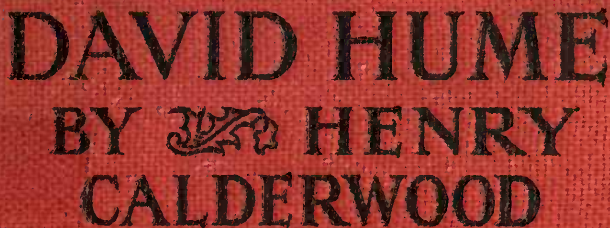

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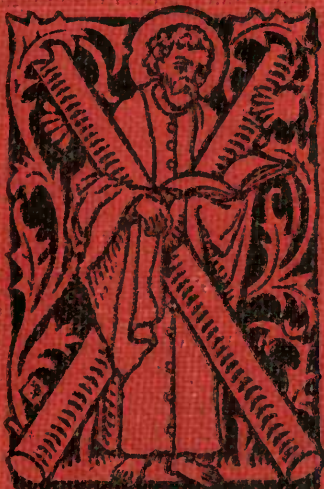

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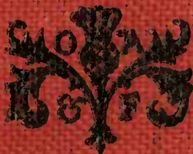

178

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

PAGE

Early Life 9

CHAPTER II

Search for a Vocation 17

CHAPTER III

Hume and his Surroundings 24

CHAPTER IV

Hume as a Philosopher—his Philosophy of Understanding 33

CHAPTER V

Hume as Historian 65

CHAPTER VI

Hume in the Government Service 80

CHAPTER VII

Hume's Attitude as to Religion 91

CHAPTER VIII

Hume among his Friends 127

DAVID HUME

CHAPTER I

EARLY LIFE

David Hume was born in Edinburgh on the 26th of April 1711 (old style). The house of his birth is unknown, but his father records that he was born 'within the Tron Parish,' then in the midst of the city. His inheritance was a favoured one. He was a healthy child, of a happy family, the home being in a beautiful district of Berwickshire. He had the companionship of a brother and sister, was in the midst of home comforts, and he had around the house, with its park, its trees, and its banks sloping down to the Whitadder, all facilities a boy can have for the frolics of childhood, and for experiencing the stimulating influences of nature.

His father, Joseph Hume of Ninewells, which is near by Chirnside, was a member of the Faculty of Advocates, who, however, did not practise at the Bar, but led the life of a country gentleman, dwelling constantly in the midst of his family. David's mother was a daughter of Sir David Falconer of Newton, Lord President of the Court of Session, 1682-1685. Both of David Hume's parents

were thus in the midst of associations of the legal profession, and they had free access to the literary life of Edinburgh.

The Humes of Ninewells were a remote branch of the family of Lord Home of Dunglas. In Drummond's *Histories of Noble British Families* * the Humes of Ninewells are placed along with the Dunbars and Dundases as belonging to the same stock as the Earls of Home. The name 'Hume' is variously written in the old records—Hwme, Huyme, Hom, and Home. Our philosopher stuck to 'Hume,' maintaining it to be the correct form.

In Drummond's work a drawing of Ninewells is given, which shows a house of three storeys and attic.† The front door is entered by steps, with an iron hand-rail on both sides. The ground floor is sunk below the level of the front steps, but the slope of the bank towards the Whitadder is such that this storey must have appeared in the rear completely above ground. The old house is a substantial country structure, after the manner of lairds' houses common over the south of Scotland. The present house was built in 1838.

As soon as the family were ready, after the birth of David, for the long journey, they returned to their country mansion, bringing to their home the new arrival, a child of marked individuality, who was afterwards to make a stir in the world. Ninewells was the scene of David Hume's early training, and to this quiet country dwelling he returned again and again in subsequent life, finding its

* Pickering, 1846, vol. ii., p. 27.

† See also Chambers' *Book of Days*, April 26.

retirement favourable to the abstract thought and the historical studies in which he delighted.

A visit to Ninewells explains this attraction, for it presents a typical piece of quiet lowland scenery. It is reached by rail, on the branch line from Reston to Duns. Chirnside is about a mile from the station bearing its name. On approaching the village its houses are seen in two long lines stretching over the ridge of a steep hill, on the road to Ayton and Eyemouth. Those who dwell on the height have a splendid view across the Whitadder, over miles of country, closed in by 'Cheviot's mountains lone,' a famous portion of the Scottish borders. Before entering the village the road to Berwick-on-Tweed, which is only about nine miles distant, passes off to the right. Hume was accustomed to head his letters, 'Ninewells, near Berwick.' On the first bend along this road Ninewells comes into view. From the road there is an easy descent towards the plateau on which the new house stands. In passing round the present house it is seen that terraces have been formed overlooking the Whitadder. These are obviously accompaniments of the modern house, suggesting that in the surroundings familiar to David Hume a more gradual declivity led the boys to the Whitadder, a stream greatly esteemed by anglers in bygone times. 'Ninewells' has its name from a series of springs a little above the house, forming a burn which runs to the Whitadder. The only feature of the olden times is found in the offices, built to the west, constituting three sides of a square. The steps to the coachman's house are hollowed in the middle, and an old stone vase, set over the water trough, bears tokens of having come from the old mansion

house. Around these offices David must often have shared in sport when fun ran high.

Few particulars as to the early life of David Hume are left on record. He early suffered by the loss of his father, who having died when he was still an infant, had not the opportunity of aiding in the mental development of his youngest child. The mother became the sole ruler of the family, and lived not only to train all her children, but to witness the literary success of her youngest boy. She was devoted to the welfare of her children. In *My Own Life*, written by David Hume when he was sixty-five years of age, he describes his mother as 'a woman of singular merit, who, though young and handsome, devoted herself entirely to the rearing and educating of her children.' That she gained a large influence over them is certain. We cannot determine what was the debt of obligation which David owed to his mother, but, without doubt, it was a heavy one. Before her death occurred he was in his thirty-eighth year and widely known in the literary world. When the announcement of her decease reached him in London, the Hon. Mr Boyle tells that when he entered Hume's room 'he found him in the deepest affliction and in a flood of tears.' These were the tokens of the sacred regard he cherished for her memory, and of his consciousness of the profound influence she had exerted over his life.

One record lingers, which, if it be trustworthy, gives us a glimpse into boyhood's years, and shows his mother's judgment of her younger son. 'Oor Davie is a fine, gude-natured crater, but uncommon wake-minded.' This is delightful; it hardly could be an invention. It is,

however, perplexing to Huxley,* as, indeed, it must be to those who are strangers to our vernacular. Hill Burton is hardly more successful, however, in supposing that it resulted from observation and his phlegmatic disposition (*Life*, I., 294.) How could his mother attribute weakness to a son who was 'an intellectual athlete?' This is Huxley's question. Let a Scotchman consider in what sense a Scotch mother would make such an admission. If Huxley had lived in her day, and said to her what he has written, what amusement, indignation, and then amazement would have swept through her mind as she heard his note of bewilderment. Imagine Davie's questioning and doubting when others had no doubt, and it will appear in no way unnatural that she should consider her boy 'fashed wi' a wakeness.' It is undesignedly suggestive that this story seems to Burton appropriately introduced in relation with the mother's death when Hume is speaking of his religious opinions (vol. i., 294). Go back to his boyhood days. Imagine the childish chatter of her Benjamin, such as would never cross the lips of John or of his sister. In this, I fancy, we find the occasion for her remark on his 'misguided' queries. A mother's affectionate interest is here even when she notes the apparently senseless character of many of his questions. That John kept in the beaten track was to her no proof of intellectual force. But Davie had quite distinguishing marks. He was 'a rale gude-hearted crater;' this a mother could appreciate, and all friends of his later life recognised it; and yet he was but 'uncommon wake-minded,' as witness his questions flying around a

* *Hume*, p. 2.

mother's ears, and needing some kind of answer, though hardly deserving any. Those child utterances, which seem weak when first heard, often testify to a direction of thought not common in child life. This distinction is aptly put by Rousseau, who says, 'Nothing is more difficult than to distinguish in infancy real stupidity from that apparent and deceptive stupidity which is the indication of strong characters' (Rousseau's *Émile*, Payne's Transl., p. 67). These utterances are seemingly too strong to be attributed to a child. Hume's mother marked the uncommon, and, not unnaturally, credited it to his 'wakeness.' She would have been startled, probably irritated, had she been told that she meant to suggest 'stupidity' as characteristic of her Davie, even when his talk showed a disregard of common sense. His was an uncommon weakness, associated with uncommon acuteness.

Hume's mother was a woman of penetration. How David appreciated her devotion we have seen, and his words tell us how much her children had recognised her ability, as well as her affection. Mr Burton gives us this description of her. 'Mrs Hume was evidently an accomplished woman, worthy of the sympathy and respect of her distinguished son, and could not have failed to see and to appreciate from its earliest dawnings the originality and power of his intellect. Her portrait, which I have seen, represents a thin but pleasing countenance, expressive of great intellectual acuteness' (*Life of Hume*, I., p. 294).

David Hume owed a large part of his education to his mother. Her power shines through his. During his school training he won no special distinction. His ability

was not of the kind that shines in the routine of school work. His progress and his promise were, however, undoubted. He was sent too early to the University of Edinburgh to reap the full advantage of academic study. The disadvantage of this was great, but his was not a mind to be led by teachers, even in philosophy, however much he might have gained by academic discipline. Even at sixteen years of age * he gives evidence of a penetration and acuteness of thought which tell of the influence of philosophy in his early training—his mother's philosophy certainly, with as much of academic influence as he had received. This freely flowing letter is a precious bit of self-revelation. 'I am entirely confined to myself and library since we parted.

Ea sola voluptas
Solamenque mali.

And indeed to me they are not a small one; for I take no more of them than I please; for I hate task-reading, and I diversify them at pleasure—sometimes a philosopher, sometimes a poet—which change is not unpleasant nor disserviceable neither. . . . The philosopher's wise man, and the poet's husbandman agree in peace of mind, in a liberty and independency on fortune, and contempt of riches, power, and glory. Everything is placid and quiet in both; nothing perturbed or disordered. . . . My peace of mind is not sufficiently confirmed by philosophy to withstand the blows of fortune. This greatness, elevation of soul is to be found only in study and contemplation—this can alone teach us to look down on human

* Witness the letter to Michael Ramsay, dated July 4, 1727, Hill Burton's *Life*, I., p. 12.

accidents. You must allow me to talk thus, like a philosopher; 'tis a subject I think much on, and could talk all day long of. But I know I must not trouble you. Wherefore I wisely practise my rules, which prescribe to check our appetite; and, for a mortification, shall descend from these superior regions to low and ordinary life; and so far as to tell you that John has bought a horse; he thinks it neither cheap nor dear. It cost six guineas.'

CHAPTER II

SEARCH FOR A VOCATION

FOR a young man of David Hume's individuality, the search for a vocation was a perplexity. He was not made for the common work of life; interest in questions of abstract thought swayed his mind, practically unfitting him for ordinary occupations. He desired above all things the life of a student; but he tells us of the difficulties in his way (*My Own Life*). He was a younger son in a family not rich; his brother being destined to become sole proprietor of Ninewells. 'My very slender fortune being unsuitable to this plan of life, and my health being a little broken by my ardent application, I was tempted, or rather forced, to make a very feeble trial for entering a more active scene of life.' A few sentences from his 'letter to a physician,' when seeking guidance as to health, will show the man we have before us. There were, however, strong adverse forces within his own nature.

'From my earliest infancy I found always a strong inclination to books and letters. As our college education in Scotland, extending little further than the languages, ends commonly when we are about fourteen or fifteen years of age, I was after that left to my own choice in my reading, and found it incline me equally to books of reasoning and philosophy, and to poetry and the polite authors. . . .

Upon examination of these, I found a certain boldness of temper growing in me, which was not inclined to submit to any authority in these subjects, but led me to seek out some new medium, by which truth might be established. After much study and reflection on this, at least, when I was about eighteen years of age, there seemed to be opened up to me a new scene of thought which transported me beyond measure, and made me, with an ardour natural to young men, throw up every other pleasure or business to apply entirely to it' (letter to a physician, Burton's *Life*, I., p. 31). In this the inner life of David Hume is disclosed. Another thing, however, is needed to complete the view. He is with the full ardour of his being a man of society. He delights in the companionship of his fellows, works surely into the intimacy of close friendship, and is ever ready for rippling, glancing humour, giving and receiving electric impulse from casual acquaintance. These features are not commonly associated, but they were united in him. There are two natures in the man, two lives within this one life ; the inner, that of the abstract thinker living within a charmed circle where he does not meet friends, save one or two, and where he cultivates an independence that owns no authority ; and the outer life of the man who is free of spirit, ready for all occurrences, and given to a playfulness of disposition, and even joviality, which to most onlookers must seem inconsistent with the high philosophic gift. Yet these two natures are indissolubly united—they are constantly appearing in parallel relations as if they were distinct. Together they constitute a nature rarely met with. It were easy, looking now at the one feature, now at the other, to bring home a

charge of inconsistency. In a sense, he is inconsistently a thinker who scorns the ordinary levels of thought; a humorist who revels in the pleasures of the passing hour as if life were a play. These apparently contradictory features are as prominent as they have ever appeared in any human life—together they constitute the actual David Hume—philosopher and man of the world. In one way he is remote from all common interests; in another he is in the heart of them all. Mainly, he is borne onward by the force of the inner impulse which is that of a profound philosophic thinker; nevertheless, you do not know the man, if you do not discover the irrepressible humorist. The chief work of his life is beyond the observation of others—it can be known only through his books; hardly at all through his conversation; but in his relaxation he may be known to all, for he gravitates to centres where men and women enjoy pleasant society, where converse is free, and all diversities of feeling find ready response. There is nothing more natural for him than to enumerate these as 'the two greatest and purest pleasures of human life, study and society' (Intro. to the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*).

To such a man as David Hume the inner bias of life must involve him in serious difficulties when he attempts a practical view of his position—when he feels 'forced,' as he tells us in roundabout fashion natural in the circumstances, 'to make a very feeble trial for entering on a more active scene of life.' These are the words of a man who already feels himself unequal to the task. Not being a man of independent means, he *must* seek means of support—but where, and how? The need for asking and

answering this brought him into the most serious difficulties, and involved him in distressing failures. How could such a man settle down to be a successful professional man or an enterprising man of business?

Here is the beginning of his trouble, as recalled late in life:—'My studious disposition, my sobriety, and my industry, gave my family the notion that the law was a proper profession for me; but I felt an insurmountable aversion to everything but the pursuits of philosophy and general learning' (*My Own Life*). In his 'letter to a physician,' written when he was in the midst of his difficulties, at sixteen years of age, he says, 'The law, which was the business I designed to follow, appeared nauseous to me.' The technicalities of legal practice had no attraction for the speculative thinker.

From that, he turns to business. There is an incongruity in the fancy that he could be placed in harness, to serve a master whose orders should be law. The urgent need for securing income in some way is made manifest by the contemplation of this alternative. 'In 1734, I went to Bristol with some recommendations to eminent merchants, but in a few months found that scene totally unsuitable to me.' This short summary disposes of the whole venture. Truly 'a very feeble trial for entering on a more active scene of life,' from one who had 'recommendation to a considerable trader.'

As if to dispose of all his uncertainties, Hume breaks away from Scotland, as well as from Bristol, and goes off to France to prosecute his studies. No clear light is thrown on this resolve, or on the reasons for his choice of place. Doubtless, the fame of the Encyclopædists had

some attraction; but he does not go to seek their guidance, nor even to avail himself of the special advantages connected with the great educational institutions of Paris. What he intends when he speaks of 'studies,' is the unrestrained pursuit of his own speculations. He goes to follow out his studies 'in a country retreat.' He found such a retreat, first at Rheims, and afterwards at La Fleche, in Anjou—odd retreat to be chosen by Hume, in the Jesuits' College, and that, too, in which Descartes had been a scholar. He was twenty-three years of age; and he has made his resolve with unwavering determination. Here is the plan he has sketched. 'I resolved to make a very rigid frugality supply my deficiency, to maintain unimpaired my independency, and to regard every object as contemptible except the improvement of my talents in literature' (*My Own Life*).

In frugality he was a genuine Scot, able to make little go a long way; contented when he fared on the plainest, for intellectual interests absorbed him. He looked back with special interest on that period of philosophic effort. He passed 'three years very agreeably in that country.' 'I there laid that plan of life which I have steadily and successfully pursued.' During this period, he says, 'I composed my *Treatise of Human Nature*,'—a wonderful achievement for so young a man.

In 1737 he returned to London. Being again on British soil, with his urgent work accomplished, he writes thus to Henry Home (Lord Kames),—'I have a great inclination to go down to Scotland this spring, to see my friends and have your advice concerning my philosophical discoveries; but cannot overcome a certain

shamefacedness I have to appear among you, at my years, without having got a settlement, or so much as attempted any' (Burton's *Life*, I., p. 63). He had the *Treatise* with him in finished form. By the end of 1738 it was published. This work was destined to exert great influence in the history of philosophic thought. There was no immediate sign of this at first. He himself reports:—'It fell dead-born from the press.' Slight as was the impression made at its first appearance, it was destined to awaken the keenest interest of the thinkers of the day. It was an exposition of Empiricism, leading to Scepticism as its logical outcome, and was, in effect, a challenge to Philosophy to produce a doctrine of Certainty. Sceptical thought had for him a fascination. The words of Cleanthes to Philo apply most aptly to their author,—'Of all men living, the task which you have undertaken, of raising doubts and objections, suits you best, and seems in a manner natural and unavoidable to you' (*Dialg.*, p. 81).

This first literary effort, published when he was only twenty-eight, marked him out as a distinguished thinker, an adept in abstract thought, consistent to a degree, content with uncertainty where certainty seemed unattainable—conspicuously the 'speculative sceptic,' with 'a certain boldness of temper growing in him; not inclined to submit to any authority.' Believing firmly in the certainties, but with a critical and sceptical bias, he seemed to meet the demands of philosophy for setting forth the vast range of uncertainties with which our intelligence is surrounded. It was in this wide region he hoped to make 'discoveries' which the world would acknowledge. In his profound

reflection, he was first stimulated, and next hampered, by the inadequate philosophy of the times. That his discussions included, so largely as they did, sceptical issues, was the fact which gave to them their power to stimulate later thought.

CHAPTER III

HUME AND HIS SURROUNDINGS

HUME had taken his place in the literature of his country and of the world. He himself, however, was depressed with sense of failure, for he says, 'Never was literary attempt more unfortunate than my *Treatise of Human Nature.*' He felt disappointed that it did not even 'excite a murmur among the zealots.' His power had been concentrated to the utmost, but renown did not come to him, as he had anticipated. What he could do in philosophic thought was accomplished, and he was convinced that the writing was not of slight significance; but the reading public did not know what had been done—his contribution was not of the character to attract readers. He was dispirited, in consequence, but he was not turned aside from his 'plan of life.' He says, 'In the end of 1738, I published my treatise, and immediately went down to my mother and my brother, who lived at his country house.' Here the thinker is once more lost to view, concentrating on fresh effort, of which the world was to learn by-and-by. 'Being naturally of a cheerful and sanguine temper,' he adds, 'I very soon recovered the blow, and prosecuted, with great ardour, my studies in the country.'

Henceforth, this retired student has his place among the literary men of Scotland. He is a man of massive

figure, stout in build, with rounded, ruddy countenance, not of marked expression—this lack being often remarked upon when he becomes a conspicuous figure in the society of Paris. The lack described was, in part, the effect of the concentrated abstraction which engrossed his life through long periods of work. In other moods, overflowing humour shines through the placid countenance. Reminiscences and portraits support these diverse representations. A portrait of him in early life, in possession of the University of Edinburgh, shews him in a less matured stage than portraits more familiar. In the National Gallery of Scotland there is a good picture of him, in scarlet tunic, such as he donned when Secretary of the Military Legation at Vienna and Turin—a red coat which, report says, did not give him the approved military air. Over against this picture in the Scottish Gallery is hung a portrait of Rousseau, enabling visitors to compare the faces of these literary celebrities, once fast friends, afterwards bitter foes. Of the two portraits in Hill Burton's *Life*, that in the first volume is from the medallion by Tassie—a thoughtful, rather heavy, face, with wig obscuring the individuality of the subject. That in the second volume is from a bust, and is somewhat startling at first. It must be at fault in its proportions; but it presents a strong face, exhibiting much more of the recognised ability of the philosopher than other portraits do. It suggests the intellectual power and the commanding force which were noted characteristics of the man.

In nature, in habits, and in all mental associations, Hume was intensely Scotch. Indeed, the strength of national bias, intensified by existing jealousies between

the united countries, tempted even a man of philosophic spirit to cherish antagonism to the English people and to English ways, the unrestrained expression of which surprises us at this distance of time (Hill, *Letters*, p. 56-64). He found delight in the rural life of Berwickshire, and took kindly to the vernacular heard all around, but was specially attracted to the literary circles of the Scottish capital. He was happy in the practice of economy—doing his work bravely as many had done before him, 'A man of punctual habits, and of unwearied industry.' He was proud of Scotland as 'a country where the avenues to learning are easy.' To his friend, Michael Ramsay, the philosopher thus describes his position at forty years of age:—'While interest remains as at present, I have £50 a year, a hundred pounds' worth of books, great store of linens and fine clothes, and near £100 in my pocket; along with order, frugality, a strong spirit of independency, good health, a contented humour, and an unabating love of study. In these circumstances I must esteem myself one of the happy and fortunate; and so far from being willing to draw my ticket over again in the lottery of life, there are very few prizes with which I would make an exchange' (Hill Burton, I., 342).

In conversation, his native Doric was marked, so that 'the broadest Scotch accent' is attributed to him. So attached was he to his native land that we find him expressing his determination 'never more to set his foot out of it.' When writing for the press, it continued matter of serious trouble to him that his Scotticisms often were allowed to pass unchecked. In this matter he owns his

dependence on Strahan, his publisher. Thus he says, 'If you have leisure to peruse the sheets, and to mark on the margin any corrections that occur to you, it will be an addition to the many obligations of the same kind I owe to you' (*Letters to Strahan*, p. 213). For the same reason, he seeks to have the help of Mallet (*Ib.*, p. 7), and in writing to Wilkes, he says—'Notwithstanding all the pains I have taken in the study of the English language, I am still jealous of my pen' (*Ib.*, p. 8).

In some of his familiar letters written to intimate friends, Hume's humour is singularly unrestrained. Dr Birkbeck Hill, in editing the letters to Strahan, for the publication of which the nation is certainly indebted to the generous liberality of Lord Rosebery, quite misunderstands the significance of a letter. Misled in this way, Hill misinterprets the author so seriously as to charge Hume 'with a levity which is only found in a man who is indifferent to strict truthfulness' (*Preface*, p. 8). This surprising judgment is passed, oddly enough, because Hume resents having been deceived. Strahan replied with indignation to Hume's complaint; and Hume was not the man to be surprised, when one remembers his own indignation at Rousseau's charges against him. How Hume afterwards felt because of this temporary estrangement from Strahan, is stated in a manner which indicates anything but levity. (*Letter* 71, p. 270), 'I do not remember any incident of my life, that has given me more real concern, than your misapprehension.' Nothing could be further from accuracy of representation than to speak of Hume as 'indifferent to truthfulness.' This is only one of several hasty judgments passed by Dr G. B.

