primitive simplicity of mankind. But perhaps you have so corrupted a taste as to prefer your Iron Age, to be met with in London and the south of England, where luxury and vice of every kind so much abound. There is no disputing tastes, and no opinion is so extravagant as not to find some partisan."[1]

His first volume was no success, however, in his own estimation. "I was assailed," he tells us,[2] "by one cry of reproach, disapprobation, and even detestation: English, Scotch, and Irish, Whig and Tory, Churchman and Sectary, Freethinker and Religionist, Patriot and Courtier, united in their rage against the man who had presumed to shed a generous tear for the fate of Charles I. and the Earl of Strafford; and after the first ebullitions of their fury were over, what was still more mortifying, the book seemed to fall into oblivion. I must only except the Primate of England, Dr Herring, and the Primate of Ireland, Dr Stone, which were two odd exceptions. These dignified prelates separately sent me messages not to be discouraged." The last-mentioned fact is much to the credit of the Archbishops, who must have had an eye for history, and who could appreciate a work that was neither a defiance of current opinion nor an echo of their own. Hume, however, was much

[1] In the John Wilkes' Select Correspondence, British Museum MSS. (1754-1797).

[2] My Own Life.

discouraged. He thought of renouncing history, leaving Scotland, and going over to France; but he was induced, "after an interval," to renew his labour, and to write a second volume. This brought him down to the Revolution. Again he thought he would desist; but the imperious necessity of work led him on, and he went back to the Tudor period—the history of which he wrote, "because he was tired of idleness," in two additional volumes. He next agreed to a plan, submitted to him by his publisher, to recommence at the beginning of the reign of Henry VII.—thus writing his History, with crab-like movement, backwards. The period subsequent to the Revolution he would not face.

It is clear that, as a historian, Hume endeavoured to be dispassionate and fair to all parties. He tried to write without prejudice. In a letter to Clephane, speaking of politics, he said—in a sentence admirable for its wisdom and its antithesis: "My views of *things* are more conformable to Whig principles; my representation of *persons*, to Tory prejudices." Again to Clephane (Oct. 1753): "I am sensible that the history of the two first Stuarts will be most agreeable to the Tories—that of the two last, to the Whigs; but we must endeavour to be above any regard either to Whigs or Tories." To Matthew Sharp of Hoddam (Feb. 1754): "Lord Elibank says that I am a moderate Whig, and Mr Wallace that I am a candid Tory." Again he wrote: "I have the impudence to pretend that I am of no party and have no bias." The bias, however, did exist, and was gradually developed, as it is with most men. Finding that the democratic side was less intellectual than the aristocratic—that the people took up causes that had

less root in the nature of things, or in reason, than in passing enthusiasm,—he gradually turned round towards the side of the Cavaliers, and became a Royalist. The relation in which Hume's History stands to his Philosophy will be considered later on.

About this time the Church Courts in Scotland took up his writings. They had previously taken up the 'Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion,' by Lord Kames—in which the liberty of the human will was held to be an illusion, although an illusion that was useful to the race. In 1753 the Rev. George Anderson attacked Kames alone; in 1755 he dealt with Kames and Hume together—the former under the name of "Sopho." It was a disgracefully unfair attack, to which Dr Blair replied;[1] but it is now utterly forgotten. In 1756 this same Anderson proposed to the General Assembly that a committee should be appointed to "inquire into" Hume's writings; and —what could not happen nowadays to a layman— to "call him before them." It is to the credit of the General Assembly of the National Church of Scotland that this proposal was rejected by 50 votes to 17.[2] Hume does not seem to have been annoyed by it, and he does not allude to it in his autobiography. In an undated letter to Adam Smith, however, he said—referring to the action of the clergy towards John Home, the minister of Athelstaneford, author of the tragedy of 'Douglas'—"Did you ever hear of such madness and folly as our clergy have lately fallen into? For my part, I expect that the next Assembly will very solemnly pro-

[1] See the Life of Kames, by Tytler, vol. i. p. 142.

[2] See the Scots Magazine, 1756.

nounce the sentence of excommunication against me; but I do not apprehend it to be a matter of any consequence; what do you think?"

Publishing his History by instalments, the second volume came out in 1756; and the way in which he referred, in this volume, to the various religious sects, gave even more offence to his contemporaries than the supposed tendency of his philosophical opinions. There can be little doubt that Hume was constitutionally biassed against two of the parties that have, throughout the Christian centuries, formed an integral part of the Church catholic. He was biassed against the Roman Church, and against the extreme Evangelicals. There is no reason to believe that he was ever intentionally unfair to any sect, or that he was ungenerous towards its disciples, even if he thought them zealots; but he had no sympathy with certain types of opinion, and enthusiasm of every kind was distasteful to him.[1] Perhaps it was his repugnance to medievalism on the one hand, and his blindness to its merits on the other, with the prevailing want of enthusiasm in his own temperament, that led to this. It is to be remembered, however, that in a letter to Clephane he said: "I am convinced that whatever I have said of religion" (he is speaking of his History) "should have received some softenings. There is no page in the History which strikes in the least at revelation." And in a proposed preface to one of the volumes of his History he wrote:—

"The proper office of religion is to reform men's lives, to purify their hearts, to enforce all moral duties, and to secure

[1] Except the very provincial enthusiasm for everything Scotch.

obedience to the laws and civil magistrate. While it pursues these useful purposes, its operations, though infinitely valuable, are secret and silent, and seldom come under the cognisance of history. That adulterate species of it alone which inflames faction, animates sedition, and prompts rebellion, distinguishes it in the open theatre of the world. . . . It ought not to be matter of offence that no religious sect is mentioned in this work without being exposed sometimes to some note of blame and disapprobation. The frailties of our nature mingle themselves with everything in which we are employed, and no human institution will ever reach perfection—the idea of an infinite mind. The author of the universe seems at first sight to require a worship absolutely pure, simple, unadorned, without rites, institutions, ceremonies—even without temples, priests, or verbal prayer and supplication. Yet has this species of worship been often found to degenerate into the most dangerous fanaticism. When we have recourse to the aid of the senses and imagination in order to adapt our religion in some degree to human infirmity, it is very difficult, and almost impossible, to prevent altogether the intrusion of superstition, or keep men from laying too great stress on the ceremonial and ornamental parts of their worship. Of all the sects into which Christians have been divided, the Church of England seems to have chosen the most happy medium. Yet it will undoubtedly be allowed that, during the age of which these volumes treat, there was a tincture of superstition in the partisans of the hierarchy, as well as a strong mixture of enthusiasm in their antagonists. But it is the nature of the latter principle soon to evaporate and decay. A spirit of moderation usually succeeds in a little to the fervour of zeal; and it must be acknowledged, to the honour of the present Presbyterians, Independents, and other sectaries of this island, that they resemble in little more than in name their predecessors who flourished during the civil wars, and who were the authors of such disorders. It would appear ridiculous in the eyes of the judicious part of mankind to pretend

that even the first reformers in most countries of Europe did not carry matters to a most violent extreme, and were not on many occasions liable to the imputation of fanaticism."[1]

In 1757—in the interval between the publication of the first and second volumes of his History—Hume sent to the press 'Four Dissertations: the Natural History of Religion; of the Passions; of Tragedy; of the Standard of Taste.' These dissertations were originally dedicated to John Home, the author of 'Douglas'; but being told by some of Home's friends—whom he called "men of very good sense, but fools in that particular"—that it would hurt the party in the Church with which his relative had been connected, he suspended the publication of it. Home having resigned his charge of the parish of Athelstaneford, Hume made haste to insert the dedication in full. This work of Hume's was replied to, in a disgraceful joint performance, by Warburton and Hurd, entitled 'Remarks on Mr David Hume's Essay on the Natural History of Religion, addressed to the Rev. Dr Warburton.'

In the month of May 1757 he wrote to his publisher, Andrew Miller: "I have already begun and am a little advanced in a third volume of History. I do not preclude myself from the view of going forward to the period after the Revolution; but at present I begin with the reign of Henry VII. It is properly at that period modern history commences. America was discovered, commerce extended, the arts cultivated, printing invented, religion reformed, and all the Governments of Europe almost changed. I wish, therefore, I had begun here at first. I should have obviated many objec-

[1] See Mr Burton's Life, vol. ii. pp. 12, 13.

tions that were made to the other volumes." In August 1757 he wrote—in a letter to Gilbert Elliot—what would have delighted Carlyle as a historian: "I am writing the History of England, from the accession of Henry VII., and am some years advanced in Henry VIII. I undertook this work because I was tired of idleness, and found reading alone, after I had often perused all good books (which I think is soon done), a somewhat languid occupation. As to the approbation or esteem of those blockheads who call themselves the public, and whom a bookseller, a lord, a priest, or a party can guide, I do most heartily despise it."

In the same year (1757) Hume resigned his librarianship, in a laconic epistle to the Dean of the Faculty. The post had not turned out so unfettered and desirable as it at first promised to be. After the experience of a year or two, he found that he could not order the books which he wished, or thought it important that the library should possess; and he had, if not enemies, at least watchful *quasi* opponents, in the Faculty of Advocates.[1] In September 1757 he told his friend Clephane that he would be "in London next summer, probably to remain there during life;" and asked him to look out for "a room in a sober, discreet family, who would not be averse to admit a sober, discreet, virtuous, frugal, regular, quiet, good-natured man, of a bad character." Through all these years, in which the writing of his History was his chief business, his position in the Scottish capital had been growing gradually more distasteful to him; and although he did not relish the idea of settling in

[1] Even Lord Monboddo, for example, accused him of adding frivolous French novels to the Library.

London—the English character being specially repellent to him—we find him going South in September 1758, ostensibly to see his friend Clephane, but really to look after the printing of his volumes on the Tudors, and partly to assist his friend Robertson, whose 'History of Scotland' was being brought out in London. His correspondence with Robertson at this time is important, as it reveals Hume in a most generous light. He tells Robertson that his brother's marriage at Ninewells had something to do with his leaving Scotland, and that although he had done everything he could to evade going to London, he may never leave it now; and farther, that although he has invitations and intentions of going over to Paris, it would be safer not to go, lest he should settle there for life—such was his *vis inertiæ.*

In 1759 Adam Smith published his 'Theory of Moral Sentiments'; and in a letter which Hume wrote to him from London, there is the same generous appreciation of merit, and the same humorous pleasantry, as in his letter to Robertson about his History. He remained in London for nearly a year, taking up his quarters at Lisle Street, Leicester Fields. There he made almost no friends, Edmund Burke—whose book 'On the Sublime and Beautiful' interested him—being perhaps the only one.

In November 1759 he returned to Edinburgh, where he took a house in "Jack's Land," in the Canongate, and began to revise and recast the earlier volumes of his History. He leant now somewhat more, especially in his account of the Stewarts, to the Tory view of things; very much as in the later editions of his 'Essays' his youthful democratic sympathies were lessened, and gradually suppressed. He interested himself at this time also

in the controversy, originated by Macpherson (1760), about Ossian's poems, inclining at first to believe in their authenticity, and then characteristically embodying his doubts in an Essay on the subject.

In 1761 he first became acquainted, through correspondence, with Madame de Boufflers, a prominent figure in Parisian society, who afterwards introduced him to the brilliant literary circle of the French capital. She had been charmed by his history of the Stewarts, which she characterised in a letter as "un *terra fecunda* de morale et d'instructions." In reply to her, Hume complains that "the spirit of faction which prevails in this country, and which is a natural attendant on civil liberty, carries everything to extremes on one side or on the other." Madame de Boufflers invited him to Paris, and he expressed his hope of accepting the invitation. About the same time he became indirectly acquainted with one to whom his subsequent relations were, unfortunately, more close than satisfactory—viz., Jean Jacques Rousseau. Exiled for his opinions, this curious compound of originality and madness, of brilliance and of vanity, of subtle insight and of overweening conceit, made the acquaintance of the Earl Marischal of Scotland, also in exile because of his share in the rebellion of 1745, and then Governor of Neufchatel. The Earl Marischal advised Rousseau to go to England, and urged Hume to befriend him. Madame de Boufflers did the same—characterising him, however, as "un homme singulier." Acting on their advice and his own generous impulses, Hume wrote to Rousseau, inviting him to come over. The upshot of their correspondence we shall immediately see.

In 1761, Dr Campbell, a Presbyterian divine in Aberdeen, published a sermon criticising Hume's view of miracle. This was afterwards expanded into his 'Dissertation on Miracles.' As a philosophical performance, its merit is not great; but the testimony which his opponent bore to Hume, as a man and as a controversialist, is noteworthy. It corroborates what Lord Charlemont said, that he "never failed, in the midst of any controversy, to give its due praise to everything tolerable that was either said or written against him." Dr Campbell wrote to him thus (June 1762), in answer apparently to a letter from Hume: "Ever since I was acquainted with your works, your talents as a writer have, notwithstanding some differences in abstract principles, extorted from me the highest veneration. But I could scarce have thought that, in spite of differences of a more interesting nature, even such as regard morals and religion, you could ever force me to love and honour you as a man. Yet no religious prejudices, as you would probably term them, can hinder me from doing justice to that goodness and candour which appear in every line of your letter." In the same connection, although it belongs to the following year, the testimony borne to Hume by his chief philosophical opponent in Scotland, Thomas Reid, also of Aberdeen, may be quoted, as both Campbell and Reid show a remarkable difference, in temper and in appreciation, to his English ecclesiastical antagonists, Warburton, Hurd, &c. Reid wrote from King's College, Aberdeen, in March 1863:—

"In attempting to throw some new light upon these abstruse subjects, I wish to preserve the due mean betwixt confidence and despair. But whether I have any success in

this attempt or not, I shall always avow myself your disciple in metaphysics. I have learned more from your writings in this kind, than from all others put together. . . . Your friendly adversaries, Drs Campbell and Gerard, as well as Dr Gregory, return their compliments to you respectfully. A little philosophical society here, of which all the three are members, is much indebted to you for its entertainment. Your company would, although we are all good Christians, be more acceptable than that of St Athanasius ; and since we cannot have you upon the bench, you are brought oftener than any other man to the bar, accused and defended with great zeal, but without bitterness."

In May 1762 he removed from the house in the Canongate to James's Court, in the Lawnmarket,—one of the many closed courts in that miscellaneous pile of seventeenth-century houses, which were built on the ridge leading down from the Castle to Holyrood. A loch—the Nor' Loch — lay below; and the whole of the country beyond, where the new town of Edinburgh now stands, consisted of open fields, woodlands, or heath. Hume's house [1] was three storeys up the western staircase, which fronted a stranger entering James's Court from the High Street. Here he continued the revision of his History, removing from it what he considered the "plaguy prejudices of Whiggism." He tells Gilbert Elliot of Minto (March 1763) that he had come to justify James I.'s imposition of taxes without the consent of Parliament, and his persecution of the Puritans; that he defended Charles I. for exacting

[1] Writing from Paris, January 1764, he called it "a very pretty little house, repaired and furnished to my fancy."

tonnage and poundage of his own free will; that he acquitted James I. of all prevarication, and exonerated James II. and the Star Chamber; and he writes to his publisher, Miller, in the same month, that he never lost sight of his purpose to continue his History.

CHAPTER VII.

PARIS AND LONDON.

After the Treaty of Paris was ratified in 1763, the Marquis of Hertford became English Ambassador to France; and a curious bit of fortune awaited Hume. The Marquis had no personal knowledge of him, but wrote offering him the post of Secretary to the Embassy. It must have been owing to the reputation for administrative power which Hume had acquired under General St Clair—especially at Turin—that he obtained this unsolicited appointment; probably also from the impression which his 'Essays' and his 'History' were slowly making, and from his own personal character. He wrote to Oswald of Dunnikier that it seemed to him "almost incomprehensible how it should happen that he, a philosopher, a man of letters, nowise a courtier, of the most independent spirit, who has given offence to every sect and every party," should be offered such a post.

At first he declined the offer, but afterwards accepted it. In September 1763 he told Adam Smith that he had "struck root so heartily" in Scotland, that it was "with the utmost difficulty that he could think of transporting himself." He "repined at the loss of his ease and

leisure, retirement and independence." Nevertheless, in the same month he wrote to Dr Carlyle of Inveresk that Paris was "the place he had always admired the most." In accepting the office, Hume doubtless saw that he would have a fresh opportunity of enlarging the circle of his experience, as well as of adding to his fortune. Lord Hertford was a man of rare integrity and nobleness of nature, with a keen eye for genuine merit,—a pious, but not an austere man,—who could appreciate characters unlike his own, and who admired and esteemed Hume for his many admirable and estimable qualities. Even before he reached Paris, Lord Elibank wrote thus to Hume,—"No author ever yet attained to that degree of reputation in his own lifetime as you are now in possession of at Paris;" and six months earlier, Andrew Stewart said to Sir William Johnstone, that in most Parisian houses the first question addressed to an Englishman was, "Do you know Mr Hume?"

As soon as he arrived in the gay metropolis, he was unfortunate in receiving as much of the incense of flattery as would have turned the head of a man less wise. His 'Essays' had been translated into French, and several of the French 'philosophes'—Helvetius and D'Alembert—had corresponded with him; but the excess of adulation he received on his arrival was a short madness in Paris. Literary men, the nobles, the ladies, the Dauphin and his children, vied with each other in administering it; and Hume wrote thus to his friends. To Adam Smith (in October)—"During two days at Fontainebleau I have *suffered* (the expression is not improper) as much flattery as almost any man has ever done in the same time;" to Adam Ferguson (in No-

vember)—speaking of the first period of his sojourn—"I am convinced that Louis XIV. never, in any three weeks of his life, suffered so much flattery;" and to Dr Robertson (in December)—"I eat nothing but ambrosia, drink nothing but nectar, breathe nothing but incense, and tread on nothing but flowers." The *ne plus ultra* of artificial French adulation was reached when he was *fêted* by the Dauphin at Versailles, who put up his three children, aged respectively nine, eight, and six years, to recite prepared speeches in his praise; and these three children were afterwards Louis XVI., Louis XVIII., and Charles X., Kings of France. The boy of six, poor child, forgot his part, and only mumbled out some broken words of compliment.

Amid these artificial flatteries, it must be admitted that, while Hume occasionally longed for James's Court, and for what he called the "plain roughness of the Poker" (which was a literary club in Edinburgh[1]), the tone and temper of Parisian society suited him exactly. More prominently then, perhaps, than at any previous time in its history, many elements met in Paris, that were nowhere else combined in the same way,—learning and luxury, enthusiasm and frivolity, brilliance and shallowness, sparkling wit, and generosity allied to a relaxed moral code.

[1] So named from its services in stirring up the mental energies of its members. Instituted in 1762, it lasted till 1784. The name was suggested by Adam Ferguson, in the hope that it might be "an enigma to the public." Robertson and Blair, as well as Hume, were members. In the 'Autobiography' of Carlyle of Inveresk, there is an account of this Poker Club. "Andrew Crosbie, advocate, was chosen Assassin to the club, in case any officer of that sort should be needed; but David Hume was added as his assessor, without whose consent nothing should be done—so that between plus and minus there was likely to be no bloodshed."

It was, as it has been happily described, a "huge ever-changing Vanity Fair." But it was a society in which distinguished men of letters moved freely, and held an honoured place amongst the social aristocracy. Hume was everywhere liked, everywhere *fêted*, everywhere made a hero of; and he did not dislike the lion-hunting tendencies of the metropolis, and of Fontainebleau—as Descartes did—although he tells us that the "luxury and dissipation attending it gave him more pain than pleasure."

After the first fit of extravagance was past, he writes that he "fell into friendships which were very agreeable." He found the society of the men of letters in France most congenial,—"all of them men of the world, living in entire, or almost entire, harmony among themselves, and quite irreproachable in their morals." At the same time he wrote to Baron Mure (June 1764), in reference to his manner of life in Paris: "All things appear so much alike, that I am afraid of falling into total stoicism, and indifference about everything;" and to Dr Blair, in 1765, he went so far as to say that the adulations of the French were agreeable "neither in expectation, promise, nor recollection;" and again, speaking of the Dauphin, he said "that prince would be the better of being roasted sometimes in the *Poker*." The probable explanation of these seeming inconsistencies is that he liked the flattery for a time; but that it became (as it could not fail to become) insipid to him afterwards, and he knew that it must pass. He thought Paris an excellent place for a man in good health; but, as he said to Blair, "not a scene suited for the languor of old age."

As to the Secretaryship, he was at first in an awkward position. The salary attached to the office was £1200 a-year; but when Hume agreed to go over to Paris and undertake its duties, it was not really vacant. It had been given to a Mr Burnby, before Lord Hertford accepted the Embassy. He was an incapable Secretary, and Lord Hertford would not employ him; but, living in London, he drew the salary of the office, while Hume did the work. It was a rather scandalous affair; and, as a compensation, the King granted to Hume a temporary pension of £200, with a promise of the Secretaryship in due time. He was somewhat indignant at the delay in obtaining it; and perhaps the sense of former disappointments galled him, for he wrote to Sir Gilbert Elliot (March 1766): "I have been accustomed to meet with nothing but insults and indignities from my native country; but if it continues so, 'ingratâ patria, ne ossa quidem habebis.'" Again, writing to Dr Blair (April 1764), his chagrin found expression in the statement: "The taste for literature is neither decayed nor depressed here, as it is with the barbarians who inhabit the banks of the Thames." He greatly preferred the society of Paris and the French men of letters, with their vivacity and kindliness, their *esprit* and generosity, to the colder temperament of Englishmen, and especially of Londoners.

Hume's dislike to England and the English was due to the idiosyncrasy of his own temperament. He would not, or at least did not, meet Englishmen frankly, either at the clubs or in general society; and it must be admitted that socially he was to a great extent provincial. He was both restrained and constrained in the literary

society of London, and he disliked it. It would be wrong to say that the refinements of the South were distasteful to him; but perhaps its special tone of mind and manners, its grace, delicacy, and reserve, were alien to him, and he found more to his taste in the French *abandon.*[1] In addition to this, there is little doubt that his antipathy to the English was partly due to his extreme sensitiveness as a literary man, and his chagrin that the English had not appreciated his work more thoroughly, either as a philosopher or a historian. His early diagnosis of his own predominating weakness—his "passion for literary fame"—was most accurate; and his craving for recognition as a man of letters not being gratified in England, he was biassed against the nation as a whole.

This unfortunate weakness had a bad effect on Hume. It blinded his eye to the excellences of many of his contemporaries, and jaundiced his judgments both of parties and of individuals. It was not due to envy. He was not the victim of jealousy, but he was intensely covetous of fame, and unhappy in the want of it. When he published his 'Treatise' at twenty-five, he said he would accept the judgment of the public, and strive to learn from it. That was scarcely his real attitude, however, even then; and as the years passed, his thirst for recognition grew stronger. He could not wait for the judgment of the future.

[1] It is somewhat curious, in connection with this, that when advising his brother where to send his eldest boy to school, he should have suggested Eton! "I have been making inquiries for some time," he says, "and, on the whole, I find Eton the best place for the education of youth." The only drawback he noted was that "few Scotsmen, who had had an English education, have ever settled cordially in their own country."

His reception in France had two sides. Warmly welcomed in a city which resembled Athens in nothing so much as in its taste for "some new thing," the applause which greeted him was a part of the transient enthusiasm of the hour. A new philosophy was welcomed in Paris more readily and more rapidly than in England; but it came in for its share of the passing fashion, just as poodles did. Of course such men as D'Alembert, Diderot, and Turgot did not honour him because he happened to be the lion of the period; but in that gay metropolis—where the sensational philosophy of Locke had "crossed the Channel" (as Cousin put it) "on the light and brilliant wings of Voltaire's imagination"—the general welcome of Hume was but a transient mania. He was himself too acute not to see this. He knew that his "reign" would pass, like a fashion in dress; and yet he was highly pleased with it while it lasted. It certainly widened his experience; but it may be doubted whether, at this period of his career, he required widening so much as concentration.

Sir Gilbert Elliot, who had asked him to look after his boys in Paris, wrote thus to him: "Allow me, in friendship, to tell you, I think I see you at present upon the very brink of a precipice. One cannot too much clear their mind of all little prejudices, but partiality to one's country is not a prejudice. Love the French as much as you will, but, above all, continue still an Englishman." Hume was specially kind to these Elliot boys;[1] but

[1] The younger of the two became a distinguished member of Parliament, was a candidate for the Speakership of the Commons, was employed in delicate diplomatic work, was Governor-General of India (1807 to 1814), and was created Earl of Minto in 1813.

their father's advice was thrown away upon him. *He* had no wish to be regarded as "an Englishman"! And although he often longed for the ease of Edinburgh and the humorous pleasantries of the Poker Club, he "turned his back to Paris with regret." In unconcealed bitterness he replied to Elliot (Sept. 1764): "Can you seriously talk of my continuing an Englishman? Am I, or are you, an Englishman? I am a citizen of the world; but if I were to adopt any country, it would be that in which I live at present." Five years later he thought very differently.

In June 1765 he was appointed to the office of Secretary to the Legation. Almost immediately afterwards, however, Lord Hertford was recalled from Paris, owing to a change of Ministry at home. Under the Rockingham Administration he became Lord Lieutenant of Ireland; and, in consequence, Hume was left for some months the sole *Chargé d'Affaires* at Paris. These months of administrative work and responsibility were much more useful to him (and more honourable) than the previous ones, in which he breathed the incense of miscellaneous flattery all day long; and Lord Brougham, writing of them,[1] tells us that his despatches "showed a perfect familiarity with diplomatic modes and habits." Lord Hertford—doubtless missing his old secretary—wished him to transfer his services to the viceregal office in Dublin, being anxious that they "might pass their lives together." Hume did not himself relish the notion of going to Ireland. He said it was "like stepping out of light into darkness, to go from Paris to Dublin;" and the proposed appointment was found to be an impracti-

[1] Lives of Men of Letters, &c., in time of George III., p. 225.

cable one, partly because of the dislike to the promotion of Scotsmen which was felt at headquarters in London. Through the influence, however, of the same ever steadfast friend (Lord Hertford), he was offered the post of Usher of the Black Rod—on the whole a lucrative one—the duties of which were to be discharged by deputy. Hume, to his honour, declined the nominal office, as "savouring of greediness and rapacity." He disliked all sinecures.

One incident of his life at Paris should not be overlooked. Colonel Edmonstone wrote to him from Geneva asking his advice whether a young Mr V., who had become a clergyman, but had doubts as to some of the Thirty-Nine Articles, should continue in his office. Hume's advice was that he should "adhere to the ecclesiastical profession." He hinted that it was unnecessary and unusual to divulge to the masses of the uneducated all the convictions which an educated person had reached. He referred to the ancient advice that the gods should be worshipped *νόμῳ πόλεως*; and as the ordinary duties of society demanded a certain amount of compromise, the clerical profession might only demand an extension of it. This is a position to which the angular logical mind, on the one hand, and the ultra-scrupulous, on the other, will object. They do not see that no two minds put, or can put, the same interpretation on the common Articles; that absolute uniformity of conviction is impossible in a mixed society; and that it has never existed, in fact, at any time in the Church. Doubtless the principle of "compromise" may be pushed too far; but Hume unquestionably grasped the principle on which all the higher educa-

tional work of the country must be carried on. If the teacher and the taught do not stand on precisely the same level, there must be adaptation and adjustment, as well as the use of symbol and parable. There was in this a forecasting of the principle of evolution in the development of the individual, if not in the race.

