

III.—DR. MARTINEAU AND THE THEORY OF VOCATION.

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PROF. SIDGWICK'S *Method of Ethics* may be said to represent the most remarkable attempt ever yet made to combine into a systematic and coherent system the opposite aspects of ethical truth of which Intuitionism on the one hand and Utilitarianism on the other are the one-sided expressions. In an examination of that work which appeared in No. 38 of *MIND*, I endeavoured to show that Prof. Sidgwick's own line of argument logically followed out would require us to place the point of junction (so to speak) between the mutually complementary doctrines considerably nearer to the "intuitive" pole than it is placed by Prof. Sidgwick himself. Accepting Prof. Sidgwick's rationalism, his "disinterested" psychology, his consequential criterion, and (I may add) his faintly adumbrated natural theology, I argued that the acceptance of these doctrines logically necessitates the rejection of the Hedonism with which they are associated in Prof. Sidgwick's actual system. To one occupying this position with reference to Prof. Sidgwick's utilitarianism, Dr. Martineau's *Types of Ethical Theory* will appear to afford a very noble expression of the complementary truths ignored by the former. When he confines himself to the question of ethical *method*, he will find himself almost entirely in agreement with Prof. Sidgwick and completely at issue with Dr. Martineau. When he approaches the more fundamental question of the ultimate ethical end, he finds himself in agreement with Dr. Martineau and at issue with Prof. Sidgwick. The ethical system for which I, and probably a very large number of the silent critics of these two great writers, look in vain among contemporary English moral philosophers is a system the body of which—the firm, strong, logical skeleton, and the flesh and blood of moral psychology—should be supplied by Prof. Sidgwick and the animating soul by Dr. Martineau.

The position which to the present writer Prof. Sidgwick seems to have placed beyond the reach of controversy is the principle that it is impossible to find any workable criterion of the morality of actions without taking into consideration the sum-total of their consequences or effects upon universal well-

being. Anyone who has gone thus far with Prof. Sidgwick will necessarily (with all due respect to a teacher so justly revered as Dr. Martineau) regard his attempt to introduce as the sole criterion of the morality of alternative courses of action an introspection into motives, as an anachronistic effort to galvanise into life the corpse of the old-fashioned, though in truth very modern, system of English Intuitionism. But the acceptance of the principle that actions are to be judged by their consequences in so far as these can be foreseen—or rather not without reference to those consequences—leaves it open to us to dispute Prof. Sidgwick's hedonistic interpretation of that ultimate good which it is the aim of moral action to promote. Because the good man must seek to promote the general good, it does not follow that the goodness which prompts does not possess a higher intrinsic value than the pleasure which results from his action, that moral goodness is not one, and that the most indispensable, element in the 'good' which he seeks to realise for others, or again that all pleasures are of the same moral value. In the paper to which I have alluded I have endeavoured to show that it is logically impossible to recognise the *obligation* of benevolence for myself without at the same time recognising the *value* of benevolence both for myself and for those whose good I am bound to promote. The *eὐδαιμονία* which the good man is to promote must include virtue as well as happiness. I do not propose at present to criticise Dr. Martineau's system as a whole; but I may be allowed, before coming to my proper subject, to point out the place which such a "Table of Springs of Action" as Dr. Martineau has drawn up would occupy in the system of non-hedonistic eudæmonism, which I should wish to see substituted for the hedonistic utilitarianism of Prof. Sidgwick. As an immediate criterion of conduct, Dr. Martineau's table of motives seems to me to be open to all the criticism to which it has been exposed in this Review by Prof. Sidgwick. Its proper place, from the ethical standpoint here advocated, would be in the analysis of the constituent elements of ultimate good, as a guide to the estimate of the relative values of different kinds of good—of the moral value of different desires or of the pleasures resulting from their gratification. A life in which the various springs of action or (as I should prefer to express it) the various *desires* should come into play in the order prescribed by Dr. Martineau—a happiness to which the gratification of these desires should contribute in something like the proportion represented by Dr. Martineau's scale—would be a very fair representation of the *eὐδαιμονία*

which I would substitute for the ordinary utilitarian 'greatest quantum of pleasure'.¹

At present, however, my purpose is to criticise Dr. Martineau's view of the ethical criterion, not to estimate the value of his contributions to other parts of ethical doctrine. I have merely indicated the point of view from which I am in harmony with Dr. Martineau, in order that I may not be supposed to under-estimate the value of a work which constitutes the only serious attempt which has been made in recent times to give a philosophical form to the ever-shifting tenets of popular intuitionism. I propose in the following pages to examine Dr. Martineau's ethical criterion in its application to one particular duty—that of choosing, or rather determining, one's vocation. I adopt this method of criticism, partly because the subject is one strangely neglected by most modern ethical writers, but especially by those of the intuitional schools, and partly because it seems to me to afford a peculiarly good touch-stone to which to bring all theories of the nature of the moral criterion.

Dr. Martineau's ethical criterion is as follows: "*Every action is RIGHT which, in presence of a lower principle, follows a higher; every action is WRONG which, in presence of a higher principle, follows a lower*" (ii. 251). The moral order of precedence among the possible principles or 'springs' of action is elaborately determined by Dr. Martineau, while immediately after the table in which he sums up the results of this inquiry (ii. 247), there follows a section on the question, "*How far a Life must be chosen among these*". Dr. Martineau here distinctly faces the objection that it rests in great measure on our own action which motives shall be presented to the mind and which shall not. Unless the higher motive be actually present to the mind, be it remembered, the action motivated by the lower "spring" cannot, according to Dr. Martineau, be wrong. "Ought we to content ourselves," he asks, "with treating the springs of action as *our data*, with which we have nothing to do but to wait till they are flung upon us by circumstance, and then to follow the best that turns up?" The objection could not be more aptly stated. Dr. Martineau meets it by maintaining as a deliberate thesis "that we are to accept our rival incentives at the hands of circumstance and consider that our duty begins with their arrival". At the same time he admits

