CHAPTER XVIII

1886-1890

Financial worries—Law-suit—The Gifford Lectures—Stirling's Religious Position

As far as literary or philosophical work was concerned, the year 1886 was almost a blank in Stirling's life. During the year, nothing whatever appeared from his pen save a short letter in the *Athenæum* on the "Italian Hegelians," suggested by the publication of an important work on political philosophy by Professor Levi—*La Dottrina dello Stato*. No doubt, he would have given more than a mere passing mention to a book of such importance but that, at the time it appeared, he was undergoing all the worry and anxiety connected with a law-suit, which involved the loss (if unsuccessful) of a large sum of money.

The limits of space preclude the possibility of giving here even an outline of what was at the time somewhat of a *cause célèbre*, the decision in which came as a surprise to all impartial outsiders, and seemed to make startlingly apparent the distinction between equity and legality. Stirling's friends and admirers showed their sympathy with him in a substantial form; a subscription to defray the legal expenses of the case was set on foot by a group of friends, among the more active of whom were Professors Laurie and Masson, Mr. Archibald Constable, and the Rev. James Wood—a man of literary tastes, and mild, gentle character, for whom Stirling had a warm friendship. From all over Great Britain, and from America, contributions were received. One of the largest came from

India, where Stirling had an earnest disciple in Rās bihāri Mukharji, a high-caste Hindu, and author of a translation into excellent English of Renan's *Dialogues et Fragments Philosophiques*.

The great event of the "eighties" in Stirling's life was his appointment as first "Gifford Lecturer" in Edinburgh University, and his delivery of the lectures which, under the title *Philosophy and Theology*, were published in 1890. The lectureship, with three others of the same character in connection with the other three Scottish universities, was named from its founder, Lord Gifford, who had died in 1887, leaving some £80,000 in trust to the universities for the foundation of the lectureships. The subject of the lectureships (which were not to be held for longer than two years) was Natural Theology, and the aim and intention of the testator in founding them was indicated in a sentence in his will. Feeling bound to employ the residue of his estate for "the good of my fellow-men," he considered that he could best accomplish his purpose by the institution of such lectureships. "I, having been for many years deeply and firmly convinced that the true knowledge of God, that is, of the Being, Nature, and Attributes of the Infinite, of the All, of the First and Only Cause, that is, the One and Only Substance and Being; and the true and felt knowledge (not mere nominal knowledge) of the relations of man and of the universe to Him, and of the true foundations of all ethics and morals — being, I say, convinced that this knowledge, when really felt and acted on, is the means of man's highest well-being, and the security of his upward progress, I have resolved, from the residue of my estate as aforesaid, to institute and found, in connection, if possible, with the Scottish universities, lectureships or classes for the promotion of the study of said subjects, and for the teaching and diffusion of sound views regarding them."

The appointment of the lecturers was entrusted, in each case, to the Senatus of the universities respectively; and in January 1888, Stirling was appointed first Gifford Lecturer of Edinburgh University by a large majority of the Senatus. He was afterwards informed on good authority that, had he not received the appointment in Edinburgh, two of the other universities were prepared to have elected him as Gifford Lecturer. How he himself regarded the appointment can be seen from the following letter to Professor Campbell Fraser, written a day or two after it took place (on Jan. 30, 1888), in reply to one of congratulation :—

"Very many thanks for your kind and cordial congratulations. I have been told by Professor Laurie how much you did to lead to this success, and have no doubt that, but for that, your action, this success would never have arrrived. I assure you, I truly feel, and am very grateful for, your warm and active zeal.

"You refer to our entering Glasgow College in 1833. I, too, have had the same event repeatedly in mind since Saturday. I don't know whether you joined the class while it still occupied a classroom just by the iron gate into the Professors' Court, and so had an opportunity of reading the very first of the Eclogues; but what I have had in mind since Saturday is the passage there where Tityrus answers Melibœus that what took him to Rome was Liberty which, though late, had looked back upon him, but only after his beard fell white from the razor. This is followed, I think, by *tamen respexit*. Now, I vividly recollect the light which the intellectual superiority of the Professor above the ordinary schoolmaster threw by a single word on the passage. The student *up* was just translating in the ordinary slip-slop unthinking fashion, 'nevertheless she looked back,' when Ramsay broke in with, 'That is, she DID

JAMES HUTCHISON STIRLING IN 1889.

(From photo by Crooke, Edin.)

To face p. 310.

look back!' The effect of that '*did*' I have never forgotten.

"I shall allow the special application of the reference to myself (the 'lateness,' the 'beard,' etc.) to be lost in the simple *did* of the *respexit!* But I am not the less grateful to Libertas, or Universitas, or Fortuna, or whatever goddess it may be that, in the end, did look back upon me, white beard and all. At the same time, I am but too conscious of the nature of the situation to which you refer (as requiring 'wise guidance'). The rocks and shoals all about are indeed most dangerous, and it is the Delian swimmer of Socrates that is required to avoid them."

When he wrote that letter, Stirling was in his sixty-eighth year. More than once, in his early middle-age, Fortune had seemed to pass him by—more than once, as we know, he had seen men, younger and less able than himself, advanced over his head—but now that she had "looked back" upon him, he was resolved to forget her former unkindness, and to be grateful for the smile at length vouchsafed to him. The "rocks and shoals" mentioned refer to a more serious aspect of the lectureship. What Stirling meant by them is made plain in a later letter to Professor Campbell Fraser (dated Nov. 2, 1888), declining an invitation to dine on the ground of occupation.

"These lectures have given me perplexity, and make me thin," he writes. "The subject and the time seem so out of concord! Natural Religion proper, demanded by the testament, is to be found nowhere but in Paley and the Bridgewater Treatises. That is impossible now. Theism, as treated by Professor Flint, might answer the purpose; but that is theological, and already realized, or exhausted. The Philosophy of Religion sounds well; but it does not stand examination. Such an aggregate of Lives as in Pünjer would never do.

Pfleiderer, so far, is more limited, and not a bit better. Where Pfleiderer is more general, he is excellent; but that is not much. I, for my part, have no interest in the *gods!*—Egyptian, Indian, Greek, or other! Lastly, flashy flourishes *de omnibus rebus*, etc., are not in my way.

"Altogether, I have had to look in a great many directions, taking an immense number of notes that will never serve any purpose. In this way a great deal of time has been lost, so that I am sufficiently pushed at the last. I have still hope, however, to say what shall be neither irrelevant nor altogether nonsense."

This letter gives a glimpse of what was one of Stirling's most marked characteristics — his conscientiousness. If he had work to do, he would, as he has sometimes been heard to say himself, "agonize" himself in his efforts to do it as well as it could possibly be done. In the case of the Gifford Lectures, while many, perhaps most, men would simply have given a course of lectures from their own point of view (if not merely on their own subject, whatever it might be!), without troubling over-much about the wishes of the testator, Stirling felt it to be incumbent upon him to obey the instructions of the will under which he had been appointed, to meet, so far as possible, the expectations of his audience, and to be true, at the same time, to his own philosophy, his own religious views. As he himself expressed the situation in the second of his Gifford Lectures:—

"With four men, at four universities, all declaiming, year after year, on the same text, there *may* come necessity for diversion and digression; but now, in the first year, it would ill become the lecturer who was first elected on the whole foundation, and in the university at least of the capital—it would ill become him, so signalized and so placed, to set the example of an *episode*, while it was the *epic* he was specially engaged for."

For these reasons, he decided to adopt the course which he indicated to his audience thus :—

"I take the theme as it is prescribed to me—Natural Theology and the Proofs for the Being of a God. These proofs I follow historically. . . . This is one half of my enterprise. The other half—the negative half—shall concern the denial of the proofs. This session I confine myself to the affirmative; next session I shall conclude with what concerns the negative."

To the programme thus laid down, the lecturer faithfully adhered. In the ten lectures of the first session (or, rather, in nine of them, for the first was introductory), he dealt exclusively with the proofs for the being of a God—teleological, cosmological, ontological—tracing them historically onwards from the great thinkers of Greece; in the ten lectures of the second session, in which his subject was the *denial* of the proofs, he dealt more particularly with modern writers—especially with Hume, Kant, Darwin.

Though delivered in a class-room of the university, the lectures were, by the express desire of the founder, open to the public; and the application for tickets of admission was so great that, even though the largest class-room in the university was chosen for the lectures, it was found impossible to meet it. On the opening day (Saturday, Jan. 12, 1889) every seat in the room was occupied by students and the general public; and the lecturer, who was accompanied to the platform by almost the entire Senatus, was received with an ovation of applause. In spite of the large audience, which continued to attend the lectures on the Saturday mornings on which they were delivered, there were many who wished to attend, but were, for various reasons, unable to do so on the day, and at the hour chosen; and in response to a request, Stirling afterwards re-delivered the lectures in the evenings. How the audience were impressed by the lectures

may be gathered from the following extracts from letters of friends who were present.

Professor Laurie, writing on the very day on which the first lecture was delivered, says :—

"The universal opinion is highly favourable. Your Lord Chancellor's summing up of the true meaning of Gifford's will was a pure piece of analysis, and will be *permanently* valuable. The mingled dry humour and epigram and seriousness of your discourse seem to have been much appreciated."

On the following day, another friend wrote :—

"The scene, the voice, the words, the speaker's presence rise before me, a piece of Life drama the most impressive to me I have yet witnessed. . . . The event of yesterday struck me with an almost sacramental solemnity . . . the hushed and eager audience hanging on your words ; the scathing and withering scorn with which you dismissed the miserable flippancies of negation ; and the measured and weighty phrases of your own 'confession' ; the sense of the momentous issues with which you dealt . . . these and much more affected me *then* only a little *less* than does their recollection *now*."

From Professor Blackie came this characteristic sentence :—

"My dear *σοφός*,—Your lecture on Saturday was a decided success. You did wisely to scatter a few *lumina orationis*, as Cicero would call them, over the severity of your theme. The author of *Burns in Drama*, whom the *οἱ πολλόι* do not know, was manifest there."

Two later lectures at which the professor was present, awoke the poet in him, and were the source of inspiration of sonnets, which appeared in the *Scotsman*.

Only one more quotation from a private letter shall be given here. It is from a letter written when the first course of lectures was drawing near an end. "In my humble regard," the writer says,

"these lectures are the event of the hour, and promise to introduce a new era in the religious life and thinking of the country."

The opinion expressed in the foregoing extracts was practically re-echoed by the Press, when in the autumn of 1890 the lectures were published in book form, under the title *Philosophy and Theology*. By way of example, the following extract from a critique in the *Expository Times* is here quoted :—

"No more *suggestive* work on the mutual relations of Theology and Philosophy has ever appeared in our country. The present lectures form, in no sense of the word, a set treatise on the matter in hand; rather they present the ripe thoughts of a powerful and acute mind; for passages of penetrating and startling strength of insight flash out on every page, well nigh; and not seldom do we meet with splendid bursts of the highest metaphysic eloquence. Dr Stirling has, ever since the publication of the celebrated *Secret of Hegel*, been acknowledged as without a rival among metaphysicians, whether at home or abroad, and, if we mistake not, these lectures will demonstrate him to be foremost also among the masters of English prose."

It is, of course, beyond the scope and purpose of the present volume to attempt to give an exhaustive analysis of the Gifford Lectures; but no biography of Stirling would be complete which did not offer some explanation of his religious position, and of this the lectures contain the most explicit statement to be found anywhere in his writings—though, of course, indications occur *passim*. In the first lecture, Stirling himself defines his own standpoint on religious questions in unmistakable terms —unmistakable, at least, to those who have thoroughly grasped the distinction of *Vorstellung* and *Begriff*,[1] of which an explanation has already

[1] In writing to Stirling on the evening after the first Gifford Lecture, Prof. Laurie said: "*Vorstellung* and *Begriff*. Can't you somehow English these?" Stirling, however, seems to have felt that, *in the special sense in which he used them*, no English words

been attempted in the foregoing pages. He begins by stating that he is a "member of the National Church"—that is, of the Church of Scotland—and of its three sections, which he distinguishes as "Broad Church, High Church, and Low, or Evangelical Church"; it is to the third that he considers himself to belong. With regard to the other two sections, he remarks: "No doubt there is deeply and ineradicably implanted in the human soul an original *sentiment* which is the religious one; and no doubt there is as deeply and ineradicably implanted there a religious *understanding*. We not only *feel*, we *know* religion. . . . So it is that, if for me High Church seems too exclusively devoted to the category of feeling, Broad Church, again, too much accentuates the principle of the understanding."

