

## CHAPTER X

1861-1865

Stirling's Home in Edinburgh—His Work and Recreations—  
Publication of the *Secret of Hegel*—Its Reception—Opinions  
of Erdmann, Green, Emerson, Carlyle

AFTER about a year spent in temporary furnished lodgings, Stirling and his wife succeeded in finding a house to suit their wants. Situated about half-way between Edinburgh and the sea-shore at Portobello, it offered the advantages of moderate rent, an open space for the children to play in, proximity to the sea and beach, and above all, quiet and freedom from disturbance for the philosopher, who had still before him four of those nine years of intense toil and mental strain that preceded the appearance of his *magnum opus*. By a curious coincidence, the house in which Stirling spent eleven years of his life, and the *Secret of Hegel* saw the light, was the same, it appears, in which, some five years earlier, the well-known writer, Hugh Miller, had lived. It was pleasantly situated, its front windows commanding a wide view of the sea, while those in the back of the house looked towards Arthur's Seat.

It was in a small back room on the upper storey (spoken of by the family, in awed tones, as "the Study") that Stirling passed through his final struggle with the adamant Hegel, out of which he issued triumphantly with the *Secret* in his hand. Within the four walls of that little room by far the greater part of Stirling's day was spent—at least, during the four years before the publication of his first book. Society entered but little into

his life or that of his wife, for they had, during those early years, few acquaintances in Edinburgh, and almost his only recreation, after hours of mental toil, was a "constitutional" walk by the sea-side at Portobello, or round the Queen's Drive at Arthur's Seat, a romp in the dining-room with his children, or an occasional talk with his friend George Cupples (who, however, had left the neighbourhood before the appearance of the *Secret*).

The shadow of those years of toil fell, to some extent, on Mrs Stirling, who, naturally of a cheerful, social disposition, was thrown almost entirely on her own society, and forced to repress the boisterous spirits of her children, when they threatened to become too noisy, with a "Hush! You mustn't disturb your father." Like Desdemona, however, Mrs Stirling was "subdued to the quality of her lord"; but the elder children were sometimes known to revenge themselves against the cause of the restrictions placed on their liberty of action by execrating "that horrid book," though no doubt the grievances of the morning were forgotten in the evening, when the philosopher would issue from his *sanctum* to play with his little ones, crawling on hands and knees as a "dog" or a "wolf" to amuse them, telling them stories, or giving them "rides" on his shoulders.

While his leisure moments were occupied with such innocent, if trivial, play, Stirling was, during his hours of work, pressing on with his book, which was now drawing near completion. From a scrap of paper, enclosed by way of postscript in a letter to Cupples, dated Feb. 6, 1865, we learn what was the length of time occupied in the actual writing of the book. "I add a word," it runs, "just about time of composition of which you speak. Exactly two years ago, I began II.,<sup>1</sup> translating *currente*

<sup>1</sup> Vol. II. of first edition of the *Secret*, which was published in two volumes.

*calamo* and without copying. I then wrote out the 'Struggle' from notes according to time, without altering them, but occasionally rejecting and burning. The commentaries were written also, for the most part, without copying. All that was done before Xmas of same year, or in ten months. . . . Preface, 'Commentators,' and Conclusion were written in less than four months."

We see from this that the writing of the book was begun in February 1863, and occupied just one year and two months. Those who know the book will be able to understand how close must have been the application of the writer to his task, in order to enable him to complete those two large volumes in the time specified. But the hardest part of his work was over before the first word of the book was written. In a previous chapter, something has already been said of the difficulties—insurmountable almost, it seemed at first—which he encountered when he came to the study of Hegel, of the years which he had to spend in the "patient assimilation of the Historic Pabulum," and of how, in his attempt to understand Hegel, he found himself compelled to institute "a systematic study of the entire subject" of German Philosophy from its commencement—to make himself at home with the philosophies of Hume, Fichte, Schelling, and especially of Kant. And after that—after he had satisfied himself as to Hegel's place in the Philosophic Succession—after he had realized fully his starting-point—there still remained the difficulty of understanding Hegel's language, though it consisted generally of common words in common use. "With the others—with Kant, with Fichte, with Schelling—there was a universally intelligible speech. But, Hegel!—Hegel had changed all that. The ball he flung down to us showed no clue; the principles that underlay the winding of it were undiscoverable; and what professed to be the explication was a tongue un-

known ; not the less unknown, indeed, but the more exasperating, that it was couched, for the most part, in the oldest and commonest of terms." For, to quote again a sentence already quoted, in the use of those common words "there lay a meaning *depending on some general system of thought, and intelligible consequently only to the initiated.*"

Here, then, was the puzzle with which the would-be interpreter of Hegel had found himself confronted at the outset—how to enter the temple by a locked door, the only key to open which was within the temple itself! The only means by which to reach comprehension of the Hegelian system was through the language of Hegel, and that was intelligible only to those initiated in the system. How was one to become initiated? One of the interesting features of the *Secret* is the way in which we are permitted to see the steps by which the writer himself arrived at a full understanding of the system of Hegel. The "Struggle to Hegel," which occupies more than half of the first volume of the original edition, is valuable not only as an exposition of the subject with which it deals, but also biographically and psychologically. The writer permits the reader to follow him through the actual process of his groping towards the light of comprehension, to catch with him the first faint gleam of dawn, and to watch it brightening and broadening into day. As Stirling himself says in a letter written to George Cupples shortly after the publication of the book (on Feb. 2, 1865), "*all is dipped in the blood of an original experience, and possibly of an original thought.*"

Writing four years later (March 1, 1869) to Dr Ingleby, he explains the intention of the form of the book. "I am glad you do get on with Hegel in some way, and quite understand all your feelings. You will find I give specimens of like moods in my own experience, in which Hegel only shows as



a grinning impostor. Hegel, for all that, is the completer and closer of the Kantian philosophy, and the greatest abstract thinker that ever lived, with the exception, perhaps, of Aristotle alone, who very much excelled Hegel, at least in compass and fertility. What I propose by my book is this:—I suppose a student to have been reading for months or years those sections of the Logic of Hegel, which I translate, and to have understood nothing—I propose, in short, to make this student understand what the mooned madness is, whence it comes, how it is brought about, and to what end it tends. Now, I conceive I have done all that, but all that will not be realized without great patience and labour. General statements will never convey Hegel—a sufficiently large cantle of his detail must first of all be minutely and accurately understood, and then snatches made to the whole; for it is only from some perception of the whole that anything like satisfaction will at last come. So far as necessity is concerned, I conceive one paragraph in my letter on Flint<sup>1</sup> to carry all up to the last and lucidest point. I might say the same for the note I have on Hegel in the *Schwegler*. Yet I find from you and others that these generalizations wholly fail—there is nothing for it, then, but to get a sufficient clutch of the particular and particulars.”

Though the *Secret* is professedly only an exposition, originality is the quality which to the general reader appears most conspicuous in its pages. “*Sui generis*,” “unique in the whole course of English literature,” “colossal,” were some of the epithets applied to the style of the book soon after its publication. After quoting, in a letter to Cupples, some of the remarks made about his style, Stirling says naïvely: “Now to me all that is unintelligible—I cannot for the life of me discern that *race* that is spoken of.” His style, in fact, was so native,

<sup>1</sup> In *Courant* newspaper, Dec. 1868.

spontaneous, and at the same time so familiar to himself that it seemed to him impossible that it should be new and original to others.

Even the form of the book was new and uncommon. It was issued in two volumes, one containing the "Struggle to Hegel," and the translation of part of Hegel's work, while the second contained an interpretation of that translation, and a Conclusion, the object being that the reader, while engaged with the "translation," could have the "interpretation" open before him for reference. In the Preliminary Notice to the first edition, the author suggests that a reader should begin his study of the book by reading, or attempting to read (!) the Translation of "Quality." The various stages in the "Struggle," he remarks—perhaps somewhat grimly!—"will be fully intelligible only to him who endeavours to advance as far as 'Limit,' either in the translation, or in Hegel's own Logic."

But if the form of the book, and the style of the writing, appeared strange to those who approached the *Secret* for the first time, what of the *matter*—what of the claims which the author makes for the system expounded? To a letter of Stirling's, dated June 22, 1864, there is appended a postscript, which, though humorous in form, may be taken as giving a fair statement of all that the Hegelian system claims to explain, while at the same time showing the startling effect of such a statement on the uninitiated. "I cannot help adding," Stirling writes, "that I put the Dr<sup>r</sup> quite in a panic about my wits the other day by telling him, when he remarked supposingly that Hegel was explanation and not genesis, that it must really be looked on as genetic—H.'s work, that is—that no position could be put which speculative philosophy could not answer, as, for instance, why was there a God—anything at all—how did God make

<sup>1</sup> Dr Jacob Hunter, a retired doctor, and a common acquaintance of Stirling's and Cupples's.

Himself—how did it occur to God to make the creation—and how was that accomplished!!! The Dr parted with me just then—I have not seen him since—I really believe he thought my brain turned at last!”

Whatever the “doctor” might think, when Stirling made the above somewhat startling statement, he was claiming no more for Hegel’s work than Hegel himself claims for it, only the claim is expressed here, not as Hegel himself expresses it, in *Begriffe*, but in *Vorstellungen*. It may be remembered that, in an early chapter, attention was called to the distinction—a most important one with Hegel and Stirling—between *Vorstellung* and *Begriff*—between “a symbol, a metaphor, as it were, an externalization of thought” and a pure notion—“thought proper.” The poet expresses himself in *Vorstellungen*—figurative conceptions, pictures; the philosopher deals with *Begriffe*—pure thought. The ordinary man thinks in pictures—not in the new, original pictures of the poet, but in crude figures, obscured and distorted by error and ignorance and prejudice, so that the truth they express is but very dimly revealed. Then comes the critic, the *Aufklärer*, as Stirling would call him, the man of mere *abstract* understanding, and mocks at those crude images of the unenlightened, *taking them for all*—not seeing the truth that is behind them. Last comes the philosopher, and interprets them *in terms of thought*, expressing in pure notions (*Begriffe*) the truth which they so imperfectly reveal. So it is that philosophy—the philosophy, at least, of Hegel and Stirling—gives back to us our Faith, of which the *Aufklärung* would have robbed us—gives it back to us in *Begriffe*, purified from the accretions of error and superstition which have gathered about them in the course of the ages.