¹ I do not of course commit myself to details; and indeed such an absolute preference of one desire to another seems to me impracticable. Moreover, the table seems to me to exclude many most powerful 'springs of action'.

that "if there be at the command of our will, not only the selection of the better side of an alternative, but also a predetermination of what kind the alternative shall be, the range of our duty will undoubtedly be extended to the creation of a higher plane of circumstances, in addition to the higher preference within it". But on what principle is a man to make his choice between the higher and the lower "plane of circumstance"? How is he to recognise the higher plane? From Dr. Martineau's fundamental principle it would seem to follow that a man is always bound to choose that "plane of circumstance" on which he will be likely to find the higher motives streaming into his consciousness in the greatest abundance and with the greatest force. Dr. Martineau himself raises the question: "If compassion be always of higher obligation than the *love of gain* or *family affection*, how can a man ever be justified in quitting his charities for his business or his home?" But to this question he has supplied no adequate answer. The only way in which Dr. Martineau strives to beat down the difficulty which he has himself so forcibly raised, is by the contention that "the limits . . . within which the higher moral altitudes can be secured by voluntary command of favouring circumstances are extremely narrow". This view he supports by insisting upon the undoubted fact that a man cannot entirely alter his nature by artificial change of environment, upon the moral advantage of the "clashing of the involuntary and the voluntary," upon the moral ill-effects of setting aside "relations human and divine" by the choice of an apparently higher walk of life. Now, in the first place, I remark that, in so far as a man deliberately turns a deaf ear to the solicitation of a higher motive from regard to the considerations insisted upon by Dr. Martineau, he is deserting the fundamental principle of Dr. Martineau's ethical system. In urging a man to repress his benevolent aspirations for fear of the moral effects (social and personal) of the neglect of family relations and the like, Dr. Martineau is distinctly transferring the object of moral discrimination from the motives to the consequences of the alternative courses of action. He is deserting the Highest-motive-criterion for the principle of Individualistic or of Universalistic Perfectionism. He bids the seeker after moral truth in certain particular cases act upon the lower in preference to the higher motive;¹ and yet no adequate rules are given for the dis-

¹ It might, indeed, be pleaded that the desire of doing right as such is higher than the benevolent desire; but Dr. Martineau does not admit the existence of the former.

crimination of these exceptional cases. If in one particular case a man is permitted to disobey Dr. Martineau's fundamental canon from fear of the moral ill-consequences which might subsequently ensue, how can he obey it in any case in which he foresees that the net moral results of acting on the higher motive will be less satisfactory than those which result from choosing the lower motive? The method of Ethics to which such a principle would lead would be a very different one from Dr. Martineau's method of introspection into motives.

But we must return to Dr. Martineau's contention "that the limits within which the higher moral altitudes can be secured by a voluntary command of favouring circumstances are extremely narrow". Here I venture very decidedly to join issue with Dr. Martineau. It is all very well to point to the moral failures of monastic systems, and the danger of neglecting natural "relations, human and divine". But what relations does Dr. Martineau mean? It may be true that a man cannot desert "his business or his home for his charities" without neglecting "relations human and divine," when once he has got a business or a home. But it rested with himself to create or not to create the business or the home in the first instance. And on what principles is he to decide whether to create them or not? Practically, Dr. Martineau's advice to anyone in doubt as to the choice of an employment or profession seems to be 'Don't choose one at all'. "Let him accept his lot," he tells us, "and work its resources with willing conscience; and he will emerge with no half-hearted and crippled character." This might be good advice to one born heir to an estate or a great business; it would be intelligible advice—though there are cases in which its morality would be questionable—to a son brought up by an arbitrary father for a particular profession. But to the man who is really free to choose between half-a-dozen different 'lots,' and in anxious doubt which of them to adopt, the precept 'Accept your lot' will seem but a mocking echo of the question that distracts him. If 'one's lot' means one's actual profession, the advice is meaningless to the boy or the man who has not entered upon any; if 'one's lot' means the lot to which one is called, the precise difficulty lies in knowing what that lot is. The maxim, 'Perform the duties of your vocation' is of no use to a man grappling with the tremendous problem—to many a man the most difficult practical problem which he ever has to face—that of finding out what his vocation is.

The duty of choosing a profession has been well called—

I think by Prof. Seeley—the most important of all duties, and the same writer very reasonably complains of the almost total neglect of this department of ethics by moralists. I may illustrate this neglect and the strange consequences to which it sometimes leads by a reference to another anti-utilitarian writer of a different school from Dr. Martineau's, Mr. F. H. Bradley. "My Station and its Duties" is the title of the only chapter of his vigorous *Ethical Studies* in which Mr. Bradley faces the question of the moral criterion. "My station and duties" is the formula by which he seeks to answer that question: and yet in the whole chapter there is not a word as to the principles upon which a man's station must be chosen except what is contained in the lines (p. 183)—

" One place performs like any other place
The proper service every place on earth
Was framed to furnish man with ".

It should be observed that this question of choosing a profession is precisely one to which the ordinary objections to the systematic treatment of questions of Casuistry does not apply at all. Against such a treatment it may plausibly be urged in ordinary cases that the decision, when the difficulty actually arises, has to be taken without prolonged and self-conscious deliberation; that to deliberate in the face of an apparent duty generally means to seek an excuse for evading it; that there is something morally unwholesome in the introspection and self-analysis, and still more in the anticipation of abnormal moral perplexities, or even in dwelling upon them when they arise; and, finally, that the details of morality as opposed to its general principles do not admit of scientific adjustment: *αἰσθητὰ γὰρ τὰ καθ' ἑκάστην*. But the choice of a profession is precisely a question which from the nature of the case *must* be deliberated on, and upon which, in numerous instances, conscientious men do deliberate long and anxiously. Here if anywhere it would appear reasonable to expect that a system of Moral Philosophy might have some guidance to offer to anxious seekers after Right. Even if the scientific discussion of such a subject were of little direct use to the doubting conscience of the individual¹ (as no doubt must generally be the case with theoretical determinations of practical questions), it might at least be expected to be of more value in determin-

