III.—MR. SIDGWICK'S *METHODS OF ETHICS*.*

IN introducing this work, the author is careful to tell us what he does *not* mean to do. He is not to give the psychology of Ethics; he is not to give its practical precepts; he is not to give its history. What he *is* to do is to discuss the *methods* of Ethics; meaning by that the different grounds assigned for the maxims or precepts of morality. In short, he is to pave the way for Practical Ethics.

The First Book is prefatory. An introductory chapter gives the scope of the whole inquiry. Ethics being the study of what ought to be done, so far as this depends on the voluntary action of individuals, its fundamental assumption is, that there is in any given circumstances some one thing that ought to be done, and that this can be known. The selected question so often discussed (the nature of the Moral Faculty) as to how we come to know what ought to be done, is really of secondary importance. Now this word "ought" points to an *end* that is desired; and the end determines the means. Moral rules are the means to some end, and as we wish the end we use the means. But the moral end may be differently assigned. For example, one may hold that all the rules of conduct prescribed by men to one another, as *moral rules*, are means to the happiness of the community. The ethical agent is supposed to be impelled to this end, and being so he follows the rules that are instrumental to realising it. The reason or motive for the adoption of the end is, however, a different thing from the suitability of the means to the end. There might be a science that would deal with this last department by itself, which might be termed the science of *Eudemonics*; a science convertible into Ethics by adopting happiness as the end absolutely prescribed.

The methods of Ethics will be as various as its ends. The ends, however, are speedily reduced to two, namely, (1) Happiness and (2) Perfection or Excellence. But these ends may be sought for all men universally, or by each individual for himself. There will thus emerge four methods. A fifth is brought to light by the circumstance that the *end* is sometimes dropped into the background, and certain *rules* absolutely prescribed as First Principles that are self-supporting. Such a system is

* *The Methods of Ethics*. By HENRY SIDGWICK, M.A., Lecturer and late Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. London: Macmillan & Co. 1874.

expressed by Independent and Intuitive Morality; it is the view of Butler, and of the Common Sense school generally.

Five possible Methods then seem to claim attention; but two of them can be set aside at once—those relating to Perfection. For, as regards *universal* Perfection, there is no claim put in by any school of moralists; and Perfection as applied to the individual is not distinguishable as a system from conformity to absolute rules, or the Intuitive Morality. Consequently there are three alternatives. The system of no-end may be called, once for all, Intuitionism. The two Happiness-systems are both designated by the name "Utilitarianism," but improperly; for the founders and supporters of that view conceived it under the aspect of universal or collective happiness. Still we may formulate a self-regarding Utilitarianism, and contrast it with a benevolent Utilitarianism; the two to be called respectively "Egoistic" and "Universalistic" Hedonism. The names are somewhat hard, but justifiable in the circumstances. Of these three systems, Mr. Sidgwick undertakes to give an exhaustive discussion.

Another preparatory clearance is to state the relationship between Morality and Law or Politics. The upshot is, that morality must be viewed with reference to actual society and actual arrangements, and not with reference to ideals, utopias, or latter-day societies.

It is needful also to understand the incongruous phrase, "Moral Reason." The proper meaning of "reason" is the apprehending of truth in matters of knowledge which alone are true or false. But in regard to reason, there are certain subtle acceptations that enter into conduct, and give a plausibility to the expression—moral or practical reason. In all systems there is assumed an intuitive operation of the practical reason in the determination of ends, as well as of means; doing what is right is conceived and expressed also as doing what is reasonable.

The fourth chapter is on Pleasure and Desire, and expounds the author's view as to the object of Desire, which he contends may be, and often is, something indifferent. I have commented on this view in another place (*The Emotions and the Will*, 3rd edit., p. 436). The conclusion is immaterial for the writer's main purpose.

Of his next chapter, on Free-will, I have the same remark to make. In the work cited (p. 493) I have given my reasons for questioning his libertarian arguments; but they are not such as to affect his ethical doctrines. The mysterious puzzle of Free-will is often supposed to have ethical bearings, accord-

ing to the side we take. Mr. Sidgwick does not think so. He recognises one aspect of the Will as coming forward in Ethics, especially in connection with good or ill desert, namely, the difference between the morally well-trained and the morally ill-trained will; the one, virtuous with ease; and the other, virtuous, if at all, with difficulty. But this does not involve the dead-lock of Free-will. As a well-reasoned polemic, out of the direct line of the work, upon the perdurable debate on the Will, I commend the chapter to whoever is interested in the theme. It has all the author's good qualities as a reasoner, which I shall have occasion to exemplify as we proceed.