Hill, from misapprehension of the passionate and the humorous in Hume's nature. Dr Hill has fulfilled his part as an editor with a wealth of scholarship which calls forth admiration; but once or twice he has singularly failed to catch the author's meaning.

The characteristics of the times in which Hume lived should have full weight on our judgments of him, but they need not have more than a brief sketch. The union of Scotland with England was an event of recent occurrence. Considerable jealousy still existed between the two countries, the Scotch thinking themselves neglected or unfairly treated; the English feeling irritated by any civil appointments given to Scotchmen. There was, however, growing up in Scotland, a desire to acquire an accurate English style in written composition, and also to become familiar with the best English authors. A large measure of literary ability was appearing in Scotland; a jovial spirit characterised even literary gatherings. Hume felt attracted to Edinburgh, where he had free intercourse with the noted literati, besides maintaining correspondence and occasional intercourse with the leading men of Glasgow. The more prominent of his literary friends were Adam Smith, author of *The Wealth of Nations;* John Home, author of *Douglas;* Dr William Robertson, author of *History of Scotland;* Henry Home, 'Lord Kames,' author of *Elements of Criticism*, in which Hume's scepticism is controverted; and Adam Ferguson, Professor of Moral Philosophy, and author of an Essay on the History of Civil Society. Several of the prominent clergymen of the city, more naturally those of the moderate school, who were less offended by the freedom of his writing

on theological and religious questions, were on terms of intimacy with Hume. Most marked amongst these were Rev. Dr Hugh Blair, minister of the High Church, and afterwards Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the University; and Rev. Dr Carlyle, of Inveresk, known as the 'Jupiter' of his set. Beyond the Edinburgh circle, the more conspicuous of his correspondents were Hutcheson, Professor of Moral Philosophy in Glasgow University, and his successor, Dr Thomas Reid, known as the father of the Scotch School of Philosophy.

Amongst Evangelical men, Hume came to be suspected, and in a degree even feared and unreservedly denounced as an evil influence in the country. His avowed scepticism he seemed to delight in expounding with ceaseless iteration. Though it was primarily philosophic in its origin and range, it was resented with intensity of feeling, as tending to foster Moderatism, and to undermine religious earnestness, which had highly distinguished Scotchmen from the Reformation period. In the view of this party, Hume stood out as the 'arch-infidel'; in his view, they were the 'zealots,' whose attack he discounted in publishing his *Treatise*, the absence of which at the outset added to his vexation.

One of the heaviest disappointments of Hume's life was his failure to carry the appointment to a Chair of Philosophy in a Scottish University. His first effort was for the Edinburgh Chair of Moral Philosophy; his second for the Logic Chair in Glasgow. Both efforts were fruitless, so hopeless, indeed, as to discourage further attempts. In rearing, with unwavering resolution and conspicuous ability, his sceptical philosophy, he had built a wall which barred

his progress to University distinction. This is the sole explanation of the result. It was no lack of ability on his part, or of attainment, or of teaching power, which led to his rejection. The force of public opinion adverse to scepticism was the barrier. The interests of philosophy itself, and also the interests of religion, are sacrificed when it is proclaimed that scepticism is the outcome of a truly penetrating speculative thought. The conviction of this swayed the University authorities. In both cases he was a candidate for a Chair he knew himself to be fitted for. The electors well knew it, though in less degree, but they could not trust him. This is the penalty for the philosopher when his bias is for sceptical thought, and when besides he delights in it, and in the disturbance which is occasioned by its free and even fierce expression. When, after his death, his *Dialogues on Religion* was published, it became apparent that in his inmost soul he appreciated the grounds for antagonism to a sceptical philosophy. There he makes Cleanthes, the spokesman who most nearly expresses his own thoughts, say to Philo, his representative sceptic:—'Your spirit of controversy, joined to your abhorrence of vulgar superstition, carries you strange lengths, when engaged in an argument; and there is nothing so sacred and venerable, *even in your own eyes*, which you spare on that occasion.' To this adverse criticism Philo replies:—'I must confess that I am less cautious on the subject of Natural Religion than on any other; both because I know that I can never, on that head, corrupt the principles of common sense, and because no one, I am confident, in whose eyes I appear a man of common sense,

will ever mistake my intentions. You in particular, Cleanthes, with whom I live in unreserved intimacy, you are sensible, that, notwithstanding the freedom of my conversation, and my love of singular arguments, no one has a deeper sense of religion impressed on his mind, or pays more profound adoration to the Divine Being, as he discovers himself to reason, in the inexplicable contrivance and artifice of Nature.'*

The judgment of the Curators of Patronage adverse to Hume has been well interpreted by his biographer, Hill Burton, 'The revolutionist, who is endeavouring to pull to pieces what has been taught for ages within the same walls, and to erect a new system in its stead, can scarcely ever be a satisfactory instructor of any considerable number of young men.' † The characteristics which he had clearly recognised in himself were adverse to his election as an Academic teacher. 'A certain boldness of temper' which made him adverse 'to any authority in philosophy'; a tendency to make light of reason, as if it were insufficient to lead us through the mazes of perplexity; and an undisguised delight in sceptical conclusions, resolving, 'if we must for ever be a prey to errors and delusions, that they shall, at least, be natural and entertaining' (*Treatise*, vol i., p. 3). He did himself injustice by those seemingly unguarded utterances, meant only to lighten abstruse discussion. The man was greatly better than he seemed, when tested by passages of this cast; but he was avowedly swayed by a sceptical bias, and this the electors regarded as a disqualification for office.

* *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, published 1879, p. 130.
† *Life of David Hume*, I., p. 352.

Hume was first and chiefly a speculative thinker; intensely interested in the difficulties besetting all research, he consecrated the best efforts of his life to penetrate into the conditions of certainty in knowledge. He prosecuted his task without misgiving, and was willing to bear all the consequences, however trying to reputation and ambition. Amongst these the loss of an Academic chair was by far the bitterest experience. He had shown in many ways his conviction that philosophic research can be successfully conducted only in silent retreat, with attention concentrated undisturbed on all complexities of thought. He even refused to discuss philosophic themes in general company, and hardly relaxed this rule in the select gatherings of thinkers fully competent for the discussion required. As a thinker, he really lived apart, feeling that his speculations could be known only through the printed page, read deliberately and silently as it had been written. When, however, he closed his studies for the time, he abandoned all concern with them; he returned into society with the alacrity of one who seeks relaxation, and with the overflowing humour of one ready for amusement under any conditions. In the same spirit his familiar correspondence was conducted, allowing himself often freedom for the utmost playfulness — not infrequently for unrestrained exaggeration, liable to misunderstanding by those who were not familiar with the licence he allowed himself in the familiarity of friendship.

CHAPTER IV

HUME AS A PHILOSOPHER—HIS PHILOSOPHY OF UNDERSTANDING

(*Knowledge,—its conditions and limits*)

THE interest with which Hume entered on philosophical studies appears from his correspondence. 'I began to consider seriously how I should proceed in my philosophical enquiries. I found that the moral philosophy, transmitted to us by antiquity, laboured under the same inconvenience that has been found in their natural philosophy, of being entirely hypothetical, and depending more upon invention than experience, . . . without regarding human nature. This, therefore, I resolved to make my principal study, and the source from which I would derive every truth in criticism, as well as in morality.' *

At the age of twenty-five, in the retreat he had selected in France, he began philosophical research with the enthusiasm of one who had found his life-work. The title chosen for his work was 'A Treatise of Human Nature: being an attempt to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects.' It thus appears that 'the experimental method' was that which allured him to independent study, and which held out the prospect of fresh 'discovery,' even as in physical research. His field

* Burton's *Life of Hume*, I., p. 35.

of study was 'human nature'; his basis, 'experience'; his method an observational enquiry into the intellectual conditions on which a knowledge of things is acquired by us. His main enquiry, therefore, was concerned with the origin of our thoughts and fancies and feelings as to things around us.

The chief interest to us in Hume's philosophy centres in its distinctive feature, his brave and exclusive reliance on Experience. Its strength and its weakness are to be traced to its root. My purpose is to sketch his system as clearly and carefully as I may find possible within the limits. If I succeed in presenting Hume as he really was in the field of philosophy, my leading purpose will be gained. I shall then be willing to leave to the reader the more extended criticism which seems desirable.

His basis was Experience; this always, this only. What he sought was an interpretation of human nature by reference to our experience, aided by a keen sceptical outlook against assumptions, inventions, and hypotheses. These were the evils which had at all stages involved philosophy in confusion, exposing its systems to ridicule. David Hume's accepted task was to rid philosophy of these evils, placing before thinking men a simple and complete exposition of human experience, guarded at every point by an unhesitating and bold scepticism as to everything that proposes to go a step beyond Experience. This is the true significance of 'Hume's scepticism.' If the reader keep this description well in view from the first, he will have a fair chance of understanding Hume better than he has commonly been understood in his native land.

A safe and sure basis for philosophy we certainly have

in Experience. All knowledge must begin in Experience, and all knowledge must be within Experience. Even thus, however, our difficulties are only beginning. We may speak of the simplicity of Experience, but the conditions of our knowledge are not simple, nor are they easily interpreted. Hume sees this from the outset, saying in the introduction to his *Treatise*, 'If truth be at all within the reach of human capacity, it is certain it must be very deep and abstruse; and to hope we shall arrive at it without pains, while the greatest geniuses have failed with the utmost pains, must certainly be esteemed sufficiently vain and presumptuous.' It is in fact easy to say, 'we shall keep to experience'; but to set forth all that is involved within 'common experience' is no easy task. Owning this, Hume shut himself off from his ordinary surroundings, and, retreating to France, devoted himself to three years of the closest observation and reflection. It was no light thing he resolved upon, and he was ready for any sacrifice, animated by the expectation that there lay within his reach discoveries which would have permanent value. Expectations are not always fulfilled, but brave resolves are ever to be honoured, and they have ever reward in their execution, — though readers may doubt whether 'experience' sustains this view of life's efforts.

Everyone can see from what directions difficulties must come, when he considers the wide sphere of existence in which we have our place, and the conditions under which we interpret the facts of experience. Hume does not mean that the universe lies within an individual's experience; he only asks how far the universe can be understood by reference to our experience. Hume does not

mean that our senses, being essentially like those of the animals, are the measure of reality; he asks what interpretation we put on our impressions by use of our understanding. Accordingly, the entire first volume of his *Treatise*, extending to 475 pages, is 'of the understanding'; and all through it there run references to 'unknown causes,' and to 'particular causes of particular events,' while he holds that the actual relation between cause and effect *never* comes within our experience. These few references are enough to shew through what an African thicket the path of exploration must be cut.

He begins with 'the perceptions of the human mind'; the outlook a man has on his surroundings; what is the origin of his 'perceptions'? how does he perceive things? how is he affected by things? The physiology of nerve and brain was unknown when Hume set to work. This field of research was therefore closed to him, though he did much to turn attention in its direction. Witness Reid's *Inquiry into the Human Mind, on the Principles of Common Sense* (1763), with his discussion of the organs of sense, and of the impressions made on them, largely suggested by Hume's *Treatise*.

Hume speaks of perceptions '*entering*' the mind, dwelling on the manner in which 'they *strike upon* the mind' and 'make their *way into* our thought and consciousness.' These phrases seem almost to suggest that perceptions are made outside, and force their way into an inner consciousness where they are stored. Nothing so crude as this is intended. He is only encountering the disadvantages of popular usage. His defence is given later, when he writes, 'It is very difficult to talk of the operations of the mind

with perfect propriety and exactness, because common language has seldom made any very nice distinctions between them' (p. 187).

The historic position was such as to involve philosophical research in needless perplexity. Locke's great essay *On the Human Understanding* held the field, having run through five editions before Hume entered on his philosophical enquiries. Locke, having first expended his force on a polemic against 'innate ideas,' had insisted that 'all the materials of reason and knowledge' come 'from Experience,' that observation is 'employed either about external sensible objects or about the internal operations of our minds,' that the mind may be regarded as 'white paper void of all characters,' that ideas are the figures 'which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it,' and that 'all ideas come from Sensation and Reflection.' Our Senses 'convey into the mind several distinct perceptions of things,' and Reflection, which is 'the notice the mind takes of its own operations,' 'furnishes the understanding with another set of ideas, which could not be had from things without.' Hume takes Locke's standpoint, acknowledges our dependence on Experience only, and entering with the freshness of youthful enthusiasm into the enquiry as to the origin of our ideas on the conditions implied, he works out his scheme of association under the sway of custom, develops his doctrine of ignorance of matter, of mind, and of causality, presenting a philosophic scepticism as the outcome. In this his grand service is an exposure of the inherent weakness of an empirical philosophy. Locke's Essay was an epoch-making book; Hume's *Treatise* prepared the way for a new and grander

epoch in the history of the science of man. With such tracings the reader may follow readily the unfolding of Hume's 'system,' of which he speaks so confidingly and confidently as the discussion proceeds.

What does Experience mean—your experience and mine? How does there originate out of this simple source all the variety of relations belonging to it? How can we by interpretation of it reach a science of human nature? These are Hume's grand questions. In seeking an answer, he hopes to achieve large discoveries in philosophy. His search is first for the simple elements of our experience,—next for the origin of the strange complexity which it involves,—and ultimately for the philosophy of existence possible to us within its limits. 'The subjects of the understanding and passions make a complete chain of reasoning by themselves'; and beyond these lies 'the examination of morals, politics, and criticism.' These, taken together, give his general survey of the field of research.

The primary element of Experience is Impression. This 'arises in the soul originally, from unknown causes' (22).* 'An impression first strikes upon the senses and makes us perceive heat or cold, thirst or hunger, pleasure or pain of some kind or other' (22). Under this name are included 'all our sensations, passions, and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul' (12). He thus distinguishes between an outer and an inner source of impression. All that can be said as to their rise is that 'they strike upon the mind, and make their way into our thought or consciousness' (12). Impressions 'are all so

* The bracketed figures refer to the pages of the 1st Ed. (in 3 vols.)

clear and evident, that they admit of no controversy' (65). Here is no room for doubt. Our consciousness of impression leaves no place for question or appeal. 'The extent and force of the human understanding' (4) still lies beyond this, involving wider questions. When Experience is taken in its utmost simplicity, all that can be said is that we are conscious of some feeling; and 'every one of himself will readily perceive the difference between feeling and thinking' (12). Even at this early stage we are dealing with a set of words of which we have no interpretation, such as 'consciousness,' 'understanding,' 'thought,' 'mind,' 'soul'; but it does not seem possible to make our statements without being allowed their provisional use. Whether these also admit of no controversy is not as yet determined. We have only before us the primary form of 'the perceptions of the human mind,'—impressions coming through the senses or from within our nature itself. But in naming them so, he 'would not be understood to express the manner in which our lively perceptions are produced in the soul, but merely the perceptions themselves.' These impressions are fleeting. They 'make their way into consciousness' and then vanish, to be followed by others. Are they then utterly lost as particular feelings, having had only a momentary existence? Assuredly not. The experience of which they are the primary phase, includes more than this, as a *consequence*, we may say. 'In thinking and reasoning,' ideas arise in the mind. These are 'the faint images of our sensations, passions, and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul.' In this use of the term 'Idea,' there is a departure from Locke's usage,

who took 'Idea' as the term to include all the phenomena in consciousness. In thus departing from Locke's usage, he says—'Perhaps I rather restore the word, idea, to its original sense, from which Mr Locke had perverted it, in making it stand for all our impressions' (13, note). What then are these 'Ideas,' and what the conditions of their origin? How are 'the faint images' of our impressions produced? They are not fading impressions; they take the place of vanished impressions, which had greater 'force and liveliness' while they lasted. 'Of the impression there is a copy taken by the mind, which remains after the impression ceases; and this we call an idea' (22). Impressions 'are copied by the memory and imagination, and become ideas' (22). This involves divergence from the 'white paper' theory as if nature made an impression on a sensitive surface. The theory suggests an activity of mind in producing a copy; and it is added that the ideal has less 'force and liveliness,' is 'faint and low,' and 'when it entirely loses that vivacity' which characterises impressions, it 'is a perfect idea' (24). Hume does not deal with the question how the mind makes the copy. He takes it merely as a fact within our experience. Subsequent references throughout his first volume are consistent with those now quoted, but do not add any thing by way of explanation. Under the action of Memory and Imagination, 'an impression again makes its appearance as an idea' (23). Memory 'preserves the original form in which its objects were presented' (25). Ideas are spoken of as 'adequate representations of objects' (58). Somewhat more definite is the reference to the 'judgments of our senses'

(89), which, it is admitted, 'undergo correction.' On the other hand, Hume speaks of 'two bodies presenting themselves,' and yet he is careful to repeat—'My philosophy pretends only to explain the nature and causes of our perceptions, or impressions and ideas' (118). While perceptions are said to 'make their way into our thought or consciousness,' he represents this as 'a mere passive admission of the impressions through the organs of sensation' (133).

The next advance is the noting of *similarity* between Impressions and Ideas. 'The first circumstance that strikes my eye is the great resemblance betwixt our impressions and ideas in every other particular, except their degree of force and vivacity. The one seem to be in a manner the reflection of the other, so that all the perceptions of the mind are double, and appear both as impressions and ideas' (13). 'This circumstance seems to me remarkable' (14). He dwells upon it with special interest, regarding it as in some sense a 'discovery,' and of the first importance. 'The Ideas I form are exact representations of the impressions I felt'; 'these two species of perception are exactly correspondent' (16); and there is a 'constant conjunction of resembling impressions.' If there is 'a copy taken by the mind,' it seems a natural result that there should be a resemblance. But Hume is arrested by the 'constant conjunction' of the two things as if it were settled by the nature of the mind that the copy must follow the impression, so that the perceptions of the mind by a provision of nature are invariably *double*. And we 'find by constant experience, that the simple impressions always take the precedence of

their correspondent ideas' (17). At a later stage we find him repeat his view of the importance of all this. 'No discovery could have been made more happily for deciding all controversies concerning ideas than that above mentioned, that impressions always take the precedency of them, and that every idea with which the imagination is furnished, first makes its appearance in a correspondent impression' (65). The lack of explanation of how the copy is taken proves a serious disadvantage now, even when we grant the doubleness, and the uniformity of sequence, and add that 'all our simple ideas in their first appearance are derived from simple impressions' (16).

But Hume recognises that it becomes needful to distinguish between simple and complex in our perceptions. 'Upon a more accurate survey I find I have been carried away too far by the first appearance, and that I must make use of the distinction of perceptions into simple and complex, to limit this general decision, that all our ideas and impressions are resembling' (14). This leads to a modification of view, shewing how much must depend on the explanation to be given of how the 'copy' is made. 'I observe that many of our complex ideas never had impressions that correspond to them; and that many of our complex impressions never are exactly copied in ideas' (15). For example, the idea we have of the 'New Jerusalem' or of 'Paris.' He then feels constrained to admit that 'the rule is not universally true, that they are exact copies of each other' (15). This suggests that nature does not provide for 'double perceptions' though the phenomena are dual; and that the later phrase, 'judgments of the senses' is truer to experience than the state-

ment that 'there is a copy of the impression taken by the mind.' Both statements, however, imply an activity of mind somewhat obscured by the references to 'resemblance' and 'correspondence.' Our author, nevertheless, continues attracted by the 'discovery' of resemblance; and he 'ventures to affirm that the rule holds without exception' in the case of 'simple perceptions.' 'Every simple impression has a correspondent idea' (15). But even here the suggestion of 'representation,' 'image,' 'copy,' is not easily supported by reference to 'experience.' 'The idea of red' is taken as an example, but we find it more difficult to form 'an idea of red,' than an idea of 'a red apple,' and even on this point ideas will differ according as we are more familiar with the Scotch apple or with the American. Hume's modification of his view by reference to complex perceptions, seems to apply even to simple perceptions, so far, at least, as to awaken doubt as to his first position that 'the difference between impressions and ideas consists in the degrees of force and liveliness with which they strike upon the mind' (11).

The complexity of Experience opens out still further. Even impressions must be distinguished as 'those of Sensation and those of Reflexion' (22). 'The first kind arises in the soul originally from unknown causes. The second is derived in a great measure from our ideas, and that in the following order. An impression first strikes upon the senses, and makes us perceive . . . pleasure or pain of some kind or other. Of this impression there is a copy taken by the mind, which *remains* after the impression ceases. This idea of pleasure or pain, when it returns upon the soul, produces the new impressions of

desire and aversion, hope and fear, which may properly be called impressions of reflexion, because derived from it. These again are copied by the memory and imagination, and become ideas ; which perhaps in their turn give rise to other impressions and ideas. So that the impressions of reflexion are *antecedent* to their correspondent ideas, but *posterior* to the ideas of sensation and derived from them.' This passage is not too long for its purpose, for the complexity described belongs to the common experience, quite apart from philosophy. This double relation of thought to feeling is such that at one time thought depends on feeling; at another, feeling depends on thought. The first feeling *comes to us*, we know not how ; the second *is awakened by our thought*. This complexity seems to present to view the whole range of enquiry. Hume is so impressed by it that it leads him even to change the order of investigation so far as to pass 'impressions' in order to treat of 'ideas.' The inducement is curiously explained. 'As the impressions of reflection, viz., passions, desires and emotions, which principally deserve our attention arise mostly from ideas, it will be necessary to reverse that method which, at first sight, seems most natural ; and in order to explain the nature and principles of the human mind, give a particular account of ideas before we proceed to impressions. For this reason I have here chosen to begin with ideas' (23). This is a temptation springing from his ultimate object—'an attempt to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects.' But the philosopher who declares that 'the only solid foundation we can give to the science of man must be laid on experience and observation' (6),

becomes bound to keep by the natural order of experience, in order to read accurately its testimony. If nature has so ordered our experience that all perceptions are double, and those of sense 'always take the precedence of their correspondent ideas,' this deviation from the natural order is a mistake, and is likely to throw the 'system' into confusion. The significance of the complexity is, however, to be seriously considered. It involves a dualism in the history of impressions. There are 'impressions of sensation' coming from *without*, which 'strike upon the senses'; and there are impressions from *within*, 'desires and emotions,' depending on reflection. 'The examination of our sensations belongs more to anatomists and natural philosophers than to moral' (23); but, when 'they make their way into consciousness,' it is quite otherwise, for it remains true that 'all impressions are *internal* and perishing existences' (339), having their place within us in accordance with conditions of consciousness. After having remarked the 'constant conjunction' of impressions and ideas, and having found in this an order of *dependence*, inasmuch as we 'find by constant experience that the simple impressions always take the precedence of their correspondent ideas, but never appear in the contrary order' (17), it seems a singular deviation from the natural order to 'give a particular account of ideas before we proceed to impressions' (23). In consequence the treatment 'of the impressions of the senses and memory' is delayed till Part III., section 5, p. 151. This determination 'to begin with ideas' affects seriously the structure of the *Treatise*.