In the sentence quoted, the words, “how did God make Himself,” and “make the creation,” are *Vorstellungen*. The God of Hegel is not the Big

Man of the nursery imagination, making the universe with His hands, as the child makes its mud-pies, or its sand-castles. "We cannot suppose God making the world like a mason."<sup>1</sup>

"God is spirit, and the life of spirit is thought. Creation, then, is thought also; it is the thought of God. God's thought of the Creation is evidently the *prius* of the creation; but with God, to think must be to create, for He can require no wood-carpentry or stone-masonry for this purpose; or even should we suppose Him to use such, they must represent thought, and be disposed on thought."<sup>2</sup>

In Chapter VIII. it was said that the proper business of all thinking men, whether scientific or philosophical, is the search for *principles*—for uniformities in the diversity of individual objects, for the Universal element in the Particular. Indeed the power of apprehending principles, Universals, is what specially distinguishes man from the lower animals. "They [the lower animals] possess but *Vorstellung*, not *Denken*," Stirling says in a letter written in 1869; "they only feel singles, they know no universals." The Law of Gravitation is, as it were, the Universal of matter—it is the uniformity exhibited by all material objects amid their endless diversity. The moon revolving in her pale, cold splendour round the earth; the river rushing from its source to the sea; the withered leaf fluttering from its parent stem to the ground—these, unlike perhaps in all else, are alike in exhibiting the influence of gravitation. Of each, the answer to the Why—Why does the moon revolve round the earth? Why does the river flow to the sea? Why does the leaf flutter to the ground?—is the same.

But the law of gravitation cannot explain *all that is*. Wide though it be in its application, it cannot embrace everything. It does not apply, for instance, to the realm of Spirit—to the thoughts, feelings,

<sup>1</sup> The *Secret of Hegel*, p. 54, 2nd edition.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.



actions, of rational beings. Yet this realm, no less than the material world, has its laws, its uniformities, its *principles*—as Socrates tried to show when, under the teaching of the Sophists, the human world had become a formless chaos of subjective (individual) opinions and tastes; or as Kant set himself to prove when Hume had reduced all our knowledge—even our very selves—to a bundle of sensations. The coroner and jury sitting on the dead body found by the wayside, the physician examining his patient, the chemist amid his retorts in the laboratory, Robinson Crusoe gazing at the footsteps in the sand, the housewife puzzling over the broken fragments of her precious ornament, the cook reflectively tasting the spoiled dish, however unlike in occupations, pursuits, or character, are alike in their obedience to a law, which is of as universal application in the realm of thought as the law of gravitation in the material universe. Each—coroner, cook, housewife and the rest—is seeking a *cause* for the phenomenon before him, or her—for the death of the man, the breaking of the china, the spoiling of the dish, etc.—each is unconsciously obeying the law of causality, every change must have a cause. *Quot homines tot sententiæ* is true with regard to our tastes and opinions, our likes and dislikes—to all that is *subjective* in us (*i.e.* peculiar to us as individuals). Though it is true, however, that no two people are entirely alike in their tastes and opinions, it is equally true that, amid all the diversity of subjective likes and dislikes, behind the caprice of individual fads and fancies, there are discoverable *uniformities* in all intelligences—laws which all thinking beings obey. Was there ever a man who, seeing a scratch on his hand, did not ask himself what had caused it, or smelling the odour of singeing wool, did not look to see what was burning?

It was the door of Causality, so to speak, that gave entrance into the realm of modern constructive

philosophy ; it was through that door that Kant passed into his system—a system of first principles, or Categories, as he called them—universal laws of thought—of which Causality is one. Kant, however, did not attempt to deduce his Categories, or first principles, from a single principle. He left them, as it were, side by side, inarticulated, “a mere catalogue.” The special work of Hegel was to complete and articulate this “catalogue” of categories, or principles of thought, by finding a *first* principle, out of which the others could be seen to grow. Moreover, Kant’s system of categories was applied only to *human* thought ; Hegel saw in the categories, in the principles of thought, not merely part of the intellectual furniture of human beings, but “the universal principles of reason, which constitute the diamond net into the invisible meshes of which the material universe concretes itself.” In so far as man is an Intelligence, he is an inlet to the universal reason, the laws of which he must obey ; but these laws, or principles, are not the *property* of man—they are not merely *in him*—they are the basis and framework of the entire universe.

“It is quite certain that thought is as independently [of man] present in the universe as electricity. The world is but a *congeries of means to ends, and every example of such involves a thought*. The wing that beats the air is a thought ; an eye that sees, a sense that feels, an articulation that moves, a pipe that runs, a scale that protects—all these, and myriads such—and they are thoughts—are as independent in nature as electricity.”<sup>1</sup>

In the human world, we find thought expressing itself in a thousand ways, visible and invisible—in stone and wood and iron, in colours and sounds, in laws and institutions. It is the thought of the constructor that makes the iron vessel float upon the water ; it is the thought of the general that wins the battle. In all these cases, too, the thought

<sup>1</sup> P. 130, 2nd edition of the *Secret*. The italics are ours.

*precedes the expression, the materialization*, as well as giving to the latter its value. Just as the human world, with its roads and cultivated fields, its streets and buildings, its machines and engines, its pictures and statuary, its colleges and hospitals, its libraries and orchestras, is the expression of the thought of man, so the vast universe, with its numberless worlds obedient to one law, and its countless forms of life, is the expression of the thought of God ; and just as in every case where human thought has expressed itself, the *conception* preceded the embodiment—as, for instance, the *plan* preceded the building, or the battle—so the thought of God must have preceded the creation of the universe. Thought is, in fact, necessarily the *prius* of a universe which is permeated, penetrated, by thought—which is built up on thought. And that the universe we know is built up on thought is proved every day by the discovery of new laws of nature. It is because the universe is permeated by thought that man can hope to understand it, to interpret it, by the light of reason; were it not *intelligible*, the work of the scientist — of the astronomer, the chemist, the geologist—would be idle.

“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 these thoughts. In them, then, we know the thoughts of God, and, so far, God Himself.”<sup>1</sup>

What has been said above is not to be taken as an attempt to summarize the philosophy of Hegel. All that is attempted here is to explain the sentence quoted from Stirling’s letter; and this could be done only by giving a suggestion of the line which Hegel’s thought follows, or, rather, perhaps, of the point from which it starts. The *Secret* is full of

<sup>1</sup> *Secret of Hegel*, p. 85, 2nd edition.

warnings not to imagine we have grasped the system of Hegel as soon as we have caught a glimpse of something intelligible. "It is necessary," we are told, "to know a Hegel close." The Hegelian system, like the Absolute, "cannot be *hopped* to by means of some cabalistic hocus-pocus. It must be worked up to."

Stirling has no faith in short-cuts—at any rate to the comprehension of any profound system of philosophy—and he has a wholesome objection to "general ideas" and "summaries," when these are made to take the place of a thorough, step-by-step study of any subject. Summaries are all very well in their place, "as useful synopses and reminders to those who have already mastered the whole subject in the entirety of its details"; but "when used independently," they "only propagatate ignorance." He regards "this haste of ours nowadays" to clutch at what is, after all, only the appearance of comprehensive knowledge as "productive of most intolerable evils."

"A large class say, we do not want to go into the bottom of these things, we only want a general idea of them, we only want to be *well-informed people*. This does not appear unreasonable on the whole, and there are departments of knowledge where general ideas can be given, and where these ideas can be used very legitimately in conversation. But such general ideas are entirely impracticable as regards the modern philosophical *systems*. No general idea can convey these; they must be swallowed in whole and in every part—intellectually swallowed. . . . To say Kant's is the Transcendental or Critical Idealism; Fichte's the Subjective Idealism; Schelling's the Objective Idealism; and Hegel's the Absolute Idealism: this is as nearly as possible to say nothing! And yet people knowing this much and no more will converse, and discourse, and perorate, and decide conclusively upon the whole subject."<sup>1</sup>

It was on the 5th of January 1865 that the

<sup>1</sup> *Secret of Hegel*, p. 83, 2nd edition.



result of Stirling's years of labour saw the light. The correction of the proofs of the book he had found a very tedious and troublesome piece of work. Writing to his friend Cupples on the 29th of August 1864, he says: "I am quite sick for a run off to the Clyde, but cannot go in consequence of Proofs, Proofs, Proofs, Proofs. First vol. 465 pages in length, and introduction not yet printed, perhaps 85 more. Second vol. estimated to run to 612 pages, three or four sheets printed. I have had great difficulty with the Hegelian parts special—had to compare with MS.—then with original—then to read over by themselves—the Proofs I mean. It has been horrible. I have been from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. . . . The *jaloused* consternation of the printer here and there has amused me mightily." He adds that the miscellaneousness of the book, "or its disjectedness, rightly viewed, will be found to be just that of the ladder, or, better, of the stepping-stones, wanted."

Almost immediately on its appearance, the book met with an amount of success very remarkable for a work of such solidity, on a subject so obscure and profound. It was hailed by some of the more serious organs of the Press as "one of the most remarkable works on philosophy that has been seen for years," as a "monument of labour, erudition, perseverance, and thought," and as marking "a period in philosophical transactions," while its author was declared to be "a man not merely of large and thorough philosophical culture, but of strong, rugged, original powers of mind . . . a sterling, fearless love of truth; and the faith of a religious devotee in the possibilities of the Hegelian philosophy." "The critic, the historian, the sociologist, the physiologist, the student of natural science," it was said by one reviewer, "will find ideas in exploring after the secret of Hegel that will be useful in arresting other secrets."

What was even more remarkable than the favourable character of the reviews was the fact that the book, in spite of its two solid volumes, and its high price, had, for a work on philosophy by an unknown writer, an unusually large and rapid sale. Writing some two months after the appearance of the book, Stirling says: "Last Monday, a Mr Collyns Simon, a great Berkeleian, author of *Universal Immaterialism*, surprised me by a call to thank me, etc., etc., for my book. He said he met it everywhere in Edgh.—'they all had it'—. . . . Same day I met Dr Carlyle,<sup>1</sup> who told me he too found the book everywhere . . . that it was getting into the libraries, that there was a pressure on Edmonston & Douglas,<sup>2</sup> who had been obliged to get several copies, that he thought it must have sold 3 or 4 hundred copies, etc., etc."