Another point to be noted in connection with Hume's residence in France is his interesting discovery, in the Library of the Scots College, Paris, of the 'Memoirs of King James II.,' consisting of twelve or fourteen manuscript volumes, written out by the King himself. Hume made use of these manuscripts in altering his History. They were afterwards unfortunately burned during the French Revolution. Father Gordon, of the Scots College, revised Hume's History for him in the light of the MSS., and marked the passages—they were not numerous—in which the King's 'Memoirs' differed from them; and Hume took the King's own testimony as final in reference to any matters of fact.

In the year 1765, J. J. Rousseau came again upon the stage. It is useless to trace out the details of a career that was alternately mad and base. Voltaire called him the "chien de Diogène," and foretold his treachery as early as 1761. Lady Hervey wrote of him (July 1776) as "an ungrateful malevolent madman," and compared Hume's bringing him to England with Lord Hillsborough's introduction of noxious animals into Ireland. At first Hume was greatly interested in Rousseau, and likened him to Socrates;[1] but preferred the former, both from his having "the finest

[1] The parallel would have been more exact if he had been called a modern Antisthenes, the "mad Socrates."

physiognomy in the world, the most expressive countenance," and also because he thought he had more genius than Socrates. He soon discovered, however, the capricious eccentricity of Rousseau. Imagining himself to be very infirm, he was in reality one of the robustest of men. In crossing the English Channel with Hume, the latter tells us that Rousseau "passed ten hours in the night-time above deck during the most severe weather, when all the seamen were almost frozen to death, and he caught no harm." Hume was most loath to believe in his insincerity, and would never have turned from him merely because of his whimsies. He wrote to his brother (Feb. 1766), Rousseau "is a very modest, mild, well-bred, gentle-spirited, and warm-hearted man as ever I knew in my life." He described him as the "most singular man in the world," and said he "loved him much"; but his eyes were gradually opened.

After their arrival in England, Hume contrived, with great tact and kindliness, to get a retreat arranged for him at Wooton, near the Peak, in Derbyshire. But the excessive vanity and disappointed ambition of Rousseau soon revealed themselves. He turned round upon his benefactor, and accused him of having conspired with Horace Walpole, and others, to ruin him. Rousseau's actions were those of a monomaniac, a compound "of wickedness and madness," as Hume put it to the Abbé le Blanc (Aug. 1766). He was mortified to find that he was not to become a hero in England. He insisted on living the life of a hermit, and yet he was angry with the English people for neglecting him in his self-chosen hermitage. His van-

ity and pedantry always demanded some new kind of incense, and he was fiercely vindictive when he did not get the notoriety he sought. Hume's forbearance towards him was really very great. He was most reluctant to publish the correspondence which revealed Rousseau's malign spirit,[1] but he could not help himself; for, besides lunacy, there was duplicity. Nay, he even came to see that the man he had so generously befriended was less a madman than a vain ingrate. Rousseau tried afterwards to make a slight apology; but, without expressing sorrow, he attributed his conduct when in England, to the influence of our foggy atmosphere! The two men were very different in temperament, and of necessity almost repellent in character, although Hume at first did not know it. The good-natured, good-humoured, genial Scot—who could always get on with any one who was not positively bad—had little in common with the vain, fiery, irritable, pedantic, revengeful Frenchman, who carried with him "the pageant of a bleeding heart" wherever he went in Europe. It was a curious thing, however, in Hume's career, to have been twice brought into such close connection with madmen—to begin with the lunatic Annandale, and to end with the maniac Rousseau.

[1] In the 'Whitehall Evening Post' (Sept. 6, 1766) it is said: "Rousseau has written to a bookseller in this city that he is not ignorant of the formation of a party against him in England, of which Mr Hume is the chief; but he defies his adversary to publish their correspondence, as he has threatened, because it contains sufficient to confound the English philosopher." Alas! a month previously, Hume, when writing to Paris, was compelled in honesty to liken Rousseau to "the serpent nourished in the bosom of friendship," and to speak of him as a "deceitful man."

CHAPTER VIII.

SETTLEMENT IN EDINBURGH, AND CLOSING YEARS.

In 1766, Hume went down to Scotland. While there he received an unexpected invitation from General Conway to become Under-Secretary of State for Scotland. This office he accepted, and held it for about a year. It is curious to think of Hume's now directing, to a certain extent, "the policy of the Home Office, in its communications with the Church of Scotland," especially after the attempt, on the part of a few Scotch ecclesiastics, to deal with him and his writings ten years before; and Mr Hill Burton evidently surmises that the King's letter to the General Assembly of 1767 was written by him.[1]

[1] The following is part of that letter: "Convinced, as we are, of your prudence and firm resolution to concur in whatever may promote the happiness of our subjects, it is unnecessary for us to recommend you to avoid contentious and unedifying debates, as well as to avoid everything that may tend to disturb that harmony and tranquillity which is so essential in councils solely calculated for the suppression of every species of licentiousness, irreligion, and vice. And as we have the firmest reliance on your zeal in the support of the Christian faith, as well as in the wisdom and prudence of your councils, we are thoroughly assured that they will be directed to such purposes as may best tend to enforce a conscientious observance of all those duties which the true religion and laws of this kingdom require, and on which the felicity of every individual so essentially depends."

Of his work in the Home Office there is nothing special to record, except his industry and exactness, along with his uniform kindness and good-nature, which led many persons to ask and to obtain favours from him. One extract from his own account of his official life, as sent to Dr Blair (in April 1767), may be given :—

"My way of life here is very uniform, and by no means disagreeable. I pass all the forenoon in the Secretary's house, from ten till three, where there arrive from time to time messengers that bring me all the secrets of the kingdom, and indeed of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. I am seldom hurried, but have leisure at intervals to take up a book, or write a private letter, or converse with any friend that may call for me; and from dinner to bed-time is all my own. . . . I only shall not regret when my duty is over, because to me the situation can lead to nothing—at least, in all probability; and reading, and sauntering, and lounging, and dozing—which I call thinking—is my supreme happiness,—I mean, my full contentment."

In the remarkable 'Collection of Autograph Letters and Historical Documents, formed by Mr Alfred Morrison between 1865 and 1882,' vol. ii., there is a letter from David Hume to Lord Hertford, dated "Lisle St., Leicester Fields, Feb. 27, 1766," in six quarto pages, giving a long, minute, and singularly graphic account of the transactions of Parliament on the first day of its assembling that year. It was before the days of shorthand reporting; but Hume's picture of parliamentary procedure is as vivid as our modern reports usually are.

He was now urged to resume and continue his History, and had offers of all the Marlborough papers for the purpose; but "*Cui bono?*" he asks; "why should I forego idleness, and sauntering, and society, and expose

myself again to the clamours of a stupid, factious public? I am not yet tired of doing nothing, and am become too wise either to mind censure or applause."

After lingering on in London,—he knew not why,[1]—he took a lease of one of the houses in Edinburgh belonging to Allan Ramsay, built on the sloping ground that descends from the Castle to the Nor' Loch; but, on the advice of his friends, he gave it up again. Urged by Madame de Boufflers to return to his favourite Paris—she even wrote saying she had taken two houses for him, one at the Temple, and another near the Bois de Boulogne—he resisted the temptation; his sympathies now turning towards his old home in the Scottish capital. Even in August 1765 he had written to Blair from Paris—"My attachment to Edinburgh revives, as I turn my face toward it;" and in his 'Own Life' he records—"I returned to Edinburgh in 1769 very opulent (for I possessed an income of £1000 a-year), healthy, and, though somewhat stricken in years, with the prospect of enjoying long my ease, and of seeing the increase of my reputation." Installed in his old house in James's Court, he writes to Smith (August 1769): "I am glad to have come within sight of you, and to have a view of Kirkcaldy from my windows. I am tired of travelling, as much as you ought naturally to be of staying at home. I therefore propose to you to come hither and pass some days with me in this solitude. . . . There is no habitation on the island of Inchkeith, otherwise I should

[1] He writes from Park Place, London, to Dr Blair (March 1769): "I know not what detains me here, except that it is to me a matter of indifference where I live; and I am amused with looking on the scene, which really begins to be interesting."

challenge you to meet me on that spot, and neither of us ever to leave the place till we were fully agreed on all points of controversy!"

We may here give a brief retrospective glance at the four houses which Hume successively occupied in Edinburgh. Where he lived in his college days, or during the subsequent winters spent in Edinburgh before he first went to France, is unknown. In 1751, when he came in from Ninewells, he settled in Riddle's Land, Lawnmarket, the only one of the four houses occupied by him which still stands as it did in Hume's day. It was there that he lived when librarian of the Advocates' Library. "In the first and smaller court of Riddle's Close . . . there is a lofty land, with a projecting turret stair, bearing the date 1726. . . . This lofty tenement derives an interest from the fact of its having been the first residence of David Hume, as an independent householder, in Edinburgh."[1] He did not find it, however, quite so satisfactory an abode as he pictured it in his amusing letter to Clephane. There he began his History, and there he wrote his 'Political Discourses.'

Eight years afterwards, on returning from London, he settled in Jack's Land, Canongate, a house which Robert Chambers, in his 'Traditions of Edinburgh,' thus describes: "It is a plain, middle-aged fabric, of no particular appearance, and without a single circumstance of a curious nature connected with it, besides the somewhat odd one that the continuator of the 'History,' Smollett, lived some time, in his sister's house, precisely opposite."[2]

[1] Daniel Wilson's Memorials of Edinburgh in the Olden Time, p. 167.

[2] Robert Chambers's Traditions of Edinburgh, p. 69. See also Wilson's Memorials.

In May 1762 he removed from the Canongate to James's Court, almost opposite his old house in Riddle's Land. In one of his letters to the Countess de Boufflers, written from this house in February 1767, he tells her that he had purchased it "five or six years ago"; that on one occasion, when he was leaving Paris, he had given instructions to have it sold; that, by mere accident, his letter was never posted; and that on his return to Paris he retained the letter, as he thought it better to keep the house as a private retreat.[1] Daniel Wilson thus describes James's Court, in his 'Memorials of Edinburgh': "Entering by a narrow alley which pierces the line of lofty houses along the Lawnmarket, the visitor finds himself in a large court, surrounded by high and substantial buildings. . . . James's Court was erected by a wealthy citizen in 1727, on the site of various ancient closes." Boswell, the friend and biographer of Johnson, became the tenant of Hume's house in James's Court, when the latter removed to St David Street; and there he received the lexicographer—the "great brute," as Mrs Boswell used to call him—the rough literary dictator of the South. It is said that when some mutual friend offered to introduce Hume to Johnson, the *ursa major* roared out, "No, sir!" This house, once Hume's property, and where he received many of his friends, was destroyed by fire in 1858. On its site are erected a Savings Bank, and the offices of the Free Church. In Hume's time the Nor' Loch was directly underneath his house, with gardens along its margin; and there must have been a very magnificent view to the north, over the space now covered by the

[1] See his Private Correspondence, pp. 231, 232.

New Town, to the Firth of Forth and the Fifeshire hills beyond.

The fourth and last house Hume occupied in Edinburgh he built for himself, and entered it in 1769. It was the first house in St David Street, on the east side, as you go towards Princes Street from St Andrew Square; and, oddly enough, the street was named after him—the name "*Saint* David" having been chalked on the wall of his house by a daughter of Baron Ord, in girlish frolic, probably, so far as she was concerned, or on the principle of *lucus a non lucendo.*[1] When his servant complained to her master, thinking the act most disrespectful, he replied, "Never mind, lassie; many a better man has been made a saint of before." There, in St David Street, he passed the six remaining years of his life, the central figure in the literary society of Edinburgh—and a remarkable society in many respects it was. Smith, Ferguson, Blair, Gilbert Elliot, Edmonstone, Lord Kames, Mackenzie, Alexander Wedderburn,[2] Mrs Cockburn, and many others, made up to him for the loss of the brilliant wits of Paris, by the knowledge, and the genial-heartedness, the learning, the culture, and the *bonhomie* of the Scottish capital.[3] He was admired by

[1] Carlyle of Inveresk affirms that it was Hume himself who contrived and executed this, "with the aid of Miss Nancy Ord, one of the Chief-Baron's daughters." He says, "They got a workman early one morning to paint on the corner-stone, St David's Street."—(Autobiography, p. 276.)

[2] Afterwards Lord Loughborough, first Earl of Rosslyn.

[3] Sir Walter Scott's opinion of the group is given in 'Guy Mannering,' chap. xviii.: "A circle never closed against strangers of sense and information, and which has perhaps at no period been equalled, considering the depth and variety of talent which it embraced and concentrated."

most men, was curious to the eye of others (from his career in France and England), was sympathised with by many from his political views, but was also attacked more fiercely than before for some of his opinions. Lesser men, such as Beattie, were more bitter against him than his powerful antagonist Reid had been. It was a curious time, when the 'Essay on Truth' was hailed as an answer to the 'Treatise' and 'Essays' of Hume; and when its author was honoured with a Crown pension, and an allegorical portrait of himself by Reynolds, into which an angel was brought, driving out Hume and Voltaire!

Adam Smith's testimony to his friend is well known. He spoke of his admirable temper, his frugality, his constant affability, and said: "Upon the whole, I have always considered him, both in his lifetime and since his death, as approaching as nearly to the idea of a perfectly wise and virtuous man as perhaps the nature of human frailty will permit." Blair's testimony was the same. His relations to the more eminent clergy of his time were most friendly. It was, of course, the era of a dominant "moderatism"; but that term has now lost the stigma of a nickname, and become an epithet of honour. His literary opponents—such as Boswell, the biographer of Johnson—speak of his charity and benevolence. With his friend Henry Home (Lord Kames), his only difference referred to their respective spelling of their common names, and their respective tastes for claret and for port.

His correspondence during these closing years had the old characteristic features. It was full of geniality, but also full of prejudice. *E.g.*, in writing to Bishop Douglas—(July 1770)—at that time the Rev. Dr Doug-

las, Canon of St Paul's, London, about certain papers of Lord Clarendon's which had fallen into Douglas's hands, bearing on an alleged French pension to King Charles of two million francs, he states that it was well known that King James "entertained a silly notion which many Protestants had adopted of reconciling the two Churches" (the Roman and Protestant) "by mutual concessions." Hume adds: "He must have been very blind if he had not seen that the Puritans were much more dangerous enemies than the Catholics."[1]

In 1771 we find him varying his life in Edinburgh by a visit to Inverary. In a curious book—'Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century,' by John Nichols—there is the following jotting in vol. i., under "Biographical Anecdotes of Daniel Wray, Esq.": "15 *October*.—Have you heard of the Congress at Inverary? Though fifty beds were made, they were so crowded that even David Hume, for all his great figure as a Philosopher and Historian, or his greater as a fat man, was obliged to make one of three in a room."

In 1775, feeling his health failing, he made his will, and wrote the autobiography, from which so many sentences have been quoted. While he left most of his property (£6000) to his brother, sister, and nephews, he left sums of money to Adam Smith, Ferguson, and D'Alembert, and appointed Smith his literary executor, instructing him to publish his 'Dialogues on Natural Religion.' He also left money for the building of a bridge over the Whitadder at Chirnside—on the condition that no stones for the building should be taken from the quarry at Ninewells,—and for the erection of

[1] From a MS. in the British Museum.

a modest monument to himself on the Calton Hill at Edinburgh. In the autobiography he said: "Were I to name the period of my life which I should most choose to pass over again, I might be tempted to point to this latter period. But I consider that a man of sixty-five, by dying, cuts off only a few years of infirmities. . . . It is difficult to be more detached from life than I am at present." He was induced to take a journey to Bath, to try the effect of the mineral waters, and the change. He went by Morpeth. There he met Adam Smith, and John Home (his relative). The latter returned with him to London, accompanying him afterwards to Bath; where he wrote an interesting record of the journey, and their conversation. He tells us that Hume had purchased some ground on the Calton Hill, Edinburgh, for a burial-place, and that he wished the inscription on his tomb to be merely "David Hume." The Bath waters did him little good. The following is from an unpublished letter[1] to Mr Crawford, dated Bath, June 15, 1776:—

"I should have been very happy in your company here, and to have improved you (and myself at the same time) in health, in philosophy, and in whist; but I leave this place in a few days, as the waters do me no service, and all the company are gone or going. . . . The true cause of my distemper is now discovered. It lies in my liver. . . . They tell me that motion and exercise are my best remedies. I shall put the recipe in practice. The same remedy would cure you. Will you meet me positively, and as a man of honour, this day month—the 15th July—at Coventry, the most central town in England? and let us wander during the autumn throughout every corner of that kingdom and of the Princi-

[1] MSS. in the British Museum.

pality of Wales. You will find me in as good spirits as ever you knew me, if not better, and resolute to set all the doctors at defiance. We may quarrel sometimes, but shall never tire of each other. I shall not travel above two, or at most three, stages a-day, which will be an admirable trial of your patience."

He returned to Edinburgh, gathered his more intimate friends together for a last social evening, and wrote thus to his brother: "Dear Brother,—Dr Black tells me plainly, like a man of sense, that I shall die soon, which was no disagreeable news to me." Smith informs us that he spoke cheerfully of his end, and yet without a "parade of magnanimity." He showed no impatience or querulousness. Others—such as Drs Cullen and Black—bear similar testimony. He died on the 25th August 1776, and was buried in the spot he had selected on the Calton Hill. A vast crowd—some of whom were drawn by sympathy, and some by curiosity—witnessed the funeral. On his well-known tomb are inscribed the words: "David Hume,—born April 26th 1711, died August 25th 1776. Erected in memory of him, in 1778."

Those who differ most widely from the philosophy of Hume cannot fail to appreciate much in the character of the man. His life showed a consistent course of self-command. His passions were kept under the steady control of the reason. He was habitually generous, direct, and open as the day, with no twist in his nature, and with nothing servile. He may be truly described as a man "without dissimulation," — which is more than can be said of some of his opponents,—as a man of high integrity and candour. His intellectual honesty showed itself in his love of all that could be verified, and in his

hatred of what seemed to him to be unrealities. If he had no Celtic enthusiasm, he had in compensation the sunny Saxon temperament; and if never radiant, he was usually serene and cheerful. He had an almost equal appreciation of the Stoic and the Epicurean view of life; but it was towards the latter that his sympathies practically tended. Unaffected, easy-minded, bright, and sociable, but also eminently secular, we find no trace in him of introspection, or of the seriousness and moral thoughtfulness that attend it. He had a clear head, and a generous heart—add to this the absence of jealousy, that common failing of literary circles and coteries; but he lacked the elevation and the nobleness that are usually associated with the philosophy of idealism. He had a singularly keen intellect; but his intellectual vision was singularly limited. That "inward eye," which discerns the unity of things beneath their manifoldness—which sees a rational meaning in the universe hid behind its symbols—was not his. If we associate with this limitation of view his excessive sensitiveness to literary reputation, his admitted ambition, and his undoubted relish for flattery, we see how his character and his philosophy acted and reacted on each other.

One thing more may be noted before we pass to an examination of the philosophy. It is the genial acquiescence of his temperament, and his preference for those obvious conclusions that could be reached without any effort of speculation. He really cared more for an undisturbed life, and the enjoyment of literary leisure, than for the arduous work of system-building. In his practical attitude of mind he was at one with the French Encyclopedists, although the result differed widely in

Paris and at Edinburgh. It showed itself in Hume's case, for example, in his conformity to religious practices—for which he has been so severely condemned by those who have judged him by another standard. But, whatever his faults may have been, Hume was genuine to the core; and he neither sat in the seat of the scornful, nor pretended to be what he was not. If speculative philosophers of more religious temperament—if Spinoza and Kant, for example—did not conform as he did, it was from a radical difference in character. Hume liked to be in practical sympathy with his fellow-creatures. Intellectually isolated, he wished to be associated with them as far as possible in common acts and observances. In this he was more like the leaders of the later Academy in Rome than any of the moderns. He had come to believe that the fabric of knowledge raised by the human understanding had no satisfactory basis; that the intellectual structures reared by his predecessors were built of inadequate materials, and with insufficient masonry. However, having "said his say" to his contemporaries, he had no wish to spend the rest of his life in incessant protest and the turmoil of debate; and as he grew older, he was increasingly indulgent towards the builders of those systems that seemed erroneous, or even fantastic to his eye. He was tolerant towards all but the extremest fanatics. He believed in the necessity of compromise, and saw clearly that if one who happened to differ from his neighbour in philosophy, or religion, or politics, thought it his first duty to proclaim that difference as from the housetop, and to emphasise it in season and out of season, the world would speedily become a mere bear-garden.

In the same connection it may be remembered that, when asked by Colonel Edmonstone if one might enter the clerical profession, without believing in every detail of the Articles formulated in the Church's creed, his reply was in keeping with the whole strain of his philosophy. He has been much blamed for that reply, but it should be remembered that it was simply a practical application of his ruling principle of compromise. And in justice to the man, whether we agree with him or not, we should remember that Hume held that a philosopher might have an esoteric of his own, which he left behind him in his retreat, when he talked exoterically with the masses of mankind. He even claimed "to speak with the vulgar, while he thought with the learned." In every attempt to estimate the man, and his system, this should be remembered.

It is clear that Hume thought he had detected the illusions on which ordinary belief reposes; but as people around him believed (or seemed to believe) the illusions, he thought that he should, at least, "live, and talk, and act like other people," although he could not think with them. The philosophical doctrines of the 'Treatise' cut him off intellectually from the great mass of his contemporaries; but his temperament was too sympathetic to permit him to acquiesce in any practical chasm between him and them, and he thought those people very foolish who became "martyrs by mistake." He therefore made a compromise of his philosophy in practice; but the fact that he could not carry it out, or apply it consistently in common life, is one of the things that suggest the existence of a hidden flaw about its speculative root.

SECTION B.—HUME'S PHILOSOPHY.

CHAPTER I.

HUME'S PREDECESSORS, AND HIS PHILOSOPHICAL INHERITANCE.

HUME's special significance in the history of philosophy is due to the way in which he pierced to the core of the problems, which his predecessors had dealt with less profoundly. In this respect his work was unique and monumental. Three generations had lived in England since Bacon inaugurated a new method of experimental research, and elaborated the laws of inductive science. All were influenced, more or less, by his realistic spirit; and during that whole period, the attitude of the English mind toward the ultimate problems connected with Man and Nature was in the main Baconian. The British philosophy of Experience culminated, however, not in Bacon, nor in Locke, but in Hume; who saw, with more clearness than any who had gone before him, both the basis on which that philosophy rests, and its inevitable issue.

In philosophy, all that is new was once old; and all

that was old in time assumes new phases. In order, therefore, to an adequate understanding of the position and work of Hume, we must go back, and briefly trace the course of European philosophy from its commencement under Descartes and Bacon. Far from being irrelevant or superfluous in a little book on Hume, this glance at his predecessors will bring out the distinctive position and merit of the Scottish philosopher.

Ancient philosophy had, for the most part, tried to explain the Universe objectively; that is to say, it had sought the origin of the Cosmos, the nature and ultimate cause of Existence, in some principle outside or beyond the knower. In the simple naturalism of the Ionic school, in the number and harmony of the Pythagoreans, in the pure being of the Eleatics, in the everlasting movement or becoming of Heraclitus, in the moving force of Empedocles, in the atoms of Democritus, in the *nous* of Anaxagoras, even in the idealism of Plato, and the physics and metaphysics of Aristotle, we have a long series of philosophic efforts to find the ultimate cause of things, in a sphere or principle external to the knower. Doubtless, in the call to introspection by which Socrates began his intellectual reform, in his glorification of the individual reason, as well as in the Stoic and Epicurean teaching, we have subjective elements grafted on the dominant objectivity of the ancient world; but in all its schools,—whether under the solar light of Greece, or the lunar reflection of that light in Italy,—the prevailing current of speculative thought tended steadily towards the objective. The radical explanation of things was sought in some phase or characteristic of the outward universe—not in

anything contributed by the knowing mind, or in the self that knows. In keeping with this, the fundamental contrast of ancient philosophy—which assumed a vast variety of phases, but was invariably present in all the schools—was not the contrast between man the knower, and the objects which he knows; but it was the contrast between appearance and essence, or the things that do appear and things in themselves—although the stress was laid, now on one, and again on another of the elements in the antithesis.

Medieval philosophy was an intellectual movement of a totally different kind. While separate threads of ancient wisdom survived, and permeated the schools of the Middle Age, the philosophy of the whole period—receiving important additions from Semitic sources and from Christianity—was, in the main, an applied theology. Its chief quest may be described as an effort (or a series of efforts) on the part of the finite to reach and to rest in the Infinite. But having reached it, by whatever process—ontological or traditional—all lesser articles of belief were evolved out of it. The conclusions come to as to the nature of man, and his relations to the world, were deduced from the theological postulate on which everything else depended. The result was that the human mind took refuge for centuries within a circle of propositions in reference to the Infinite, which were handed down mechanically from generation to generation; and the rights of the individual reason were crushed under the supremacy of tradition. Throughout the whole period, the human intellect—marvellously acute and at times super-subtle—worked in fetters, though without complaint; endeavouring to give rationality and con-

sistency to what it had received on authority. But the effort to rationalise accepted data implied a constant re-examination of them from fresh points of view, which by degrees undermined them. The very use of reason to defend a dogma was opposed to the *credo ut intelligam,* which had been the watchword of the whole scholastic movement.

In opposition to the objectivity of ancient and the traditionalism of medieval thought, the starting-point of modern philosophy was essentially subjective; and the prevailing contrast (drawn out in various ways, but emphasised in all the schools) was not, as in antiquity, between substance and phenomena, or, as in medievalism, between the dogma given on authority and the opinion picked up by the individual—the fixed credenda and the mutable belief—but between the subjective attestations of consciousness, and the objective realities attested by them. It begins with the work of two remarkable men, Bacon and Descartes.

Although the work of Bacon was prior in date to that of Descartes, and although Hume's inheritance from the former was more direct—and is therefore more easily traceable—than his relation to the latter, our survey of his predecessors may begin with the work of Descartes. It is from him that modern philosophy takes its most distinctive rise; and from him, as from Socrates in Greece, several streams of influence emanated—separate schools of thought, differing from each other more widely, (as Cicero remarks of the Socratic schools) the farther they removed from their source. The Cartesian influence is traceable, not merely in the idealism of modern Europe — through Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant,

Fichte, and Hegel—but also in the realistic features of the school which sprang from Bacon, and which, passing through Hobbes, gave rise to the experimentalism of Locke and Hume. The two latter were greatly influenced by Descartes.