Returning from these half-needed digressions, Mr. Sidgwick has to express more fully the character of the three alternative Ethical Methods. He shows that what seem to be additional methods, as for example, "God's Will" and "Conformity to Nature" resolve themselves into one or other of the three. He meets an objection from another side, to the effect, that *two* methods would express the actual varieties of opinion; namely, one that makes *virtue* the end of human action, and one that makes *pleasure* the end. This would confound what we are especially called upon to keep separate—Egoism and Altruism; pleasure for self, and pleasure for others. Practically, the commonplace man is a mixture of both impulses; it is easier "to move in a sort of diagonal between egoistic and universalistic hedonism, than to be a consistent adherent of either." In fact, the great outcome of the author's exposition, as we shall see, is to show a much closer alliance between Utilitarianism and Intuitionism than between the two forms of Hedonism. To separate these two motives, in spite of their constant entanglement, is what puts the greatest strain upon the ethical theoriser.

Egoism has been carefully defined so as to be rescued from the vagueness attaching to the allied notion Self-love, which admits of interpretations not properly egoistic. It is to be stated as "the sum of pleasures valued according to their pleasantness;" while at a subsequent stage will be considered the means of arriving at this interesting summation.

Intuitionism has next to be cleared of confusing admixtures, a still more serious business. It is a method that "prescribes certain actions to be done without regard to their consequences." Something in the act itself carries us irresistibly to the conclusion that it is a right or a wrong act; we are moved to pay a debt from the self-evident propriety of the action, and not because of the pleasure that we bestow upon our creditor. This naked statement may put on various garbs, which the

author indicates, and which are distinct logically and historically. I do not stop to describe them farther than they are suggested by his designations—(1) Perceptual or Instinctive, (2) Dogmatic (with a basis of general rules), (3) Rational or Philosophical (giving some reasons for the rules), to which special reference must be made at a later stage.

Another vague word that afflicts the ethical controversialist is the "Good," given as the ethical end. The common interpretation of this word does not allow an identification with pleasure, and therefore the doctrine that sets it up would not be Hedonism, least of all Egoistic Hedonism. There is rather the notion of contributing to the excellence or perfection of conscious life, which is a form of Intuitionism. The author here introduces a criticism of the Good, or the *summum bonum*, in the ancient systems. It would interest the reader to compare Mr. Grote's exposition of the radical defectiveness of the ancient point of view in giving a self-regarding turn to the ethical end, in which society is really the party concerned (*Ethical Fragments*, Essay III.).

The Second Book is devoted to Egoism. The notion, purified of vagueness, represents solely the pursuit by each individual of his own greatest happiness, and that by a direct aim. And happiness shall be taken purely as the surplus of pleasurable over painful consciousness. Supposed distinctions in the *quality* of pleasures are to be done away with, by resolution into differences in amount or quantity alone. A man's mode of getting at his greatest happiness may not always be the same; he may simply take what pleasures are within his reach, or he may institute a computation of the pleasures and pains likely to follow a given course of action. Or he may by a deductive argument satisfy himself that virtue is the way to happiness; taking honesty as the best policy. Or he may have a theory that the maintenance of health is the surest road to happiness. But, under every view, he must appeal to his own consciousness as the final criterion of pleasure and pain. So that, in fact, the natural method of Egoistic Hedonism is reflecting on one's pleasures and pains, with comparison and estimate of their respective amounts. To this method the author applies the designation "Empirical Hedonism."

The method thus designated is neither more nor less than the inquiry into the relative values of human pleasures and pains. In connecting it with a theory of moral ends that is at last to be pronounced untenable, the author does not insinuate that it is a mean and unnecessary inquiry. On the contrary, it stands out as equally indispensable for the more worthy

conception of ethical right and wrong that is to emerge as the conclusion of the whole inquiry. The first attempt by an ethical philosopher to provide an exhaustive survey and computation of pleasures and pains, was that made by Bentham as a part of his Utilitarian theory, which was not egoistic but universalistic hedonism.

That pleasures and pains should be calculable is an assumption necessary to all rational pursuit, whether self-seeking or philanthropic. If human life is not a game of blind man's buff, we ought to be aware of the difference between one pleasure and another, if there be any difference. If the pleasures purchasable by £300 a year do not exceed those attainable by half the sum, while the pains of earning the larger sum are undoubtedly greater, every sane man would stop at the smaller figure. So, it would be unnecessary, in showing good-will to a relation or a friend, to bestow what is needless for happiness.

Pleasures and pains obviously differ in degree; and we are conscious of the difference. There is, in both, a scale of degree, beginning at a "hedonistic zero," and rising to the maximum of known pleasure or pain. The fundamental assumption of Hedonism is that pleasures are to be preferred and pains to be shunned, in proportion to their degree or amount. No other distinction is to be considered under this system. Quality, elevation, refinement must either condescend to be computed on the score of intensity, or be rejected as belonging to another scheme of life, and not to hedonism.

But now is the calculation practicable or possible? We must face all the difficulties, for hedonism, whether egoistic or universalistic, stands or falls upon it. Mr. Sidgwick does not blink these difficulties, nor indeed any other difficulties.