A fortnight later he quotes, writing to Cupples, the following sentence from the letter of an Edinburgh correspondent: "It has given me great pleasure to hear from a friend of mine here that a stranger, who was here recently from London, had been saying that something like 500 copies of Mr Stirling's work on Hegel had been sold the first day. I sincerely hope this is true. He seemed to have his information from your publishers."

Stirling had the wisdom to receive this information without too much faith. "When I get my account in," he writes, "I only hope it will tally!" Of course, his incredulity was justified when the account did come in; but although it proved that the statement about the 500 copies was a gross exaggeration, still the actual number of copies sold was considerable for a book of the nature of the *Secret* by an unknown author. The author himself had no expectation that the book would prove

<sup>1</sup> Dr John Carlyle, brother of Thomas Carlyle.

<sup>2</sup> A firm of Edinburgh publishers, and owners of a fashionable circulating library.

successful from a pecuniary point of view. "For my part," he writes, "I do not think it will ever sell, but that it may bring notoriety—a notoriety of no value."

In these last words we seem to hear the voice of the philosopher, who knew well the worthlessness of the celebrity *of the moment*. Many of those who were reading, and talking about, the book, he was well aware, had been attracted to it by its appearance of novelty and strangeness, by the talk of others, or by expectations (which were bound to be disappointed) of having the secret of the universe laid bare before their eyes, as one exposes a juggler's tricks. When those people found that the gold did not reveal itself at the first scratch on the surface of the soil, but that they were required to labour with spade and pick-axe for months, perhaps for years, to reach it, they would, Stirling knew, conclude that there was no gold there, and go elsewhere to seek it.

If, however, the notoriety of the passing hour had no value in the eyes of the philosopher, he found great satisfaction in the thought of having accomplished what he regarded as important, and even necessary, work, in the attempt to accomplish which several able and gifted men had failed. "It is indeed something," he writes, "to have done what has not been done in England, France, or Germany, and by such men as Coleridge, De Quincey, Hamilton, Ferrier, to say nothing of Goethe and other Germans. The wonder is, as you will see, Schelling, however, who, with every advantage possible, studied Hegel for fifty years and failed."

It was also a source of deep gratification to him that his work was appreciated by those best able to judge, though, of course, he was not aware of this fact, in every case, until a considerable time after the publication of the *Secret*. George Cupples, for whose critical and literary faculty Stirling had the highest respect, wrote: "The whole work is in my

view a masterpiece—a *great* book. . . . The ease and fulness of philosophical expression in it—the power and wealth of illustration, comparison, assimilation, analogy, metaphor, literary filling out and accommodation and finish—are to my mind unique. The labour, the patience—the instinct for truth, and for metaphysical tracks and trails—the constant connection with life—these things continually rouse my admiration and delight.” The American seer, Emerson, said of the book—though this was not till more than a year after its publication—“I have never seen any modern British book which appears to me to show such competence to analyse the most abstruse problems of the science, and, much more, such singular vigour and breadth of view in treating the matter in relation to literature and humanity. It exhibits a general power of dealing with the subject, which, I think, must compel the attention of readers in proportion to their strength and subtlety.” Carlyle, the Master, Teacher, Prophet of Stirling’s earlier years, expressed the conviction that the author of the *Secret* was “the one man in Britain capable of bringing Metaphysical Philosophy, in the ultimate, German or European, and highest actual form of it, distinctly home to the understanding of British men.” The German Erdmann, who had sat at Hegel’s feet, and was himself the author of several philosophical works, wrote to Stirling as to one more deep in his knowledge of Hegelian philosophy than himself. T. H. Green, Fellow of Balliol College, and leader of the group of so-called “Little Hegelians” in England, expressed the opinion that the *Secret* “not only contrasts with everything else that has been published in England about it [the Hegelian philosophy] as sense with nonsense, but that it is such a true and thorough exposition of the development of German philosophy as could have been put forth by no one not possessed of the highest speculative ability, and of that ‘tran-



scendent faculty of taking pains' which is said to constitute genius."

Like Stirling, Green had a profound conviction of the importance of a thorough knowledge of German philosophy. According to him, without such knowledge, "a writer is outside the main stream of European thought." In expressing this opinion, he was, of course, saying, less impressively, what Stirling has already been quoted as saying — that the German philosophers, "negatively or affirmatively, required to be understood *before an advance was possible for us.*"

These last words suggest what was the source of the deepest satisfaction to Stirling on the completion of his great work. It was not the fact that he had almost at once become a celebrity; it was not the thought that he had succeeded in doing what many able men had failed to accomplish, nor even that he had gained the respect and admiration of such men as Erdmann, Emerson, and Carlyle. It was the knowledge that he had, as he would have said himself, assimilated the *Historic Pabulum*—that he had succeeded in absorbing and making his own what he believed to be the intellectual and spiritual food appointed for the nourishment of the age, without which Man could not grow to his full stature. All the faults and weaknesses of the time he held to be due to "neglect of the *Pabulum*"—to the fact that Europe had "continued to nourish itself from the vessel of Hume, notwithstanding that the *Historic Pabulum* has long since abandoned it for another and others." Replying to an objection brought against the *Secret* that it contained "political references," he writes:—

"What political references? There are none such *as such*—only allusions to first principles. I want just a general picture to emerge of the *Aufklärung*—and I want it to be seen that all results from neglect of the *Historic Pabulum*. There is," he concludes impressively, "*a one pabulum.*"

## CHAPTER XI

1865-1867

Literary Friends—Dr Carlyle—Visit from Thomas Carlyle—Holiday in France—Sir Evan Mackenzie—Publication of *Analysis of Sir W. Hamilton*—Candidature for Chair in Glasgow University—Letter from Carlyle—From Emerson—Emerson and the *Secret*—Pecuniary Losses—Degree of LL.D., Edin., conferred on Stirling—Publication of his *Schwegler*—Note on the *Sophists*—*Subjectivity* and *Objectivity*—Publication of Articles in *Macmillan* and the *Fortnightly*—Letter from Carlyle—Emerson's Appreciation of *Schwegler*

BESIDES other more important results mentioned in last chapter, the publication of the *Secret* brought its author the acquaintanceship of many interesting people. Within a few months after the appearance of the book, several of the representatives of learning in Edinburgh had called on Stirling, amongst others, Professor Campbell Fraser, who occupies with respect to the Irish philosopher, Berkeley, a position similar to that which Stirling holds with regard to Hegel. In a letter, dated June 1, 1865, there occurs this allusion to the meeting of the two: "Professor Fraser called on me, and I since on him. I find him deep-thinking."

A month or two earlier, there is mention of a call, or calls, from Dr John Carlyle, brother of the Chelsea sage. "As in duty bound," Stirling writes, "I dropped my pasteboard on Dr Carlyle in return for his, so doubly courteous. Last night he came down, smoked a pipe, and took a 2nd moderate tumbler with me. He was vastly pleasant, cordial, easy. . . . We talked, of course, *de omnibus rebus et quibusdam aliis*. . . . I had a good many anecdotes from him of Wilson, De Quincey, John Stuart Mill,

Froude, etc. A good deal about his brother. He says he only got £40 out of his *Dante*, and, I think, 50 copies."

Later (in August of the same year) Carlyle himself paid a visit to Edinburgh, and, along with his brother, called on Stirling, who, in a letter to George Cupples, gives the following short account of the meeting with his old master: "The great author has decidedly aged; but he still seems pretty strong. He talked very hearty and cheery—a long time to my wife. We had the 'age,' and quite a lot of fellows through hands: my analyses always seemed to hit his own thought. . . . T. C. and the Dr were going to bathe at Portobello, whither I accompanied them. They forgot their pipe-cases at my house, and I had to send William<sup>†</sup> up with them. He was asked in, talked with, and in going away, T. C. said to him, 'Tell your papa I am very glad I called on him.'"

Early in the year, after the completion of his work, and the appearance of the *Secret*, Stirling had allowed himself a brief holiday in France, where he paid a short visit to his friend of St Servan days, Sir Evan Mackenzie. Sir Evan, who had some literary tastes, had been attracted to Stirling, as the weaker and less gifted man often is by one of original intellect and fearless independence of character, and had formed a warm friendship for him. After meeting Stirling, he had discarded the band of crape which he had worn for some time on his sleeve in mourning for his friend, Major Nolan, whose tragic death, while attempting to avert the catastrophe of the fatal Charge of the Five Hundred, is so vividly described by Kinglake in his *History of the Crimean War*. The friendship, in one way at least, proved unfortunate for Stirling. Mackenzie, who, though he had succeeded to the family title, was not, at that time, in possession of the family

<sup>†</sup> Stirling's eldest son.

estate, had accepted the position of salaried manager of a wine company—the Beaujolais Wine Company—which afterwards failed, and had induced Stirling, who had as little “business” faculty as philosophers usually possess, to invest in it some £900, which of course was lost. Writing to Cupples on May 7, 1865, Stirling says: “The danger in which my £900 stands with the Beaujolais Coy. makes me think sourly of this other outlay. £1300 without return must tell on my big household.”

Within a year of the appearance of the *Secret*, Stirling’s next book, an analysis of the philosophy of Sir William Hamilton, was published (on October 25, 1865). Though it appeared after the *Secret*, the *Hamilton* was, as the author explains in the preface, really written some time before it. What he actually published, moreover, was only a *portion* of the analysis which he had planned and partly written. According to the plan, his examination of Hamilton’s philosophy consisted of *four parts*:—I. Analysis of Hamilton’s Theory of Perception; II. The philosophy of the *Conditioned*; III. Hamilton’s Logic; and IV., a general conclusion. Of the four parts, only the first was published—the rest remains still in MS., and more or less fragmentary. The reasons for the publication of Part I., and Part I. alone, are stated in the preface to be that “It (Part I.) will of itself, probably, suffice to justify, on the whole, the conclusions<sup>1</sup> spoken of as already before the public; and it is solely with a view to this justification that it is published. The other parts are, for the present, suppressed, in submission to the temper of the time, and in consideration of the intervention, on the same subject, and, as I understand, with similar results, of my more distinguished contemporary, Mr Mill. I am sensible at the same time,” the writer

<sup>1</sup> The allusion is to certain criticisms of Hamilton, which occur in the *Secret*, and gave offence to his friends and admirers.



adds, "that this partial publication is, in every point of view but the one indicated, unjust to myself."