The Cartesian starting-point was the self-consciousness of the individual, broadened out over the whole area of subjective experience. All that clear and accurate self-consciousness attested — whether pertaining to the senses and the intellect, or to the emotions and the will—was to be accepted, and held as philosophically valid, simply because it was thus accredited. If it stood the test of "clear and distinct" thought, it was borne witness to by an ultimate authority, by evidence beyond which we could not pass. As with Socrates a deeper *scepsis* than that of the Sophists had to precede the attainment of rational conviction, so with Descartes; suspense of mind was the necessary prologue to clear, because thoroughly scrutinised and verified, knowledge. Doubt everything of which you can doubt, Descartes virtually said, exhaust the sphere of the doubtable, and by this process you will conquer doubt; you will escape from the world of illusion, and reach the sphere of reality. Speaking in a metaphor, you will get to the rock which lies below the shifting sand; because whatever remains clear and distinct in self-consciousness, after the utmost possible doubt, not only may, but must be accepted as true.

But in what does this appeal to self-consciousness result? When the whole sphere of the doubtable is traversed, and all that belongs to it is set aside or excluded, what is disclosed as trustworthy? Des-

cartes' answer in brief is this. There are two spheres to which real or substantial existence belongs—that, viz., of material extension, and that of immaterial thought. Together they exhaust reality. Every form of organised existence is a phase of extended matter; similarly, every thought, feeling, and volition is a phase of immaterial unextended substance; and between the two there is an impassable chasm. They are not only different from each other, as outwardness and inwardness differ respectively, but each is the opposite or negative of the other. Therefore they have nothing in common. Neither of them can give rise to the other, or even modify it. We cannot deduce matter from mind, or construe mind as an evolution of matter; nor can we unite the two by intellectually stepping across the chasm which divides them. Over that chasm there is no plank, speculative or experiential; and no bridge can be built across it by the reason, or discovered in experience. How then are the two to be connected? They can only be united by a *tertium quid;* and this to Descartes was the presence and the interaction of the Infinite Substance—viz., God. By various ontological proofs, he had demonstrated to himself the existence of a supreme *causa causans;* and, being both infinite and eternal, it was by its universal and omnipotent agency that the conjunction of the two realms of finite substance was brought about: in other words, the union of external nature and internal consciousness was accomplished by a process of incessant underworking—a sort of everlasting occult miracle.

Descartes did not work out this union. His successors in the Cartesian school did so. To Descartes, matter in motion could not give rise to consciousness,

nor could mind in energy originate matter; but he had no explanation of the union of the substances to offer, except an arbitrary one. From the way in which he left the problem, however, it was inevitable that a school of materialism on the one hand, and a school of idealism on the other, should develop out of his system. The former virtually said, "the whole sphere of consciousness is due to the action and evolution of atomic particles." The latter said, "the objectivity of the material or outward sphere is a delusion: seemingly external, it is in reality subjective from first to last."

The contrast between the objective and the subjective—so clearly drawn by Descartes—passed on into the realistic schools of England and the Continent, and led the European mind to deal with each apart. More especially, it led those whose vocation it was to study Nature to deal with natural phenomena on mechanical principles, to be solved without calling in the aid of anything beyond themselves. The result has been to the great advantage of experimental physics and the natural sciences. All the great discoveries in these departments, within the last two centuries, have been due to the rigour with which extra-material powers or entities have been excluded, and the entire realm of matter regarded as an interconnected framework of law and order.

The philosophy of Descartes itself, however, was dualistic to the core,—that is to say, it recognised a twofold realm of substance, mind and matter—the ego and the non-ego—and between them a "great gulf fixed"; and its dualism gave equal prominence to each of the two

elements embraced within it. It gave up the realm of matter to the most unfettered study by induction; it kept the realm of spirit for experimental study by self-consciousness; and it united the two by bringing in a theological concept, as an appendix to the philosophy—the synthesis of mind and matter being found in God.

The Cartesians who succeeded Descartes sought in various ways to explain the union of the two. Geulinx and Malebranche tried to account for it by supposing that, while mind could not act on matter nor matter on mind, the divine energy was exerted, on the occasion of a movement in either realm. They held that this supernatural energy—bringing the two together—explained our knowledge of material things, and the action of material things on us. The *substantia extensa* and the *substantia cogitans* of Descartes, which had not been really united by him—but only attached by the casual agency of a *Deus ex machina*—were thus united. The *substantia extensa* assumes a thousand different phases, which pass, and repass, and interchange. This is obvious even to an eye untutored by philosophy. But the point to be explained is, how the *substantia cogitans* attains to a knowledge of the former. Malebranche explained it by supposing that each separate mind, imbedded as it were in the Infinite, knows all that it does know, in the Infinite, and through it. Hence the theory expressed in the aphorism, "Nous voyons tout en Dieu." In this doctrine the dualism of Descartes is retained, and even intensified, but its fundamental difficulty is not solved.[1]

[1] Geulinx deserves quite as much notice as Malebranche in the history of European Philosophy, although he seldom receives it. He

The next step in the evolution of European thought was taken by Spinoza, in whose system, however, the dualism of Descartes disappeared in a one-sided monism. Spinoza stood more apart from the current of contemporary speculation than any other of the moderns. He was less affected by his immediate predecessors, although his speculative work cannot be understood apart from that of Descartes; and he did not form a distinctive school of successors. He was dissatisfied with the Cartesian dualism; but the goal of unity was reached by him, not (as by realist and idealist) through the suppression of one term of the antithesis, but by embracing both, in the transcendent doctrine of the unity of all things in God. In other words, he took up the two finite substances of mind and matter in a unity which destroyed their differences, instead of making room for these differences, and reconciling them. It was a return, in part, to the Eleatic doctrine of the ἓν καὶ πᾶν; but many Platonic, neo-Platonic, and medieval elements were grafted by Spinoza on the simple doctrine of Parmenides, and the result was wrought out by him in a wholly original manner. To the Eleatics, the phenomenal world in its manifoldness stood apart from that of pure Being, and was inexplicable by means of it. Reality did not belong

developed the Cartesian doctrine of self-consciousness, and based the *a priori* convictions of the reason on the inner structure of that reason itself. He saw more clearly than his predecessors had done the relation of Language to Thought,—he anticipated Hobbes in this,—and explained Grammar as the science of the forms of thought. He also discusses the relation of sense-perception to the higher knowledge obtained by reason. The latter, however, did not amount to a knowledge of the nature of things in themselves, but only of those intellectual forms which regulate all our knowledge of existence.—See 'Arnold Geulinx, Erkentnisstheorie und Occasionalismus,' by Ed. Grimm.

to phenomena; they were mere show and illusion. To Spinoza, on the other hand, all phenomena were embraced within one supreme and solitary Substance, and were the phases under which it disclosed itself. The entire history of the cosmos, the whole series of evolutions through which phenomenal existence passed — when regarded, not as happening in time, but *sub specie æternitatis*—were the outcome of a single underlying substance, the revelation, not of a series of separate things, but of one solitary existence, self-subsisting, self-identical, and self-contained. Did the phenomena of the universe disclose to us *two* finite substances (as Descartes had taught)—substances that were antithetic, reciprocal, and contrasted — they would for ever stand apart. They could not touch or interact. But there was only *one* substance, and its attributes were both mental and material, while they disclosed themselves to us under an infinite variety of diverse modes. Thus Spinoza reached unity, by sinking the two substances of Descartes in the abyss of the Infinite.

Spinoza's conception of Nature, not as dead mechanism, but as living substance, was a gain to philosophy; but, while throwing out his doctrine of the unity of substance as a speculative guess, he has nowhere given us the means of rising to the height, whence we can survey the universe *sub specie æternitatis.* To reach unity may be the goal of philosophy, but the goal must be reached by a normal process of consistent thinking, and not by an arbitrary assumption made at starting. Now, to begin with, we have duality given us in the conscious experience of a double set of phenomena, in mind and in matter. Spinoza asks us to reach unity

by construing the essence of both sets of phenomena as one and the same; and he does this by bringing in a *tertium quid* distinct from both, to which he affixes another name. His solution is as arbitrary as was that of Malebranche. There is no *a priori* necessity for sinking individual things, as he does, in the abyss of universal being; and the individuality of individual things may be retained without surrendering the unity of the whole. In other words, the substances of mind and matter may be regarded as fundamentally distinct, or radically separate; while they are at the same time kindred in essence, and correlated naturally, standing in no need of an everlasting miracle to bring about their correlation. We shall by-and-by see the bearing of Spinoza's theory on the doctrine of Hume.

Hume's philosophical debt to Spinoza was, however, only remote and indirect. He was much more directly indebted to the realistic teaching of Bacon, and to the way in which Gassendi and Hobbes had turned the current of English thought towards a naturalistic interpretation of things.

Gassendi was a modern Lucretius, who developed the philosophy of Democritus, and popularised it, as it had never been popularised amongst the Epicureans. He was not a Cartesian, but an opponent of Descartes, who drew his chief inspiration from the ancients—although in Gassendi's doctrine of substance we can trace the indirect influence of the founder of modern philosophy. A physicist by natural sympathy, he instinctively fastened on the atomism of Democritus and the Epicureans, and wrought it out. The notion that all existence is due to the movement, the impact, and

the collision of atoms, working by necessary law in everlasting sequence, was sufficient to explain to him the vital processes of growth; and the subsequent decay of organisms was but the separation of atoms which had formerly been held together. Both Hobbes and Gassendi were alike influenced by the atomists of antiquity and by Descartes. Their relation to each other was one of mutual indebtedness, although Gassendi's works were published earlier, and his theories were wrought out in independence and isolation.[1]

Turning to our English philosopher Hobbes, we find that he had much in common with Gassendi. He began his intellectual career, however, by an independent study of the school logic. During his Continental travels he found the authority of that logic shaken, and the investigation of Nature in the ascendant. Influenced to some extent by Bacon, he addressed himself to the natural sciences; and though he threw theology aside, he kept loyal to the Church, and the established order of things. To Hobbes the dominant conception of the

[1] In the curious affinities and the equally curious antagonisms of the philosophical schools, we find theistic materialists and atheistic spiritualists. Gassendi was a Catholic priest; Hobbes a defender of *ab extra* authority, and even of sacerdotalism. Gassendi's aim was to vindicate the fallen reputation of Epicurus, and to reinstate him in his true place of honour. Learned, acute, fair-minded, humorous, his controversy with Descartes was an admirable sample of what philosophical controversy should be. He was a materialistic theist, who, admitting the existence of a spiritual first cause, dispensed with him straightway, and concentrated all his regard on the physical world of matter and motion; and yet he believed in an immaterial and immortal spirit. His teaching was adopted by many in Paris, and a school of disciples formed who opposed the dominant Aristotelianism as keenly—although from an opposite point of view—as the new Cartesian school opposed it.

universe was a realistic one. His was the mathematico-physical point of view, and from that point of view he unified substance; but to him the one substance was not (as to Spinoza) God, but matter; and even the abstract generalisation "matter" was in his view misleading. Strictly speaking, it was only "bodies" that were known by us. "Matter" was merely an abstract *name* for a collection of bodies. In his account of the process of perception, as the movement of atoms acting on our organism, and arousing a certain resistance,—this reaction leading us to regard the objects which induce the perception as external to us,[1]—we see the influence of Democritus; but in Hobbes the Greek atomism was transformed by its alliance with certain Cartesian elements into an indigenous English growth, the effect of which we shall discover subsequently in Hume.[2] It was an acute theory—of which we shall find the traces and the influence further on—that the motions of bodies are transmitted through the air to the brain and heart, and are met by a reactionary movement, which is sent back again to the object, and which generates in us the belief in externality or "outness"; but it was avowedly a material explanation of mental states—a mechanical account of the act and process of perception. Hobbes has special merit and significance as the founder of

[1] De Corpore, iv. 25.

[2] All the "thoughts of man" are "every one a *representation* or *appearance* of some quality or accident of a body without us, which is commonly called an *object*, which object worketh on the eyes, ears, and other parts of a man's body. . . . The original of them all is that which we call *sense*, for there is no conception in a man's mind which hath not at first totally, or by parts, been begotten upon the organs of sense. The rest are derived from that original."—Leviathan, Part I., chap. i.

English empirical psychology, but his philosophical system was one of rigid mechanical necessity, developed out of atomism; and his sociology, his politics, and his ethics were its further outcome. If the origin of the State could be traced back to the movements and affinities of atoms composing the body politic, it was a self-evident corollary that there was nothing in it inherently good or right; the goodness and the right were due to the *de facto* arrangements of society.

In Gassendi and Hobbes, however, we see the robuster type of empiricism, content to announce itself boldly, but in no sense revolutionary in its tendencies, or subversive of the existing order of things. In the next generation, the doctrine was carried to its logical issue; but it became diluted, as well as diffused. The drift of the current of English thought was increasingly toward the objective,—not in the sense in which the poets, at the close of the following century, brought back the national mind healthily to Nature, from the artificiality and conventions of the previous period — but in the sense that physical inquiries were more in vogue, and speculative ones were relegated to the background. The strong recoil from the rigour of Puritanism accelerated this in the age of the Restoration; and, as a natural consequence, speculative philosophy was almost abandoned. Hobbes had brought experience to the front; and in ethics he based his system on the conventional ground of the existing arrangements of society.

Immediately after Hobbes, English philosophy may be said to have been developed by reaction and antagonism, rather than by inheritance. The reaction came first through that notable band of Platonists, or Platonis-

ing divines, connected with the University of Cambridge — Cudworth, More, Smith, &c.—who fell back, in a somewhat mystical manner, on the eternal distinctions and reasons of things. Cudworth, the ponderous, the learned (yet half-learned) seer, maintained that the distinctions of good and evil existed, in the nature of things, antecedently to us and to our experience; and that they were absolute, non-contingent, and universal. In this Clarke followed him, drawing a parallel between mathematical distinctions and those of morals. Bishop Cumberland, again, keeping to the English traditions of experience, sought the root of morals, not in the eternal fitnesses of things, but in the existing circumstances of human nature and society; and he found in them certain tendencies which were not self-regarding, but benevolent. This doctrine was carried much further by Shaftesbury, who—keeping strictly to the lines of inquiry laid down by Locke — discussed mainly those impulses in human nature which tend toward others, and are the complement of those which terminate in self. Shaftesbury's work was both abler and more enduring than Cumberland's, and bore fruit in the moral psychology of the next and greater thinker, Bishop Butler.

Returning now for a little to an earlier date, after the teaching of Hobbes had borne fruit, and the somewhat noisy clamour of his miscellaneous opponents had died away, there was a slow but steady gravitation in the national interest of England towards the objective rather than the subjective side of things, and a consequent tendency to survey all the great problems of the universe from the outside, rather than to begin (as

Descartes had done) with the nature of the knower. The expansion of the methods of physical research, and the progress of scientific discovery, confirmed this. Newton in physics, and Robert Boyle in chemistry, carried on the work which had received so great an impetus from Gassendi and Hobbes;[1] but they separated the sphere in which they laboured from the sphere of subjective experience so widely, that—while developing the former, and confirming the tendency to regard the great problem of the universe as in the main a materialistic one—they remained theists. The intellectual instinct of the age turned increasingly towards the material, but as yet there was no explicit divorce between the material and the spiritual. That separation became explicit at a later stage; but the two were held together without being rationally connected, or their mutual relations drawn out, in the period which succeeded that of Hobbes, and preceded that of Locke.

Locke's intellectual and literary career was largely shaped by the stream of tendency dominant in his time. The reaction against scholasticism in all its forms—which Bacon initiated, and Hobbes confirmed—was then widespread in England; and Locke was borne on by the general current. Hobbes did not influence him much directly. It was Descartes who was his intellectual

[1] It is not perhaps recognised so fully as it should be, that in order to form any just estimate of the philosophy of England during the seventeenth century, the immense strides which had been made in the physical investigations of Nature, and in a mathematico-physical explanation of its powers—beginning as far back as Copernicus, and coming through Galileo down to Newton—must be taken into account.

inspirer, from the outset of his career; although Locke misunderstood the radical point of the Cartesian philosophy, as to innate ideas. He had studied the natural sciences in his youth; and, occupied with the political and politico-economic problems of his day, it was after he had not only examined, but written on these subjects, that he interested himself in the special psychological questions with which his name is chiefly associated. He was one of those acute, sagacious thinkers—endowed with more vigour and clearness than depth of mind—who have done much for the enlightenment of their own and subsequent generations, both by the intellectual quality of their work, and the admirable form in which it was unfolded. To Locke, the "proper study of mankind was man;" and he did lasting service by recalling his contemporaries from physical inquiry, and objective research of all kinds, to the study of the human mind, both in its processes and its products. As all our knowledge takes its rise from the nature of the knower, and the relation in which that nature stands to the objects known, it was clear to him that the extent and the limits of human knowledge could only be determined by an experimental study of the human faculties. In pursuing this, Locke carried on the psychological analysis which Hobbes had inaugurated, to new and significant issues. His firm hold of experience, with his distrust and rejection of all that could not be experimentally verified, has made him the very type of the philosopher to the majority of educated Englishmen. And although his analysis of the elements of consciousness was not sufficiently profound, was indeed even singularly defective—and was therefore exposed to the easy critical rejoinder

of Leibniz—credit must be given to Locke for the clear and trenchant manner in which he brought back the mind of England from hypothesis and conjecture to fact, from vague guesses and unauthenticated instincts to the solid ground of experience.

Locke's main polemic was against the doctrine of innate ideas. He wholly misunderstood that doctrine, as maintained by the greater minds of antiquity, and could not even comprehend the teaching of Plato on the subject;[1] but it must be remembered that the crude doctrine which he attacked—although a travesty of idealism—had its supporters, and that it deserved its fate at the hands of Locke.[2] It was easy to show that everything in human consciousness had to grow, and be developed; but that did not disprove the prior existence, in a latent state, of the very things that were thus evolved.

Locke tried to exhibit the development of consciousness through its progressive stages. Simple ideas, such as those of colour and sound, reach us through the senses. These we combine into compound ideas, and get the notion of substance. As all the world knows, his contention was that the mind is originally a *tabula rasa*,[3]

[1] The innate ideas which Locke attacked were the mere ghosts of the Platonic ideas; or, to change the illustration, they were the dead bones of the old Greek doctrine, which had lain for ages buried under the strata of medieval tradition; and as no one could breathe into them the breath of life, a new idealism had to take the place of the old.

[2] It is the penalty to which every crude statement of a just doctrine is exposed, that it provokes an easy reply from those who cannot understand a deeper statement of it.

[3] This idea and the phrase are Aristotle's—(see the De Anima, iii. 4). But Aristotle's doctrine on this point was abandoned by Locke, and Leibniz comes nearer to it.

like a sheet of white paper, and that our knowledge is afterwards written on the original white sheet by the impressions of the senses, and is built up into symmetry by our subsequent manipulation of them. The outward world presents us with the manifold in experience. It is the function of the understanding to take this manifold to pieces by analysis, and afterwards to arrange it in groups or classes; which it does, by forming general ideas, through the aid of language. Thus all the material of our knowledge comes to us from without; and in receiving and registering it, we are but the passive recipients of influence *ab extra.* As to the realm of substance, or essence, lying behind our impressions—the realm of metaphysical or ontological reality—that is a *terra incognita.* There is but one figurative door at which everything enters into the chambers of knowledge, the door of sensation; and there is no corresponding door, by which the understanding can pass out, on the other side as it were, into the realm of substance.

Locke's 'Essay on the Human Understanding' led to the 'New Essays' of Leibniz, which were written in vindication of the *a priori* elements of knowledge. The experiential formula of the one, "Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu," was met by the ontological rejoinder of the other, "Nisi intellectus ipse." Leibniz inherited the subjective starting-point of his philosophy from Descartes. His system was as individualistic as was Locke's. But beginning with self-consciousness as his field of study, analysing its contents and deducing inferences, he reached, not two substances (as Descartes had done)—a *substantia extensa* and a *sub-*

stantia cogitans—nor one substance (like Spinoza), but a multiplicity of separate ones, to each of which he transferred most of the characteristics of the one substance of Spinoza. Each was not a phenomenon merely, but a noumenon also, a monad with a substantial essence of its own, and was known by us as a "thing in itself."

Thus the line of evolution, from Descartes to Leibniz through Spinoza, was from a doctrine of two substances (*dualism*), to that of one underlying universal essence (*monism*), and thence to a reassertion of the manifold, in one of the most curious of speculative theories,—a theory in which the individualism, which had disappeared in Spinoza, reappeared in the spiritualised monads, the *individua* of Leibniz.

The Lockian philosophy ran its course of rapid development and degradation across the English Channel. Condillac seized and vulgarised it, by the ease with which he reduced its fundamental postulate to commonplace. Very much as Aristippus degraded the νοῦς of Anaxagoras, by relegating it to the menial office of being a sort of lion's provider for the senses, Condillac, tracing intelligence backwards, found its origin in sensation pure and simple. The highest act or energy of the reason was simply "un sensation transforme"; and the logical result was the reduction of mind to the level of matter—"man, a machine."

In England, however, after Locke's intellectual labour had ended, the doctrine of Descartes was developed by Berkeley, to another and a very different issue. Berkeley had been nurtured in the school of Experience which Descartes inaugurated; and while influenced by Locke more powerfully than by any other of his prede-

cessors, and developing the Lockian psychology to some extent, he also assimilated much of the earlier Platonic teaching, grafting it in a fruitful manner upon the stem of our insular philosophy. He so interpreted the things of sense, in the light of what the mind brings to them from within, that he affirmed of those things of sense that they had no existence apart from that inward and ideal element. He did not affirm that they had no existence apart from what is supplied by the individual percipient; but that, apart from some such element, supplied by some mind or another, they had no existence. Furthermore, the essence of material reality was merely the sum of the things perceived by us, and was therefore spiritual. Its *esse* was *percipi*. Nothing of which we have any knowledge could exist *per se* —that is to say, it could not exist if it were unperceived or unapprehended by mind. In other words, there was no realm of substance that was at the same time material.

In reaching this conclusion, Berkeley had the credit of developing the idealism of Descartes logically, on one side; and his prevailing merit, in the literature of speculative thought, is his insistence on the fundamental truth that the root of all knowledge, being within the mind of the individual that knows, must therefore be ideal. But his philosophy was one-sided, in very proportion to the truth of its fundamental postulate. That the object perceived has a relation of intellectual dependence on the percipient subject is obvious, so far as his cognition extends; but if the object perceived be different from the act of perception, it cannot be in any sense dependent on it, or on a similar act, for its existence.

As is well known, Berkeley's main assault was directed against an objective world of material substance, existing independently of mind. A mindless world of matter was to him unthinkable. In trying to think it, mind was of necessity brought in, *nolens volens;* and it was the singularly acute attack which he made on the received notion of substance, transmitted to him in lineal succession from Locke, that mainly interested Hume, and roused him to carry out and complete the stroke, not as Berkeley wished it carried out—into an ideal or theoretic interpretation of nature—but by deducing the wholly negative conclusion that we know nothing at all of substance, and resting there.

It was Locke, however, beyond all question, who chiefly influenced Hume. On Berkeley he bestowed only a passing glance, and that a half-friendly one. He saw in him a philosopher who had drunk at the same fountain-head as himself, and who had deduced some conclusions with which he was in sympathy; but he was in sympathy with them only in so far as they tended towards agnosticism. Hume had much more in common with Hobbes than with either Locke or Berkeley, and more with some of the ancients than with any of the three. It is not always the thinker with whom one is most in sympathy, however, from whom he receives the most powerful or commanding influence; and there can be no doubt that—so far as intellectual parentage is concerned—it was the Lockian philosophy that gave rise to that of Hume, just as out of his system, or want of system, there arose in due time the counter-philosophies of Reid and Kant; the one being in the main a sym-

pathetic deduction or development, and the other an antagonistic reaction and recoil.

With this brief survey of the course of European thought from Descartes onward, the philosophical inheritance of Hume will be apparent; but the importance of the Lockian philosophy, as the immediate predecessor of Hume's, warrants our returning to it for a little in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II.

LOCKE AND HUME.

In his introduction to Hume's 'Treatise,' Mr Green justly remarks, that "at rare epochs there appear men or sets of men, with the true speculative impulse to begin at the beginning and go to the end, and with the faculty of discerning the true point of departure which previous speculation has fixed for them."[1] If this be true of Hume,—if it was his special merit to discern the true point of departure which previous speculation had fixed for *him*,—it is essential to a correct understanding of his work and achievements to ascertain, and critically to estimate, the fundamental points in the Lockian theory of the origin of knowledge. We do this the more willingly, because, in explaining Locke, we virtually explain the doctrine of Hume. Locke had the rare merit of being a clear, patient, and acute psychologist. He put the question, as an experimental one, thus: Whence comes the stock of knowledge of which I am now conscious? How has it entered into me? and how has it been built up? Of what materials is it composed? Can I go back and examine, with any approach to pro-

[1] Introduction to Hume's Treatise, pp. 1, 2.

bability, the process of upbuilding, growth, and derivation? He affirmed—as he thought, on the testimony of experience—that the mind was originally characterless, like an empty unfurnished room; that it was at first entirely passive, its earliest signs of life being merely the capacity of being influenced by the outward world. Our life begins in sense. One after another, in lengthening series, sensations are experienced by us. We gradually learn to refer them to external objects, and to associate them with these objects as their causes. Thus, perception not only follows sensation, but springs out of it; and all our thoughts of things, however high they rise, have their root in simple feeling. By degrees we learn to discriminate one sensation from another. We compare the results, and we contrast the causes; but the entire fabric of experience to which we attain is built up out of these successive acts of a slowly evolving consciousness of sense. "In time," says Locke, "the mind comes to reflect on its own operations about the ideas got by sensation, and thereby stores itself with a new set of ideas, which I call ideas of reflection."[1] But these ideas of reflection arise out of our ideas of sensation, as the latter arise out of the sensations themselves. Memory, imagination, reasoning, all the higher faculties, are—by a shorter or a longer pathway of derivation—the product of the lower.

Some of his followers have defended what they call the "intellectualism" of Locke, on the ground that he recognised a second source of ideas in "reflection." But, while several of his statements on this point contradict the fundamental thesis of experientialism—

[1] Essay, Book II. i., sec. 24.

notably the contrast which he draws between the "primary" and the "secondary" qualities of body, and his distinction between the "abstract idea of substance" and the "complex ideas of particular substances"—they do not warrant the conclusion that Locke admitted "reflection" as an independent source of knowledge; because he held that the originally empty chamber was *first of all furnished by sensation.* Granting that a new set of ideas ultimately arise within that chamber, their origin must still be sought in those sense-impressions, which the blank or characterless tablet first received. Locke says explicitly, "There appears not to be any ideas in the mind before the senses have conveyed any in."

Some of our ideas are "simple," others are "complex." Some of the simple ones (such as those of colour and sound) enter the mind by the gateway of one sense; others (such as those of extension and sensation) by several senses; some (such as those of thought and volition) enter by the second channel of reflection only; and others (such as that of power) by sensation and reflection united. But those simple materials of knowledge may be indefinitely combined, and form complex ideas; just as letters are united into words, and words into sentences. They may be combined in three ways, and into three classes; into modes, substances, and relations. The second and the third of these are philosophically the most important, and Locke's explanation of substance is one of the most significant developments of his doctrine. He explains it thus: From sensation and reflection together we get many simple ideas, which we associate under a common name as one idea. "Not imagining how the simple

ideas can subsist by themselves, we accustom ourselves to suppose some substratum in which they subsist, and which, therefore, we call substance." This substance, he says, exists beyond us, but its essence is unknown.