The effect on the development of the theory is to pre-

sent Empiricism in a more trying light. The field of life's activity is illuminated by impressions, external and internal; all ideas are dependent on them; 'innate ideas' are, therefore, excluded (21). Impressions are unaccounted for; they are, however, classified, according to their source, as external or internal; how they arise is unknown to us (a physiology of the senses and of organic sensibilities not being at command). The main difficulties are now full in view,—how have impressions their 'correspondent ideas'; how do these ideas subsist as a system; how are those relations essential to the scheme of knowledge originated and maintained; and how does this scheme stand related to the system of things we name the universe? With nothing more than impressions and their copies to work with, a faint outline of the sceptical result is already shining through this description of our experience. Its incompleteness involves its insecurity, and this means doubt. In this study of 'the extent and force of the human understanding,' the theory that mind is as 'white paper, void of all characters' is being discredited; and the theory that it is as 'a copying-press' does not show to advantage.* We need to ascertain by direct observation 'the force of the human understanding.'

The first question is, How have impressions their 'correspondent ideas'? To 'give a particular account of ideas, before we proceed to impressions,' is 'to reverse' the natural order. It is to act as the builder who proceeds with the structure before he has made sure of the foundation. To delay the primary question from Part I., section

* It is of special consequence to the student of Hume to mark this change of order.

2, until Part III., section 5, was a serious thing. Let the reader transfer sections 5 and 6 of Part III. to their natural place in Part I., after section 2, and it will appear how brief and insufficient is the treatment, how naturally the author admits that he is employing 'materials which are of a mixed and heterogeneous nature' (151), and consequently how much of the brief discussion falls out of account when it is placed in its natural position.

In proceeding to 'give a particular account of ideas,' the discussion enters into the heart of all the complications connected with their *relations*. We become concerned with the conditions of reflections; memory and imagination are called into requisition; association of ideas are noted; and forthwith we are drifting out on the wide ocean where single impressions are as difficult to descry as the mountain rills flowing to the sea. Here each voyager has his separate experience. Men originate their own systems of thought. There are associations of impressions and of their 'correspondent ideas' according to similarity and dissimilarity; and of *things* according to their contiguity in place and in time; and of occurrences according to the relation of cause and effect. We speak of substance and qualities, and modes of existence; and according to the natural activity of reflection we institute a search into space and time, and all problems of existence presented by the great universe.

Hume is eager to grapple with all the complications here involved, and to him is due the honour belonging to independent research into the origin of the tendencies and habitual courses of reflection characteristic of our mental procedure. His first concern is to be true to his

fundamental position, 'that all our simple ideas in their first appearance are derived from simple impressions which are correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent.' His next is to trace, with the most painstaking care, the manner in which men come to think as they do of the relations of things external, and of their own doings and destiny. Only a brief outline of his method can be given here.

Impressions and ideas are passing incidents, quickly vanishing from our consciousness. How then are *relations* established affording coherence to our experience, and giving to it an enlarged significance? 'When any impression has been present with the mind, it again makes its appearance there as an idea' (23). The impressions 'have gone before to prepare the way' for the ideas, and 'the faculty by which we repeat our impressions' is either memory or imagination. We note 'that quality by which two ideas are connected together in the imagination,' so that the one 'naturally introduces the other' to consciousness; and also 'the arbitrary union of two ideas in the fancy,' in accordance with some particular circumstance by which 'we may think proper to compare them' (32). Here three 'faculties' are at work, Memory, Imagination, Comparison. Their nature is not specially considered, but rather the 'association of ideas.' 'This uniting principle among ideas' is 'as a gentle force which commonly prevails,' as appears in the common features of language, 'nature in a manner pointing out to everyone those simple ideas which are most proper to be united into a complex one.' Such references to the action of 'nature' are frequent. The qualities by which

'the mind is after this manner conveyed from one idea to another' are Resemblance, Contiguity in time or place, and Cause and Effect. We enter on the exercise of comparison, discrimination, classification, and inference. We are within the recognised province of Intellect and Will. Hume does not, however, deal with the exercise of these in a prominent way. He does, indeed, occasionally allude to the fact that 'we accompany our ideas with a kind of reflection' (52), and, referring to power and activity, he remarks that 'when a person is possessed of any power, there is no more required to convert it into action, but the exercise of the Will' (30). These are, however, only occasional references. He is much more occupied with 'association of ideas' as 'the gentle force which commonly prevails,' under conditions not generally noted by us. His service to philosophy is most manifest in this direction, while things, as well as ideas, come largely into view.

Cause and Effect may be selected as the most important of the relations named, the treatment of which is most characteristic of our author. Resemblance is readily restricted to ideas, but subsequent references apply to the outer world. 'As the senses, in changing their objects, . . . take them as they lie contiguous to each other, the imagination must by long custom acquire the same method of thinking' (28). But 'there is no relation which produces a stronger connection in the fancy, and makes one idea more readily recall another than the relation of cause and effect betwixt their objects' (28). Cause concerns change and motion, as well as origin of existence, and so bears on our observations first, and on philosophic

thought afterwards. A cause is that which under existing conditions produces change in the order of things. We deal no longer with sensory impressions, but with things as related to each other. Hume's statements recognise this. Causality is 'the power by which one object produces another' (126). 'Cause and effect are relations of which we receive information from experience' (126). Experience places us in relation with the external, so that we are constantly influenced by the conditions around us, and that to a degree much greater than particular impressions entail. Hence the need for referring not only to impressions and ideas, but also to objects, to physical laws, and to the action of nature. Allusions to those abound in Hume's *Treatise*, but without deliberate treatment of the problem as to the relation of impressions to objects. There is, however, necessary reference to adequate and inadequate 'ideas,' and it is assumed that 'wherever ideas are adequate representations of objects, the relations, contradictions, and agreements of the ideas are all applicable to the objects' (58).

The following are examples of Hume's more general statements as to Causation. Causality is 'the power by which one object produces another' (126). 'It is only causation which produces such a connexion as to give us assurance, from the existence or action of one object, that it was followed or preceded by any other existence or action' (133). 'To begin regularly we must consider *the idea of causation*, and see from what origin it is derived, . . . examining that primary impression from which it arises' (134). It is granted that 'the idea of

Cause' is within consciousness, the problem concerns its entrance.

Our author's first effort is to fence round the area of research. This is done by a series of *negatives* which will be admitted. (1) 'The power by which one object produces another is never discoverable merely from their idea' (126); nor (2) 'from abstract reasoning or reflection' (126). (3) 'There is no single phenomenon, even the most simple, which can be accounted for from the qualities of the *objects* as they appear to us'; or (4) 'which we could foresee without the help of our memory and experience' (126). This, then, is Hume's grand difficulty. If 'nothing is ever really present with the mind but its perceptions, or impressions and ideas' (123), and if 'the qualities of the objects as they appear to us' do not include 'the power by which one object produces another,' whence comes the conception of Cause?

For an answer we must turn to the objects and their relations. 'Let us, therefore, cast our eye on any two objects, which we call cause and effect, and turn them on all sides, in order to find that impression which produces an idea of such prodigious consequence' (135). Coming soon to admit that 'there is a *necessary* connexion,' he says, 'Here again I turn the object on all sides' (139). The phrase is a favourite one, indicating his reliance on carefully derived observation rather than on casual impressions, such as come to the non-reflective mind, and declaring how difficult is the pass over these mountains. How can we rise from the fleeting impressions, and from their 'double,' to recognise the fixed or the 'necessary' in nature and in thought? That this elevation is reached,

even by ordinary minds independently, is a familiar fact; yet is the exercise one of very striking character, for 'the mind in its reasoning from causes or effects carries its views beyond these objects which it sees or remembers' (148). Without parting company with its 'impressions and ideas,' it transcends them all, and also those efforts of memory by which those are recalled. The 'necessary' in thought, and also in nature itself, is as superior to 'common experience' as the mountain height is above the stream in the valley. Even 'to turn the objects on all sides' will help us no more than our lifting of stones from the bed of the stream and turning them in our hands before throwing them back will help us in climbing to the heights above. When we speak of 'invariable sequence,' and 'uniformity of nature,' and of 'necessary connection,' 'we always conclude there is some *secret* cause' (133), as to which experience carries no witness. Experience leaves all in uncertainty—the issue is doubt—a sceptical philosophy, thinking and speaking of that which is beyond our reach, yet sorely puzzled by a persistent reference to the necessity of a cause, which all affirm, and yet which experience does not warrant. The Philosophy exploring the valley finds no approach to the pass by which to cross into the region beyond. 'Some secret cause' is still our phrase.

At this point curiosity is greatly quickened as Hume's steps are watched. 'The idea of causation must be derived from some *relation* among objects' (136). 'What, then, are the features of this relation, which is of greater importance than any other?' Objects considered as causes or effects are (1) contiguous; (2) cause is prior to

the effect; (3) 'there is a necessary connection to be taken into consideration;' and this third feature is 'of greater importance' than the other two relations, for contiguity of place and priority in time are not peculiar to the relation under consideration. When we speak of the *necessity of a cause*, and when the recognition of this necessity stimulates our enquiry and regulates our reasoning, there seems an ultimate principle which impressions and their ideas do not originate.

Pressed by this difficulty, Hume devotes a section of the *Treatise* to the question, 'Why a cause is always necessary' (I. iii. 3, p. 141). 'It is a general maxim in philosophy that whatever begins to exist must have a cause of existence. This is commonly taken for granted in all reasonings without any proof given or demanded. It is supposed to be founded on intuition, and to be one of those maxims which, though they may be denied with the lips, it is impossible for men in their hearts really to doubt of' (142). This is very different from fastening the eyes on 'particular effects,' and thereafter searching for their 'particular causes.' When we say that 'a cause is always necessary,' we maintain a general truth which cannot be established by any number of particulars, or even by a whole lifetime of experience. The recognition of the maxim, and the search for a particular cause adequate to account for a particular effect, are exercises of mind quite distinct, the one implying certainty, the other ignorance, which can be dispelled only by observation. Hume's enquiry is concerned with the former of these questions, the warrant for the general maxim 'that whatever begins to exist must have a cause,' and the

claim that this maxim is held by men 'without any proof given or demanded.' His method is to 'examine this maxim by the idea of knowledge above explained,' that 'nothing is ever really present with the mind but its perceptions, or impressions and ideas.' But this maxim cannot be included among impressions; we seem in danger of making a theory the test of fact, rather than fact the test of theory. 'All certainty arises from the comparison of ideas, and from the discovery of such relations as are unalterable, so long as the ideas continue the same' (142). These relations are, resemblance, proportions, degrees of quality, and contrariety. None of these 'are implied in this proposition, Whatever has a beginning has also a cause of existence.' What then? Cause is not an impression, and cannot be its double. The relation of cause and effect is distinct from all the relations enumerated. We cannot, indeed, demonstrate 'the impossibility there is that anything can ever begin to exist without some productive principle.' 'The general maxim in philosophy' is, however, held 'without any proof given or demanded.' The attempted demonstrations of Hobbes, Clarke, and Locke are unavailing. Hence it seems open to Hume to retreat upon his favourite position. 'Since it is not from knowledge or any scientific reasoning that we derive the opinion of the necessity of a cause to every new production, that opinion must necessarily arise from observation and experience' (147). How, then, is the popular opinion, the 'maxim in philosophy,' the proposition 'whatever has a beginning has also a cause of existence' to be vindicated? His course is a retreat from the principle to particular oc-

currences, as these stand related to particular causes. 'The next question should naturally be, how experience gives rise to such a principle? But as I find it will be more convenient to sink this question in the following, Why we conclude that such particular causes must necessarily have such particular effects, and why we form an inference from one to another? we shall make that the subject of our future enquiry. It will, perhaps, be found in the end that the same answer will serve for both questions' (p. 148).

This expectation, sounding oddly from one who professes only a knowledge of particulars in experience, appears at the close of section 3 of the third Part of the *Treatise*, and not till section 14 do we reach 'the idea of *necessary* connexion' (p. 272). These 120 pages are occupied with discussions as to the characteristics of our reasonings, dependence on memory, probability, association of ideas, opinion or belief joined to conceptions of things, custom, operating in an oblique and artificial manner, influence of contiguity and resemblance as assisting the conception of cause and effect, formation of general rules, credulity, effects of education, influence of belief, perception of pain and pleasure, the idea of good and evil as actuating the will, effects on the imagination, mixture of truth and falsehood, likelihood and probability, the slow steps by which our judgment arrives at a full assurance, strong tendency to continue in an accepted course, direct and subsidiary or oblique influence of habit, transference of the past to the future; 'all reasonings are nothing but the effects of custom.'

From this extended discussion it will be enough to

select the references to causality, which will enable the reader to trace the general line of thought. Even when the mind carries its reasonings from causes or effects *beyond* objects seen or remembered, 'it must never lose sight of them entirely.' 'We must establish the existence of causes' (148). 'As to those impressions which arise from the senses, their ultimate cause is, in my opinion, perfectly inexplicable by human reason, and it will always be impossible to decide with certainty whether they arise immediately from the object, or are produced by the creative power of the mind, or are derived from the author of our being' (152). 'The inference we draw from cause to effect is not derived merely from a survey of particular objects' (155). Even 'contiguity and succession' do not prove sufficient; our reliance is largely on *constant conjunction*, but this implies no more than this, 'that like objects have always been placed in like relations of contiguity and succession,' a fact which is insufficient to warrant the assertion of 'necessary connexion' (157). Thus 'this new discovered relation of a constant conjuncture seems to advance us but very little in our way.' 'Our memory presents us only with a multitude of instances,' and it must be confessed that 'from the mere repetition of any past impression, even to infinity, there never will arise any new original idea, such as that of a necessary connexion' (158). The investigation is thus in danger of closing in a recognition of 'continuity in nature' as a fact in history, not in an explanation of the philosophic maxim. A sense of helplessness seems to come over the investigator, who is constrained to confess that 'from the mere repetition of any past im-

pression, even to infinity, there never will arise any new original idea, such as that of a necessary connexion' (158). 'Even after the observation of the frequent or constant conjunction of objects we have no reason to draw any inference concerning any object beyond those of experience' (245). The alleged 'necessity' has disappeared, vanishing into the gathering of unsolved problems, whose accumulation contributes to the building up of a sceptical philosophy. Yet this search for particular causes would never have been instituted but for the belief 'commonly taken for granted in all reasonings, without any proof given or demanded,' that 'whatever begins to exist must have a cause of existence' (141). While trusting Experience to its utmost extent, we may possibly be constrained to admit that it does not account for all our thoughts. However far our observations and reasonings are pushed, we cannot complete our demonstration. The small success 'has at last obliged philosophers to conclude that the ultimate force and efficacy of nature is perfectly unknown to us, and that it is in vain we search for it in all the known qualities of matter' (279). 'Suppose two objects to be presented to us, of which the one is the cause and the other the effect, it is plain that from the simple consideration of one or both these objects we shall never perceive the tie by which they are united' (285). All that can be said is this, that after 'a sufficient number of instances we immediately feel a determination of the mind to pass from one object to its usual attendant.' This determination is unexplained; custom prevails. 'The several instances of resembling conjunctions lead us into the notions of power

and necessity. . . . These instances have no union but in the mind which observes them and collects their ideas. . . . Necessity then is the effect of this observation, and is nothing but an internal impression of the mind, or a determination to carry our thoughts from one object to another' (289). This is only necessary determination of our thoughts, leaving unexplained our fundamental maxim, 'the necessity of a cause for every occurrence.' How he regards this result appears from these words—'I am sensible that of all the paradoxes which I have had, or shall hereafter have occasion to advance in the course of this treatise, the present one is the most violent' (291).

The main features of Hume's intellectual philosophy are now before the reader. Our limits prevent our dealing with his analysis of the passions and his theory of the basis of moral distinctions. My leading purpose has been to make clear what is to be understood by Hume's scepticism. It is distrust of everything which transcends our sensory impressions and the 'copies' of them. All certainty is reduced to passing impression and its passing influence. There is no direct evidence as to the nature of matter or of mind. He esteems these his chief 'discoveries' in philosophy, the exact correspondence of impressions and ideas; that association of ideas under custom is the utmost reach of the understanding; that the knowledge of a cause is unattainable, and that 'the very essence of belief consists in the force and vivacity of the conception.'

The first volume of the *Treatise* does not conclude without acknowledgment of the sense of his own perplexity and misgiving, which has an autobiographic value of the

highest degree. 'The intense view of the manifold contradictions and imperfections in human reason has so wrought upon me and heated my brain, that I am ready to reject all belief and reasoning, and can look upon no opinion even as more probable or likely than another. Where am I, or what? From what causes do I derive my existence, and to what condition shall I return? Whose favour shall I court, and whose anger must I dread? What beings surround me, and on whom have I any influence, or who have any influence on me? I am confounded with all these questions, and begin to fancy myself in the most deplorable condition imaginable, environed with the deepest darkness, and utterly deprived of the use of every member and faculty.

'Most fortunately it happens that, since reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds, nature herself suffices to that purpose and cures me of this philosophic melancholy and delirium, either by relaxing this bent of mind, or by some avocation and lively impression of my senses, which obliterate all these chimeras. I dine, I play a game of back-gammon; I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when after three or four hours' amusement, I would return to these speculations, they appear so cold, and strained, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any farther.'

Still, 'I cannot forbear having a curiosity to be acquainted with the principles of moral good and evil, the nature and foundation of government, and the cause of those several passions and inclinations which actuate and govern me. I am uneasy to think I approve of one object and disapprove of another; call one thing beautiful

and another deformed ; decide concerning truth and falsehood, reason and folly, without knowing on what principles I proceed' (466-470).

The reception given to the *Treatise* was disappointing to Hume. It did not on its appearance awaken any marked interest. But its effect on human thought was deep and lasting. A new epoch in philosophy follows directly from it. Scepticism results in a stronger faith. The effect on philosophy was quickening. Theology was differently affected. It was resentful and actively antagonistic. The assault was delivered from a remote point; but, on that account, it seemed all the more unsettling; in challenging the foundations of all certainty, it threatened religious faith by involving all belief in common disaster. To the theologians of the day, who were the most earnest and devoted expounders of Christianity, Hume was the arch-sceptic—the adversary of religion. Their attitude towards him was, however, determined more by their profound sense of the interests involved, and of the consequences to the country which would follow a period of unsettled faith, than by an exact and far-reaching survey of his philosophic positions.

In the region of philosophy, the result was altogether a gain. Hume led the way into the enquiry as to the origin of our impressions and convictions and habits of thought. He opened up the large question concerning the synthesis of knowledge. He tested empirical philosophy by asking whether all things are not involved in uncertainty, if experience is only a succession of sensations, vanishing in less vivid copies. His research involved constant reference to objects and their relations

and continual allusion to the action of mind, involving imagination, thought, will, custom, and general principles. Hume's references to the mind or soul possess special interest and are of frequent occurrence. Of these, there are three which deserve to be quoted. They occur when his investigations into 'the extent and force of the human understanding' is far advanced. 'What we call a *mind* is nothing but a heap or collection of different perceptions, united together by certain relations, and supposed, though falsely, to be endowed with a perfect simplicity and identity' (361). 'The mind is a kind of theatre where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, repass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations. . . . The comparison of the theatre must not mislead us. They are the successive perceptions only that constitute the mind; nor have we the most distant notion of the place where these scenes are represented or of the materials of which it is composed' (439). 'I cannot compare the soul more properly to anything than to a republic or commonwealth, in which the several members are united by the reciprocal ties of government and subordination, and give use to other persons who propagate the same republic in the incessant changes of its parts. And as the same individual republic may not only change its members, but also its law and constitutions, in like manner the same person may vary his character and disposition, as well as his impressions and ideas, without losing his identity' (453).* The sceptical bias is marked, but there is a sense of the inevitable acknowledgment of an individuality — an identity of

* These passages occur thus—I., iv. sec. 2; sec. 6; sec. 6.

being and a power of direction of conduct. The breadth of significance involved may be seen, when Hume says in preparing the way for the quotation last given—'The true idea of the human mind is to consider it as a *system* of different perceptions or different existences which are linked together by the relation of cause and effect, and mutually produce, destroy, influence, and modify each other' (453). The passages do not readily coalesce in a consistent and coherent representation of the understanding, but they come as near to each other as seems possible in a sceptical philosophy, declaring 'that all the nice and subtle questions concerning personal identity can never possibly be decided.' The author does not escape the confession of his own despair,—'For my part, I know not what ought to be done in the present case.' 'A true sceptic will be diffident of his philosophical doubts, as well as of his philosophical conviction.'

Hume's references to Nature (27, 211, 321, 374,) will specially interest the student of mental philosophy. His service to philosophy was great even with 'his miscellaneous way of reasoning' (i., 457). His scepticism gave a fillip to deeper thought; it awakened new interest in the thinking view of things; it roused to fresh effort the men who were in danger of being satisfied with dogmatic formulae. It brought a searchlight on Empiricism, exposing its weakness; it disclosed the large demands which philosophy makes on Reason; it lifted the question as to 'the extent and force of the human understanding' into a position of first rank; it introduced a new epoch, full of energy, enthusiasm, and expectation. These results came slowly; we cannot wonder that the author was disconcerted

and disheartened by lack of evidence of their approach; but they came surely; yet not in such form as was expected by the pioneer, who whetted his axe so eagerly and dealt his blows with an energy which had gathered force from daily exercise.

Hume's native land was roused. The 'Scottish Philosophy' was the fruit of his scepticism—the philosophy of 'common sense,' resting on 'principles' or essential conditions of the understanding, without reference to which no explanation of Experience is possible. The answer came first, in critical form, from another Hume—Henry Home, Lord Kames; more slowly and systematically from Reid, Stewart, and Hamilton, Scotland's leaders in the march for 'a thinking view of things.' A deeper and more elaborate answer came from Kant, who confessed that he had been roused by Hume from dogmatic slumber. Kant's contribution consisted of a critical examination of the conditions of human knowledge—a marvel of acumen, which has taxed the acuteness of later thinkers for its exposition and criticism, and has given to the synthesis of human knowledge a new meaning. To Hume's scepticism we owe the transcendental philosophy of Germany, through all the developments of Kantian and Hegelian thought onwards to 'the return upon Kant' more recently proclaimed. The reception of the *Treatise* was such that he afterwards seemed 'anxious to disconnect himself with the authorship' (Burton, I., 136), or, otherwise, to describe it as a 'juvenile work,' 'projected before he left college' (Advertisement to *Essays*). On the other hand, he claims that 'most of the principles and reasonings contained in this volume' of Essays were 'published' in the *Treatise*;

and then he adds, 'not finding it successful, he was sensible of his error in going to the press too early; he cast the whole anew in the following pieces.' Whatever may have been the advantages in respect of the more popular form of the Essays, most students of the earlier and later works will concur in the judgment of Huxley as to their merits, when he says, concerning the *Inquiry*,—'In style, it exhibits a great improvement on the *Treatise;* but the substance, if not deteriorated, is certainly not improved' (Huxley's *Hume*, p. 11).

CHAPTER V

HUME AS HISTORIAN

THE disappointment felt by Hume on account of the reception of the two first volumes of his *Treatise of Human Nature* did not daunt him or abate his literary activity. He prepared his third volume, *Of Morals*, which was published in 1740. Thereafter, he carried through the preparation of the Essays, presenting his theory in more popular form, and including literary and political essays along with philosophical. These he published in 1742.