The *Hamilton* is, of course, a work of infinitely less general importance than the *Secret*; but it affords an excellent example of Stirling's critical, or controversial, style. It is exhaustive, incisive, subtle, and supported at every step by abundant proof. As one critic of the time remarked of it, it deals "a blow to Sir W. Hamilton's doctrine of perception more ponderous than that dealt by Mr Mill; for it is a blow struck from a higher altitude, and directed by an eye that commands a wider range than Mr Mill's."

Some months after the publication of the *Hamilton*, an article by Stirling on the same subject, entitled, "Was Sir William Hamilton a Berkeleian?" appeared in the *Fortnightly Review*. It is not necessary to enter here into a discussion of the question dealt with both in the book and in the article—namely, Hamilton's "Theory of Perception"—but it seems worth while to quote the following paragraph from the article, as giving Stirling's general summary of the course of philosophy in Britain since Hume reduced all knowledge to a bundle of sensations:—

"Let us bring home the lesson here. From Hume in consequence of his queries in the *Treatise of Human Nature*, there have descended two lines of thinkers in Great Britain; one irenical, culminating in Mr Mill; one polemical, culminating in—shall we say?—Sir William Hamilton. But of both lines the efforts have been *nil*; both return exhausted to the queries of the *Treatise of Human Nature*; and as Hume left Philosophy in Great Britain, so in Great Britain Philosophy remains."

In short, according to Stirling's opinion, the Philosophic Succession, as far as Great Britain was concerned, had ended with Hume, after whom philosophic thought in that country had wandered

into by-paths, which ended in *impasses*. It was in Germany that the great Scottish philosopher found his true successors; it was a German who took the torch from his hand, and carried it along the great highway.

One would have thought that, with two philosophical works published in the same year, not to mention the article which appeared in the *Fortnightly* some months later, Stirling must have been sufficiently well occupied; but in February 1866 we find him writing: "Am doing nothing, and can't find anything to do—think I shall off to Buenos Ayres to grow sheep's fleeces for my children."

Two months later, however, he writes that he is "busy," having found at least temporary occupation in his candidature for the Chair of Moral Philosophy in Glasgow University. In his candidature he had some very strong support, including that of Thomas Carlyle, who gave him an excellent testimonial, which was accompanied by the following friendly letter:—

"SCOTSBRIG, 18 April 1866.

"DEAR SIR,—I have written you a small testimonial; and shall be very glad if it can help you,—it or anything else in my power; but there is nothing else I can think of.

"Professor Lushington is a frank, loyal kind of man: if you don't know him, my brother does, and will present you to him, which might have good effects, or tend that way. Did you controvert John Mill, or take his side, in your late pamphlet?<sup>1</sup> I fear, the former. John Mill is grown very whimsical latterly (I hear); but you might write to him, and perhaps his generosity would prompt him

<sup>1</sup> Stirling had published no "pamphlet" in 1866. The allusion can only be to the *Hamilton*.

favourably.—Professor Masson has come nearer the scene, and may now, also, have a word to say : he is a thoroughly kind-hearted man.

“On the whole, use your best diligence ; and succeed if possible. It will give me real pleasure to learn that you do ; it seems the career of all others fitted for you.  
T. CARLYLE.”

From Emerson, too, with whom he had previously had no correspondence, Stirling received a very strong testimonial, a sentence of which was quoted in last chapter. The testimonial was enclosed in the following cordial and appreciative letter :—

“CONCORD, MASSTS.  
8 May 1866.

“DEAR SIR,—I have this morning received a note from Mr G. S. Phillips of Chicago, in which he informs me that you are a candidate for a Chair in the University of Glasgow, that the election takes place this month, and that you would like to add a word from me to the testimonials offered on your part. I am delighted with both facts—the candidateship, and with the request with which you honour me, and, on the instant, have written the enclosed note, though in entire ignorance of the forms. If you choose to send it in, you will prefix the proper address.

“I have been so much indebted to your book, which your publishers were so good, or so kindly advised, as to send me, and which I carried with me on a long journey, that, I suppose, it would have been an honest gratitude to have written you long since some direct word. But I am a slow and interrupted reader, and have not yet done with the book. I am all the more gratified with this sudden occasion of coming for the moment into more direct intercourse with you.—With great regard,

“R. W. EMERSON.”

The "long journey" mentioned in this letter is probably the same as that referred to in the following extract from an article entitled "A Day with Emerson," which appeared in *Lippincott's Magazine* for November 1882:—

"Whether to divert me from attention to the track which I wished him to pursue, or to direct my attention to an author who has powerfully influenced philosophic thought, he [Emerson] went to his portmanteau and took out two stout octavo volumes, *The Secret of Hegel* by Stirling, with some remark concerning the value of the doctrines of this great German thinker. He confessed that he was studying the work on his travels, and that he supposed few men living had actually mastered the subject. He did not read to me a single sentence, nor refer to any particular part of it; but, with a volume in his hand, which he held in a sort of caressing way, and opened here and there as if it contained a treasure, kept on his rhythmic talk."

It would surely be impossible to imagine a stronger tribute to the value of Stirling's work than the fact that a man of Emerson's pre-eminence in learning and intellectual insight should find, in the contents of the "two stout octavo volumes," a sufficient recompense for the trouble of carrying them about with him on a long journey!

In spite of the fact that Stirling was the author of an epoch-making book, and that he had the support of the two writers whom it is perhaps not too much to call the most distinguished of their day, the Glasgow electors decided to appoint Mr Edward Caird, at that time Fellow of Merton College, Oxford, who, some fifteen years younger than Stirling, had not yet published anything of importance, though, later, he was the author of several well-known philosophical works.

The following letter, written by Stirling thirty-five years later to a correspondent to whom reference has already been made in an earlier chapter—the Rev. John Snaith—throws an interesting and character-



istic side-light on some of the circumstances connected with his candidature for the Glasgow Chair:—

“I am glad you are a little reconciled to ‘puir auld Scotland’ in my reference. I think I could reconcile you even more in that respect. For instance, when I called, as Candidate for a Chair, on the late ——— [one of the electors], I conversed with him a long time cosily by his fire, and being younger then, I thought I rather took him by my chat. At all events, when I rose to go, and we both stood by the fire, he said, ‘But, ah, Mr Stirling, you don’t ask me for my pledge.’ And I answered, ‘Oh, no, I should not think of that!’ Such a donkey as that could never get a Chair! Had I accepted his pledge, I am pretty sure, looking back on the electors, that I should have had a majority. My very supporters knew what a fool I was. They would say to each other, ‘You know what he is, he won’t canvass!’ And all in Edinburgh goes by canvassing—all in Scotland, I suppose: the whole hive is up when there is question of money to be got.

“There remains, then, only your complaint against the public for not knowing me; but you know Socrates himself complained he was poor from his service of the God! I suppose Herbert Spencer may make something by physics; but who will ever make anything by metaphysics, and especially such metaphysics as mine?”

In this case, as in that of Stirling’s early letter to Carlyle and his later comment on it, it is both interesting and instructive to see the criticism of age on (comparative) youth.

At the time, Stirling accepted his failure with equanimity. “I was not at all sanguine,” he wrote to Cupples, “and am not disappointed, though it would be a great relief to me to find a *quid pro quo* in reference to possible losses . . . at the hands of

the B.jolais Coy. . . . I have been bitten by the N.B. Railway to the tune of £250 a year. I cannot allow ourselves to eat up capital, so, if I cannot make it up by literature, I shall go to sea as a surgeon."

Fortunately, the improvement of the affairs of the railway company, which had been passing through a period of depression, made the taking of any such desperate step as that mentioned above unnecessary.

At the spring Graduation ceremonial of Edinburgh University in 1867, the degree of LL.D. was conferred on Stirling. "I am the only one this year," he writes,—“the only one in Mental Science since Mansel.” At the time the degree was conferred, he was busily occupied with his translation of Schwegler's *History of Philosophy*, which appeared in the autumn of the same year, and has remained ever since—for forty-three years—the favourite text-book for students of philosophy. The book is more than a mere translation, Stirling's Annotations, appended to the translation, having been said by experts to constitute the most valuable part of it. In the first edition, the annotations occupied a comparatively small space; but in successive editions, they were expanded, and ultimately their length was almost doubled.

Even in the first edition, however, there is to be found the long note on the Sophists, which Stirling believed to contain a summary of what is perhaps the most important outcome of philosophy. In beginning the note, he impressively calls the attention of the reader to its contents, “for it is here,” he asserts, “that we begin to get a clear view of *the* lesson of philosophy—the distinction, namely, between subjectivity and objectivity, and our consequent duty.”

In the course of the foregoing pages, allusion has been made, on several occasions, to this distinc-

tion ; but perhaps it may be well, for the benefit of any reader not familiar with it, to give here some explanation of the sense in which the words *subjective* and *objective*, *subjectivity* and *objectivity*, are used by Hegel and Stirling, for it is a sense substantially different from that in which the words are current in the works of British writers. In the common use of the words, *objective* is what belongs to the *object*, or the thing known, *subjective* is what pertains to the *subject*, or the person who knows. It is not with this meaning that they are used by Stirling and the German philosophers whom he followed.

In Chapter VIII. of this Memoir, it may be remembered, the position of the Greek Sophists was indicated in a sentence. To put it shortly, the main tenet of the school (if they can be said to form a school) was what Hegel and Stirling would call the *Principle of Subjectivity*, expressed by their founder in the dictum, "Man is the measure of all things." According to this principle, everything *is* just what it *appears* to each individual. Each individual is the measure of truth or falsity, of right or wrong, to himself. What is true or right for one individual, is true or right *for him*, but not necessarily for anyone else. There is nothing necessarily true for every intelligence — nothing necessarily right or wrong for every moral agent. The Sophists, in fact, denied the possibility of an *objective* (universal) standard of truth or morality.