Under the head of "relation," he examines the ideas of cause and effect, and of identity and difference. The origin of the idea of cause and effect is simply that we observe something beginning to exist, and we note that it receives its existence in consequence of something else pre-existing it. It is "from what our senses are able to discern in the operations of bodies on one another," that we get the notion of cause and effect, and this is the notion we obtain—viz., that "a cause is that which makes any other thing begin to be."[1]

The outcome of the Lockian philosophy is that we know nothing of substance, or essence, or cause. Of things as they are, we are wholly ignorant; we only know things as they seem, or appear to be. "It is evident that the mind knows not things immediately, but only by the intervention of the ideas it has of them. Our knowledge, therefore, is real only in so far as there is a conformity between our ideas and the reality of things. But what shall here be the criterion? *How shall the mind, when it perceives nothing but its own ideas, know that they agree with the things themselves?*"[2] The sentence italicised embodies the fundamental position of idealism; and the interrogatory doubt in which it is expressed, shows how naturally the Cartesian doctrine, passing through the mind of Locke, led on to the agnostic mental attitude of Hume.

In his analysis of the complex states of consciousness,

[1] Essay, Book II. xxvi., sec. 2. [2] Essay, Book IV. iv., sec. 3.

and in tracing to its root what is now the intertwisted branchwork of experience, Locke did good service to English psychology. He warned us against vague quests, and speculative flights, beyond the limits of the knowable. That so clear and keen an English intellect was honest in confessing the limit of its own vision—that it refused to admit a knowledge of what it could not grasp, and proclaimed its dislike to all nebulous theories, —was a gain to philosophy in the long-run. Only good came out of his effort to banish "innate ideas" from the field of consciousness, because his failure compelled the next generation to make a still deeper analysis, and to survey the problem from a different point of view.

The limitations of empirical psychology were seen in the very success to which Locke attained. He proceeded to analyse the contents of his own mind by the method of introspection. Isolating himself from other existences, he examined his own consciousness as he would have studied any of the phenomena of Nature; and he thought of himself as a sort of prepared photographer's plate, dipped in a collodion bath, and sensitive to all impressions. But he never looked beneath his metaphor. He was the intellectual slave of his own *tabula rasa.*

By far the most important point to be determined in the psychology of sense-experience, is how the first or fundamental step in the process was taken. Of course we cannot go back to the beginning by memory, and recall the first sensation. We must begin our analysis with experience in a comparatively advanced and even mature stage. The child is incapable of introspection, and hence it is a matter of indifference which

point we select in the stream of adult experience. Perhaps it is as well to begin our experiment as far down the stream as possible; but, whatever be the point chosen, the question we must raise is this, does the outward object create the inward impression? or does the subject create it? or do both contribute a share to the result? The subject—that is to say, the individual consciousness—receives the impressions; but what is meant by its receiving them? In order to any unconscious reception, there must at least be a receptacle; and in order to all conscious reception there must be a receiver: but neither the receptacle nor the receiver can be a total blank, or *tabula rasa*, if there is to be reception at all.

All the matter of our experience, said Locke, comes to us from without. Our knowledge is built up in us by a series of impressions, while we are passive in the process. But we cannot even understand those impressions (far less register them), we cannot interpret or store them up, without an active exercise of the understanding. We must bring to the knowledge and the interpretation, as well as to the registering and the storing, things which cannot have crept in at the doorway of sense. If we do not, our knowledge is mere chaos.

It is needless to follow Locke further into the details of his empirical psychology. We have now seen enough of his doctrine to understand how Hume received the problem of the origin of knowledge handed to him for solution.

There is a further question, however, preliminary to any discussion of Hume's philosophy as a whole, with which this chapter may conclude. It is whether he

had, or held, a philosophy at all: for there are those who maintain that his position was merely that of an eighteenth-century agnostic, who came to no conclusion on the ultimata of knowledge, and who regarded all definite opinion as to "first principles" to be a transgression of the limits of the knowable. Sir William Hamilton alleges that Hume merely accepted the Lockian philosophy as the current one; that, without endorsing it, he showed its consequences, and the contradictions in which it landed its advocates. There are several passages in Hume which seem to justify this opinion. He certainly affirmed that there was a contradiction between the instincts of human nature and the conclusions reached by the current philosophy, and that doubt or suspense of mind was our only rational alternative. But, on the other hand, it is a total mistake to suppose that Hume's aim was altogether destructive. It would be more correct to say that he wished what he believed to be the erroneous results of the constructive reason set aside; and although what remained was only a psychology of the powers, he wished the psychology to be accurately and scientifically constructed. There are, of course, various types of scepticism; and Hume's was not a shallow revival of the doctrine of Pyrrho, that we should make no assertions as to the truth of things, any more than it was a positive affirmation that we know nothing of the sphere of reality. Of the two, he had less sympathy with the latter than with the former; and it is the least rational and consistent position, though perhaps the commoner one. If dogmatic scepticism be a contradiction in terms, the doctrinaire sceptic, whose affirmation tends towards a definite creed, is no un-

common reality. Hume's was rather the scepticism which stood apart, and finally declined to speculate on ultimate problems, feeling that the entire region was one of haze.[1] But here we reach one of the practical inconsistencies of the man and his system, of which we have seen some traces in his life, and of which we shall find many further illustrations in his teaching.

In an important passage towards the close of the first book of the 'Treatise,' Hume tells us of "the origin of his philosophy"; and although he afterwards regretted,[2] not only the "positive air which prevails" in the 'Treatise,' but the "very great mistake in conduct" in publishing it at all when he was so young, it is in this book that we have the clearest indication of the aim and scope of his philosophy. He writes thus:—

"The contradictions and imperfections in human reason have so wrought upon me and heated my brain, that I am ready to reject all belief and reasoning, and can look upon no opinion even as more probable and likely than another. Where am I, or what? From what causes do I derive my existence, and to what conditions shall I return? . . . What beings surround me? and on whom have I any influence, or who have any influence on me? I am confounded with all these questions." He then tells us that since Reason cannot dispel the clouds, Nature suffices for the purpose; and, in a well-known sentence, he adds: "I dine, I play a

[1] "Nothing can be more unphilosophical than to be positive or dogmatical on any subject. . . . Where men are most sure and arrogant, they are commonly the most mistaken."—(See the Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals, section ix.)

[2] In a letter to Gilbert Elliot.

game of backgammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when, after three or four hours' amusement, I would return to these speculations, they appear so cold and strained and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any further." He "finds himself absolutely and necessarily determined," he tells us, "to live, and talk, and act, like other people." He finds that he "must be a fool, as all those who reason or believe anything *certainly*[1] are;" but he is resolved that "his follies shall at least be natural and agreeable." "In all the incidents of life," he adds, "we ought still to preserve our scepticism." The time returns when he is "tired with amusement and company;" and when, "whether in reverie in his chamber, or in a solitary walk by a river-side, he feels his mind all collected within itself," he wishes to explore the hidden reasons of things; and "I am uneasy," he says, "to think I approve of one object and disapprove of another, call one thing beautiful and another deformed, decide concerning truth and falsehood, reason and folly, *without knowing upon what principles I proceed.* . . . I feel an ambition arise in me of contributing to the instruction of mankind, and of acquiring a name by my inventions and discoveries. And should I attach myself to any other business or diversion, I feel I should be a loser in point of pleasure; *and this is the origin of my philosophy.*"

This passage contains a key to the man and his system. In it are seen the Cartesian inheritance, the desire for some "criterion" by which he may "distinguish truth from mere opinion"; but in the same section of the 'Treatise,' he tells us that he finds "nothing but a

[1] The italics are Hume's.

strong propensity to consider objects *strongly* in that view under which they appear." In this, however, the criterion of Descartes — the apprehension of reality "*clare et distincte*," by which the reports of consciousness were tested — disappears in a mere difference between the degrees of strength in which impressions reach us; and the influence of Locke, modified by that of Pyrrho and of Sextus, is more apparent than that of the founder of modern philosophy. Still, it must not be forgotten that Hume modestly expresses it as his "only hope" that "I may contribute a little to the advancement of knowledge by giving, in some particulars, a different turn to the speculations of philosophers;" and that he adds at the close of his discussion, "a true sceptic will be diffident of his philosophical doubts, as well as of his philosophical convictions."

CHAPTER III.

THE ORIGIN OF KNOWLEDGE.

In an "advertisement" to the 'Inquiry,' Hume expressed his wish that it, and not the earlier 'Treatise,' should "alone be regarded as containing my philosophical principles." In the second section of the 'Inquiry' he discusses "the origin of ideas"; the twelfth and last section is devoted to "the academical and sceptical philosophy"; and in these two sections he recast, but in no sense modified, or even simplified, the teaching of the earlier 'Treatise.' It is in the 'Treatise' that we find the clearest statement of the root principle of his philosophy; in the first section of the first part of Book I., "On the origin of our ideas," and in the second section of the fourth part of that book, entitled "On scepticism with regard to the senses." It is so common a fault in philosophical criticism to be unjust to the doctrine one is opposing, and even to travesty it in the act of translating it into other words than those by which its author originally set it forth, that it will be best to give Hume's doctrine, in the first instance at least, in his own words.

"All the perceptions of the human mind resolve them-

selves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call IMPRESSIONS and IDEAS. The difference betwixt these consists in the degrees of force and liveliness with which they strike upon the mind, and make their way into our thought or consciousness. Those perceptions which enter with most force and violence we may name *impressions;* and under this name I comprehend all our sensations, passions, and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul. By *ideas* I mean the faint images of these in thinking and reasoning. . . . There is another division of our perceptions, which it will be convenient to observe, and which extends itself both to our impressions and ideas. This division is into SIMPLE and COMPLEX. Simple perceptions (or impressions and ideas) are such as admit of no distinction or separation. The complex are the contrary of these, and may be distinguished into parts. . . . Impressions and ideas resemble in every other particular except their degree of force and vivacity. The one seem to be in a manner a reflection of the other; so that the perceptions of the mind are double, and appear both as impressions and ideas. . . . Every simple idea has a simple impression which resembles it, and every simple impression a correspondent idea; . . . and as the complex are formed from them, we may affirm in general that these two species of perception are exactly correspondent. . . . *All our simple ideas in their first appearance are derived from simple impressions, which are correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent.* . . . The simple impressions always take the precedence of their correspondent ideas, but never appear in the contrary order. . . . The constant conjunction of our resembling perceptions is a convincing proof that the one are the causes of the other; and this priority of the impressions is an equal proof that our impressions are the cause of our ideas, not our ideas of our impressions. To confirm this, whenever by any accident the faculties which give rise to any impressions are obstructed in their operations (as when one is born blind or deaf), not only the impressions

are lost, but also their correspondent ideas, so that there never appear in the mind the least traces of either of them. . . . 'Tis remarkable that the present question is the same with that which has made so much noise in other terms, when it has been disputed whether there be any *innate ideas,* or whether all ideas be derived from sensation and reflection. . . . Impressions may be divided into two kinds—those of SENSATION and those of REFLECTION. The first kind arises in the soul from unknown causes ; the second is derived in great measure from our ideas, and that in the following order. An impression first strikes upon the senses. Of this impression there is a copy taken by the mind, which remains after the impression ceases ; and this we call an idea. This idea, when it returns upon the soul, produces new impressions, which may be called impressions of reflection, because derived from it. These, again, are copied by the memory and imagination, and become ideas; which perhaps, in their turn, give rise to other impressions and ideas. So that the impressions of reflection are posterior to those of sensation, and derived from them. The examination of our sensations belongs more to anatomists and natural philosophers than to moral ; and as the impressions of reflection arise mostly from ideas, it will be necessary to give a particular account of ideas before we proceed to impressions." When an impression reappears as an idea, it may do so "after two different ways—either when, in its new appearance, it retains a considerable degree of its first vivacity, and is somewhat intermediate betwixt an impression and an idea ; or when it entirely loses that vivacity, and is a perfect idea. The faculty by which we repeat our impressions in the first manner is called the MEMORY, and the other the IMAGINATION."—(Treatise, Part I., secs. i., ii., iii.)

This may suffice, as a condensed statement in his own words, of Hume's theory of the origin of knowledge. Obviously, and on the surface, it traces everything back to impressions made upon the senses.

In proceeding to estimate it, it will be observed first of all that the inquiry is an experimental one. Hume makes psychology the basis of metaphysic, believing that the question of what we *do* know, as matter of fact, must precede any inquiry as to what we *can* know, or the limits of the knowable. He therefore takes us back—as Descartes and Locke had done—to consciousness, or conscious experience; but next, he tells us, as the result of his examination of consciousness, that all our knowledge arises out of "impressions" made on us through the senses. It is thus derived from without, and is produced in us by external causes. On the surface, at least, it seems a simple and intelligible theory; but in thus beginning with the impressions of sense, let us see what it is that we really start with. What is an "impression"? Is it thinkable, in and by itself? Does it not require something other than itself to make it intelligible? It is the impression of an object external to us. So far good; but *on* what does the impression light? In order to the impress of any impression being conscious, is not the existence of a self—that is to say, of a subject capable of being impressed—necessary? In other words, if we analyse our consciousness of any single "impression," we find that we must first of all assume the existence of a conscious self; and neither the single impression nor a series of impressions can create the self, if the existence of the self is necessary to the consciousness of the impression. Hume affirmed that all our ideas were derived from prior impressions; but if we must bring in an idea to *explain* an impression, and to account for the first impression, the theory is a *hysteron proteron.* If we ask what an impression is, in answering the question, we

must put the impression into a class or mental category. And what does that mean? It means that in order to make an impression intelligible, we must make use of an idea. To explain it is to predicate certain things regarding it—that is to say, to bring it under some common notion, or to think it under an idea.

The first objection, therefore, to such a theory of the origin of knowledge as Hume advances, is that it is untrue to fact. Tested by experience, it is contrary to experience; because a sensation never exists, and cannot possibly exist, without a conscious subject. The *tabula rasa* state can never be disclosed to consciousness; because the *tabula* is no longer *rasa*, when conscious life begins. Empiricists direct us to "sensation," pure and simple, as the origin of ideas. But what, we must again ask, is meant by a "pure," or "simple," or "single" sensation? It must have certain features, which mark it off from other sensations. It must exist in place, and in time; and it must have a special character, as weak, or strong. But in each of these elements of place, time, and degree, certain features differentiate it from other sensations. Then, as each individual impression reaches us, it comes not singly, but in definite relation to others, which are contemporaneous as well as successive; and it is what it is, in virtue of its relation to these other impressions. Whether the sensation has been often felt, or only once experienced, these relations to what is beyond itself are necessarily involved in its very existence; so that it may be categorically affirmed that no sensation is ever "simple," in the sense that it does not carry us beyond itself. Instead, therefore, of affirming with Hume that "there is nothing in any object which

can afford us a reason for drawing a conclusion beyond it," we affirm that, unless we transcend it we cannot even know it, and that our first knowledge of it is due to the fact of our getting beyond it. Suppose that a particular sense-impression reaches us: in Hume's language, let it be "an impression of coloured points disposed in a certain manner." What now do we mean by this disposition of coloured points? It is their arrangement in lines, or curves, or figured forms; but do we not, in the very act of recognising them, predicate something of these coloured points, which the sensible objects themselves do not originate? The coloured points are not isolated, separate, solitary percepts. They are combined together in a unity of sense-perception. Each, therefore, carries us beyond itself, in the very act of recognising it. We know none in isolation, but all only in relation to, and in combination with, others; and if so, the theory of atomic individualism in sense-perception breaks down.

Again, when we have two or more sensations (coexistent or successive), and, comparing them with one another, affirm anything of them—as, for example, that they are similar, or that they are different—we necessarily presuppose the existence of a self, that performs the act of comparison; and this "self," in its acts of comparison, makes use of elements which its sensations do not yield. This is a second objection to the theory in question.

Self-consciousness cannot be got out of sensation, because the mere repetition of sense-impressions does not, and cannot, give rise to the reflex knowledge of a single sensation. A stream of phenomena cannot become conscious of itself. That is perhaps the chief difficulty

which confronts, and must always confront, the psychology of sensation. Sensation has no meaning apart from thought. They are given us together, or in synthesis. They appear invariably as correlatives; and not as dual elements entering into consciousness together *ab extra*, but as joint elements, one of which is furnished from without, and the other evolved from within, as the apprehended object and the apprehending subject.

The sensational philosophy attributes to matter the power of creating ideas in us, by dint of reiterated impressions. If we persist in asking, whence come they? is it out of the objective world of sense—out of mere "crass matter," as it used to be called—that the ideas emanate? it is replied that ceaseless contact with the objects that surround us generates sensation of all kinds within us; and that thence, in due time, by a power of inner alchemy, by the transformations of energy that are continually going on, ideas arise. This answer, however, does not carry us one step nearer a solution of the difficulty; and instead of repeating the question, a better way, perhaps, is to proceed to the analysis of any single sensation, as it occurs in conscious experience. Such analysis, if patiently made, will reveal at the very outset the inadequacy of the sensational theory.

We experience, let us say, a particular sensation, whether of colour, sound, taste, or odour. It lasts for a little, and is succeeded by others that differ from it. Were our experience limited to a single sensation, undifferentiated from others, and absolutely the same throughout, it would be a total blank to the mind. How then do we distinguish the sensations as they succeed each other? The answer to this may

tell us how we perceive each one as it occurs. The lines of difference separating each, which give it form and limit, which fix it in place, determine it in time, and regulate it in degree, may show us how we become conscious of it at all. Without these differentiating elements, the sensation would be absolutely unknown,—just as we could have no knowledge of light unless we knew it in contrast with darkness, or of bitter except as opposed to sweet, or of harmony but as compared with discord. It is, therefore, out of the contrast and the difference between them that the knowledge of our most elementary sensations arises; in other words, it is due to what is underived from sense that we are conscious of sensation at all.

It has been said, however, that although a single sensation may by itself be unable to give rise to thought, or to generate an "idea," many sensations together—a series or succession of them—by dint of recurrence and of co-ordination, may produce that which one could not originate. And as the successions are often very rapid, the incessant change, and the infinitely minute modification perpetually going on, may make us aware of each separate sensation as it occurs. This assertion may be met by a counter one, and a demand for proof. If one sensation cannot give rise to thought, why should two or more sensations do so? It remains to be proved that the mere repetition of a thing—in other words, habit or custom—can accomplish what a single occurrence is powerless to create. Besides, our sensations *coexist* in consciousness, as well as succeed each other. What, it may be asked, is the meaning of this coexistence of sensations? If they are marked off from one another,

by any characteristic sign of difference, is not this a proof that the differentiation proceeds in part from within? and that it is due to an element in active operation there, while it is met by another element existing without? The mere recurrence of sensations, or their number, is not the important point to be attended to, in an analysis of their nature. The important point is, that in experiencing them, as recurrent and plural, we build up the fabric of our knowledge of these very sensations, not by a mere passive reception of them, but by an active exercise of thought upon the materials furnished from without; and further, that in order to hold these elements together in consciousness, we must make use, not only of the untempered mortar of reiterated sense-impressions, but of an interior element of thought which arises and works from within.

It may be further contended that every act of reflex knowledge—by which the individual apprehends himself as a conscious subject, in relation to an object known by him—is a sign that he is more than a link in the phenomenal chain of nature, more than a mere development of sensation. In all knowledge there is a subject knowing and an object known, and the two stand face to face; but if the subject knows itself in the act of knowledge, it cannot believe that the object known both generates the act of knowledge, and gives rise to the knower himself. The unequivocal testimony of consciousness, in reference to our knowledge of the external world, is that certain states of the conscious subject stand related to corresponding states of the object known, that the subject knowing is active in its knowledge (though passively acted upon by the objects it knows),

and that the phenomena it observes do not produce its states, but that the latter are partly the product of its own inward energy, acted upon and evolved by contact with the objects it perceives. We do not know how they unite, how the object acts upon the subject, or how much each contributes to the result: all that we know is that each co-operates with the other.

The notion of mind as a passive product of external influence—and not, at the same time, an active agent or producing cause—is a radical flaw in the psychology of Hume; and, as developed by his followers, it issued in the wholly materialistic dogma that consciousness is the product of cerebral action, and mind, a mere function of brain. It is true that Hume did not absolutely affirm that the whole formative influence was *ab extra*, and had therefore a material origin;[1] but his psychology tended in that direction, and as such it was subsequently wrought out. Numerous contradictions occur on this point, both in the 'Treatise' and the 'Inquiry.' In more than one passage he affirms that the only thing the mind knows is its own "perceptions"; that it "cannot possibly have experience of their connection with objects"—that is to say, that we are quite ignorant of what has caused the ideas with which our minds are stored; while, alike in his criticism of Locke and Berkeley, and in the exposition of his own views, he tends towards an agnostic doctrine

[1] He held that the ultimate substance of mind and of matter is incognisable by us, and that all that we really *know* are the subjective states of our own consciousness; and he suggests that, *for all that we know to the contrary*, material changes may be sufficient to produce mental ones, but he does not teach this dogmatically.

of our knowledge of the outer world that is contradictory of the sensational theory with which he sets out.[1] In other passages he affirms that the causes of our impressions are unknown, but that our ideas are due to the impressions "which they represent," and that all our ideas of reflection arise out of those of sensation.

Perhaps the most curious thing about his teaching on this head is that, while clinging to the representative theory of indirect perception (his Cartesian and Lockian inheritance), he held that it is not any external object that we know—"not our body that we perceive, when we regard our limbs and muscles, but certain impressions which enter by the senses." Now, while in this admission Hume is logically an idealist, as much as any of his opponents — a "cosmothetic idealist," Hamilton would have called him — the important point to be noted is that he failed to find any valid link of connection between the subjective sensation and the objective world whence it came. Some kind of correlation between the subjective state and the object was admitted, but how we pass from the one to the other he could not tell. It is obvious that this ignorance, or mental impotence, must affect the prior doctrine, that every 'idea' has its prototype in an 'impression'; and that if we cannot find the 'impression' whence it sprang, we may be sure we are mistaken in supposing that we have any such 'idea.'

The followers of Hume, who have carried out his doctrine on the materialist side, point in the most irrelevant manner to certain states of the nervous system, which they say are antecedent to states of consciousness,

[1] See Inquiry, vii.; Treatise, xii.

and are therefore productive of them; forgetting that the latter are also antecedent to physical states, and co-operate to produce *them.* No physiological explanation of mental states and processes is worthy of serious regard, in the domain of philosophy; because it cannot carry us across the chasm which separates the phenomena of mind from those of matter. We must get behind these physiological states and processes altogether. To tell us—as the physiologists do over and over again—that the brain is the organ of mind, and that molecular changes in the brain always accompany mental acts, is to explain nothing. If it could be proved that the molecular changes *produce* the mental states, it would be demonstrative evidence on the materialist side of the question. But that has never been proved. The utmost that has been proved is that physical antecedents co-operate with mental ones, each contributing a share towards the joint result; and physical states are as much produced by mental ones, as the latter are caused by the former. To affirm that the "materials of consciousness are products of cerebral activity"—besides being a dogmatic assertion of what is *a priori* unlikely—is a very conspicuous instance of assuming the truth of what has to be proved. We know, on the evidence of consciousness, that acts of will originate changes in the bodily organism. Contrariwise, we know that changes in the brain determine acts of thought, feeling, and volition. If this be so—if bodily states influence the mind, and mental states influence the body, neither can be in a position of absolute dependence on the other.

Not only so; but with a far greater show of probability it might be affirmed that a physiological ex-

planation of mental states is an absurdity,—that it is irrational to begin with, and must therefore be irrational throughout,—because the very explanation involves, or carries with it, 'ideas' to which physiology cannot give rise. A material world of sense cannot be construed as intelligible, cannot even be rationally or scientifically spoken about, without taking for granted the existence of mind or consciousness. The empiricist begins with sensation, and tries to evolve all the complex life of the adult consciousness out of it. He explains the varied evolutions of mind as an invariable development of matter; but, in doing so, he reads into the earlier stages (*nolens volens*), 'ideas' which he has fetched from the later ones. In the very act of explanation, in the construction of his dogma, he cannot help taking the opposite theory for granted, and unconsciously proving it to be true; because *every* explanation of the universe—be it scientific, or be it philosophic—is of necessity the outcome of a mental act and process, and therefore cannot be an evolution of matter, whether in motion or at rest.

In Hume's analysis many inconsistencies are found. *E.g.*, he says (in words already quoted, 'Treatise,' I., sec. ii.), that as "the examination of our sensations belongs more to anatomists and natural philosophers than to moral," he will begin, not with them, but with the ideas which are derived from them. That is to say, he will begin with the 'ideas' rather than with the 'impressions,' *assuming that the former are derived from the latter*, although he does not show us how. Nevertheless, as he proceeds to deal with these 'ideas,' the gist of his whole contention—book by book, and section

by section—is this: "Show me the 'impression' from which the 'idea' is derived; for, if you cannot, the 'idea' is a delusion—a mere 'Will o' the wisp.'"[1] Yet he has never once indicated to us *how* any single 'idea' is thus derived: he has not, in a solitary instance, shown us the transformation in an actual "process of becoming." Thus the whole theory is a gigantic *petitio principii.* It is a mere assumption that the entire world of consciousness is a world of 'impressions' and 'ideas,' and that the impressions are the originals of all the ideas; and what is the worth of the assertion, if the 'impressions' be just the 'ideas' at a more vivid stage, and the 'ideas' the 'impressions' at a less vivid one?

[1] The reason why he rejects the nature of substance as an unintelligible entity, is that he cannot trace it back to any impression of sense.

CHAPTER IV.

THE THEORY OF CAUSATION.

There is the closest connection between Hume's doctrine of the origin of knowledge and his theory of Causation.

To distinguish 'impressions' from 'ideas' was a gain to psychology, but to derive the 'ideas' *from* the 'impressions' was the clumsy error into which Hume fell. It would have been equally or more correct to have derived the 'impressions' from the 'ideas,' and to have said that those finer (though latent) elements give all the character to sensation that it ever has. It would also have been a truer reading of psychological fact to have affirmed that we have many 'ideas' which *cannot* be the copies of 'impressions,' because there is nothing of which they can possibly be the impress; and further, that 'ideas' and 'impressions' differ, not in degree but in kind, *toto cœlo;* or, as Jeremy Collier's phrase puts it, "by the whole diameter of being." Hume accepted not only the Lockian doctrine of the origin of knowledge in sense, but also the Berkeleyan view of the illusion involved in the reality of an external world, or the objectivity of matter; and he con-

sidered it a parallel illusion to recognise a permanent self underlying the stream of thoughts and feelings by which the existence of that self is manifested. Putting aside the whole superstructure of doctrine on the subject that had been reared throughout the ages, and especially the "school metaphysic" (which was his abhorrence), he concluded that the only verifiable and trustworthy fields of knowledge were either (1) the mathematical sciences, which deal with "quantity and number," or (2) those sciences which deal with matters of fact—that is to say, the empirical sciences. There is a persistent antagonism, in his writings, to every other kind of inquiry; because he held that, from the nature of the case, it must lead nowhere. To get beyond phenomena, to reach the inner essence of things, to explain the relation of occurrence to occurrence, even to find out the connection between the material stream of phenomena and the mental one of acts of consciousness by which that stream is known,—all these were regarded by him as attempts to outsoar our mental atmosphere. His advice was virtually this: Register your facts, induct your laws, and then remember that, as a philosopher, you have reached your goal. Record, group, and classify; but recollect that, when you have done so, you have attained the limit of your powers. Don't presume thereafter to scale the heights, or sound the depths, or in any way to scrutinise the arcana of the universe, beyond the region of events and laws.