¹ Since writing the above, a friend informs me that he was determined in the choice of his profession, the medical, by the incidental treatment of this subject in Prof. Green's *Prolegomena to Ethics*.

ing the advice which should be given to others upon a subject upon which more than on any other moral question men are wont to seek for counsel and advice. The Moral Philosopher as such is no more capable of answering such a question than anyone else ; but he ought surely to be able to point out the considerations upon which its solution turns, and so to state the question in a manner in which it admits of an answer. I need hardly say that in the present essay I make no pretension to contribute to the discussion of the subject anything which would be likely to be of much value either to inquirer or adviser in such cases. I merely wish to point out that the question of choosing a profession is a peculiarly good test of any philosophical criterion of morality, and to show that Dr. Martineau's criterion is one which could not practically be applied to its determination, or at least that the results of its adoption would be such as would not commend themselves to the practical moral judgment of thoughtful and reasonable men.

It will be well perhaps, at this stage of my argument, to call attention to the psychological grounds upon which Dr. Martineau bases what I must respectfully call his evasion of this problem :

"The limits, however, within which the higher moral altitudes can be secured by voluntary command of favouring circumstances are extremely narrow. Go where we may, we carry the most considerable portion of our environment with us in our own constitution ; from whose propensions, passions, affections, it is a vain attempt to fly. The attempt to wither them up and suppress them by contradiction has ever been disastrous : they can be counteracted and disarmed and taught obedience only by preoccupation of mind and heart in other directions. Nothing but the enthusiasm of a new affection can silence the clamours of one already there " (pp. 248-249).

Dr. Martineau's treatment of the whole subject seems to have been warped by the assumption that the only way in which a man can attempt to raise himself to 'the higher moral altitudes by the voluntary command of favouring circumstances' is by 'going out of the world' in the monastic sense. He insists with much force upon the folly of attempting to suppress the lower 'propensions, passions, and affections' by one tremendous sacrifice of the external goods or circumstances which seem most obviously to call them into activity. It is quite true that 'it is a vain attempt to fly' from one's natural 'propensions, passions, and affections,' by change of external environment ; but it is entirely possible to give a wholly new direction to them by such a change. It is precisely because 'the affections can be counteracted

and disarmed and taught obedience only by preoccupation of mind and heart in other directions,' that the influence of environment upon character is of such decisive importance. It is just because 'nothing but the enthusiasm of a new affection can silence the clamours of one already there,' and because some occupations are so much more favourable than others to the growth of 'new affections' of the right kind, that a man's character is so largely determined for him—determined by himself, but determined in ordinary cases once for all—by the choice of his walk in life.

Without denying to every honourable and worthy calling either its characteristic virtues or its characteristic vices, it is surely undeniable that some professions are as a rule more favourable to virtue than others. It is not to the purpose to allege that all callings are compatible with the highest morality. Exceptional men may lead exceptional lives in any walk of life; the very obstacles to virtue which some careers present will become so many occasions for moral achievement to those who are capable of triumphing over them. But we are not dealing with exceptional men, but with ordinary men, though (since *ex hypothesi* they are desirous of regulating their choice on the highest principles) with ordinary good men. And the characters of ordinary men are enormously moulded by their environment—by the nature of their work and of the people with whom it will bring them into contact. To such men when hesitating as to the choice of a profession such alternatives as these are constantly presenting themselves. A man hesitates between the profession of a doctor and that of an infantry-officer, more or less clearly foreseeing that if he becomes an officer there lies before him (in time of peace) a life of idleness just disguised and sweetened by a moderate quantity of routine work, a life of comfort and pleasure, of almost unavoidable luxury and self-indulgence, to say nothing of the actual temptations naturally associated with such a life. Against this there is—so the matter may present itself to him—little to be set except the rare opportunities of heroism which may from time to time present themselves in war. As a doctor there lies before him a life of hard work and great usefulness—a life in which there will be daily and hourly calls for the exercise of sympathy, self-denial and devotion. Or again, take the case of a man hesitating between the life of a parish clergyman and that of a lawyer. Of course the temptations of the highest callings—the degradation of the man who cannot in some measure rise to the moral level which they demand—is great in proportion to the opportuni-

ties which they offer. But it will hardly be denied that most men who have adopted the profession of a parochial clergyman from not wholly unworthy motives—sometimes even that exception might be omitted—are made better by the demand which such work incessantly creates for sympathy, for self-judgment, for moral effort, for charity in the highest sense of the word. How constantly does one find the highest qualities developed by a few years of serious clerical work among the poor in a man who certainly showed no signs of their possession as an undergraduate?¹ Can it be doubted that in all reasonable probability those virtues would have remained, to say the least of it, equally dormant and unobtrusive had he become a barrister? It is not, however, necessary for my argument to show that the actual moral performance of one profession is on an average superior to that of another, though I should myself have little doubt of the fact. The question is, whether some professions do or do not make greater and more frequent demands than others upon the higher 'springs of action' and so create a 'higher plane of circumstance'. Here I should have thought there could not be room for the smallest doubt. Professions which bring a man into contact with human suffering must surely more frequently suggest benevolent impulses than those whose work is done in the study or the office, whatever be the response which is actually made to such higher suggestions. Professions which offer opportunities for work not wholly dictated by personal interest call for these higher motives more frequently than work in which there is no room for any honesty except the narrow honesty which is the best policy. Professions which necessarily involve an attitude of antagonism to moral evil must clearly be more likely to excite those sentiments of compassion and reverence which Dr. Martineau places at the head of his Table of Springs of Action than professions in which the existence of evil is either kept out of sight or has for the most part to be accepted as a datum instead of being grappled with. If that be so, I cannot see how, on Dr. Martineau's principle, a man to whom the profession which will secure the presence of these higher motives has once suggested itself, could ever be justified in adopting one which will place him on a lower 'plane of circumstance'. Whether he possesses the capacity or taste for the work, whether it is probable that he will