Perhaps it will be seen from this statement in what sense Hegel uses the words *subjective* and *objective*. According to his usage, subjective is that which is *peculiar to the individual as an individual*—his personal opinions, tastes, idiosyncrasies, *bias*—while, on the other hand, that is objective which holds good *for every intelligence*. "Subjective truth is truth for this subject, *or* that subject. Objective truth is truth for this subject,

and that subject. Evidently, then, objective truth is independent of the subject *as* subject."

The distinction is similar to that which was expressed by Plato, and others of the Greek philosophers, in the words *opinion* (δόξα) and *true knowledge* (ἐπιστήμη). According to Plato, the whole business of life is the attainment of true knowledge, but the ordinary man is content to sit "in the sediments of the universe," and mistake the water over his head for the sky, knowing nothing of the blue heaven beyond, nor of the splendour of the sunlight undimmed by its passage through a denser medium. Here, the water through which the ordinary man is represented as seeing the light, corresponds to what Hegel would call his *subjectivity*—that which is peculiar to him as an individual. The white light of truth envelops the universe, but the individual minds through which it passes, like prisms in the path of the sunlight, bend and refract, and break it up into coloured rays, each seeing only *part* of the truth, and seeing it distorted by its own *subjectivity*. As, however, it is possible to obtain what scientists call *achromatism*—to restore the refracted sunbeam to whiteness—by passing it through a combination of prisms, so *objective* truth may be reached by finding what is true for this man *and* that man *and* every man. Examples of such truths—*objective* truths—are the following:—Every change must have a cause; two things which are equal to a third thing are equal to each other; the straight line is the shortest way between two points. Every intelligence yields to these principles an obedience as unhesitating as that which every particle of matter in the Universe yields to the law of gravitation.

In the sentence quoted from his Annotation to the "Sophists," Stirling remarks that there devolves on us a "duty" consequent on the distinction of subjectivity and objectivity. This duty is twofold:



in the world of thought, it involves the ridding ourselves of all intellectual bias, of all merely subjective opinions; in the practical world—in our daily life—it necessitates the subordination of subjective feeling, *self-will*, to objective Will—the Universal. In its application to *conduct*, this distinction of subjective and objective formed the favourite theme of Stirling's Sunday evening talks with his family. No words were more familiar to them than these two; and no duty was more often, or more urgently, impressed on them than the duty of subordinating their subjective self-will to the Universal.

Besides the *Schwegler*, there appeared, in the month of October 1867, two short articles from Stirling's pen—the one, in *Macmillan's Magazine*, entitled the *Symbolism of the Sublime*, being a translation of a portion of Hegel's *Æsthetic* with notes by the translator, while the other, *De Quincey and Coleridge upon Kant*, was an exposé of the falsity of the claims of the two British writers to a knowledge of the German philosopher.

With regard to the first of these articles, as it is only to be found in a back number—a very far back number!—of a magazine, it is perhaps permissible to quote a sentence from the note which heads the article, as it seems to afford a simple summary, in Stirling's words, of Hegel's general position:—

“Hegel's general object is best named, perhaps, when we say that he *sought thought everywhere*, with the resolution of demonstrating that this thought did not exist only unconnectedly here and there, as mere pleasing or surprising signs of intelligence, but that it *constituted a system*—a vast, organic, complete system—but still a system that referred itself to the unity of a single living pulse. With this general aim, he naturally found himself under an obligation to construe not only the present but the past. History became to him a very important portion of his problem, and he was compelled to philosophize it from various points of view. Of these religion was the most

important . . . he was led to present religion as a single subject gradually developing itself from Fetichism upwards, till the time was ripe and Revelation vouchsafed. The progress of art Hegel views as having been similarly conditioned—as having always constituted, indeed, but an accessory of religion. While man was yet absorbed in, and identified with, nature through the mere necessities of hunger, etc., art there could be none. Art could only begin when, in stepping back from nature, and looking at it on its own account as different from himself, man first felt wonder. Thenceforward the attempt would be to understand this different thing—that is, to reduce its difference into his own identity. But such attempt is necessarily accompanied by the desire to express.”

Of Stirling’s criticism of De Quincey and Coleridge in their relation to Kant, it is only necessary to say that it has been completely confirmed by subsequent advance in the knowledge of the German philosopher. Any student of philosophy nowadays who has even a superficial knowledge of the work of Kant is aware that the entire industry, the entire object, of that philosopher was *constructive*, yet this is how he is described by De Quincey:—

“He was called, by one who weighed him well, the *Alles-zermalmender*, the world-shattering Kant. He could destroy; his intellect was essentially destructive. He had no instincts of creation or restoration within his Apollyon mind . . . he exulted in the prospect of absolute and ultimate annihilation.”

It seems worth while to quote here the last sentence of Stirling’s essay—if for no other reason, at least because it is so characteristic of the writer.

“Our general lesson, then, is now obvious. To the genius-airs, and genius-flights, and genius-indulgences of De Quincey and Coleridge, we oppose as well the industry, the ingenuousness, and the modesty of Kant, as the silence, the self-restriction, and the iron toil of Hegel.”

Carlyle's opinion of the matter is expressed in the following letter to Stirling :—

“CHELSEA, 8 Oct. 1867.

“DEAR SIR,—Thanks for your attention in sending me the *Fortnightly*. I had already read your paper there with interest and entertainment, and dismissed my own No. on its further travels; but now am glad, for your sake, to look into the Quincey-Coleridge matter again.

“It is an able Paper, agreeable to read, and may have its uses with many. You have made it clear as noonday that neither De Quincey nor Coleridge had read anything considerable of Kant, or really *knew* anything of him at all, and that poor De Q.'s picture of him is completely and even ridiculously a *minus* quantity,—which it were charitable to bury under ground! With Coleridge it goes still worse. . . . Kant, in whose *letters*, etc., I have been reading lately (with considerable weariness for most part) seems to me in *spiritual* stature too what he was in bodily, ‘not above 5 feet 2’! Essentially a *small*, most methodic, clear and nimble man;—very like that portrait in *Schubert*, I should think; the fine, sharp, cheery, honest eyes, brow, intellect; and then those projected (quizzically cautious, etc., etc.) *lips*, and that weak, receding, poor chin. Not an *Alles-zermalmender* the least in the world, but much rather a *Gar-manches-zernagender*! Who was it that first gave him the other epithet?—Will you tell me, too, where *is* that about the *starry firmament* and *sense of right and wrong*, which has dwelt with me for many years, but only at second hand.

“I also read the bit of *Hegel* in *Macmillan*; found it throughout intelligible, and surely very *well* translated.—Yours sincerely,

“T. CARLYLE.”

Replying to this letter (on Oct. 22, 1867) Stirling says: "I fear to transcend all the usual conventional proprieties, were I to allow myself to express at full to you how sweet to me is your recognition of my little efforts lately. I will simply appeal to your understanding of this from your recollection of my relations to you when a lad of eighteen—relations which on my part have only deepened with years. I shall leave this attractive emotional ground to answer the questions with which you have honoured me.

"If you will refer to page 121 of Part XII. of Rosenkranz and Schubert's edition of the works of Kant, you will find—with the other circumstances—that it was Mendelssohn who called Kant 'den Alles-zermalmenden.' Again, if you will refer to page 312 of Part VIII. of the same work, you will find that the *Beschluss* of the *Kritik* of Practical Reason constitutes the passage to which you allude with reference to the 'starry heavens and the moral law.'

"As for Kant, acknowledging the rare incision of your touches, I would only deprecatingly say that his letters are mostly conventional, *wersh* and wearisome because he is already old, and addressing generally mere admiring *outsides*. Then the element in which he lived, though he is not without many a genuine grasp of the concrete, was mainly abstract and formal; yet the inexhaustible fertility with which he applied himself, not only to the metaphysical, but also to the ethical, question and questions of Hume is verily wonderful. He was a *true* soul, simple, kindly, social, not without humour, if a little old-maidenish, precise and garrulous. One can see that Hamann, a very interesting strange character, an erring, volcanic nature that could find its repose only in the *Gährung* of undistinguished *Substanz*, would like to make out Kant to have been too prim and strict, too much devoted to dis-



tinctions, and the linked results of labour and scientific demonstration. Yet this Hamann, with all his want of sympathy, with all his preference of what might seem to him inspiration, we find obliged to write not only kindly of Kant, but with an involuntary respect that is not without a tinge of awe in it. He styles Kant 'wirklich ein dienstfertiger, und im Grunde gut und edel gesinnter Mann von Talenten und Verdiensten.' He speaks of Kant's 'Vertraulichkeit,' of his 'good character which nobody can deny him,' and exclaims that 'his poor head is to Kant's a broken pot—clay to iron'! I like to look into a man through his own actions and his own words, but I am sure you will much enjoy the whole story of the relations of Hamann and Kant, which begins foot of page 79 of the second sub-part of the 11th part of R. and S.'s edition.

"It is very pleasing to me that you like Schwegler. His quarry, however, is mostly Hegel. The Plato and Aristotle are nearly perfect, and the best of the book. Descartes, Locke, Leibnitz, Spinoza, etc., are very successful. I am least contented with the Hume. The Fichte also is very good, and the Kant, with a few deductions, most excellent. The Logic of Hegel is shortened, or fore-shortened, almost into caricature, and the other portions have too much the character of extended contents. But 'III.—the Philosophy of Spirit' gives a true glimpse throughout, especially under '2. The Objective Spirit.' That portion is a reduction of at least two volumes, but it contains matter most excellent for the present time, and which I think will not be without Zusagen for you.—Thanking you very, very cordially, forgive me subscribing myself, yours affectionately,

"J. H. STIRLING."

Of the *Schwegler*, the opinion of Emerson was no less favourable than that of Carlyle. Writing

to Stirling on June 1, 1868, the great American writer says, after modestly disclaiming the right to criticize on the ground of ignorance of metaphysics: "I found on trial that I too could read it [the *Schwegler*], and with growing appetite. I could at least appreciate well enough the insight and sovereignty of the Annotations, and the consummate address with which the contemporary critics and contestants are disposed of, etc."

