Scottish Men of Letters

CHAPTER II

EARLY SCOTTISH PHILOSOPHY - HUTCHESON - DAVID HUME

WHILE there were signs of a growth of literary interest in Scotland in poetry, history, and antiquarianism, there were also in the Universities signs of fresh intellectual life. In the first years of the century, the Universities were centres of dulness, the regents carrying their pupils through their three years' curriculum of learning with antiquated methods and scholastic authorities of past ages; but there gradually came into those chairs teachers of a new type. Aristotle was superseded by Locke, Descartes gave way to Newton as the authorities. Colin Maclaurin leaving Aberdeen in 1725, where since he was nineteen he had been teaching a few students, came to Edinburgh to begin his brilliant career in the chair of mathematics, as colleague to James Gregory, who kept the salary and left him the fees, which Sir Isaac Newton, in compassion for his disciple, supplemented by $20; in 1727 Alexander Monro was installed as the first professor of anatomy, and with other teachers began to form a great medical school, gathering students to his class-room from all quarters. In Glasgow, in 1712, Robert Simson became the first professor of mathematics, soon to attain fame as a brilliant reviver of Greek geometry. And in 1730 there began to lecture on philosophy Francis Hutcheson, who was to quicken philosophic interest in Scotland, and to influence deeply and widely the thought and tone of a new generation.

For thirty years the chief teacher in philosophy in the West had been Mr. Gershom Carmichael, a laborious and conscientious man, the son of an old covenanting minister, who had named his offspring "Gershom" because, having been born in London, he was, as the Hebrew name signifies, a "sojourner in a strange land." He had been appointed to that chair when he was young and knew little of modern philosophy, and died when he was old without knowing much, although he was the best commentator on the great text-book of Puffendorf. [It is curious that Sir William Hamilton should say that "Carmichael may be regarded as the real founder of the Scottish School of Philosophy" (*Reid's Works*, p. 30, edit. Hamilton)]. He was, however, as Mr. Robert Wodrow relates, "singularly religious," and "under great depths of soul exercise," [*Analecta*, iii. 440; iv. 95.] which is not a common exercise for professors to indulge in. His successor was of a calmer temperament.

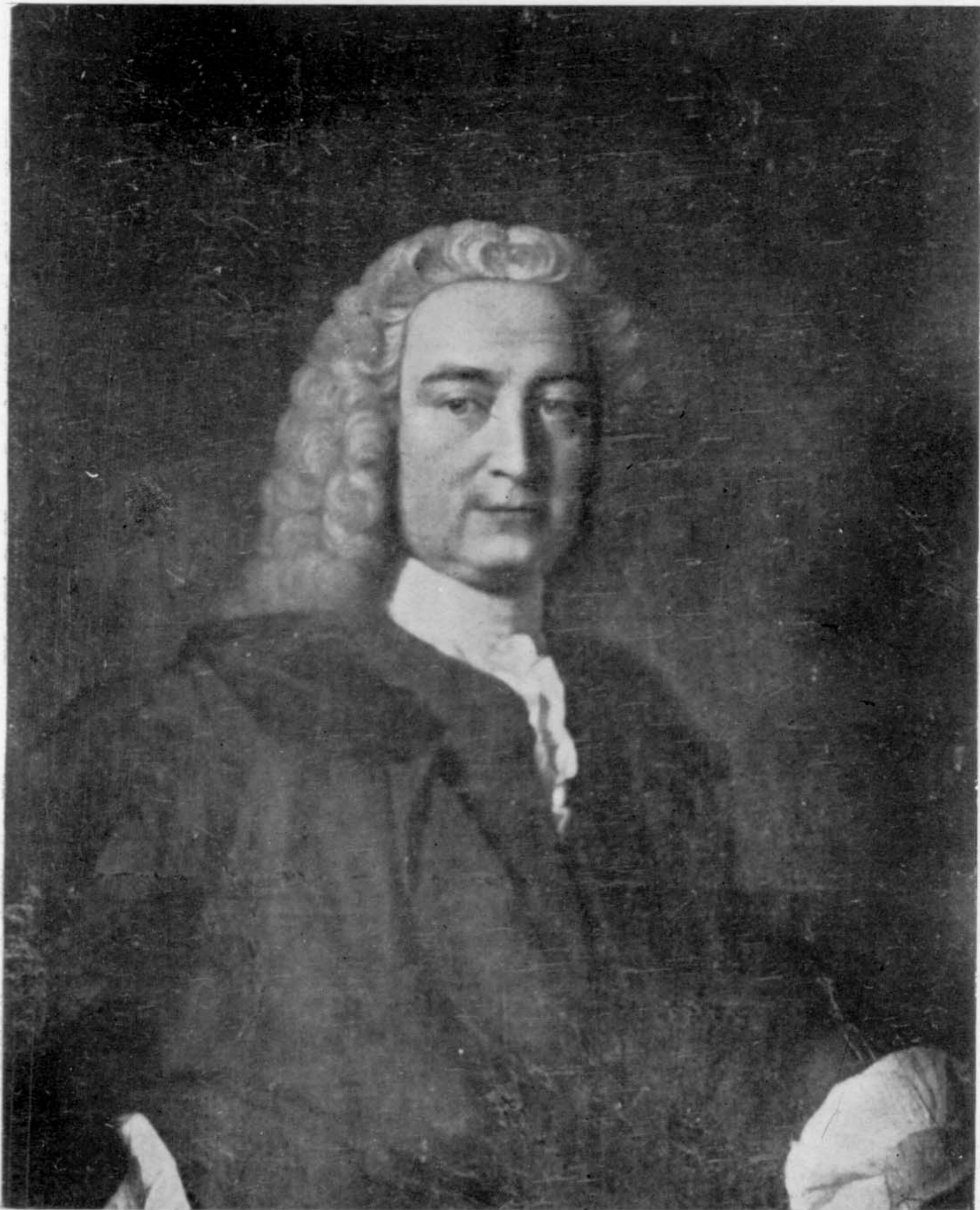
Born in 1694, Francis Hutcheson was the son of a Presbyterian minister in

County Down, grandson of a minister who had come from Ayrshire. Like most Irish Presbyterian youths preparing for the ministry, he was sent to Glasgow College, and there he studied under Mr. Gershom Carmichael, who then as regent taught to his pupils in successive years Greek, logic, philosophy, and physics. From the "soul-exercised" Carmichael he passed to study divinity under Professor John Simson, whose alleged Arianism and hopes for salvation of the heathen agitated for years the whole church, till he was suspended from his chair, though not before he had instilled more liberal thinking than Calvinistic professors had ever encouraged in students.

In 1716 Hutcheson was licensed to preach, but his tone and teaching were not of the evangelical, soul-searching order Irish Presbyterians loved. One Sunday being rainy, his father did not like to venture out, so Francis for the first time took his place in the pulpit. As the weather cleared, Mr. Hutcheson went out of doors, and met the congregation going home, dissatisfaction marked on their countenances. An elder, a Scotsman, accosted the anxious father and said, "We a' feel wae your mishap, reverend sir, but it canna be concealed, your silly loon Frank has fashed a' the congregation wi' his cackle; for he has been babbling this 'oor about a gude benevolent God, and that the souls o' the heathens themsels will gang to heaven, if they follow the licht o' their ain conscience. No a word did the daft lad ken, speer, nor say aboot the gude auld comfortable doctrine o' election, reprobation, original sin, and faith. Hoot, mon, awa' wi' sic a fellow!" [Reid's *History of Presbyterian Church in Ireland*, iii. 406.] Here surely were forbidden fruits plucked from Mr. Simson's doctrine.

