

indeed the whole process is one of correction. That is inevitable. You find yourself in a contradiction; you must say something, and it must not be contradictory; therefore you must go farther, and contrive a reconciling truth; that is all. Plato describes the process quite clearly, and shows how it leads up to the fullest and most living concrete. Mr. Russell's interpretation of the 'Forms' I hold to be on the whole a misrepresentation, though not without support in Plato. And his limitation of universals to abstractions, excluding individuals, I take to be one of the arbitrary distinctions by which he truncates experience.

This logical error, as I must hold it to be, affects profoundly his conception of the contrasted worlds of universals and of existences (p. 156). It is a dualism which divorces the being and logic of his universe from its life and love. I cannot say how deeply I regret that such a doctrine, absolutely fallacious, as I hold, in logic, and in its general bearing a mere formulation of popular prejudices,¹ should go out to the world with Mr. Russell's great authority. The typical universal is surely Plato's *ἔπος* or his *ἀγαθόν*, the all-pervading pulse at once of thought and of desire. What Mr. Russell calls universals seem to me to be just the barest outlines of the sub-structure of the world, and to have a comparatively slight claim to the character of wholeness and pervasiveness which marks the true universal.

I referred above to Mr. Russell's view of the limits of philosophical knowledge. I strongly agree with it as against many theological philosophers; and I also accept in a very large measure his estimate of the value of philosophy, which seems to me very finely expressed. Only I am not sure what application he has in mind when he censures philosophies which recognise in the universe nothing alien to the Self. The ideas, say, of Plato, Spinoza, Hegel, Bradley, might equally well be described either in this language, or, in the phrase which carries Mr. Russell's approval, "the union of Self and not-Self". It would in my judgment be a very serious error to censure philosophies like these as treating the self in a way which makes it an obstacle to freedom of thought, and I am inclined to believe, as also I hope, that Mr. Russell has not committed it.

BERNARD BOSANQUET.

James Hutchison Stirling: His Life and Work. By AMELIA HUTCHISON STIRLING. London. Fisher Unwin. Pp. xii, 379.

FRIENDS and admirers of Stirling will readily acknowledge their indebtedness to Miss Stirling for this record of a life given with rare strenuousness to the advancement of speculative philosophy

¹ Cf. James' student in my *Principle of Individuality*, p. 10; James' *Pragmatism*, p. 21.

in this country and in the English-speaking world. The book is written from the inner sanctuary of the family circle, and while the story is naturally coloured by emotional intimacy with the subject of the memoir, the writer has clearly endeavoured to maintain an objective manner of treatment, and to present the narrative with as much detachment as is consistent with the reserves of kinship. The result is a biography of Stirling to some extent of the kind which one can imagine Stirling himself to have written, though without the graphic peculiarities of such an autobiography. The estimate of the significance of the various events and incidents recorded was very probably Stirling's own estimate of them; the judgment of the value and place of his work was in all likelihood the judgment which Stirling himself would have held; the philosophical conclusions, positive and negative, enunciated are in substance undoubtedly in the line of Stirling's own thought.

One might say Miss Stirling has erred more by what she has eliminated than by what she has inserted. In a biography of a scholar one looks for the inner history of the character and mind of the man, as distinct from his declared and published opinions which have already secured the attention of that part of the public interested in them. There is much less of the former and rather more of the latter than the admirers of Stirling could have wished from his biographer. In the narrative of the outwardly uneventful life of an almost solitary scholar like Stirling the main interest must necessarily lie in the detailed record of the private opinions, characteristics, or even idiosyncrasies which give vividness to the actual life and to the written portrait of the man. The main lineaments and features are, however, here drawn with considerable success, and for this the interested reader will be grateful.

Every man is said to be the focus of his environment; and this is certainly true of Stirling. It would be difficult to imagine how such a man could have lived his life outside the region of the desperate enthusiasms which constitute as they have conditioned so much of the best in Scottish character and history. With all his immense learning and uncommon penetration, the ground plan of his nature, formed and composed of national and ancestral elements, remained unchanged to the last. His sensitive, fractious independence of spirit, with its self-contained detachment, was supported by an unbending resolution of will, and pervaded by the deep religious instincts of his people. One of the main things which from the first attracted him towards Hegel was that Hegel had, "above all, reconciled to philosophy Christianity itself. *That struck.*" In opening the lectures on the Gifford foundation at the close of his career he gladly avows himself a "member of the national church" and in doctrine an "evangelical". Like many another Scotchman who has been drawn to metaphysics, he was concerned to find an Absolute that was equal to the requirements of the Confession of Faith and the Shorter Catechism, and having