¹ The same might no doubt be said of other of the nobler professions. I select the illustration with which my own experience has made me familiar.

succeed in making as frequent response to these higher springs as he might make to the good but inferior springs of action suggested by work of a less morally exacting kind, whether he will be more useful to Society by adopting the calling which makes the greater demand upon the higher springs—all these are, as it seems to me, utilitarian considerations with which the Intuitionist of the 'highest motive' school cannot logically concern himself. Whether the moral value of the motives immediately prompting a man to choose the one calling or the other be considered, or whether we have recourse to Dr. Martineau's supplementary rule of choosing the 'higher plane of circumstance,' nothing could, as it seems to me, justify a man in choosing what we may for the sake of convenience call the lower profession in preference to the higher, but the fact that the desire of adopting the latter had never occurred to him, or that he had never had one moment's experience of those higher desires which would be gratified by the adoption of the higher profession.

It must be remembered that the collision of motives respectively impelling a man to the choice of two alternative walks of life is not commonly limited to the collision between one higher motive and one good but somewhat lower motive. Dr. Martineau, indeed, shows a disposition to deny the possibility of action impelled by a mixture of motives. But whatever be the case with actions actually performed, there can be no doubt that, so long as alternative courses are still in contemplation, it seldom happens that the man is impelled to the one or other course by one motive alone. This is eminently the case with the choice of a profession. Sometimes, indeed, some of the lowest inducements will persist in arraying themselves on the side of the highest of all. What more common in religious men than a coincidence between the 'love of power or ambition' (placed 7th on Dr. Martineau's list), or even 'love of gain,' and the promptings of 'compassion' or 'reverence'? So again in the familiar struggle between the intellectual and the philanthropic desires, the lowest desires of all will commonly take the side of the former. 'Love of ease and sensual pleasure' will ally themselves with 'love of culture' in deterring a man from those active professions to which he is prompted by 'generosity' and 'compassion' in the present, and in which those motives of action are likely to be most frequently called into activity in the future. It must be remembered that where a higher desire and the wish to provide for a future supply of such desires point one way, and the lower desires the

other, the higher desire is by no means always a predominant, habitual or overmastering desire. Where that is the case, it may be a man's duty to adopt it irrespectively of inclination. The thought of the higher vocation may, indeed, be a mere transient, intermittent aspiration. The man may shrink from the higher vocation (though willing to accept it if proved to be his vocation) with an aversion in which dislike of its hardships, felt incapacity for its duties, and the overmastering attraction of some lower though not unworthy passion or ambition will mingle almost inextricably. Yet, if it be once admitted that the moral value of the impelling motives must determine the choice, it must follow that no man attracted to the army by 'love of power or ambition,' could ever conscientiously devote himself to that profession if a 'love of culture' had once suggested to him the thought of being an artist; that no man who had ever felt sincere compassion for the sorrows of the poor and recognised the supreme nobleness of philanthropic work could ever devote himself conscientiously to the cause of science or learning; that no woman who had ever aspired after the usefulness of a hospital nurse or a schoolmistress could ever conscientiously consent to marry a squire or a man of business.

In fact, since the profession to which a man is most strongly attracted commonly presents itself to him in an agreeable light, *i.e.*, as likely to satisfy some of his lower desires as well as one or more of the higher ones, it would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that on Dr. Martineau's principles it will generally be a man's duty, when hesitating between two or more professions, to choose that which he dislikes most.¹ Such a preposterous conclusion would, of course, be rejected by Dr. Martineau as emphatically as it would by any other sensible man. Yet from the perplexities and paradoxes which we have been considering there seems to be no way of escape so long as we confine ourselves to a

¹ It is difficult to bring within Dr. Martineau's Table some of the motives which frequently have most weight in disposing a man to one or other profession. Perhaps the strongest likings or dislikings for particular callings commonly rest upon a love of society or of society of a particular kind, or upon dislike of a particular kind of society. (By society I mean all kinds of intercourse with one's fellow-men.) It is hard to explain such likings or dislikings by any of Dr. Martineau's 'springs,' whether taken singly or in combination. The only love of pleasure which he recognises is 'love of *sensual* pleasure'. I quite assent to the theory of the disinterestedness of most of our desires. The pleasure would not be felt but for a previous desire, but when the gratification of the desire is found to be pleasant, a desire of the resulting pleasure (though not sensual) must surely arise.

purely subjective criterion and refuse to consider the consequences of our action upon social wellbeing.

It is true, indeed, that Dr. Martineau might point to not a few passages of his book where the calculation of consequences is admitted to have a place in morals : but the relation of the 'Canon of Consequences' to the Canon of Motives is nowhere adequately explained. In one place, indeed (ii. 255), it is admitted that such a "computation is already more or less involved in the preference of this or that spring of action ; for in proportion as the springs of action are self-conscious, they contemplate their own effects, and judgment upon them is included in our judgment of the disposition". If this admission be pressed, it seems to me to amount to the practical adoption of a Utilitarian (*i.e.*, consequential) criterion of the morality of at least all deliberate actions, in the only sense in which I am contending for its adoption. All action must affect some one, and if a man is reflecting upon the course of conduct which it is right for him to pursue, it must surely occur to him that the consequences of one course of action will be more socially beneficial than those of another. How, then, can he fail to be moved to the adoption of that alternative by 'compassion' : and compassion, in Dr. Martineau's table, takes precedence of all other springs of action, except 'reverence'. Except, therefore, in so far as its dictates may be modified by those of reverence, compassion seems to be practically erected into the ethical criterion. This, however, is not explicitly admitted by Dr. Martineau, and I must continue to assume that comparison of motives is meant to be his working criterion.