The premature moderate did, indeed, find a congregation to appoint him their minister; but he soon gave it up, and for eight years he kept a private academy in Dublin, and pursued his philosophical studies. A treatise on the *Original of Beauty and Virtue* in 1725, and an *Essay on the Passions and Affections*, established his literary reputation, won him the friendship of men of high position, and resulted in his appointment to the Chair of Moral Philosophy in Glasgow when good Carmichael died. When entered on his post in 1730, his name and his success attracted dissenting students from England and Ireland, who with the others soon filled those benches, before which Carmichael had lectured to about thirty pupils. He was the first professor to give up lecturing in Latin - to the joy of the students - and his lectures were full of animation, as he discoursed, walking backwards and forwards in the room, with his clear persuasive voice. A pleasant man to look at, with a kindly expression on his florid face, with a genial dignity in his presence as

he stood in his gown and ample wig. In his teaching he discarded the old arid scholasticism, though he had no fancy for new abstract speculation. [Leechman's *Life of Hutcheson*, prefixed to *System of Moral Philosophy*, 1754.] He set himself rather to study the mind, with its faculties and passions, as a botanist examines a plant and separates it into component parts. According to his theory of virtue there is in man a "moral sense" (adopting Lord Shaftesbury's phrase) by which he discriminates virtuous and vicious actions, just as the physical senses discern colours, sounds, and taste. What is the quality that this sense approves in any act? Hutcheson replies it is Benevolence - "all the kind affections which incline us to make others happy, and all the actions which flow from such affections." Using a phrase which Bentham afterwards created into a moral creed, he maintains "that that action is best which procures the greatest happiness of the greatest numbers." [*Inquiry Concerning Moral Good and Evil*, sect. 3.] As he discoursed on the beauty of virtue, on the moral affections, on the regulation of passions, he impressed his scholars with an enthusiasm akin to his own. "When enforcing moral virtues," says Carlyle, one of his students in 1743, "he displayed a fervent and persuasive eloquence which was irresistible." [Carlyle's *Autobiography*, p. 70.] There was a fine optimism in his theological creed, born like his moral theory of his genial nature. There was a teaching very different from that prevalent in the Church. The philosopher taught that by morality man can serve a benevolent God; evangelical ministers taught that by faith alone God can be pleased, by moral works no man be saved. Insensibly he was revolutionising religious thought - especially in the west, where clergy and people were the sternest of Calvinists, the keenest of evangelicals. Now, youths who were to form the new generation in church or society were inoculated with the new thought - hard dogmas lost their hold over them, the doctrine total corruption grew unreal as he depicted the beauty of human nature. A remorseless creed was shaken by the doctrine of a benign Universal Parent - "whose world shows happiness, whose chastisements are tender admonitions." To his influence was added that of Dr. Leechman - professor of Divinity, afterwards the Principal of the University - who put morality as the essential of religion to the front and theological doctrines in the background. Hutcheson prophesied that "this man would put a new face on theology in Scotland," and he right. [M'Cosh's *Scottish Philosophy*, p, 64; Leechman's *Sermons*, with Life by Wodrow, vol. i.] The saintliness of the divine, with quiet, earnest face, thin and pale like an ascetic, gave him power which few students could resist, and which not even zealots that opposed him could gainsay. As for Professor Hutcheson, he was not only affecting a class-room, but, by his Sunday evening discourses on Christian



FRANCIS HUTCHESON
From a Painting by John Foulis in Glasgow University

truth and evidences in the College Kirk, he influenced men of all classes in the town. His works and speculations do not mark an era in philosophy, neither did they greatly mould future thought; but they certainly gave a stimulus to thinking, influenced theological opinion in the Church, and increased the ranks of the moderate clergy. It is true his disciples were not always wise. With youthful crudeness preachers would sometimes bring the style of the class-room into the pulpit, and speak of the "harmony of the passions," of the "balance of the affections," quote Shaftesbury and cite Socrates to bewildered rustics who could not comprehend their phrases and loathed their "heathen morality." While the evangelical fathers spoke of "sanctification," their sons spoke of "virtues"; the old school preached about "graces of the spirit," the new school discoursed on "moral qualities"; and while the old held forth about "holiness," the young talked of a "high pitch of virtue." In ability they were fit to fill a pulpit; in indiscretion they were fit to empty a church. As they grew older, however, they became wiser, and the hope which David Hume expressed to Hutcheson, "that such instructive morals will get into the world and then into the churches," [M'Cosh's *Scot, Phil.* p. 86.] was amply fulfilled.

As years went by, the popularity of Hutcheson increased. His range of subjects was vast - ethics, natural religion, jurisprudence, government - in all of which his insistence on religious and civil liberty was keen and eloquent; and young Adam Smith caught not a little stimulus in his moral and political opinions from the master he loved - "the never to be forgotten Hutcheson." In the quadrangle of the college the professor's closest friends were the congenial Professors Leechman and Robert Simson - the quaint mathematician, who, when Hutcheson left him at his tavern at ten o'clock, was ready to remain talking and moderately drinking till three in the morning with Professor Moor, renowned for his Greek, for his jests, and as an adept in geometry. In 1746, when on a visit to Ireland, the philosopher died - a man whose character was intensely admired while he lived, and whose memory was cherished with singular fondness after his death.

David Hume

While thus was proceeding the awakening of intellectual life in Scotland, while lawyers, lairds, and some clergy had emancipated themselves from kirk austerity, and in Thomas Rankin's tavern, the club known as the "Rankinian" was

discussing the *Characteristics* of Shaftesbury and the theological metaphysics of Dr. Samuel Clarke and the idealism of Berkeley, a lank lad was attending the college class-room, taking listless notes of Latin lectures which gave light to none. The worthy professors of philosophy were prelecting drowsily on Puffendorf and Grotius, while David Hume was studying literature, reading classics, interested in Berkeley's Principles of Roman Knowledge, and thinking boldly for himself.

It was in 1711 that he had been born in his father's town house, but it was at the mansion-house of Ninewells in Berwickshire that he passed his childhood - that quaint plain house with its thick walls, narrow passages, creaking staircases, and low-ceiled rooms, ill lighted by little windows. It stood on a slight acclivity, from the sides of which rose the nine small springs from which the place took its name - making their way down to the Whitadder in front. There lived John Home, the laird, with his wife, daughter, and two sons. After education at home under the simple-minded minister, David was sent when eleven years old to Edinburgh College, with its 300 students, where he studied Greek - the only classical learning he got there - and heard cumbrous Latin lectures on half-obsolete philosophy which made as little impression on his ear as the rumbling of carts outside the college walls. Ancient moralists, "polite letters," and poetry were the delight of the spare youth - for the obese philosopher of after years was lank and meagre. His health breaking when he was about eighteen, a strange depression came over him, for which he asked advice from the able but ponderous physician of 30 stone, Dr. Cheyne of London. The calm philosophy of his favourite Cicero failed to cheer him, and for his broken spirits and weakened constitution physicians could only suggest long rides on the rough country roads, and prescribe a daily pint of claret and anti-hysterical pills. In time came a change. The lean, raw-boned youth became robust, his complexion ruddy; his face cheerful, all symptomatic of that physical exuberance which was in after years to pass into unwieldy corpulence The choice of profession for a gentleman in those days was very limited. He thought of the law, but the weary subtleties of Cujacius and Heineccius had no allurements for a mind that loved poetry and mild philosophy; yet he went to an occupation even less congenial - a merchant's office in Bristol - which he soon quitted. His father was now dead, and on the slender patrimony of £50 a year he departed for France at the age of twenty-three, "exercising rigid economy," he tells us, and "regarding every object contemptible except the improvement of his talents in literature." [*Memoirs of my Life.*] Here the young man still becoming fatter, in spite of his frugality, visited Paris, Rheims, and made his way to La Flêche, which had something to stir his

mind. Two years before the miracles wrought the tomb of Abbé Paris, the Jansenist, at St. Medard had given triumph to his party, and filled society and the church with excitement, and the practical insight into the mode in which belief in miracles is formed was not wasted on the young Scotsman and bore fruit afterwards in his famous Essay on Miracles. He discussed such questions with Jesuits in their cloisters, ruminated over philosophic doubts in the very seminary in which Descartes had meditated on his system, which began skepticism and ended in dogmatism.