satisfied his mind on the point, he was then ready to chant the words of Simeon of old with perfect confidence. Of an intense positive temperament, Stirling early in life took himself and his purposes very seriously, and was peculiarly adapted by nature for that stubborn attempt to think to the uttermost which constitutes the prevailing mood of the metaphysician. While capable to an unusual degree of laborious patient investigation, he was constitutionally incapable of resting content with a negative or half-negative result. This largely accounts for his ruthless and incessant assaults on the half-truths of the *Aufklärung*, and for his scornful contempt for the contemporary empiricism of his day. To both of these movements he probably did less than justice, because of his temperamental bias towards positive conclusions. In his philosophical antipathies he did not remain satisfied to win his case at the bar of pure reason; he pilloried his victims on a metaphor which brought in laughter to the assistance of logic, and left discomfiture to complete the work of conviction. While there can be little doubt about the feelings of the public, only conjecture can describe the emotions of Mill and Bain as they read Stirling's article in the *Courant* in 1870, with its concluding sentence: "It is quite curious to watch Mr. Mill and Mr. Bain in what they think philosophising—Mr. Mill concealing himself from his own presuppositions behind the shadowy heads of a ghostly asparagus-bunch of possible sensations; and Mr. Bain, with a sobriety of aspect that becomes the occasion, intently milking . . . his own biceps into Time and Space".

Stirling was a man of singularly versatile mental endowments, with a sinewy strength of intellectual endurance and great powers of concentration. He was familiar with most of the fields of science, and probably could have proved himself successful in any of them. It was always a legitimate satisfaction to him that he was a serious rival to Kelvin in the mathematical class in Glasgow University; and at least one distinguished mathematician has acknowledged that, in the controversy with Whewell and Robertson Smith in later years over Hegel's criticism of Newton's view of the calculus, Stirling had the best of the dispute. He had a scholar's knowledge of several languages, and a very living interest in the literature of his own country. A being with such varied capabilities must have found the problem of selecting a definite *métier* in life one of singular difficulty. In a sense one might say he never really found his peculiar sphere in any of the recognised departments of activity, and to the last remained outside all of them, imposing his own tasks and duties on himself. This is in some respects to be regretted, in other respects it was a gain; and in any case it makes Stirling's great achievements all the more remarkable. Whatever success he may have had as a doctor of medicine, there can be no doubt that the type of work most after his own heart was that of a teacher of philosophy in a University.

He took his defeat as a candidate for the Edinburgh Chair very bravely; but that was probably the disappointment of his life. His non-election showed a strange lack of sound judgment on the part of the electors, and was undoubtedly a serious loss to Edinburgh University, and to Stirling himself. Teaching would have compelled Stirling to think more simply and more concretely, and would have removed most of the transparent singularities in his style of writing which, largely owing to the isolation of his life and work, tended to take the form of a public monologue. Moreover, Stirling had a very vivid and clear insight into Ethics (the subject of the chair); his volume of *Lectures on the Philosophy of Law* (1873) is perhaps the most luminous and valuable of all his writings.

It was natural that a man of Stirling's varied gifts and resources should have thought of and tried many avenues of activity before finally settling down to the task that called forth his best energies. Some of his early literary efforts and ambitions were perhaps less due to a want of perspective than to a want of knowledge of his own real powers. His correspondence with Carlyle in this connexion is interesting mainly for the light it throws on Carlyle's good practical sense in dealing with such a correspondent. Specimens of Stirling's attempts at literature, poetical and otherwise, are given in the earlier chapters of the volume. He had no interest in literary form, as he confesses in so many words (pp. 137-138); and, while possessed of an abundance of telling, picturesque imagery, he seems never to have cared for the fine art of literary expression, and certainly cannot be said at any time to have practised it. His best and most continuous pieces of writing (the "Conclusion" of the *Secret*, and the "Reproduction" of Kant in the *Text Book to Kant*), are sustained flights of impressive philosophical exposition, and in the nature of the case do not lend themselves to adornment or eloquence in order to be effective. Such style as he may be said to have had was largely formed or fostered under the influence of Carlyle, for whom he always retained the deepest admiration from youth to old age. No doubt many of Stirling's idiosyncrasies of style are traceable to Carlyle, the Carlyle who appeared in *Sartor* and the succeeding works: and it can hardly be held that such an influence was anything but prejudicial.