It may be urged that, however unsatisfactory Dr. Martineau's criterion for the determination of cases of conscience such as these, no more satisfactory guidance is to be obtained from any other. If we adopt tendency to promote social good (however understood) as our test, is not the difficulty (it may be asked) quite as great? If a man's duty is to adopt the course of conduct which produces the greatest amount of good on the whole, how is it possible to set limits to the self-denial, the asceticism, which such a principle of conduct seems to demand? How is it possible, except by a cynical or pessimistic disbelief in the usefulness of philanthropic effort, to justify the adoption of a less useful in preference to an intrinsically more useful or laborious profession—the expenditure of time upon abstract thought or study which might be spent in teaching the ignorant and brightening the lives of the wretched, the expenditure of money upon the conventional comforts of a middle-class home (to

say nothing of the luxuries of 'the rich') when it might be spent upon hospitals and young men's clubs?

I do not pretend to offer a complete solution of this most difficult problem of practical morality. I only wish to point out that, on the theory which makes universal *eudaimonia* the supreme end, it is not incapable of a solution which may commend itself to 'common sense' without in any way repressing the highest moral aspirations. I propose to notice a few of the more prominent of the considerations which must be taken into account in a solution of this question, whether in its application to the choice of a career or the choice of a mode of life in so far as it remains open to those who have already adopted some recognised profession. However obvious they may seem (as most of them certainly are), an attempt to enumerate them will be the best way of illustrating the practical adaptability to such cases of what I may call Non-hedonistic Utilitarianism or Eudæmonism.

(1) In the first place, there are those considerations of what I have called 'moral prudence,' on which Dr. Martineau has—as I venture to think quite inconsistently with his main principle—sufficiently insisted. Before embarking under the influence of some higher motive upon a course of action not required by strict duty, which will require for its maintenance the continued presence of such higher motives, a man should have a reasonable prospect that the necessary inspiration will hereafter be forthcoming. Otherwise, the adoption of the higher course of life will lead to a moral fall rather than to a moral advance. In such cases the surrender to the 'higher motive' will not be conducive to the man's own moral wellbeing on the whole, and therefore not conducive to the good of society. Of course this principle will not hold where the course of action to which man is called is one of plain duty. But if the true canon of duty be, 'Act always on the highest motive,' it is difficult to see how any aspiration after some more heroic or more saintly walk could ever be rightly repressed from a fear of its possible moral consequences. In that case the answer to such fears would be 'Better do right now, even if you will not be able to live up to the level of your present enthusiasm hereafter'. If, on the other hand, it be the duty of the individual to realise the highest attainable moral good for himself and others, he will recognise that, though the career of a philanthropist is higher than that (say) of an honest lawyer, he will himself attain a higher moral level as a lawyer than by the more imperfect fulfilment of a higher ideal.

(2) These considerations naturally lead us to the observation that certain social functions require for their adequate

fulfilment that they should be done in a certain spirit. Such functions demand the possession of certain qualities of mind or heart or character which cannot be summoned up at the command of the will, and cannot be satisfactorily performed merely as a matter of duty. Common sense as well as Catholic Moral Theology are therefore right in recognising that it would be positively wrong for anyone to enter upon certain careers which make great demands upon the moral nature merely from a strong sense of duty, when they have no 'internal vocation' for it. The principle no doubt requires to be extended to many careers beyond those afforded by the priesthood and the religious orders: and the true ultimate ground of such a distinction must, from our point of view, be found in the social advantages (moral and hedonistic) which flow from its observance and the social disadvantages which would be entailed by its neglect. The average sister of mercy is no doubt a more valuable member of society than a Belgravian lady who is somewhat above the average: but a sister of mercy with no natural love or instinct for her work, with no natural love for the poor or the sick or the young to whom she ministered, would be far less useful to society than the Belgravian lady who performs respectably the recognised duties of her station, even though she may devote what must in the abstract be considered a very excessive amount of time to domestic trivialities and social dissipation.

(3) While the principle just laid down applies pre-eminently to certain special callings, such as those of the artist, the scholar, the man of letters, the teacher, the clergyman, it applies in a certain measure to all work which is capable of being liked at all, or for which any special aptitude is possible. It is for the general good that every man should do the work for which he is most fitted; and, as a general rule, a natural liking for the work or kind of life adopted is one of the most important qualifications for it. There are of course obvious limitations to the principle thus laid down. The highest tasks are necessarily repulsive to the lower part of a man's nature. A due distinction must be drawn between the kind of dislike which there is a reasonable prospect of overcoming and the dislike which is insurmountable, and again between the dislike which interferes with the due performance of the work and the dislike which does not interfere with it. A surgeon who could not overcome a physical squeamishness at the sight of blood would be more useful to society as a billiard-marker. On the other hand absolute callousness to human suffering, though it might increase his

love of his profession, would be anything but a qualification for its duties.

(4) Regard must be paid not only to the effects of the individual's conduct, but to the effect of the general adoption of a like course of conduct on the part of others. Thus it would not be socially desirable to encourage all high-minded men to forsake the careers which seem from some points of view to stand upon the lowest moral level. A life of money-making (abstracted from the use which is to be made of the money when accumulated) may from some points of view seem one to which nobody could lawfully devote himself who had ever felt an aspiration after some higher kind of work : for, however necessary to society may be the work of merchants and stockbrokers, there would always (under existing conditions) be forthcoming a sufficient supply of duly qualified persons who would be attracted into these professions from purely mercenary motives. Against this, however, must be set the demoralisation which would result to such classes or professions, and the consequent injury to society, if all men of high character were led to avoid them. It may be questioned whether, upon this principle, it may not sometimes be a positive duty on the part of good people to continue in professions which may be in various degrees unfavourable to the improvement of their own personal character, or which at least involve much that is disagreeable to what we may call their moral taste—such as the professions of the brewer, the publican, the actress. The most extreme ill effects of the adoption of a contrary principle were experienced in the middle ages. The 'religious' life being assumed to be the highest of all careers, every man or woman anxious about his or her soul was driven into a religious house, unless indeed they were wealthy enough to found one. The consequence was an appalling relaxation of the standard of ordinary 'secular' morality—a complete de-spiritualisation of all 'secular' life, including that of the secular priest. Even the work of the pastor had to be abandoned to worldly men, because it was not disagreeable enough to satisfy the religious man's hankering after self-sacrifice.