It may be all very well to compare two recent pleasures or pains, as in testing wines or perfumes, or the tone of an instrument; but when the experiences are past, we must trust our memory, and this is not very faithful as regards pleasures and pains. It is from recollections of the past that we must conceive the future, and those recollections have often to be shaped by the constructive imagination into new forms and groupings — a very uncertain process. Then, for many situations that have to be hedonistically valued, we have no experience of our own, and must depend upon other persons; and these other persons, besides being unfaithful in representing their experience, may not be constituted as we are, and therefore no fair criterion of what we shall feel when we come into the situation supposed.

The difficulties thus appear to thicken upon us at every step. Even at the first stage, the estimation of our own experienced pleasures, Mr. Sidgwick seems to think that when they are different in kind, as in comparing the sensual, the æsthetic, and the intellectual, our faculty of discrimination and valuation is non-plussed. So when we compare an unmixed pleasure with one that has an ingredient of pain, he thinks that we are easily thrown out of our reckoning. This I take to be true of a careless observer; but if the comparison were conducted in earnest, the supposed difficulties might, I think, be overcome. But then, continues Mr. Sidgwick, we are liable to the working of bias in various ways. Thus, in looking back upon our hardships, evils and anxieties, we are apt to underrate them. The remedy here must be the same as for any other known bias; we should learn to allow for it. Then, again, in the pressure of some actual misery we crave for its opposite, without taking account of attendant evils. When overworked, we crave for inaction, and forget the *ennui* of idleness.

The trust in other people's experiences is obviously dangerous, until we can allow for differences of character. But a worse uncertainty remains. Our own character may be changing, and passing into a phase that we cannot now estimate. In point of fact, however, this is the previous difficulty; for we must interrogate persons that have come into the same phase, and be guided by them. The most subtle form of the uncertainty is in trying to compute what will be the result of a particular discipline or education, whether to heighten a pleasure-giving taste, or to harden ourselves against a pain.

These are grave obstacles in our hedonistic path. There are others of a more factitious sort, as the supposed dulling tendency of self-consciousness; any cognitive effort being a damper to the pleasurable flame. Then there is the paradox of Desire—that in order to succeed in a thing you should set your aim at some different thing. For my own part, I do not set much store by these difficulties, and Mr. Sidgwick has no wish to exaggerate them.

It is at this point of Mr. Sidgwick's exposition that I first open critical fire. I thoroughly concur with him as to the necessity of a hedonistic calculation, and I admit all the difficulties that he sets forth. I think, however, that an additional chapter would have been well bestowed upon the ways and means of meeting those difficulties, or else of lightening their pressure. The motive that urges me in this suggestion is not mere asking-for-more. The author has put

into his volume a sufficient amount of good matter to make it one of the best volumes of the present generation. It is rather because Utilitarian Ethics does not get justice, if identified with the problem of calculating the vast total of human pleasures and pains of every sort and degree. An opponent can maintain with reason that such a task is impossible; and a system that supposes it, is liable to be thrown overboard as a chimerical idea.

I can imagine various ways of so far mitigating the difficulties as to bring the operation within the limits of possibility. When so much ingenuity has been spent in calculating the lunar and planetary perturbations, something might be done to simplify the problem of the perturbations of the human breast. Without losing sight of the benefits of physical science, we may say that a good hedonistic calculation has more to do with our welfare than the Transit of Venus. A "Science Commission" might well be issued in consideration of the backwardness of subjective research, and the serious consequences flowing therefrom. When we have a hedonistic calculus, with its senior wranglers, we shall begin to know whether society admits of being profitably reconstructed.

To exemplify the possible simplifications of the hedonistic problem, I will mention first the device of studying separately the side of *pain*. The removal of pains is in many respects a distinct department, and could be rendered remarkably definite. Not only does the protection from pain grow out of special appliances, but it occupies the largest portion of our endeavours and resources. If we could only keep free from pains, if our burdens and obligations were within our strength, the system would respond to pleasure without the necessity for numerous stimulants. But, as regards Ethics, the greatest consideration remains; protection from pain is the chief thing sought by moral restraints and enactments. Morality does not cater for men's pleasures, it only secures them from molestation in pursuing pleasures for themselves.

Another device of simplification would be a felicitous concentration of the main sources of pleasure, the result of a good classification of our sensibilities. Various modes might be tried; but it is clear that the *social* feelings would be one leading group.

I can suppose various other considerations that would come in to facilitate the labours of the hedonist, but what I lay especial stress upon, is the *limitation of the province of Ethics*. For although pretexts may be made for bringing into the

Ethical problem every possible pleasure and pain, we may, I think, satisfy ourselves that *security* and not happiness is the chief end of the rules of Ethics; *being* rather than well-being. I have already maintained this view in various places, and I will not argue it farther until I am met by some arguments on the other side.

Mr. Sidgwick, after setting forth against himself the almost insuperable vastness of the hedonistic computation, turns round and asks the pertinent question—whether Common Sense has found an easy way, a royal road. He finds that the moral judgments of Common Sense are indeed perplexing and inconsistent, but are still worthy of being attended to, in the absence of anything better. The tendency is to exaggerate the evils attending our worldly advantages, such as wealth, power, fame; notwithstanding that there is something to be said for that view. I believe, however, that the best corrective to this excess, would be to study the *pains* removed by these advantages; to look at the exemptions of the rich man, in comparison with the poor.