It must always seem a kind of happy accident that led Stirling to undertake what proved to be his life-work—the study and exposition of Hegel and German Philosophy. There was nothing in his preceding life-history, at least so far as can be gathered from his biography, which called for a comprehensive metaphysical system to satisfy a deep-felt spiritual need. He appeared to be mentally at peace with himself when the inheritance of a competence induced him to give up professional work and go abroad to read. His religious life seems to have been securely established

very early, and does not appear to have been seriously shaken at any time. And even after his task of studying and expounding Hegel was completed, he definitely declares, "I have not sought, and do not seek, to be considered a disciple" [of Hegel] (Schwegler, *History of Philosophy*, 11th ed., p. 445). Perhaps some light may be thrown on the matter by his remark in the same context "my position in his [Hegel's] regard has been simply that of one who in making the unintelligible intelligible would do a service to the public". This, taken along with the passage in the biography (p. 115) already referred to, seems to indicate that he undertook the stupendous task which he carried to a finish, first of all to see how Hegel had "reconciled to philosophy Christianity itself," secondly in order to bring to the light of day the dark enigmas of an apparently impenetrable system of philosophy, and thirdly perhaps to gratify an intellectual curiosity of a high order. He had free time on his hands and nothing to lose by failure, if he should fail; and he had inexhaustible patience, intellectual ambition, and the indomitable resolution which refuses to be turned back once it has set its hand to the plough. He seems to have known little German before he went for the year's stay in Heidelberg, 1856-7, where the task was begun. On the whole, therefore, it seems remarkable that an undertaking, the outcome of which was of such great moment for the study of philosophy in this country, should have had its origin in such apparently contingent circumstances.

We need not rehearse here the story of the intellectual struggle through which Stirling passed before light came, and with it the secret for which he was in search. Apart from the brief references in the biography, the record of the struggle is set forth in the first five chapters of the *Secret of Hegel*. The composition of the work took a year and two months, and it at length appeared in 1865. It was received on its appearance with mingled admiration and astonishment; and as an intellectual feat it will always stand by itself in the annals of philosophical literature.

If there is a kind of genius required for luminous exposition of a man of Hegel's dimensions, then certainly the *Secret* is a work of genius. Those best know its value who have trodden the mazes of intellectual perplexity and have come to Stirling in their hour of need. No one has ever done for Hegel and for German philosophy what Stirling accomplished in the *Secret*. But it is not for every one that the book was written, nor to every one that it makes a responsive appeal. To some it has been indeed the wine of life; to many others it is the waters of Marah and wholly unpalatable. Its unattractiveness to the generality of readers even capable of understanding it, is due not so much to the difficulty of the subject, as to the manner of presenting it. Stirling after long seeking at last struck the right clue for getting at the source of his author's meaning, viz.,—the close historical connexion of Hegel with his more immediate predecessors. Stirling was never weary of laying

stress on the importance of understanding this clue, or, as he used to put it, assimilating the "Historic Pabulum". What he never seemed to realise was the equal importance of showing the intimate connexion of Hegel's philosophy with everyday thought, with common sense, and ordinary scientific and religious notions. Without this the strangeness and aloofness of the system from everyday life remained unremoved; and the historical setting of Hegel's thought, so far from bringing the system into touch with life, seemed merely to relegate it to the past and to connect it with "old unhappy far-off things" which people might as well forget. And in endeavouring to meet the reader half-way, it has always seemed unfortunate that Stirling should have done little more than reprint the notes made during his own personal struggle to understand Hegel and present these as the first five chapters of the work. Valuable as they are, these notes are mainly of autobiographical interest and of psychological significance. What was wanted by way of introduction was an analysis of the steps by which Hegel's own system arises from and is continuous with the thought of everyday experience in all its aspects. No one has ever been better equipped than Stirling for such an undertaking, and, at the time he wrote, probably no one but himself could have done it. The truth seems to be that he was so intent on getting to the centre of the system that, once arrived there, all else seemed of slight importance, and the reading public almost forgotten. He spoke from a secure vantage ground of his own, and the public was left to follow him as best it could. To some extent he sought to remove this defect in the *Secret* in his repeated restatements of Hegel's position in his later works, more especially in the most important of his latest writings, *What is Thought* (published in 1900). But the defect seems never to have been quite removed. He was so clear in his own mind about what Hegel meant that he hardly seemed to see the point of the difficulties raised by others. A crucial question, for example, was put to him by one of his correspondents, and his letter in reply (*Life*, p. 346 ff.) seems anything but a satisfactory solution of the difficulty.

It is remarkable that in the *Secret*, which professed to give the Hegelian system in "Origin, Principle, Form and Matter," so little is said about any part of the system except the *Logic*. The *Philosophy of Nature*, which has always been the danger zone for the enemy of the system, was hardly considered in the *Secret*; and much the same may be said of the *Philosophy of Art*. Stirling's most luminous exposition dealt mainly with the *Logic* and the ethical and religious aspects of the system. In the *Logic* he found the secret principle of the system, and the ethical and religious aspects were dealt with mainly by way of showing the bearing of that principle on certain recognisable concrete spheres of experience.