We shall immediately see the bearing of this on the doctrine of causation. It is important to remember that Hume affirmed that the "ultimate cause" of our 'impressions' is unknown. He even went the

length of saying that it would always be impossible to decide whether they arise from the object, or are produced by the mind itself, or are derived from the Author of our being. But he had no doubt that all the genuine 'ideas' to which we ever attain, or can attain, arise out of 'impressions'; and that we have thus a test—simple, adequate, trenchant, and unfailing —by which we can pronounce, with unwavering confidence, whether each 'idea,' which we now find as part of our mental furniture, has a valid origin, or is a mere *ignis fatuus*. Now, the most important of these ideas is that of cause and effect. We find within us this notion of a necessary connection between things that happen. But whence comes the idea? From what impression is it derived? Hume admitted its existence; the existence, that is to say, of the 'idea,' not of contingent succession, but of a necessary connection between events; but he could get no warrant for it, or authentication of it, except custom. We see a certain result follow from a particular event. We see it repeated (or repeat itself) again and again, and we infer that it will continue to do so—*i.e.*, that similar results will always follow similar causes. But our inference is wholly due to the trick of custom, to the instinct and the operation of habit. Frequent experience gives us, we think, a warrant to conclude that phenomena thus associated not only will, but *must* remain associated; and that there is more than mere sequence in the links of the chain, *i.e.*, that there is a necessary tie. The sole function, however, of any one phenomenon we may select, and isolate for the moment, is to tell us that it will be followed by another. Its use or office, as an

antecedent, is that of being a *signum memoriale* that a consequent will come after it; and all that we can attain to—all that we do *de facto* reach, in the course of our experience of the world—is the accumulation of a vast number of these *signa memorialia*, which enable us from the antecedent in due time to expect the consequent.

Such is the result (and the only possible result) of the derivation of the notion of causality from without. So far as mere 'impression' goes, in any object appealing to the senses, we cannot discover the cause which gave rise to it, or the effect that will follow from it. All that the senses can take note of is the conjunction of the one with the other; but custom, says Hume (in effect), compensates us for the lack of knowledge, and clears the barrier which the intellect is unable to surmount.

Let us take some instances. At a certain hour each night I see a gleam on the horizon across a wide estuary, and I have learned that the keeper of a lighthouse is in the habit of kindling his lamps at that time. I have been there, and seen him at work; and I have learned to associate the rays, which duly reach my eyes, with the act of kindling the light on the part of the lighthouse-keeper or his attendants. But it is merely a customary, and therefore an accidental connection that I discern between the ray of light (an effect) and its cause. Similarly, I hear a particular sound succeed the discharge of a cannon; and when I have done so repeatedly, I come to associate the two together: but I am not warranted in setting down the firing of the cannon as the *cause* of the sound I hear. Again, I lift a rose, and

smell it: the sweet odour which I experience I attribute to the flower, but this also is merely due to habit, and the sequence of the pleasant sensation from the proximity of the rose is all that I am warranted in affirming. In these three instances, the senses—of sight, of sound, and of smell—take note only of antecedence and sequence. Any link of causality, or causal connection, between the phenomena is not in the objects, but in us, who subsequently—by dint of habit and association—read into the objects what is not really there. The light on the distant horizon, which I have been in the habit of attributing to the keeper's nightly toil, might not be due to it, but to something else which resembles it. The sound, which I attribute to the discharge of the cannon, might be due to a totally different cause. The odour, which I attribute to the rose, might proceed from some other object. But my belief that the light comes from the lighthouse, the sound from the cannon, the scent from the flower, is due to the fact that I have had a reiterated and vivid 'impression' of the *conjunction* of the two things. It is the vivacity of the impression, its force and liveliness, that is the sole warrant (according to Hume) for my calling the antecedent—which I have been in the habit of finding associated with the consequent—a cause, and for naming that consequent its effect.

Hume did not deny that we do, as matter of fact, attribute some kind of causality to the antecedent, which produces the consequent. What he denied was that we have any philosophical justification for doing so. Of the supposed "necessary connection" he wished an explanation. It would not have mattered to him whence

it came, *ab extra* or *ab intra*, *a posteriori* or *a priori*. But the curious thing is that he never seems to have imagined that this link of connection—if obtained at all—*must* be obtained *a priori*. No element of necessity could ever be derived or evolved *a posteriori*, or through the experience of particular things. The whole problem lay in finding a reason for the fact that, given any single phenomenon (A), another phenomenon (B) must *of necessity* follow from it. He could discover no reason for the existing sequence of events except custom; and therefore, no reason for attributing efficiency to any single phenomenon except the accident of habit. For the proposition that "every effect" (no matter what it was as a particular occurrence, or what the nature of its antecedent) "*must* have *some* cause," and that there is therefore a tie of necessity between the sequences of Nature, altogether independent of the result that happens to emerge, Hume could see no speculative warrant whatsoever.

But let us come to closer quarters with this problem, because Hume's doctrine of causality is after all the centre of his system; and it is a cardinal one in most systems, in the sense that its treatment determines their tendency. Schopenhauer is clearly in error in saying[1] that Hume was the first to ask whence the law of causality derived its efficiency; but his attack on the doctrine was certainly significant, and it gave definite shape to the rejoinder of Kant. The belief in causality had been questioned over and over again, in a general way, from the dawn of speculative inquiry. Ænesidemus denounced the search for "causes," and affirmed that no

[1] Vierfache Wurzel des Satzes vom zureichenden Grunde, p. 20.

one thing causes anything else. To Sextus and Pyrrho the same idea was familiar; and Hume doubtless owed much to his acquaintance with the doctrine of the later Alexandrian sceptics.

It is impossible even to glance at the history of the doctrine of Causality, to which a treatise might be devoted; but coming down to Locke in modern philosophy, to him the notion had, and could only have, an experiential origin. The consciousness of energy on our part, and the sense of resistance to our volition by external objects, generated in us the notion of cause. This "influence of volition over the organs of the body" Hume recognised, but he added that the "means by which it is effected . . . must for ever escape our most diligent inquiry." Putting aside, for the present, the happier analysis of Leibniz—and his signalising it as a principle of necessity, and not of contingency—it may be best to quote Hume's own words; and it will be seen how rigorously, here as elsewhere, he deduced the root-principle of the Lockian philosophy.

"We can never, by our utmost scrutiny, discover anything but one object following another, without being able to comprehend any force or power by which the cause operates, or any connection between it and its supposed effect. . . . All events seem entirely loose and separate. One event follows another, but we never can observe any tie between them. They seem *conjoined*, but never *connected*. But as we can have no idea of anything which never appeared to our outward sense or inward sentiment, the necessary conclusion seems to be that we have no idea of connection or power at all, and that these words are absolutely without any meaning when employed either in philosophical reason-

ings or common life. . . . It appears that this idea of a necessary connection among events arises from a number of similar instances which occur of the constant conjunction of these events; nor can that idea ever be suggested by any one of these instances, surveyed in all possible lights and positions. But there is nothing in a number of instances different from every single instance, which is supposed to be exactly similar, except only that after a repetition of similar instances the mind is carried by habit upon the appearance of one event to expect its usual attendants, and to believe that it will exist. This connection, therefore, which we *feel* in the mind, is the impression from which we form the idea of necessary connection. . . . The first time a man saw the communication of motion by impulse, as by the shock of two billiard-balls, he could not pronounce that the one event was *connected*, but only that it was *conjoined* with the other. After he has observed several instances of this nature, he then pronounces them to be *connected.* What alteration has happened to give rise to this new idea of *connection?* Nothing but that he now *feels* these events to be *connected* in his imagination, and can readily foretell the existence of one from the appearance of the other. . . . Similar objects are always conjoined with similar. Of this we have experience. Suitably to this experience, therefore, we may define a cause to be *an object followed by another, and where all the objects similar to the first are followed by objects similar to the second.* Or, in other words, *where, if the first object had not been, the second never had existed.*"—(Inquiry, section 7.) Again, in a footnote to section 8, part i., he says: "If a cause be defined *that which produces anything,* it is easy to observe that producing is synonymous to causing. In like manner, if a cause be defined *that by which anything exists,* this is liable to the same objection. For what is meant by these words, *by which?* Had it been said that a cause is *that after which anything constantly exists,* we should have understood the terms. For this is indeed all we know of the matter. And

this constancy forms the very essence of necessity, nor have we any other idea of it."

From Locke's first principle, that all our knowledge comes to us from without, no other conclusion than this was possible. If sense-experience be the only source of knowledge, our notion of causality must take its rise in experience. It is true a Lockian disciple might reply that, on the repetition of these experiences to which Hume directs us, the mind discovers rather than feels the "connection" of the events. Still, the connection itself is not evidenced by the senses, nor to them. Relations of necessity are not disclosed in our experience of the contingent phenomena of sense. Therefore, if they are real, they must be evidenced in some other way. All that Hume can tell us is, that one thing is the *signum memoriale* of another, that they are associated in our experience; but the tie connecting each with each—like the inner substance of them all—is unknown and unknowable. He held that the interior Force, or ultimate Power, which "actuated the whole machine" of Nature, was "naturally concealed from us, and never discovers itself in any of the sensible qualities of body." We shall see the bearing of this upon his interpretation of Nature later on. Note meanwhile how logical a deduction it is from the starting-point of his philosophy; how (metaphorically speaking) he is *compelled* "to clear the board" of our knowledge of the notion of Cause, as well as of that of Substance, because we cannot find their prototypes in sense. There is the closest possible connection between Hume's inability to recognise a world of substance underlying phenomena, discoverable by the direct intuition of the reason—an

object, or "thing in itself," disclosed to us through sense, yet existing behind it, and irradiating and explaining it —and his inability to recognise anything more than antecedence and sequence in causation. It is really the same inability in a different form. If it be an illusive trick of custom to recognise a permanent self (behind the phenomenal stream of thoughts and feelings) constituting the "personal identity" of the ego, it is evident that it will be an equal illusion to imagine a substantial tie of efficiency within the links of the phenomenal chain in the outer universe.

Before dealing further with the doctrine of Causation, it is important to note that it was at the close of the first section of his 'Treatise,' after Hume had discussed our perception of objects in the external world, that he turned to the problem of personal identity, and virtually said, in his old accustomed manner, "Show me the 'impression' from which this 'idea' of a personal self is derived." We have no abiding 'impression' of self. All is evanescent. The 'idea' of what is constant cannot be derived from the 'impression' of what is fleeting. *Therefore there is no such 'idea.'* It is true that we cherish it, but it is an illusion. We are deceived by it. Now here as elsewhere adopting the current philosophy, Hume saw the difficulties in which it landed him. He tried to escape from them, but found no means of doing so. Dissatisfied with the solution given by the "philosophers," and at times with his own solution, he fell back, more and more avowedly as his intellectual life developed, on the position of the sceptic. He seems to have felt that by holding himself aloof from dogmatic solutions, he could at least keep

what he deemed the arch-enemy of mankind, "superstition," at arm's-length. If we cannot penetrate to any arcana, why need we try to do so? Why not go on our way without troubling ourselves? There is enough for the guidance of mundane life in these antecedents and sequents which we know. Why not indulge our "sceptical doubt" as to all that transcends them? The masses of mankind may cherish any faith they like, if they do not interfere with a similar liberty in others; but why should the intellectually emancipated, the "scientes" do so? It must be admitted that there was, in a good deal of Hume's polemic, if not an *arrière pensée*, at least an occasional satisfaction that the exposure of the old philosophical orthodoxy would be helpful towards the overthrow of superstition, and the discomfiture of fanatics.

But has Hume given us an accurate analysis of causation, either as a psychological fact, or as a metaphysical doctrine? Has he unfolded the idea of causality as it lies within the mind, and adequately interpreted the causal nexus as it exists in the realm of nature? On the contrary, his theory is full of flaws; nay, it is root and branch delusive.

In the first place, being a development (and a necessary development) of the doctrine which limits our knowledge to the realm of sense-experience, it necessarily shares in the defects of that doctrine. A cause, according to this principle, is not a power productive of result; it is simply that which goes before. Phenomenon A precedes, phenomenon B succeeds. Sequence is all that we know, because all that the senses take cognisance of is succession in time; and

we call that the cause which precedes the effect, and that the effect which succeeds the cause. We do this by habit, and get so accustomed to the associations of succession, that we come to believe that they *must* go on as they do; that is to say, we impose upon ourselves, and turn a trick of custom into a relation of absolute necessity. Now, this may seem to be a theory of nescience, an agnostic position; but it really contains a dogmatic presupposition upbound with it. It positively affirms that there is no power within the antecedent adequate to produce the consequent, that the notion of such causal power is a fiction of the imagination. We are told that in imagining efficiency, or causality, or productiveness (name it as you will) to be lodged within an antecedent, or even within a group of antecedents, as co-operative con-causes, we are the dupes of custom—the slaves of use and wont. We may validly ask for an explanation of the use and wont, or for the source of the custom, if custom be all in all.

But lest this should seem a circular argument, the affirmation of Hume may, in the second place, be still more validly met by the counter-affirmation, that—in each and every occurrence—there is more than simple antecedence and sequence; that there is a continuous exercise of power within the successive phenomena, dynamic force, or direct causal efficiency. Given the whole sum of concurrent conditions that go before an event—(and the group may be very large, and is in all cases indefinite)—in order to the production of any result, *power* must be exerted, an interior causal energy lodged within the phenomena must operate to produce the effect. The longer it is looked at, the

theory that resolves causation into sequence will be seen to be the emptiest of theories. It ignores the question at issue; it tries to solve the problem by cutting the knot, and then affirming that there is nothing to untie. To put casual in place of causal succession (which Hume does) is to put the cart before the horse, not only metaphorically but really; because it is only in the causal relations of phenomena that we find *power*, or drawing force. The only thing that Hume recognises in the operations or ongoings of the universe is (as we have seen) mere sequence. An event happens, it takes place, *evenit*,—that is all that we can say in explanation of it. The isolated particulars, in the continuous chain of phenomenal succession, these we do know, as they occur in time and in place; but as to any tie between them, connecting them, we are absolutely in the dark. Now here (just as in the parallel flaw we already traced in his theory of perception) it is precisely the reverse. We do *not* know the particulars, as they succeed each other, simply as detached occurrences. If we know them at all, we know them in relation to each other; and the larger half of our knowledge of each is our knowledge of its relation to the rest. A cause has no meaning except in relation to its effect, and the effect has none except in relation to its cause. But the special point to be noted is that we know the cause as *productive* of the effect, or we do not know it at all; and we know the effect as *produced by* the cause, or we do not know *it* at all; and since all phenomena are, alternatively, both causes and effects, according as we regard them—the cause being just the effect concealed, and the effect being merely the cause

revealed—we find an interior power or causality *within every single link of the chain.* Take any small section of the continuous area of phenomenal succession (for we must remember that the chain is *never* broken), select two or three links. You apply a match to gunpowder, and you see the flame and smoke, and hear the sound of an explosion. You perceive a violent change in the position and the relations of certain particles of matter. The application of the spark to the powder you call the cause, the explosion you name the effect; but there were many things besides the application of the spark that were equally influential in determining the result, and without which that result could not have taken place,—elements, states, and conditions, indefinitely numerous, but all concurring and co-operating. And all the result lay potentially within the cause, or the sum of the con-causes; the explosion merely made it visible. It displayed the working of the cause or causes in a certain manner. In other words, the force which separated the atoms formerly slumbered within them. It was latent, and it became active. Of course we are not to suppose that there is a non-material entity lying in some sort of crypt amongst the material atoms, alternately caught and released, now passive, and again active in its wanderings to and fro; but within *every* atom, as its interior essence, and therefore throughout the whole area of Nature, this force or causal power resides. This, however, is to anticipate.

In the third place, Hume's cardinal error—and it is the common error of the scientific as distinguished from the philosophic mind in dealing with this question—is the mixing up of two radically distinct beliefs, or the

ignoring of the distinction between two fundamentally different ones—viz., the belief in causality, or the belief in the uniformity of the order of Nature.[1] The latter belief is entirely due to custom; but the custom is based on an observation of phenomenal fact, and is not capricious or arbitrary. We believe that the existing order of Nature will continue—*e.g.*, that the sun will rise to-morrow, and the winter succeed the summer—because we have been accustomed to find it so; because extended experience—that is to say, the experience of the race, consolidated and organised for generations—has taught us to look for it; but it is quite possible, in the nature of things, that the existing order might change or be changed. We may even admit that, of every single occurrence the evidence of which reaches us through the senses, the antecedents and sequents might be other than they are—*e.g.*, that the sunrise might be followed by darkness, and the sunset by light; that summer might be cold, and winter hot; that silence might accompany a storm, and noise attend a calm. It is totally different, however, with our belief in causality, in the proposition that "every effect must have a cause," and that *power* is lodged within the cause (or the sum of the con-causes), adequate to produce the effect. That is a belief elicited in and through our experience of finite succession; but it is not due to such experience, or created by it, because in no conceivable conditions of experience could it be

[1] It is to this want of distinguishing between these two things that Hume's disciples have introduced so much confusion into this controversy. It is nearly as pernicious as another of their confusions—viz., identifying Science with Philosophy, and representing Philosophy as a branch of Science!

otherwise. The conviction of causality is made more vivid to the mind, by our witnessing the definite and orderly successions of phenomena ; but, as soon as it arises, it discloses its independent origin. The sun *might not* rise to-morrow, summer *might not* succeed winter, a percussion *might not* explode dynamite; but in all conceivable conditions of existence, in all conceivable universes, it would be as true that every effect must have some cause, and every cause some effect, as that two and two are equal to four, that all the radii of a circle are equal to one another, and that all the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles. We can conceive the natural order of succession different, but we cannot conceive causation absent. We can imagine a different result, but not the absence of all result. In short, it is not from *the amount of my experience* that I believe that every effect must have a cause, but it is because I discover by an intuition of the reason that it *must* be so. Now it is this link of power between phenomena, this inner tie of causality disclosed to the reason, that Hume denies; and in the denial of it his philosophy rests on an illusion.

Has, then, this judgment of causality an evidence *in all respects* equal to that of the propositions of mathematics? The mathematical axioms would be true, although no physical world existed, in which they could be evidenced to the senses. Is the same true of the axiom of causality? It may be admitted that there is one obvious difference. In coming to the conclusion that all the radii of a circle are equal, we simply analyse or take to pieces a given notion, the notion of a circle. The proposition of the equality of its radii lies *within it*,

is a latent part of it. We do not require to measure the radii of a circle, before pronouncing them equal; or to cut out the three angles of a triangle, and place them together, to find out whether or not they are equal to two right angles. Their equality is involved in the very conception of the circle and the triangle respectively. But in saying "every effect must have a cause," we pass beyond the effect; we go out of it, or rise above it, that is to say, we perform an act of synthesis, not one of analysis. We do not take to pieces, we unite. And here we find the kernel of the whole controversy. It is admitted that we form analytic judgments *a priori:* the mathematical sciences are proof of it. Can we also form synthetic judgments *a priori*, equally valid in universality and necessity with the analytic ones? This leads straight to Kant's reply to Hume, consideration of which must be meanwhile postponed.

It must be repeated, however, that both with Hume and his successors, it was not the existence of the idea of causality that was the question at stake, but only its warrant. Inheriting the phenomenalist doctrine from Locke, Hume's task was to explain how it happens that, in the absence of any knowledge of causality, as a real inward link between phenomena, we come to believe in such a necessary tie. The tie, he said, is not in the objects we behold, but in the beholders; and it is generated in us, by the constant experience of the conjunction of objects. That we do believe in the necessary connection of events he admitted. The only question was, on what ground do we believe in it? and the sole explanation to Hume's mind was the habit of doing so. We see things repeated and repeated in a certain manner,

and we gradually come to believe that they must go on in that manner, and that there is something *in the objects* that produces this result invariably and constantly. But we can never really know, from the examination of any object, what that was which gave rise to it, or what that is which will ultimately issue from it. We see certain things conjoined, touching one another in space, succeeding one another in time. That is the 'impression' that reaches us, the original report of the senses. Then, the 'idea' of necessary connection arises. It is begotten in the mind, but it is only custom that begets it. It therefore arises surreptitiously, so far as reason is concerned. It cannot authenticate itself. For example, you hear your friend speak, and you associate the words spoken with the speaker; that is to say, your eyes and ears receive sundry 'impressions'; and, as you have heard and seen your friend before, you get into the habit of associating those impressions with him. Your only warrant, however, being custom, your act is rejected and disallowed by "the slightest philosophy." In other words, the instinct which leads you to believe in the necessary connection of things is destroyed, whenever you begin to be rational. Such is the position taken up by Hume.

Slight reflection will show its inadequacy; and, to make it the more obvious, let us change the illustration. Suppose that in walking by the sea-shore I see a mark upon the sand, which I conclude to be a human footprint. I immediately infer that some one has recently passed that way; and, if there was any special feature in the footprint, corresponding to some peculiarity in the foot of a person known to me,

I might with confidence infer who the individual was who had passed that way. This is an inference as to special or particular causation; but it is totally different from the belief, or judgment, or inference, that the print on the sand must have had *some* cause, whether a human footfall or a different cause. The two things are totally distinct; and the latter, which is the distinctive judgment of causality, is yielded by any and by every phenomenon equally. It requires no accumulation of instances to warrant it, although it needs some slight experience to elicit it. It is intuitive, and in its intrinsic nature is unaffected by the discovery of particular antecedents and sequents in the chain of nature.

The special point to be noted is that while the *senses* take note of phenomenal succession only, the intellect strikes through the phenomenal chain—anywhere and everywhere it is able to do so—and it discerns the inner vinculum, the tie of causality binding antecedent to sequent in the grip of an *a priori* necessity. It is also to be observed that, while this judgment of causality flashes forth from the mind *a priori*, the tie of necessity which it discerns is one that binds the sequences perceived by the senses *a posteriori*. The source of the judgment of causality is within the mind that perceives it, but its evidence is not wholly subjective. Its evidence, like its sphere, is both within us and without. It is not created by the cunning workmanship of our own subjectivity. It is *found* within; and it flashes forth into conscious evidence, when the mind comes into contact with those external phenomena that are inexplicable without it.

If we now go back upon the problem, and survey it from other points of view, the more overwhelming will be the evidence of the distinction that has been drawn, and the clearer will the issue seem. Let it be conceded to Hume that the knowledge we acquire of the larger number of the qualities of objects is a knowledge of how they affect us; that in all the commoner states of consciousness we do not metaphorically pass over to objects, and find out their inner essence, or know even remotely what they are "in themselves," that we only know how they influence us. It is equally certain that the mere existence of any object before us, its extended area, and the relation of its parts each to each, are known to us, not through the senses (though by the aid of sense), but that they are known as things that *are* independently of our experience. The things of sense reach us as manifold, not as single phenomena; as connected, not as isolated events. They affect us as plural, not as singular. But when apprehended by us, grasped by the perceptive faculty of the recipient, these manifold, connected, plural phenomena are reduced to a kind of unity. First of all, they are grasped in the unity of consciousness. Next, we make use of non-experiential elements both to unfold, and to interpret, the manifold phenomena of sense; that is to say, we employ those *a priori* categories, which make our experience what it is. Their source is within; and, when elicited in self-consciousness, they partly constitute, and partly regulate, our perception of the objects of sense. It is thus that objects, given in sense, when grasped by the mind become intelligible. Immediately afterwards they are placed by the understanding in categories—that is to

say, they are reduced to their place in the order of thought, as one or diverse, as whole or part, as detached or united. But this reference of the objects given by sense to the categories is merely a development or extension of the act by which they first become intelligible to us. Combined in the unity of knowledge, they are made precise. They are reduced to greater precision by being referred to the categories, and the two things may be done simultaneously. The object is brought under the category in the very act of perception; and we cannot perceive it, without bringing it under some category. This is true of each individual object; but then, when several objects are brought together for comparison, a new reduction to category takes place, which is only a development of the first act of perception. First of all, to receive the impact or inrush of sense-impressions, next to register and store them up, again to recall and compare them one with another (or with new impressions),—in all this reception, recognition, and comparison we are making use of the categories, *nolens volens.*

It is thus that we find, by an analysis of experience, that it involves and carries with it certain necessary elements. The mind of the knower is not entirely acted upon from without; but it brings forward sundry elements of its own to the interpretation of what it knows. From the outer world (the manifold of sense) impressions manifold flow in upon the mind. Single and plural, coexistent and successive, they reach us, and affect us, and vanish. We know them to be diverse each from each, and to succeed each other one by one; but, if they are *our* impressions, we must unite them together,

we must combine the many in the one. Not only to interpret, but to receive them, we must know what we are receiving, and we must unify them. Some reach us simultaneously, *i.e.*, we combine them in space. Others reach us in succession; *i.e.*, we combine them in time. And if we distinguish them as ours, we combine them in another unity of experience. But what are we doing in all this? Sense-experience that was slowly produced by the impact of the external world upon us, would only give us difference. It could not give us unity. But we do unite our impressions, instinctively and inevitably, as they occur—simultaneously in space, and successively in time—and in both cases as our own. Is not this clear evidence that we employ a power or faculty not derived from sense? We cannot unify sense, any more than we can differentiate it by sense; but we bring in, and must bring in, the unifying and differentiating categories. In the act of combining our impressions—whether it be an act of conscious, or of unconscious synthesis—we put forth a power which sense did not give us; and the knowledge to which we attain is due to the union of two elements, the one of which is subjective and the other objective. Here it is that we find our original dualism taken up into a monism, which transcends but does not abolish it. We combine the differences of sense-experience in a unity which does not annihilate them, but which renders them intelligible. In other words, every act of sense-perception is a synthetic act, in which object and subject unite; and as they succeed each other in series, they are bound together as the acts of one and the same ego. *They* differ, *it* is the same; *they* change, *it* remains; and as it lies

beneath the differing and changing series, it also transcends it. It is only thus that experience becomes intelligible. Although in all experience there is an ultimate mystery unexplained and inexplicable, we can only make any act of knowledge intelligible by construing it as one in which self apprehends what is not self together with itself — that is to say, as an act by which the subject grasps both object and subject synthetically.

The differences, in the objects which we know, are not due to the mere passive reception of a stream of influences; nor does the percipient create these differences. They exist in the outward world, but they are also determined by the percipient self, and they are combined by the combining unit of self; while its act of combination transcends the differences which it unites. Thus it may be said first to differentiate, and then, at a stroke, to take the differentiation away. It separates, that it may combine; and the act of combination has meaning only as a sequel to the separation, while the separation is intelligible only in the light of the union.