The succeeding chapter is one of vital interest. It faces the question, so often shirked, Does Duty coincide with Happiness? The author allows no ambiguity, evasion, or subterfuge to stand between him and the unwelcome conclusion, that Duty does *not* coincide with Happiness. He tries the point, first upon the Legal Sanctions of Morality, and shows that they are not always sufficient to render immoral conduct also imprudent. Next the Social Sanctions, blame and praise, fail in nearly the same ways, and also in ways of their own, as when society is divided on the guilt of a particular line of action. Farther, whereas the reciprocity of virtuous conduct goes a considerable length in re-imbursing the virtuous agent, yet the way that this reciprocity works is to stint the virtuous motives by comparing them to profitable investments. Turning to the satisfaction of a good conscience and the pains of remorse, the author is equally constrained to pronounce against the unqualified coincidence of Happiness and Duty.

This of course disposes of Egoism, as a basis of Morals; it is a sufficient refutation of any Selfish System. Before concluding, however, the author examines another attempt to fix the route to the greatest happiness, namely, the adjustment of our impulses and faculties to our surroundings, physical and social—a view expounded by Mr. Herbert Spencer. No doubt a perfect correspondence between all our wishes or impulses and the society that we live amongst, would make for our greatest happiness, as well as bring about a coincidence

between happiness and duty. But after a full examination, which I cannot here trace, Mr. Sidgwick is obliged to conclude that the method is, after all, simple empiricism.

The Third Book, occupying nearly half the volume, is the author's greatest achievement; it is the examination of INTUITIONISM. Many writers have pointed out that the morality of Common Sense, in other words, the moral sentiment, is, in the main, Utility. But although numerous telling examples have been cited in support of this view, there was still wanting an exhaustive demonstration; and this is now provided. Both the general fact and the exceptions are set forth in satisfying detail.

I shall indicate briefly the author's mode of proceeding. As usual, he clears the way by settling the meanings of terms, a perpetual necessity in Ethics. The fundamental assumption of Intuitionism is that we see at once what actions are in themselves right and reasonable. But it is said by some that *dispositions* or *motives*, and not actions, are what we judge to be right or wrong. This does not survive the author's scrutiny. Moreover, rightness is not absolute or objective, but dependent or subjective; it is what the agent *believes* to be right. Any bias that he may have in his own favour is cured by the generalising test—Would this be right for any other person placed in the same circumstances? This, the formal test of Kant, Mr. Sidgwick remarks, is like the Formal part of Logic; it must be complied with, but it does not give a complete criterion of Duty. He farther observes that the Existence of moral intuitions is not to be confounded with their Origin, nor with their Validity. Whether they are instincts or growths, is nothing to the purpose; although he thinks that the supposition of growth is the most favourable to their value, as the wisdom of the man ought to be greater than the wisdom of the infant.

The first important question to be settled is whether the intuitive moral decisions are universal or individual. Do we judge in each case, with or without reference to a rule or general principle? To this the answer must be that, in the decisions of the intuitive moral faculty, reference to general maxims is usual and admitted. In fact, there exists, in a formulated shape, a body of current maxims imposed by the community on each individual; which body of maxims may be regarded as the Positive Morality or the Moral Code of the community. These maxims are what have to be scrutinised, in the attempt to discover the real ethical end, the foundation of moral duty. On looking into those current notions, the first thing to strike us is their want of clearness. Indeed under

them, opposite judgments may be formed upon one and the same case; a proof that they must be indefinite and elastic to a degree.

After some remarks on the distinction between Duty and Virtue, Mr. Sidgwick commences his detailed examination of the Common Sense Moral Code. Without laying great stress upon any one order in classing the duties, he opens with what are called Intellectual Virtues. Of old, Wisdom, Practical Wisdom, had a front rank among the virtues; "but its precise relation to the other virtues was a continual source of perplexity, so that even the thought of Aristotle loses its usual analytic clearness on this subject." As an excellence of the intellect, Wisdom would mean the right selection of means to ends; but it may also mean the proper selection of ends. The wise man that is an object of moral praise is he that selects good or moral ends. It also includes a right condition of the Will, for we must not merely choose well, but must carry our choice into effect. The consideration of this aggregate mental excellence does not, however, aid us in the present inquiry.

The virtues that will bring Intuitionism to the proof are—Benevolence, Justice, Truth; and the author's examination of all the three is most elaborate, and goes far to supersede every previous analysis.