Returning to Ninewells after three years, he devoted himself to study; and to completing a treatise which he felt sanguine would startle the world. It is a curious picture we can form of the old-fashioned frugal Scots household at Ninewells: the good prosaic mother busy with her stores and her maids, looking with maternal compassion on her younger son poring over his books and papers, and making ineffectual efforts at poetry; - "Davy's a fine good-natured crater, but uncommon wake-minded," she is reported have said of her portly offspring - while the sister was busy with her work and her spinning-wheel, and the young lad was absorbed in planting trees and rearing turnips. A visit to London resulted in finding in Mr. John Noone a bookseller bold enough to give £50 and twelve bound copies of an edition of 1000 copies of the work which the Scotsman submitted to him. The *Treatise on Human Nature* was published anonymously in 1739. The author knew that his views must cause surprise, for they were subversive of all established philosophy; though in his desire to win the good opinion of Dr. Joseph Butler, whose famous *Analogy of Religion* had been published the year before, he "cut off the nobler part" - which probably included that Essay on Miracles which one day was to explode like a shell in the camps of orthodoxy. Anxiously he awaited the effect on the world; be listened eagerly for the explosion his theories were to create. Alas! "it fell," as he says, "still-born from the press." Instead of a storm, it raised not a ripple. A few obscure reviews noticed its arrival; that was all, for the English mind was utterly indifferent to philosophy.

In this little treatise it is easy to trace the origin of Hume's speculations. In 1710 Berkeley, then only twenty-six years old, propounded his subtle idealism, in that style which is so charming to read and so easy to misunderstand. Starting from the accepted view of Locke, that we have no immediate perception of an external world, that we are conscious only of sensations, which we refer to outward objects, he maintained that there is no material world to know. The objects of knowledge are ideas, and these exist only as they are perceived [*Esse* is *percipi* is his dictum.]; though when

these pass from our mind, they do not cease to exist, for they are perceived by the infinite mind of God. In this way by Berkeley matter is disposed of, materialists are silenced; and at the same time mind or spirit is shown to be all that exists. Hume, with the same courage of a man of twenty-five, carries this theory to its utmost conclusion. With Locke he agrees we have only knowledge of our sensations and ideas; with Berkeley he agrees that there is no evidence for a material world; but he further argues we as little knowledge of the existence of mind, for all that we know is merely a series of ideas or impressions. Whence they come, wherein they exist, whither they go, we cannot tell. Away then vanish body and soul, mind and matter, the world outside, and personal identity within - for of the reality of these what evidence exists? We can no more go beyond our ideas than we can jump off our shadows. “I am at first affrighted and confounded,” said the author, “at the solitude in which I am placed by my philosophy.” But fortunately, while reason could not dispel his gloom, Nature, which snaps its fingers at reasoning, soon gave him relief. “I dine, I play a game at backgammon, or 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 it in my heart to enter into them any further.”[Book I. part iv. sect. 7.] In fact, he felt of his own theory what he said of Berkeley’s, that it allows of no confutation, and produces no conviction. Hardly less memorable, and almost as fruitful of philosophic debate, were his views on causation. Denying that we know of the existence of such a relation as cause and effect, he holds that we only learn from experience that certain objects are invariably conjoined; that when certain things occur, certain other things will follow in uniform sequence; but of power in one thing to produce another we are ignorant. Though this treatise, full of daring and original speculation, seemed still-born, it had a vigorous life before it. It was destined to incite philosophers, who felt that the weak points in accepted philosophy had been fatally exposed, to endeavour to reconstruct philosophy and establish conviction on a new and firmer basis.

Disappointment David Hume bore fairly well, but there was chagrin that the work to which he had devoted his young energies and brilliant thought should pass unnoticed. He went on with his studies, which in 1741 and 1742 bore fruit in two other little anonymous volumes entitled *Essays Moral a Political*. These met with a reception which consoled him for his former failure. The subjects were more popular, the style was fresh, the acumen was admirable, and they were warmly welcomed. The most whimsical result of the new literary importance he had won was his appointment in 1745 as companion, governor, or keeper - it is difficult to

fix on the proper term - to the Marquis of Annandale. This nobleman was half-mad, but sane enough to have read and admired Hume's Essays, and the young impecunious philosopher, allured by a salary of £300 a year, attended on his charge at St. Alban's - walked with him, talked with him, humoured him. A year ended the engagement. [Burton, i. 180; Walpole's *Letters*, i. 185.] Disputes, intrigues, in which his lordship's friends played a shabby part, resulted in the governor's dismissal from the service of the crazy peer (who three years after was declared a lunatic), and then followed petty squabbles about arrears of salary which, on Hume's part, show a spirit not quite philosophical. He next appears in a new character - as secretary to General St. Clair, who was sent on a foolish expedition to Canada, which ended in a feeble attack on the French coast - a rare piece of bungling, neither the general nor the admiral knowing anything of their parts, the troops being without guides, the ships without pilots, the captains supplied by the Admiralty with charts for the sea, when they had asked for maps of the coast. [Burton's *Life*, i. 218.] Could any position be more unsuitable for this philosopher, who loathed the sea, than to be kept on a squalid ship which, he would have agreed with Johnson, was but a prison, with the added chance of being drowned? The poor man owned he was "mortally sick at sea," and soon he was heartily sick of it. Verily ten shillings a day, even with perquisites, was not enough recompense for this. More congenially he served on shore with St. Clair, as part of his staff; when his friend was on a military embassy at Turin. There he was gorgeous in scarlet and gold lace, "with his broad fat face and wide mouth void of all expression except good-nature, his eye meaningless, his corpulence vast - looking like a grocer of the trained bands," as he masqueraded in the garb of an aide-de-camp. [*Memoirs of Charlemont*, i. p. 15.] Here at least he had good company, good fare, and good pay; and he quitted the service £1000 richer.