CHAPTER V.

SUBSIDIARY POINTS IN THE DOCTRINE OF KNOWLEDGE; PERSONAL IDENTITY, AND STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

THERE are a number of subsidiary points in the doctrine of knowledge, as unfolded by Hume, which may now be briefly referred to. From the general conception of mind as a bundle of detached perceptions, united by no underlying substance constituting "personal identity," many important results are deducible, and are indeed logically inevitable.

In one of the most interesting chapters of his 'Treatise,' Hume proposes four things:—

"First, to explain the *principium individuationis*, or principle of identity. Secondly, give a reason why the resemblance of unbroken and interrupted perceptions induces us to attribute an identity to them. Thirdly, account for that propensity, which this illusion gives, to unite these broken appearances by a continued existence. Fourthly, and lastly, explain that force and vivacity of conception which arises from the propensity."—(Treatise, I., iv., § 2.)

As to the first, he affirms that neither a single object nor a multiplicity of objects can convey the idea of identity to us; but bringing in the idea of time or dura-

tion, we suppose, "by a fiction of the imagination," that the object lasts on invariably and uninterruptedly, and comparing it "in the different periods of its existence" we get the idea of identity. He then goes on to ask why the "constancy of our perceptions makes us ascribe to them a perfect numerical identity." He finds that when objects resemble each other, we naturally and readily pass from the one to the other, and sometimes without perceiving that we do so. When we fix our thought on any object which remains the same from moment to moment, we suppose the change to lie only in the time; and "a succession of related objects is considered with the same smooth and uninterrupted progress of the imagination as attends the view of the same invariable object." "The passage between related ideas is smooth and easy." The thought "slides along the succession with equal facility as if it considered only one object, and therefore confounds the succession with the identity." It is this "smooth passage of our thought along our resembling perceptions" that "makes us ascribe to them an identity."

As to the third point, Hume has to explain how it is that we get into the habit of uniting our broken perceptions by this illusion of a continuous existence. He admits that we suppose the objects we perceive to exist, and to continue, independently of our perception of them; but he adds that "what we call mind is nothing but a heap or collection of different perceptions united together by certain relations, and supposed (though falsely) to be endowed with a perfect simplicity and identity." Then, in reference to the external objects of perception, he says that "an interrupted appearance to

the senses implies not necessarily an interruption in existence. The supposition of the continued existence of sensible objects involves no contradiction." "We may remove the seeming interruption by feigning a continued being which may fill the intervals." But as we not only feign, but also believe in, this continued existence, Hume has, in the fourth place, to determine whence this belief arises; and falling back on his old position that belief is only a vivid or vivacious 'idea'—derived, of course, from some precedent 'impression'—he has only to account for the *vivacity* of the idea in question. We feign the notion of a continued existence or identity in the object, in order to avoid the contradiction in which we would be involved by supposing a constant interruption in our perceptions. But it is a false supposition that any object perceived by us remains identically the same after a break in our perception of it. Therefore the supposition of this identity cannot arise from reason, but only from imagination, by which we "bestow an identity on our resembling perceptions." This propension to bestow an identity on our resembling perceptions "produces the fiction of their continued existence;" but that, "as well as the identity, is really false."

In the second chapter of the 'Treatise' Hume goes on to expose what he takes to be the fallacy of the continued existence of objects. All perception is dependent on our organs, and therefore changes with the changes which these organs undergo. He will not admit that the objects we perceive are distinct from our perception of them. Here his Berkeleyanism is pronounced. "No beings are ever present to the mind but perceptions."

It therefore follows that, while we may discern sundry relations connecting our different "perceptions," we can never discover any relation between our "perceptions" and the objects we perceive.

The sequel to this is specially instructive. Hume tries to show how the common opinion of mankind, while directly contrary to the system of the philosophers, is also related to it. First, he says, "our perceptions are our only objects: resembling perceptions are the same." Their apparent interruption is "contrary to their identity." It therefore "extends not beyond the appearance, and the object really continues to coexist." But a little reflection shows that our perceptions have a dependent existence, and it might therefore be supposed it would also show that they had a continued existence; but it is not so. "Though we clearly perceive the dependence and interruption of our perceptions, we stop short in our career, and never upon that account reject the notion of an independent and continued existence. That opinion has taken such deep root in the imagination, that it is impossible ever to eradicate it." He then says that, to get out of the difficulty, we frame the hypothesis "of the double existence of perceptions and objects." This philosophical system he describes as the "offspring of two principles which are contrary to each other, but which are both at once embraced by the mind, and which are unable mutually to destroy each other." Imagination and reflection are opposed, and we elude the contradiction by resorting to a new fiction. We ascribe the "interruption to our perceptions, and the continuance to objects." Hume, of course, does not accept or

endorse the hypothesis. On the contrary, he proceeds to state two objections to it; and yet he concludes by saying that he finds no ground for putting implicit faith either in our senses or in our reason, and that sceptical doubt as to both of them is "a malady which can never be radically cured." "It is impossible, upon any system, to defend either our understanding or senses; and we but expose them farther when we endeavour to justify them."

In the sixth section of this book, entitled "Of Personal Identity," Hume develops his position still further. He begins with the old contention — show me the 'impression' from which this 'idea' of self arises; for, if you cannot, no such idea can be valid. Next, he asks how all our particular, different, and distinguished energies can belong to this hypothetical self, and be connected with it? He says that each of them "may exist separately," and that they "have no need of anything to support their existence." When he "enters most intimately into what he calls *himself*," he "always stumbles on some *particular*." And as with himself, so with the race. Mankind are "nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux or movement." To account for the individuality in which people believe, we must "account for that identity which we attribute to plants and animals, there being a great analogy betwixt it and the identity of a self or person."

Here, as before, Hume finds that we confound the notion of a succession of related objects with the continuance of an identical object; and this, though a

fiction of the imagination, is extremely natural. "We feign the continued existence of the perceptions of our senses to remove the interruption; and run into the notion of a soul, and self, and substance, to disguise the variation." The proof of this is to be found in the fact that "all objects to which we ascribe identity consist of a succession of related objects." Suppose some huge mass of matter before us, to which we ascribe individuality. It possesses and preserves its identity to us only so long as nothing is taken from it; but if a substraction be made, and be very minute, its identity is of course destroyed, and yet we do not perceive it, and may continue to speak of it as the same; and, in a sense, it *is* the same. Loss of a part alters the elements that go to constitute the whole. It introduces a change into the object, but it does not make the object itself different. The case becomes much stronger when we pass from things inanimate to things vital. Organisms that are always changing their constituents do not lose their identity by doing so. Nay, this incessant change, the coming and going of atomic particles, is the very condition of the life of organisms, and therefore of their identity.[1]

Hume was too acute not to perceive this. He saw that the acorn and the oak, the child and the man, were apparently one throughout all the stages of their growth; but he held that their identity was a fiction of the imagination, that there was no real oneness. And it was the same with the identity "which we ascribe to

[1] It is to be observed, however, that the case is precisely similar, though not so obvious, in the inorganic masses that constitute objects. Atomic change is incessant, even within the hardest mineral mass.

the mind of man," it was "fictitious" merely. For support, he fell back upon his old contention that there is no real causation amongst phenomena, but that the causal nexus resolves itself, when scrutinised, into an association of ideas by custom. Therefore he concluded that the identity we ascribe to objects and to ourselves is not real, but is a union of the imagination, effected by the help of what he called "the three uniting principles in the ideal world," viz., resemblance, contiguity, and causation; and that our notions of personal identity are all due to "the smooth and uninterrupted progress of thought along a train of connected ideas." Memory is the chief "source of personal identity"; not, however, as producing, but only as discovering it—which disclosure is an illusion. It is from memory that we "acquire the notion of causation"; and then we extend the chain of causes beyond the range of memory, and think of ourselves as having experienced what we have entirely forgotten.

In all this we see the same psychological inadequacy, the same misreading of consciousness, analytic poverty and helplessness, that we have previously noted. A succession of states of mind *has no meaning*, except in relation to the substrate of self that underlies the succession, giving it coherence, identity, and intelligibility. The states are different, but the self — whose states they are—is the same. The mind of man has no "contents," in the sense in which a book has contents, or in which a mountain has strata, or even in which a plant has its constitutive parts of root, stem, branches, and leaves. The physical analogy is irrelevant, although even that analogy does not bear out the contention of Hume, because—as already stated—the identity of plant

and animal is unaffected by the loss of their constituent atoms, and even by the occasional loss of members. But the mind, existing underneath its states, and acts, and operations, does not derive its contents from without, and arrange them afterwards as casual furniture within. It *has* them—at least the most essential part of them—from the first; and these contents are afterwards shaped, reduced to order, differentiated, by its contact with the outward world; the formative factor—and that the central element in the whole process—being the personal self within. "I" am a series, a succession, a changing stream of thought, feelings, 'impressions'—that is all that Hume can tell me; but if all that I *am* is this series of successive and detached 'impressions,' which I subsequently recall and bring back upon the stage of my experience as 'ideas'—how are they *my* impressions and *my* ideas? To make them *mine*, "I" must exist beneath them or within them, and in a sense before them. To get the impressions into unity, there must be a uniting self; and we can never get our sense-experience even focussed for us, by a mere physical process of 'impressions' from without.

There are two corollaries of this position which Hume consistently deduces. The first is that external causes determine internal states; and in the maintenance of this, Hume's disciples in this country have developed his doctrine still more logically. They boldly affirm that the elements of consciousness are to be sought in bodily states and changes. All mental states are the effect of physical causes; and therefore, all mental operations are, in the last analysis, mere "cerebral functions." It would be a perfectly valid rejoinder to

say that physical states are the effect of mental causes; and therefore, that cerebral functions are due to mental operations. But the truth is that neither are all mental states produced by physical ones, nor are all physical results due to mental causes. Cerebral states are never the sole causes of thought and feeling (subjective experience); but they are elements which co-operate to the production of the result. The physical (the material) may do its part, and yet no mental or emotive result may follow. I may be in a room where a brilliant light is burning, and where music is being played, and yet I may neither see the one nor hear the other; and if I am conscious of both, in order to that consciousness I must put into active exercise a power within me that is not the mere result of "molecular changes of the nerve apparatus." These modern followers of Hume affirm, with a bland dogmatic air, that the mental phenomena are the effects of material ones; and that, they say, merely means that they are *preceded* by these material phenomena; and they go on to affirm, in consequence of this, that the more deeply it is studied, the materialistic position will be seen to be unassailable, but that the idealistic position is unassailable also! If that is not affirming and denying the same thing at the same time, the idealism commended is a very secondary and spectral affair—a sort of lunar doctrine, shorn of all its splendour, and even of significance. It is certainly not the doctrine of any idealist of note from Plato to Ferrier. It is much the same as the admission of this school that ideas are innate, when it turns out that all they admit is that mental states are the product of the reaction of the organism on an unknown cause.

But modern materialism points us to the discovery of the law of the correlation of all forces, and the transformation of energy. It reminds us that we can prove that heat is but a mode of motion, and that every one of the so-called physical forces pass and repass into each other endlessly. But what proof does it give, or can be given, that consciousness is but a mode of motion, or that it is produced by physical causes solely? Nerve-force is a definite measurable quantity; but it has never been known to pass into thought, or to be transmuted into consciousness. We have no evidence that the non-vital forces pass into the vital, that life is a mode of motion; still less that unconscious energies ever become conscious ones, by dint of mere manipulation in the secret laboratory of Nature. Modern materialism affirms—just like that of antiquity and of the eighteenth century—that matter can give rise to mind, that consciousness is evolved out of the unconscious; while modern idealism is just as explicit in its denial of the possibility of any such evolution. There is no doubt that idealists are warranted in affirming, (1) that the identity of all force has not been proved; and (2) that, if it were proved, the radical notion with which we must start, in our conception and interpretation of it, is derived not from matter but from mind.

Another point to be noted is the close connection between the nominalist doctrine—which Hume received from Berkeley—and his agnostic doctrine of substance and of personal identity. It was a very old theory of the schools, which Berkeley rehabilitated (though it was curiously out of harmony with the tenor of his own philosophical idealism), that genera are but the names

which we attach to a number of particular things. This theory, for which Hume thanks Berkeley, considering it "one of the greatest and most valuable *discoveries*," is connected with much else in his philosophy. If universals are only the names by which we describe a series of individual things, if there be no real category under which we subsume them, all our knowledge dissolves in a string of particulars. We know nothing but units; and these units we cannot unite in a whole that includes them. In other words, for us there is no philosophy; science is all we can attain to. This, it will be observed, is in strictest keeping with the derivation of knowledge from without, and its origin in material sense-impressions. The nominalist doctrine is inconsistent with the recognition of substance as a generic element underlying particular and specific phenomena; while the recognition of substance as a generic element distinct from, and underlying particular and specific phenomena, carries with it a counter-doctrine to that of the nominalists. And so we come back, as before, to the question, "Can we get beyond the particulars, the *individua* in a series, so as to reach a universal, which is the archetype of which the individuals are an illustration?" If we can, then "genera" are more than generic "terms." We do not create them; we find them. We recognise them as really existing, and the story of the universe becomes to us not a mere string of occurrences, a kaleidoscope of change; but it is the evolution in time of those eternal ideas, which lie at the root of individual things, and which, in their entrance and exit amongst the phenomena of sense, are unaffected by them.

The nominalist position may be met, and has al-

ways been met, by the simple assertion—on the testimony of conscious experience—not that we are able to frame general ideas, but that we have them, we *possess* them, and feel ourselves *possessed* by them. They are elicited in experience through our contact with particular things. We do not first collect the particulars, and place them in an artificial frame or category, thereafter naming them so and so: but we find the category, (that lies within us in a latent state,) evolve itself into life, step by step with our experience of the particulars, which it takes up or embraces within it. The genera are not dependent on the particulars, nor the particulars upon the genera. They coexist, and are mutually illustrative; because the particulars have no meaning apart from the genera, by which they are embraced; while the genera have no sphere beyond the particulars, in which they are mirrored. The formation of these genera or classes is not dependent on language. They are formed before language is articulate. They arise in dreams. They are experienced by deaf mutes. We are more vividly conscious of them when we are silent, than when we embody them in speech. It is true that the process of evolving and forming general conceptions—and the further process of idealisation—is greatly *aided* by language. It is defined, and made more expressive, by the help of spoken and of written words. But to make language a creative instrument, and to ascribe the formation of all general notions to an act by which the mind merely sums up particulars, and sets down the result in a sort of mental arithmetic, is to travesty fact, and to put an airy hypothesis in its place.

CHAPTER VI.

THEORY OF MORALS, AND OF THE WILL.

Hume's 'Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals,' published in 1752, was, in his own words, "of all my writings, historical, philosophical, and literary, incomparably the best." In literary completeness and practical value, it may probably be ranked next to the 'Political Discourses.' The 'Treatise' was philosophically much more important, both in substance and in its results; but this book on Morals is, in its own sphere, a maturer work; and its philosophical moderation—both in stating opinions, and in the tone adopted towards preceding writers—as well as its admirable wealth of illustration, must not be overlooked.

Hume's ethical theory was a real, though an unconscious, development from that of Hobbes, nay, from the ethics of Epicurus and Lucretius, just as—

"Da Vincis derive in due time from Dellos."

He was familiar with Hobbes, and he knew the subsequent history of ethical thought in England, through Locke, Clarke, and Shaftesbury, and his own contemporaries, Butler and Hutcheson. A single glance at the

philosophical succession will show the extent of his indebtedness.

Hobbes had explicitly announced a selfish theory of the origin of human action. According to him, man had been originally a solitary, and therefore a selfish being; and although, as society developed, he has *seemed* to lose his selfishness, it has been seeming only, all human action being really self-regarding, whether avowedly so or not.

Locke followed Hobbes, for the most part, in his discussion of this doctrine, modifying without abandoning the position that pleasure is the pole-star of life, and veiling it somewhat by his recognition of elements that were inconsistent with it. The cardinal distinction between good and evil was, however, whittled down to the difference between pleasure and pain, as it always must be when actions are tested solely by their results.

With Shaftesbury a reaction set in. He sought the moral basis of conduct, not in any anticipated pleasure resulting from action, but in the good of society at large, which he maintained should be consciously aimed at by the individual. The "appetite for private good" was not in itself evil, but only when "excessive," and when inconsistent with an "affection for the public good." Shaftesbury held that there was an instinct implanted in us which tends to goodness, an innate and a disinterested regard for the wellbeing of others; but that we discriminate actions through "a moral sense," which decides that virtue is pleasurable and vice painful, just as the palate decides in reference to things bitter and sweet. Although in this he adopted the root-principle of the philosophy

of sensation, Shaftesbury's main attack was directed against what he considered the monstrous notion that all benevolence has self for its object, disguised under an apparent regard for others. But, on the whole, his ethics were meagre, and his system inconsistent.

The teaching of Shaftesbury was developed by Francis Hutcheson, who published his 'Inquiry into Beauty and Virtue' in 1725. He held that a large part of human action—and all the more commendable part—proceeded from a positive interest in our fellow-men, and aimed directly at their good; and that such action was approved by an interior moral sense, its disinterestedness arising out of "the very frame of our nature"; but he overshot the mark, and taught that in *every* moral act we have a regard to the general, and not to individual good. To Hutcheson, however, as to Shaftesbury, the moral standard was found in the tendency of actions, and the best action was that which produced the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

Of a totally different character was Butler's system. Partly intellectual and partly emotive, it was avowedly an experimental study of human nature as an "economy or constitution." He found in it a sort of hierarchy of powers or tendencies. On the lowermost floor there were the simple irreflective instincts, appetites unillumined by thought. Above these were the two principles of rational self-love and of benevolence towards others, which work together toward a common end. The disinterestedness of the latter was as obvious as the interestedness of our private and personal desires, simply because it seeks an object, and tends out toward that object. But above benevolence, as well

as above our primitive desires, was a principle of rational judgment as to the quality of actions, the conscience, which arbitrates amongst competing actions, approving of some and disapproving of others. Butler's main contribution to ethical theory was his elevation of the "conscience" as the arbiter of right and wrong, in place of the "moral sense" of Shaftesbury. It stood as a sort of a judge enthroned amongst the other powers, its right of control or superintendence being involved in its very existence. Human nature was thus to him under a monarchical, and not a republican government; and virtue was what the conscience autocratically sanctioned, vice what it authoritatively condemned, 'conscience' being the faculty which approved of the right and disapproved of the wrong. As a theory, this was neither strikingly original, nor peculiarly convincing. To define the morally good as that which the conscience approves of, and to define the conscience as that which magisterially approves of the good, is really to beat round about the speculative bush, if not to wander in the maze of a circular intellectual puzzle; and in ascertaining *why* the conscience approves of one set of actions, and disapproves of another—why some are right and others wrong—Butler fell back on their healthful or injurious tendency, and the utilitarian test came in as clearly as it did in the ethics of Socrates.

The theistic element which Butler recognised in conscience was, however, noteworthy, and was quite as valuable a contribution to morals as the rational element signalised by Cudworth and Clarke. Hobbes's dogmatic affirmation of the selfish principle had been

met by Cudworth by an equally dogmatic assertion of "eternal and immutable morality," in conformity to which, on our part, good conduct consisted. In this Clarke followed him, maintaining that immutable distinctions were as clearly revealed in the moral sphere, as the difference between truth and falsehood in the intellectual. Both writers were dogmatic, unhistorical, *a priori*, and absolute. Clarke's doctrine, that virtue lies in conformity to right reason, or to the eternal "fitness of things," was exceedingly vague; and it proved as ineffective, practically, as were the old arithmetical conceptions of the Pythagorean school. Still there are important links of connection between the ethics of Clarke, and those of Butler and Shaftesbury; and there are also elements in the teaching, both of Clarke and of Shaftesbury, which take us back to Plato and the Stoics for their original germs, and onward to Kant for their full evolution. Before Hume's 'Inquiry' came out, Hartley had published his 'Observations on Man' (1749). Hartley traced everything back to sensation; and, with the help of the principle of association, tried to exhibit the growth of all our higher tendencies from that root; but as his work exercised no direct influence on Hume, it is unnecessary to indicate how he worked out his fundamental principle. So much for Hume's predecessors in ethical philosophy in England.

In the 'Inquiry into the Principles of Morals,' we have a new version of the third volume of the 'Treatise'; but neither of these is a *direct* development of antecedent ethical doctrine in England. Although they show obvious affinities with Hobbes, they take us back to Epicurus and his school. In morals Hume bases

everything on sentiment. Reason is regarded by him as a sort of lamp, to be occasionally lit, in order to teach the passions how to act; but it is not reason, it is feeling (in other words, pleasure and pain) that is our ultimate guide as to the kind of actions that are to be performed or shunned by us. To the question, why do actions please us? the answer returned is, they please us because they are useful, but useful not only to ourselves individually, but to the race at large; in other words, because they advance the general welfare—sympathy with others being an original tendency of our nature, and a counteractive to the instinct of personal gratification.

The notion of a first principle or immutable law in the intellectual sphere having been set aside—both in the 'Treatise' and the 'Inquiry'—it followed that there was no first principle or immutable law in the moral sphere; but then, custom might establish some very stringent secondary laws; and while wholly secular in its origin, the practice of virtue might be shown to be highly useful to the race. With all his hatred for what he deemed metaphysical chimeras, Hume had a respect approaching to reverence for mundane law, and the sober lessons of experience. He studied the phenomena of human conduct in the same cool analytic fashion, as he examined the process of perception, or our relations to the external world; and morality became to him a new sort of natural history: but, on that very account, it was not a sphere in reference to which there was any room for doubt or indifference, or for acting as one pleased. It was a region over which law and order reigned, and from which, therefore, all phantoms

should be chased, and every rag of superstition brushed aside.

His book on Morals has not been regarded by posterity so highly as the 'Treatise' or the 'Essays,' partly because the utilitarian theory has been wrought out much more fully since Hume's day; but it has a special value of its own. In the introductory section he deals with the "general principles of morals." Those who question "the reality of moral distinctions" he even "ranks amongst disingenuous disputants." With any one who denied the difference between right and wrong he would not argue, but "would leave him to himself." It was very different, however, with the question of the "foundations of morals, whether they be derived from reason or sentiment,"—whether we reach them by argument or by intuition,—whether they bind the entire universe, or are peculiar to mankind. Hume first, and characteristically, states some arguments on both sides of the controversy. We could scarcely debate the question, if reason were not the basis; but then, argument never stirs the active powers, and sentiment must be its root, if morality is to issue in good conduct. He therefore "suspects"—and this is one of the best instances of Hume's practical eclecticism—that "reason and sentiment concur in almost all moral determinations." The "final sentence" which we pass on human conduct depends, it is probable, on "some internal sense, universal in the whole species;" but to pave the way for its exercise, intellectual reasoning is necessary. Therefore the general approbation of mankind on the one hand, and the general censure on the other, may determine for us the quality of actions as respectively virtu-

ous or vicious. If we can ascertain what that is which is common to all admirable actions, and what that is in which all blamable ones agree, we will "reach the foundations of ethics, and find those universal principles from which all censure and approbation are ultimately derived;" and as this is a question of fact, we "can only expect success by following the experimental method," and applying the same principles to moral as to natural philosophy.

Hume next discusses the subject of "benevolence"; and from the number of synonymous terms he makes use of in describing it, it will be seen that to him the virtue is a wide one. "The epithets *sociable*, *good-natured*, *humane*, *merciful*, *grateful*, *friendly*, *generous*, *beneficent*, or their equivalents, are known in all languages, and universally express the highest merit which human nature is capable of attaining." The special point which he notes, however, and the chief merit of the virtue, is the happiness or benefit which results to society from its practice. "The utility resulting from the social virtues forms at least a *part* of their merit, and is one source of that regard so universally paid to them." "In all determinations of morality this circumstance of public utility is ever principally in view." *How much* of the merit of actions is due to their utility he discusses later on.

In the next section, "Of Justice," he maintains that "public utility is the *sole* origin of Justice." He supposes a state of matters in which every one would get what he wished or needed, without labour or toil, by simply taking it. In such a state there would be no sense of property, of "mine" or "thine." "Justice

would be an idle ceremonial, and could never possibly have place in the catalogue of the virtues." Similarly, if the virtue of benevolence were universal, and no one ever thought of defrauding another, "the *use* of justice would be suspended by such extensive benevolence." "Every man being a second self to another, would trust all his interests to the discretion of every man, without distinction; and the whole human race would form one family." Such a community of goods has been tried; and when it has been abandoned, it has been because of the "returning selfishness of men," and therefore it was necessary to fall back on justice, because of its *use* to mankind. In a case exactly the reverse of this, when the whole of society was in the utmost extremity, "the strict laws of justice would be suspended, and would give place to the necessity of self-preservation;" so that, again, the use of the virtue is to "procure happiness and security, by preserving order in society." Self-defence against assault, the punishment of criminals, and nations going to war, are all cases of the "suspension of the ordinary rules of justice" for the greater benefit of the individual, or of society. If you "render justice *useless*, you totally destroy its essence, and suspend its obligation upon mankind." The poetical fiction of a golden age of aboriginal peace, and the philosophical fiction of the first human state as one of war, each indicate a state in which the virtue of justice could not possibly arise. Were there a species of creatures incapable of resisting us in any way, our relation to them could not be social, and the virtue of justice would be useless. Were each one self-centred or solitary, he would be incapable of justice; but as soon

as society begins to be formed, in the establishment of the family bond there is a sphere for justice; and as the social area widens by the union of families, the sphere of justice extends. Again, the good of mankind, or the interest of society, is the only end contemplated by legislation; and every writer on "the laws of nature," with whatever principle he starts, invariably ends in this. Again, if private rights may ever be set aside for the sake of the common good, the utilitarian end is again apparent. And further, in determining what is any one man's property, utility must be our rule, or we land in whimsies, or in frivolous and perhaps burdensome superstitions. Justice is not weakened, but strengthened, in being thus founded on utility.

In a section added to this chapter, in a subsequent edition, Hume tries to show the inadequacy of the theory which ascribes the sentiment of justice to an "original instinct"; and here we find the old defect already traced—viz., his atomic individualism—clinging to him, and marring his ethics. He says that if it sprang from original instinct, we "would require ten thousand different instincts." He cannot see unity in the variety, the one beneath the manifold. We would not have required, he thinks, "a hundred volumes of laws, or a thousand volumes of constitutions," to deal with the subject of inheritance and contract, if the principle of justice had been an original instinct. The history of legal debate proves that reason, and not instinct, is at work, and has been at work from the beginning. Instinct is uniform, reason is diverse. Had instinct been the original factor, uniformity and not variety would have characterised the rules of property. He concludes

ments.' Utility he considers to be the "foundation of the chief part of morals;" but the useful tendency of actions "moves us not with any regard to self-interest." It is rather a "tendency to the public good, and to the promotion of peace, harmony, and order in society."