Take first Benevolence. As with other ethical terms, the word has a clustered meaning. As commonly stated, it combines the emotion of love with active services to our fellow-creatures. The emotion or affection is not under the control of the will, except as to its being cultivated; so that the part that chiefly belongs to duty is doing service to others, or promoting the happiness of others. But now, in seeking for a more definite guidance, we ask whether it is the *happiness* or the *virtue* of our neighbour that we are chiefly to promote. Farther, we ask *who* are the most proper recipients of our favour; for example, whether human beings alone, or the lower animals as well. This point Common Sense does not precisely determine. More important is it to determine how our benevolence ought to be distributed among our fellow-men. In the Utilitarian view, we are to seek the happiness of men generally, but are to apply our strength where it will operate to most advantage, namely, by promoting the happiness of such as come within our sphere. Common Sense recognises certain individuals as more nearly related to us, and enjoins that our kindness shall be regulated by the proximity of the relationship. But now starts up a perplexity from considering that many of those kindnesses are in requital for benefits received, thereby converting Benevolence into

Justice. So that to get at an open career for benevolence, we must find a region where the services are not of debt. Then comes the case of Affection, and the question whether it is duty and virtue simply to follow out affectionate promptings; or, in order to be virtuous, must we work where we have no affection, like Howard for criminals? Other questions are put equally puzzling to Common Sense Ethics; and the author is driven to confess that he cannot, by reflecting on common sense, elicit clear and definite principles for determining the right distribution of kindness. He goes exhaustively through the duties: Duties of Involuntary Relationships—Kindred, Neighbourhood, Citizenship; Duties of Voluntary Relations, as Friendship; Duties springing from services received—Gratitude; Duties to special need—Pity. The conclusion is the same for all: "While we find a number of broad and more or less indefinite rules laid down by Common Sense in this department of duty, it is difficult or impossible to state even the most certain of these with such clearness and precision as would enable us to determine exactly the extent of duty in any case."

The author's handling of Justice is in like manner thorough and masterly. The results he sums up thus:—

"The prominent element in Justice as ordinarily conceived is a kind of Equality; that is, Impartiality in the observance or enforcement of certain general rules allotting good or evil to individuals. But when we have clearly distinguished this element, we see that the definition of the virtue required for practical guidance is left obviously incomplete. Inquiring further for the right general principles of distribution, we find that our common notion of Justice includes—besides the principle of Reparation for injury—two quite distinct and divergent elements. The one, which we may call Conservative Justice, is realised (1) in the observance of Law and Contracts and definite understandings, and in the enforcement of such penalties for the violations of these as have been properly announced and generally accepted; and (2) in the fulfilment of natural and normal expectations. This latter obligation, however, is of a somewhat indefinite kind. But the other element, which we have called Ideal Justice, is still more difficult to define; for there seems to be two quite distinct conceptions of it, embodied respectively in what we have called the Individualistic and the Socialistic Ideals of a political community. The first of these takes the realisation of Freedom as the ultimate end and standard of right social relations; but on examining it closer, we find that the notion of Freedom will not give a practicable basis for social construction without certain arbitrary definitions and limitations: and even if we admit these, still a society in which Freedom is realised, as far as is feasible, does not completely

suit our sense of Justice. *Primâ facie*, this is more satisfied by the Socialistic Ideal of Distribution, founded on the principle of requiring Desert; but when we try to make this principle precise, we find ourselves again involved in grave difficulties: and similar perplexities beset the development of Criminal Justice on the same principle.

"Ideal Justice, therefore, is very difficult to delineate, even in outline; for if we cannot work out satisfactorily either of these two conceptions, it is still harder to make a satisfactory combination of the two; and yet difficult altogether to discard either. And we are farther perplexed when we try to reconcile either with Conservative Justice. For both in public and in private affairs it is often questioned how far the natural expectations of comparatively undeserving persons ought to interfere with Distribution according to Desert; and, again, how far such expectations, if not founded on definite contract, ought to hamper the Freedom of others. To such questions our attempt to define the common-sense notion of Justice does not seem to furnish an answer."

In a chapter entitled "Laws and Promises," Mr. Sidgwick dwells on the duties of obedience to authority, which common sense requires, but does not free from uncertainties. There is the conflict between usurped and rightful authority, which is solved only by a reference to Utility. The subject of Good Faith or Fidelity to Promises gives a fine opportunity of showing how thoroughly at fault is the monitor within the breast, if unassisted by the utilitarian monitor. The author unfolds, with remorseless completeness, the critical situations that baffle the inward sense, and is of course obliged to sum up once more against its pretensions.

The duty of Truth seems at first sight the clearest case of all for the Intuitionist. But only at first sight. Common Sense has allowed a number of grave exceptions to the absolute claims of Truth, and is obliged to go to Utility to hold the license in check.

The restraining of Malevolent Impulses is often laid down as an absolute duty, but this is not consistently adhered to; for we must punish and retaliate injuries in the interests of society; and the consideration of those interests, that is, Utility, must be our guiding star.

The Self-regarding Virtues are next considered—Temperance and Purity. As strictly self-regarding, Temperance is regulated by the calculations of Egoistic Hedonism. Common Sense, however, interferes so far as to demand a certain abstemious restraint, but when we ask where the line of indulgence is to be drawn, the answer fluctuates; some would put it at the maintenance of health, others would allow a little

indulgence for society's sake. So in Chastity and Purity : the gratifying of the sexual appetite, even in the marriage relation, has had strict limits imposed on it by the ascetic moralists, as, for example, the procreating of children. But this is mostly theory.