Stirling was never weary of explaining that the secret of the

system lay in the *Notion*, and he endeavoured with an abundance of illustration to show what this meant. His view of the principle agrees substantially with that of others who have sought to interpret the system, and Stirling's grasp of the principle has never been surpassed in penetration and vividness. But to the last he insisted that his interpretation was merely that of an expositor of Hegel. He did not profess to be convinced of the truth of that principle on its own merits. On the contrary, he frankly says (*Schwegler*, note on Hegel), "whether that notion be really the pulse of thought—that is what is still to be verified—that is what I still doubt. So long as that doubt remains I am not properly an Hegelian." It is not clear from the biography nor from his later writings that this fundamental doubt was ever removed. He says, indeed (*Life*, p. 373), that "Hegel's act is, probably, as the opening of the final seal into the consciousness of man". But to the last Stirling was more interested in expounding and illustrating the importance of Hegel's contribution, especially as against Kant and the *Aufklärung* than in criticising the value of Hegel's principle and method.

It is impossible to do even approximate justice to Stirling's writings which appeared after the *Secret*. Some of these have long been recognised as of great importance, more particularly his elaborate exposition and criticism of Kant, and his critical analysis of empiricism in its various forms. His study of Hegel had matured his powers to a degree of strength which made his later work comparatively easy for him, while his command of the history and logical resources of philosophy made him a very successful exponent and a most trenchant critic. His criticism of later naturalism, e.g. in *Darwinism, Workmen and Work* (1894), seems, however, to have created no impression on the naturalistic school, mainly, perhaps, because Stirling's mental antipathy to naturalism led him to do less than justice to its method and results and hardly even to take it seriously.

Of Stirling's own philosophical views, it is not easy to gather much that is new from the biography. He had an opportunity given to him in the Gifford Lectureship to offer his own independent contribution to the interpretation of the great questions of philosophy: but whether it be that the task by that time (1889) was beyond him, or that constructive effort was not his *métier*, in any case the result from this point of view was not considered a success. He describes his religious position in a letter (p. 319) as that of "the Hegelian Right," "philosophical Christianity from the idealistic standpoint": "I have in the *Begriff* what the ordinary man has in the *Vorstellung*, and the historical facts are common to us both". What this means in actual experience he seeks to explain in a letter (p. 321) apropos of the atonement, and in another (p. 323) apropos of the resurrection. In both cases while Stirling's *Begriff* is doubtless the truth, there seems a gulf fixed between it and the *Vorstellung*. On immortality he remarks that "the one argument is simply

the divinity of the Universe" (p. 322): and in the *Secret*: "it is no more absurd that you should be continued than that you *are*. That you *are* is the guarantee of your *necessity* . . . why should not the death of the body be the birth of the spirit?"

We have left no space to deal with Stirling's friendly intercourse with some of the greater minds of his time. The record of this forms a very interesting feature of the biography of one of the most remarkable men of his time.

J. B. B.

Essays in Radical Empiricism. By WILLIAM JAMES. Longmans Green & Co., 1912. Pp. xvi, 283.

THIS book consists of a collection of reprints, with a preface by the editor, Prof. Perry. Most of the essays in the volume were collected by William James himself in an envelope with the title which Prof. Perry has given to the book. Some of them were subsequently reprinted, in whole or in part, in *The Meaning of Truth* and in *A Pluralistic Universe*, but they are rightly included here in order to give as complete a view as possible of the doctrine called "Radical Empiricism".

"Radical Empiricism" is not the same thing as pragmatism or humanism: in William James's mind the two were connected, but he admitted that one might hold the one without the other. Prof. Perry, in his Preface, quotes the summary from the Preface to *The Meaning of Truth*. According to this summary, Radical Empiricism consists of (1) a postulate, (2) a statement of fact, and (3) a generalised conclusion. The postulate is that only things definable in terms drawn from experience shall be debatable among philosophers. The statement of fact is that relations between things are just as much matters of direct particular experience as the things themselves. The generalised conclusion is that the parts of experience hold together from next to next by relations that are themselves parts of experience. The postulate is not intended to rule out the possibility that there may be "transempirical" objects, but only methodologically to exclude the consideration of them from philosophy (p. 241). The statement of fact and the generalised conclusion distinguish James's empiricism from the more atomic traditional empiricism of Hume and his followers; they may, I should suppose, be now accepted as indubitable. With regard to the postulate, it is evident that its truth or falsehood must turn on the meaning given to that very slippery word, "experience". On this subject one could wish that James had been more explicit. He seems to regard "experience" as something simple, with which we are all acquainted. I cannot help thinking that, in the first two essays (which are the most important in the book), the failure to analyse "experience" has concealed important difficulties in the views advocated.