He sought, however, some wider range of effort, on which he might concentrate; and he found it in History, to which he forthwith devoted himself with the greatest ardour. In this department of research, he shewed his breadth of interest, his profound reflection on social and political problems, and his acuteness on economic questions—the last being so marked that Macaulay has said of him that he was 'undoubtedly one of the most profound political economists of his time.' *

Hume's merits as a philosopher were, indeed, to some extent a disadvantage to him as a historian. Philosophic interests were not allowed to abate carefulness in research, but these induced him to enter into general problems

* Macaulay's *History of England*, People's Ed., II., 399.

more than was always advantageous to the narrative, or demanded by the historic spirit. He seems to have been conscious of this danger, for he remarks upon it, as one of the things clear to him, that the sceptical form of his philosophic inquiries must not be allowed to influence his historical writing. When full of delight over the completion of the first volume of his *History* (1754), he writes to a friend who 'had entertained apprehensions of his discretion,' explaining that he had written for the people, and he is at pains to say that he had 'thought that scepticism was not in its place in an historical production' (Burton's *Life*, I., 397). If the admission is not altogether favourable to his philosophy, it does honour to the historian. Even with his best endeavour, however, he did not escape from a tendency to undervalue the earnest convictions of religious men, and, at times, to disparage the rights of the people—a tendency resulting partly from sceptical, partly from political bias. It must, at the same time, be admitted that his advantages were considerable from being a philosopher first and a historian afterwards. Without losing sight of the demand for clearness, brightness, and vivacity of style, he never failed to consider deliberately the political and social problems which were being worked out in history. His treatment of these has such value that, even when granting that the large mass of historical material brought within reach since his day requires large modification of his views, his glowing, and often eloquent, pages may be read with advantage, as supplying a practical embodiment of political philosophy. So well recognised was this that Hume won distinction as 'the philosophic historian.'

In another sense, these volumes of history shew that he was, at times, far from being philosophic. When dealing with the principles involved in a great national movement, his writing is always suggestive; but, when passing judgment on men and measures, he appears often as the partisan. He felt keenly and wrote strongly, and was not infrequently disposed to give way to the bias which swayed him as a politician. This appears chiefly in his relation to political parties, often indicated in the *History*, as it is avowed in his private correspondence. The facts are now placed in stronger light by the *Letters to William Strahan*, for publication of which we are indebted to Lord Rosebery and to Dr Birkbeck Hill, an editor at once competent and unwearied. This volume of Letters is now an essential supplement to Burton's *Life*, and is specially important as bearing on the *History*. Hume cherished a strong antagonism to the Whigs, and found occasion for expressing his enmity with a modicum of reserve. That his party bias influenced him in his *History* admits of no question. He is himself conscious of it. Burton admits the consequent inconsistencies (I., 405); and though Macaulay goes too far in his condemnation of alleged 'sophistry,' he has ample warrant for his charge of partisanship (*Edinburgh Review*, xlvii., p. 359). What the philosopher's attitude should be, Hume clearly indicated in his Political Discourse on *The Protestant Succession*, when he said,—'It belongs to a philosopher alone, who is of neither party, to put all the circumstances in the scale, and assign to each of them its proper poise and influence' (*Political Discourses* [1752], p. 270). It is not easy to be quite philosophic and also resolute in political

action. His own representation of his attitude is this,—'With regard to politics and the character of princes and great men, I think I am very moderate. My views of *things* are more conformable to Whig principles; my representations of *persons* to Tory prejudices. Nothing can so much prove that men commonly regard more persons than things, as to find that I am commonly numbered among the Tories' (Burton, II., 11). When the keenness of Hume's antagonism to the leaders of the Commons in the time of Charles I. is considered, this admission must be remembered, that they were 'a set of men of the most uncommon capacity and the largest views' (*History*, vol. vi., p. 184, ed. 1813). In writing to his publisher, he says, 'I think I have kept clear of party in my *History*' (*Letters to Strahan*, p. 32). There is, however, reason to sympathise with Macaulay's criticism of the *History* (*Edinburgh Review*, vol. lxvii.),—'Though a great work, drawn by a master hand, it has all the lights Tory, and all the shades Whig.'

Granting that serious deductions are to be made from its claim to authority, his *History* is 'a great work,' possessing high value for present-day readers, equally on account of its vivid descriptions of grand events and of its philosophic insight. His devotion to historical research is beyond all praise. He searches unweariedly through books, parliamentary reports, and other sources of information. He corresponds with specialists on questions of perplexity, as, for example, when seeking to ascertain the value of 'subsidies' at different periods in our Parliamentary history. And he persists, with surprising constancy and care, in the revision of successive editions

of his writings; so that it is not without solid foundation that he keeps repeating his claims to confidence and honour. 'I certainly deserve the approbation of the public from my care and disinterestedness, however deficient in other particulars' (*Letters to Strahan*, p. 1). His election to the office of Librarian in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, had this special attraction for him, that it gave him unrestricted 'command of a large library,' — a storehouse of materials for the historian. At the same time, this election had a transitory interest which he keenly relished; he was brimful of delight because he had triumphed over the social forces in the city, opposed to him avowedly on account of his sceptical philosophy.

His ideal of history was lofty, and was kept well in view, even though occasionally beclouded by political bias. 'History, the great mistress of wisdom, furnishes examples of all kinds; and every prudential, as well as moral precept, may be authorised by those events, which her enlarged mirror is able to present to us' (*History*, chap. lix., vol. vii., p. 138, ed. 1813). The philosopher and historian are at one in such an utterance. Along with it may be quoted a passage from the introduction to his *Treatise*,—'However other nations may rival us in poetry, and excel us in some other agreeable arts, the improvements in reason and philosophy can only be owing to a land of toleration and of liberty.' He felt proud in being one of a group of Scotchmen who had devoted themselves to history,—'I believe this is the historical age, and this the historical nation' (*Letters to Strahan*, p. 155).

For his first effort, Hume selected the Stuart Period, including in his first volume the reigns of James and Charles I. His attraction to the period was found in its comparative nearness to his own time, and in the wealth of material which lay ready to hand. Subsidiary was the pride in Scotland's honour in giving a monarch to England, and the vital concern which Scotland felt in the progress of the United Kingdom. The selection nevertheless involved the historian in special difficulties, special to the times as involving the perplexing occurrences which led up to the Revolution, special to the writer on account of religious questions being so deeply involved in the conflict between the Commons and the Crown. Hume faced his difficulties with philosophic deliberation, if also with admixture of keen personal feeling. When the first volume appeared in 1754, it raised a storm of criticism, which the philosopher braved with some sense of irritation. When the second volume appeared in 1756, including the period from the death of Charles I. to the Revolution, it was received with much more favour. These two volumes gave him celebrity, far beyond anything achieved by his philosophic works; from their appearance he ranked as a great public man, who did honour to his country, and who had written with a power and vividness of description which went to the heart of the people, and made references to his writings familiar in the arena of Parliament, and in the private correspondence of the leading politicians of the day. That Hume was a man of strong political bias made the references the more numerous and telling; and if he was rendered famous in his day, he suffered a penalty

attending on fame; he had to wince under an attack from Chatham, delivered with force of eloquence in the House of Lords.

After the storm of criticism had ceased, it appeared that the second volume had been the more popular. Hume's own judgment was at variance with the award of his critics. 'I must own that in my private judgment the first volume of my *History* is by far the best; the subject was more noble, and admitted both of greater ornaments of eloquence and nicer distinctions of reasoning. However, if the public is so capricious as to prefer the second, I am very well pleased, and hope the prepossession in my favour will operate backwards and remove even the prejudices formerly contracted' (*Letters to Strahan*, p. 4). The adverse judgment pronounced on the first volume concentrated mainly on the defence of Charles against the demands of the people. His defence of the kingly prerogative was the more resented that it was manifestly at variance with many of his avowed political maxims. Even after all has been said as to his reasonings, his moral sentiment, and his eloquence, it must be granted that his sympathy with Charles as a brave man, sorely driven and tried, carried him to an altitude of antagonism to popular rights at variance with his deeper and life-long convictions. Burton, who shews the utmost favour for Hume, admits that his published opinions were strangely at variance with much of the writing in the first volume of the *History*. 'In his philosophical examination of the principles of government, written in times of hot party feeling, he had discarded the theories of arbitrary prerogative and divine right with bold and calm disdain'

(*Life of Hume*, I., 402). The current of his thought went strongly against regal domination; his sympathy was avowedly with 'the sentiments of liberty, honour, equity, and valour' (*History*, I., 178, ed. 1821). He granted as to the leaders of the Commons, that 'these generous patriots,' 'animated with a warm regard to liberty,' aimed only at 'reducing the prerogative within more reasonable compass' (*History*, VI., p. 184, ed. 1863). In view of these declarations, we cannot wonder at Jeffrey's criticism —'that he should have sided with the Tudors and the Stuarts against the people seems quite inconsistent with the great traits of his character' (*Edinburgh Review*, xii., 276).

The explanation is not found in any change of opinion, or in any conclusion slowly reached after deliberate criticism, or in finer appreciation of the difficulties belonging to the period of political development in our rational history, or in blindness to the merits of the popular leaders, or to the demerits of the kings. The key seems to be found in certain outstanding characteristics of the philosophic historian; first, the excess of philosophic indifference, or 'candid indifference,' which he specially commends and reckons as rare (see *History*, vol. vi., p. 12); second, in his enmity against 'zealots,' political and religious; and, further (perhaps most of all), in his dread of outbursts of excited feeling among the populace,—'the enthusiastic fire which afterwards set the whole nation in combustion' (*History*, vol. vi., 269, ed. 1813). These seem to me the causes, the force of which can be allowed without approval of their influence on the *History*. The result was a singular blending of antipathy and sympathy

towards the Puritans. It was occasion of intense annoyance to Hume to find that 'the enquiries and debates concerning tonnage and poundage went hand in hand with theological or metaphysical controversies,' touching 'subjects where it is not allowable for human nature to expect any positive truth or certainty.' It is easy to imagine the intense wrath of Hume against 'the puritanical sectaries.' There must have been much show of spirit when he was dealing with such subjects, inducing temporary forgetfulness of lofty prerogative, and of the forces of the Court of High Commission and the Star Chamber. His antipathy flashes out with fury against Cromwell, from his first appearance in the House of Commons. Oliver Cromwell, 'complaining of one who, he was told, preached flat popery,' receives from Hume this slighting remark — 'It is amusing to observe the first words of this fanatical hypocrite correspond so exactly to his character' (*History*, VI., 248). The age which has gained possession of *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches* is incapable of accepting the word 'hypocrite' as applicable to the hero of the great struggle of the Puritans; and this 'young man of no account in the nation' afterwards wins from Hume the acknowledgment of a 'rough but dexterous hand,' and of 'the unparalleled greatness which he afterwards attained' (*History*, VII., 97) — a leader in an age 'with awful, august, heroic thoughts in its heart, and at last with steel sword in its hand' (Carlyle's *Cromwell*, intro., vol. i., p. 68).

The first volume of the *History* called forth an anonymous volume—*Letters on Mr Hume's History of Great*

Britain—published in Edinburgh in 1756, and generally attributed to Daniel Macqueen, D.D. The volume is devoted to a criticism of Hume's treatment of religion. These letters arose out of a discussion of the merits of the *History* at a social gathering. Their criticism is directed mainly against two passages, in which Hume dwells on 'two species of religion — the superstitious and the fanatical.' The former is illustrated in the Romish Church, the latter in the Reformed. The author proposes 'candid and calm debate,' and proceeds to set forth his complaint against 'the author's indecent excursions on the subject of religion, the genius of the Protestant faith, and the characters of the first reformers' (p. 4). He vindicates 'the right of private judgment in all matters of religion,' with the rejection of 'splendour and glittering pomp of worship,' and claims for the reformed faith deliverance of men from the 'delusion of an over-heated imagination.' This formal criticism was in harmony with a very wide expression of dissatisfaction. Its prevalence affected the mind of Hume, and in course of his corrections, and the adjustment of the volume to its place in a more extended plan, his references to religion are modified, and the more offensive passages concerning the reformers and their beliefs disappear. In a letter to Dr Clephane he says—'I am convinced that whatever I have said of religion should have received more softenings. There is no passage in the *History* which strikes in the least at Revelation. But as I run over all the sects successively, and speak of each with some disregard, the reader, putting the whole together, concludes that I am of no sect, which to him will appear the same thing as the being of no religion'

(Burton's *Life*, II., p. 10). Burton, remarking on his 'consciousness that some apology was called for,' gives the 'draft of a preface' to his second volume, the substance of which was ultimately inserted as a note towards the end of that volume. In this he says—'It ought to be no matter of offence that in this volume, as well as in the foregoing, the mischief which arose from the abuses of religion are so often mentioned, while so little in comparison is said of the salutary consequences which result from true and genuine piety.' In a few carefully chosen paragraphs he explains and vindicates 'the free and impartial manner in which he has treated religious controversy' (Burton, II., p. 11).

When Hume escapes from direct contact with those whom he regarded as 'enraged and fanatical reformers,' and contemplates the progress of civil and religious liberty, his judgment and better feeling come out in a different phase. Then he acknowledges that 'the precious spark of liberty had been kindled, and was preserved by the Puritans alone.' 'It is to them that the English owe the whole freedom of their constitution.' These utterances must be kept before us when we form our judgment of his account of the reign of Charles I. Throughout both volumes on the Stuart dynasty there runs a strong bias in favour of the monarchs with whom the people were at variance. While he allows that 'the views of the popular leaders were more judicious and profound' than those of the Court favourites, he seems willing to defer to the lofty admonition of a king who claims to be superior 'by nature,' and takes such a view of popular rights as to be disposed to write in terms such as these—'To be sacrificed

to the interest, policy, and ambition of the great is so much the common lot of the people that they may appear unreasonable who would pretend to complain of it' (*History*, chap. li., vol. vi., 215-217, ed. 1813, referring to the discontent which prevailed at the assembling of Charles' third Parliament). When the complications thicken, and Charles, after the rupture with the Parliament, is encountering evil days, and at length is a captive, and the army is dominant over Parliament, Hume's horror is such that he finds it a hard task 'to put all the circumstances in the scale, and assign to each of them its proper poise and influence.' The wrong-doings of Charles are forgotten, and his woes make powerful appeal to the feelings of the historian—with the terrible scenes vividly present to his imagination, and his feelings roused to passionate sympathy, he is by many subtle influences drawn to the position of a partisan without being able to maintain the critical spirit for which he was distinguished. He was not abandoning the popular cause and assuming the responsibility of the vindicator of kingly oppression; but he was ready to argue that 'it is seldom that the people gain anything by revolutions in Government' (chap. lix., vol. vii., 107, ed. 1813); and to maintain that 'Government is instituted in order to restrain the fury and injustice of the people; and being always founded on opinion, not on force, it is dangerous to weaken, by these speculations, the reverence which the multitude owe to authority, and to instruct them beforehand that the case can ever happen, when they may be freed from their duty of allegiance' (vii., 136). When

these springs of feeling have been traced and noted, we have the secret of Hume's treatment of the Stuart dynasty. Allowing for the immense difference which separates dethronement from execution; and granting that Hume has reason for his strong condemnation of the latter, we are still surprised to find what we should hardly have expected from 'the philosophic historian,' a fear of open discussion, and apprehension of the results if the people are allowed to pass from leading strings. After considering the sad issue of the conflict between the royal prerogative and the liberty of the people, and specially of Parliament, he is prepared to admit that one is 'at a loss to determine what conduct in the king's circumstances could have maintained the authority of the crown, and preserved the peace of the nation' (vii., p. 135).

But, apart from his opinions on the subjects named, the historic spirit and power of the author are fitted to awaken high admiration. His appreciation of Charles' fidelity to his friends and of his acuteness in carrying out negotiations with the Parliamentary leaders; his description of the king's interview with his family, and of his noble and courageous bearing in meeting a violent death, are outstanding examples of high excellence in historic writing.

His scheme advanced to more extended proportions as his interest developed. He passed back to include the Tudors, publishing in 1759, two volumes on *The History of England under the House of Tudor.* Thereafter he contemplated a complete history, the earliest period coming last in the order of treatment. The result was *The History of England from the invasion of Julius Cæsar to the*

accession of Henry VII., in two volumes, published in 1761. These separate works were subsequently revised and combined, presenting Hume's *History of England* as we are now familiar with it in the eight volume editions.

The work of composition, revision, and reconstruction was carried out with the utmost care and with unceasing interest. The conditions of work are full of interest now. He was constantly negotiating for 'franks' under which he could convey manuscript without charge; and when he had a new volume or a large mass of revised material, he announces by post to his publisher in London that 'it will be put into the stage coach in two white iron boxes,' or will be put into 'the fly' on a given date, and may be looked for 'about three weeks hence.' On the first negotiation for appearance of the *History*, Hamilton, the Edinburgh publisher, writes to Strahan, the London publisher, 'we have been at due pains to inform ourselves of the merit of the work, and are well satisfied on that head that it is the pettiest thing that ever was attempted in the English History' (*Letters to Strahan*, p. 3). After its value had been tested by the sale of successive editions, Strahan urges the extension of the *History*. Writing in 1771, Strahan says—'If you write another volume, which the best judges of writing are daily enquiring after, you may demand what you please. It shall be granted' (*Letters to Strahan*, p. 198). Again in 1772 Strahan writes suggesting motives for the continuation of the *History*, 'in which if you will make some progress, however trifling, I will venture to say you will find your immediate account in it' (*Ib.*, p. 243). And once more, in August 1766,

Strahan writes—'Your *History* sells better of late years than before; for the late edition will be gone some time before this can be finished. In short, I see clearly your reputation is gradually rising in the public esteem' (*Ib.*, 340).

CHAPTER VI

HUME IN THE GOVERNMENT SERVICE

WHEN Hume had reached the age of fifty-two he had achieved fame, and was in possession of resources which made him comparatively independent. He was settled in Edinburgh in his house in James Court, overlooking the 'Nor' Loch,' and having a wide sweep of view, stretching over the fields and across the Firth of Forth to the shores of Fife. His mind was full of the prospect of learned leisure, of quiet days, and of jovial evenings among a circle of choice friends. This was the reward of these long years of literary labour through which he had toiled unceasingly; now he meant to enjoy well-earned rest—possibly spending his days in 'idleness and sauntering, and society'—a vision which had often floated attractively before his eyes.

But suddenly a new prospect opened in manner and form unexpected. In 1763, the Earl of Hertford was appointed Ambassador to the French Court; the secretary nominated to the Embassy was unacceptable to him, but, being highly connected, he could not be removed until a favourable opening offered. In these circumstances the Earl looked around for a secretary who should be his own nominee. To the surprise of Hume, he received from

the Earl of Hertford a proposal that he should act in the capacity of secretary. Hume's picture of his future had been so different from this that after his first sense of surprise, and satisfaction with the honour done him, had passed away, he felt reluctant to move. He has thus described the situation. 'I was become not only independent but opulent, I retired to my native country of Scotland, determined never more to set my foot out of it. As I was now turned of fifty, I thought of passing all the rest of my life in this philosophical manner, when I received an invitation from the Earl of Hertford, with whom I was not in the least acquainted, to attend him on his embassy to Paris with a near prospect of being appointed secretary to the embassy; and, in the meanwhile, of performing the functions of that office' (*My Own Life*).

This offer of an official position is in itself matter of much interest, as shewing the impression Hume had made on the Parliamentary and official circle in the United Kingdom. To his recognised distinction as a philosophic historian, the invitation from the Ambassador was due. The Earl of Hertford had no direct knowledge of Hume; he was a nobleman of 'decorum and piety'; so that his selection of the philosophic historian, who was traditionally the philosophical sceptic, shews how high was the confidence he had, not only in his political sagacity, but also in his moral character. Hume felt the stimulating force of the selection, and with sense of the humour of the situation, he quotes with naïve satisfaction the words of his friend Elliot, that 'were he to be proposed for the see of Lambeth no objection could henceforth be made to him' (Burton, II., 159).

Hume declined the offer when first submitted. The reasons given in *My Own Life* are these,—'because I was reluctant to begin connections with the great, and because I was afraid that the civilities and gay company of Paris would prove disagreeable to a man of my age and humour.' The latter clause is sufficiently comical when Hume's fondness for gaiety and gallantry are considered; but it is the expression of feeling quite natural to him, because of his preference for a few chosen friends, with whom he could meet in unrestricted freedom.

The Earl of Hertford was generous enough to repeat his invitation, and to urge its acceptance. On this renewal of the request, Hume consented, feeling the advantage there might be in being thus roused 'from a state of indolence and sloth'; and also the many attractions of residence in the French capital. Only afterwards, when occupied with preliminary arrangements, did Hume get to know why the proposal did not come in the form of immediate appointment to the position of Secretary to the Embassy; and only then did he ascertain that the Earl, in selecting him, had regard not only to his intellectual and acquired fitness for the post, but also to the possibility of his supplying important aid to his son, Lord Beauchamp, when preparing for public service.

Hume was specially fortunate in this entrance on official life. There was no capital in Europe where his writings were so well known, and his philosophical and political positions so fully appreciated as in Paris. His *History* had been applauded by writers so distinguished as Voltaire and Rousseau; and the sceptical

bias of his philosophy found favour with the French of the period. Besides, the custom and fashion of the French capital assigned a prominent place in society to literary celebrities. Hume had, in his literary fame, his introduction to the best society; and when, besides, he appeared as the official secretary of the British Ambassador, his distinction was magnified in a manner additionally attractive. The philosopher, who felt small attraction to the society and the official circles of London, —who in the freedom and spontaneous exaggeration of his private correspondence wrote of 'the factious barbarians of London' (Letter to Robertson,—Burton, II., 178),—became ready to burst out in loud terms of admiration of the French, 'observing on what a different footing learning and the learned are here, from what they are among the factious barbarians above-mentioned.' This tendency to playful exaggeration, appearing in familiar conversation and correspondence, tended to increase the force of feeling which marked a weakness in our philosopher.

His entrance into French society was a novel experience for Hume. It was the triumph of an illustrious author and thinker, who, notwithstanding a certain awkwardness of manner, was found to be a genial spirit and a ready wit, sensitive to the applause which French society lavishes on its favourites. The 'Great David' became one of the lions of the noted drawing-rooms of Paris. His first days in the capital, and those afterwards spent at Fontainbleau, pleased him greatly, introducing him not only to the splendours of court life, but to the lavish applause in which the refined courtiers and ladies of France indulge.

Shortly after his arrival,—26th October 1763, he writes to Adam Smith,—'I have been three days at Paris and two at Fontainbleau, and have everywhere met with the most extraordinary honours, which the most exorbitant vanity could wish or desire.' Compliments came from the dukes and mareschals of France, and flattery of the most unrestrained form from the conspicuous ladies of Parisian society. He is at first disturbed by the little speeches which greeted him, and then he settled into the pleased feeling of one who has found entrance into a choice circle, and is welcomed on every appearance. He saw much of the grace and vivacity of the French salon; and he saw besides not a little of the vice in the midst of that refinement,—saw without approving,—and without being dragged into the vortex. There was in Hume a boyish exuberance of feeling when placed in circumstances novel and attractive. This lent piquancy to the accession of the Scotchman to the brilliant drawing-room gatherings. In the round of gaiety and display of intellectual wealth, he found intense pleasure. The more staid feeling of his reflective hours finds expression in the letter to Adam Smith from which a quotation has already been given. 'During the two last days, in particular, that I have been at Fontainbleau, I have *suffered* (the expression is not improper) as much flattery as almost any man has ever done in the same time.' But he adds,—'I assure you, I reap more internal satisfaction from the very amiable manners and character of the family in which I live (I mean Lord and Lady Hertford and Lord Beauchamp) than from all these external vanities; and it is that domestic enjoyment which must

be considered as the agreeable circumstance in my situation' (Burton, II., 171).