After touching on the common sense views of Courage and Humility, the author is prepared for a summary of the whole case. He lays down, with ominous rigour, the conditions that he expects in an Ethical first principle—the terms precise, each proposition really self-evident, the different propositions mutually consistent, universal acceptance. Reviewing all the duties above detailed, he inquires whether the maxims in each case comply with these four conditions. The flaws that come to view are such as—reasoning in a circle, incurable indefiniteness, aversion to explicitness. At the same time he guards himself against supposing that he has subjected all the moral duties to an utterly destructive analysis.

“The notions of Benevolence, Justice, Good Faith, Veracity, Purity, &c., are not emptied of significance for us, because we have found it impossible to define them with precision. The main part of the conduct prescribed under each notion is sufficiently clear; and the general rule prescribing it does not lose its force, because there is in each case a margin of conduct involved in obscurity and perplexity, or because the rule does not, on examination, appear to be absolute and independent. In short, the Morality of Common Sense remains perfectly adequate to give practical guidance to common people in common circumstances; but the attempt to elevate it into a system of scientific Ethics brings its inevitable imperfections into prominence without helping to remove them.”

Next is a chapter on the moral judgments we pass on Motives; as when we assign to some motives a higher moral rank than others, and declare that in presence of a superior an inferior must give way. He treats of the difficulties attending this view, in an argument with Mr. Martineau, and concludes that no method of deciding moral questions can be founded on it.

He now passes to the inquiry whether there be any philosophic handling of Intuitionism such as to elevate it to the position of a science. He goes back to the historical systems, as embodied in the moral philosophy of ancient and modern times. Stating in words the two cardinal virtues—Wisdom and Temperance—he finds them to be mere tautology. And even in approaching the great names of Plato and Aristotle, with all their valuable thought, he declares their method stricken with the same incurable defect. He exemplifies this

in Aristotle's definition of the Good. Stoicism also is circular in its reasoning. The Stoical formula (Life according to Nature) is adopted by Butler, and in his hands it still bends into the old circle: "it is reasonable to live according to Nature, and it is natural to live according to Reason."

From the circular vice, he excepts only Clarke and Kant. Clarke has two principles—Equity and Love or Benevolence, and neither of them is tautological. The rule of Equity (the Golden Rule) is equivalent to the broad formula—"what is right for me is right for all in the same circumstances." This Mr. Sidgwick unhesitatingly pronounces to be an Ethical Axiom, a self-evident proposition. It is definite, and it is not an identical but a real proposition. The second rule, the rule of Benevolence, is "to promote the welfare and happiness of all men." This too is self-evident; it cannot be made to repose on any more fundamental principle. It is also perfectly intelligible, allowing for the latitude that may be given in applying it. Kant, in a different way, has arrived at the same two rules. He then refers in this connection to J. S. Mill's proof of the principle of Utility, to which he objects that the principle of Universal Benevolence (which is the Utilitarian theory) is subjected to a hedonistic interpretation.

The closing chapter of the Book on Intuitionism resumes the inquiry—What is the Good, the *Summum Bonum*? Happiness, no doubt, in great part, but not wholly, in the judgment of Common Sense. Neither is it exclusively Virtue. Goodness or Excellence of Conscious Life must be allowed to be "good;" but some farther elucidation is needful. Now Common Sense, while peculiarly averse to Egoistic Hedonism, is not dissatisfied with Universalistic Hedonism as a sufficing end. Universal Happiness—desirable conscious life for the innumerable multitude of living beings, present and to come—seems an End that satisfies our imagination by its vastness, and sustains our resolution by its comparative permanence and security. In short, as the conclusion of the whole matter, the Intuitionist method yields as its final result the doctrine of pure Universalistic Hedonism.

We are now at the Fourth Book, UTILITARIANISM. The need of clearing up the meaning of this much abused notion is urgent. The great point, however, is to detach it utterly from a selfish system, an Egoistic Hedonism. As to Bentham's wording of the principle, adverse criticism is too easy. For one person that has mastered his almost unexceptionable exposition, a million are acquainted with his exceptionable motto.

But now we come to the graver question—What is the proof of Utilitarianism? Egoistic Hedonism may dispense with

proof; each agent may be allowed to postulate his own happiness as an end; but it is different with Universalistic Hedonism. No doubt Common Sense accepts it, and we may, if we choose, rest satisfied with that acceptance. Common Sense or Intuitionism is a crude or impure Utilitarianism; if the crude form is to be admitted, how much more the purified article. The author once more reviews the chief virtues, showing that each one of them is in its basis utilitarian, and has its boundaries set by utilitarian considerations. In fact, without considerations of utility, the common sense virtues would be unworkable. Take Benevolence. This, rationalised, would be an exact description, a summary, of Utilitarianism. In an interesting series of examples, the author proves the point at length. An equally strong case is made out under Justice, and the Obedience to Law. The missing links of Intuitionism are provided by Utility. So with Truth-speaking and its exceptions. Again the discrepancies of the moral codes of nations can often be accounted for by referring to special utilities; likewise the unequal stringency of the same enactments towards different individuals. So much for the proof of Utility by Common Sense.