The two remaining sections of the 'Inquiry' are devoted to a discussion on the "qualities useful to ourselves" (such as discretion, industry, frugality, honesty, fidelity), and of those "immediately agreeable to others"; and, in the conclusion of the book, he returns to the proposition that personal merit is due to the possession of qualities that are either useful or agreeable to ourselves or others; and that it is the *tendency*, both of the personal and of the social virtues, that is the "sole foundation of their merit."

There are four appendices to the 'Inquiry,' to two of which reference may be briefly made, because of sundry admissions they contain, fatal to utilitarianism. The first is "Concerning Moral Sentiment." In this Hume adds to his former contention five arguments why reason, though it has a share in the matter, cannot be "the sole source of morals." 1. He asks, In what does the demerit of ingratitude consist? It does not concern a matter of fact, nor does it consist in the relation of one fact to another, nor of a particular action to the rule of right. 2. Reason must first do its work in ascertaining the relation of act to act, and of power to power; and then sentiment comes in to complete the process; and it is not in the discovery of the relations, but in the sentiments that arise after that discovery, that "all moral determinations consist." 3. Beauty in objects does not reside in the parts, but "results from the whole,"—

a striking admission from Hume,—and therefore the discovery of the relation of part to part by the reason does not give rise to it. It is due to the feeling that springs up from the contemplation of the whole; and similarly with regard to moral beauty. 4. Mere intellectual relations subsist between inanimate objects, where there is no room for morality; and, 5. We cannot go on for ever asking a reason for the thing we do, and a reason for that again; and as we must pause somewhere in our search for causes, we must rest in something that is done, not because of any other thing, or for any other end, but *on its own account;* and virtue, says Hume, in a remarkable sentence, "is an end desirable on its own account, without fee or reward, merely for the immediate satisfaction which it conveys." The function of reason is to discover objects as they really are, and therefore it gives us the knowledge of truth and falsehood; the office of feeling is to give us internal sentiment, directed toward virtue and vice respectively, and therefore to become a motive to virtue. There is no doubt that Hume assigned to reason a function in ethics much less noble than that which he assigned to feeling. He thought it had no motive power.[1] Its exercise made human nature calm, and therefore torpid in action; whereas feeling, emotion, sentiment, roused to action.

In the second appendix to the "Inquiry," entitled "On Self-Love," Hume treats with genuine disdain the notion that benevolence is hypocritical; and the "philosophical chemistry which resolves friendship into self-love,

[1] In his letters, as well as in his books, he speaks of "morals, which depend upon sentiment."—See letter of Gilbert Elliot, Feb. 1771.

twisted and moulded into a variety of appearances," he regards as altogether chimerical. The selfish theory is "contrary to common feeling and our most unprejudiced notions;" and therefore it requires "the highest stretch of philosophy to establish so extraordinary a paradox." All attempts to evolve the benevolent out of the selfish instincts have arisen from a false love of simplicity. The lower animals feel kindness as well as man; shall we then deduce their feelings from self-interest? People are benevolent in thousands of cases when no real notion of self-interest can possibly impel, and to bring in an imaginary interest is altogether inadmissible. Further, as there are bodily wants which seek their object without any reflex reference to self, why may it not also be so with benevolence? and, from the original structure of our constitution, we may seek the welfare of others as a distinct end in itself. The opposite philosophy Hume regards more as a satire upon human nature than a true delineation of it.

From this it will be seen that Hume shows far more catholicity or width of view in his moral than in his metaphysical philosophy. The utilitarian basis on which he plants the standard of morality is conjoined with a real recognition of the disinterestedness of conduct; just as, in his analysis of the elements in which morality consists, he combines reason with sentiment (while laying the chief stress on the latter), and is thus more comprehensive than the exclusive advocates of either of them.

But the admissions made in his ethical philosophy are inconsistent with, and indeed undermine his intellectual system; while, *vice versâ*, the latter, consistently carried out, leaves no place for the more generous ethics

which he advocates. An explicit exception to the radical doctrine that all our desires seek pleasure as their end, is made in behalf of benevolence, or goodwill to others; but that one exception is fatal to the root-principle of his system. In other passages Hume seems to hint that we are not selfishly interested even when we seek our own glory, any more than when we seek the happiness of others; and conversely, that we are not more *dis*interested when we are aiming after the public good, than when we are striving to promote our own ends. His suggestion that we may make the desire for another's good *our own* good, and so pursue it both from benevolence and self-interest, is not (as Mr Green suggests) so much a mark of inconsistency, as it is the sign of the working of two opposite principles in his nature. He admits the existence of sympathetic emotion, which, being unselfish, carries us straight away from self to others; but, on the other hand, he maintains that the goal of all desire is pleasure. And if pleasure be the one motive of action, the difference between pleasure and morality is destroyed.

After all, the main point to be noted is, that it is the *tendency* of actions, according to Hume, that determines their character. No action ever is or can be done, because it ought to be done; but all is done, and should be done, either because it gives private pleasure, or because it promotes the public good. The chief evil, then, in every life is simply an omitted pleasure. The worst disaster that can befall one is an advantage lost or frustrated: and the primary aim of every human being should be in all cases to secure a maximum of pleasure, and a minimum of pain.

It is not necessary to advance at any length a counter-statement to the ethics of utility. Their radical error is that of defect, or meagreness. Every action is looked upon as a means to an end beyond itself, that end being the welfare of the individual and of society. It is forgotten that an act may be its own end; and even if it is also a means to an end beyond itself, it does not follow that that end is or must be happiness. It is obvious that, when the consequences of an act are exclusively regarded, its moral character disappears. Besides, if it is ever desirable for the individual to sacrifice himself for the sake of society, as Hume admits it is, to that extent the hedonistic theory is abandoned by him. The subordination of private to public interest cannot be vindicated except on other than utilitarian grounds; and if I am bound to have any regard in my actions to the happiness or welfare of others beyond myself, I am for the same reason bound to regard the happiness or welfare of the whole race. But how can I know, with any approach to accuracy, what actions of mine will, in the long-run, contribute a maximum of pleasure and a minimum of pain to others? We cannot forecast the ultimate issues of a single act; and thus the utilitarian canon is far from being a luminous guide to conduct. It is not the clear, obvious, indubious rule which its advocates imagine; and of what practical value is a calculus by which you can calculate nothing accurately? It leaves us to steer the vessel of our life on the stormiest seas of moral action, without rudder, chart, or compass. Nay, if the test of their consequences is the sole criterion of the morality of actions, many an act should be performed from which the un-

sophisticated moral sense shrinks back. There are persons now living whose existence is a curse to the earth they inhabit, scorpions in human form, whose immediate "removal" would add to the sum total of the happiness of the race. Tested by its consequences alone, would not the removal of these men be right? It is admitted by utilitarians that the immediate consequence of many a wrong action is an increase of pleasure. We are told, however, to weigh the future with the present, the remote advantage with the immediate result, in the scale of pleasure. But how is this to be done? who is to do it for us? and especially for the masses of mankind, the "dim common populations," to use Mr Arnold's phrase? With a surface show of great concreteness, it is really a blank empty formula. How can the rule to increase the sum total of happiness in the world be practically carried out? Before any single deed could be approved as right, or disapproved as wrong, it would be necessary for us to know whether its performance entailed more pleasure or pain. If we are told that there is no great difficulty, and no special risk of error, that we have merely to fall back on the customs of society—those generalised rules of conduct which have been sanctioned by the use and wont of generations—this is to substitute a traditional (and it might easily be a tyrannical) guide, for a rule approved of by the individual reason. It is as unreasonable to ask us to adopt it as to say that, though pleasure be the end of life, we must not take it as the end, and pursue it as such, or we will be sure to miss it; and that the best way to get it is not to seek it. But is not that to renounce both the pleasure and the theory

together? And what is this "pleasure," which is set forth as the end of human action and effort? It is a state, or a series of states of transient feeling, a vanishing series of moments of fugitive experience. But this series, and these moments, cannot be summed up and brought together as a unity; they cannot be even included as a whole in a common category, except in a verbal one. They can be bracketed together under a common term. That is all.

It is only right to note that some utilitarians provide us with a graduated scale of pleasures, arranged in ascending series, with animal enjoyment at the foot, and self-sacrifice and saintly ecstasy at the top. If it is legitimate, however, to bring acts of self-sacrifice within the series of acts of pleasure, this is either to play fast and loose with words, or with the theory itself.

It is worthy of note that the philosophy of Hume leaves no place for moral liberty, or the autonomous self-determination of character. In the essay on "Liberty and Necessity," in the 'Inquiry,' he says that philosophers in their discussion of this subject begin at the wrong end, by examining the faculties of the mind and will. They should rather begin by examining the operations of body, and they would see that causation was only sequence. He then affirms that he has a reconciling project, and that his aim is to end the debate by showing that both liberty and necessity are equally true. And he proceeds to define liberty as—

"A power of acting or not acting, according to the determination of the will; that is, if we choose to remain at rest, we may: if we choose to move, we may also. Now

this hypothetical liberty is universally allowed to belong to every one who is not a prisoner, or in chains."

But this is evidently a solution of the problem on the necessitarian side. Our seemingly voluntary actions are supposed to be subject to the same law of necessity as rule the operations of matter. We are the slaves of our own inner constitution, helplessly borne on by the tide of antecedent influence within, while we are modified by contemporaneous influence from without—pushed and pulled about, in short, by a double set of forces, *ab extra* and *ab intra.*

Curiously enough, Hume's disciples in this country are much blinder than he was, in not seeing—or ignoring—the inevitable issue of this doctrine. Some of them have the hardihood to affirm that our responsibility for our acts "has nothing to do with the causation of these acts, but depends upon the *frame of mind* which accompanies them"! But what is the cause of this "frame of mind"? Are we accountable for our feelings, but not for the volitions whence our acts originate? These disciples do not see the suicidal tendency of the doctrine of moral determinism, or the parallelism which they try to establish between the physical and the moral forces. But if our volitions are all necessitated like the movements of atomic particles, and our character is shaped as a pebble is rounded in the channel of a stream, our moral accountability is a mere figure of speech. Now Hume saw the issue clearly enough; but he fell back on a sort of optimistic fatalism, which, he thought, saved him from it. He admitted that if all human actions could be traced back to necessitation *ab extra,* "and by a necessary chain up to the Deity, they never

could be criminal;" or that, if they were criminal, the Deity to whom they were ultimately traceable could not be perfect. He said that he could see "how the Deity can be the immediate cause of all the actions of men without being the author of sin;" but then he explicitly left the problem unsolved. *He had no solution to give us.* His disciples, with a curious speculative blindness, go on to ridicule (as he never did) the doctrine of interior causation, and dismiss with a sneer the moral autonomy of Kant as a "noumenal libertine," a "bare sham, naked but not ashamed." It would be much more consistent in them to say, with Hamlet, "there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so," and so fall back on the conventionality of moral distinctions. It may be however that, in the sphere of ethics, some persons are constitutionally colour-blind.

CHAPTER VII.

THEISM, AND THE FUTURE OF THE INDIVIDUAL.

HUME'S opinion as to the ultimate *Causa causans* of the universe is contained in the 'Treatise,' but it is more fully unfolded in his philosophical 'Essays'; and the question is discussed in detail in his 'Dialogues on Natural Religion' and in the 'Natural History of Religion.' His discussion has the merit of rare intellectual candour, and courage in carrying the root-principle of his philosophy to its only logical issue. Its success is another matter, and its consistency is not quite clear.

In the earlier writings we find a negative conclusion remorselessly deduced, although somewhat veiled to the common apprehension.[1] In his later ones he enters more on the historical aspects of the question. That theology can find no place in the circle of the sciences, and that its one great postulate lies beyond the sphere of reason, is the outcome and result of his discussion; but in the course of it he makes admissions which are

[1] In the section of the 'Treatise' which deals with "The immateriality of the soul" (iv. 5), he discusses the theistic problem even more explicitly than in the chapter on "The idea of necessary connection" (iii. 15).

inconsistent with agnosticism, and which even amount to a shadowy kind of theism. On the whole, he discusses the problem as if it were one of natural history. To Spinoza the theistic controversy resolved itself into a mathematical problem; to Hume it was a question for inductive science to deal with.

If the sphere of human knowledge be limited to 'impressions' and 'ideas,'—if the realm of substance be a *terra incognita*, and causality a Will-o'-the-wisp,—it logically follows that all theological data are mere guess-work, unverifiable if not fallacious. If we know nothing of finite substance, it would be absurd to lay claim to a knowledge of the Infinite. To the opposite philosophy of idealism, the finite and the Infinite are correlatives; that is to say, we know them, or are ignorant of them, together. But if the sphere of our knowledge be limited to phenomena, whenever the reason ventures to construct a theology, it not only works in fetters, but it is predestined to failure from the first; because it is merely manipulating, or working up into formal shape, what has reached it by the gateway of sense. A cause is merely a single predecessor, or a series of antecedents.

In the fifth section of the fourth part of his 'Treatise,' Hume's argument on the subject of theism takes the form of a reply to Spinoza, whose "atheism" he ventures to speak of as "so universally infamous," and whose monistic theory he calls a "hideous hypothesis." His statement of the Spinozistic doctrine of the simplicity of substance is not amiss; but he proceeds to say that "this hideous hypothesis is almost the same as that of the immateriality of the soul"! He then restates the position of Spinoza, as if his doctrine of the

unity of substance, with phenomena as modes, applied only to the external world: and finds that the "theologians" hold the same doctrine in reference to the interior realm of impressions and ideas—all being but modes of one simple, uncompounded, indivisible substance; and he affirms that the doctrine of the theologians is as indefensible as that of Spinoza. In his discussion of "the idea of necessary connection," in an earlier section of his 'Treatise,' Hume says: "If any idea be derived from an impression, the idea of a deity proceeds from the same origin; and if no impression implies any force or efficacy, 'tis equally impossible to discern, or even imagine, any such active principle in the deity." This is clear enough, and sufficiently logical; but in a footnote a few pages on, he says, "The order of the universe proves an omnipotent mind—that is, a mind whose will is *constantly attended*" (the italics are Hume's) "with the obedience of every creature and being. Nothing more is requisite to give a foundation to all the articles of religion." Here, then, we have the curious position that Deity exists, is omnipotent, and that its will is universally obeyed; and yet that causal power, or "active principle," does not belong to it. But further inconsistencies remain to be noted.

The short treatise entitled 'Natural History of Religion,' published in 1759, is specially interesting as showing that, as he grew older, Hume preferred to consider the question in its historical, rather than in its speculative aspects; that is to say, to trace the origin of the belief, and to exhibit its development in the consciousness of mankind—its evolution into new and

ever-changing types—rather than to discuss its nature and its evidence. There is no doubt that the spirit of the historian by degrees predominated over and extinguished that of the speculative philosopher in Hume. This treatise also shows that in his later writings he distinctly inclined toward a theistic belief of some sort, though its intellectual form was exceedingly airy, spectral, and nebulous. "The whole frame of nature," he says, in the introduction to this 'Natural History of Religion,' "bespeaks an Intelligent Author; and no rational inquirer can, after serious reflection, suspend his belief a moment with regard to the primary principles of genuine Theism and Religion." Elsewhere (sect. vi.), he speaks of "those invincible reasons on which it"—*i.e.,* the doctrine of one Supreme Deity—"is undoubtedly founded;" and quotes with approval Lord Bacon's saying, "A little philosophy makes men atheists; a great deal reconciles them to religion." The argument from design is then brought explicitly forward. In stating it, Hume sees it implies that the essence of the divinity must have some remote analogy to human nature; and in his "general corollary" (which is the title of the fifteenth and last section of the book), he reiterates the position that "a purpose, an intention, a design, is evident in everything;" and that we "must adopt, with the strongest conviction, the idea of some intelligent cause or author." He traces the development of religious belief — a subject which has been worked out much more elaborately since his day—from polytheism, when men, feeling their dependence on a multitude of objects and "unknown causes" for their happiness, and transferring their own emotions to them,

first humanised, and then deified these objects. Hence the belief in invisible beings, and a "crowd of local deities," which poetry and art subsequently elaborated in the ancient mythologies. He traces the rise of theism out of polytheism by the perception of unity of design in nature. "This uniformity leads the mind to acknowledge one author." The recognition of one Power is not, however, inconsistent with the recognition of minor divinities.

"The only point of theology in which we find the consent of mankind almost universal is that there is an invisible intelligent power in the world; but whether this power be supreme or subordinate, whether confined to one being or distributed over several, what attributes, qualities, &c., ought to be ascribed to these beings—concerning all these points there is the widest difference in the popular systems of theology."

He discusses the various forms of polytheism due to the allegorising tendency, and to hero-worship, or the apotheosis of man. Again he affirms that "the principles of religion have a kind of flux or reflux in the human mind, and that men have a natural tendency to rise from polytheism to theism, and to sink again from theism into polytheism" (sect. viii.); and proceeds to compare these various forms of religion as regards their tolerance, the courage or heroism they develop, and their reasonableness: and he discusses at some length those conceptions of the Divine Nature which arise in most of the popular religions, whether polytheistic or theistic, and their influence on morality. The "conclusion of the whole matter" is in favour of Religion in general, yet against the exclusive claim of any one type or form

of it; and the difficulty of coming to any conclusion except a very general one, along with the inconsistencies between the opinions and practices of mankind in reference to religion, leads him to exclaim,—"The whole is a riddle, an enigma, an inexplicable mystery. Doubt, uncertainty, suspense of judgment, appear the only result of our most accurate scrutiny concerning this subject:" while his closing words suggest that, after all, he is glad to escape from the regions of conflict and debate amongst the several sects, into what he calls "the calm, though obscure, regions of philosophy."

When we pass to the 'Dialogues concerning Natural Religion,' we have some fresh light as to the attitude of Hume's mind toward this ultimate problem. It is a clear, cold, passionless discussion of the question; and while the form of the Dialogue may have been adopted to avoid the more precise statement necessary in a treatise, the views of the several interlocutors are clearly expressed; and Hume has told us (in a letter to Gilbert Elliot, March 1751) with which of them his own sympathies lay. Three characters are introduced—Demea, Cleanthes, and Philo. Demea is the orthodox *a priori* theologian; Cleanthes the liberal-minded theist, who adopts the teleological argument from design, and combats the narrower theology of Demea; while Philo is the sceptic, who mediates between both. Hume tells us it was not Philo but Cleanthes whom he meant to make the hero of his dialogue. It must not be forgotten, however, that he had a certain amount of sympathy with all the characters; and that each of them (Demea included) alternately mirrored his own ever-changing mood. This kaleidoscopic character of Hume's mind has

not been sufficiently recognised, and it is quite consistent with his prevailing tendency towards agnosticism.

Cleanthes seeks to prove that the ontological arguments of the *a priori* theists are really arguments in the hands of the atheist; because the God they leave you with is cut off from humanity as much as the "unknown essence" of the atheist. In other words, the pure being of the ontological theist is a conception akin to zero, and is not theistic. In reply to Descartes' ontological argument, Hume held that there is no being in the universe whose existence is demonstrable, in the sense that his non-existence involves a contradiction in terms. The only kind of existence that can be demonstrated, apart from the facts of contingent experience, is existence in general—*i. e.*, the totality of being. Hume objects, with reason, to the ontological argument of Anselm and Descartes; and to the cosmological argument—which endeavours to rise from the fact of existence by an infinite regress to an uncaused cause—his objection is equally clear and cogent. But he affirms that the third historic form which the theistic argument had assumed—viz., that from design—had a great deal to be said in its favour.[1] Philo, even while trying to minimise the difference between theist and atheist, pushes the argument home to the latter, and asks "if the principle which first arranged and still maintains order in this universe bears not also some remote inconceivable analogy to the other operations of nature, and among the rest to the economy of human mind and

[1] Kant defended this argument very much as Hume did: but he saw its limitations much more clearly. If it gives us a vast world-intelligence somewhere, it does not prove a personal creator.

thought?" "The whole of natural theology," he elsewhere says, "resolves itself into one simple, though somewhat ambiguous, at least undefined proposition, *that the cause or causes of order in the universe probably bear some remote analogy to human intelligence;* but then, according to Philo, this analogy "afforded no inference that affected human life."

From these, and many other passages, it seems clear that the chief difficulty to Hume was how to ascribe a moral character to the great World-Intelligence; and he saw that if the proof from design were admitted in any real sense, it carried some strange consequences with it. It did not warrant the inference of the unity of the designer, nor his infinity (if there be but one); nor did it tell us anything of his character, or his relations to the universe. If our inference from its phenomena was that the world presents the appearance of a number of machines, we would be at liberty to infer that there were a number of mechanists; but, if we may conclude that it is one machine, the advocates of design say we may infer the existence of a single mechanist.

Teleologists forget, however, that in proportion as we widen the conception of design we attenuate it. It is weakened as we extend it; and, when we universalise it, it vanishes altogether; because if every phenomenon in the universe be adjusted to, or fitted into, every other, the notion of fitness—which arises from the sense of hindrance and difficulty, and of bringing things not otherwise related into relation—has no place. Again, the proved existence of a number of *resemblances* to human design in the world will not prove the reality of the existence of a designer; while, if proved, it would

reduce him to the level of the human. Further, might we not ask for an explanation of the mind or intelligence which we see in Nature—that is to say, for an explanation of our explanation? and so have the *regressus ad infinitum* which the cosmological argument involves? Besides, to admit that there is a principle of order, or of intelligence in the world, is not to grant the theistic datum. The question is whether the phenomena of the universe yield us the inference of an infinite, and of an infinitely moral designer. Now the inference which *some* of the phenomena suggest is that of a blind force, rather than a self-conscious intelligence. It must be remembered, however, that Hume does not say that the Ultimate Power *is* blind; he only affirms that we have no overmastering proof that it is not so.

Another source whence we gather Hume's opinions as to Theism is the essay in the 'Inquiry,' entitled "Of a particular Providence, and of a Future State." In this essay he supposes himself to be an Epicurean philosopher arraigned before the Athenian people, and he endeavours to justify his position. He puts the case thus. It is said that from order in the work we may infer forethought in the workman:—

"If the cause be known only from the effect, we never ought to ascribe to it any qualities beyond what are precisely requisite to produce the effect; nor can we return back from the cause and infer other effects from it. . . . No one, merely from the sight of one of Zeuxis' pictures, could know that he was also a statuary or architect. The cause must be proportioned to the effect. . . . We can never be allowed to mount up from the universe, the effect, to Jupiter, the cause; and then descend downwards, to infer any new effect from that cause."

We see an effect in Nature, and think we have found its cause, and we then proceed, by "the assistance of exaggeration and flattery," to suppose that this cause must be adequate to the production of much greater things; but this is entirely imaginary. We "aid the ascent of reason by the wings of imagination." If it be said, in reply, that from a half-finished building—which we know to proceed from the contrivance of an architect and builder—we may infer that it will be completed by the same contrivers (just as from *one* footprint in the sand we might infer that a man had passed that way though the mark of the second foot was obliterated), the rejoinder is at hand, that the subjects are infinitely different. In the one case, we infer an extension of finite design from our experience of it in part. In the other, our inference is from the finite to the Infinite. As to human contrivance, *we know by experience what that is.* We can easily pass from the effect to the cause; but it is totally different with every inference drawn by us as to the Deity; and the universe, which is supposed to yield us the inference, is a "singular effect," with no parallel. If we knew only one work of a man's, we could make no inference as to his handicraft in other directions; just as if we had experience of only a single footprint, we could make no other inference as to its cause than that something had produced it. It is, therefore, contrary to the rules of analogy to reason from human design to the procedure of the Infinite. It is like making an inference as to the sun from the gleam of a waxen taper.

Upon the whole, it seems that a belief in the existence of an intellectual principle, or being, having some

dim analogy to human intelligence, survived in Hume's mind; but that he distinctly declined to predicate anything more regarding it, or of its relations to the universe, especially as to its moral character. The very aim of the 'Dialogues' was to show that the questions which theism raises were outside the sphere of human reason; and these dialogues are, in a sense, the representative expression of the theistic doubt of the eighteenth century, just as the 'Essays' reflect another phase of its mental attitude—cold, clear, dispassionate, historical, neutral.

The position reached was a logical development of the principles of the 'Treatise on Human Nature.' If Substance be an unreal notion, if we have no other idea of Cause than the mere sequence of phenomena, any knowledge of the Infinite by the human mind is impossible. Let it be admitted that Hume's destructive criticism of the *a priori* proofs of theism is irrefragable. The pure being, which these proofs essay to reach, they do not find; and if they found it, it would be a mere abstraction of the intellect, a grey speculative dogma, remote from practice. On the other hand, no one has shown the limitations of the *a posteriori* proofs more acutely than Hume has done; but then he never faced the deeper arguments on which theism rests—from which it derives all its strength—and which subsequently give to these inconclusive ones a borrowed lustre and an indirect significance,—viz., the moral argument from conscience, and that which arises from the intellectual intuition of the Infinite. In ignoring these, he overlooked the very basis of the philosophy of theism; although he could hardly help ignoring them, for they were not within the

horizon of the dominant philosophy of the eighteenth century.

If we can escape from the fetters of the finite, by an intellectual intuition of the Infinite—within, behind, beyond, and beneath it,—if we can outsoar the realm of individual sense-impressions in their disconnectedness and finitude, and apprehend the One as at the same time the Limitless, for us the foundations of theism are laid. To Hume the universe was, as we have repeatedly seen, a series of separate parts, conjoined but not organically connected, bound by no interior tie. He could not therefore rise to the conception of a central Power, "subsisting at the heart of endless agitation," of something that endures, while phenomenal succession comes and goes—the one within the manifold. But if we are warranted in construing the cosmos around us, not merely as a stream of isolated phenomena, but also as a series of symbols or pictures, mirroring to us a world of higher and supersensible reality, we may, by another intuition, recognise in the realm thus mirrored to us, a certain kindredness to ourselves. The ultimate principle which we reach, or to which we rise, being transcendent, it is not as "one of ourselves"; but it is related to us, and we to it, in virtue of the very thought and feeling by which it is apprehended; and with it we have definite and reciprocal relations. Its personality, as well as its transcendency, is known by direct intuition, if known at all.

An important corollary to Hume's view of the universe is seen in his doctrine of Miracle. Those interferences with natural order, on which some theologians rest the chief evidence of Divine action, seemed to him

to derogate from that action, and not to elevate or enhance it. If the exceptions are most conspicuously divine, what becomes of the rule itself? Is it less divine? Is Providence to be removed from the series of events before and after the marvel, and reserved for it alone? If so, what becomes of its infinity? Did a special power awake, at a special time, into unwonted activity, and thereafter take repose? Has the Divine causality, which produced the miracle, slumbered ever since? or, has it only assumed new phases of activity? And if so, are not the differences in its action merely differences in degree? How can ordinary events be less divine than any other phenomena, unless the one Divine Being—present in all—operates less intensely, or to less purpose, through certain links of the causal chain than through others?

Now all this may be admitted; but the possibility of a change in the order of nature, or of an alteration of the way in which phenomena succeed each other, is no less evident. A Being who is at once within, behind, and above the phenomena (we must speak in figures), acting by the force of interior causality upon these phenomena, could certainly modify the course of their development.