This seems a tolerably definite confession of faith; but it is not precise enough for the lecturer's fastidious conscience. He goes on thus:—

"I point out *this difference* between them [*i.e.*, the three sections of the Church] and me that what they possess in what is called the *Vorstellung*, I rely upon in the *Begriff*. What they have *positively* in the feeling, or *positively* in the understanding, or *positively* in a union of both, I have reflectively, or ideally, or speculatively in reason. What the term *positive* amounts to will be best understood by a reference to other religions than our own. . . . Mormonism is a positive religion. There, says Joseph Smith, holding up the book of Mormon, take that, believe whatever it says, and do whatever it tells you. That is positive. . . . There is not a shadow of explanation, not a shadow of reasoning. . . . So it is with Mahomet and the Koran. . . . It is for the same reason that laws are positive. They rest on authority alone, another will than his who must obey them. . . . Nevertheless, it is implied in laws, and law, that *they* as particulars, and *it* as a whole,

were quite equivalent to them—just as no English word could quite convey all that is meant by the German *Aufklärung*. Perhaps, the Letter and the Spirit, the outer expression and the inner truth, might be said fairly to express the German words.

are as much the will of him, or them, who receive, as of him, or them, who give. *Law is but a realization of reason, of the reason common to us all*, as much yours as his, as much his as yours. So it is, or so it ought to be, with religion; and there you have the whole matter before you. He whose religion rests only on the *Vorstellung* possesses it *positively*—believes it positively only; whereas he with whom religion rests on the *Begriff*, has placed beneath it a philosophical basis."

At this point, it occurred to the lecturer that "possessing religion in the *Begriff*" might be construed to mean Rationalism—with which he was entirely out of sympathy. "Rationalism, in fact, means—in its religious application—nothing but Aufklärung"; and, as all who have read the foregoing pages must be well aware, Stirling was, in his day and generation, the declared foe of the Aufklärung. The Aufklärung, according to his opinion, had done its appointed work (for it *had* its appointed work to do) generations ago; and its day was over. Nevertheless, he was forced to see that, though "dead among thinkers," it had "descended upon the people."

"There is hardly a hamlet," he goes on, "but has its Tom Paines by the half-dozen—its Tom Paines of the tap, all emulously funny on the one subject. I witnessed such a thing as this myself last summer in the country—the bewildered defeat of my landlady under the crowing triumph of her son, a lad of seventeen or so, who had asked her to explain to him where Cain got his wife!"

The attitude of mind of this lad of seventeen—the attitude of mind which fixes on trivial "discrepancies" in the Scripture—was peculiarly repugnant to Stirling.

"With the Hebrew Scriptures lying there before us in their truth," he says, "is it not something pitiably small to hear again the jokes even of a Voltaire about the *discrepancies?* I do not apprehend that it is pretended by anyone that there are not discrepancies; but what are

they in the midst of all that grandeur? He who would boggle at the wife of Cain, or stumble over the walls of Jericho, is not an adult; he is but a boy still."

In several of his letters, the same thought is expressed, as, for instance, in the following passage from a letter to Mr Snaith, dated Nov. 15, 1897:—

"You are right about English thought for a long time now. I suppose it is the religious position that is to blame. The multitude—that part of it ever so little educated—sees nothing but the 'discrepancies,' a literal Garden of Eden, a literal Eve made from a literal rib of a literal Adam, and they fail to see aught else: they have ceased to read. It is still the Aufklärung with them, the naked disillusionment and exposure: *they cannot see the spirit for the letter:* they have not come to the Aufklärung No. 2, which tells them to reverse the position, and not to see the letter for the spirit. I acknowledge, however, that to teach and preach this is a vast practical difficulty. Hegel exclaimed publicly, 'I am a Lutheran, and will remain so.' My good friend, Prof. Veitch of the Logic Chair at Glasgow—(dead now, but he was really a friend)—I am told, used to hitch up his gown when he came to my name, and would say, 'Dr Stirling may tell you what he likes, but Hegel was nothing but an infidel!' Reproaches of that kind are practically fatal—however unjust!"

In another letter (dated Feb. 18, 1892) to the same correspondent, he writes:—

"I quite agree with you as to the colossal size of Hegel; and I agree with you also as to the Christian character of what he writes. It is, in fact—to my belief—that reputed character that, in these days, largely prevents the study of him . . . nothing will go down with many but the old, old Aufklärung still . . . they cannot believe a philosopher in earnest who will still stand by the Bible. They

ought to know, however, that the Aufklärung itself has been followed by its correction, and that it is now wholly out of date."

"I have no doubt," he observes in a later letter to the same correspondent, "I have no doubt all will change, however, as soon as what 'correction of the Aufklärung' means is seen and understood."

There is a more personal note in Stirling's letters on the same subject (religion) to Mr Hale-White, dated Nov. 24, 1881, and Nov. 20, 1882, respectively. In the first, he states his religious position with great definiteness, thus :—

"I hold my religious position to be essentially the same as what is called the Hegelian Right. . . . What we see now under the Mills, Buckles, Huxleys, *al.* is the continuation of the French Aufklärung in a very shallow form, and these men are supported now by the mass of the reading public. . . . The true position now is not to continue the Aufklärung, but to correct it by doing justice to Christianity, and by a deeper philosophy of the world.

"That is my position—philosophical Christianity —I have in the *Begriff* what the ordinary man has in the *Vorstellung*, and the historical facts are common to us both. From that position, I believe I could quite consistently occupy the pulpit ; and it is as occupying that position that I am a communicant of the Established Church of Scotland."

In the second letter referred to, this sentence occurs : "Holding by philosophical Christianity from the Idealistic standpoint, I believe myself to belong to the orthodox evangelical party."

As we have already seen in connection with his articles on Strauss, Stirling had little sympathy with the Biblical critics.

"To me," he writes to Mr Snaith in Jan. 1898, "[there is] no idler thing under the sun than said Criticism. It is applicable at all ONLY *if* the books are ordinary ones ; and even so, it is no use to me.

I take the Scripture wholly on the Testimony of the Spirit; and all that about dates and authors may, for me, go hang."

In this last quotation, it may be noticed, "Testimony of the Spirit" is used as equivalent to *Begriff*.

While opposed to scepticism, rationalism, and biblical criticism, Stirling was, at the same time, completely out of sympathy with a too narrow, *literal* orthodoxy. The following short extract from a letter to Mr Snaith, dated Nov. 22/98, seems pretty clearly to define his position between the two extremes of rationalism and a *literal* orthodoxy:—

"I do not think it is necessary for anyone in the pulpit to *mention* the 'discrepancies'—whether for defence or correction. The Dogmas are different: they are *constitutive*. But I do not think they should be *made down* to hearers. I once heard a preacher in Welsh on a collection Sunday telling his hearers to give as Christ gave—'He did not give His blood in teaspoonfuls—no, nor in teacupfuls; He gave in bucketfuls!' Now, it is quite true that we are purified by Christ's blood, for He died for His doctrine, and it is by that doctrine that we are Christians. Still I would not have this rationalism in the pulpit, if neither I would have that *literalism!* But might not a living, burning spiritualism be heard in the pulpit that, without interfering with any literalism, without even *naming* either discrepancy or dogma, would give the absolute soul of the latter? What an enormous quarry is the Bible, Old or New, for Spiritualism, whether in poetry or prose—the eloquence of prose!"

In a letter to Dr Ingleby, dated twenty years before the period we have now reached (July 5, 1870), Stirling gives a special illustration of the relative positions of the "common man" and the philosophical Christian.

"What is required," he writes, "is a few men by me . . . to bring men to see that Germany

(though almost unknown to itself) can give us principles true to fact—principles political, religious, and philosophical. *Nor is there the slightest desire that any man should commit mental suicide.* He may wonder at the miracle of the swine as much as Shakespeare has evidently done, and yet believe Christianity when properly philosophized. For instance, I would explain the Atonement thus: the common man feels his fallen nature—he yields to lazinesses, tempers, temptations of the flesh, lies, etc. He has a horror of meeting *that Judge after death.* He longs for a remedy . . . This [the remedy] to him is the *physical* blood [of Christ] . . . This is the *Idea*:—The Infinite *must manifest itself.* The manifestation must be by very nature—*finite*—imperfect—infected with an *original sin* that is in a certain way an injustice. What compensation can there be but that the Infinite should take on the form of the Finite, and suffer and atone so? Now, I preach this doctrine—and I preach in true Idea the *same thing precisely* that *he* (the common man) has in crass matter. I *meet* him, then—we are quite agreed—we have the same historical fact between us, the material side being turned to him, the ideal to me."

In a former chapter, when dealing with Stirling's article in the *Courant* on Ueberweg's Berkeley, it was pointed out that the author of the *Secret of Hegel*, unlike some later writers on Hegelianism, maintained that *personality* was implied in the God of Hegel. He (the God of Hegel) is the universal, the absolute, *self-consciousness*, "the living subject of the creative thought, and in Him it is that finite subjects live, and move, and have their being." In several of his private letters (especially, perhaps, in those to Mr Snaith) the same thought—of the personality of God—is repeated. The following quotations are from letters to Mr Snaith, written between 1897 and 1904:—

"God is *not* a mere logical universal to Hegel, but the living, personal God." "It is rather amusing to be told that I say my nightly prayers, as I always most devoutly do, to an unconscious God! To have no information about Hegel but the current periodicals is the stereotyped state of the case. I never expect ordinarily to see a single word on Hegel that is worth reading." "As to —— ——, I should like to tell him that *my* individualism is the individualism of the absolutely personal God, whom the Christ has vindicated into *concretion* from *abstraction* by the assumption of humanity. If —— ——'s individualism is not as mine, then I should say he has some reason to fear for the security of his Theism!" The last quotation is from a letter dated July 2/04: "I send for your reading," Stirling writes, "reprint of an article in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* . . . to see if you agree with me that what L. asserts of Hegel denying the personality of God as the Absolute should be resisted. I know I pray to God as the Personal Absolute, and surely I quote from Hegel's most authoritative works to a like effect in his case. Both you and I have all his [Hegel's] works, and I know no such possible denial as L. refers to."

With respect to the question of the immortality of the soul, Stirling writes to Mr Snaith thus:—

"The immortality of the soul as an individual subject scarcely admits of lengthened treatment. The one argument is simply the Divinity of the Universe. It is impossible that this world of ideas can be a thing of brainless chance, we know not how or why. It is the coevon of man; and the earth of his footing is alone inhabited in this externally huge universe—which *is* huge, and has so many atoms just because it is the externalization of Quantity as Quantity. All these stars, etc., Hegel declared, were no more to him than as 'a rash on the skin!'

"Now, all that being so, it is impossible that this — a mere broken fragment, broken in its first, broken in its last—can be all. There must come a mighty consummation!"

Of course, when he speaks of the "one argument" here, Stirling is leaving revelation out of sight. The allusion to Hegel and the "rash on the skin" was one very often heard on Stirling's lips. The meaning is that, to Hegel, mere externality—the mere more or less of matter—was a thing of no importance. To him, Spirit, Thought, was everything; and the external universe was interesting only in so far as, *in the laws which govern it*, it exhibited thought. As bearing on Stirling's view of the question of immortality, the following brief extract from the *Secret* is quoted here:—

"Absurd that you should be continued? Why so? On the contrary, it is no more absurd that you should be continued than that you *are*. That you *are* is the guarantee of your *necessity*. God is a concrete Spirit—not an abstract unit—why should not the death of the body be the birth of Spirit?—and why should not you *continue* united to the universal Spirit then, even as you are so united here, in Natural form, now?"

In reply to some question, on the part of Mr Hale-White, regarding the Resurrection, there occurs, in a letter dated Dec. 1881, the following passage:—

"Christianity ought *now* to be looked at ideally or philosophically. So looked at, the dogma of the Resurrection is essential to the Christian scheme as regards the immortality of the soul. It is not necessary, at the same time, to pin one's faith to the *letter*. A revelation, by the very terms of it, is *externalization*, and externalization is a prey to boundless contingency. Build a temple, of never so white marble, to God—how long will it be before rain and weather have stained it, before spiders,

rats, and mice have crept into it? Should you be apt to think the miracle of the swine such rat—why, for me, you might still be orthodox of the orthodox."

The statement categorically expressed in the first sentence of the above passage—that Christianity ought to be looked at "philosophically"—seems to demand an explanation and a reason, and we find both in the *Secret*. There, the writer, though admitting that "the humble, pious Christian who performs his probation of earth in full consciousness of the eye of Heaven," is "probably preferably situated to the greatest philosopher that ever lived," nevertheless states two reasons why religion is the better of the support of philosophy. One reason concerns "the humble pious Christian." Even he, it seems, though "independent of philosophy as regards his *faith*," might yet derive some gain from it (philosophy).

"In the singleness of his view, in the singleness of his endeavour, he who would be religious *merely* becomes narrow and thin and rigid. The warmth that should foster becomes with him the fire that shrivels; while the light, the mild light, that should guide, becomes restricted in his strait heart into the fierce flash that misleads. *Humanity wells from him;* he becomes a terror and an edge from which even his children flee. *To give the due breadth, then, to this too keen edge, it may have been that the Aufklärung, in the purposes of Providence, appeared;* and just such function does Philosophy possess for all, for the fierce in Faith as for the no less fierce in the so-called Reason still arrogated to themselves by the fragments of *the Illumination. Man must not rigidly restrict himself to a single duty, but must unclose himself into the largeness of his entire humanity.* It is good to know all things—the stars of heaven and the shells of earth, and not less the wondrous entities which Philosophy discloses in the bodiless region of thought as thought. The humble pious Christian, then, independent of Philosophy as regards his *faith*, may still profitably resort to the same for the *pasture of his humanity*."

But the chief reason why, in the present day, religion requires the support of philosophy, lies "in

the necessity of history"—in the fact that the Aufklärung has arisen.