The Utilitarian System being now enthroned (subject to a final question still to be put), how is it to be worked out? In other words, how are we to proceed in authenticating, or else in amending, our present morality? For morality has changed in the past and may change in the future. The answer is—nothing for it but Empirical Hedonism. With all its defects, this is the only method left us; the substitutes have been weighed and found wanting. Mr. Sidgwick puts himself into the situation of an ethical reformer, under Utility, and plays the part of a conservative liberal. The existing Common Sense (with its utilitarian handling) he would have to be provisionally received, but not to be regarded as a faithful transcript of utility, nor as a final adjustment of our duties. He points out the many disturbing causes that have been at work to render imperfect the morality handed down to us from bygone times. If we now shrink from the hedonistic calculation, how we can respect the solutions given by men less informed and more fool-hardy? Their sympathies were limited; their intelligence was also limited. False religions gave a wrong bias: founders of religions did not even refrain from introducing their own individual likings and dislikings into the moral code; if Mohammed had been fond of wine, and indifferent to women, the morality of the human race (in the East) might have been very different. It is thus apparent that Utilitarianism has much to revise and consider in regard to our received

morality; that is, supposing anything can be made of the calculus of pleasures and pains. To dispense with the morality of instinct and tradition would be premature and ill-advised; the present rudimentary condition of sociology is alone a sufficient reason.

Mr. Sidgwick farther, in the true conservative spirit, considers all the precautions to be observed by an ethical innovator. Indeed, no one will charge him with any serious designs upon our present moral code. He sets an example of the careful balancing of the two sides of every question, which is often neglected by common sense, but cannot be neglected by the Utilitarian thinker.

The concluding chapter is the gravest of the whole book. It has the merit of at least putting explicitly the hardest question in Ethics. "It has yet to be shown why a man should be a consistent Utilitarian." As the author has already refused (on good grounds) to admit that virtue and happiness coincide in the long run, he has burdened himself with the task of showing an adequate reason for preferring virtue at all hazards. The effect of virtue (that is, of social restraints and good conduct of every kind) is greatly to multiply the general stock of human happiness; but it does not necessarily repay every contributor in exact proportion to his contributions. In fact, a number of the contributors get little or nothing; many dutiful lives are both short and miserable. This effect, however, is deplored by society itself; the constant aim is by improved arrangements to reduce the number of self-sacrificing members.

Mr. Sidgwick makes ample allowance for the reciprocities of society, together with the pleasures of sympathy and compassion, but is yet inexorable in refusing to admit a perfect and universal coincidence between Utilitarian duty and self-interest. What then is to be done? Try the Theological solution. Alas! this too crumbles under his handling. Is there then no solution; no motive adequate to perform the sacrificing duties? The author mournfully says *none*; and yet thinks that something must be done.

"We have found that the antithesis between Intuitionism and Utilitarianism must be entirely discarded: since the first Principle of Utilitarianism has appeared as the most certain and comprehensive of Intuitions, and most of the others naturally range themselves in subordination to it, and even seem to be most thoroughly understood when considered as partial applications of it unconsciously and imperfectly made. Nor has it appeared very difficult to marshal our common judgments both of Goodness and of Rightness into a system under this principle without impairing our confidence in the

substantial veracity of Common Sense: and all particular moral sentiments and special sympathies fall easily into their places as auxiliaries to the two supreme coincident impulses, Universal Benevolence and the desire to do what is Right as such. In such a reconciliation, though much practical embarrassment may be caused in details by the conflict that will partially continue between what we may now call Instinctive and Calculative Morality, all theoretical perplexity as to the general principles of determining Social Duty will have been entirely—or almost entirely—removed. But the fundamental opposition between the principle of Rational Egoism and that on which such a system of duty is constructed, only comes out more sharp and clear after the reconciliation between the other methods. The old immoral paradox, 'that my performance of Social Duty is good not for me but for others,' cannot be completely refuted by empirical arguments; nay, the more we study these arguments the more we are forced to admit, that if we have these alone to rely on, there must be some cases in which the paradox is true. And yet we cannot but admit with Butler, that it is ultimately reasonable to seek one's own happiness. Hence the whole system of our beliefs as to the intrinsic reasonableness of conduct must fall, without a hypothesis unverifiable by experience reconciling the Individual with the Universal Reason, without a belief in some form or other, that the moral order which we see imperfectly realised in this actual world is yet actually perfect. If we reject this belief, we may perhaps still find in the non-moral universe an adequate object for the Speculative Reason, capable of being in some sense ultimately understood. But the Cosmos of Duty is thus really reduced to a Chaos; and the prolonged effort of the human intellect to frame a perfect ideal of rational conduct is seen to have been foredoomed to inevitable failure."