The special point to be noted is, that if our theology be an inference from the phenomena of Nature, we have no right to consider exceptions to that order as more conspicuously divine than the order itself, or even to believe in exceptions at all; but if our theism rests on a moral basis, and we have valid ground for the belief that the law, which is "in us, yet not of us," reveals a higher than self within the self that is conscious of it,

we have the basis of miracle laid for us. It is laid in the very consciousness of freedom, working in harmony with law, and yet not its mere offspring or evolution. As to the poet,—

> "The marvel of the everlasting will
> An open scroll
> Before him lay,"—

so to us. Our theology is the inner implicate of moral life—its suppressed premiss; but it does not necessitate the severance of man from nature, or a cleft in things secular. It implies an orderly evolution of their inner essence. If, in other words, our theism be an inference from the order of nature, it will not be strengthened by the recognition of marvels (which are simply events which our faculties cannot account for, and which, when accounted for, becoming normal, cease to be miracles); but if it springs from a recognition of the Infinite within the finite, it rests on no exception or prodigy, but on the perpetual apocalypse of a Power transcending sense, yet acting through it. If Nature be a figurative book, in which we read the thoughts of its Maker, why should we select only a few favourite pages, and look to the special writing on these? Can the others —less familiar to us, or less understood—be one whit less divine? Suppose that a certain event, B, from some definite feature specially suggests the divine causality to me, phenomena A preceding and C succeeding it, may equally, or more specially, suggest it to another mind; and if any occurrence outside the range of common experience suggests it to a third, and is at the same time duly authenticated, the only inference we are

warranted in drawing is that an aspect of the divine causality (or a channel through which it works), heretofore hidden, has become apparent. Marvels may undoubtedly happen, but their occurrence does not imply that the Divine agency, hitherto slumbering, has at length begun to act; but rather that this agency—always present, but hitherto unrecognised—has at length disclosed itself to the observer. Miracles then, duly attested, are not the erratic movements of omnipotence, or incursions of the supernatural within the realm of Nature, but the orderly manifestation of that Power which is omnipresent, but which emphasises itself to human apprehension "at sundry times in diverse manners." By thus abolishing the false dualism between Nature and the supernatural, we lay the basis of a new doctrine of miracle.

There is no doubt, however, that Hume is right in his contention that the greater the deviation from the customary order of Nature in any alleged occurrence, the greater the need, not for rejecting it, but for caution in accepting it. And why so? because the evidence of experience is against it. The evidence of a million experiences is against any change in the orderly revolution of the heavenly bodies; but it is not in favour of our pronouncing such a change to be impossible. It is only in favour of the extremest caution in reading that particular chapter, or page of the book of Nature, and being absolutely sure that the change has really taken place before we receive it as a fact; and all such matters as the competency of the testator, his means of information, the state of his faculties, the way in which the evidence reached him, &c., must here be taken into account.

It may be safely affirmed that *a priori* it is more probable that the testimony, which vouches for the occurrence of what would rightly be called a miracle, is erroneous —that is to say, that our senses, or the senses of our informant, have been deceived—than that a real change in the order of Nature has occurred; and therefore that we require evidence of the occurrence of an exception to the customary rule, strong in proportion to the excess of deviation implied in it. But no experience of the uniformity of the order of Nature can ever warrant us in saying that deviations from it are impossible; and overwhelming evidence of such deviation—if sifted and tested by every available test—would warrant the conclusion that such deviation had actually occurred.

It is not necessary to dwell at any length on Hume's teaching as to the future of the individual. He is reticent on the subject; and it is enough to point out that his doctrine of personal identity, or the nature of each individual human being, leaves no room for immortality. Hume says that "by the mere light of reason it is difficult to prove the immortality of the soul;" and he goes on to say—in a sentence of which it is difficult to see whether the spirit of candour or of compromise is uppermost, whether it is an expression of belief or of satire— "in reality it is the Gospel, and the Gospel alone, that has brought immortality to light." He first reviews the metaphysical arguments which have been advanced to prove the immateriality of the soul; and, in a significant sentence, seems to indicate his belief that if we hold its posthumous existence, we must logically hold its preexistence also. "What is incorruptible must also be ingenerable." He deals, secondly, with the moral argu-

ment, that the present condition of the world seems to necessitate a future for reward and punishment; and maintains that "the whole scope and purpose of man's creation, so far as we can judge by natural reason, is limited to the present life." He then considers, thirdly, the physical arguments, and says that, from the analogy of Nature, the inference would be that the soul is mortal. Everything in Nature perishes, when transferred to a condition of life very different from the original one in which it was placed." "How contrary to analogy to imagine that one single form is immortal and indestructible!" And he ends this curious essay with the remark, that "nothing could set in a fuller light the infinite obligations which mankind have to Divine revelation, since we find that no other medium could ascertain this great and important truth."

Hume's position has been taken up by some Anglican prelates and divines, as affording the right basis for a doctrine of immortality; very much as the agnostic doctrine of our ignorance of the Infinite has been brought forward by other divines, to lay a basis for supernatural revelation. They maintain that if immortality was "brought to light" by Christianity, we must believe in the natural mortality of the soul. But Hume's contentions are all wide of the mark. They do not touch the ground on which the "intimations of immortality" are suggested, if not attested to us. From the very nature of the case, neither this nor the theistic belief can be demonstrated as a mathematical proposition can, or evidenced as a fact of sensible and secular experience can be proved. Hume's disciples would apparently wish this august conviction as to the issues of human life and

conduct to be as luminous to them as the sunrise, if they receive it at all; just as they desire the theistic postulate to be made "as plain as a pike-staff," if it is to be of any use for minds that have been saved by science from superstition. They do not see that, from the very nature of the case, it cannot be so; and that the whole moral value of both beliefs would be gone did we live under the blaze of day regarding them. To indicate at any length the grounds on which the belief in immortality enters into the circle of the verifiable convictions of the race, would be as much out of place in this little book as to enlarge on the evidences of theism. Thoughtful readers will surmise, from the hints that have been given, the ground on which both beliefs can be vindicated. But in parting with his discussion on this head, we may thank Hume for the way in which he dropped the hint as to the bearing of the doctrine of pre-existence on the posthumous existence of the soul—a hint the significance of which has been lost on many who have followed him in the controversy.

CHAPTER VIII.

HUME AS POLITICAL ECONOMIST, AND HISTORIAN.

It is a relief to turn from Hume's meagre ethics and barren metaphysics to his really fertile 'Political Discourses.' Their merit is not only great, but they are unrivalled to this day; and it is not too much to affirm that they prepared the way for all the subsequent economic literature of England, including 'The Wealth of Nations,' in which Smith laid the broad and durable foundations of the science. The explanation of Hume's success in this department is that he was dealing throughout with facts —though with complex social phenomena—and deducing conclusions from them, as well as illustrating his principles by reference to the facts. It was exactly the field in which he might have been expected to win his greatest triumphs, because in economic discussion we have not to transcend the sphere of phenomena and their laws. He neither required the extensive knowledge of detail which the historian must possess, nor did he need that "inward eye" to see behind phenomena which the metaphysician requires; and so both his 'History of England' and his 'Treatise of Human Nature' were less successful—though by no means less influential—than

his 'Political Discourses.' In addition, we must not forget that his experience as a practical administrator, or man of affairs, helped him as a writer on political and economic science.

The effect produced by these 'Discourses' was great. Immediately translated into French, they passed through five editions in fourteen years; and the opinion of his French contemporaries certainly endorsed his own, that they were superior both to the 'Treatise' and to the 'Essays.' They were a distinctive addition to English Literature, and were strictly scientific, though not technical. They at once floated Hume into fame, bringing him to the front, both as a thinker and as a man of letters; and posterity has ratified the judgment of the hour. It is not only their convincing clearness, their trenchant force, their eminent lucidity and impartiality, that is the source of their charm; but also their novelty, as they contain many original germs of economic truth.

The effect they had on practical statesmen, such as Pitt, must not be overlooked. It was perhaps an advantage that the economic doctrines both of Hume and of Smith were published at that particular time, as they led naturally and easily to several reforms, without being developed to extremes, as was subsequently the case in France. There is no tendency to extravagance in the teaching of Hume itself. His 'Discourses' were conservative as well as progressive; and his own nature was far too wide to permit him to be a mere innovator, or even revolutionary in his political views.

As to the 'History of England' and Hume's merits as a historian, little can, in the present volume, be said. Students of Philosophy may at first think that the

'History' written by Hume had little or nothing to do with his 'system,' and that it may therefore be passed over by them. It is more than a mistake, however, it is a serious error, to ignore the former, in our effort to discover the character of the latter. To have one history written from the point of view to which the philosophy of Experience had conducted the writer, has been an important addition to the historical literature of England.

It will be easily seen that the general tendency of his philosophy at once fitted and disqualified Hume for the office of historian. On the one hand, the tendency to doubt unauthenticated rumours, and to be suspicious of all vague testimony, is invaluable to the historian—as many an old chronicle is full of statements that have no warrant, numerous alleged facts are mere surmises, and in the majority of ancient records truth and fiction are mingled confusedly. The very office of the historian is to sift these, after the materials have been adequately and impartially collected; and the cool temperament of one who is constitutionally given to doubt, will undoubtedly fit him for the office of historical critic. On the other hand, the unimpassioned temperament, weighing facts in keen critical balances, may be unconsciously unfair towards the enthusiasms with which it has no sympathy, and the root of which it cannot understand. In short, the amplest width of sympathy is as necessary to the historian as the clearest vision, and the ability to analyse and expose illusions.

Hume's history is admittedly one-sided; and although it is to their one-sidedness that half the charm of some historians is due, we must make deductions as we read

their work. Hume wrote with the conviction that "all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." He held that the historian's office was to record what met the eye and the senses generally—that is to say, to note the secular or mundane side of life. His first two volumes dealt with the reigns of James V. and Charles I. A conflict was going on in that period between two tendencies, one of which looked exclusively to the secular side of things, and the other recognised a higher order pervading and penetrating the secular, yet transcending it. There were doubtless faults in the way in which the struggle was carried on, on both sides. But a student of some of Hume's historical portraits may detect the signs of an erroneous method of historic work. He sometimes framed for himself the conception of a character from a surface study of it, building up from a first "impression" an "idea" of what the character was; and proceeded—not to modify this, in the light of other records of the character, gathered from diverse sources, but—to interpret subsequent actions in the light of the original "impression." In other words, the *a pòsteriori* philosopher occasionally introduced *a priori* fictions into his historic survey, appearing rather as an advocate with his brief than as an inductive student of fact and event. Abundant illustration of this will be found in his estimates of Charles I., of Queen Mary, of the Cavaliers and Roundheads, of Knox and the Reformers.

There were types of individual character with which Hume had no sympathy; and there were historical movements, in which the fervour of the people was enlisted, on which he commented as an outside critic would. He detested the fanatics of every age (and,

rightly enough, condemned them); but he had less sympathy with the struggles of the people after constitutional liberty than with their loyal obedience to existing powers. Perhaps his early distaste for the science of jurisprudence, and his real ignorance of it, unfitted him for doing justice to points in the historical development of British law, and the constitutional history of England.

The more closely it is looked into, it will be seen that Hume the Historian cannot be separated from Hume the Philosopher. The fundamental doctrine of empiricism may be seen underlying the whole of the 'History.' He wrote the latter work after he had explicitly abandoned a philosophy of *a priori* principles, and come thoroughly under contemporary influence. A Scotsman trained in France, and a follower of the experiential method, he read the history of his country under the prejudices of his system and position; and he wrote it far too quickly. While his brother historian, Robertson, spent more than six years over his 'Scotland,' Hume wrote the first volume of his 'England' in little more than a year; and when revising it, he altered rapidly, without the necessary research. His bias against the Whigs grew with that on which it fed. If—as was the case—many of the Roundheads were fanatics, and the majority of the Cavaliers were of a more tolerant spirit, that was enough for Hume. He at once exaggerated both. His historical style is undoubtedly good. It is specially clear and vivid—not a dry digest of annals, but a picturesque narrative, lit up by gleams of happy characterisation, and many felicitous side-comments on men and things. And as such it soon took its place, both at home and abroad. Lord Lyttleton, who was preparing

a history of his own, and to whom Hume sent the proof-sheets in advance, thanked him with marked cordiality. Helvetius praised its philosophical spirit, and its impartiality; and urged him to take up an abandoned idea of writing the history of the Church, which he called "le plus beau projet du monde"—telling Hume (in June 1763) that the subject was worthy of him and he of the subject. In February 1766 (and again in 1773) D'Alembert did the same.

It is easy to point to defects in Hume's work, especially in the light of those histories of England that have followed it, and the new methods of investigation, which have made the work of the historian so much simpler to the writers of the nineteenth century, and the result so much more satisfactory to their readers. But while his 'History of England' is now little read—simply because we have others that are more valuable and more trustworthy to turn to—it remains, and will probably always remain, a notable literary landmark; while as an illustration, both of his opinions and of his tendencies in philosophy, it may retain a value out of proportion to its intrinsic merit as a record of the past.

CHAPTER IX.

GENERAL CONCLUSION.

In the original plan of this volume, it was intended to devote a chapter to "The subsequent issue of the philosophy of Hume." This must be reserved for the book referred to in the preface, as it involves the consideration not only of the course which Speculation subsequently took in Britain, but also its development on the Continent—especially the idealistic reaction in Kant's reply to Hume.

What Kant did for philosophy in general, and what was subsequently wrought out by Hegel, has been already told in these "Philosophical Classics." Their work, taken together, forms the completest counter-statement to the teaching of Hume. The independent reply made to him, however, by a robust philosopher in his own country, may be alluded to in a single paragraph, as it has a distinct value of its own, being prior, and indigenous, acute, and modest withal. The great achievements of modern thought on the Continent—which have made the close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, A.D., as illustrious in European speculation, as were the fourth and the third centuries

B.C. in Greece,—have not unnaturally cast into the shade the less brilliant work of Reid and his successors in Scotland.

But if Reid was imaginatively dull, and gifted with no original speculative genius, he had all the better qualities of the Aberdonian intellect — shrewdness, patience, penetration, and sagacity. He was the personification of common-sense. His dislike of paradox and super-subtilty, his firm grasp of the obvious data of consciousness, his reference of secondary psychological truths to metaphysical first principles, and his modest contentment with what he regarded as the limits of the knowable, give him a place of his own in the history of philosophy. His extreme candour was seen in his forwarding the MS. of his 'Inquiry' to Hume before sending it to the press. Hume read it, and wrote to Reid about it; although his compliment, it must be owned, was a dubious one. He praised its "perspicuity," and said it was rare to find anything so philosophical, written with so much spirit, and affording so much entertainment to the reader. Many friendly letters passed between the disputants in February and March 1763. Reid expressed his debt to Hume, and said he had learned more from his writings than from all others put together. It has been the fashion—in some quarters a natural one we may admit—to deny to this vigorous Aberdonian the title of philosopher at all. Obtuse in certain directions he undoubtedly was: but, not to refer to the fact of his commanding the full intellectual respect of such a contemporary as Hume himself, and of successors such as Hamilton and Cousin, there is no doubt that his vigorous grasp of psycho-

logical facts—although he seldom saw the inner essence of the facts, and although he multiplied his "first principles" too readily, and fell back on them somewhat helplessly at the pinch of a speculative difficulty —was both a natural reaction from the agnosticism of Hume, and a healthful protest against it. Reid felt that in philosophy we must take our stand somewhere, and make an explicit start from first principles, duly attested and authenticated. His easily caricatured doctrine of "common-sense" is simply an appeal to the common consciousness of all men, as contrasted with what might be an intellectual vagary, disguised as the special insight or the cultured reasoning of the few. That his philosophy was, in the last resort, a commonplace one, is a charge which Reid would not have resented, but would have admitted and defended. The precise point of his reply to Hume, with its resemblance to, and its difference from, the fuller replies of Kant and his successors, must be left to a future work. Meanwhile, some general remarks on Hume himself will fitly close this chapter and volume.

We have seen that, in the philosophical schools, the succession is usually through conflict, and the progress by antagonism. It follows that, in most instances, the real significance of a great system is not discerned till some time after the death of its founder. Immediate controversy fastens upon its accidents quite as much as its essentials; and its main position—its intellectual centre of gravity, so to speak—may even be misunderstood in the first turmoil of debate. By-and-by the dust of controversy is laid; and the system—having been critically appraised by many minds, from opposite

points of view—is more adequately understood than was possible when it first appeared.

This was distinctly the case with Hume. By none of his contemporaries was he fully understood. A few saw the results of his teaching, but they could not comprehend its deeper significance, nor its relation to the past. They did not see that, in its initial stages, it was merely a development of the method of Socrates, and of the Cartesian doubt; and that, in its completed form, it was the "honest doubt" in which — if there did not "live more faith" than "in half the creeds" it overthrew—there was at least neither an iota of scorn, nor that "vaunting of itself," which has been the bane of many a positive philosophy. Even to this day it is difficult for some persons to see that the sceptic's function is a necessary one in every age; and that it must always assert itself, after a period of uncritical faith, or dogmatic affirmation. Adequately to recognise this may be the best antidote to the evil which a one-sided scepticism breeds. It is, moreover, a very obvious corollary of one of the simplest of truths—viz. this, that no intellectual conclusion, come to by the speculative reason, however clearly realised, can possibly continue to satisfy it; nay, that every time it is grasped by the mind, after its first recognition, it of necessity assumes a different aspect. It comes back altered in the very act of reapprehension; partly because it is seen each time from a different point of view, under an altered light, and partly because it returns associated with other truths, or views of the universe. Every intellectual system is thus of necessity transient; but if, in virtue of this almost elementary fact, one were to maintain

that all truth was fluid, and that no standard of the true or the good was obtainable, a dogma would underlie the doubt, and even contradict it. Already, in the very statement of the sceptic's position, a dogma lies in germ, and that dogma, dragged out into daylight, becomes, as much as the most elaborate system, open to the attack which scepticism initiates.

Occasionally dogmatic Hume could not fail to be; dogmatic, that is to say, in his avowal that an ultimate dogma, whether as to nature of substance or of cause, was unattainable. But dogmatism was not the prevailing tone of his mind. It was rather that of suspense, or uncertainty, as to all ultimate things; and when he had once "made up his mind" in reference to any minor question, within the range of phenomenal fact or law, he he did not care to reopen it. As he grew older, he became increasingly averse to speculative inquiry as such. As he said to Blair, in reference to Dr Campbell's discourses on miracles, "I have long since done with all inquiries into such subjects." That was the form which the conservative instinct of advancing age assumed in Hume; but it was simply because he believed the problem to be an insoluble one, and because he therefore bowed to the inevitable. There was not a spark of irreverence in Hume; and his bitterest opponents never charged him with intolerance, or with antagonism to religion. On the contrary, he was recognised as a reasonable conformist to religious practice, even while he was intellectually unconvinced as to the data on which that practice rested. All his contemporaries—excepting those who were, let us say, constitutionally biassed against him—join in honouring him for his honesty, his sincerity, his

generosity, his unbounded good-humour, his cheerful spirit, and the calm tranquillity of his outlook. His cheerfulness never forsook him, while the malady that killed him advanced with rapid step. But, on the other hand, there was a certain rigidity of mind, and even a ponderousness, in the way in which he dealt with the problems which he finally set aside. To be prosaic rather than poetic he would himself have regarded as a title to honour amongst philosophers; but in consequence of this, and from the very want of the "inward eye," he never saw the ideal side of things. To Hume the ideal was equivalent to the fantastic; and his want of idealism—his habit of prosaic literalness—cut him off from appreciating one half of the philosophy, the art, the literature, and the life of the world.

Social as he was in temperament, there is no doubt that, in the elaboration of his philosophy, Hume was a solitary being. Intellectually he was quite as much alone in working it out, as Spinoza was in the construction of his. It is curious, in this connection, to think of him in the early days at Ninewells boldly facing the great problem for himself, communicating with no one, because there were none with whom he could sympathetically exchange ideas. It is still more curious to follow him during the years he spent in France at Rheims and La Flêche. *Why* he chose these places for a retreat, we know not; but we think of him as a recluse, meditating and writing, pacing the quiet streets alone, and at intervals composing his 'Treatise' with its one great negative conclusion—the remorseless "everlasting no." It was the same to the very close of his life, though his geniality increasingly developed itself. When his friends

dropped in upon him at James's Court, or St David Street, in Edinburgh, to spend some hours of pleasant talk and social intercourse, he was much more emphatically alone than any of them ever knew.

The representative man of his age, and in some respects of his century, his friendships were rather happy acquaintanceships than sympathetic unions of heart and soul. Hence the close of a friendship was not in any special sense painful to him. It is no disparagement to him to say that he never loved any one intensely. Constitutionally he could not identify himself with the interests of others. Perhaps some of his ethical views might have been modified had he done so.

Even his knowledge of human nature—though wide, varied, sagacious, and many-sided [1]—was not profound. It was curiously shallow in some directions, and one or two of the finest and rarest features of our humanity were absolutely unknown to him. A certain strength of character, as well as a dignity of bearing, were his habitually; but these were quite compatible with deficiency of insight in other directions. And while intellectually bold, in argument always intrepid, and in character supremely tolerant, he was to a curious extent a man of the period—a child of that eighteenth century, both in its strength and in its limitations. We cannot

[1] He was not so encyclopedic as Bacon, nor even as Hobbes, and was certainly far inferior in this characteristic to many philosophers both of ancient and modern times—*e.g.*, to Aristotle and to Leibniz. He was not learned, in the ordinary acceptation of the term. It was his clear-sighted thoroughness, the vigorous and incisive way in which he grasped the problems he dealt with—so far as he was able to see into them—that was his chief intellectual characteristic.

realise Hume at his ease in any other century or period, as we can realise many lesser men transplanted from their time, and carried either backward or forward sympathetically. This was in one sense a merit; but, in another, it narrowed him, and certain types of character were a complete puzzle to him.

The physiognomist can see the prevailing spirit of the eighteenth century stamped on the very faces of its representative men; and the Scottish men of letters—Hume, Smith, Ferguson, Robertson, Blair, Carlyle—are especially typical of the period. He sees shrewdness, worldly wisdom, common-sense, acuteness, and strength combined; but no delicacy of insight, no vision behind the veil of phenomena, no inclination either to sound the depths or to climb the heights of speculative wisdom; and, on the moral side, a self-centredness (which was an undoubted virtue), but no self-sacrifice—at least in the high or heroic sense. The result was that, throughout the whole period—though there were many strong and notable personalities—there was little elevation and no idealism. From the very acquiescence of Hume's temperament, and the absence of the heroic element, there was a placid acceptance of things as they are, without protest and without recalcitration. Hence he was no iconoclast of the institutions that surrounded him, however much he saw through (or thought he saw through) the opinions that were cherished within them. He was conservative, in the best sense of the term, of all that brought with it the prestige of antiquity, and thought it an unproductive vocation to spend one's time in merely exposing illusions. So far well.

But, with all its tolerant width and happy acquiescence, Hume's philosophy is meagre; and, as a system, it is poverty-stricken. One rises from a perusal of his chief works with the feeling that, after the process of disintegration has been accomplished, a very small residue is all that remains for humanity; that a few propositions, mostly negative, are the sole outcome of the philosophy of experience. Although in his own nature an indigenous growth, it was more French than Scottish in its essential features.[1] It is after all a surface philosophy, and it was admitted to be so by its author. It was right in much that it affirmed, but it was wrong in what it denied; and it was unfortunately louder in its negation than in its affirmation. The truth is, we cannot push the philosophy of experience *too far;* hence the service which Hume rendered to English thought, and to the thought of the world. But then, we may *stop short* at the philosophy of experience, without transcending it; and hence the inevitable reaction which followed, a reaction towards that idealism which Hume discarded. To put the case otherwise: to limit philosophy to the sphere of experience cannot be erroneous, if the sphere of experience be widened to include all its elements. It is only erroneous when the sphere is narrowed to one half of its legitimate area—

[1] In this connection, it is essential to remember the historical fact that, although Hume's 'Treatise' took shape in his college days, and was written before he was twenty-five, all the subsequent developments of his mind were determined by the current philosophy of France, which had already popularised Locke. If we recall Hume's contempt for the philosophy of the past, and his appreciation of Locke's empiricism, we see the close link of connection between the doctrine he avowed and the tone of society in which he moved.

viz., to the "things which do appear": and idealists maintain that the more important half, and that which gives all its significance to the former, is that section of experience which deals with the realities that underlie "appearance." They venture to describe it, not as a strong, but as a weak and even a helpless sort of philosophy, that contents itself with registering facts, and remaining dumb before them, without ever raising a question as to what a phenomenon *is;* or, if the question is raised, returning an agnostic answer, and proceeding to arrange the phenomena in groups, after the manner of the sciences.

Thus when Hume abandoned the pursuit of truth beyond the report of the senses (which he held to be illusive) and settled down acquiescently amongst the phenomena of experience—virtually treating all the problems of Philosophy, of Morals, and of Religion, as questions of Natural History—we feel that he was blind to the significance of one half of the sphere of *reality;*—constitutionally colour-blind let us say (repeating a phrase we have already used), and so avoid both the philosophical complaint and the theological anathema. But then, one who has an eye open to the *other* side of Nature and of human life—which was a total blank to Hume—finds that the result of an erroneous theory of knowledge may be quite as serious as a defect in practical conduct. Hume, as we have seen, did not believe in the "inward eye" of the poet and the seer; or he assigned to it a very subordinate office, if not an ignoble function. In his writings we miss all inwardness of vision, and find little intellectual plummet-sounding: and, again to speak in a figure, if no bottom can be

reached, what does it matter whether you sink your sounding-line a dozen yards or ten thousand fathoms in the ocean of existence? Of course this metaphor is of use, only in order that we may discard it. We may sound the physical ocean successfully, but we cannot explore the ocean of existence so that no mystery remains; and there are some who tell us that the acknowledgment of an ultimate mystery, the admission of a *je ne sais quoi* in philosophy, is the same thing as an abandonment of philosophy, and a recourse to agnosticism. It is not so; because, from the very nature of the case, knowledge lies within the ignorance, if the recognition of the mystery be intelligent.

A concluding remark may be made as to the best antidote to the one-sidedness of the philosophy of experience. It will be found, not so much in the study of the opposite philosophy of idealism (though that is always salutary), as in the study of the *Philosophy of History*, which proves conclusively that the human mind cannot rest in a sectarian theory of knowledge; but that, as action and reaction are equal and opposite, as well as invariable, every materialistic movement must sooner or later be followed by an idealistic one, and every destructive theory be succeeded by a constructive one. Still better—as the baffled ontologist is so often indebted to the "prophets of the beautiful" for help when mere speculation fails him—the antidote may be found in a study of the way in which the "open secret" has been understood by the chief idealistic poets of the world, from Dante to Wordsworth. By none of them have we been taught more than by the

last not only to recognise that "stream of tendency" which flows around us—and on which we are borne forwards—but also to hear

> "Authentic tidings of invisible things,
> Of ebb, and flow, and ever-during power,
> And central peace subsisting at the heart
> Of endless agitation."

END OF HUME.

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