(5) Similar considerations are applicable to the innumerable difficulties which beset the conscience of every man possessed with something of the 'enthusiasm of humanity' in the matter of personal expenditure, conventional luxury, and so on. In the first place he will apply the principle of 'moral prudence' to the effects of his conduct upon himself and his capacity for work. He will make recreation subordinate to work, social pleasures to social usefulness, and

so on. There is, however, room for as many different vocations, so to speak, in respect of the use that may be made of leisure-hours, as there is in the choice of a life-work: and some of them are higher than others. It is no doubt morally higher to spend one's evenings in teaching a night-school than to spend them in amusement or interesting reading. But if a man to whom some higher motive suggests the idea of taking up with the former occupation, feels that the work would be excessively distasteful, and that as a consequence he would be less capable of efficiently discharging his duties in the day, and probably become irritable, discontented and dyspeptic,—he will do much better to play whist of an evening instead, even in the interests of his own moral wellbeing. Still more evidently will such a course be recommended when we extend our view first to the direct effects of the two alternatives on the happiness of others, and then to the effects which would follow an extensive imitation of a conscientious but uncheerful philanthropy. On Dr. Martineau's principle, it is difficult to see how it is possible to justify a rich man under any circumstances living the life of a rich man, when once it has been suggested to him that he might spend his fortune on some great work of social usefulness. He would certainly be prompted to such a course by 'compassion' and deterred from it (among however many other motives) by 'love of ease and sensual pleasure'. On the other hand, when once the appeal is made to social wellbeing, a number of other important considerations suggest themselves which may well justify a man who does not feel strongly moved to make such a sacrifice in accepting the more agreeable alternative. He will reflect that the habits of a class cannot be suddenly changed, but that they may be gradually modified. He might therefore do more good by setting an example of liberality, care for dependents, devotion to public duties, and moderation in amusement and personal expenditure, than by absolutely stripping himself of his fortune. He will reflect that some forms of luxury have good social effects—such as the encouragement of art and superior workmanship, which ultimately benefits the community at large. He may feel that it is better to indulge to some extent in forms of luxury demanded by the customs of his class, but rightly condemned by the moralist, such as good dinners, expensive wines,¹ costly flowers, rather than abandon great opportunities of social or political influence and usefulness.

¹ I will not attempt to define the extent to which this principle should be carried: but to avoid misunderstanding, I may say that it seems to me that it is only on this principle that such dinner parties as are pro-

(6) Moreover, if *εὐδαιμονία* be the supreme end, my *εὐδαιμονία* is a part of that end : and my happiness is a part of my *εὐδαιμονία*, though not the whole of it. It ought not, therefore, to be sacrificed to promote a less amount of it in others. And up to a certain point the general *εὐδαιμονία* is best promoted by the principle that within the limitations demanded by strict duty everyone shall exercise a reasonable care for his own happiness, and shall not make such complete sacrifices of *ἡ ἐκτὸς χορηγία* as will (he being what he is) involve the destruction of his tranquillity and contentment, however much such sacrifices might be compatible with happiness in better men. This principle may be admitted even for the guidance of the individual conscience—and still more when there is a question of inculcating such sacrifices on people in general—without going the length of saying with Sir James Stephen, that “human nature is so constituted that nearly all our conduct, immensely the greater part of it, is and ought to be regulated much more by a regard to ourselves and to our own interests than by a regard to other people and their interests”.¹ It is obvious that the extent to which this principle can be admitted will be very considerably narrowed by the acceptance of a non-hedonistic interpretation of *εὐδαιμονία*. As soon as morality is recognised as an end in itself and an essential part of *εὐδαιμονία*, it becomes impossible to admit that a pursuit of our own happiness unmixed with and unregulated by a desire for other people’s could ever be the vocation of any man, even if in his particular case such a course of conduct should chance to be coincident with that dictated by the public wellbeing. The individual should pursue his own wellbeing as part of the general wellbeing, but he will recognise that his moral wellbeing demands a measure of self-sacrifice.

(7) And lastly, there is the fact that some kinds of work which do not call into activity the very highest ‘springs of action’ are as useful as, perhaps more useful than, those that do : and that in reference to some of these kinds of work it is even truer than of more distinctly spiritual kinds of work that ‘the harvest truly is great but the labourers are few’. In England at least this is notably the case with all the higher kinds of intellectual labour. I for one cannot assent to that beatification of intellectual pursuits—and even of the most selfish forms of intellectual sybaritism—which is common among persons of literary and speculative tastes, bably given by the simplest-living bishop upon the bench could be justified.

¹ In the *Nineteenth Century*, No. 118, p. 783.

but a demonstration of the supreme social value of such work—when it really is *work*—will be superfluous in the eyes of my present readers.

It is obvious that these reflections might be spun out indefinitely. Enough, it is hoped, has been said to illustrate the kind of guidance which may be afforded in the solution of such problems of vocation by the adoption of a consequential but non-hedonistic criterion of Morality.