In a postscript to the letter, he adds:—

"My friend W. T. Harris, Esq., of St Louis, Missouri, Editor of the 'Journal of Speculative Philosophy,'<sup>1</sup> writes me thus:—

"I forward by this mail the copy of *Schwegler* which you were so kind as to lend me. I have examined the book sufficiently to convince myself that Mr Stirling's labours in the way of rendering the text and of annotating the same are very valuable. Mr Stirling is the most happy of all modern writers in his power to awaken in the student of philosophy that immense faith which is indispensable to the one who will master the speculative thinking.'"

The above estimate of the book has been fully endorsed by the opinion of later critics. Forty-three years after its publication, Stirling's translation of *Schwegler*, with his Annotations, is still the favourite handbook of English-speaking students of philosophy all over the world.

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards Minister of Education for the U.S.A. Government.

## CHAPTER XII

1868

Address on Materialism—Review of Browning—Vindication of Hegel against Whewell and others—Candidature for Philosophy Chair in Edinburgh—Letters from Carlyle

THE year 1868 was a very full one in the life of Stirling. In January, he published his volume of *Essays* on Jerrold, Tennyson, Macaulay and others, of which individually some mention has already been made in the previous pages. In March, he delivered an address, to an audience of medical students in Edinburgh, on the subject of *Materialism in Relation to the Study of Medicine*. Afterwards published at the request of the society under whose auspices it was delivered, the address is partly a clear, incisive argument by a man possessed of a professional knowledge of physiology, and partly an eloquent appeal on the part of the philosopher on behalf of the immaterial, the spiritual, the Ideal. As the main argument contained in the address bears, to a large extent, on the same subject as its author's *As regards Protoplasm*, it is thought best to reserve it for discussion, along with the latter, in a later chapter, and meantime to glance at some of Stirling's other work during the year 1868.

It was in that year that his review of Browning appeared in the *North British Review*—a periodical now extinct. As a work of literary art, this review would no doubt be regarded by most critics as much inferior to the essay on Tennyson, of which it is not too much to say that it is one of the most *poetic* critiques ever written on any poet. Compared with the latter, the Browning seems like prose compared

with poetry—like a series of disconnected chords on the piano compared with one continuous and complete burst of harmony. It is an interesting study to compare the two articles, and note how the style of the critic appears to reflect the qualities which he finds in his respective subjects, the *Tennyson* affording an example of that “single flight in one full swoop, the one and ever-ascending gust of genius,” which he regards as characteristic of the work of the author of *Maud* and the *Idylls of the King*; while the *Browning* has something of the ruggedness, abruptness, and harshness which its writer finds in the pages of the poet who will “always say, and not sing.”

It is only fair to Stirling, however, to mention that, of the two styles, it was that of the *Browning* which he himself preferred. In a letter to Dr Ingleby (dated Nov. 19, 1869), he writes: “You are quite right: I have no object but to get my thought *out*. Still my sentences are—on the whole, say—connected enough (consequent duly attached to antecedent), genuine enough, and whole enough. . . . Where I like myself best for Style is in the *Hamilton*; my paper on *Browning* and this on *Protoplasm* are not dissimilar. The *Browning* I like very much, and was amused to hear of a very ancient friend of mine exclaiming after reading it, ‘What a pity it is that he has lost his fine style!’ (As in *Jerrold*, *Tennyson*, and *Macaulay*.)”

Whatever the reader of the *Browning* article may think of its style, he will readily admit that, on every page, it affords evidence of its writer’s possession of the two essential conditions of good criticism—sympathy and discrimination. It has been the lot of *Browning*—more, perhaps, than of most writers—to be the victim of indiscriminating praise, as well as of indiscriminating abuse. The truth is, that for a poet, *Browning* is, as the phrase goes, a hard nut to crack; and while, on the one hand,



there are some who, too lazy or incompetent to crack it, declare it is empty or rotten, there are others, possessed of unusual powers of mastication, who crunch down shell and kernel together, and swallow both with equal relish. As a critic of Browning, Stirling shows that he belongs to neither of those classes; though he is fully sensible of the hardness of the *shell*, he is keenly alive to the *freshness*, the wholesomeness, and the rare flavour of the *kernel*. A newspaper reviewer, writing of the *Browning* article at the time it appeared, says of it: "The writer of this article has evidently dug into the very heart of Browning, and surveys the works of the great poet from that central point looking outwards. He has given us here as the result a sample of a kind of criticism not very common in these degenerate days."

As the article deals chiefly with the poems individually, and not so much with Browning's characteristics in general, it is not easy to find a passage suitable for quotation. Perhaps, however, the following brief passage will serve as an example of the style in which it is written. In the passage, the critic is speaking of the *Flight of the Duchess*, which in spite of an enthusiastic admiration for *Luria*, *The Soul's Tragedy*, and many of the shorter pieces, he regards as Browning's *chef d'œuvre*. (It must be remembered that, in 1868, the *Ring and the Book*, and several of Browning's longer poems, had not yet appeared; but it is doubtful whether Stirling saw reason later to change his opinion.)

"That premised, we say at once that we ground our preference of this poem for the first place among the products of Browning on the newness and elaboration of its form, with special consideration of its length. The newness of the vein alluded to is seen at once in the opening thirty lines. The peculiar racy bluntness, and the peculiar racy speech contained in those lines, were for the first time heard in England when this poem was published thirty years ago. . . . The tone of the piece

is indeed externally light; but that must not tempt us to assign to it a subordinate class. We have here a tragedy, but—as might be its course in real life—transacted in the everyday language of comedy. We seem in it to be presented with a piece of humanity just as it occurs . . . and the player that represents it is an honest huntsman, bluff and blunt, and with a genuine ring in him. . . . Indeed, this poem . . . is not more valuable for what it directly tells, than for the reflex that falls back from it on the simple narrator—this hale, sun-tanned, weather-proven, perfect sample of bluff humanity. . . . The pitch of blunt colloquial ease, with the sound of reality in every tone of it, is caught from the first, and fairly preserved to the very last word. . . . What a free grace, too, what a charm of methodic unmethodicness, what a fascinating picturesqueness there is in those double rhymes, and free, loose lines! There is indeed a very perfection of rhymes here—a very perfection of verse, a very perfection of art. The labour that realized this poem must have been simply enormous.”

In what has been said in the foregoing pages with regard to Stirling's work during the year 1868, variety of occupation has perhaps been sufficiently indicated; but before the year was ended, his attention was attracted in yet another new direction—from Browning and poetry to Hegel and the borderland between metaphysics and physics—by feeling himself called on to defend the German philosopher from a charge brought against him from the side of mathematico-physical science. From this charge and Stirling's repudiation of it, there arose a controversy between him and Mr W. Robertson Smith (at that time assistant to the professor of Physics in Edinburgh University, afterwards better known as Orientalist and Biblical critic), which was carried on at infrequent intervals by means of letters in the *Courant* newspaper, a paper read before the Royal Society, and two articles in the *Fortnightly Review*.

Like most newspaper controversies, this one might be best passed over in silence, but for one or two reasons which make it neither quite possible,

nor (from the point of view of Stirling's biographer) quite desirable, wholly to ignore it. The chief of those reasons is the fact that Stirling himself gave to the substance of the controversy a more permanent expression than could be found in newspaper letters by publishing, in 1873, along with his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Law, a Vindication of Hegel in a Physico-mathematical Regard*. Of this *Vindication*, the greater portion is occupied with a defence of Hegel from the charges brought against him by Dr Whewell; but the objections of Mr Robertson Smith are also dealt with in it; and it therefore seems to be necessary at least to indicate the general character of the defence which Stirling offers for Hegel against both attacks.

Stated broadly, the charge both of Dr Whewell and Mr Robertson Smith against Hegel was that he had ventured to attack Newton on the latter's own special ground, and had even attempted to substitute, for the Newtonian Calculus and the Law of Gravitation, some theory or explanation of his own. By a writer in *Nature* of Nov. 10, 1871, the charge was exaggerated into the monstrous statement that Hegel had "proved that Newton did not understand fluxions, nor even the law of gravitation"!

As the recognized interpreter of Hegel, Stirling naturally felt it to be his duty to clear his master from a charge calculated, as was this, to cast discredit upon him. In substance, his defence was that both Hegel's language and Hegel's object, in the passages in his works referred to in support of the charge against him, had been misunderstood. As has been frequently pointed out in the foregoing pages, Hegel spoke a language of his own—a language intelligible only to the initiated—which it had taken Stirling years of hard study thoroughly to understand. It was not wonderful, then, that a reader who was not completely at home with the system of Hegel should misunderstand the meaning and object

of passages taken at random from his works; and, as Stirling proved by abundant examples, Whewell's translations from Hegel showed that he was utterly, even ludicrously, in the dark as to the philosopher's language and system. And this is no less true in the case of Mr Robertson Smith.

Throughout the controversy, Stirling's object was not to maintain that Hegel was correct in his interpretation of Newton, but to show that Hegel himself was neither understood nor correctly stated. Writing to Dr Ingleby in April 1873, he says:—

“Now, the question with me is, not, Is Hegel correct?—but Is Smith (or Whewell) correct about Hegel? In regard to Smith, I show in my ‘Green book’ that Smith is *diametrically* wrong simply in his *naming* of the matter in Hegel. That is my whole business, and wherever I come to any doubtful point—(and at this moment I recollect only one such) . . . I content myself by setting down what Hegel really says side by side with what Smith says, quite willing that what is a blunder on the part of Hegel should be called that. When what Hegel really says is seen, I am quite willing that it should be gone in at, and should stand on its own merits. Probably that Kepler allusion does involve a blunder to Hegel—nay, perhaps I may object to Hegel's metaphysique of the Calculus, once it comes to that—but it has not come to that. What drops from Smith in any such general application is but wandering and uncertain, and has no validity beside all those endless and extraordinary blunders of his. It is those blunders of Smith's that constitute my whole business—in the Green book. . . . Let Hegel be really wrong, you will never find any attempt in me to throw them out in saying so, or *for* saying so—I show up only what they [Whewell and Smith] wrongly say.”

It was in consequence of the want of comprehension of Hegel's language and objects, that



statements in his writings were regarded as scientific criticisms which were, in truth, only *translations* into his own peculiar philosophical dialect, or dialectic, of scientific laws, *accepted by him as such from the scientist, without question.* Philosophy, as the *scientia scientiarum*, has to deal with the principles which lie at the root of *all science.* "That is just what metaphysic is—the ultimate sifting and searching of all the other sciences; and as they move, so it . . . καὶ ἔστι τοῦ φιλοσόφου περὶ πάντων δύνασθαι θεωρεῖν." (Stirling's "Review of Buckle" in *North American Review*, July 1872.) "Metaphysics only follow physics, and deny them not; only they would philosophize them *still further*—find an *ultima ratio* for them." (Letter in *Courant*, Dec. 21, 1868.)