Hume discharged the duties of Secretary to the British Embassy with a concentration of mind, precision in detail, and sense of responsibility, which fully sustained the expectations of Earl Hertford. So much did he himself feel interest in the round of work, that he writes, after nearly six months' experience, 'Though I have entered late into this scene of life, I am almost as much at my ease, as if I had been educated in it from infancy' (Burton, II., 196). At the close of his work, the Earl spoke with admiration of his 'abilities and ease in business' (*Ib.*, 289).

The round of fashionable entertainments which it was desirable to accept in the interests of the Embassy considerably restricted Hume's opportunity of entering into intimate relations with the learned circles in Paris. As opportunity offered, however, he found occasion and a special satisfaction in the literary gatherings. The more outstanding names amongst those whose friendship he enjoyed are D'Alembut, Turgot, Diderot, Helbach, Helvertius, Buffon and Henault. (For an account of French literary circles at this time see *Edinburgh Review*, xv., 459, and xvii., 290.)

Not till July 13th, 1765, did Hume receive his commission under the Great Seal as Secretary to the Embassy. For more than a year and a half he fulfilled all the duties of the office, while acting only as the nominee of the Ambassador. More than a month before the date of the commission, when the tidings reached him that he had been nominated to the office, he had written to his friend Elliot, expressing his delight that he was now 'possessed

of an office of credit and of £1200 a year.' But the honour was not long continued. Shortly after Hume had received his credentials, Lord Hertford was recalled, on account of a change of Government. The Earl had been appointed to the Embassy by Bute, and continued by Grenville (Walpole's *Memoirs of Geo. III.*, i., 391); but in July 1765, when the Rockingham administration came in, Hertford was nominated Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, while Conway, his brother, became Secretary of State, and leader of the House of Commons. Hume had just gained his official position when he learned that he must forthwith surrender it. The change did not affect his distinction in the eyes of the French Court and of the leaders of fashion in Paris, but for him the brilliance vanished within less than a month. The trouble of this was abated greatly by the prospect of promotion to the rank of secretary at Dublin, for Hertford indicated not only his desire for this, but his determination to secure it.

In the sudden withdrawal of the Ambassador, Hume had an accession of influence in Paris, along with seriously increased responsibilities. He was left Chargé d'Affaires, being entrusted with the duties of British representative until the Duke of Richmond, the new Ambassador, arrived. From July till October, Hume held this position; and he set himself to a careful dealing with the important questions which demanded attention. Lord Brougham had occasion afterwards to make the procedure of the Embassy, during these months, matter of close investigation. We have his judgment of it on record:—'By Lord Aberdeen's kindness, I have been allowed to examine the correspondence of the Embassy

with Marshal Conway during these four months; and it is highly creditable to the philosopher's business-like talents and his capacity for affairs. The negotiations of which he had the sole conduct related to the important and interesting discussions of Canada; matters arising out of the cession, by the Peace of Paris; and to the demolition of the works at Dunkirk, also stipulated by that treaty' (*Lives of Men of Letters*, p. 225—quoted by Burton, ii., 283).

During this busy season, Hume's private interests concentrated on the prospect of his being nominated to the office of Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. The prospect of such distinction had caused quite a flutter of excitement at Ninewells; and was eagerly watched by literary friends in Edinburgh. The Earl of Hertford was eager for Hume's transference along with him to Dublin, and used his influence with the King and the Government, in face of the powerful prejudices against 'the free-thinker.' But official traditions were against him, and 'the official ring' prevailed. Hertford had to yield before a force which he could not resist, and he was appeased by having his own son, Lord Beauchamp, appointed, of whom Hume had expressed high admiration. For Hume the disappointment was great; but after turmoil of feeling endured for a season, and much reluctance to part from Paris, he resolved on return to Edinburgh, and to the quiet of a literary life, in which he found his satisfaction.

The prospect of a high official position in the home country, with £2000 a year, and growing influence in official circles, vanished like a dream, and with it well-nigh

vanished Hume's thoughts of Government service. The end was not yet, but it was not far off. He had felt from the first that he had started on the diplomatic service too late in life; and now he was not averse to return to his familiar occupations. He had passed through a new experience; he had tasted a new joy; and he felt that his life had been enlarged. He had smarted often, and acutely too, under the prejudice against him in his native land; but now he had basked in the sunshine of popular favour in France. The pleasing experience had been valued as an offset against the antagonism which met him at home. Now, he could return with his laurels, and, even more, with the assurance that his literary labours in Philosophy and in History had made an impression, not only deeper, but much wider in range than he had previously known. He could not, indeed, foresee how much larger his influence was yet to be, his life would not last long enough to make this clear. But he was happy to go back to his native city—the capital of his native land—there to carry forward the work he had planned, before the attractions of the Embassy in Paris had been presented to him. Mr Mure narrates his return about the same time as Sir James Stewart, when the attention of the passers was arrested with the French cut of the laced coats and bags, and especially with the philosopher's 'ponderous, uncouth person equipped in a bright yellow coat spotted with black.'*

When the time had come for his return to Edinburgh, the Earl of Hertford had secured for him a pension of £400 a year. In further acknowledgment of his able

* *Caldwell Papers*, i., 38, quoted in *Letters to Strahan*, p. 86.

services to the nation, which had met with singularly scant return, he received in the following year, 1767, from Mr Conway 'an invitation to be Under-Secretary.' This communication was followed up by a letter from Lady Hertford urging acceptance. 'This invitation,' Hume says, 'both the character of the person and my connexions with Lord Hertford, prevented me from declining.' He had just been in Edinburgh for a short time, busy writing about his quarrel with Rousseau, and about the difficulties emerging with his publishers as to the issue of his pamphlet in reply to the irate Frenchman, when he had to make ready for removal to London, where in the end of February 1767, he was installed in office, under the direction of the Leader of the House of Commons, Mr Conway, brother of Lord Hertford. Hume never took kindly to London, and could not at first escape the feeling of 'a banished man.' But he was soon again at ease in the midst of official work. Writing to Blair, he says, 'I pass all the forenoon in the Secretary's house from ten till three, where there arrive from time to time messengers that bring me all the secrets of the kingdom, and indeed of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America.' To this he adds, General Conway 'is the most reasonable, equal tempered, and gentleman-like man imaginable.' 'Only I shall not regret when my duty is over, because to me the situation can lead to nothing, at least in all probability' (Burton, II., 384). Hume continued in office until General Conway resigned, which occurred on 20th July 1768. Then he went forth, feeling a free man; but with a circle of influential friends with whom he continued in intimate

relations. He did not leave London at once; but we find him back to his own house in Edinburgh—the familiar house in James's Court—in August 1769. He has disappeared from the circle of official servants of the Crown, to resume his pondering of the deeper problems of human life. In a letter to Sir Gilbert Elliot, written October 16th, 1769, he says:—'I am here body and soul, without casting the least thought of regret to London or even to Paris.'

CHAPTER VII

HUME'S ATTITUDE AS TO RELIGION

Being in philosophy a sceptic as to all that transcends individual experience, Hume was regarded and treated as a sceptic in religion. 'Hume the Atheist' was a designation of him not uncommon. Accordingly, he was disliked and resisted as the enemy of religion In the boldness of his spirit he rather courted antagonism ; yet the sense of odium fretted his life, and often seriously embittered it.

This traditional view of his position, though erroneous, still lingers among us, on account of the difficulty of distinguishing between a man's theory and his faith. To Hume it was matter of satisfaction that 'our most holy religion is founded on Faith, not on Reason.' Most Christians will hold that faith and reason are united in the religious life ; and religious faith at least is honoured by Hume. His scepticism belonged to the region of philosophy, not to the sphere of religion. No doubt, scepticism, in dealing even with the abstruse problems of the universe, must in some degree react on faith and feeling. But in Hume's life it never banished them. He had started with the assumption that certainty depends altogether on the senses ; and as the knowledge of God cannot come in this way, religion was for him exclusively a matter of faith. Yet so difficult is it for a man to adhere to his theory, that he, supposing

himself to be Epicurus, addressing the Athenians, says, 'Religion is nothing but a species of Philosophy' (Green, *Works*, IV., 171; *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, sec. xi., *Of a Particular Providence and of a Future State*, ed. Selby-Bigge, section 113). No life of Hume can be accurate which depicts him as 'Hume the Atheist.'

How his thought concerning the philosophic interpretation of the universe widened out will readily appear by reference to his theory of morals. In theory he held that utility is the measure of rightness—a poor enough theory I admit, but he maintained at the same time that our regard for moral distinctions depends on 'a feeling which Nature has made universal in the race.' The Supreme Power rules for righteousness. 'The Deity is known to us only by his productions.' 'As the universe shews wisdom and goodness, we infer wisdom and goodness' (*Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, sec. xi.).

Conclusive as this evidence is, Hume made such open and formal avowal of his sceptical philosophy, as if it were matter of enjoyment to him to do so (Burton, II., 443), that he was resisted by the religious men of his time as the adversary of earnest religious life. On the other hand, he was the intimate friend of prominent clergymen, such as Blair, 'Jupiter' Carlyle, and Home, though these belonged to the 'moderate' school. Nevertheless, of the intensity of antagonism to him, we have this striking testimony, that his most intimate friend, Adam Smith, was strenuously opposed to the publication of his critical views, and expressed this opinion in strongest terms even after Hume's death, when the question was raised whether the

author's desire should be respected as to the printing of the *Dialogues on Religion.* We have besides evidence of the spirit of the times in the fact that a complaint was made against Hume before the Presbytery of Edinburgh that he should be subjected to discipline for heterodoxy; this was formally discussed, but rejected. It is mainly to the impression made by the *Essay on Miracles* that the intensity of feeling cherished in religious circles is to be attributed.

In our day, it is possible, by deliberate and critical investigation of his writings, to form a fuller and more favourable judgment of his position. He seriously concealed and beclouded his position, not only by the prominence given to the sceptical element in his philosophy, but by the boldness with which he maintained the sceptics' attitude. To himself we must assign a large share of responsibility for the prevalence of the traditional view which represented him as the enemy of religion. He cherished horror of the 'Zealots'; they, with vastly greater reason, dreaded that 'candid indifference' which he exemplified and commended.

For evidence of his attitude towards religious faith and reverence we have four conspicuous portions of his works:—His *Essay on Miracles;* his *Natural History of Religion;* his *History of England*, especially in the volume first published; and his *Dialogues on Religion*, prepared with great care, and by his own express wish, published only after his death.

The history of the *Essay on Miracles* (constituting sec. x. of *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*) is important. In *My Own Life* the reference to it is

only indirect. But in a letter to Principal Campbell, author of *Dissertation on Miracles*, he writes:—'It may perhaps amuse you to learn the first hint which suggested to me that argument which you have so strenuously attacked. I was walking in the cloisters of the Jesuits' College of La Flêche (France), a town in which I passed two years of my youth, and engaged in a conversation with a Jesuit, of some parts and learning, who was relating to me, and urging some nonsensical miracle performed lately in their convent, when I was tempted to dispute against him; and as my head was full of the topics of my *Treatise of Human Nature*, which I was at that time composing, this argument immediately occurred to me, and I thought it very much gravelled my companion; but at last he observed to me that it was impossible for that argument to have any solidity, because it operated equally against the Gospel as the Catholic miracles, which observation I thought proper to admit as a sufficient answer. I believe you will allow that the freedom at least of this reasoning makes it somewhat extraordinary to have been the produce of a convent of Jesuits, though, perhaps, you may think the sophistry of it savours plainly of the place of its birth' (Burton's *Life*, I., 57). The origin of the suggestion was the superstitious spirit leading to unquestioning acceptance of trifling wonders, not a deliberate study of the Gospel miracles or even of the laws of evidence.

The argument involves a return on *individual experience* as the basis of certainty, as that may affect our reliance on the testimony of eye-witnesses. The enquiry affects the value of our Christian faith as it relies on historic

evidence. The substance of this argument is thus stated by Hume—'Our evidence for the truth of the Christian religion is less than the evidence for the truth of our senses ; because even in the first authors of our religion it was no greater; and it is evident it must diminish in passing from them to their disciples ; nor can anyone rest such confidence in their testimony as in the immediate object of his senses.' Yet, it is 'necessary to human life to rely on the testimony of men,' though it must be granted that testimony may vary in value, sometimes suggesting probability, at others supplying proof. If, however, the reported event is 'extraordinary,' 'the testimony admits of a diminution, greater or less, in proportion as the fact is more or less unusual.' When the event 'has seldom fallen under observation, here is a contest of two opposite experiences, of which the one destroys the other, as far as its force goes.' Suppose the reported event be 'miraculous,' and 'suppose also that the testimony, considered apart and in itself, amounts to an entire proof, there is proof against proof, of which the strongest must prevail.' 'A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature ; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined.' 'Nothing is esteemed a miracle if it ever happen in the common course of nature.' 'There must therefore be an uniform experience against every miraculous event.' 'The plain consequence is (and it is a general maxim worthy of our attention) that no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind that its

falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavours to establish.'

Hume was peculiarly liable to be attracted by an argument such as this. Its fascination was great to a mind which had schooled itself in sceptical criticism. Such an argument was to him like a nugget to a gold-digger—a thing to boast of to all around. Hear his words :—'I flatter myself that I have discovered an argument which, if just, will, with the wise and learned, be an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusion, and consequently will be useful as long as the world endures.'

In one aspect, the argument is a freak of ingenuity; in another and secondary aspect, it is a substantial contribution towards the modern view of uniform sequence under natural law. But the philosopher delights in the freak—he is fascinated by 'the *freedom*, at least, of the reasoning,' even if it contain a considerable admixture of 'sophistry.' It is the misfortune of the sceptic that, being engrossed with criticism of other people's faith, he does not sufficiently criticise his own. Hume, powerful as he was, could not escape the consequences of a long cultivated habit of enlarged faith. A miracle cannot be directly vivified by us. Nothing is more certain; but so it is with all facts of history, from the most common to the most singular. Any argument on this account is not an argument against miracles, but against faith in the past. The historian saws through the bench on which he sits.

In dealing with laws of evidence, in insisting on the sifting of testimony, and on the special difficulty of ascertaining what is reliable in the records concerning events in

distant ages, Hume's Essay is at once able and of practical value; but abstract reasoning to prove the impossibility of occurrences we have never witnessed, or impossibility of evidence to prove that such things have occurred, is vain on the conditions of experience itself.

But we must note the range of Hume's reasoning. His Essay is not an argument against the possibility of miracles. The thinker who insisted that certainty depends on individual experience could not have constructed such an argument. He had supplied the weapon to cut all such arguments in two. He is naturally solicitous, therefore, that the rigid limits of his 'free reasoning' should be observed. 'I beg the limitations here made may be remarked when I say, that a miracle can never be proved so as to be the foundation of a system of religion. For I own that, otherwise, there may possibly be miracles.' Hume never committed himself to the proposition that no miracle has happened; still less to the proposition that such an event could not occur. The possibility of an event depends on power and will, not on testimony, which can be only subsequent to the event.

What then of Hume's denial of the possibility of evidence to warrant belief in a miracle? Granting 'uniform experience' as to fixed laws in nature, what bearing has this on evidence for miracles? By miracles we certainly mean events distinct from the common occurrences explained by natural law. 'Nothing is esteemed a miracle if it ever happen in the common course of nature.' But if we admit that they are distinct events, Hume's definition needs to be rectified, and his appeal to experience as to 'the common course of nature' can be of

no avail. What is meant by a miracle is not 'a violation of the laws of nature,' nor is it 'a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity,' but 'a particular volition of the Deity,' for other ends than those secured 'in the common course of nature,' such as moral ends, which are not secured by fixed laws of nature, but depend on man's reason and volition, as these may be influenced by Revelation. But when 'violation of the laws of nature' is withdrawn from the definition, the point of the argument is lost, and a basis is found for Hume's admission that 'there may possibly be miracles.' 'A particular volition of the Deity' for a moral end implies the action of supernatural power.

As to the evidence for such intervention in human history, our uniform experience of the common course of nature can supply nothing of testimony and no ground for criticism. To represent human experience as witnessing to 'the common course of nature' is sound science and is good philosophy, but to say that human experience has borne witness to nothing more is to beg the question in dispute, and to suggest that moral government has no place in the history of the universe. Granting that 'firm and unalterable experience has established these laws,' such experience can bear no testimony as to possibilities or impossibilities beyond.

Hume's attempt here to lift religion out of the sphere of reason proved a failure. It was, indeed, at variance with his deeper instinct. The whole discussion as to proof and probability, keenly sustained on both sides, witnesses to the impossibility of religion being limited to faith. Hume's purpose, honest and earnest, to put 'an

everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusion,' was one which could not have been served even by making good the position that the unbroken testimony of common experience makes evidence for a miracle impossible. To separate faith from understanding is to open wide the door to superstition. It may be described in his own language as a vain endeavour after 'subduing the rebellious reason by the belief of the most unintelligible sophisms' (*Natural History of Religion*, sec. x.). But his contention is interpreted aright only as we acknowledge his avowal that 'there may possibly be miracles,' while he at the same time holds that these cannot afford testimony for 'a system of religion.' The spirit of his argument is shewn in his own estimate of its worth. 'I am the better pleased with the method of reasoning here delivered, as I think it may serve to confound those dangerous friends, or disguised enemies to the Christian religion, who have undertaken to defend it by the principles of human reason. Our most holy religion is founded on Faith, not on Reason of miracles.' This Essay shews insight as to the uniformity of nature in considerable advance of his time, but it shews for him a singular failure in the exercise of his critical power. In passing to the *Natural History of Religion*, which first appeared in 1777, it becomes apparent how much Hume occupied himself with the problems of religion. Here also we have fuller indication of his personal faith, and at so many points as to remove all uncertainty as to his attitude. 'The whole frame of nature bespeaks an Intelligent Author, and no rational enquirer can, after serious reflection, suspend his

belief a moment with regard to the primary principles of a genuine Theism and Religion' (*Intro.*).

This avowal at the outset, recognising that religion has 'its foundation in reason,' is the more important as his *Treatise* is occupied mainly with the inconsistencies, superstitions, and immoralities appearing under the name of religion. Here also Hume is the critic, exercising 'freedom of reasoning' in handling the beliefs and sacred rites of 'popular religions,' 'for the most part polytheistic.' He is content to go back to the Christian era, where he finds the whole world given to idolatry. Looking around on the varied aspects of popular religion, he proceeds to consider how religious principles may be easily perverted by various accidents and causes. His purpose in this work is to consider 'what those principles are which give rise to the original belief, and what those accidents and causes are which direct its operation.'

'The only point of theology in which we shall find a consent of mankind almost universal is that there is invisible intelligent power in the world' (sec. iv.). 'Nevertheless, the doctrine of one Supreme Deity, the author of nature, is very ancient, has spread itself over great and populous nations, and among them has been embraced by all ranks and conditions of men' (sec. vi.). We therefore admit that there are 'invincible reasons on which it is undoubtedly founded.' 'But it is chiefly our present business to consider the gross polytheism of the vulgar, and to trace all its various appearances, in the principles of human nature, whence they are derived' (sec. v.). In carrying through this enquiry he has much to say as to the superstition and the fanaticism which have

appeared in the natural history of religion, and here he often indulges in the free criticism which appeared in the *History of England*, and called forth the adverse criticism of the friends of evangelical religion. But the *Treatise* is a vigorous treatment of the subject, shewing extended research, specially directed upon classical authors, discovering prominent features in the mythology of the ancient Greeks and Romans, while including frequent references to the religious rites prevailing among uncivilised tribes in all ages. In all this he deals carefully with a vast mass of evidence essential to the discussion. We cannot attempt even a summary of the extended investigation. It includes much that is of the utmost value as to the history of the unfolding of religious ideas and the institution and continuance of religious rites. With all this outcome of research under review, he remarks that 'there is not wanting a sufficient stock of religious zeal and faith among mankind.' 'Look out for a people entirely destitute of religion: if you find them at all, be assured that they are but few degrees removed from brutes.' But corruptions naturally appear in the fancies, traditions, and religious observances of men. 'Men have a natural tendency to rise from idolatry to theism, and to sink again from theism into idolatry.' 'The corruptions of the best things give rise to the worst.' On the other hand, theism is sustained by the reflection of the most thoughtful. 'Where theism forms the fundamental principle of any popular religion, that tenet is so conformable to sound reason that philosophy is apt to incorporate itself with such a system of theology' (sec. xi.). Our speculative thought as to the first cause—the supreme intelligence

—is of the first moment to the individual thinker and to our race as a whole. 'What a noble privilege it is of human reason to attain the Knowledge of the Supreme Being, and from the visible works of nature be enabled to infer so sublime a principle as its supreme Creator' (sec. xv.). But when we 'examine the religious principles which have, in fact, prevailed,' many of them are to be discredited as 'sick men's dreams,' rather than respected as 'the serious, positive, dogmatical asseverations of a being who dignifies himself with the name of rational' (*Ib.*). When we look at the vast problem as it stands before us in history, 'the whole is a riddle, an enigma, an inexplicable mystery' (*Ib.*). But faith remains unmoved. 'The universal propensity to believe in invisible intelligent power, if not an original instinct, being at least a general attendant of human nature, may be considered as a kind of mark or stamp which the divine workman has set upon his work; and nothing surely can more dignify mankind than to be selected from all parts of creation, and to bear the image or impression of the universal Creator' (*Ib.*).

These extracts shew how clearly Hume maintained his conviction of the inherent value of religion, even when tracing the inconsistencies which appear in its history among the several nations and tribes of men. His mental characteristics, intellectual and emotional, induced him to treat scornfully of these inconsistencies, as if they were traces of hypocrisy. This tendency appeared so offensively in the first volume of his *History of England* as to subject him to severe criticism. He owned its force, and modified several passages. Burton gives besides a paper designed for a preface to his second volume, which was afterwards

modified and transferred to the position of a note. The opening sentences of this *Preface* are of special interest here. 'It ought to be no matter of offence that in this volume, as well as in the foregoing, the mischiefs which arise from the abuses of religion are so often mentioned, while so little in comparison is said of the salutary consequences which result from true and genuine piety. The proper office of religion is to reform men's lives, to purify their hearts, to enforce all moral duties, and to secure obedience to the laws and civil magistrate. While it pursues these useful purposes its operations, though infinitely valuable, are secret and silent, and seldom come under the cognisance of history' (Burton, II., 11).

From the *Natural History of Religion* Hume passed on to the study of the rational basis of *Natural Theology*, which he prosecuted in the critical spirit characteristic of him. For the long period of twenty-five years the subject was kept before him. When the results appeared after his death the publication was a small volume of 152 pages. It is a work of great value, presenting a searching scrutiny of the conditions under which we seek to think out the relations of the universe to the invisible intelligence, the first cause. The volume bears evidence of care in thought and expression, and anxious revision. It assigns to critical and sceptical thought its utmost scope, and alongside of this presents 'the invincible reasons' on which natural theology is founded. To the reader who dips into it, turning its pages with a light hand, it will seem in its main contents a sceptical book; to the critical student it will appear a book of great constructive worth, while it hides nothing of the difficulties of our speculative thought.