All these incongruous occupations did not divert him from his literary pursuits. He busied himself in recasting his unlucky treatise, and a volume, modestly priced three shillings, and entitled *Essays Concerning Human Understanding*, appeared anonymously in 1748. In this he had rewritten his youthful work, omitting some of the most daring speculations, which he desired should be thenceforth forgotten. This was a vain desire, for they were to prove the most memorable and fruitful in controversy of all his writings. Others, however, were added, including the famous essay on Miracles, which was to bring him a troublesome notoriety, for invalidating all evidence for the miraculous, and an essay on necessity which denied free will and pronounced the reign of invariable law in mind as in nature. At first the book was ignored, but afterwards he had no reason to

complain of neglect. "Answers, from reverends and right reverends, came out by twos and threes," [*Memoirs of my Life*.] and Bishop Warburton, the swashbuckler of the Episcopal bench, railed in his most truculent fashion. Two more volumes in 1752 continued his contributions to philosophy; a new version of his *Principles of Morals*, in which he makes utility the criterion of moral action, and his *Political Discourses*, which received the warm welcome in England and in France that they deserved - possessed as they are of singularly acute understanding, practical suggestiveness, and fulness of knowledge, whether discoursing on "the populousness of nations" or the balance of trade; giving studies in sociology and economics, which anticipated and suggested much of Adam Smith's doctrine.

In 1751 the laird of Ninewells married, and in Riddell's Close, near the head of the West Bow, and afterwards in a flat in Jack's Land in the Canongate, David Hume settled. "I have £50 a year, £100 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." [Burton's *Hume*, i. 342.] With such modest possessions he was content. His sister took up house with him, contributing a further £30 a year to the little household, a cat, and a servant-maid. It was well for him that he had this easy nature, for patrons were chary of offering posts to an infidel, even though he was most amiable. In vain he applied for the Chair of Moral Philosophy which Sir John Pringle vacated - that physician, naturalist, philosopher, whom Samuel Johnson hated as Macaulay hated Croker and cold boiled mutton - that versatile man who, as President of the Royal Society; at last

sat on Newton's chair,
And wondered how the Devil he got there.

Professor Hutcheson had refused the post, and Hume, in the simplicity of his heart, was surprised that neither he nor Principal Leechman - his own friends - supported his claims as an instructor of youth in ethics and natural theology. A little comfort came to him when he was elected Librarian to the Advocates' Library on the retirement of old Ruddiman. Ladies loved the benignant freethinker; they became his enthusiastic partisans, and pestered advocates to surrender their scruples. When news came to the playhouse that "the Christians were defeated," the caddies in a body proceeded with flaming torches and crowded Riddell's Close, where the tattered admirers serenaded him with drums and discordant music - proud at his becoming "a great man." [Burton, i. 372.]

The last work on philosophy and religion that he published - *Four Dissertations* - appeared in 1757, containing the famous *Natural History of Religion*, [To this he put a dedication to John Home: "You possess the true theatrical genius of Shakespeare and Otway, reformed from the barbarisms of the one and the licentiousness of the other."] in which he discusses the origin and evolution of religion, final causes, miracles, providence, with rare lucidity and brilliant dialectics - coming to the conclusion: "The whole is a riddle, an enigma, an inexplicable mystery. Doubt, uncertainty, suspense of judgment appear the only result of our most accurate scrutiny concerning this subject." In his desk were essays on Suicide, the Immortality of the Soul, and Dialogues concerning natural religion, which he left to be published after his death. Hume's writings were the armoury which should furnish weapons for agnostics of the future, and afford subjects of debate in universities for a century. They contained arguments which were to impel thinkers to reconsider the whole basis of philosophy. As a reaction from their destructive criticism were soon to come the philosophy of Reid and Kantian speculation. Hume's attitude was that of an agnostic - feeling too much to deny, knowing too little to believe. Yet the believing side of him was often uppermost; and in his essays the last word is usually in favour of theism. In a brilliant discussion - the arguments seem to shatter every evidence for that belief, with keen dialectics to confute every reason in its support; but it implies that as the most likely solution of the problems of the world. Whether this was due to his caution or to conviction is not very clear. It is not surprising, however, from the halting way he puts the positive side of a question, that his conclusions do not feel conclusive. One clear, beautiful night, as Adam Ferguson and he were walking home, Hume suddenly stopped, looked up to the starlit sky, and exclaimed: "Oh, Adam, can any one contemplate the wonders of the firmament and not believe in a God!"

When he was busy in his study, he was also delighting in society - known to everybody and liked by every one. He gained friends among the young moderate clergy, on whom he never obtruded his views. Carlyle, Robertson, Home, and Ferguson, younger men than he, were among his chosen companions - not from sympathy with his opinions, for they had none, but from common literary tastes, and the comradeship of ability. No more honest divine could be found than Dr. Jardine of the Tron Kirk; yet no more attached friend did Hume possess. They might argue about the necessity of revealed religion, but always in good humour. One night Hume, having declined to be lighted down the turnpike stair from his friend's lodging, fell in the darkness. Jardine rushed for a candle, and as he lifted the bulky

body of his guest, slyly said: “Davie, I have often tell’t ye that ‘natural licht’ is no sufficient.”

The post of librarian yielded only an income of about £40, and that salary he gave to the blind poet Blacklock, in his indignation at the curators - including Lord Hailes and Lord Monboddo - who had censured him for polluting the immaculate shelves with such immoral authors as Crébillon and La Fontaine. His post, however, he retained, for the library of 80,000 volumes gave him command of books which he could turn to good purpose. He had almost abandoned philosophy, and now turned to history as an unoccupied field for his energies. A history of the reigns of James I. and Charles I. was the project he set before him, and to this he turned with a vigour that astonished his unwieldy and indolent self. He, who could not endure the trouble of answering a letter in two years, could despatch a quarto of history in eighteen months. “I am,” he owned, “industrious in keeping up a correspondence with posterity whom I know nothing about, and who will probably concern themselves nothing about me, while I allow myself to be forgetful of friends whom I value.” The spur of literary ambition, which was his ruling passion, urged him on. No history worthy of the name as yet existed. Men with the spirit of pamphleteers had written; hacks with the prospect of guineas had compiled; chroniclers like the dull Rapin had been translated; but for a man with power of grasping facts, and style to record them, the field was open for an historian of England. When the volume was written, Millar in London published it in 1754, but the reception in England was frigid - only forty-five copies in a twelvemonth, their author asserts, were sold in London, and with an emphasis which we must discount he tells us: “It met with reproach and even detestation. English, Scots, and Irish, Whig and Tory, Churchman and Sectary, freethinker and religionist, patriot and courtier united in their rage against a man who shed a generous tear for the fall of Charles and the Earl of Strafford.” [*Memoirs of my Life*.] How such widespread animosity could be felt towards a book of which only forty-five copies had been bought and read it is difficult to understand; but then for a philosopher Hume was amazingly sensitive, and sadly addicted to exaggerating his grievances. Certain it is that in his vexation he threatened his friends to abandon his country and settle in France. In time he calmed down, and proceeded with his History of England, and issued in 1756 a continuation up to the Revolution, which Tories asserted was too whiggish, and Whigs complained was too tory. All this dissatisfaction was due to the author's indifference to either side, which pleased neither. How could he sympathise with Puritans or Covenanters who staked their lives and their country

on questions he laughed at? As little as Gibbon, who sneered both at Arian and at Trinitarian, and wondered how churches and states should madly quarrel over the difference of a diphthong.