"The Aufklärung cannot now be regarded as a temporary and accidental outbreak of infidelity principally French; it has now taken its place as a historical movement, and must now be acknowledged as a necessary member of the appointments of Providence. The French criticism, English criticism, German criticism, which belonged to that movement, cannot any longer be ignored; on the contrary, all the ascertained and approved results of these must be admitted into that common stock of the possessions of Humanity which is named Truth or Knowledge. But the position of revealed religion does not remain unmoved the while. For one thing, revealed religion must henceforth consent to place its documents on the ordinary and common basis of evidence, historical and other; and, indeed, it is precisely the nature of this evidence which renders desirable any appeal to philosophy . . . religion is not confined to the humble only; and never was there a time in the history of humanity when the proud heart longed more ardently than now to lay itself down in peace and trust within the sanctuary of religion, an offering to God. Now for these latter [those of proud heart] is it that religion—since the Aufklärung—must appeal to Philosophy. *And just to fulfil this function was it that Kant and Hegel specially came.* The former, breathing ever the sincerest reverence for Christianity, had no object during his long life but the demonstration to himself and others of the existence of God, the freedom of the will, and the immortality of the soul. The latter [Hegel] followed in the same cause, and, in addition to the reconstruction of the truths of natural religion, sought to reconcile to philosophy Christianity itself. . . . Very obscure, certainly, in many respects is the system of Hegel, and in none, perhaps, obscurer than in how we are to conceive God as a subjective spirit, and man as a subjective spirit, and God and man as in mutual relation. Beyond all doubt, however, Hegel really attempts this, and believes himself to fulfil this. It is to be said, too, that the contradiction which is objected to the *thought of Hegel* may be equally objected to the *fact of the Universe.* Finite and Infinite, Conditioned and Absolute, both *are;* and of this *fact*, the dialectic of Hegel may be the true *thought.*"

CHAPTER XIX

1891-1900

George Cupples—Stirling's Friendship for him—*Darwinianism*—Criticism of Natural Selection—*What is Thought?*—The "Secret" *told out*

No sketch of the life of Stirling would be satisfactory, not to say complete, which did not give some account of his friendship with George Cupples, the author of *The Green Hand*, and one of the three men referred to in a previous chapter, who, during the years of the maturity and old age of the philosopher, stood closest to him. For forty-two years the two men were in constant touch with each other, either by letter, when they were living at some distance from each other, or, when the homes of both were in, or near, Edinburgh, by personal intercourse; and never was there a truer friendship than that which existed between them—never did any man possess a more loyal, devoted, enthusiastic admirer than Stirling found in Cupples.

To some who were young in the "eighties," the name Cupples calls up a singularly quaint, yet attractive, personality—a man absolutely unique, whose like we shall not probably see again. Dreamy, imaginative, unpractical to an incredible degree, Cupples was the very personification of the man of letters, but utterly devoid of the ambition, self-seeking, and worldly wisdom which generally characterize, more or less, the successful writers of these bustling days. Born, in 1822, in a manse in Stirlingshire, he had inherited from three generations of Scotch Church ministers—father, grandfather and great-grandfather—a religious spirit,

which dwelt in perennial and untroubled calm within the innermost sanctuary of his nature. Upon the altar of his heart the sacred fire burned ever with a steady, unflickering flame. Yet, although, in his youth, he had, at his father's request, attended theological classes to prepare him for entering the ministry, he, as Stirling puts it, "recoiled from the stairs of a Free Church pulpit." He never entered the clerical profession—or any other, unless, indeed, literature as he practised it could be called a profession.

At sixteen years of age he had gone to sea—perhaps allured by the visions of his imagination, perhaps driven by the severity of his father, whose religion seems to have been, not "the warmth that should foster," but "the fire that shrivels"—and for eighteen months, on a voyage to India and back, he served as a ship's boy.

"How intense the impression of that voyage must have been is evident from this that—at least to my surmise—it alone, this voyage, *with* his reading, underlies *The Green Hand*, and all the rest of his writings that concern the sea. I almost fancy that it (the voyage) had, in fact, a physical effect on him—that, so to speak, it physically knocked the breath out of him, and made him quiet and still in every expression, in every externality of life, afterwards. All at once, as it were, his brain teeming with romance, and in himself soft, simple, silent, smiling, only an all-expectant mother's boy—all at once, to be actually cuffed and kicked by a great rough, coarse monster, who kept brutally asking him, in the most blasphemous language, why he had not cleaned the grease from the brass candlestick better!"[1]

No doubt, his experiences during those eighteen months at sea affected permanently Cupples's character, as did also a serious illness (hip-joint disease) with which he was attacked about 1857, when he

[1] From the Biographical Sketch of Cupples by Stirling, which was appended to Cupples's *Scotch Deer-hounds and their Masters*, published in 1893—two years after its author's death.

was a man of thirty-four or thirty-five. Before that time he had already become a celebrity by the publication of *The Green Hand*, which had appeared as a serial in *Blackwood's Magazine* as early as 1848, when its author was only some twenty-six years of age, and is still regarded as among the best sea novels in the language; before that time, too (when he was only twenty-five), he had written the article on Emerson, which Stirling considered the best essay on Emerson ever written. After his illness it is doubtful whether he ever regained either the bodily health, the mental vigour, or the position as a writer, which he had enjoyed before it. He became, more or less, it must be admitted, a literary derelict. He was no less *literary* than before—he was as enthusiastic in his appreciation of excellence in any writing, as keen in detecting slovenliness, as ever (Stirling always regarded Cupples as an excellent literary critic), but perhaps his power of concentrated effort was diminished. The limp which his illness left with him (he was permanently lame, and wore a thick-soled boot) was perhaps to be seen in more than his walk; at any rate, one fancied that the *limpness*, discernible in him—both physical and moral—was the result of ill-health. As Stirling puts it, "he never was really, in the actual intellect, changed, though the wheels of it, perhaps, became somewhat more sluggish to turn."

In 1858, when he had not long risen from his sick bed, Cupples had married a young girl of nineteen, who, some years later, acquired a certain celebrity as a writer of stories for children.

In her own way, Mrs George Cupples was perhaps as unusual a character as her husband. Her courageous spirit, her humour, her love of adventure (for which she had a remarkable attraction!), her gipsy-like dislike of order, restraint, and regularity, her extraordinary power of throwing off

trouble and worry, were all, in a way, unique, and enabled her to go through what most women would have sunk under. On the other hand, it must be admitted that her lack of the more purely domestic qualities was only too visible in the state of her house; and it is a fact that she has been known to sally forth in the morning with the expressed intention of ordering in the provisions for the family dinner, and to return late in the evening in high spirits, and full of amusing talk about the people she had met, and the adventures which she had encountered in the course of the day, while the household had dined as best they could on the somewhat scanty contents of the larder.

To the friends who knew her best, and had not believed her to possess literary gifts, it was somewhat of a surprise when Mrs Cupples made her *début* as an authoress with the publication of a story of the sea for boys, entitled *The Little Captain.* How the appearance of the little book struck Stirling may be gathered from the following extract of a letter of his to Cupples, dated July 19, 1866:—

"You refer to the *Scotsman* hinting the author[1] to be someone, like yourself, knowing the sea, etc. That feeling is universal and ineradicable. I have tried your friends here with your own account, but they will not be persuaded. *Any* help is *all* help, they seem to think. It is so easy to deceive oneself, they say, as to the amount of help; human nature is weak, and believes what it wishes [to believe]—then morally the situation and relations are dangerous, and in many ways, for all concerned. . . . Really, Mrs Cupples deserving the credit, it is too bad—at the same time that I must frankly acknowledge my own weakness for the other side also! I think the best plan is for you to say nothing about it."

It is to the "eighties" that the present writer's

[1] From the context it is evident that the allusion is to a review in the *Scotsman* of *The Little Captain.*

recollections of George Cupples belong. About 1881 it probably was that the Cupples family removed from Guardbridge, near St Andrews, where they had lived for several years, to a house on the north side of Edinburgh, quite near Stirling's. In the same neighbourhood, though not in the same house, George Cupples spent the last ten years of his harmless, yet apparently useless, busy yet resultless, dreamily-contented life, taking no more "thought for the morrow" than the daisies and the dandelions (there were probably no "lilies" there) that lifted their innocent, unabashed faces from green, and borders, and walks in his rough, disorderly garden.

If it was rough and disorderly, however, the garden was not neglected, for Cupples, it must be recorded to his credit, dug, and sowed and planted to such purpose that his peas, potatoes and parsley were unusually good; but it was characteristic of him to prefer the rank luxuriance of nature to the stiff regularity of horticultural art. As Stirling puts it, "it was the novelist in him that largely led to this." "I do like a footpath!" he would exclaim, looking "with shining eyes" at a beaten track—to most men, an unsightly object—which led across what ought to have been a lawn in his garden.

Contented in a simple, child-like way at all times, he was blissfully happy in the society of the friend for whom he had such a warm affection, whom he so humbly and intensely admired; and one is tempted to think that he actually *lived* from one to another of the alternate Monday evenings on which he was in the habit of going to smoke a pipe with Stirling after dinner. Over the pipes there would be talk of philosophy, literature, and philology (in his later years, Cupples devoted a great part of his time to the study of philology and ethnology—especially Keltic), Stirling generally doing the most of the talking, while Cupples listened with rapt

attention, now and then throwing in a word—almost invariably a word of enthusiastic approbation—in his soft, sleepy voice. "On all the great interests of humanity," Stirling writes, "our sympathies were in common"; and he concludes a paragraph about Cupples's favourite poets with this sentence :—

"He knew Chaucer well, Spenser too; but Milton, when there was mutual talk of him, we were both equally ready to rave about, as the deepest, truest, greatest of all pure poets—quoting, big-mouthed, at times the 'Hymn on the Nativity,' say, or some grand bit of the all too few grand, grand sonnets."

Perhaps it was characteristic of Cupples's impersonal, unegotistic outlook on life that, for probably two years before the end, he was deeply troubled and anxious about the health of his wife, who was discovered to have some affection of the heart, while he himself—all unknown to himself, or to anyone else—was much more advanced in a similar disease. It was not till the appearance of the swelling, which announced the approach of the end, that his malady was discovered, while Mrs Cupples was able, some time after his death, to join her sisters in New Zealand, where she lived for several years.

The death of Cupples was a great grief to Stirling. "Sadly I lament his loss," are the words with which he concludes his biographical sketch of his old friend; "how much he was to me it is I only, daily, that know." Just before this sentence there occurs the following brief description, which seems vividly to call up Cupples :—

"Would, as when we had planned some excursion—would that, by going up the street, I could see again his tall, showy figure coming eagerly towards me, broad slouch hat on head, cloak flying open, stick flourishing, huge high-soled, high-heeled boot stumping, face beaming—gratified, alert, with the thought of the expedition on hand."

Already, when he wrote the above words in his seventy-fourth year, Stirling had more than begun to experience one of the saddest aspects of advancing age—the loss, one by one, of those who began life with us, or even after us. Of those friends of Stirling's mentioned in the previous chapters, Ingleby had already gone, and Roden Noel was soon to follow. Of his intimates, there still, however, remained Laurie and Dr Mitchell; and among the men of whom he saw a good deal during the "nineties" there were two who ought to be mentioned here. The one was the Rev. William Hastie, Professor of Theology in Glasgow University—a man of powerful intellect and wide reading, who died with startling suddenness in 1903. The other was R. J. Muir, H.M. Inspector of Schools, and author of *Panta Rye*, *Muncraig*, etc. —a kind-hearted man, and somewhat erratic genius, with a brain teeming with quotations from every variety of writer—from *Hans Breitmann* to Hegel!

It was about two years after Cupples's death that Stirling had the misfortune, a second time, to break an arm. He had walked to Leith—a distance of about two miles—on a frosty, winter day, and, as his habit was, was passing along the streets, lost in thought, and seeing nothing about him, when the sudden barking of a dog close at his heels startled him out of his reverie, and threw him off his balance (which, in his seventy-fourth year, had begun to be somewhat unsteady). He slipped, and fell on the hard pavement, breaking his left arm below the elbow. It was characteristic of the man —of his unyielding spirit and his indomitable will— that, as soon as he was helped on to his feet, instead of driving home, or to a doctor, he continued his walk, transacted the little piece of business on which he had come out, and then returned home on foot! Arrived at the house, he let himself in with his key, walked upstairs, and entering the

drawing-room where a daughter was sitting, said in a quiet, matter-of-fact tone, "Come and help me off with my coat—I have broken my arm."

At the time of the accident, Stirling had just completed his *Darwinianism: Workmen and Work*, which was published in the beginning of 1894. The publication of the book reawakened his regret for the loss of his friend Cupples, for the subject of it was one which Cupples could have discussed with interest and intelligence. He (Cupples) had corresponded with Darwin, and had furnished him with information gained from his experience in the breeding of deer-hounds; but, as Stirling says in the biographical sketch mentioned above, "there was no man more opposed to the *theoretical conclusions* of Darwin than George Cupples was."