The history of the manuscript volume is of exceptional interest. It is clear from a letter to Elliot, written from Ninewells, dated March 10, 1751, that the first draft was written then, and was submitted for Elliot's criticism. Hume's death occurred in 1776, and the *Dialogues* were not published till fully two years after that event. The manuscript in possession of the Royal Society of Edinburgh shews many emendations and corrections, making it certain that the author worked over those pages with anxious solicitude, and that in its published form we have the statement of his matured thought, as well as the results of his best literary effort. From his literary friends he sought suggestions in the freest spirit; and we know that Elliot, Adam Smith, Blair, and others were intimately acquainted with the contents. So early as the date named, Elliot had 'a sample' of the *Dialogue*, in which Philo is the Sceptic, Cleanthes the Philosophic believer, Demea the rigidly orthodox or quiescent believer, who distrusts speculation. To Elliot he says,—'I make Cleanthes the hero of the dialogue; whatever you can think of, to strengthen that side of the argument, will be most acceptable to me. Any propensity you imagine I have to the other side crept in upon me against my will' (Burton, I., 331). At the same time he tells how, before he was twenty, 'doubts stole in upon him,' involving him in 'a perpetual struggle of a restless imagination against inclination, perhaps against reason.' The *Dialogues* present his effort to clear the way through inevitable doubts. His own estimate of the result he indicates in this letter to Elliot,—'The instances I have chosen for Cleanthes are, I hope, tolerably happy, and the con-

fusion in which I represent the sceptic seems natural' (I., 333).

As the close of life approached, Hume felt great solicitude about the publication of these *Dialogues*. This feeling was increased by the desire expressed by some of his most intimate literary friends that he should withhold the book. He was willing that it should not be published till after his death, but he took pains to secure that it should appear 'within two years' thereafter. The delay indicated his aversion to encounter the storm likely to be raised by their appearance; his fixed determination that it should appear within a defined period testifies to his conviction that an important service was to be rendered to the cause of religion by unreserved critical handling of the difficulties which beset our attempts to apply the Theistic conception in the midst of finite relations.

On the 4th of January 1776, he executed a settlement of his estate, leaving his money to his brother, sister, and younger relatives, £200 to D'Alembert; the same to Adam Ferguson, and the same to Adam Smith, under special proviso. 'To my friend Dr Adam Smith, late Professor of Moral Philosophy in Glasgow, I leave all my manuscripts without exception, desiring him to publish my *Dialogues on Natural Religion* which are comprehended in this present bequest. . . . I even leave him full power over all my papers, except the *Dialogues* above mentioned; and though I can trust to that intimate and sincere friendship which has ever subsisted between us for his faithful execution of this part of my Will, yet, as a small recompense of his pain in correcting and publishing this work, I leave him two hundred pounds,

to be paid immediately after the publication of it' (Burton, II., 490).

Hume explained to Adam Smith his desire that he should superintend the publication of the *Dialogues.* Smith declined the responsibility, being averse to the publication, as likely to increase the popular clamour against him. On this, Hume writes to his friend on 3rd May 1776, three months before his death:—'My dear Friend, . . . I own that your scruples have a specious appearance. But my opinion is, that if upon my death you determine never to publish these papers, you should leave them, sealed up, with my brother and family, with some inscription that you reserve to yourself the power of reclaiming them whenever you think proper. If I live a few years longer, I shall publish them myself' (Burton, II., 492). In an accompanying letter Hume adds—'I am content to leave it entirely to your discretion at what time you will publish that piece, or whether you will publish it at all.'

Afterwards he added a codicil, retracting the previous provision, and substituting the following:—'I leave my manuscripts to the care of Mr William Strahan of London, Member of Parliament, trusting to the friendship that has long subsisted between us for his careful and faithful execution of my intentions. I desire that my *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* may be printed and published any time within two years after my death.'

Still later, it is added—'I do ordain that if my *Dialogues*, from whatever cause, be not published within two years and a half of my death, as also the account of my life, the property shall return to my nephew, David, whose

duty in publishing them, as the last request of his uncle, must be approved of by all the world' (Burton, II., 494).

Strahan also declined the responsibility, and the *Dialogues* were eventually published by the author's nephew, David, in 1779, and without name of publisher or printer. Fortunately for the literature of our country, the author persisted in his determination. Now that the prejudices against him have in considerable measure passed away, we can admit that his perplexities may be helpful to us who follow. Faith succeeds doubt, while preparing the way for better thought. A true service is rendered in the history of intellectual and religious development when the common difficulties of our position in the universe are stated with clearness and force. Pioneers, after enduring untold hardships, may have the gratitude of the people. On the voyage of life there is gain in sounding all depths.

In the title of his work Hume uses the term 'Religion' rather than 'Theology.' This usage applies the same term to the practical experience and the speculative exercise. Some confusion is apt to arise in this way, for it is admitted that religion, as a characteristic of human life, may flourish apart from direct and intimate concern with the perplexities of thought, from which theology cannot escape.

Hume's reasons for adopting the form of dialogue have obvious force in view of the nature of the subject and the end he sought. His purpose was to present in their utmost strength the difficulties encountered in thinking of the relations of God to the universe, and to shew religious faith at its best in the sphere of intelligence. The certainty of the Divine existence being admitted, the object is to dis-

cuss 'what obscure questions occur concerning the nature of that Divine being, his attributes, his decrees, and his plan of providence' (p. 3).

For understanding of the discussion it is needful to keep in view the attitude and special bias of the speakers. PHILO is the pronounced sceptic who dwells on the weakness and blindness of our intelligence, and delights in doubts as if they constituted the current coin of the realm. CLEANTHES is the philosophic thinker, ready to examine every doubt presented, and relying on regulated methodical thought for attainment of a vision of truth in harmony with our fundamental faith in the Divine existence and government. DEMEA is the quiet believer in God and his goodness, content to trust, willing to treat obscure questions of speculative thought as things too high for us belonging to an unknown territory into which the ordinary believer does not travel. Philo and Demea are at the opposite extremes, but occasionally in close agreement, because of their readiness to think lightly of human intelligence. Cleanthes is the philosophic thinker, deliberate, patient, and strong, 'the hero of the Dialogue.' 'The remarkable contrast in their characters' gives interest to the discussion, and makes it possible for the author to give a breadth of representation of the varied tendencies and habits of thought subsisting in society.

PART I

Demea. Natural theology being the most abstruse of all sciences, needs a mind enriched with all the other sciences, and may be postponed while the opening intelligence is 'seasoned with early piety.'

Philo. To season the mind thus is reasonable as a defence against an irreligious spirit, but the danger is that of 'inspiring pride and self sufficiency' to guard against which evils we must 'become thoroughly sensible of the weakness, blindness, and narrow limits of human reason.' Having such poor intelligence, 'with what assurance can we decide concerning the origin of worlds, or trace their history from eternity to eternity?'

Cleanthes. 'You propose then to erect religious faith or philosophical scepticism.' But this is a foundation weaker than reason, and which the common intelligence, weak as it is, readily rejects, because of its obvious inconsistency; for 'though a man, in a flush of humour, may entirely renounce all belief and opinion, it is impossible for him to persevere in it, or make it appear in his conduct for a few hours.'

Ph. 'However sceptical anyone may be, I own he must act and live, and converse like other men; and for this conduct he is not obliged to give any other reason than the absolute necessity he lies under of so doing.' But there is a fascination in speculative thought; 'everyone, even in common life, is constrained to have more or less of this philosophy,' 'and what we call philosophy is nothing but a more regular and methodical operation of the same kind.' But 'when we look beyond human affairs,' and carry our speculations forward to consider 'the powers of operations of one universal Spirit,' 'we have here got beyond the reach of our faculties,' 'and are entirely guided by a kind of instinct or necessity in employing them.'

Cl. But 'your doctrine and practice are as much at variance in the most abstruse points of theory as in the

conduct of common life.' 'There is, indeed, a kind of brutish and ignorant scepticism' which 'is fatal to knowledge, not to religion.' 'But the refined and philosophic sceptics fall into an inconsistence of an opposite nature. They push their researches into the most abstruse corners of science, and their assent attends them in every step, proportioned to the evidence with which they meet.'

Ph. Taking together 'the history of the religious and the irreligious scepticism,' 'it appears to me that there are strong symptoms of priestcraft in the progress of this affair.' These reverend gentlemen are 'sceptics in one age, dogmatists in another,' as 'best suits their purpose.'

Cl. 'We need not have recourse to priestcraft' to account for the history of events. 'Nothing can afford a stronger presumption that any set of principles are true, than to observe that they tend to the confirmation of true religion, and serve to confound the free-thinkers.'

Such in outline is the opening Dialogue. Interest concentrates on the antagonistic reasoning of the Sceptic and the Philosopher. To their several parts we shall restrict this summary.

PART II.—Does limited knowledge involve uncertainty in Analogies?

Ph. 'Where reasonable men treat these subjects, the question can never be concerning the *being*, but only the *nature* of the Deity.' The former truth is unquestionable and self evident. 'But our ideas reach no further than our experience; and we have no experience of Divine attributes and operations.'

Cl. 'The curious adapting of means to ends through-

out all nature resembles exactly, though it much exceeds, the productions of human contrivance, of human design, thought, wisdom, and intelligence.'

Ph. 'Wherever you depart in the least from the similarity of the cases, you diminish proportionably the evidence; and may at last bring it to a very weak analogy, which is confessedly liable to error and uncertainty.'

Cl. 'Is the whole adjustment of means to ends in a house and in the universe so slight a resemblance? The economy of final causes? The order, proportion, and arrangement of every part?'

Ph. 'I must allow that this fairly represents the argument' from observation and experience. But 'experience alone can point out the true cause of any phenomenon.' 'Order, arrangement, or the adjustment of final causes is no proof of design, except in so far as it has been experienced to proceed from that principle.' But I am 'scandalised with this resemblance which is asserted between the Deity and human creatures, which I conceive implies a degradation of the Supreme Being.' I prefer to agree with the orthodox in defending what is justly called 'the adorable mysteriousness of the Divine Nature.' 'Thought, design, intelligence, such as we discover in men and other animals is no more than one of the springs and principles of the universe, as well as heat or cold, attraction or repulsion.' 'Why select so minute, so weak, so bounded a principle as the reason and design of animals? What peculiar privilege has this little agitation of the brain which we call thought, that we must thus make it the model of the whole universe.'

Cl. Let me suggest that you do not 'abuse terms.'

We 'distinguish reason from experience, even where the question relates only to matter of fact and existence.' 'To prove by experience the origin of the universe from mind is not more contrary to common speech than to prove the motion of the earth from the same principle.'

Ph. In the 'cautious procedure' of observational science is to be found the condemnation of rash speculation in Natural Theology. 'The subject in which you are engaged exceeds all human reason and enquiry.' 'Have you ever seen Nature in any such situation as resembles the first arrangement of the elements?'

PART III.—Conditions of reasoning from Experience to that which transcends it.

Cl. 'It is by no means necessary that Theists should prove the similarity of the works of Nature to those of art, because this similarity is self-evident and undeniable.' 'Suppose that there is a natural, universal, invariable language, common to every individual of human race, and that books are natural productions, which perpetuate themselves in the same manner with animals and vegetables. Suppose that you enter into your library, thus peopled by natural volumes, containing the most refined reason and most exquisite beauty, could you possibly open one of them and doubt that its original cause bore the strongest analogy to mind and intelligence?' 'Any objection which you start by carrying me back to so unusual and extraordinary a scene as the first formation of worlds, the same objection has place on the supposition of our vegetating library.' 'To exclude all argument or reasoning of every kind is either affectation or madness.'

Ph. 'Your instance drawn from books and language, being familiar, has, I confess, so much more force on that account; but is there not some danger too in this very circumstance?' 'When I read a volume, I enter into the mind and intention of the author; I become him, in a manner, for the instant. . . . But so near an approach we never surely can make to the Deity. His ways are not our ways. His attributes are perfect, but incomprehensible. And this volume of Nature contains a great and inexplicable riddle, more than any intelligible discourse or reasoning.' 'Our thought is fluctuating, uncertain, fleeting, successive, and compounded; and were we to remove these circumstances, we absolutely annihilate its essence, and it would, in such a case, be an abuse of terms to apply to it the name of thought or reason. At least, if it appear more pious and respectful (as it really is) still to retain these terms when we mention the Supreme Being, we ought to acknowledge that their meaning in that case is totally incomprehensible; and that the infirmities of our nature do not permit us to reach any ideas which in the least correspond to the ineffable sublimity of the Divine attributes.'

PART IV.—Can phases of the human mind be attributed to the Divine Intelligence?

Cl. 'The Deity, I can readily allow, possesses many powers and attributes, of which we can have no comprehension. But if our ideas, so far as they go, be not just and adequate, I know not what there is in this subject worth insisting on.' . . . 'Though it be allowed that the Deity possesses attributes of which we have no comprehension, yet ought we never to ascribe to Him any

attributes which are absolutely incompatible with that intelligent nature essential to Him.'

Ph. 'I shall endeavour to shew you the inconveniences of that Anthropomorphism (Theology founded on human characteristics) which you have embraced; and shall prove that there is no ground to suppose a plan of the world to be formed in the Divine mind, consisting of distinct ideas differently arranged, in the same manner as an architect forms in his head the plan of a house which he intends to execute.' Suppose we judge of the matter by Reason:—'a mental world, or universe of ideas, requires a cause as much as does a material world, or universe of objects; and if similar in its arrangement, must require a similar cause.' We are still obliged to mount higher in order to find the cause of this cause, if we take the world of ideas to be the cause of the world of objects. Suppose we judge of the matter by Experience;—'How shall we satisfy ourselves concerning the cause of the ideal world into which you trace the material?' 'When you go one step beyond the mundane system, you only excite an inquisitive humour, which it is impossible ever to satisfy.' 'To say that the different ideas, which compose the reason of the Supreme Being, fall into order of themselves, and by their own nature, is really to talk without any precise meaning.' 'No satisfaction can ever be attained by these speculations, which so far exceed the narrow bounds of human understanding.'

Cl. 'The order and arrangement of Nature, the curious adjustment of final causes, the plain use and intention of every part and organ; all these bespeak in the clearest language an intellectual cause or author.' 'I have found

a Deity, and here I stop my enquiry. Let those go further who are wiser or more enterprising.'

Ph. 'I pretend to be neither, and for that very reason I should never perhaps have attempted to go so far, especially when I am sensible that I must at last be contented to sit down with the same answer.'

PART V.—'Like effects prove like causes.'—How far is the maxim applicable?

Ph. 'Please to take a new survey of your principles. Like effects prove like causes. This is the experimental argument; and this, you say too, is the sole theological argument. Now it is certain that the liker the effects are which are seen, and the liker the causes which are inferred, the stronger is the argument. Every departure on either side diminishes the probability, and renders the experiment less conclusive.' Now, 'by this method of reasoning you renounce all claim to infinity in any of the attributes of the Deity,' and there is left no reason 'for ascribing perfection to the Deity.' On your hypothesis 'a man is able, perhaps, to assert or conjecture that the Universe, sometime, arose from something like design; but beyond that position he cannot ascertain one single circumstance.'

Cl. 'These suppositions I absolutely disown: they strike me, however, with no horror. On the contrary they give me pleasure, when I see that, by the utmost indulgence of your imagination, you never get rid of the hypothesis of design in the Universe, but are obliged at every turn to have recourse to it. To this concession I

steadily adhere; and this I regard as a sufficient foundation for religion.'

PART VI.—Can we reason from the known to the unknown?

Ph. 'There is another principle' derived from experience, 'that where several known circumstances are observed to be similar, the unknown will also be similar. Thus, if we see the limbs of a human body, we conclude that it is also attended with a human head, though hid from us.' 'Now if we survey the universe, so far as it falls under our knowledge, it bears a great resemblance to an animal or organised body, and seems actuated with a like principle of life and motion.' 'The world, therefore, I infer, is an animal,' and, according to the hypothesis of the ancients, 'the Deity is the soul of the world actuating it, and actuated by it.' 'If our limited analogy could ever with any propriety be extended to the whole of Nature, the inference seems juster in favour of the ancient than the modern theory.'

Cl. 'This theory, I own, has never before occurred to me, though a pretty natural one, and I cannot readily upon so short an examination and reflection deliver any opinion with regard to it. It seems to me the analogy is defective in many circumstances the most material—no organs of sense, no seat of thought or reason, no one precise origin of motion and action.' Besides, 'human society is in continual revolution between ignorance and knowledge, liberty and slavery, riches and poverty, so that it is impossible for us, from our limited experience, to

foretell with assurance what events may or may not be expected.'

Ph. 'It is observable that all the changes and corruptions of which we have ever had experience are but passages from one state of order to another, nor can matter ever rest in total deformity and confusion. What we see in the parts, we may infer in the whole; at least that is the method of reasoning on which you rest your whole theory. And were I obliged to defend any particular system of this nature (which I never willingly should do) I esteem none more plausible than that which ascribes an eternal inherent principle of order in the world, though attended with great and continual revolutions and alterations. This at once solves all difficulties, and if the solution, by being so general, is not entirely complete and satisfactory, it is, at least, a theory that we must sooner or later have recourse to, whatever system we embrace.'

PART VII.—Shall we think of the Universe as Organism or as Mechanism?

Ph. 'If the Universe bears a greater likeness to animal bodies and to vegetables than to the works of human art, its origin ought rather to be ascribed to generation or vegetation than to reason or design.' If we must rely on experience alone, this seems a legitimate hypothesis, but 'we have no data to establish any system of cosmogony. Our experience, so imperfect in itself, and so limited both in extent and duration, can afford us no probable conjecture concerning the whole of things.' And organism 'bears stronger resemblance to the world than does any artificial machine.' We may refer to reason, instinct,

generation, or vegetation, but 'the principles themselves and their manner of operation are totally unknown.'

Cl. 'I must confess, Philo, that the task which you have undertaken of raising doubts and objections suits you best, and seems in a manner natural and unavoidable to you. So great is your fertility of invention that I am not ashamed to acknowledge myself unable on a sudden to solve regularly such out-of-the-way difficulties as you incessantly start upon me, though I clearly see in general their fallacy and error. And I question not but you are yourself in the same case, and have not the solution so ready as the objection, while you must be sensible that common sense and reason are entirely against you.'

PART VIII.—How far our difficulties arise from the transcendent greatness of the subject.

Ph. Because 'a hundred contradictory views may preserve a kind of imperfect analogy,' 'invention has full scope to exert itself.' 'Motion, in many instances, from gravity, from elasticity, from electricity, begins in matter, without any known voluntary agent, and to suppose always in these cases an unknown voluntary agent is mere hypothesis.'

Cl. But the hypothesis of vegetation or involuntary development is exposed to insuperable objections. 'No form, you say, can subsist unless it possess those powers and organs requisite for its subsistence; some new order or economy must be tried, and so on without intermission, till at last some order which can support and maintain itself is fallen upon. But according to this hypothesis,

whence arise the many conveniences and advantages which men and all animals possess?'

Ph. 'You may safely infer that the hypothesis is so far incomplete and imperfect, which I shall not scruple to allow. But can we ever hope to erect a system of cosmogony that will be liable to no exceptions?' It is this which gives to scepticism the power it has. 'In all instances which we have ever seen, ideas are copied from real objects.' 'You reverse this order, and give thought the precedence.'

PART IX.—May we reason from finite existence to a self-existent Being?

Demea. 'Had we not better adhere to the simple and sublime argument *a priori?*' It is impossible for anything to produce itself; 'we must either go on in tracing an infinite succession, without any ultimate cause at all, or must at last have recourse to some ultimate cause that is necessarily existent.'

Cl. 'There is an evident absurdity in pretending to demonstrate a matter of fact, or to prove it by any arguments *a priori.*' 'There is no being whose existence is demonstrable. I propose this argument as entirely decisive, and am willing to rest the whole controversy upon it.' As to the existence of the Deity, it is said that 'if we knew his whole essence or nature, we should perceive it to be impossible for him not to exist. But it is evident that this can never happen while our faculties remain the same as at present.'

Ph. 'The argument *a priori* has seldom been found very convincing, except to people of a metaphysical head,

who have accustomed themselves to abstract reasoning. . . . Other people, even of good sense, and the best inclined to religion, feel always some deficiency in such arguments, though they are not perhaps able to explain distinctly where it lies.'

PART X.—The moral argument.

Demea. 'It is my opinion that each man feels, in a manner, the truth of religion within his own breast, and from a consciousness of his imbecility and misery is led to seek protection from that Being.'

Ph. 'I am indeed persuaded that the best and, indeed, the only method of bringing everyone to a due sense of religion is by just representations of the misery and wickedness of men. . . . In this point the learned are perfectly agreed with the vulgar, and in all letters, sacred and profane, the topic of human misery has been insisted on with the most pathetic eloquence.' 'Disappointment, vexation, trouble, follow man's activity and ambition.'

Cl. 'I can observe something like what you mention in some others, but I confess I feel little or nothing of it myself, and hope that it is not so common as you represent it.'

Ph. 'Is it possible, after all these reflections, you can still assert the moral attributes of the Deity, his justice, benevolence, mercy and rectitude,—to be of the same nature with these virtues in human creatures? His power, we allow, is infinite; whatever he wills is executed; but neither man nor any other animal are happy; therefore he does not will their happiness.'

Cl. 'If you can prove mankind to be unhappy or

corrupted, there is an end at once of all religion. For to what purpose establish the natural attributes of the Deity, while the moral are still doubtful and uncertain?'

Demea. 'Nothing can be more surprising than to find a topic like this, concerning the wickedness and misery of man, charged with no less than atheism and profaneness.'

Cl. 'These arbitrary suppositions as to wickedness and misery can never be admitted.' 'The only method of supporting Divine benevolence (and it is what I willingly embrace) is to deny absolutely the misery and wickedness of man. Your representations are exaggerated. . . . Health is more common than sickness.'

Ph. 'You have put the controversy upon a most dangerous issue, and are unawares introducing a total scepticism into the most essential articles of natural and revealed theology. What! no method of fixing a just foundation for religion, unless we allow the happiness of human life.' 'By resting the whole system of religion on such a point, which from its very nature must for ever be uncertain, you tacitly confess that system is equally uncertain.'

'It is your turn now to tug the labouring oar, and to support your philosophical subtleties against the dictates of plain reason and experience.'

PART XI.—The problem of evil.

Cl. 'If we abandon all human analogy, I am afraid we abandon all religion, and retain no conception of the great object of our adoration. If we preserve human analogy, we must for ever find it impossible to reconcile

any mixture of evil in the universe with infinite attributes. But supposing the Author of Nature to be finitely perfect, though far exceeding mankind, a satisfactory account may then be given of natural and moral evil, and every untoward phenomenon be explained and adjusted, a less evil may be chosen, in order to avoid a greater. . . . Benevolence, regulated by wisdom, and limited by necessity, may produce such a world as the present.'

Ph. If a very limited intelligence were assured that the universe, with which he was at the moment unacquainted, was 'the production of a very good, wise, and powerful being, however finite,' he could never fancy that the effect could be so full of vice and misery and disorder as it appears in this life. But such a limited intelligence must be sensible of his own blindness and ignorance, and must allow that there may be many solutions of those phenomena which will for ever escape his comprehension.