In spite of adverse criticism, the History made its way into popularity, and the historian was encouraged to continue his work. Two volumes on the house of Tudor appeared in 1759; and the last part, which should have been the first, treating of the period from Julius Cæsar to Henry VII., was published in 1761. Sagacious Andrew Millar offered Hume any price to continue the history to a later date, but he was tired of the work. He was now famous, and even "opulent." [Altogether he seems to have been paid £2500. Hume's *Letters to Strahan* (ed. Hill), p. 15; Burton's *Hume*, ii. 61.] With perfect complacency the historian remarks on his account of the Stuarts, "I fancy I shall be able to put my account of that period of English history beyond controversy." Happy delusion of any man who imagines his words or his works are final! Gibbon spoke rightly of the "inimitable beauties" of Hume's style (which others condemned as not English, but French); and the shrewd insight into the purpose underlying political movements, which later research has often confirmed, the admirable clearness of narrative, the vigorous portraiture of character, and the keen perception of social movements going on silently amid wars and political strife, made the History, in spite of all defects, a fine literary achievement. As the author had proceeded with his work, his sympathies with the aristocratic as opposed to the democratic, with the Tory rather than the Whig parties, had increased, partly from his distaste to enthusiasm and bigotry either in church or state, and as he corrected his editions he was as unwilling as Samuel Johnson "to let the Whig dogs get the best of it." What pains he took to write good English! How he tried to avoid Scotticisms and solecisms, having "the misfortune to write in the language of the most stupid and factious barbarians in the world"! It is pathetic to see this great Scotsman begging that upstart David Mallet to revise his work and correct his vocabulary and his grammar - an appeal the great little man did not deign to answer; at another time asking a worthy linen-draper in Bristol to correct his style [Hannah More's *Memoirs*, i. 16.]; and in 1775 submitting the text of a new edition to two Scots lads fresh from an English school. [*Caldwell Papers*, ii. 39.]

His great work finished, a change comes over his life again - a strange one for an easy, slumbrous, portly man of letters who loved his fireside. Lord Hertford was appointed in 1763 ambassador to France - a faithful churchman with a pious and orthodox wife. Yet to him Hume was appointed to act as secretary with an alluring £1000 a year of salary. "I am now a person clean and white as the driven

snow: were I to be proposed for the See of Lambeth no objection could henceforth be made to me," the amiable infidel chuckled to a friend. A few months later he was in Paris, where his fame had preceded him, for his Essays having been translated, were read by all the *esprits forts*. In intellectual circles that knew literature, and aristocratic circles that prattled about it, he was the fashion, and ladies who prided themselves on their emancipation from "prejudice" - that meant religion - found him adorable. Society abounded in women who boasted of being intellectual, to whom philosophers paid court. They discussed freely everything with vivacity and brilliant inaccuracy - the last scandal from Versailles about the Pompadour, the last quarrel of Rousseau with his friends, the last pamphlet of Voltaire against providence. They dabbled in science, as in philosophy, and rustled into lecture-rooms where Abbé Nollet discoursed on chemistry, and fancied they were scientific because they enjoyed an "experiment"; and greeting every explosion of fetid gas with pretty little screams and terror-stricken "ahs," with dainty handkerchiefs at their noses, they pronounced the whole thing charming. Such were fashionable amusements of society, from the farmer-general's wife to the scion of royalty for whom the courtier-physician prefaced his performances: "The oxygen and hydrogen will now have the honour of amalgamating before your Royal Highness." David Hume found it delightful to be petted in the bright salons. What mattered it to him that his hostesses did anything except their duties, loved anybody except their husbands, attended to everything but their children, and went everywhere but to mass? Everything English was then *bon ton* - English sentiment, frocks, and literature; and David Hume, having the further charm of being a free-thinker, was now their idol. It is true he had no graces, no wit, and spoke only a little French atrociously. Yet "no lady's toilette was perfect without his attendance" - his ponderous person resplendent in bag-wig and laced coat and waistcoat of "bright yellow, spotted with black." [*Caldwell Papers*, i. 38; Hardy's *Memoirs of Lord Charlemont*, i. p. 8.] He sat at the opera (without understanding a word of the libretto or a note of the music), with adoring dames on either side, to whom he distributed fat, amiable smiles. "The more I resiled from their civilities, the more I was loaded with them," he avowed with complacency. Yet, if we may believe Lord Charlemont's description, there was nothing in his appearance to fascinate them. "Nature, I believe, never formed any man more unlike his real character. The powers of physiognomy were baffled by his countenance; neither could the most skilful in the science pretend to discover the smallest trace of the faculties of his mind in the unmeaning features of his visage. His face was broad and fat; his mouth wide and

without any other expression than that of imbecility. His eyes vacant and spiritless, and the corpulence of his person was far better fitted to communicate the idea of a turtle-eating alderman than of a refined philosopher. His speech in English was rendered ridiculous by the broadest Scotch accent, and his French if possible still more laughable. So that wisdom most certainly never disguised herself before in so uncouth a garb." [*Memoirs of Lord Charlemont*, i. p. 122.] Here is an admirable little scene of comedy. Ladies at this time made the fashion of giving tableaux vivants. In one of these Hume was made to take a part, and there he is seen seated, dressed like a sultan, between two obdurate beauties, to whom he was supposed to make love, and thus he plays his part. [Madame d'Epinay's *Mémoires*, iii. 284.] Placed on a sofa between two of the loveliest women in Paris, he looks at them attentively, and strokes his stomach and his knees again and again, but nothing else can he find to say than "Eh bien", mes demoiselles. Eh bien! voilà, donc, eh bien, vous voilà! vous voilà ici!" At last, these phrases having continued for a quarter of an hour, the ladies rise in impatience, and exclaim with indignation, "That man is only fit to eat veal!" Not the less, in spite of epigramless stupidity, was he fêted, and the worthy man enjoyed it all. He was to be found at Madame Geoffrin's, when the glass manufacturer's widow gave her famous dinners to artists, men of science, and philosophers - the best hostess to manage men of hostile opinions, and make gesticulating Frenchmen calm. He visited Madame du Boccage, rich, beautiful, and learned, whose guests shivered at the necessary ordeal of praising her *Amazons* and *Columbiade*, which they could not read. He appeared at the splendid rooms of Madame de Boufflers, and the brilliant salon of blind old Madame du Deffand, where he went through the usual ordeal for new guests, of having his broad face patted all over by the hostess to spell out his features, producing probably on her as much surprise as when she felt the baggy cheeks and button mouth of Mr. Gibbon. At the table of the wealthy Mæcenas of philosophers, Baron d'Holbach; he was a constant guest, and there it happened one day that as the company, Diderot, Hélvetius, d'Alembert, and others, talked freely against religion, Hume interjected, "As for atheists, I do not believe that any one ever existed. I have never seen one." "You have been very unlucky," his host answered: "you see yourself at table with seventeen for the first time." [Romilly's *Memoirs*, i. 179.] The Scots philosopher, who was so superstitious as still to believe in a deity, was treated with courteous compassion. Elsewhere Hume was overwhelmed with adulation. Did not Madame de Pompadour show herself more gracious to him than she had been to any other? Were not the little princes, afterwards Louis XVI., Louis XVIII., and Charles X.,

aged respectively nine, eight, and six, set up to deliver to him prepared addresses on his philosophy at Versailles? The effect was somewhat spoiled by the youngest forgetting his speech, and being only able to mumble some words to the smiling recipient. So he wrote to his friend Dr. Robertson, "I eat nothing but ambrosia, drink nothing but nectar, breathe nothing but incense, tread on nothing but flowers." [Stewart's "*Life of Robertson*," *Works*, x. 353.]

All, however, was not merely pleasure at Paris. Hume proved himself a capable man of affairs, writing despatches with skill, getting up details with industry, and giving interviews always with bland good-humour. It is not surprising that Lord Hertford, when called off to be Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, left him behind as *chargé d'affaires*, and would have taken him as secretary to Dublin, if the outcry against promoting a Scotsman (which was more objectionable than promoting a deist) had not been too great.