Although *Darwinianism* was the first book which Stirling had devoted exclusively to the subject, in several of his previous works—in the *Secret*, in *As regards Protoplasm*, and more particularly in the Gifford Lectures—he had dealt to some extent with Darwin's theory of Natural Selection, and in several of his private letters there occur allusions to it which show that the subject had occupied a considerable amount of his thought long before 1894.

The earliest reference in any of his works to Darwin occurs in the *Secret*, where he quotes from Hegel, on the subject of evolution, to the following effect:—

"Nature is to be regarded as a *System of Grades*, of which the one necessarily rises out of the other, and is the proximate truth of the one from which it results—but not so that the one were *naturally generated* out of the other, but only in the inner Idea which constitutes the Ground of Nature. . . . It has been an inept conception of earlier and later *Naturphilosophie* to regard the progression and transition of one natural form and sphere into a higher as an *outwardly actual production*, which, however, to be made *clearer*, is relegated into the *obscurity* of the past."

On this paragraph Stirling comments: "This, written many years before Mr Darwin's book, reads like a critique on nothing else." A little further on, he adds this paragraph :—

"The error, then, of the reasoners in question [*i.e.*, the 'Darwinists'] is patent. . . . Not only is it *utterly impossible for any material principle to be an adequate Beginning*, an adequate First and One, but the whole problem they set themselves concerns at bottom abstract Quality, abstract Quantity, abstract Identity, abstract Difference, abstract Condition, and, in general, the whole body of Metaphysic, with which—though they know it not themselves—unexamined, simply presupposed, they set to manipulate their atom or their species, as if *so* any legitimate result *could* be possible."

"The question of evolution and the descent of man, etc.," he writes to Dr Ingleby on March 5, 1882, "is philosophy and not natural history;" and a few weeks later, in a letter to the same correspondent, "the questions of the origin of species and the descent of man are emphatically philosophical and not natural-historical."

"I told them in Glasgow," occurs in a third letter to Ingleby about the same time, "that it [the *Descent of Man*] was Darwin's explanation of how the Particular *grew* into the Universal, and the most pitiable book I knew."

In the first of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Law*, this reference to the Darwinian theory of evolution occurs :—

"To suppose that there ever was a natural first germ that *naturally grew* into another, as, for example, that the oyster ever *grew* into a man, is to suppose an absurdity. . . . All that ingenuity that would explain the peacock's tail by the loves of the female (whose comparative plainness then remains unaccountable) is but perverse and a waste of time—a waste of time in this, too, that science is quite unable to allow the explanation *time enough*. . . . The method of *natural conjecture*, in fact, however amusing, leads nowhere."

The words "natural conjecture" in the above extract indicate what is the strongest objection to the entire position of Darwin—that it rests upon nothing more solid than unverified, unreasoned conjecture. To summarize, as far as it is possible to do so within the present limits, the arguments advanced by Stirling against the Darwinian theory of evolution, they may be said to be chiefly the following:—Firstly, the one indicated in the extracts given above from the *Secret* and from Stirling's letters—namely, that the question of *origin* is one for philosophy and not for natural history, and that those natural historians who attempt to deal with it, take for granted, without investigation or examination, the very points which most stand in need of explanation. Secondly, Stirling shows, in his *Darwinianism*, that Darwin often accepted the facts on which he founded his theories on somewhat doubtful authority, citing in particular the case of one Hearne, "the hunter."

"Who was he, Hearne?—who was that Hearne, the sole and single man privileged to see 'the first step by which conversion of a bear into a whale would be easy, would offer no difficulty?' 'In North America the black bear was seen by Hearne swimming for hours with widely open mouth, thus catching, almost like a whale, insects in the water!'"[1]

The sentences quoted by Stirling in this passage are from Darwin's *Origin of Species*. One cannot help wondering, as one reads them, whether it is from such evidence as that indicated there that science usually derives her *undoubted and indubitable facts*. It was in 1796, it seems, that Hearne observed the phenomenon of the swimming, open-mouthed bear, on which Darwin founds so much; and Stirling remarks humorously, "That is almost a hundred years ago; surely, by this time, the bear will have got flippers, or at least the *bulbs* of them!"

[1] *Darwinianism*, p. 155.

Thirdly, as Stirling points out, in the *Origin of Species*, no *origin* of any species is ever demonstrated, but only at most *modification*.

"This is strange, too—in the whole *Origin of Species* there is not a single word of origin! . . . Nay, as no breeder ever yet made a new species, or even a permanent race, so the Darwins themselves, both Charles and his son, Mr Francis, confess: 'We cannot prove that a single species has changed.'"[1]

Yet it was the claim to have discovered and demonstrated the *origin* of species which made Darwin's reputation.

"In the books of the day—novels, say—we are accustomed to come again and again on 'Darwin.' And 'Darwin' is something mystic—a prodigious knowledge and power, that, in absolute intelligence of all things, has deposed the Deity. . . . The knowledge, as knowledge, then, was it so prodigious? It was only the word *origin* did all this; and the word *origin*, strictly, was a misnomer, misleading, not novelists alone, but the general public as such, into anticipations of a beginning and a first that was to be, as it were, a new creation of all things: whereas Mr Darwin himself exclaims, 'It is mere rubbish thinking at present of the origin of life!'"

But it is against "the central idea, the quintessence of Darwinism," that the main strength of Stirling's argument is directed. This central idea—the so-called "law" of Natural Selection—is that new species arise from the gradual "accumulation of individual differences." By some accident or chance, which Darwin does not undertake to explain, a bird, for example, is "born with a beak $\frac{1}{100}$th of an inch longer than usual." This additional length of beak gives the creature some advantage over the others of its own kind; in the Struggle for Existence it survives them, and propagates offspring, which possess the parental advantage (the elongated beak) in a higher degree,

[1] *Darwinianism*, p. 257.

while their offspring, again, exhibit it in a still higher, and so on until a new species emerges.

This, then, Stirling says in effect, if not in actual words — this, then, is science — scientific reasoning! This mere guess-work, this conjecture, unsupported—even actually contradicted—by facts! It is *not true* that "differences" do go on "accumulating."

"Individual does differ from individual; no two individuals are perfectly alike. Manifestly, then, there is development of difference. . . . But is it so certain, as Mr Darwin will have it, that *difference goes on*—that difference adds to itself—*till* there emerges—what?—its own opposite, an identity, a fixed new identity that actually propagates its own identity, as a species, before our eyes, illimitably? . . . *If* there is *advance* of difference into a *new*, is there not *return* of difference into the *old*, identity? We can see the latter [*i.e.*, *reversion* to the original type] at every minute of the day, and on all sides of us; but we never see the former—never have seen the former. . . . A breeder, if he is to breed, must have his material to work on; he knows that to effect the modifications he wants, he can only take advantage of *what is already there*. Nay, it is not by the accumulation of *differences* that the breeder effects his purposes, but by the accumulation of *identities*. If he wants wool, he adds wool to wool; if he wants flesh, he adds flesh to flesh. . . . But with all his skills, and all his contrivances, and all his perseverances, no breeder has ever yet produced *a new species*. We do not deny, any more than Kant, that nature *can* produce new species; we only deny that nature has no secret for the process *but* the accumulation of the differences of accident."[1]

It is in his *As regards Protoplasm* that Stirling observes that, "in the fact of 'reversion' or 'atavism,' Mr Darwin acknowledges his own failure." Each example of reversion of the individual to the original type (and the examples are numerous) is a proof that "differences" do *not* go on "accumulating," and so a disproof of Darwin's "law" of Natural Selection. That such unsub-

[1] *Philosophy and Theology*, pp. 398-399.

stantiated conjecture as this of natural selection should be elevated to the dignity of a law by the common consent of scientific men, is surely one of the strangest signs of the times. As Stirling remarks in the *Protoplasm*, "People will wonder at all this by-and-by."

As was pointed out in a previous chapter, a law of nature is an *invariable uniformity* observed among a certain class of otherwise divergent individuals. The law of gravitation, for instance, is exhibited by *all* material bodies, however unlike or divergent in other respects. In its operation it is *invariable*, *demonstrable*, and capable of expression in a *definite arithmetical formula*. Within the experience of man, no physical body has ever been known to disobey it. But is this so-called "law" of Natural Selection in the same position, on the same level, as gravitation? Can it justly claim to be called a law at all? As we have seen, it is *not invariable* (for each case of reversion is a breach of the law), neither is it *demonstrable*—within the experience even of humanity! — for Darwin admits that "we cannot prove that a single species has changed." As for expression in a definite arithmetical formula, that is obviously entirely out of the question, since Natural Selection rests entirely on *chance*—a chance variation from the specific type—and chance, accident, is incapable of being formulated. Any thoughtful person, who considers the shallowness of conjecture that calls itself science here, will sympathize with Stirling when, in 1871, he wrote to Dr Ingleby, lamenting, *à propos* of the *Descent of Man*, which had just been published, the materialism, the want of thought, which characterized the time. He added, however, that the book would be "a great help towards return to thought. It is a peculiarity of the mad to tear off their clothes, and contort their nakedness. We need not be alarmed: *the keepers will come.*"

It is pleasant to be able to point out that, even among the ranks of the most distinguished scientific men, Stirling had supporters in his view of the incompetence of the Darwinian theory of evolution as an explanation of the order in the universe. In the *Life of Lord Kelvin*, by Professor Silvanus Thompson, we are told that, on one occasion, when Mrs King (Lord Kelvin's sister) had been reading "from Darwin's works"

> "the passage in which he expresses his disbelief in Divine revelation and in any evidence of Design, he [Kelvin] pronounced such views utterly *unscientific*, and vehemently maintained that our power of discussing and speculating about atheism and materialism was enough to disprove them. Evolution, he declared, *would not in the least degree explain the great mystery of nature and creation.* If all things originated in a single germ, then that germ contained in it all the marvels of creation—physical, intellectual, and spiritual—to be afterwards developed. *It was impossible that atoms of dead matter should come together so as to make life.*"[1]

There is a great deal that is apposite to this question—a great deal that one is tempted to quote —all through Stirling's works, perhaps especially in the *Secret* towards the end of the "Conclusion"; but the present limits of space forbid further quotation on the subject.

As far as Stirling's personal life was concerned, the "nineties" were not eventful. After the publication of the book on Darwin, the event of most importance was the appearance, in 1897, by arrangement with Messrs Oliver & Boyd, of a second edition of the *Secret*, with some alterations and additions by the author.

Three years later (in 1900) his last important work, *What is Thought?* appeared. There is no doubt that, in its author's opinion, this book, with the *Categories* (which, published three years

[1] The italics are ours.

later, may be regarded as an appendix to the other), formed the coping-stone of his life's work. Writing to Mr Hale-White in 1886, when the worries and anxieties attendant on a law-suit were preventing him from doing any philosophical work, he remarks: "I feel now as if the chances were that I should never get delivered of my own special wind-up and best!" And similar remarks occur elsewhere in his private letters. Now, in 1886, all his works, save the *Darwinianism* and *What is Thought?* had already appeared, so it is natural to conclude (*Darwinianism* being concerned, so to speak, with a side issue) that *What is Thought?* contained what Stirling regarded as his "own special wind-up and best."

This conclusion is confirmed by the opinion of several philosophical writers and teachers at the time when the book was published. The following extracts from three of the many letters received by Stirling early in 1900 will perhaps serve by way of example. The first is from a letter from Professor Campbell Fraser, dated Feb. 15, 1900:—

"A book in which every page expresses years of thought cannot be adequately estimated within a few days, but I have already read enough in it [*i.e.*, *What is Thought?*] to be conscious of its highly stimulating influence on what is best in man, and to see that this, your latest work, is of a piece with preceding work, which has given you so high a place in the intellectual and moral history of Scotland."

The second occurs in a letter from Professor Laurie, dated Feb. 6, 1900:—

"I have read it [*What is Thought?*] with the keenest pleasure. For acute and penetrating criticism it is almost superhuman. Nor do I think there is much more to be said on Kant's failure and Hegel's position. As to this latter [Hegel] there can be no doubt that his

central thought is put beyond question by you."

The following, from a letter from Professor Seth Pringle-Pattison, dated Jan. 1st, 1900, seems precisely to express what was Stirling's intention in his latest work :—

"There is all the tang of the *Secret* in the new volume, and it is not a little remarkable that 35 years should separate the two. May we not say, indeed, that this is *The* Secret, or at least the Secret *told out?* This, as I understand the book, is the final clearing up of the mystery, the stripping off of the last veil that has hitherto obscured and distorted the view of Hegel."

So far as is possible in a book such as the present (which is professedly *ex*oteric—intended more especially for the *un*initiated), we shall endeavour to see what is meant by the "telling out" of the "secret," the "stripping off of the last veil." It may be remembered that, in the foregoing pages, it has been frequently stated that, according to Hegel and Stirling, *thought* is the basis of the universe, the necessary *Prius*, or First, of creation. The principles of thought, it has been said, "are not the *property* of man—they are not merely in *him*—they are the basis and framework of the entire universe." It has been pointed out, too, that since, in the world of man, we know that the thought, or conception, always *precedes* the expression or execution, it is only reasonable to conclude that this was so also in the universe—that *thought* (the thought of God) preceded the physical universe. Perhaps it may be permitted, as bearing on the point under discussion, to quote again this brief sentence from the *Secret* :—

"Here lies the germ of Hegel that initiated his whole system. The universe is but a materialization, but an externalization, but a heterization of certain thoughts:

these may be named, these thoughts *are*, the thoughts of God. To take it so, God has *made* the world on those thoughts. In them, then, we know the thoughts of God, and, so far, God Himself."