There seem to be four circumstances on which depend all, or the greatest part of the ills that molest sensible creatures, and it is not impossible but all these circumstances may be necessary and unavoidable. *First*, 'pain, as well as pleasure, is employed to excite all creatures to action.' *Second*, 'the conducting of the world by general laws.' *Third*, 'the great frugality with which all powers and faculties are distributed.' *Fourth*, 'the inaccurate workmanship of all the springs and principles of the great machine of nature.' It would be too presumptuous for creatures so blind and ignorant as we 'to say that these circumstances are not necessary.'

'Some ill must arise in the various shocks of matter;' 'but this ill would be very rare, were it not for the *third*

circumstance.' 'Almost all the moral, as well as natural evils of human life, arise from idleness.' 'In order to cure most of the ills of human life,' I do not ask that man be endowed with greater powers, physical or mental; but 'let him be endowed with a greater propensity to industry and labour; a more vigorous spring and activity of mind; a more constant bent to business and application,' with 'a more vigorous spring and activity of mind,' 'the exact execution of every office and duty' would 'immediately follow.'

Cleanthes has admitted that our difficulties in dealing with this problem of evil arise from the representation of the Deity as *infinite* in all his attributes. If we take the opposite course, 'supposing the Author of nature to be finitely perfect,' this old 'Manichæan system * occurs as a proper hypothesis to solve the difficulty; and no doubt in some respects it is very specious, and has more probability than the common hypothesis, by giving a plausible account of the strange mixture of good and ill which appears in life. But if we consider on the other hand the perfect uniformity and agreement of the parts of the universe, we shall not discover in it any marks of the combat of a malevolent with a benevolent being.' 'So long,' however, as there is one vice at all in the universe it will very much puzzle you anthropomorphites—believers in the likeness of Divine powers to human—how to account for it. You must assign a cause for it, without having recourse to the first cause, yet you must 'rest on that

* The reader will remember that J. S. Mill in like manner retreats on the Manichean hypothesis for escape from the dark problem of evil.

original principle which is the ultimate cause of all things.'

Demea. 'Hold! Hold! I joined in alliance with you, in order to prove the incomprehensible nature of the Divine Being, and refute the principles of him who would measure everything by a human rule and standard.'

Cl. The total infirmity of human reason, the absolute incomprehensibility of the Divine nature, the great and universal misery, and still greater wickedness of men, these are strange topics surely to be so fondly cherished.' But 'your friend Philo from the beginning has been amusing himself at both our expense.'

PART XII.—Results of the discussion.

Cl. 'Your spirit of controversy, joined to your abhorrence of vulgar superstition, carries you strange lengths when engaged in an argument; and there is nothing so sacred or venerable, even in your own eyes, which you spare on that occasion.'

Ph. 'I must confess that I am less cautious on the subject of Natural Religion than on any other, both because I know that I can never on that head corrupt the principles of any man of common sense, and because no one, I am confident, in whose eyes I appear a man of common sense, will ever mistake my intentions. . . . Notwithstanding the freedom of my conversation, and my love of singular arguments, no one has a deeper sense of religion impressed on his mind, or pays more profound adoration to the Divine Being, as he discovers himself to reason, in the inexplicable contrivance and artifice of Nature. . . . All the sciences almost lead us insensibly

to acknowledge a first intelligent Author; and their authority is often so much the greater, as they do not directly profess their intention.'

Cl. 'One great advantage of the principle of Theism is that it is the only system of cosmogony which can be rendered intelligible and complete, and yet can throughout preserve a strong analogy to what we every day see and experience in the world.' 'Whoever attempts to weaken this theory,' can only 'by remote and abstract views of things reach that suspense of judgment which is here the utmost boundary of his wishes.'

Ph. 'So little do I esteem this suspense of judgment in the present case to be possible, that I am apt to suspect there enters somewhat of a dispute of words into this controversy, more than is usually imagined. That the works of Nature bear a great analogy to the productions of art is evident, . . . but there are also considerable differences. . . . As the works of Nature have a much greater analogy to the effects of our art and contrivance, than to those of our benevolence and justice, we have reason to infer that the natural attributes of the Deity have a greater resemblance to those of men than his moral have to human virtues. But what is the consequence? Nothing but this, that the moral qualities of man are more defective in their kind than his natural abilities.' 'In proportion to my veneration for true religion is my abhorrence of vulgar superstitions.'

Cl. 'Religion, however corrupted, is still better than no religion at all.' 'The proper office of religion is to regulate the heart of men, humanise their conduct, infuse the spirit of temperance, order, and obedience; and as its operation

is silent, and only enforces the motives of morality and justice, it is in danger of being overlooked, and confounded with these other motives. When it distinguishes itself, and acts as a separate principle over men, it has departed from its proper sphere, and has become only a cover to faction and ambition.'

CHAPTER VIII

HUME AMONG HIS FRIENDS

HUME, more than most men of his time, is known by his books. His writings have this peculiar value, that they shew the reader much of his individuality. He deals so largely with the moral and religious life, in practical as well as in philosophical aspects, that the pages reveal the man, whereas it often happens that a man's writings are a veil, not infrequently a screen, concealing the author.

When we pass from Hume's literary efforts to his social life, the man is again revealed. By a series of reflected pictures, vividly accurate, his image seems thrown on a mirror. The social life appears broadly, and the large variety of interest, notwithstanding his seclusion, often extends over long periods. He is 'sociable, though he lives in solitude' (Burton, I., p. 226), M.S. Royal Society, Ed. One has only to name a selection of those with whom he enjoyed the intimacy of friendship, in order to suggest the biographical value of these friendships, and of the records of them which survive. This will be obvious by mere reference to his friendship with Adam Smith, who stands out prominently in the circle of chosen companions; with Strahan, his publisher and literary adviser, to whom he is

drawn closer as the work of life advances; with Home, author of *Douglas*, illustrating his generous interest in the literary success of others; with Rousseau, resulting from his residence in Paris, in course of which we see the tenderness and generous spirit of the man, though all ends in vexatious failure; and his friendship with the Countess de Boufflers, to whom he is attracted by her striking intellectual gifts, and with whom he sympathises in her times of perplexity and adversity.

Intellectual ability in all its phases finds a ready admiration. After that, he is attracted to social life by his appreciation of social pleasantries, of unrestrained talk on well-chosen themes, and of free banter, attended with jest which has no bitterness in it,—a freedom dear to him, in accordance with the customs of his country.

What he was in disposition and tendency his friends had to accept; and for the most part they found no great difficulty in maintaining regard for one who had a large share of dogmatism in his conversation, without the Johnsonian gruffness. From his early days to life's close, literary ambition was the main-spring in his life; next, there was in him, along with love of truth, a strong critical spirit, rejoicing in suspense of judgment and in doubt; and, along with these, an intense social instinct, which to a man largely severed from family ties, brought, in the unrestrained hours of leisure, the comfort and quietly stimulating effects of social interest, with play of fancy and of feeling. These things indicate how much Hume sought, and how much he gave, within the privileged circle of chosen friends.

Edinburgh, the city of his birth, continued to Hume

the centre of attraction all his life through, finding the town 'the true scene for a man of letters.' Ninewells was his retreat when study demanded seclusion. It was the home centre while his mother lived; it continued his cherished retreat after his brother was owner, his sister-in-law at the head of her own family circle, and his nephews were gathering the fresh associations of early life. The circle attracted him, but the quietness of the place was an allurement dear to a philosopher. But Edinburgh commanded his loyal attachment throughout. It was the city of his abode, the centre of his friendships. Whatever the inducements calling him away, he left it with a grudge; when engagements elsewhere were closed, he always returned with delightful anticipation of renewed enjoyment of his social surroundings. Edinburgh was to Hume what it afterwards became to Robert Louis Stevenson, though it was more a centre of lifelong friendships to Hume than to Stevenson, who found in Samoa the attractive climate favourable to one in feeble health.

Hume experienced no serious discomfort in the cold of an Edinburgh winter and spring. He could even write to a friend who was to occupy his house, that one of the rooms in it was so comfortable that there was no need for a fire there, even on a cold night. His native city was his chosen dwelling. He had his earlier abode at different points in the historic line of street from the Castle to Holyrood. Once in the Canongate, well down the line towards the Palace, afterwards in the Lawnmarket in James's Court, almost under the shadow of the Castle walls, in one of the high lands, with

grand prospect looking across the Firth of Forth to Fife. Latterly he had his abode in the New Town, beyond the Nor' Loch, where he built a house on the rising ground on which St Andrew Square now stands. A wag wrote with chalk upon its wall, 'Saint David,' which being reported to its owner, he replied, 'Many a better man has been made a saint.' The name became a fixture, for the street is still known as St David Street. At whatever point in it he fixed his dwelling, the city, its society, and its surroundings concentrated the living interests of the philosophic historian.

Only once did he hesitate as to the place of his settled abode, but then the hesitation was serious. It was when his duties as Secretary to the Embassy in Paris came to a close. The attentions and flatteries lavished on him there stood in strong contrast with the suspicions and condemnation which met him in Edinburgh. 'Edinburgh has many objections and many allurements,' he wrote. Quite seriously he thought of seeking some genial retreat in France. Adam Smith remonstrated with him against such a choice, and wrote to Millar, the bookseller, asking him to advise Hume against separation from his life-long interests. 'He is light-headed, tell him, when he talks of coming to spend the remainder of his days here (Paris) or in France.'* Hume soon came to be of Smith's opinion, and decided against settling in France, fearing that he should be drawn 'into engagements with princes and great lords and ladies.' He returned to Scotland. The good fortune of being nominated by Mr Conway to the

* M.S. Royal Soc., Ed. *Letters of Hume to Strahan*, Birkbeck Hill, p. 59.

position of Under-Secretary of State transferred him to London for a time, but there the power of the magnet in Edinburgh was felt as strongly as before.

Among his friends the most intimate was Adam Smith, the Kirkcaldy boy, twelve years his junior, son of the Comptroller of Customs in the 'lang toun,' a Writer to the Signet, and Judge Advocate Depute for Scotland. The historian and the economist, afterwards author of *The Wealth of Nations*, became fast friends. A biographer cannot write of the one without writing of the other.

In early life Hume and Smith dwelt remote from each other. Chirnside and Kirkcaldy were far apart. Their intimacy did not come from boyhood years, but from their early manhood, when Hume was author of the *Treatise*, and the younger man a student at Glasgow University, having an eye on the 'Snell' Bursary, which would open the way to Oxford. After Smith's return from Oxford he was at Kirkcaldy from 1746 to 1748; Hume was then absent on the Continent as Secretary to General St Clair when on his mission to the Court of Turin. By the influence of Henry Home of Kames (afterwards Lord Kames) and James Oswald of Dunkier, young Smith came to Edinburgh to deliver a course of lectures on English Literature. This course was largely attended by members of the bar, clergymen, and leading citizens. These lectures were given throughout three successive winters, until the lecturer was appointed Professor of Philosophy in the University of Glasgow. Through the friendly intervention of Home and Oswald, Hume and Smith became acquainted, and soon they were fast friends, sharing in a multitude of literary, philosophic, and patriotic

interests. They were of opposite schools of politics—Hume Tory, Smith Liberal—but this was no obstacle to deepest friendship. From this time there was laid the foundation of a lifelong intimacy. So strong was the mutual attachment that it was to Hume an additional attraction to the view from the high windows in James's Court that it included Kirkcaldy, the dwelling-place of Adam Smith, whilst Smith addressed Hume as 'My dearest friend.' In his valuable *Life of Adam Smith*, Rae fitly names it 'a memorable Roman friendship' (p. 105). When the end of life approached, and Hume prepared his will, 'My friend, Dr Adam Smith, late Professor of Moral Philosophy in Glasgow,' is named as literary executor to carry out his most cherished desires.

From the first Hume valued Smith as a profound and original thinker; Smith looked up to Hume as one who had greatly influenced him by his *Treatise* in those days when he, as junior, was only a student in Glasgow, under the teaching of Hutchison, Professor of Moral Philosophy. That Hume was twelve years older than his friend was a fact that did nothing to abate the frankness of the elder, or the freedom of the younger. The two were born 'thinkers,' each finding the main occupation of his life in study of abstract problems, and each finding in the other a cherished enthusiasm for literature and philosophy. Both spent much time in silent thought; both were noted for 'wealth of conversation' when in a chosen circle of friends, though Smith was prone to silence at times; and each appreciated the variety of powers belonging to the other. Hume's *Essay on the Balance of Trade* seems to have arrested the attention of Adam Smith, whose deep

interest in questions of trade and commerce found quickening here. Smith's bias makes it easy to understand how his attention would be attracted by an argument against the tendency in nations 'to prohibit the exportation of commodities.' How valuable must have seemed to him its fundamental position. 'The more is exported of any commodity, the more will be raised at home, of which they themselves will always have the first offer.' This opened a wide range of common interest. To this and to the more practical side of philosophy, Smith was devoted ; he did not, however, enter with Hume's enthusiasm into the speculative region. Smith was even steadily opposed to Hume's publication of the *Dialogues on Religion.* Hume had an absorbing devotion to the speculative problems, which led him towards sceptical rather than positive conclusions.

In 1749 Hume returned from the mission to Vienna and Turin ; for two years thereafter he was at Ninewells ; in 1751 he came to Edinburgh, where the Librarianship of the Advocates' Library opened the way to the preparation of the *History.* It was at this juncture Smith was elected Professor of Logic in Glasgow. The two were parted, just when the opportunity for regular interviews seemed probable. Such, however, was their devotion to each other, that Smith often came from Glasgow, though the journey in these days occupied thirteen hours. Hume's house was Smith's abode at such times ; the summer recess brought to Smith the satisfaction of extended residence in Edinburgh. Their friendship was constant ; their co-operation in public enterprise incessant. Smith was transferred to the Chair of Moral Philosophy in

1752, when Hume became a candidate for the Chair of Logic, but without success, since he had roused an adverse feeling which shewed its strength as soon as he sought the position of a public teacher. Smith is constrained to abandon hope of Hume's success; saying to Professor Cullen:—'I would prefer David Hume to any man for the College; but I am afraid the public would not be of my opinion.' Hume had to retire from the conflict a defeated candidate.

Smith gave his interest and effort to the advancement of education in the University of Glasgow, and of literary taste in the city, finding there many willing coadjutors. But it was in Edinburgh that the largest gathering of men outside the University shewed unceasing resolution for advancement of literature, philosophy, science and social organisation. There were Lord Kames (Henry Home); his brother, John Home, minister of Athelstaneford, author of *Douglas;* Adam Ferguson, Professor of Moral Philosophy; Gilbert Elliot, M.P.; Sir David and Sir John Dalrymple; Robertson, Blair, Alexander Carlyle, William Wilkie, minister of Ratho, and author of the *Epigoniad,* with many more in the midst of whom Hume and Smith were recognised as the most active and able. Hume with a 'strong and capacious mind,' Smith with a practical sagacity which excelled that of his senior. The three philosophers, David Hume, Adam Smith, and Adam Ferguson had, in all literary circles, the deference to which their distinctive writings entitled them.

On the proposal of Smith, Hume was made a member of 'The Literary Society' of Glasgow. In Edinburgh,

Hume was Secretary to 'The Philosophical Society,' afterwards merged in 'The Royal Society.' Smith was elected a member of 'The Philosophical' in 1752.

Smith was a leading spirit in the formation of 'The Select Society' of Edinburgh, constituted on the model of the 'French Academy,' and first proposed by Oswald and Allan Ramsay. Adam Smith made the opening speech explanatory of the objects and constitution. The Society at once gained favour, the membership quickly rising from 15 members, the original number, to 130, including the most illustrious names at a notable period in the history of Scotland. The weekly debates maintained by the Society proved animated and effective. Hume boasts of them that 'the House of Commons was less the object of general curiosity to London than the Select Society is to Edinburgh.' Here young advocates, ministers and literary men, had an arena for distinction, and 'long drawling speakers found out their want of talents.' The range of subjects was wide, chiefly political and economic (*Scots Magazine*, xix., 163), the limits imposed being indicated by exclusion of 'such as regard revealed religion, or which may give occasion to vent any principles of Jacobitism.'

Out of this Society originated the Edinburgh Society for encouraging art, science, manufactures, and agriculture. In this movement, Hume and Smith had a part, being placed together on the Committee for Belles-Lettres and Criticism.

In the midst of these manifold activities, a restless feeling was stirring in religious circles on account of the unreserved sceptical bias of Hume's works. Campbell (*Lives of the*

Chancellors, vol. vi., 18) describes it as 'a state of extraordinary ferment.' In 1755 Hume and Lord Kames were threatened with a summons to appear before the General Assembly to give account of their published views, and with possible ex-communication. The mover (Anderson) was not influential but he was persistent, and, by careful adherence to form, was able to put the machinery of the Supreme Court of the Church in motion. Hume made light of it all, in his own jaunty way; the member of the College of Justice was more disturbed. They trusted to Robertson, the leader of the House, and to the young advocate, Alexander Wedderburn, then rising into influence, to trace the limits of reasonable ecclesiastical procedure, and to vindicate freedom of thought in the field of literature. The anxiety of the two authors—which appears strange to us—was not unnatural a century and a half ago. Religious faith and feeling had encountered a rude shock from the writings of Hume, and the age was one which gave to the Supreme Court of the Church a wide dominion over all the subjects. A prudent reserve was maintained in the exercise of ecclesiastical authority. The majority of a court, which had dealt hardly with its own members in 1733 and 1752—when pleading in the interests of evangelical religion for the rights of the people in election of their ministers—dealt more leniently with the sceptic and with the speculative thinker on the bench, the latter, indeed, being exempted from the more serious charges advanced. Majorities had been found to depose Ebenezer Erskine and his companions, and also Thomas Gillespie, a few years afterwards, for refusing to share in the induction of ministers presented by the patron but rejected by

the people. But when the Assembly were asked 'to call before them' 'one person styling himself David Hume, Esq., who hath arrived at such a degree of boldness as to avow himself the author of books containing the most rude and open attacks on the glorious gospel of Christ,' they declined to exercise their authority—refused to examine his books and to pronounce a formal decision upon them —making in this a beginning in the recognition of that liberty to think and to publish according to conviction, which we now value and deem essential to true progress in thought. But in these days 'the ferment' was serious. The force of religious antagonism to Hume was such that his friend Smith hesitated to associate Hume with other writers in a literary adventure of the time—the institution of the *Edinburgh Review*, in anticipation of the famous Journal which, under the guidance of Jeffrey, afterwards appeared under the familiar title. The young advocate, just referred to as the defender of Hume in the Assembly, was the Editor of the *Edinburgh Review* of 1755, a young man of high ability and vast energy, who afterwards rose to be Lord High Chancellor of England, and became Earl of Rosslyn. On the staff of writers there were Adam Smith, Robertson and Blair—all the familiar friends of Hume. The religious antipathy stirring so strongly against him seems to have induced them to hesitate to include him on the staff, and they kept from him the information as to their plans. The object of the *Edinburgh Review* was 'to shew men at this particular stage of the country's progress the gradual advance of science would be a means of inciting them to a more eager pursuit of learning, to distinguish themselves, and

to do honour to their country.' The bare suspicion that Hume was directly concerned in the venture went against its chances of success, and the Review did not get beyond its second number, published January 1756. In 1818, Sir James Mackintosh republished the two numbers, as containing 'the first printed writings of Adam Smith and Robertson, and the only known publication of Lord Chancellor Rosslyn' (Alexander Wedderburn). In his preface to the republication given in Mackintosh's works, vol. ii., p. 470, Sir James says that 'the temper of the people of Scotland was at that moment peculiarly jealous in every question that approached the boundaries of theology' (p. 473). Unfortunately the projectors did not feel that their craft was trimmed and manned to face the storm. The *Edinburgh Review* disappeared, its name reserved for the later and better venture planned in Buccleuch Place by Jeffrey and others in 1802. Hume was too well aware of the antagonism he had roused, the result of acting as one 'desirous of being hated by the public,' to be offended by his exclusion, when the secret came out.

In 1758 Hume made a vigorous effort to get Smith to Edinburgh, as successor to Professor Abercromby in the Chair of Public Law; but Smith declined to think of it, and continued other five years in Glasgow University. The two continued in co-operation exactly as if Edinburgh had been the place of residence for both. Their next joint effort was in a political movement for the advance of their country. The Jacobite rebellion had left in England a sense of distrust of the Scotch, the manifestation of which, in the rejection in 1760 of a Bill for a Scotch

militia. The irritation occasioned in Scotland led to the formation of 'The Edinburgh Poker Club' in 1762. This was a convivial club, with a definite political purpose,—'the poker' being the symbol of a purpose to stir the fire of agitation against the action of Parliament, and the English prejudices which sustained it in the course taken. The declared object of the Club was to obtain greater security 'for the freedom and independence of these islands.' Hume, Smith and Ferguson were members of the 'Poker,' the words quoted being those of the philosopher last named. Gradually the favour for a standing army extended throughout the nation, and when in 1776 the Scotch Militia Bill of Lord Montstuart was introduced, there was much less complaint over it, even though a militia was granted to Ireland, while it was refused to Scotland.

Shortly after the founding of 'The Poker Club,' Hume had gone to Paris, as Secretary to Lord Hertford, British Ambassador. Hume left hurriedly, and had time only to send to Smith a word of explanation. Smith had been pleading with Hume to visit Glasgow, and Hume, in a vein of pleasantry, in March 1763, writes:—'You may be sure a journey to Glasgow will be one of the first I shall undertake. I intend to require with great strictness an account of how you have been employing your leisure, and I desire you to be ready for that purpose. Woe be to you if the balance be against you.' By the month of August Hume wrote to tell of his departure for Paris. 'I am a little hurried in my preparations, but I could not depart without bidding you adieu, my good friend, and without acquainting you with the reasons of so sudden a movement.' He closes the letter saying—'We may meet abroad, which

will be a great satisfaction to me.' This meeting came sooner than either expected. When Hume had reached Paris, his first letter was to Smith, telling how he had 'suffered as much flattery as almost any man has ever done in the same time,' and he tells him that, under the eye of the Baron d'Holbach, there is one engaged in translating his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. In the following October (1763), Smith received a letter proposing that he should accompany the young Duke of Buccleuch, then at Eton, on a continental tour, in course of which education might be blended with travel and relaxation, offering the philosopher £300 a year while so engaged, and £300 a year for life thereafter. The Professor accepted, resigned his Moral Philosophy Chair, and turned his face for the first time to the Continent, with the Duke of Buccleuch, and his companion, Sir James Macdonald of Sleat. 'Sir James was heir of the old Lords of the Isles, and son of the lady who, with her factor, Kingsburgh, harboured Prince Charles and Flora Macdonald in Skye' (Rae, *Life of Adam Smith*, p. 174). The travellers reached Paris in February of 1764, when, during a stay of ten days, most of Smith's time was spent in the company of Hume. Thereafter the time of the Duke of Buccleuch was spent in Toulouse, Bordeaux, and Montpelier. Afterwards he and his tutor came to Geneva, where Smith made the acquaintance of Voltaire, for whose literary ability he had a high admiration. In course of the residence at the different places selected, Smith had much time on his hand. On 5th July 1764, he writes to Hume:—'The life which I led at Glasgow was a pleasurable, dissipated life in comparison of that which I lead here at present. I have begun to write

a book, in order to pass away the time.' This is the first reference to the writing of the *Wealth of Nations*. When the travellers returned to Paris in 1765, Hume had lost his position at the Embassy, and was preparing for his departure, when Rousseau was to go with him to England. Smith's arrival in Paris at this juncture gave opportunity for again spending several days with Hume.