What is said here of philosophy in general, is specially true in the case of the philosophy of Hegel, whose "principle of the *Notion*," as Stirling says, "demanded realization everywhere."

"In disposition of his Physics and his Mathematics, Newton has involuntarily recourse to a certain metaphysic. Hegel, meddling neither with his Mathematics nor his Physics, *as such*, would simply replace the metaphysic of Newton by his own."<sup>1</sup>

"Not one received physical principle did he [Hegel] deny; his sole object was to replace, not physics by physics, but metaphysics by metaphysics."<sup>2</sup>

"It is only Hegel's exclusive attention to the peculiar metaphysic referred to which misled him occasionally into an appearance of injustice towards Newton, at the same time that, *indirectly*, Hegel cannot *hide* his sense of Newton's transcendent greatness."<sup>3</sup>

Although Hegel was occupied exclusively, not with physics, but with metaphysics, it must be admitted, however, as Stirling quaintly expresses it, that he (Hegel) "sometimes plays his metaphysics too close to physics to come off scatheless"; and this was doubtless the case in his criticism of Newton in reference to the Calculus. Mathematicians of

<sup>1</sup> *Whewell and Hegel*, p. 82.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

to-day tell us that, at the time when Hegel lived, and long after it, Newton was not thoroughly understood, even by professed mathematicians, and Hegel no doubt simply accepted, from the mathematical experts of his time, the facts regarding Newton on which he founded his criticisms. If, however, so far as the comprehension of Newton's process with respect to the Calculus was concerned, he was not in advance of the professed mathematicians of his day, it is surely something of a triumph for him that the criticisms on which he ventured—not *formally*, but only in passing, and in the interests of his metaphysic—are admitted by modern mathematicians to be just in themselves, and well deserved by certain "slovenly writers on the Calculus," although they are wrong in their application to Newton.

The above is substantially the conclusion on the subject stated briefly by Stirling in a letter to Dr Ingleby, dated October 24, 1871. "It is not necessary," he writes, "that Hegel should be understood as accusing *Newton*—it is enough that he should have certain pretensions of certain mathematicians before him. What Hegel says, in fact, is quite true—though wholly without application."

Hegel was not a professed mathematician. His business was not directly with physics, nor with mathematics. "Even in the physical and mathematical reference," as Stirling said, "Hegel is only metaphysically, or philosophically, employed." If, however, his business was not directly with physics and mathematics, *indirectly*, it was with these, and with every department of human knowledge. The business of the scientist may be said generally to be the discovery, and scientific statement, of the so-called laws of Nature. But those laws are mere generalizations, mere *matters-of-fact*—universal, it may be, but not *necessary*—there is no reason known to science why they *must* be so, and not

otherwise. Take, for instance, the law of gravitation. Science has discovered that every particle of matter in the universe attracts every other in accordance with a law capable of definite arithmetical expression; yet, in the eyes of the metaphysician, the law of gravitation still awaits explanation, for we only know the fact that it *is*, we do not know why it *must be*. On the other hand, these two statements, "Every change must have a cause," "Two things which are each equal to a third thing must be equal to each other," stand in need of no further explanation. We know at once that they *must* be true—that their contrary is unthinkable. They are, in fact, *necessary* principles; and the business of the metaphysician is specially to endeavour to reach such. Of course, there have been so-called philosophers—men of the empirical school, such as Mill and Bain—who have denied the existence of necessary truth; but those men are not among what Stirling calls the "magistral philosophers of all the countries and all the ages—Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Leibnitz, Kant, Hegel"; they are not of those who have held their place through centuries in the Philosophic Succession.

In Stirling's correspondence with Mr Hale-White (author of *Mark Rutherford*, and translator of Spinoza's *Ethic*), which began in 1870 and lasted for many years, there occurs a passage which bears on this subject. Writing to Stirling on 16th November 1874, Mr Hale-White says:—

"As for the Hegelian quest, I get on with exceeding slowness. I could ask you questions for a week. I write questions to myself, what may be called 'struggles to the Struggle.' As a rule, I don't struggle, but lie for days incapable of movement before half-a-dozen words. . . . In the Critique of Pure Reason the existence of *à priori* truths is assumed as beyond dispute. Kant seems to think that nobody will ever question the universality and

*necessity* of mathematical axioms. I want to know where an answer is given to Mill upon this subject. Mill, as you are aware, points out that the so-called necessary truths are those whose truth is perpetually proved to us, and fairly argues that the repetition of a lesson every instant of our lives must beget almost an impossibility of believing otherwise. I have never seen any formal disproof of this doctrine. I don't say I believe it, but I want to know where he is grappled with and overthrown."

Replying two days later, Stirling says :—

"I point out in the *Kant* in the *Fortnightly*, that to say a thing is *à priori* gives no reason for its *necessity*. This reason lies only in the fact of a *universal*. Space is the universal medium for the facts of sense—every such fact is presented in and through it, and so every such fact must conform to the conditions, to the nature, of Space. These conditions, then, are *universal necessities*. But the relations, or conditions, or nature of Space are not due to anything but its own self. Space is so constituted that its lines and angles, etc., *are* in such and such relations—which all THINGS *must* accept. Why space is so constituted can also be metaphysically assigned. The *truths* of space, then, precede experience, depend not on experience—and so are universal and necessary. Here you see the reason too of the 'repetition,' the 'lesson of every instant of our lives,' you mention as in reference to Mr Mill. *Every* fact of sense must present itself as in space. So it is that these facts are 'of the most frequent occurrence.' Mahaffy, Monk, and the other Dublin metaphysicians who write on Kant, always oppose Mill in these matters, but I cannot say I quite like their points of view, or ways of putting things.

"The argument against Mill is simply this :—no inductive generality will replace a pure universality. The square on the Hypotenuse of the right-angled triangle is equal to the squares of the other two



sides. Measure that again and again, and with every new measurement the inductive generality (and your conviction) increases. Prove it now demonstratively out of the very nature of lines and angles, and you get an *intellectual insight* at once into something that not only *is* but *must* be so and so. Hume himself says, had there never been such a thing as a line or an angle in existence, the truths of Euclid would remain the same. It is an intellectual insight at once, from the very nature of the case, that parallel straight lines *will* never, *can* never, meet. No man ever thinks of *trying* this—whether it is matter of fact or not. As an *experiment*, a *fact of experience*, indeed, it is *impossible*, and yet every man knows of facts of experience that, though they have gone on so and so for many thousand times, they *may* alter at last.”

It is in the same letter to Mr Hale-White that Stirling gives the metaphysical explanation of gravitation.

“But suppose your difficulty to be what is the cause of this attraction which is called gravitation?—Well, physicists can only tell you it is a law of all matter, and just *found* so. Metaphysic, for its part, says gravitation is the very nature, the very idea, of *body*. Body is out-of-itself-ness, and out-of-itself-ness must depend on, strive to, its own true self, its *in-itself-ness—i.e., to its own centre*: hence the motion or attraction of matter. If you ask again why there is *body*—out-of-itself-ness, externality as such—at all, that, too, Metaphysic can answer, on and on, to the very end—the staple on which the whole hangs—a staple, too, which brings with it its own sufficient reason.”

Perhaps it may appear to some readers that all this is a digression from the Newton-Hegel controversy; and it therefore seems necessary to explain that it contains the reply, from the side of metaphysics, to the objection of mathematicians, What

had Hegel to do with the law of gravitation, or the Calculus any way? Perhaps that reply is expressed at its shortest and clearest in the concluding passage of Stirling's *Vindication* of Hegel as against Whewell:—

“Descartes said that he ‘should think it little to show how the world *is* constructed, if he could not also show that it *must* of necessity have been so constructed.’ This, though censured by Whewell, who cites it, is the true philosophical instinct; and it was very conspicuously the guiding principle of Hegel. It is man’s business to explain this spectacle, and he will never cease attempting to do so. But to *explain* is to reduce an *is* to a *must*. To know the former, however, is as absolutely indispensable as to accomplish the latter. This Hegel acknowledged,” etc.

The statement contained in this passage of the relative positions of science and philosophy constitutes one of the “reasons” alluded to above for venturing to give here a brief outline of the Hegel-Newton controversy.

Another reason is that, in Stirling’s first letter to the *Courant* on the subject (in December 1868) there occurs the following passage, which he himself, in a letter to Dr Ingleby, describes as a “summarizing diamond of my enormous labours on Hegel” :—

“Let them [physics] but once ascertain a law—gravitation, say—and what a multitude of facts they at once construe. If Hegel, then, says, I have found a law that construes perfectly, not only all externality, but all internality, there is nothing in the mere statement, however wonderful it may sound, to provoke denial. To *think* is, in so many words, to endeavour to find no less. Now the law of Hegel is not difficult to name: it is this—All that is, be it external, be it internal, is but a function of judgment. In a word, if ultimate explanation is ever to be reached, all variety whatever must collapse into the unity of thought. Nor is this idea original to Hegel; he has simply brought to supreme generalization in it the leading conception of Kant. The misfortune is, indeed, that

neither Hegel nor anybody else has ever stated it so simply. Yet such expression comes directly from the industry of Kant. Hume asked, Whence comes the necessity of causality? Kant answered, There are many such necessities; and they all derive from functions of judgment—categories. Hegel then said, Let me take judgment, once for all, and watch if its own rhythm will not develop into a *system* of functions, of categories—a complete inner. This once understood, the perception that externalization as externalization would follow by very virtue of the same rhythm could not be far. And what is externalization as externalization? What but boundless physical contingency, that can be philosophized only by being reduced, in ascending grades, to the previous law and laws of the functions of judgment. And so on. Such thoughts being held steadily in view, the whole riddle is explained, and even the reading of a dialectic, the principle of which is so plain, ceases any longer to prove hopeless. If it be objected, But genetically to develop all things from a germ of thought is to empty the universe of a God, the answer is easy—No more than of man, whom you will allow to be. The process, moreover, is logical, rather than genetic. In fact, the moment Hegel comes to philosophize time (history), the tables are turned on his objectors, and he can only end in concrete Christianity.”