Having thus, in his previous works, laid it down that the universe is built on *thought*—that thought is the basis of all things—it was only natural that Stirling's last work should be an attempt to answer the question, What *is* Thought?

To put the matter in another way, it has been indicated frequently in the previous pages that the special business of the philosopher is the search for *an ultimate principle*—a principle which is the final explanation of all other principles. It has been said, too, with respect to Hegel, that his special work was to find a first principle out of which the others—the "categories," which he had inherited from his philosophical progenitor, Kant—could be seen to *grow*. Such principle must be a *living* principle, capable of development, through its own spontaneous movement, into the universe as we know it. No mere germ of matter could be such a principle. A material germ would, of itself, remain inert, self-identical, being incapable of expansion, of development, but only of accretion or diminution. Moreover, the first principle must be no mere imaginary abstraction, but an *actual fact*, something which actually *is*. The current belief with respect to philosophy, as Stirling points out in *What is Thought?* is that it deals with empty abstractions, whereas Science is based on facts.

"And so, one may have been apt to speculate in the past, were philosophy seen to grow from a *Fact*, to develop a *Fact*—a single principle—a single principle *in rerum natura*, that would give intelligibleness, certainty, and security to every further progress . . . would it [philosophy] not be generally seen into at last, and would it not receive at last that confidence on the part of the bulk of mankind which is at present denied it, and which so far is reserved for science alone?"

Is there any such principle—a principle which is a *fact*, an undeniable fact, which is *living*, and which is capable, through its own movement, of development *out* of itself into something different from itself—which has within it the power of transition *from identity to difference?* Hegel and Stirling reply, There *is*.

Now, what is that principle? To give the reply, it is necessary to refer again to what has been said above—that the universe is built on *thought;* that the *framework* of the universe—what Stirling calls the "diamond net"—is composed of principles of thought, *categories*, which it is the special business of mankind to endeavour to reach, to formulate, to make explicit. That this is so is implied in the very existence of science—any science whatever. Every attempt of science to *explain* any group of phenomena *presupposes that the facts are explicable*, and that means that they exhibit some *principle* which is capable of being formulated—that they are the expression of thought. And that brings us back to the question, What *is* Thought?

The answer is, Thought is the special function of *self-consciousness*. Out of Self-consciousness—not the empirical self-consciousness of each individual man, but the absolute, the divine Self-consciousness, through its own native, spontaneous movement — the categories can be shown to develop. As Stirling puts it in a letter to Mr Snaith, written in Jan. 1904: "The Ego [or self-consciousness], God's Ego," is, "by its own divine dialectic [*i.e.*, rhythm, movement], the *divine* origin and original of the divine Categories, which also, by the same dialectic externalized, are the Creation —God's own divine Creation." "If you look at the universe," he adds, "you will see that it is in effect (ideally, internally) but a bundle of Categories."

Self-consciousness, then, the Ego, is, according to Stirling, *the principle*—the Hegelian principle, though perhaps not quite explicit in Hegel's own writings. It is a *fact*—an undeniable fact—the most undeniable fact known to us. Descartes, beginning with the determination to get rid of all presupposition—to doubt everything which it was possible to doubt—found that the one fact incapable of being doubted was his own existence. The very fact that he doubted, proved that he *was*. *Cogito ergo sum* was the foundation of his philosophy. The whole external universe—the hills, the sea, the heavens — might conceivably be a vision, a dream, of my own; but that I *am*—I who feel, and see, and think—is to me the most undeniable of facts.

If self-consciousness is a *fact*, it is also living, and it is capable, through its own inner movement, of development out of itself into its "other"—into something different from itself. To quote here from what is perhaps the most explicit—certainly the *fullest* and most condensed — of all Stirling's writings on Hegel, namely, the first of his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Law* (quoted at some length by himself in *What is Thought?*)—

"Hegel said to himself, or seems to have said to himself, for there is little that is direct in Hegel—he builds his system as a man might build a house, and lets us find out all his thoughts about it for ourselves—I, too, like other philosophers, would like to explain existence; but what does that mean? Evidently, I must find a single principle, a single fact *in* existence, that is adequate to all the phenomena *of* existence, to all the *variety* of existence; and this principle, while adequate to all the variety of existence, while competent to reduce into its own *identity* all the *difference* that is, must bring with it its own reason for its own self, its own necessity, its proof that it is, and it alone is, that which could not *not* be . . . he [Hegel] would find an explanation of all that is in some *actual constituent* of all that is. And that is thought, reason; that is *self-*

consciousness. Self-consciousness he finds to be the one aim of existence: all that is, he finds, *is only for self-consciousness.* That is the one purpose of existence. Nature itself is but a gradual and graduated rise up from the dust of the field to the self-consciousness of man. This we can see for ourselves: in the inorganic scale, up and up to the organic, and, in this latter, up and up to man. All is *explained* only when it is converted into thought, only when it is converted into ourselves, only when it is converted into self-consciousness. . . . It [self-consciousness] is the ultimate and essential drop of the universe, and explanation is only the reduction of all things into it. All things, indeed, stretch hands to it, rise in successive circles ever nearer and nearer to it. Now what is self-consciousness? Its constitutive movement is the idealization of a *particular* through a *universal* into a *singular.* Now that may appear a very hard saying, but it is a very simple one in reality: it is only a general naming of the general act of self-consciousness. In every act of self-consciousness, that is, there is an object and a subject [the thing known, and the person who knows]. The object, on its side, is a material externality of parts, while the subject, on the other side again, is an intellectual unity, but a unity that has within it, or behind it, a whole world of thoughts. It is by these thoughts the subject would master the object, *reduce it into itself.* . . . We can only think by *generalizing*, and generalizing is the reduction of particulars to universals. Evidently, then, in every act of self-consciousness, *particulars* meet *universals* in a *singular.* . . . Now, that is the Notion—that is the Secret of Hegel. *The vital act of self-consciousness is the notion.* The single word *notio* involves all the three elements, a *knowing* (universal) of *something* (particular) in a *knower* (singular)."

Here, in the above passage, the "Secret" is undoubtedly "told"—even, one might say, "*told out*" —and there are several passages in the *Secret of Hegel* (some of them quoted in *What is Thought?*) in which it is stated with equal explicitness. Nevertheless, the reader who studies Stirling's last book will find it (the secret) treated much more fully and explicitly than in any of his previous works. In the following letter to Mr Hale-White, too (for the insertion of which here apologies are perhaps due to

the uninitiated reader, for whom this book is said to be specially intended), the "secret" is told with great directness and all possible simplicity. The letter is dated December 1874:—

"There are only two things," Stirling writes, "that actually *exist*—Nature and Spirit. Or there is only one thing that exists—Spirit (implying Nature). Thought is that which cannot *not* be. There must be a primal necessity. That is *thought*, and the *existence* that necessarily results as the *expression* (manifestation) of thought. The Begriff, then, is the one necessity, but the Begriff is the Ego, Self-consciousness. Ego is the primal ἀνάγκη, and *its* necessity again is a *non*-ego (a manifested *nature*—its own). There *is* existence; therefore there is something that could not *not* be—and that, named above, may be also named an *internalè* that could not be without an *externalè*—a subject-object. An internalè, a subject, were a blank and null without an internalè that reflected it into the unity of a meaning, of a purpose for its own self. *Hegel does not state those things, but they must be got at to understand him.*[1]

"Now, about 'concrete.' Well, Nature and Spirit being alone what *exists*, Logic, the whole series of the categories, must be called abstract—it does not, in its own form, *exist*[2]—it gets *existence* as an unconscious permeating, supporting, constituting diamond net, outwardly, in Nature, also as an unconscious system of weights and measures, so to speak, inwardly, in every individual spirit, and as a *conscious system* (of logic, of categories) in the *Hegelianly educated spirit*. Thus relatively abstract, it is very certainly, all the same, *absolutely* concrete—it is *the* important, the *essential*, the *substantial*, element or filling of all things. So with *each* category: *Becoming* is the most general predicate by which you can characterize *that which is;* the last word you can say is,—What is, is Process. Sea becomes land, land sea; metals become oxydes; wood, stone, falls into dust; plants, animals, are born, grow, die, rot,

[1] The italics here are ours.

[2] Like other philosophers, from Plato onwards, Stirling distinguishes between *being* and *existence*. Existence applies to the *phenomenal*, the external, *that which is perceived* through the senses; being applies to the *noumenal*, the internal. Nature *exists;* God *is;* man, in so far as he is spirit, *is* (he is "made in the likeness of God"), in so far as he consists of an external body, *exists*.

etc. What is—what at any moment is—is *re*-formation. Well, re-formation, process, becoming, is certainly always from Being to Being. Still, you understand what process is, quite by itself, without reference to any Being whatever. Well, its accurate definition *in that form* [*i.e.*, the definition of Becoming] is negation and affirmation (nothing and being), both together, in union, neither without the other. It is an amalgam, then, and it is *in rerum natura* (it is the inward scheme—action—in a thousand natural facts). As such actually existent amalgam (Begriff), it is concrete—though, *in that form*, certainly 'in the abstract element of thought.' But its *moments* are *absolutely* abstract; neither *is* (or *exists*) by itself: you cannot hold up, make overt, make explicit, negation (nothing) without holding down, making occult, making implicit, affirmation (Being). That is the case in the perfectly generalized notion of becoming (process), and that is the case in every actual instance of becoming. But *Something* is a better example. If, in Becoming, the two moments seem to a certain extent apart, as if the process were *between* them (which is not the case, however), in *Something* each penetrates and permeates the other to the formation of a quasi-permanent third something—*Something*. It is as if cold and vapour were precipitated together into snow. Fancy sulphuric acid here, and soda there—let them slip together, they are at once Glauber's Salts [*i.e.*, Johann Rudolf Glauber's]—a one—which one you can (in idea) see at any moment separating into two. Viewed as moments, sulphuric acid and soda—acid (the negative, *nothing*), and alkali (the positive, *being*)—*exist*, each in its own form apart. But that is not so with the moments Being and Nothing, neither as they are in Becoming, nor as they are in Something. Each something in existence *is what it is as much by what it is not as by what it is;* and you can never show Being and Nothing apart, each in its own form. . . . Being and Nothing are the *abstract moments* which their coalescence goes to form, and which are actual functioning schemata of all *existing* things.

"Take Quantity: its moments are Discretion and Continuity. They are abstract, but *it* is concrete. *It* is *their* concretion, and *it* is *in rerum natura*, but *they* (singly) are not. You can never show a discrete that is not continuous, or a continuum that is not discrete. Discretion, then, is the acid (but abstractly), the negative, the nothing, that goes together with the alkali, the positive, the being, to form the one concrete notion (though in that form—the

form of abstract thought—relatively abstract) Quantity. Quantity is then a Begriff, and an analogue of *the* Begriff —the Ego, Self-consciousness, which also, in its place, is an *amalgam*, a concrete, of two—the Subject and the Object, the internalè and the externalè—and those moments Hegel would not hesitate to call, in reference to the resultant single Ego, or Absolute Spirit, *relatively* abstract.

"No, there is nothing 'historic' in it. The Idea at once *is*, and the Universe at once is, in the virtue of the Idea. But that is no reason why you may not take the watch to pieces. Creation must not be supposed an event in time. The Absolute Self-consciousness is *What is*, and the Absolute Self-consciousness involves an Absolute object (its *nature*, and so what we call Nature). God, then, is not up there, a big man in the air, to be discovered by a telescope.[1] He exists in me, in you, in him, etc. In each of us, as a mathematical point, is the whole infinite *radiation.*

"Where does this 'pen,' this 'paper' come in? Nature is the necessary externalè—the 2nd moment of the notion (the particular)—and the 'pen' and 'paper' belong to it; and *it, simply as being an* EXTERNALÈ, is a boundless out and out of difference amid ceaseless contingency. The notions of Logic are never intended to be such that you will deduce from them *this* 'pen' or *that* 'paper'—Nature as a whole is there, and *must* be there, as 2nd moment of the Notion. The things in Nature are not deduced from the Notion, but they are reduced to the Notion by its (Nature's) own action. Nature's 'Mechanik' rises into 'Physik,' that into 'Organik.' The last of 'Organik' itself is Life and Man, out of whom there is at last the birth of Spirit, which is the return of the Notion from externalness, from Nature, to its own form, its own inwardness. . . .

"'Being to Being,' yes, but *that* is negation—what comes *was* not, what goes *is* not."