At the close of his Parisian career occurred an episode which was a source of perplexity to himself, and of vast amusement to society. When Jean-Jacques Rousseau was driven from place to place, less by the machinations of his enemies than the delusions of his half-mad brain, he had come to Paris under risk of arrest of Parliament. In a soft, unguarded hour, Hume offered to seek a shelter for the persecuted writer of the *Contrat Social* in that land where bigots cease from troubling and heretics are at rest. So together the philosophers crossed the channel - which neither enjoyed and as they landed, the exile leaped on his ponderous friend's neck and covered his ample cheeks with tears and kisses, to his modest embarrassment. In a lodging in Fulham, Rousseau got the quietness he professed to seek, and in London streets the public notice he loved to find, for his Armenian dress was a rare sight for Londoners, and the recluse, in spite of his protestations, loved notoriety dearly. Assiduously his friend guarded the distinguished exile; and to add to his burden, Thérèse la Vasseur, Jean-Jacques' irregular spouse, was brought over under the fussy charge of James Boswell, who was delighted, even through this coarse quondam servant, to be associated with a man of distinction. A pension of £100 a year was got from George III.; a home was found for him in the country seat of Wootton in the Peak of Derby where he could write and botanise and grumble at his will. In the delightful guilelessness of his heart, Hume asserted, "I think I could live with him all my life in mutual friendship and esteem. I am sorry that the matter is not likely to be put to trial." That "trial," unwarily longed for, came soon enough. In that retreat, without books or companions, with no occupation except writing his morbid *Confessions*, no amusements except gathering and arranging his herbs, with

no interests except listening to Thérèse squabbling over coals and a kettle with their host's housekeeper, while the snow lay deep on the dreary uplands, Rousseau's mind, always morose and perverse, began to turn every favour into a grievance, every kindness into an insult, every friend into a foe. In June a letter was written from the solitudes of Wootton to Hume, breaking off all friendship, raising marvellous accusations, which were the offspring of a diseased brain. David Hume he denounced as a "traitor." Had he not lodged with a son of Dr. Tronchin, his bitterest enemy? Had not Hume one evening, as they sat at supper, gazed at him with a steadfast, jeering look, which had agitated him - Jean-Jacques - almost to fainting? "Presently I was seized with the most violent remorse, till in a transport I sprang on his neck and embraced him eagerly. Almost choked with sobbing, and bathed in tears, I cried in broken accents, 'No! no! David Hume cannot be treacherous; if he is not the best of men, he must be the basest!'' David Hume politely returned my embraces, and gently tapping me on the cheek, repeated several times in a placid tone, 'Why, what, my dear sir! Nay, my dear sir! my dear sir!' " (One recalls the limited vocabulary at the tableaux vivants in Paris.) And did not Hume in his sleep, coming across in the vessel, utter the significant words, "Je tiens Jean-Jacques Rousseau!" (Poor Hume, who had not sufficient French for his waking hours, had not enough to expend during his sleep.) Further charges he hurled against old friend: of tattling with Thérèse behind his back; of opening his letters; of writing a mock letter in his name to Frederick the Great (which was a mischievous trick of Horace Walpole). Never was there such a quarrel. In Paris society was in wild excitement. Men of letters, who disliked the querulous egotism of their countryman, made merry over the "just what they expected"; and ladies, who adored him, vehemently espoused his cause. In England discussion was not so keen, though one peeress, from excitement of her defence of Hume, gave premature birth to a son, [*Caldwell Papers*, ii.] Unluckily Hume, over-persuaded, published a vindication [*Concise and Genuine Account of the Dispute between Mr. Hume and Mr. Rousseau*, 1765.] and the war proceeded furiously, while poor Jean-Jacques felt and acted like a man distraught. For a year Rousseau lived in Wootton in his misery; and one day, in April 1767, he and Thérèse suddenly disappeared, leaving their baggage and money behind them, and found their way back to France. Hume, kindliest most placid of souls, for once in his life regretted that he had done a good-natured action. Now he saw "ingratitude ferocity, and lying" [Burton, ii. 378.] in the fugitive he had trusted so simply.

In a short time Hume was installed in a post which showed that he had earned

a reputation for capacity in business. General Conway, brother of Lord Hertford, being Secretary of State, appointed him Under Secretary, an office which he held till his chief's resignation in 1768. Among his various duties it is interesting to think that one of these would be the composition of the King's annual letter to General Assembly of the Church of Scotland - that venerable assembly which, some years before, issued solemn resolutions against his writings, and its abhorrence "of the impious and infidel principles in books published of late." [Morren's *Annals of General Assembly*, ii. 54, 86.] We may picture the corpulent pagan sitting down to concoct the royal epistle to the "right reverend and honourable" body; but we could not venture to picture the horror of elders and ministers had they known that these majestic counsels, these august hopes for their good behaviour, and the pious commendation to the blessing of providence (all which gracious message was received standing) had been written with a copious smile by the arch heretic whom they had banned some years before. [Burton, ii.382.]

In Paris we have seen Hume lionised, and he admired the noblesse for the honour they paid to philosophers; but he found men of letters ignored by high society in London where "a man who plays no part in public affairs becomes altogether insignificant." There no bevies of high-born dames fluttered round him; although General Fitzpatrick - a man of wit and fashion - pronounced him "a delicious creature." [*Table-Talk of Sam. Rogers*, p. 106.] If he spoke, they might sneer at his Scots accents and Scots phrases; while in Paris ladies would listen with courteous gravity to his most abominable mistakes. When Dr. John Moore - author of *Zeluco* - expressed a fear that some word he used was not correct French, a marquis replied with exquisite courtesy, "It is not actually so, but it quite deserves to be." [*Moore's View of Society and Manners in France*, 1779.] There was no such tact in England. We hear of Hume very little in literary sets; and Dr. Johnson, who disliked him as freethinker and sneered at him for a Scot, refused to meet him, as he had refused to greet Abbé Raynal, keeping his hands behind his back. Yet this austere moralist and Christian could be proud of his intimacy with Topham Beauclerc, most rakish of gentlemen, and be vastly entertained by John Wilkes, rake, infidel, and demagogue. To no sittings in Sir Joshua's studio was he invited, although Allan Ramsay painted a portrait of him in scarlet and gold lace. On George III. suggesting that the dress was too fine, the privileged Court painter replied [*Boswelliana*, p. 255.] that "he wished posterity to see that one philosopher in His Majesty's reign had a good coat to his back." It was with Scotsmen he fraternised chiefly; and these were to be found at the favourite resort, the British Coffee-House, which so swarmed with men of the

North that Gibbon used to speak of it as the *Breetish* Coffee-House. [Gibbon's *Letters*, i. 201.] There John Hume, Dr. Armstrong, Wedderburn and Elliot, the Hunters and Smollett, were constantly meeting. Hume felt little at home with Englishmen, whom he never wearied of stigmatising as "stupid, factious, barbarous," because he was convinced "they had conspired against himself and his History" - all which, his friends told him, was "melancholy nonsense." Certainly the serenity of the philosopher could be ruffled if his literary work was disparaged, and his spleen against English critics extended to Englishmen in general. Yet fair opposition to his views he bore with fine good-humour. Campbell controverted his theory of miracles, and he was amiable; Dr. Wallace controverted his views, and he corrected the press for his opponent; Reid attacked his philosophy, and he revised his manuscript; Dr. Gerard disputed his opinions, and he was friendly - for these wrote with the manners of gentlemen; but when Dr. Beattie assailed him with spiteful piety he flew into a rage. One time, at his request, Cadell the bookseller invited to meet him as many persons as he could collect who had written against him, and they proved a goodly gathering. [*Table-Talk of Sam. Rogers*, p. 106.] Dr. Adams, Dr. Price, Dr. Douglas were there, and they were charmed with him and he was charmed with them.