It was not till 1776, the year of Hume's death, that Adam Smith published the *Wealth of Nations*. Hume took a warm interest in the success of the book, as he had done in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. He wrote his friend expressing in warmest terms his admiration of the book. 'It has depth, and solidity, and acuteness, and is so much illustrated by curious facts, that it must at last attract the public attention.' Gibbon, in a letter to Adam Ferguson, described it as 'an extensive science in a single book.' The work arrested public attention in a large degree, commanded careful study from many distinguished parliamentary leaders, supplied the educational influence which prepared for the Free-Trade policy adopted in the mother country of all the English speaking nations, and was accepted as a classic in the literature of Political Science. Hume begins his letter to the author :—'Euge ! Belle !—Dear Mr Smith,—I am much pleased with your performance.' The words were written only a few months before the pen dropped from the writer's hand,—a pen wielded powerfully when arguing for removal of commercial restrictions, pleading for 'that free communication and exchange, which the author of the world has intended by giving them soils, climates, and genuises, so different from each other.'

One cannot tell of Hume's friendships without noting the warm interest manifested by him in the literary labours and successes of his compeers. Whether we refer to Adam Smith, or to Robertson, or to John Home, author of *Douglas*, we find evidence of his generous admiration and joy in their success. To this must be added his resolute efforts to help forward young aspirants, unknown in literary circles, or battling with difficulties. Witness his efforts for Thomas Blacklock, the blind poet, residing in Dumfries, by whose 'gentle sensitive character and hard fate' he was greatly moved. For 'the son of a poor tradesman' he made strong efforts to clear the way, esteeming as a young man 'of modesty, virtue, and goodness, as well as of genius;' and one who, 'notwithstanding very strict frugality, is in great necessities.' To Blacklock he for a time gave the salary which came to him for his duties at the Advocates' Library, when, having quarrelled with the committee of management, he was preparing for resignation. Another example of enthusiastic effort, in which, however, his goodness of heart outran his caution, is presented in his introduction of Macpherson with his professed 'Ossian' manuscripts to the literary circles of London. Johnson suspected deception from the first, and expressed his disdain in one of his usual outbursts. But Hume did not easily relax his interest, and feeling some pride in the proof of poetic gift among the Highlanders of Scotland, stuck to his protégé, till doubts came to disturb his own confidence and to weaken his zeal.

When Hume was suddenly transferred to the British Embassy at Paris a quite new social experience opened to him. After being presented at Court, he was, as we have

seen, welcomed to the literary gatherings of the French metropolis. He was delighted to find himself in a city where literary merit gave a free pass to the best society, and he was naturally elated by the reception extended to him. Sceptical tendencies presented no barriers, and awakened neither suspicions nor aversions. He was flattered even in little set speeches which struck him as novel; he was 'lionised'; and became noted as 'the Great David.' For a season, he passed through a round of gaiety, not altogether favourable to friendship in its best sense. Only slowly did he succeed in reaching the literary men of Paris in their more familiar gatherings. But at length he secured the friendship of many of the most conspicuous of them, although the duties of his office made it needful to give his chief attention to 'society,' where Court influences could be best considered, and the requirements of an ambassador could be best served.

In Parisian circles, he met a scepticism which outstretched the utmost length of his expressed doubts. On one occasion in Edinburgh he was saluted by a brilliant lady as a Deist, and resented the suggestion, saying that he had no desire to be regarded in this light. On another occasion in Paris, when dining with the Baron d'Holbach, Hume said to his host that he 'had not seen an Atheist, and did not believe that there was one,' to which the Baron replied, 'you are here at table with seventeen.' Hume learned to respect many of these men, but his acquaintance did not induce him to change his deliberately expressed judgment which he was at pains to have published—'Surely nothing can afford a stronger presumption that any set of principles are true, and ought to

be embraced, than to observe that they tend to the confirmation of true religion, and serve to confound the cavils of Atheists, Libertines, and Free-thinkers of all denominations.'*

In Paris, Hume soon became a recognised favourite among the ladies who reigned over the salons where literary men mingled with ladies and gentlemen of high rank. He gained the acquaintance of all these guides of fashion, and his presence was eagerly desired when their invitations were issued. This arose out of the unbounded good humour of the man, his ready delight in the pleasantries of good society, and his willingness, after his first shyness was over, to contribute to the glancing mirth which gave zest to the evening. Out of this sprung also not a few valued friendships; such as come from more serious lines of thought, and common interest in subjects of careful study. Of these the best example appears in his friendship with the Countess de Boufflers. Among the favourites of Court, he found not a few ladies who were 'great readers,' having at the same time 'great sense and an agreeable conversation,' but the Countess de Boufflers shewed deep interest in his own works, and in all the questions philosophical and political which engrossed his thoughts. Their correspondence, of which a large selection is published, shews the breadth of interest she felt in the great problems of life. Their earlier letters concern largely the persons holding prominent positions, and the books which merited careful study. At a later period the Countess came to make Hume more of a confidant who would feel some direct interest in her ambi-

* *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Part I., p. 21.

tions, and, even more certainly, some compassion for her in her disappointments and trials. The Count de Boufflers does not seem to have concerned himself much with the gaieties of his wife. She, feeling the lurements of a gay court, was drawn into intrigue and into clandestine relations with the Prince of Conti which were at first only faintly veiled, and were afterwards accounted as affording a basis for social distinction. After the death of the Count she cherished the further ambitious hope of finding her place as a member of the royal family. The doubts and fears of that dark, silent, restless season, when hope and fear contended with each other, and were constantly supplanting each other, were freely communicated to Hume, and this in manner which touched his compassion, bringing his sympathy into active exercise, in the midst of such opportunities as his official position afforded. Writing on 28th November 1764, he assures her that he has kept 'eyes and ears open with regard to everything that concerns her affair.' He even goes so far as to report from 'the best informed' an impression 'that a resolution had been taken in her favour,' fanning the flame of ambition soon to be damped and to die out. Such a friendship was not to be lost sight of; the Countess clung to it with great confidence; and, even after hope had been displaced by the bitterness of disappointment, she received gratefully Hume's counsel as coming from one who had expressed deep compassion for her 'in her present melancholy situation,' when having been seemingly brought 'within reach of honour and felicity,' she is slowly but surely being lowered into overwhelming dismay. Then he counsels courage, and the firm resolution of one who has nerved

herself for the supreme effort of breaking off an alliance which is closing in sword-thrusts, endangering to health, and fatal to the peace and hope of an honourable life. With a feeling altogether suitable to the occasion, he writes—'The measure which I recommend to you requires courage, but I dread that nothing else will be able to prevent the consequences so justly apprehended' (*Private Corr. of D. Hume*, published 1820, p. 112; Burton, II., p. 249). So much did the Countess in the calmer hours of later years value the friendship of so faithful yet sympathetic a counsellor, that correspondence was maintained by her after Hume had finally returned to his own land. She even became in turn a truly sympathetic friend of the Scottish philosopher when disaster fell on his relations with Rousseau (*Private Correspondence*, cf. p. 171, p. 186).

To Voltaire and Rousseau, the literary rivals dividing the honours of the day, Hume was naturally attracted on account of their conspicuous ability. His interest in them was further quickened by his own intellectual bias in favour of a sceptical tendency. He felt besides, notwithstanding the reckless extravagance of their writings, that a service was being done in a very rude manner, and too often in a blasphemous spirit in breaking up the dominion of evil traditions, and preparing the way for the freedom and breadth of thought which must be the conditions of progress.

Hume never came into close friendship with Voltaire. From his private correspondence it is clear that he had a great admiration of 'the many fine things' in Voltaire's writings. But circumstances did not favour

close intimacy. Hume was, indeed, in thorough agreement with Voltaire in his antagonism to the Church of Rome, because of its fostering of superstition among the people, licentiousness among the priests, and intolerance towards all who valued freedom of thought. To this extent the two were in full sympathy. But Hume had learned at an early stage in his experience as a servant of the British Crown, that Voltaire was reckless and virulent in assault, and relentless in spirit. Hume's judgment was this:—'He never forgives, and never thinks any enemy below his notice' (Burton, II., 195). Yet, when Hume found himself rising into general popularity in France, he felt it desirable to seek somewhat friendly relations with Voltaire. In a letter to Colonel Edmonstoune, written from Paris on 9th January 1764, he says, 'when I arrived in Paris all M. Voltaire's friends told me of the regard he always expressed for me; that some advances on my part were due to his age, and would be well taken. I accordingly wrote him a letter in which I expressed the esteem undoubted due to his talents; and among other things I said that if I were not confined to Paris by public business, I should have a great ambition to pay him a visit at Geneva' (Burton, II., 184). But no great intimacy sprung up between them. Geneva was too far distant from Paris; Hume was too closely held by the demands of his secretarial duties; and they do not seem to have met. There was, however, mutual interest and regard which found occasional expression. When the outburst of Rousseau's wrath brought Hume into serious trouble, Voltaire wrote a letter, dated Ferney, 24th October 1766, to express his sympathy, mingled with ready

sarcasm directed against Rousseau (Voltaire's *Œuvres*, ed. 1789, lxiv., 495; Burton, II., 358).

With Rousseau, Hume came into close and most friendly relations, attracted not only by his brilliant gifts, but also by compassion for his many sorrows, and specially by sympathy of most direct and active form when persecution threatened him with loss of liberty. Rousseau had enjoyed at an earlier stage a period of quiet peaceful experience when he found satisfaction in literary work. This was the Montmorency period, when he enjoyed the friendly and generous interest of the Duke and Duchess of Luxembourg, and had the satisfaction of meeting many of the highest rank in France. But when Hume came to know him, Rousseau had fallen on evil times. A trying combination of circumstances made his life miserable. He was as much as ever the brilliant writer, the flashes of whose wit and genius delighted his countrymen; but the author was wretched, as one driven to bay and tormented. This bitter experience was largely due to his own lack of self-control. He had the sad inheritance of an excitable nervous temperament inducing miserable recklessness; his domestic life did nothing to soothe or elevate daily experience; his own self-indulgent irresolute spirit constantly aggravated his troubles. Many in high rank did much to abate his sorrows; but the rulers of the nation suspected his evil influence, and threatened him with condign restraint; while popular applause brought occasional relief and brightness, it could not bring deliverance from the growing burden of life. He grew increasingly irritable, suspicious, and miserable; this evil spirit of unrest was aggravated by sarcasm levelled against his

vanity, and by practical jokes, the worst of which was perpetrated by Horace Walpole who wrote him a letter of large promise assuming the semblance and signature of the Great Frederick of Prussia. Rousseau was maddened by these things, and was gradually moving on a dangerous incline towards insanity.

Hume proved a warm-hearted generous friend who stood by Rousseau in these days of trouble. Hume's sympathy soothed the fevered brain, irritated by miseries, real and imaginary, and it animated the disturbed life by inspiring fresh hope. The Scotchman who had thought of forsaking his own country in order to settle in France, became the adviser of the French litterateur counselling withdrawal from his country, and promising a safe retreat in England. He, who gave the counsel, was ready to undertake guidance and responsibility. So it happened that when Hume's time for leaving France had come, at the close of 1765, Rousseau had arrived in Paris to act in accordance with his friend's suggestion, and, as it happened, to travel with him to England. He had in Hume a true friend whose feelings were thus expressed, 'I must own I felt on this occasion an emotion of pity, mixed with indignation, to think a man of letters of such eminent merit should be reduced in spite of the simplicity of his manner of living to such extreme indigence; and that this unhappy state should be rendered more intolerable by sickness, by the approach of old age, and the implacable rage of persecution' (Burton, II., 296). To his burdened life the prospect of an English home seemed an escape from a load of woe. He arrived in Paris a marked man, outlawed by Parliament, yet sheltered by

the Prince of Conti, strange in appearance, wearing an American dress, dreaded by the ruling authorities, idolised by the people who were moving towards their own paroxysm of madness. When the popular enthusiasm was roused it began to overflow in tumultuous fashion, involving the retiring secretary of the British Embassy in a situation not the most comfortable. Escape from it was agreeable to Rousseau himself as well as to Hume, and early in January 1766, the now miserable object of popular admiration, passes away from the view of the excited Parisians, under the friendly guidance of 'the Great David.' Hume's judgment of his unfortunate protégé is very favourable, and his compassion for him deep. 'I find him mild and gentle, and modest and good humoured'; 'his judgment and affections are as strongly biassed in my favour as mine are in his.' Those who knew well the characteristics of the author of *Emile* warned Hume that he 'could not conduct him to Calais without a quarrel.' But the warm-hearted friend discredited such evil prognostications, and writes—'I think I could live with him all my life in mutual friendship and esteem. I am very sorry that the matter is not likely to be put to trial!' (Burton, II., 310).

These two fast friends arrived in London in safety. Rousseau became the object of popular interest, and was welcomed by many of high rank. By the intervention of Hume, he received a pension from the King, and besides this, Hume succeeded in awakening a lively interest in the French genius in the heart of his friend, Mr Davenport of Davenport, who generously placed at Rousseau's command as a dwelling, 'the mansion of Wooton, in Derby-

shire, surrounded by scenery not unlike that which he had left behind him in the Jura.' All was accomplished that Hume had foreshadowed, and in a manner as exact as if the whole had been arranged in the routine of ordinary business, with resources ample. If surroundings can make the future, all is in proper course. But Rousseau is only a silent volcano; woe betide all concerned when the lava bursts forth! A favourable retreat has been found for the great genius, before whom 'Voltaire and everybody else are quite eclipsed.' Hume had reason to be proud of his success, as the friend who had cleared the way out of a forest of troubles. But what of the restless, tumultuous nature in 'the mansion of Wooton,' accustomed to outbursts of popular applause, and also to deep and troubled brooding over his miseries? He is an utter stranger in the land, comparatively unfamiliar with the language of the people around, who did not at all understand him. He begins to feel himself as one banished from his own land, a dead ocean all around him, and not even a ripple of applause breaking at his feet, not a sound of sympathy falling on his ear. He is a man withal who 'writes and speaks, and acts from the impulse of genius, and who forgets its force when it is laid asleep,' weaker then than common mortals, quickly roused to jealousy and suspicion, the victim of distorted fancies; feeling now as one chilled by heartless neglect, and again wincing under acute pain as one who has been scourged with scorpions. What is a quiet dwelling? what is a peaceful neighbourhood to him? Who is Hume that he should shape his cause, and arrange for him in all things, as if he were incapable? What is the pension of the King of Britain to an illustrious French-

man? Hume, his professed friend, is a traitor, in secret collusion with all his foes who mock at his calamities. As for himself, he has been deluded, caught like a fox in a trap, and appointed to death. If he has as much strength in him as to make an effort, he will effect his escape, and pass away from the gaze of the English eye, and the control of English hands. Suddenly he takes to flight, as if all were reality, his wrath blazing specially against Hume. He flees from place to place; writes from a halting place to the general commanding the forces to warn him that if he be secretly assassinated, the deed will be found out; but if he is allowed to escape, and lands once more on French soil, he will be forgiving, and will not publish an account of the wrongs perfidious Albion has done to one of France's most notable sons.

To Hume the occurrence was matter of overwhelming concern; when Rousseau's angry denunciations came to him, he was stung to the quick, and resented them with fiery indignation as if they were the words of a sane man. Even after the flight had been traced stage by stage, after the extravagant fears of the wanderer were known, Hume could not be calm—could not take the advice of Adam Smith, to write nothing. He retorts with unrestrained indignation to Rousseau. He is so disturbed that he writes in all directions to friends at home, and to friends in France, to vindicate himself from the charge of false-heartedness. The large mass of correspondence in possession of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, shews how deeply and sorely he was troubled, as if all that he held dear had been suddenly wrenched from his grasp, leaving him a suspected, if not a discredited man. One needs to re-

member how deeply, and very tenderly, Hume had felt in his sympathy for Rousseau; and, on the other hand, how much the occurrence had become the theme of continued remark in society, British and French; in order to understand the tumult of disturbed feeling rushing through the heart of Hume. The quiet, strong words of a true and sagacious friend were lost upon him. He felt as one feels who thinks and feels and repeats that he 'does well to be angry.'

The worst storm stills at length. The friends irritated and alienated, if they could not be reconciled, grew calm, and took in the situation. The enmity between them was a bitter experience for both, leaving pitiful wreckage along the shore. This is the expression of quieter reflection which Rousseau penned:—'My soul, wearied with so many shocks, was in a condition of such profound melancholy, that in all that passed I believe I committed many faults.' Hume proves equally ready to acknowledge his regret to Adam Smith, on 17th October 1767, saying, after a review of the occurrence:—'I may apologise for a step, which you, and even myself, have been inclined sometimes to blame, and always to regret' (M.S., R.S.E.—Burton, II., 380).

Hume once more, though only for a brief period, passed into the service of Government. In February 1767, Mr Conway nominated him as Under-Secretary, in which office he continued until the change of Government in July 1768. Hume was assigned to the Northern Province, under which were included our relations with Prussia, Russia, Austria, Hamburg and Brussels. At this time he must besides have had much to say as to

Scotch affairs. Of this time he says:—'My way of life here is very uniform, and by no means disagreeable. I pass all the forenoon in the Secretary's house from ten till three, where there arrive from time to time messengers that bring me all the secrets of the Kingdom, and indeed of Europe, Asia, Africa and America.' 'My Chief is the most reasonable, equal tempered, and gentleman-like man imaginable.' With change of Government he passed from his agreeable post, and prepared to return to Edinburgh, there to spend the remainder of his days. He says in *My Own Life* 'I returned to Edinburgh in 1769, very opulent (for I possessed a revenue of £1000 a-year), healthy, and though somewhat stricken in years, with the prospect of enjoying long my ease, and of seeing the increase of my reputation.' He was now nearly sixty years of age. He entered again on occupancy of his familiar home in St James's Court, in the Lawnmarket; and from his lofty perch, looking across the Firth of Forth to the Fife Coast, he writes to Adam Smith:—'I am glad to have come within sight of you, and to have a view of Kirkcaldy from my windows.' He forthwith settled quietly into his familiar ways; shortly afterwards, writing to Sir Gilbert Elliot, he says:—'I have been settled here two months, and am here body and soul, without casting the least thought of regret to London, or even to Paris.' He continued in the old house for about a year, while the building of his new house was being carried forward, after which he removed to his home, at the head of St David Street, where he spent his few remaining years—where, when inroads of disease had brought him low, he had his last dinner-

party of friends on the day after his return from Bath, and where he died only a few weeks thereafter. These closing years were spent very pleasantly in the midst of the circle of familiar friends. He did not continue to write letters so freely as he had been wont to do; but his interest in the whole circle of philosophical, historical, and political questions continued lively and keen as in the earlier years; and he enjoyed, with all the well-known zest, unrestrained talk and discussion among familiar friends.

In the early part of 1775, Hume began to own that some sense of failing health had crept over him, and had been growing for several years previously. Disease had not yet assumed definite form, but constitutional predisposition was preparing the way. He noted this as a warning of the coming end, and now began to include in his plans arrangements preparatory. He placed himself under the care of his medical adviser, Dr Black, who took a serious view of his complaint; he prepared instructions as to disposal of his papers, specially expressing solicitude as to the publication of the *Dialogues Concerning Religion*, and carried through a considerable correspondence on this matter, when his friend Adam Smith indicated reluctance to pledge himself to carry out his purpose.

Between the spring of 1775 and that of the following year the disease had made considerable progress. Hume writes thus in *My Own Life* as to this period, considering his disorder had 'become mortal and incurable.' 'I now reckon on a speedy dissolution. I have suffered very little pain from my disorder; and, what is more strange, have, notwithstanding the great decline of my person, never suffered a moment's abatement of my spirits; inso-

much that were I to name the period of my life which I should most choose to pass over again, I might be tempted to point to this latter period. I possess the same ardour as ever in study, and the same gaiety in company. I consider, besides, that a man of sixty-five, by dying cuts off only a few years of infirmities; and though I see many symptoms of my literary reputation's breaking out at last with additional lustre, I know that I could have but few years to enjoy it. It is difficult to be more detached from life than I am at present.'

When in April 1776 symptoms of rapidly declining strength had appeared, Dr Black wrote to Adam Smith, who was then in London, where also John Home was, urging him to come to Edinburgh. 'I wish, if possible, to hasten your coming, that he may have the comfort of your company so much the sooner.' Adam Ferguson wrote to the same effect, saying,—'David, I am afraid, loses ground.' Smith and Home set off together about the middle of April, hoping to meet the doctor's wishes, and give some comfort in the closing days. At the same time, a reverse course was planned by Hume, on account of the suggestion that a visit to Bath might prove beneficial. His Autobiography had been finished just two days, when he wrote to Strahan, 20th April 1776,—'My body sets out to-morrow by post for London; but whether it will arrive there is somewhat uncertain. I shall travel by slow journeys. Last Monday I sent off by the waggon, directed to Mr Cadel, the four last volumes of my *History*. I bring up my philosophical Pieces corrected, which will be safe, whether I die by the road or not' (*Letters to Strahan*, G. B. Hill, p. 319).

Very fortunately for the invalid traveller, his two friends, Adam Smith and John Home, met him at Morpeth, where they saw 'his servant, Colin, at the gate of the inn.' They had reached their friend sooner than they had expected, and spent the night with him. Adam Smith there received tidings of the serious illness of his mother, and had to hasten forward to Kirkcaldy. John Home went with Hume, going by Durham, Darlington, Boroughbridge, Northallerton, and Ferrybridge. After resting at London, he proceeded to Bath, where during the first four days he seemed to improve, but he soon relapsed to the former condition, when he resolved on the return journey, arriving in Edinburgh in the beginning of July.

In August, Adam Smith writes, 'Mr Hume's magnanimity and firmness were such, that his most affectionate friends knew that they hazarded nothing in talking or writing to him as to a dying man, and that so far from being hurt by this frankness, he was rather pleased and flattered by it.'

Hume himself, five days before his death, writing to the Comtesse de Boufflers, says:—'I see death approach gradually, without any anxiety or regret.'

On the 23rd August he writes to Smith, who had gone to Kirkcaldy:—'My Dearest Friend,—I am obliged to make use of my nephew's hand in writing to you, as I do not rise to-day. . . .

'I go very fast to decline, and last night had a small fever, which I hoped might put a quicker period to this tedious illness; but, unluckily, it has, in a great measure, gone off. I cannot submit to your coming over here on my account, as it is possible for me to see you so small a

part of the day; but Doctor Black can better inform you concerning the degree of strength which may, from time to time, remain with me. Adieu.'

The letter from the doctor is dated 'Edinburgh, 26th August 1776' (Burton, II., p. 515), and runs as follows :—

'Dear Sir,—Yesterday, about four o'clock, afternoon, Mr Hume expired. The near approach of his death became evident in the night between Thursday and Friday, when his disease became excessive, and soon weakened him so much that he could no longer rise out of his bed. . . . He never dropped the smallest expression of impatience; but, when he had occasion to speak to the people about him, always did it with affection and tenderness. . . . When he became very weak, it cost him an effort to speak; and he died in such a happy composure of mind that nothing could exceed it.'

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