The letter concludes abruptly, at the foot of the second sheet of paper, with the words, "*Must* stop *some*time!" These three last words express the only excuse which can be offered for what is felt to be a most scanty and insufficient statement of the

[1] The reference is to a saying of the astronomer Lalande (quoted in the Preface to the *Secret*), "I have swept space with my telescope, and found no God."

character and contents of *What is Thought?*—a book which throws much new light on the four great German philosophers — Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel—and their relations to each other, and which, moreover, contains its author's *last word*. Here, in brief, is his summary :—

"Explanation of the universe" is "the aim of philosophy." "Science, no doubt, has also attempted the problem, but always only with such presuppositions [*e.g.*, Space, Time, Matter] as to negate the enterprise. . . . The ancients tried their best with *thickenings* and *thinnings;* the moderns have scarcely done more with *eddyings* and *swirlings*, *heatings* and *coolings*. . . . Metaphysicians, with a similar purpose, may not have done perfectly, or even well; but have they not done better? They *have* a First, a First that is *in rerum natura*, and so constituted also that, by virtue of its own *ratio*, it develops into an entire *internalè*, which, in turn, and by virtue of the same *ratio* continued is an entire *externalè*. . . . We cannot further follow here a Philosophy of Nature in the *Particular* and the *Singular*.

"But God, we say at once, is, necessarily to us, alone in all this, the actually, livingly, and personally *bëent*[1] UNIVERSAL.

"For to philosophize through the Ego is not to presume to measure the infinitude of God. . . .

"There can no Supreme Being be but that must say to Himself *I:* I AM THAT I AM. . . .

"Man, again, it is said, is made 'after the likeness' of God: 'a man is the image and glory of God.'

"It is the very heart of the Christian Religion that the Infinite God, become Finite, is a Man.

"And man is *I*. Even by the privilege of having been made like unto God, Man is *I*.

"It is that that he has of God in him. . . .

"Hegel . . . lived—indeed we may say it—*in* God and *to* God.

"I Am that I Am—I Am that I Am—I Am that I Am.

"That to Hegel was all."

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[1] *See* note on p. 346 as to distinction of *being* and *existence*.

CHAPTER XX

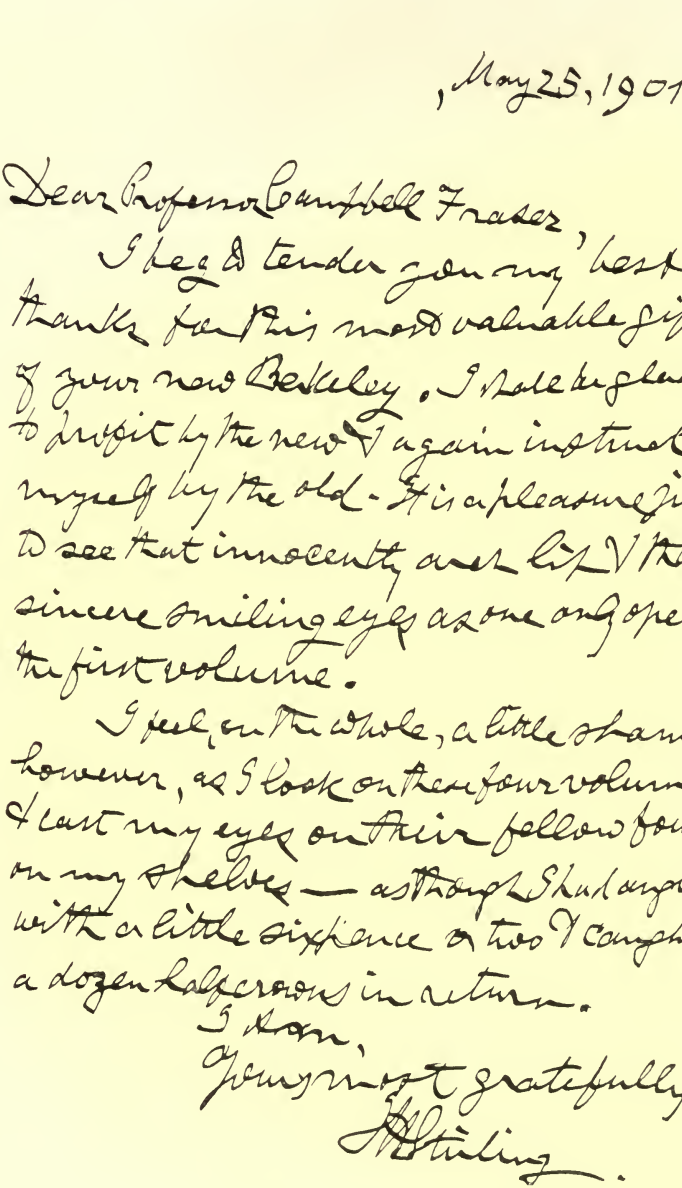
1901-1909

Last Years—Death of Mrs Stirling—*The Categories*—Professor Laurie—Stirling's Friendship for him—His Death—Stirling's Death—Tributes to his Memory

WHAT remains to be told of Stirling's life is mostly sad—as we count sadness in this world. Perhaps in another and a better world, the breaking of the links that bind us to this earth will be regarded, not as a thing to grieve at, but rather to rejoice over, as the prisoner rejoices at the loosing of his chains. Before his own hold on life was loosed, Stirling had to experience, in those last years, the breaking of two more links with it—one of them the strongest of all. It was in 1903 that the sharer of his joys and sorrows for more than fifty years—the only love of his life—was taken from him.

Before that terrible wrench occurred, however, one or two small events, which took place in the first years of the century, have to be recorded. In 1901, on the occasion of the ninth jubilee of the University of Glasgow, the Senatus of his *alma mater* conferred on Stirling the honorary degree of LL.D. As he was now nearing the completion of his eighty-first year, and, as the result of his accident in 1893, was apt to be somewhat nervously distrustful of his footing, he shrank from making his appearance in a large crowded hall, and the Senatus kindly agreed that the degree should be conferred on him *in absentia.*

About the same time, or a little earlier, a friend sent him from Paris an extract from a French


, May 25, 1901.

Dear Professor Campbell Fraser,

I beg to tender you my best thanks for this most valuable gift of your new Berkeley. I shall be glad to profit by the new & again instruct myself by the old. It is a pleasure indeed to see that innocently arch lip & those sincere smiling eyes as one only opens the first volume.

I feel, on the whole, a little shame, however, as I look on these four volumes & cast my eyes on their fellows four on my shelves — as though I had angled with a little sixpence & two I caught a dozen half-crowns in return.

I am,

Yours most gratefully,

J. H. Stirling.

FAC SIMILE LETTER OF STIRLING'S.

To face p. 350.

Dictionary of writers,[1] in which he was described as a "philosopher and critic," who had "profoundly penetrated the spirit of the system of Hegel," and whose prose was, "*à la fois poétique et précise, incisive et pittoresque.*" Such proof that his work was understood and appreciated in another country was no doubt pleasant to receive, as were also the letters from admiring disciples here and there throughout the world—even in far New Zealand—which, from time to time, reached the philosopher in his declining years. In January 1903 he had the pleasure of receiving in his house the members of the Scots Philosophical Club—a small society, composed of the philosophical professors of the four Scottish Universities, with two or three "honorary" members, of whom Stirling was one. Two other honorary members, both of whom were present on the occasion, were Mr A. J. Balfour (at that time Prime Minister), and the present Viscount Haldane of Cloan. In the philosophical discussion which took place, Stirling bore his part, as those present averred, with much of his old vigour and incisiveness.

That occasion seems to mark the close of a chapter in the lives of Stirling and his family. It was almost the last social event at which all the members of the little family circle, which had remained unbroken for more than twenty years, were present together. Only a few months later the family hearth was sundered by that "incommunicable gulf," across which one looks back with dazed eyes at one's past life as something dim, far-off, unfamiliar, which can never return again.

It was little more than a month after the meeting of the Scots Philosophical Club that Mrs Stirling was pronounced to be suffering from an incurable malady—failure of the heart. During her life as

[1] *Dictionnaire manuel-illustré des Écrivains et des Littérateurs.* (Armand Colin, Paris.)

wife and mother, she had identified herself so completely with husband and children that she hardly seemed to have any "self" apart from them—so much so that one of her family once remarked that to think of her apart from husband and children was as impossible as to think of substance without qualities. Yet now she had to face the thought of leaving all she loved, of setting out alone on that unknown journey, from which there is no return. For months before the end she knew it must come; suffering no pain, in full possession of consciousness and faculties, she waited for it—at first in silent human anguish at the thought of parting from those she loved, but later, with the light of eternity in her face.

As for Stirling, he resolutely refused to believe what was so obvious to everyone else—almost to the very last, he refused to believe it. When the end came, he broke down utterly.

During the months before his wife's death (on 5th July 1903), he had been engaged on his little book, *The Categories*, which, as was said above, is in some sort an appendix to *What is Thought?* When, in the following October, it was published, it bore, by way of dedication, this tribute to her memory :—

"To the Memory of
My Wife
Whose irreparable loss is associated inseparably
With its Publication
I dedicate this Little Book
To me she was
The Sweetest Woman and the Most Ingenuous
The Truest Wife and the Faithfulest
That in the Will of God
Ever Blessed Man."

Friends who knew of the long years that Stirling

MRS. HUTCHISON STIRLING.
(From photo by Crooke, Edin.)

To face p. 352.

and his wife had lived together—of their love for each other, of her graciousness, sweetness, unselfishness—did what they could to soften with their sympathy the blow which had fallen on the aged philosopher. Among several to whom some expression of gratitude is due, mention should perhaps be specially made of Dr James Mitchell. Both in 1903, and six years later when the second blow fell, he sorrowed with the sorrowing, making their grief his own.

Of *The Categories* perhaps there is not, at this point, much that requires to be said. Considering that it is the work of a man of nearly eighty-three, the little book is quite remarkable for its terseness and clearness. A serious student of Hegel would find much that was new and valuable and of special interest in Chapter II. ("The Double Statement"), and in Chapter III. ("Categories and Physics") the reasoning of *Darwinianism* is contained in summary, as well as much that is fresh. Writing to Professor Laurie on the last day of October 1903, the author himself says of the little book: "Please find in Chap. I. complete comparison of Logical and Phenomenological, together with the Last of the Secret, etc., etc., etc.,—in Chap. II. discussion of a beginning, etc. (Causality thrown in), also, in a hand's breadth, all Darwin and the truth of Evolution."

Perhaps it may be permitted to revert for a moment to this last subject (*Darwinism*), which has already been touched on in the previous chapter, in order to state at the briefest possible the substance of what is said regarding it in Stirling's last little book. His (Stirling's) objections might perhaps be not unfairly summarized under the following two heads—but those two are surely unanswerable and conclusive:—

First: Darwin's method of procedure—of reaching his conclusions—was utterly unscientific and unreliable.

Second: His conclusions themselves were entirely unsupported either by facts or reasoning.

Under the first head, Stirling points out that Darwin's way of reaching a conclusion was *not* by slow and careful induction from a large number of undisputed facts—which is the accepted method of experimental science—but the reverse of this. It was, in fact, to get hold—somehow—of a "theory," a conjecture, and then to collect the facts which fitted in with it—disregarding, of course, those which did not! Darwin had, as Stirling shows, an inherited instinct for theorizing.

"Now, the love of hypothesis as quite a family *tick* is admitted. And Mr Francis Darwin has, of his father, these strong words: 'It was as though he were charged with theorizing power ready to flow into any channel on the slightest disturbance, *so that no fact, however small, could avoid releasing a stream of theory, and thus the fact became magnified into importance; in this way it happened that many untenable theories occurred to him.*'"[1]

The method of procedure, the kind of mind, indicated here is precisely that which, whether by writers on science, or teachers of logic, one has been accustomed to be warned against as *peculiarly unscientific.* No conclusion, we are told, must be reached *per saltum;* and no hypothesis can be accepted unless substantiated by the unanimous evidence of all the known facts. One contradictory fact is enough to invalidate a hypothesis; but, as we saw in last chapter, Darwin's Law of Natural Selection is contradicted by numerous instances of reversion and atavism.

It is, indeed, *per saltum* that he (Darwin) appears to have usually reached his conclusions.

"*That it is conceivable,*" as Stirling says (*The Categories,* p. 101), "has the force of fact for Mr Darwin. 'It is conceivable that flying fish *might* have been modified into perfectly winged animals

[1] The italics are ours.

. . . and so I cannot doubt that during millions of generations individuals of a species *have* been born so and so!'"

It seems scarcely necessary to point out that such an attitude of mind as that indicated here has nothing to do either with *fact* or *reasoning*—the two pillars on which the edifice of science claims to be reared. One cannot but sympathize with Stirling when he exclaims, "Oh, if for it all there were but sound logic and existential fact!"

"The whole of Mr Darwin's single action and one thought lies here:—'Favourable variations would tend to be preserved, and unfavourable ones to be destroyed.' 'Here, then,' says Mr Darwin, 'I had at last got a *theory* by which to work.' Theory is rather too big a word; it implies a complex of correlated particulars. Mr Darwin's 'theory' was a simple idea—this, namely, that the progeny of an organism exhibited some variation, never mind how slight, from its parent before it. On that simple idea Mr Darwin turned; his whole soul flashed, kindled, and his mind flew open. It belonged to his simple, ingenuous, sincere, *straight*, instantaneous nature to dwell here, on and on, as in a world of consequences. A variation, however accidental, might not just come and go; *it might have consequences*. . . . 'The result would be the formation of a new species!'" (*The Categories*, pp. 112-113.)