Once again, and finally, David Hume settled in Edinburgh, in 1769, and he was glad to be at home. "Very opulent," he says, "for I have £1000 a year; healthy, and, though somewhat stricken in years, with the prospect of enjoying my ease, and of seeing the increase of my reputation." He was comfortable and fat, and had all the good-nature which accompanies corpulence. And of his fatness he liked to make a jest. When coming across the Forth - probably from visiting Adam Smith at Kirkcaldy - during a violent storm, he expressed fear to the lively Lady Wallace that they would soon be food for fishes. "And pray, my dear friend," she asked, "which do you think they will eat first?" "Those that are gluttons," replied Hume, "will undoubtedly fall foul of me; but the epicures will attack your ladyship."

Truly the world, in spite of his grumbling, had used the obese historian kindly; and he was happy in his flat in James' Court, which, during his residence in London, he had lent to Dr. Blair, having recommended it to him as possessing the singular merit of "being free of vermin." The Court was a fashionable quarter; it was inhabited by "most genteel families," who had their little balls and suppers among themselves, and they boasted of having a scavenger of their own. In Hume's spacious parlour was to be met everybody of note in the city - judges, ministers, advocates, doctors, professors: Lord Kames with his sarcasm, his coarse jokes, his

cackling laugh; John Home - "dear Johnnie" with his many friends - with his radiant presence, which was genial if not brilliant as the sun; Carlyle of Inveresk, stately, handsome, full of life and good talk; Dr. Blair, prim, precise, and pompous; Dr. Robertson, and Adam Ferguson. His bosom friend, Adam Smith, had a chamber ready for him whenever he came across from Kirkcaldy. But David Hume himself was the most delightful of all. "He had the greatest simplicity of mind and manners, with the utmost facility and benevolence of temper, I ever knew," [Mackenzie's *Life of Home*; Carlyle's *Autobiography*, p. 278.] says his friend, Dr. Carlyle. All such qualities made him loved by everybody. He was so loyal to his friends, so patriotically admiring of his countrymen. With him blind Blacklock, mildest of poetasters, was a Pindar; Wilkie, dullest of versifiers and most grotesque of mortals, was a Homer; Home was a Shakespeare "without his barbarisms."

It was a kindly, genial, friendly life which was to be found in Edinburgh in those days - with a familiarity of social intercourse found nowhere else. When Home, Carlyle, and Jardine of the Tron Kirk resolved to have a supper in a tavern, the caddies were sent out to mount the several stairs to ask Mr. Adam Ferguson, Mr. David Hume, and Dr. Blair to meet at nine o'clock at John Dowie's or at Fortune's tavern; and thither David Hume was sure to come, the huge door-key lying beside him on the table, which his servant Peggy had given him, that she might not be kept out of bed till one o'clock in the morning. Every Tuesday at Nicholson's tavern there dined, at a shilling a head, the Poker Club - a club ostensibly to "poke up" the national spirit against English oppression and insolence, but practically for the consumption of that beverage which was a favourite in Scotland - a wine which came into vogue from the old intercourse with France, and was from its cheapness till the English government enforced the duty and raised its price. The philosopher affected the generous port wine, while John Home stood up for the long-established drink of which the taxes of tyrannical England sought to deprive them. And his epigram uttered his scorn:

> Firm and erect the Caledonian stood;
> Old was his mutton, and his claret good.
> Let him drink port! the English cried.
> He drank the poison, and his spirit died.

But still more genial were the suppers at Hume's own house, for he gave and enjoyed good fare. He would copy out carefully his recipe for making *soupe à la reine*; and as for his sheep's-head broth, it was made by Peggy in a manner that made his friends rave about it for days. He boasts of his beef and cabbage - a "charming dish" he succulently remarks; and for old mutton and old claret

"nobody," he avows, "excels me." He was somewhat of an epicure, and he owned to be even something more of a glutton. James Boswell tells of his presence at a dinner at the house in company with Lord Kames and Dr. Robertson; but he only remembers the excellent supper, with three sorts of ices. "I can recollect nothing the conversation," [*Letters to Temple*, p. 203.] he remarks; but the loss of memory was probably due to the partaking of something else than the ices.

Though living a contented bachelor life, Hume had not always looked forward to that as his fate. In his earlier and poorer days he had proposed to and been rejected by a lady position and beauty. When he was rich and famous it was intimated to him that the lady, no longer young and fastidious had "changed her mind." "So have I," he bluntly rejoined. [*Caldwell Papers*, ii. 190.] Now he was the favourite of all ladies; whose attentions an intentions were not matrimonial. Ladies of the sourest orthodoxy could not resist the sweet-tempered deist. Never was there so good-humoured a man - playful, almost infantine, in ways and speech. Rigid women; shocked at reports of his works which they had never read, were won by his good-nature. The mother of Robert Adam, the architect, had a horror at the "atheist" - a term which women vaguely supposed was the synonym for "deist" - and she vowed that never should that man darken her doors. One evening, without telling mother his identity, Adam had Hume at supper, and when the company had left, the old lady said, "I must confess, Robert that you bring very agreeable companions about you, but the large jolly man who sat next me was the most agreeable them all." When he revealed that this was her monster impiety, she replied, "Well, you may bring him as much as you like, for he is the most innocent, agreeable, and facetious man I ever met." [Carlyle's *Autobiography*, p. 272.] The good man's appearance at any tea-table was a family delight; children clambered on his knees, though to maintain their position was no easy task - the huge paunch projecting so far, that to keep on their perch they held on by the buttons of his coat. There was a delicious amount of childlike simplicity side by side with his intellectual shrewdness. Theoretically he denied the evidence of his senses for the existence of the physical world, and practically he trusted everything and everybody in equal defiance of his senses. "David, maun, you'll believe onything except the Bible!" exclaimed Lord Saltoun, who had crammed his friend with incredible tales, to see how far his credulity would go. Careful to avoid uttering one word in private intercourse which would give offence [Mackenzie's *Life of Home*, p. 20.] he never could understand why exception should be taken to his works. That the world should condemn him for such trifles as doubts on miracles, revelation, and providence seemed

to his simple heart extremely unjust. When Dr. Blair sent to him Dr. George Campbell's reply to his Essay on Miracles, he wrote in an injured tone, "I wish your friend had not denominated me an infidel writer on account of ten or twelve pages which seem to have that tendency, while I have wrote as many volumes on history, literature, politics, trade, morals, which in that particular are entirely inoffensive. Is a man to be called a drunkard who has been fuddled once in his life-time? A similar complaint of his once met with a retort which pleased his sense of humour. "You put me in mind," said one of the company in which he was speaking, "of an acquaintance of mine, a notary-public, who, after having been condemned to be hanged for perjury, lamented the hardship of his case, that, after having written many thousand inoffensive sheets he should be hanged for one line." [*Memoirs of Charlemont*, i. 121.] Probably there were more articles in his creed than his speculations logically allowed. The ghost of the old faith which he had killed seemed to haunt him, and he did not like to vex that ghost. His presence in Greyfriars' Church when Principal Robertson preached, and his careful provision of church seats for his servants, were not merely due to conventional decorum. "Though I throw out my speculations to entertain and employ the learned and metaphysical world, yet in other things I do not think as differently from the rest of mankind as you suppose," he said to a friend. [Carlyle's *Autobiography*, p. 273.] So far true at any rate, that the philosopher, who had said there was no evidence for an external world, enjoyed that world as much as ever mortal did. One day Hume was telling his orthodox friend, Dr. John Gregory, that he could reckon many of the female sex among his disciples. [Forbes's *Life of Beattie*, ii. 54.] "Now tell me," said the doctor, "whether, if you had a wife or daughter, you would wish them to be your disciples?" With a hesitation and a smile he replied, "No; I believe scepticism may be too sturdy a virtue for a woman."