A sad ending to a great work! I cannot but think, however, that too much is demanded. Mr. Sidgwick appears to suppose that individual and universal happiness must both repose upon one foundation; or rather that self-regard must carry with it the regard to others. Now it seems to me that the sooner he gives up this expectation the better. To seek our own interest is one thing; to renounce our own interest for another man's is quite a different thing; the second cannot by any conceivable device be forced under the first. That "I am to be miserable" cannot be an inference from "I am to be happy." There must clearly be *two* things postulated as the foundations of human duty, each for itself and on its own merits. It is reasonable for each one to seek their own happiness; it is right, reasonable, for each to give up, if need be, their own happiness for the sake of the happiness of some other persons. The first motion being put and carried *nem. con.*, the second becomes an independent and substantive

motion, and must be put on its own distinct grounds of acceptance. In all human societies hitherto, this motion has been also carried with more or less unanimity and with more or less of qualification; and being carried, men have to a certain extent acted up to it.

On Mr. Sidgwick's book as a whole, I would venture the following remarks. On its own plan, the completeness of the handling is almost beyond praise; I cannot assign any important omission, while often struck with the opposite fact. Equally, if not more, meritorious is the logical rigour of the reasonings. Any one might fearlessly offer a reward for every fallacy, under the widest classification of the fallacies. Whatever the author touches, he clears, and not seldom adorns; while ruined sophisms strew his track.

If I must be critical, notwithstanding the extent of my approval and concurrence, I would indicate one other point (besides the Hedonistic Calculus) where the ideas (although all stated) might have been expanded with advantage to the main theme. I think that Mr. Sidgwick might have been fuller upon the influences apart from Utility, well or ill apprehended, that have determined the traditional morality. On the maxim that, before pronouncing a person to be wrong, it is desirable to know how he came to be wrong, any proposal to alter a moral rule should be accompanied with an account of the mode of its origination.

My concluding remark is more general. The author amply recognises the close and inseparable connection of Ethics and Sociology. Yet I doubt whether he has done everything that this connection would impose upon him. My conception of morality is that it should never be separated from the consideration of the social organism. In the matter of Duty, Society is the alpha and the omega. What I mean will receive a contrasting illustration by referring to Bentham's motto, and to Mr. Sidgwick's wording of Universalistic Hedonism. "The greatest happiness of the greatest number," the aim "at universal happiness," do not yield Morality as I understand it. Under these requirements, I fail to see how large fortunes can be otherwise than condemned. I, for my own part, would not oppose one man individually to any number of men individually; the opposition is—one man to the social body. It is to society, *as society*, that we are to offer up our individual happiness, when called upon by an emergency. The restraints that we all submit to are supposed to be needful for the effectual working of the social machinery.

Objection could easily be taken to the vagueness of this

statement, and it wants many explanations that I cannot here offer. But, even as stated, I believe it to be a position of advantage for attacking the difficult questions. It simplifies, by narrowing, the hedonistic calculation ; it shows where the stress of obligation should lie—the preservation of the social system. It ranks the social ends in the scale of urgency, and commands our assent as soon as proposed. It declines the pursuit of Universal Happiness, and contents itself with Universal Security.

I apprehend that to attempt moral reforms upon the hedonistic calculus in all its unqualified extent, would break down from the handle that it gives to the opposition ; in the mazes of such a problem, the balancing operation could be rendered hopeless. The effective point of attack is against over-government, that is, needless restraints. Here the burden of proof lies upon those in power. Authority may be called upon at all times to justify itself. Is it right to exclude women from the professions ?—might be discussed for ever upon the *pros* and *cons* of Universal Happiness. If it is to be settled, in any reasonable time, this must be by insisting on a clear and overwhelming case for depriving one sex of the opportunities of worldly advancement possessed by the other.

One other point, and I have done. In that final pinch—the reconciling of the good of others with the good of self—the social wording of the formula, without resolving the paradox, presents it on the side that most easily gains acceptance. If I am bidden to give up my happiness to another man, I may not unfairly answer that I am surely free to keep what is my own. But if I am reminded of the claims of the society that I was born into, and spend my life in, I feel that a constraining voice has spoken to me. Such is our habituation to the social relationships, that we are disposed to fall in with the prescribed arrangements without question. “I and my king” are one, when the social impetus is awake. There are occasions when the other impetus awakens up, and perhaps carries the day ; but we are under a divided dominion ; the best of us are always faithful to Society ; the worst cannot entirely throw off allegiance. “Am I not a man and a brother?” is the full expression of *Homo sum*.

A. BAIN.

IV.—MR. SIDGWICK ON INTUITIONALISM.

MR. SIDGWICK’S work, though named *The Methods of Ethics*, is not on the methods of investigation appropriate to ethical inquiry. It aims at an impartial statement of rival theories, and a summing-up of the evidence, for and against, in a