"And so . . . he [Darwin] confined himself, not to natural history as a study to be perfected, but to the gathering together of a commonplace-book compilation, in which every word that made for a natural explanation of life and living beings might be adopted and signalized. Accordingly, as he says himself, he read all manner of 'agriculturists and horticulturists'; he depended on answers to all manner of 'printed inquiries' sent out to all manner of 'breeders and gardeners'; not less on 'conversations' with such. . . . So it was that he came to his organic physics—Natural Selection. Was it so that Newton came to his *inorganic physics—Gravitation?* . . . When the one [Newton], so modestly confident, declared that so and so *is*, now that the law of Gravitation is discovered, was it just the same thing and fact when the

other (Mr Darwin) . . . declared that so and so *is* '*now* that the law of Natural Selection is discovered'?

"Where is that law? 1. A *variation*, a mere thing of accident and chance, whether from within or without; 2. By mere chance, unforeseen, unlooked-for, a *profit* from it (*i.e.*, a casual, fortuitous use and application of it)—an accident—two accidents: The accident of an accident! Good heavens! Is that a *law?*" (*The Categories*, pp. 111-112.)

In the last sentence quoted we have passed from the first "head" mentioned above (*i.e.*, Stirling's objections to Darwin's method) to the second (his criticism of the conclusions of Darwinism). Under the latter, there is no need to add, to what has already been said in last chapter, more than the following extract from Darwin himself, quoted by Stirling in *The Categories*, and his (Stirling's) comments on it:—

"'In fact the belief in natural selection must at present be grounded entirely on general considerations—we cannot prove that a single species has changed; nor can we prove that the supposed changes are beneficial, *which is the groundwork of the theory.*' . . . If any reader will honestly follow out these admissions into their constitutive content, he will wonder what in all the world is left Mr Darwin at last. Why, in sober and good truth, there is nothing left Mr Darwin at last but Mr Darwin himself—looking away out there into 'millions of generations' in dream! And the public thought this dream, this mere imagination, was a scientific apodictic proof of all these innumerable species of plants and animals being sprung from a single slight variation of accident and chance in a piece of 'proteine compound' that, 'some time or other,' had just 'appeared'—'by some wholly unknown process'! . . . And here the idea of Origin—of Origin as *Origin*—cannot but force itself in upon us. If a First, a pre-existent First, has to be postulated . . . why is there any claim of Origin? . . . Origin—as currently interpreted by the public at large . . . who believed that Mr Darwin proposed to initiate them into the origin, not merely of species derived from species, but of the very creatures themselves that constitute species—*origin* can only demonstrate itself as a palpable misnomer."

In a word, according to Stirling, the *Origin of Species* has nothing to do with *origin*, but only with *modification*, and the Law of Natural Selection is only a baseless conjecture, and not a *law* at all.

To Stirling, Darwinism was in science what Robespierre was in politics—*the last word of the Aufklärung* (or, rather, of its degraded form, the *Aufklärerei*)—the stripping off, from nature and human nature, of the last rag of order and reason left by the "men of the Revulsion," leaving the universe bare of all save accident, chance, unreason.

"A mad world, my masters!" says Shakespeare; and Stirling adds, "Yes, but *the keepers will come*."

Perhaps the age of its author prevented *The Categories* from receiving the amount of attention to which the clear and concise argument contained in it entitled it. The following extract from a letter from Professor Laurie (dated 15th Nov. 1903) appears to appraise the little book at its true value. "It would be absurd," Laurie writes, "to compare it [*The Categories*] with your greater works, but yet I think it the most *effective* pronouncement you have made. Thought and manner fit into each other beautifully, and it is an immense pleasure to an old friend to see that your hand is as vigorous as ever. I believe the parts on Darwin and religion will be of great service to many a bewildered young 'scientist.' . . . Everything from your pen is characteristic and full of instruction and encouragement to all who wish to believe in God, who is certainly not in fashion in these days."

It is not without intention that it has been left to the last chapter to speak of Laurie and of Stirling's friendship for him. He was the last of the three men, referred to more than once in the previous pages, who "stood closest" to the philosopher in his maturity and old age—the last, but assuredly not the least. The friendship between Stirling and Laurie, in fact, stood on a footing of greater

equality than that between Stirling and the other two friends previously spoken of. Laurie was no less admiring of Stirling's intellectual achievements than either Henderson or Cupples; but he was of a stronger, more independent, character and intellect. Less purely literary than George Cupples, he was more philosophical (indeed, he was himself a philosopher—author of several important philosophical works), and he possessed, moreover, unlike Cupples, a practical wisdom, a knowledge of the world and of human character, which are not usually found united with a love of metaphysical speculation.

It was no doubt the publication of the *Secret of Hegel* which made Stirling and Laurie acquainted with each other. In a letter of Stirling's to Cupples, dated July 1866, we have an allusion to what was doubtless the beginning of their acquaintance. "Mr Simon Laurie sent me his book on *Ethics*. From an English point of view, I found it good . . . I missed the German element, however . . . he [Laurie] promised to call on me . . . am disposed to think very highly of him, especially in a moral point of view." Two years later, Stirling writes to Ingleby: "He [Laurie] is a most accomplished scholar—reads German, too—hard at K. and H. —a most amiable—fearlessly (*unwittingly* fearless, too) candid man."

Perhaps in this last sentence Stirling has touched upon the quality for which those who knew Laurie well admired him most—his fearless candour—though, as will be readily understood, that very quality was sometimes the means of making enemies for its possessor. He was emphatically a manly man—brave, strong, self-reliant—yet he undoubtedly possessed one virtue which is usually supposed to be the peculiar property of the softer sex—unselfishness. If it was for his fearless candour, his honesty, his robust intellect, his strong common-sense that

his friends admired Laurie, it was for the unselfishness, the generosity, the broad humanity, the warm affection of the man that they loved him. No doubt, there were people who saw in him only the faults of his virtues—people by whom his strength and decision of character were set down as dogmatism, his fearless candour was regarded as pugnacity, his vehemence in denouncing falsehood or folly was stigmatized as intolerance. But those were people on the outside—and such there will always be. Those on the inside knew that he possessed an absolute genius for friendship. True and loyal, he gave his friend his admiration, his love, his advice, his help, while retaining always his own self-respect, his own independence of judgment. He was never what Emerson calls a "mush of concession" to his friend.

Apart from the family affection with which he was surrounded, it was his friendship with Professor Laurie that formed the chief solace of Stirling's last years. The letters of the two men breathe the warmest affection for each other, and are written with an openness and unreserve that reveal how complete was the trust and confidence which they reposed in each other. A further proof—if any were required—of this trust and confidence is to be found in Laurie's self-reproach for having, for a few months, concealed from Stirling, as well as the rest of the world, his authorship of *Metaphysica Nova et Vetusta*, which he published under the name of *Scotus Novanticus* in 1884. A copy of the book had been sent by the publishers to Stirling, who, utterly unsuspicious of the identity of the author, acknowledged receipt of it, through the publishers, in a letter of some length in which he congratulated the writer "on the production of this remarkable little book," and entered into a somewhat detailed, and very favourable, criticism.

When, six months later, Laurie revealed his

identity with *Scotus Novanticus* (in a letter dated April 5, 1885), he admitted that though, on receipt of Stirling's letter about the book, he had felt "more pleased than if I had received the title-deeds of a county," he had been troubled in mind about keeping his friend in the dark as to its authorship. "It seemed a breach of friendship," he wrote—"at least of the *kind* of friendship I had with you. To me, as I hope you well know, you are the first of living thinkers; but the deep respect I have for you as a thinker is not greater than my personal affection for you as a man."

As a proof of how warmly Stirling, on his side, reciprocated Laurie's affection for him, the following letter will show (written twenty years later than that of Laurie, from which the above extracts are taken). It is dated the first day of the year 1905, and begins at once thus:—

"There!—that is the first time I write the new date, and I could not write it to a better than to

"My best Friend, — To whom I most sincerely wish all happiness for the new year; and to whom I must return one word, though I hope so soon to see him—one word in sympathy with the mood that wrote your letter of Dec. 27. Yes, the more one ponders, the stranger and more mysterious it seems! Why should there be existence at all? That—even though evil is as much inherent in the necessary contingence of externality as two right angles in the three—whatever angles of any triangle!

"But the Gifford![1] That is all right—you are the very man for it. What you feel is but the shiver before action. You will wonder at your own comfort the moment you have written."

During his last years, Stirling avoided all public gatherings, and, save for his daily walk, was seldom outside his own home. His friendship for Laurie,

[1] Professor Laurie had been appointed Gifford Lecturer in Edinburgh University.

however, proved stronger than his aversion to public meetings; and on more than one occasion he contrived to be present in the University class-room when Laurie was delivering one of his Gifford Lectures—in spite, too, of a friendly, half-jesting prohibition on the lecturer's part. "When sitting talking to you," Laurie had written on May 2, 1906, "I always think of you as about 55. This explains my selfish thoughtlessness in asking you to be present on Friday. Even if you drive up to the very steps, these are numerous. You *must not* come. If Flossy lets you, she will be punished by losing the next chess match. But send me a note, saying you regret, etc., etc. You see, if not wholly in your particular 'mansion,' I am in your philosophical Heaven, and it is satisfactory to me to feel that the mansion assigned to me is next door to yours."

Of Stirling's writings during those last years, only two remain to be mentioned—the first a critical notice of Professor Campbell Fraser's *Biographia Philosophica*, which appeared in *Mind* in Jan. 1905; and the second an *Appendix to the Categories* (published in 1907), the main object of which was to defend Emerson from a charge brought against him of being a supporter of the Darwinian theory of evolution.

It is perhaps not a little remarkable that those subjects should have been the last on which he should have written for the public; for both were associated with his youth, and must have carried his thoughts back to the distant past. Stirling and Campbell Fraser, though unknown to each other at the time, had, in 1833, sat on the same benches of the old Glasgow College; both of them had seen

"morning after morning, from the facing street, the twin lamps that just indicated the black devouring maw of the college entrance, as, right and left over its squared

sides, they brought ever to the student's mind images of Bitias and Pandarus, supporters of the gate, while he hurried along, even agitated by the very peculiar, small, sharp, quick, quick, quick, of that strangely instant catalogue bell, the stopping of which meant the shutting also of the class-room door, and the impossibility of an '*Adsum*' from him belated without to the call of his name within, with loss of the best of a certificate, uninterrupted attendance." (*Mind*, Jan. 1905, p. 86.)

Emerson, too, was associated with Stirling's youth, though with a later period of it than that to which the memories indicated in the above paragraph belong. "I was an idealist of the Emerson stamp," Stirling writes to Ingleby in 1869, "till —Kant and Hegel, in short." And now the last public utterance of the philosopher of nearly eighty-seven was devoted to the defence of the idealist, who had been the teacher of his youth, from the charge of materialism.

Briefly to indicate the substance of the defence, it is this: Emerson believed in Evolution—yes, but not as Darwin believed in it. Evolution was not to Emerson what it was to Darwin — the gradual transition of one form, or species, into another by natural generation, and under no rational principle—under no principle at all but accident. The evolution of Emerson was substantially the same as the evolution of Aristotle, or Hegel. He perceived that Nature was a "system of grades," rising up from "mechanic" to "organic," and so on, through lower and higher forms of animal life, to man; but it never occurred to him that these different grades were *naturally generated from each other in time*. These grades were to him the various steps in the manifestation of the Divine Idea. "No falser libel could have speech than to name an Emerson with a Huxley or a Darwin." (*Appendix to the Categories*, p. 15.) "Emerson! who only valued ideas—who knew that the world was hung on ideas—that

no sensuous appearance in it but had an idea under it—an idea in the mind of God." (*Ibid.*, p. 41.)

Brief though it is, there is much in the Appendix that would be worth quoting did space permit. As Laurie wrote to the author, it shows all his "old vigour and strenuousness." Before leaving the subject of Emerson, however, it is thought fitting to quote, as bearing upon it, this sentence from a letter of Stirling's to Mr Snaith, written in Nov. 1901 :—

"I agree with you about Emerson and Carlyle. As you say, they 'were not very deep in philosophy' technically so-called. Both, however, had souls that just naturally in themselves, and supported by education generally, were really, in point of fact, deeply philosophic : they were both men of genius of the truest water."

During the last two or three years, Stirling had several sharp attacks of influenza, each of which, though he recovered from it, left him a little weaker and a little older than before. But he never complained of his weakness or infirmities—or, indeed, of anything else. In those last years, the impatience and vivacity of the *genus irritabile* dropped from him entirely. It seemed as if, as he neared eternity, he entered a region of eternal calm, peace, contentment. He was always calmly, gently cheerful.

On the occasion of his attacks of influenza, however, he showed that he still possessed the strong will which, nearly eighty years before, had carried the boy of eight along the unknown miles from Glasgow to Greenock. As soon as the fever was over, he would insist, in spite of the prohibitions of doctor and nurse, in dragging himself from bed, although he was so weak that, even with support on both sides, it was hardly possible to keep him from falling, even on the few steps between his bedroom and his study, where he would sink into his chair in a state of absolute collapse.