It will by this time have become evident that the course of our argument has led us from the discussion of a particular duty—that of choosing a profession—into the discussion of a much larger and more fundamental question of ethics—the distinction between Duty and Good—between ‘*devoirs strictes*’ and ‘*devoirs larges*’—the question whether there are or are not such things as works of supererogation. It has been throughout contended that there are cases where it is good for a man to contribute in certain ways to the general good, though it would not be wrong for him to refuse to contribute to them—that there are cases where a man may rightfully decline to perform socially beneficial actions for the reason (among others) that he does not feel a natural inclination or strong desire to perform them. On the other hand it has been assumed (as it must be assumed by every system which recognises moral obligation at all) that in some cases no amount of disinclination, no consideration of the sacrifice involved, will justify a refusal to adopt the course of action which will make the largest contribution to social good. But how, it may be asked, can such a distinction be admitted without involving ourselves in the *prima facie* immoral corollary that a man can do more than his duty? I believe that we have already by implication arrived at something like an answer to the question. One course and one only can ever be a man’s duty; but duty itself requires in *certain cases* that some regard shall be paid to the inner dispositions and inclinations of the individual. It is always a man’s duty to do what conduces most to the general good; but the general good itself demands that whereas some contributions to social good shall be required of all men placed under the same external circumstances, in other cases contributions differing both in kind and in amount shall be demanded of different men. It will be well, however, to dwell a little more at length upon the difficulty and importance of the problem under discussion.

The case for and against works of supererogation shall be stated by two living French philosophers, M. Émile Beaussire and M. Janet. The contrast between their views

on this point is the more striking on account of their general philosophical agreement. In the admirable work of M. Beaussire, *Les Principes de la Morale*, which I had the honour of reviewing in MIND xi. 273, we find such utterances as these :

"Le mérite et la vertu naissent du devoir accompli ; mais à leurs degrés supérieurs, ils tendent à dépasser le devoir, ils s'élèvent jusqu'au dévouement" (p. 169). "Donner ses enfants à la patrie, quand elle les réclame au nom de la loi, est un devoir de droit. Les offrir, quand la loi permet de les conserver, est un devoir de vertu ou plutôt un acte de dévouement qui dépasse le devoir. Les soustraire à l'obligation légale d'une éducation publique où l'on voit un danger pour leur foi ou pour leur moralité, ce peut être le plus impérieux de devoirs" (p. 241).

On the other hand, M. Janet, the greatest living representative of French 'spiritualistic' philosophy, argues as follows :

"La distinction de deux domaines, le domaine du bien et le domaine du devoir, conduirait à cette supposition inadmissible, c'est qu'entre deux actions à faire, dont l'une serait manifestement meilleure que l'autre, il serait permis à l'individu de choisir la moins bonne. Où pourrait-il prendre ce privilège ? N'est ce pas sous une autre forme cette opinion des casuistes si sévèrement condamnée par Pascal et par Bossuet, à savoir qu'entre deux opinions probables il est permis de choisir la moins probable ?" (*La Morale*, p. 227.)

M. Janet then proceeds to explain the apparent collision between the verdict of reflection and the verdict of what Prof. Sidgwick would call 'common sense' on this head by the following considerations :—

(a) The degree of self-sacrifice demanded for the performance of a man's duty depends upon his circumstances, especially upon his "rôle" in society. When it is demanded either by that "rôle" or by the exceptional circumstances under which any man may find himself placed, "dévouement" becomes in the strictest sense a duty. [This is the principle on which I have myself insisted. What I desiderate in M. Janet's admirable treatment of this subject is some discussion of the principles by which a man is to determine his "rôle" in society. Every theory of duty requires a theory of vocation as its necessary complement.]

(b) The highest degrees of moral perfection are not attainable by all men. It is a duty to strive after the highest degree of moral perfection that circumstances permit. "Nul n'est tenu de faire ce qui n'est pas possible ; mais tous sont tenus de faire ce qui est possible."

(c) The popular distinction between duties and acts which it is good to do but not wrong to omit depends mainly upon a particular characteristic of the subject-matter or content of certain duties, *i.e.*, their indeterminateness.

(d) The development of the moral consciousness in different men being unequal, the same actions do not always suggest themselves to all men ; acts of extraordinary heroism,

ideals of extraordinary self-devotion, present themselves only to rare and exceptionally endowed natures.

"Or, tant que l'idée d'une action à faire ne s'est pas présentée à notre esprit, il est évident qu'elle ne peut être pour nous obligatoire : il n'en est pas de même aussitôt que cette idée a été conçue par notre conscience. Cette action, une fois représentée dans l'esprit, se présente à nous avec tous les caractères du devoir ; et nous ne pouvons plus l'écarter sans remords" (*ib.*, p. 232).

Thus the popular distinction between duties and acts which it is good to do is to a certain extent justified, while the immoral deduction that it is possible to do more than one's duty, and sometimes right to do less, is avoided. With M. Janet's position I should in the main agree. At the same time, I do not think that M. Janet has quite got to the bottom of the difficulty. I agree with him in holding that it is a duty to aim at doing the utmost amount of good that lies in one's power : and therefore it is not possible for a man to do more than his duty. Moreover, it is an essential characteristic of the Moral Law that it should be (in the Kantian phrase) 'fit to serve for law universal,' *i.e.*, that what is right for one must be right for everyone else under the same circumstances. But it is perfectly consistent with this principle to include a man's character, moral, emotional and intellectual, among the 'circumstances' upon which his duty in the particular case depends. The neglect of this distinction between external and what I may venture to call 'internal' circumstances has been the main source of the vagueness and uncertainty which has generally characterised the treatment of the distinction between duty and good actions. By M. Janet the principle of internal circumstances is to a certain extent recognised ; but the interpretation which M. Janet (here approximating to the position of Dr. Martineau) would give to the principle seems to me at once too wide and too narrow. The only internal circumstance, according to M. Janet, which could ever justify a man in omitting a good action which it would have been good for another to perform, seems to be the circumstance that the good action did not happen to occur to him. Similarly, according to Dr. Martineau, an act done from the highest motive actually present to the agent is always right ; an act is never wrong unless a higher motive than that which prompted his actual choice was present to the agent's consciousness. Now, it seems to me that the practical maxims of such a system would under certain circumstances fall very much below, at other times rise too far above, the requirements of duty properly understood. A crowd stands by while a child is drowned in three feet of artificial water in a London park.