In Edinburgh, however, of female disciples there were very few, and they were certainly not due to any proselytising of his. Other women only thought he was too good a man to be damned, and tried to save him from the everlasting fires. It was in his last days that a member of the Berean congregation came to his door, pressing for admission as she had received a message from on High. The philosopher received her and heard her graciously and gravely. "This is an important matter, madam. We must take it with deliberation - perhaps you had better get a little temporal refreshment before you begin - (Lassie, bring this good lady a glass of wine)." As she partook of the preliminary refreshment, Hume discovered that her husband was a tallow-chandler, and cunningly stating that he was in need of temporal lights, he entrusted his visitor with such a large

commission for candles, that the worthy woman, in the joy of her heart, forgot the order from Above, and hastened home to give her order for the "moulds." [Burton, ii. 436, 457.] One dark night, as he walked along a footpath over a boggy ground behind the Castle, his ponderous frame fell and stuck fast in the mud. His calls brought a woman to the spot, who unsympathetically asked, "Are ye Hume the infidel?" "Well, well, my good woman, but Christian charity bids us help our enemies," he pleaded. "I'll dae naething for ye if ye dinna say the Lord's Prayer and the Belief, but leave ye where I fand ye." The philosopher readily obeyed, and the body of the Deist was laboriously extricated from the mire by the Christian.

In 1770 he quitted the old town, with its endless stairs, so wearying to his panting body, for the new town, which was rapidly being built on fields and meadows. He removed his household goods to a corner house in St. Andrew Square, with the door entering from a little street as yet unnamed. One morning the servant lass beheld in flagrant white letters the words "St. David Street" chalked up on the house, and in dismay reported what she had seen: his very name turned into a saint. "Never mind, lassie, many a better man has been made a saint o' before," replied her master. So the frolic of a young lady amused the town, and gave a permanent name and memory to the street where the historian died. There he grew older, frailer, though not less cheerful, not less lovable. He set forth to Bath to try its helpful waters, accompanied by his true friend John Home; but he got little benefit in that town where, according to Mrs. Montague, the topics were "How d'ye does?" all day, and "What's trumps?" all night. The two friends returned, beguiling the tedious journey in the chaise with piquet and lively talk; going over their old disputes on the merits of port *versus* claret, of the spelling of their name, Hume verses Home. The valorous dramatist kept a huge pistol by his side, ever on the outlook for highwaymen in his usual heroic manner. "Frighten as many highwaymen as you please, John," said the invalid, "for I have little life left to be an object worth saving."

With shaky hand he indited to Dr. Hugh Blair the last note he was ever to write to his old friend:

DONCASTER, 27th *June* 1776.

John Hume, alias the Home, alias Lord Conservator, alias the late minister of the gospel at Athelstaneford, has contrived matters so as to arrive infallibly with his friend at St. David Street on Wednesday evening. He has asked the favour of the doctor to make up the number.

He returned to die. But death's approach brought no dismay to the man who,

Lord Monboddo went about saying, confessed on his dying bed not his sins but his Scotticisms, [Sinclair's *Old Scenes and Distant Places*, p. 170; Burton, ii. 511; *Caldwell Papers*, i. 40.] and chatted humorously over Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead*, wondering what excuses he could give to Charon to plead for delay before being rowed across the Styx. [With the jocularity that never deserted him, he wrote a codicil to his will twelve days before his death. "I leave my friend, Mr. John Home of Kilduff, twelve dozen of my old claret at his choice, and a single bottle of that other liquor called port. I also leave him six dozen of port, provided that he attests under his hand, signed John *Hume*, that he has himself finished the bottle in two sittings. By this concession he will terminate the only two differences that ever came between us concerning temporal matters." (Mackenzie's *Life of Home*).] One pleasant scene in the sick-room we find when the widow of Baron Hume came to take farewell of him. On parting he gave her a copy of his History. "Oh, David!" the good lady said, "that's a book ye may weel be proud o'; but before you dee, you should burn a' your wee bookies." Raising himself in bed, he answered with playful vehemence, "What for should I burn a' my wee bookies?" He was too feeble to say more, so the old friends shook hands, never to meet again. When he lay on his deathbed, a little girl, a relation of his own, used to come to see him; and every morning and evening he would make the child kneel by his side and say her prayers aloud - often desiring her to repeat the Lord's Prayer, which came touchingly from the young lips to the ears of the dying philosopher. [Chambers's *Walks in Edinburgh*, p. 183.] Dr. Cullen and Dr. Black attended him as doctors, and Adam Smith sat with him day by day - the two philosophers talking more, doubtless, of things seen than of things unseen. Hume was anxious that essays which he had written many years before, but, in deference to the wish of his friends, had been reluctant to publish, especially the Dialogues on Religion, should be edited after his death by his friend; but this Smith refused to do, thinking that they would raise clamour and increase odium against his friend. The end came with "tranquillity and pleasantry," [Thomson's *Life of Cullen*, i. 607.] said Dr. Cullen; and on 25th August 1776, David Hume was dead, and there was mourning in many a home in Edinburgh. The historian was the most popular man in the city, and as he lay dying his condition was the universal subject of inquiry and interest with high and low. Every one spoke of him with the anxiety of an intimate friend. The crowd that gathered round the door on the day of the funeral was drawn there as much from affection as from curiosity. Among the lowest of the rabble one was heard to say, "Ah, he was an atheist." "No matter," rejoined another, "he was an honest man." On that pouring day of rain, as the burial took place, it was witnessed by great throngs, and for days people came to see the place where rested the body of the philosopher whose huge, corpulent form, with kindly, good-humoured face, had been so long familiar in the streets. [*Curious Particulars and Generous Anecdotes respecting David Hume, etc*., 1788. "After his interment two trusty persons watched the grave for about eight nights [was this

from fear of fanatical outrage?]. The watch was set by eight at night, at which time a pistol was fired. Candles in a lanthorn were placed on the grave, where they burned all night." (p. 16).] Next year Adam Smith's account of the last days of his friend was published with his verdict: that "he was as nearly to the idea of a perfectly wise and virtuous man as perhaps the nature of human frailty will permit." Addison called his stepson, Lord Warwick, to his bedside, "to see how a Christian can die." Religious circles were scandalised when Adam Smith called the world to witness how a sceptic could die. [With regard to Hume's private religious views, it is not easy to discover what they were from his books. In his works often occur passages which are curiously and inconsistently orthodox. Were these merely sops to the Cerberus of orthodoxy, or were they sincere? He himself approved of the policy of accommodation, for he defended it in his cynical advice to an English clergyman who was troubled with religious doubts: "It is putting too great a respect on the vulgar and to their superstitions to pique oneself on sincerity with regard to them. Did one ever make it a point of honour to speak truth to children or madmen?" (Burton's *Hume*, ii. 188.)]