It is only a few years before the end that he writes (in Nov. 1905) to his friend Mr Snaith, "positively, so far as health goes, I am as well as ever I was—tongue, pulse, eating, sleeping, etc., etc. My friend Laurie wrote lately from the country asking after me as that 'young-old' man . . . I still walk round my garden of a morning; but one or other of my daughters *will* give her arm for my afternoon walk. It is my legs disappoint me. Not that they get tired on my walk; I miss my old nimbleness—I hate foot-stools, cats, pet-dogs, etc., as trials to steadiness—I quite appreciate catches for the hand, as, whether up or down, my own *double* stair rail."

A year or two later, even the morning walk round the garden had to be abandoned without the "daughter's arm"—one by one, the sails were being taken in as the vessel neared the harbour. It is a touching fact that Stirling's "best friend" may almost be said to have shared with him the last voyage. Though some eight years his junior, Laurie too was drawing near his end. For some two years or so he was more or less an invalid, being subject to violent heart attacks; and the two friends met but seldom. It was after an interval of some months, during which they had not seen each other, that they met—in Stirling's house—for the last time. There was a tender solemnity in the meeting (probably they both knew it would be their last); and Laurie seemed to set the seal upon their long friendship when, for the first—and last—time, he reverently pressed his lips to Stirling's brow.

On the following Xmas day (1908) they exchanged their wonted gifts; but not long afterwards both were taken ill. Stirling regained his usual health for a while, and his great interest, during the last two months of his life, was hearing the accounts of his friend's health. When, on March 3, 1909,

the news of that friend's death reached him, he wrote this tribute to his memory :—

"*We* know what he was : a man—a true man—open as the day, utterly incapable, almost even as it were in play, of anything but truth, truth. And entirely true was anything that he wrote—anything that he spoke. His writings went curiously home. I have heard individuals in his audience involuntarily say, half aloud, 'Ay, that is deep, and his own.'"

Little more than a fortnight later, he followed his "best friend" to the grave. It is an interesting coincidence, however, that the last letter he ever wrote (on March 12/09) was addressed to the last living link with his boyhood—Professor Campbell Fraser. As it is very short, it is given here in full :—

"Dear Professor Campbell Fraser,—I am very much obliged by your kind present of this remarkable little[1] volume. It is pretty well, concisely and happily in brief, a résumé of the whole of a philosophy lucidly put to the reader's intelligence. It recommends itself pointedly to me by ending in—by being all through, indeed—spiritualism as the true root of the universe, against the crass materialism and shallow irreligion of the present day.—I am very sincerely yours,

"J. H. Stirling."

Only a few days later he was pronounced to be suffering from pneumonia. This was on Wednesday at noon. On Friday, in the cold, unhappy hour before the grey dawn of that March morning (the 19th) his laboured breathing gradually became more gentle till it ceased altogether ; his eyes, which had kept constantly open during the illness, looking upwards, closed peacefully. With what those present felt to be a conscious, and purposeful act,

[1] *Berkeley and Spiritual Realism* in "Philosophies Ancient and Modern" series.

he laid himself backwards (the difficulty of breathing had necessitated an almost sitting position), and stretched himself to his full length. The look upon his face was more than peaceful—it was triumphant. The imprisoned soul had shaken off the shackles of the flesh, and knew itself free.

During those last days he had more than once been heard to murmur his wife's name, as if he saw her. Three days later (on March 22nd) he was laid beside her in Warriston Cemetery, Edinburgh—in the spot which he had himself chosen six years before.

Of the many tributes to his memory from earnest students who gladly owned their debt to the philosopher, only a very few can be quoted here. "He had a noble character, as well as a great intellect," one professor of philosophy writes, "and he exerted a lasting influence on many an eager student, who will bless him to-day for the light and help he gave in the higher thinking." His "splendid philosophical work," writes another, "will always be borne in grateful remembrance by us who were brought to see by his insight, and found inspiration in his enthusiasm. I cannot reckon how much I have learned from him and his writings." "I owe more to his work than to that of any other single author," is the opinion of a third; while a fourth states, "My admiration and affection for him have grown in depth and strength as I was privileged to watch his beautiful old age."

The above are some of the tributes of philosophical experts to the memory of the man whom they honoured as their master. The following are from men not specially philosophical. "Those who knew [him] will miss him, not only as a great philosopher, but even more as a Personality which inspired universal affection and respect."

"What a thing it is to leave behind one such a

record of great achievement, and such an enduring spiritual influence as [he] does." "He was a great man . . . but what I most venerate him for is his magnificent work in the cause of idealism. . . . I think it one of the great things in my life that I knew him." "He was the last of the Masters. There are many clever men left, but there is no Master now—with the mass and weight and reserve of power that characterize that rare class."

Lastly, this sentence from the author of *Mark Rutherford* expresses what we must all wish could be said of us when our time comes: "Few men—hardly one that I know—have done so thoroughly the work they were sent to do. He has gone to his deserved rest."

CONCLUSION

And now it only remains to indicate in a word, if it be possible, the nature of the service which Stirling has rendered—not to the student of philosophy (with him we are not here concerned), but to mankind in general. Referring to the remark of Mr Hale-White's with which the last chapter concluded, let us try to see what it was that Stirling was "sent to do."

The writer of a recent short notice of him[1] remarks: "He [Stirling] set himself at once to grapple with the difficulties, and to unfold the principles, of the Hegelian dialectic, and by his efforts introduced *an entirely new spirit into English philosophy*." What the writer here calls a "new spirit" is perhaps the same thing as has been frequently alluded to in the foregoing pages—the recognition, on Stirling's part, of the supreme importance of "patiently assimilating the Historic Pabulum." It was because he recognised this that, though with his remarkable originality he might have made an independent name for himself, he was content to take his place as the interpreter of another writer, resisting what he called the "impatience of vanity"—the natural ambition of genius to shine by its own light.

It is this—with all that it implies—which perhaps constitutes the most important lesson of Stirling's life. For it implies that Truth *is*, and that it is capable of attainment by thought—not the thought of a single individual, or even of a single generation (the "Absolute cannot be *hopped* to"), but by successive generations of thinkers carrying on the work of those who have gone

[1] *Encyclopædia Britannica* (latest edition).

before. It was not for nothing that the author of the *Secret* put on the title-page of his book this motto from his master, Hegel: "The Hidden Secret of the universe is powerless to resist the might of thought; it must unclose itself before it, revealing to sight and bringing to enjoyment its riches and its depths."

But it is not by guesses, by theories and conjectures, however clever and ingenious, that the Secret is to be reached. "There are those," Stirling remarks in *The Categories* (p. 157)—"there are those who, having curiosity to know and philosophize this world, just at once look away off, as it is said, *ins Blaue hinein*—into the Blue, *εἰς τὸν ὅλον οὐρανόν*—and start on their *Pasear*[1] just as they are"; but this is not the way of the true philosophers—the men who have taken their place in the Philosophic Succession, who, throughout the centuries of the world's history, amid the cries of the moment—the dust of mushroom "systems and creeds"—have been silently measuring, and digging, and laying the metal of, the great highway that is ultimately to lead to the goal.

"Historic Pabulum" is, of course, Stirling's own expression. What all thinking men and women have to do at present is doubtless to realize that there *is* a Historic Pabulum, and to learn precisely what it means. In such knowledge they will find stability, security, a foundation for all their thoughts and reasonings, a common meeting-place for all rational beings. They will no longer be tossed to and fro between the conflicting opinions of rival writers, equally authoritative because equally baseless, equally *subjective*, equally unconnected with the Philosophic Succession. They will no longer be at the mercy of every intellectual Pretender who thinks himself competent

[1] A word adopted from Bret Harte, meaning a slow walk, or promenade.

to spin a philosophy or a religion out of his own inside, as the spider spins its web; they will know that, in the realm of thought, there is a legitimate succession, that there are kings by Divine Right, not of physical, but of spiritual, descent—men who owe their place in the line of monarchs to their patient assimilation of the accumulated wisdom and learning of those who have gone before them.

When all this has been realized—when writers and thinkers and teachers have recognized the fact that it is not by squeezing the marrow out of their own bones that they can feed the hungry multitudes, but by first patiently assimilating the Historic Pabulum, and then giving it out in the form best suited to the needs of the time—an important stage in the advance of mankind will have been reached. What saving of time and thought and labour when each new worker, instead of digging a yard or two of a new road of his own that leads nowhither, will devote his strength to the carrying forward of the great high road! We are "heirs of all the ages"; but until we consent to assimilate the Historic Pabulum, we have not entered into possession of our inheritance. "The historical pabulum is the thing," Stirling writes to his friend Dr Ingleby in May 1870; "Mill & Co. are mushrooms in England for want of it. The interest to be settled is the form historical philosophy took when it passed into Germany. Not only do I know that students increase daily, and that all the knowing ones round me acknowledge that that is to be the thing 'presently'; but I never look into Hegel without being absolutely convinced of the absolute necessity of all those 'supreme generalizations' being made a common property."

In an earlier chapter of the present volume, an attempt was made to prove that what Stirling says in this letter, written forty-one years ago, is true

still—that the historic pabulum, as it is contained in the vessel of Hegel, has not yet been made "a common property," and that, until that pabulum has been assimilated, mankind will go spiritually hungry. Of course, when we speak of the "pabulum" here, we are not referring to the technicalities of the philosophy of Hegel (which belong only to the class-room and the student), but to what has been indicated in the foregoing pages—to the distinctions of Universal and Particular, of abstract and concrete, of subjectivity and objectivity, and all that they imply. These distinctions—and all that they imply—ought to be—will yet be—thoroughly realized by our teachers, preachers and legislators, and form the basis of our future systems of education, law and government.

"Man's *life* is in the crutch of the antithesis between universal and particular, for what lies in the hollow of that crutch is *thought* itself. Thought, in truth, is *nothing but* the very antithesis named. But, named as it may be, it is certainly to the *Spannung* between particular and universal that man owes at once his conscience and his generalization, or, what is the same thing, his religions, and philosophies, and arts, and sciences, and politics." (*Preface to Lectures on Philosophy of Law.*)

And it is Stirling, carrying on the work of Hegel, who has made this distinction explicit—a distinction which, once having grasped and made his own, the "individual soul finds itself on a new level, and with new powers." This applies, not to the student of philosophy alone, but to humanity in general; for philosophy is not mere idle speculation —it is, as Stirling says (in article in *Courant*, May 22, 1871), "the reduction of the whole of man's world to terms of thought, with theoretical light and practical guidance in all that concerns him as a rational animal."

Perhaps, however, it may be said—indeed, it has been said in the past—that Stirling has not

been "explicit," that he is no less obscure than Hegel, that he has not told the "Secret," but kept it. By such smart sayings did some who had not the intellectual patience and grip to grapple with the difficulties presented to them in the *Secret* console their wounded vanity and restore their self-satisfaction. Many readers, however, have long passed beyond this stage; and many more will yet pass it. A writer in the *Aberdeen Free Press* in 1897 says with regard to the *Secret*:—

"The new terminology, the strange point of view, the reversal of the judgments of apparent common-sense, all tended to bewilder and confuse. We had as great a struggle to win the secret of Stirling as he had to win the secret of Hegel. It was an open secret, after all, when one obtained the keys. And now, after the lapse of years we read the book *and find it luminous*."

In those words there is the fulfilment well-nigh of the prophecy of Stirling himself, when, nearly thirty years earlier (in 1869), he wrote to Dr Ingleby: "What you say of the S. of H. [*Secret of Hegel*] is quite true now—all is so new, strange, and (being unfamiliar) uncouth. The time will come when any student will read it in a week."

In spite, however, of the progress in the comprehension of Hegel which has undoubtedly been made in the last half-century, the substance of Hegelianism (in which, as Stirling believed, lies the remedy for the unrest and discontent, the vanity and egotism of the present day) has not yet become the common property of humanity. "No man is final" —not even Hegel—but, according to Stirling, the German philosopher has not yet been thoroughly exploited, even by himself, and it is still with Hegel that the next generation of thinkers must begin.

"Only the Greeks and the Germans, to say so, are *categorically* educated; and, as just referred to, Hegel of all mankind is the most so. His categories, and as they are, constitute at this moment the most complete body of

metaphysic—philosophy—that exists; but it by no means follows that, just as they are, they are final. The secret of the dialectic that deduces them has been given: *there are those coming who, on it or with it, will operate to constructions, combinations, configurations, that are beyond prophecy. It is for Philosophy itself to concentrate itself hither.*" (*The Categories*, p. 158.)

This, almost the last word of a man who had devoted a lifetime to the subject of which he is speaking, is surely impressive enough; but more impressive still, perhaps, are the following sentences from *Schopenhauer in Relation to Kant*, with which this Life of its author shall conclude:—

"No man but Hegel in this universe has produced, for this universe, *what may prove the key*—terms of explanation that at length come up to need. . . . If the key has been found for the casket of Hegel, and its contents described, it is quite certain that the public has never yet seriously set itself to apply this key, or examine these contents. Something to stimulate or assist seems still to be wanting. Much, of course, lies in the very temper of the time. *It is out of the materials of that casket, however, that we are to build the bridge, which, leaving the episode behind, leads to the long epic of the race.* Hegel's act is, probably, AS THE OPENING OF THE FINAL SEAL INTO THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF MAN."

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