Would it mitigate the moral disapprobation with which we regard *the act* of one of the individuals concerned if he pleaded that it never occurred to him to jump in and save the child? It seems to me that it is quite conceivable that to many persons in that crowd the thought did not occur. But it surely shocks all common sense to say that in that case they did not fail in their duty. There are surely many cases in which a man is ignorant of his duty, but in which we cannot deny that such and such a course was his duty, whether he knew it or not. From Dr. Martineau's point of view, indeed, such a statement would be an absurdity : since his criterion of duty is wholly subjective, it is impossible for a man to be ignorant of his duty. There is, according to Dr. Martineau, no objective right or wrong in actions ; only a higher and a lower. But M. Janet insists strongly on the necessity of an objective criterion of morality. It would seem, therefore, that we must exclude, from the internal circumstances that may vary the duty of two men placed in similar external circumstances, the want of knowledge of what the duty is as well as the want of will to perform it, however much the former may mitigate the culpability. In asking under what subjective conditions A may be right in omitting an act which it would have been right for B in like external circumstances to perform, we must exclude the absence of sufficient devotion to duty on the part of A, or sufficient care to find out what his duty is : *ex hypothesi* A is anxious to find out his duty and willing to do it when found. But we may include in the internal circumstances that vary duty the presence or absence of all moral qualities which are not under the immediate control of the will—which may be more or less cultivated, but which are not producible to order. Now, there are some good actions which do and there are others which do not require for their fulfilment moral qualities of this kind. A man's duty under all circumstances is to do what is most conducive to the general good : but, while the general good demands that certain good things shall be done by all men irrespective of their natural disposition and the degree of moral perfection which they have attained, there are other good things which the general good only demands that persons of a certain disposition and moral character should perform. Thus the social value of truth-speaking is not dependent upon the strength of the agent's natural love of truth or the degree of moral advancement which he has attained in other respects. However reluctantly he speak the truth, society gets the same advantage ; if he lies, the injury to society is the same. The public wellbeing demands that *all* shall speak the truth.

A man cannot therefore plead that he has no vocation for contributing to social good in that particular way: the general good demands that to this rule of conduct there shall be no exceptions. Indeed, the more exceptional be the lie, the more harm it is likely to do. On the other hand it is good for a rich man (with no obvious claims upon his purse) to sell all that he has and to give the whole of his time and money (in ways consistent with sound economical principles) to the service of the poor. But this only becomes a *duty* in persons endowed with a sufficient love of the poor to do this not grudgingly or of necessity. In that sense it might even be called a work of supererogation, though the term is on the whole an objectionable one: not only is it not an action demanded by social wellbeing of all men placed in similar circumstances, but it is one of those cases in which (as M. Janet says of the voluntary adoption of celibacy from the highest motives) "il est même évident que cet état ne peut être choisi par quelques-uns qu'à la condition de ne pas l'être par tous" (p. 229). The good of society demands that there should be different vocations, some of them morally higher than others. A man can never do more than his duty, or without sin do less when he knows what his duty is. But it is sometimes right, because desirable in the highest interests of society, that a man should choose the lower vocation. It is morally as well as socially desirable that there should be a great liberty of choice as to the particular way and as to the extent to which he will contribute to social good; but that liberty of choice is conditioned by the duty—and that the most imperative of all duties—of adopting the vocation to which upon a fair review of all circumstances, internal and external, a man believes himself to be called. It is conditioned also, I may add—and this is a consideration which would demand much fuller treatment were I writing primarily with a practical object—by the duty of moral progress; that is to say, of gradually fitting himself (so far as the external conditions of his life allow) for a higher degree of devotion to social good than any to which, being what he is, he could at present wisely aspire.

The general tendency of non-utilitarian philosophy has been either to assume that there is in all cases some one course of action which all moral men placed under the same external circumstances would recognise as their 'bounden duty,' or to find *in rerum natura* a fundamental distinction between 'duties' and acts which it is good to perform if one likes—between the terms 'right' and 'good' in their application to actions. On the other hand, it has been the tendency of utilitarian philosophy to reduce all duties to a general

obligation or encouragement of a philanthropy, the extent and limitations of which are usually left undefined. I have attempted in this essay to justify, by means of the principle of Vocation, the popular distinction between duties and charitable actions, without detracting either from the imperative-ness of duty, or from the claims of a more abounding charity, and to find the basis of that distinction in the principle of Utility itself. Once more, for fear of misunderstanding, let me repeat that by Utility I do not mean Hedonism.

The positions at which I have arrived in the foregoing pages may be summarised by the following definitions :—

(1) It is always a man's *duty* to adopt the course of action most conducive to the general *εὐδαιμονία*. A man can never do more than his duty, nor can he ever (when he knows his duty) without sin do less.

(2) The name of *absolute duties* may be given to those rules of conduct which the general wellbeing requires to be observed by all men under given external circumstances,¹ irrespective of the subjective conditions of the agent.

(3) Acts or omissions which the general good only requires to be performed under certain *internal* circumstances or subjective conditions may be termed *Duties of Vocation*.

I have throughout discussed the subject without direct reference to those theological and religious considerations which originally underlay the employment of the word 'vocation' to denote a man's work or position in life. It might be difficult to continue the discussion without introducing theological postulates were I to undertake to discriminate with any subtlety between those higher aspirations which do and those which do not constitute a genuine call to a particular profession or a particular form of self-sacrifice. But up to the point which has now been reached I do not conceive that the solution of the question turns upon our attitude towards theology except in so far as our ethical position as a whole is necessarily modified thereby. Duty must (I believe) logically be something more to the Christian or the Theist than it can possibly be (however great their personal devotion to duty) in the theoretical outlook of the Agnostic or the Pantheist. That inward impulse which, in conjunction with objective circumstances and a certain subjective capacity, constitutes it for some men a duty to undertake tasks or sacrifices which are not duties to all, will necessarily be invested with a clearer and more commanding authority when it is interpreted as a veritable call of God.

¹ Including of course the duties of his profession or position when once it has been adopted and so long as it is retained.