It is to the sentence in this passage, which begins “All that is, be it external, be it internal,” etc., that Stirling refers when, writing to Dr Ingleby on Jan. 1, 1869, he says: “That sentence of mine is what I had been searching and longing for for years in regard to that unintelligible procedure of Hegel. To understand this, you too would require to have been years on Hegel. As Hegel has it, there is no mystical idealism—Nature is but the Idea *externalized*—and *externalized* means an infinite out-and-out of individuals in infinite physical contingency. The Idea again is the *internal* system—spun out in the Logic—of which nature is the exemplification. There is no traffic, however, between the individual man and nature as if *he* made it.”

Before the first letter on the Hegel-Newton controversy had appeared in the *Courant*, a very

important crisis in Stirling's life had been reached. Early in 1868 he had become a candidate for the Chair of Moral Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, and had written to Carlyle, requesting him for a testimonial. Carlyle, who was at the time Lord Rector of Edinburgh University, replied in the following letter :—

“CHELSEA, 23 Janry. 1868.

“DEAR SIR,—Before your letter came, I had heard of your candidacy, and have been frequently thinking of it since. So far as I understand, it was expected of you, and considered likely to be successful by the Public.

“I have myself little right to speak on such a subject : quite an alien from all Metaphysic for the last forty years ; and ignorant at present what the Electors specially intend their Moral Philosophy Professor to accomplish for them.

“To what I already ventured to say on a similar occasion, I can now add, after reading some of your recent productions and translations, that in regard to German Metaphysics I do find you to have yourself understood every word you put down, and to be completely intelligible to a reader that will take sufficient pains ;—which, so far as my experience reaches, is more than can be said of any British man that has gone before you on those topics. . . . Indeed, with all my good-will I can see no *perfectly clear* way of helping you,—except that you should, if you like, print in your Book of Testimonials, what I have here marked the margin of,<sup>1</sup> in the form of *sequel* to the *Glasgow* thing I wrote for you two years ago. If that can be of any avail, that is a fact, and can stand fronting all the winds. For the rest, I have no vote ; and truly with the notions I hold should not try very much to influence any other person's. Even for yourself, my dear sir, I

<sup>1</sup> That is, the passage above, beginning, “To what I already ventured to say,” and ending “on those topics.”



actually *don't know* whether success in this matter, and turning of your talent altogether upon *Metaphysic*, and possibly setting all Scotland on babble with it, would be good for you or bad! I will pray Heaven only, may you get what *is good*! . . .

“May all good befall you.—Yours truly,  
“T. CARLYLE.”

Replying to this letter a few days later (on Jan. 29), Stirling wrote:—

“I beg to return you my best thanks for your kind letter, and the ‘magnificent testimonial,’ as my friends call it, which it contains.

“I had a hearty laugh at the idea of *me* converting Scotland into a Babel of *Metaphysic*. But in truth my wish is to leave unstable theory for the *terra firma* of practice. My books after all are fuller of Ethics than *Metaphysics*, and so it is that one of them has been made the Moral Philosophy text-book this session. My essays, too, as the *Coleridge*, it was my endeavour to make ethical. It is for this also that I desired so much that you would allow me to send you my *Secret of Hegel*. The Preface and Conclusion of that book *contain to my mind the fruit of the whole*; and that fruit is those ethical, political, and religious principles in which I know you sympathize, and which you wish so much to see extended.

“I implicitly trust your judgment in what you have done or left undone, and assure you of my sincere thankfulness. . . .

“I am haunted with the idea that it lies in your knowledge (knowledge which your position opens to you) and in the opinion formed thereon, that I should withdraw. Otherwise matters look certainly hopeful. The worst they bring against me—if it is against me (and one word certainly is so)—is that I am a ‘barbarous imitator’ of yourself.”

As we have seen, when, two years earlier,

Stirling stood for the Chair in Glasgow University, it was without any great hopes of success, or any great disappointment at his failure. But it was otherwise in 1868. He had now been more than three years before the public, and besides the *Secret of Hegel* he had published his translation and annotations of *Schwegler*, which gave evidence of a wide acquaintance with the entire subject of philosophy. His own view of his claims to the Chair are perhaps best expressed in his letter to John Stuart Mill, from which a sentence has already been quoted. On the suggestion of Carlyle and others, he had been induced to send his books to Mill, with a request for a testimonial. Mill acknowledged receipt of the books with a tribute of respect and admiration for the writer; but declined to give the testimonial requested on the ground that he did not think that the study of Hegel would have a salutary effect on the "immature minds of University students." In his reply to Mill's letter, Stirling writes:—

"Your frankness at least invites frankness, and I will explain the circumstances.

"In 1851, inheriting a very modest sum, I gave up a lucrative professional post to go to the Continent for the completion of those studies which college success seemed to recommend. I was six years on the Continent. From 1856 to 1865 I was most laboriously—rather with positive agony, indeed, and often for 12 hours a day—occupied with those German books that were not understood in England, and yet that, negatively or affirmatively, required to be understood before an advance was possible for us. Since then, I have been similarly occupied with the analysis of Hamilton, the annotated *Schwegler*, certain of the *Essays*, etc. Here, then, is an enormous amount of disinterested sacrifice, disinterested labour, disinterested expenditure of money; and yet at this moment I am some

four hundred pounds actually out of pocket for the publication of these books!

“These are the circumstances, and in their view it certainly appears to me worse still that the attention of him who is at least ‘voiced’ *the* expert among my countrymen having been invited hither, I should be obliged to learn that, in his opinion, I am precisely the person to be left unrewarded, unsupported. For how can such sacrifices and labours be rewarded, or such studies supported, unless by an academical appointment? . . . The work of a Moral Philosophy class, however, is not logic, but (with a psychological introduction) the institutes of natural jurisprudence, ethics, and politics. In none of my books are those subjects formally or comprehensively treated; still I know not that I have anywhere indicated imperfect studies on, or immature views of, such subjects. The *Hamilton* is psychological, and in its sort, as I believe, the only specimen in the language of analytic objective synthesis. . . . The *Schwegler* ought to show technical knowledge on the required subjects throughout the whole course of the history of philosophy. *Materially*, the greater part of the *Hegel* cannot be brought in evidence; but *formally* surely the whole book may—were it for nothing but the power of work it represents.”

Reading this letter, and that of Mill to which it is a reply, one is struck by the advance in philosophical thought which has been made in this country in the last forty years. At the time the letters were written, the school in the ascendant was an empirical, materialistic one, to which the works of Kant, Hegel, and the modern German philosophic writers—those which, according to Stirling, “required to be understood before an advance was possible for us”—were almost wholly unknown. Now, it is probably not too much to say that there is not an occupant of a philosophical

Chair—in Scotland, at least—who is not more or less familiar with the German metaphysicians, or who does not regard their work as what is deepest and most valuable in modern philosophy. For this change the credit is assigned, by those best able to judge, to Stirling, who is admitted to have been “the originator of the idealistic movement, which so powerfully influenced British and American philosophy during the last thirty years of the nineteenth century.” That such a man—the exponent of a system, “every step” of which “is towards the Immortality of the soul, every step is towards the freedom of the will, every step is towards God”; the man whose “healthy moral perceptions” Emerson counted among his “high merits”; the man in whom Carlyle perceived “on the moral side” “a sound strength of intellectual discernment, a noble valour and reverence of mind”—that such a man should be regarded as unfit or unworthy to teach students—and that by one of the leaders of an empirical school of thought, which, whatever the personal views of the individual adherent, is bound to induce a sceptical or materialistic attitude of mind on those who belong to it—cannot fail to strike a thoughtful person in these days with surprise and wonder.

Of course, it was not to be expected that those who had the appointment to the Chair should, in every case at least, be capable of judging for themselves of the merits of a writer of such profundity as Stirling (four of the seven electors were representatives of the Edinburgh Town Council, and made no pretence to a knowledge of philosophy, the other three being representatives of the University); but they might at least have given weight to the opinion of such intellectual giants as Carlyle and Emerson. As the day fixed for the appointment drew near, however, it became evident that there were influences at work unfavour-



able to Stirling, and favourable to the candidate who obtained the Chair—the Rev. Henry Calderwood, minister of a United Presbyterian church in Glasgow.

Carlyle, who, as Lord Rector of Edinburgh University, had been reluctant to take any public action in the matter of the election, hearing what was going on in Edinburgh, wrote, two days before the appointment was to take place, the following letter to Stirling :—

“CHELSEA, 16th June 1868.

“DEAR STIRLING,—You well know how reluctant I have been to interfere at all in the election now close on us, and that, in stating, as bound, what my own clear knowledge of your qualities was, I have strictly held by that, and abstained from more. But the news I now have from Edinburgh is of such a complexion, so dubious and so surprising to me; and I now find I shall privately have so much regret in a certain event—which seems to be reckoned possible, and to depend on one gentleman of the seven—that, to secure my own conscience in the matter, a few plainer words seem needful.

“To what I have said of you already, therefore, I now volunteer to add that I think you not only the one man in Britain capable of bringing metaphysical philosophy, in the ultimate, German or European, and highest actual form of it, distinctly home to the understanding of British men who wish to understand it; but that I notice in you further, on the moral side, a sound strength of intellectual discernment, a noble valour and reverence of mind, which seems to me to mark you out as the man capable of doing us the highest service in ethical science too; that of restoring, or decisively beginning to restore, the doctrine of morals to what I must ever reckon its one true and everlasting basis

(namely, the divine or *supra* sensual one), and thus of victoriously reconciling and rendering identical the latest dictates of modern science with the earliest dawnings of wisdom among the race of men. This is truly my opinion, and how important to me, not for the sake of Edinburgh University alone, but for the whole world for ages to come, I need not say to you.

“I have not the honour of any personal acquaintance with Mr Adam Black,<sup>1</sup> late member for Edinburgh, but for fifty years back have known him, in the distance, and by current and credible report, as a man of solid sense, independence, probity, and public spirit; and if, in your better knowledge of the circumstances, you judge it suitable to read this note to him—to him, or indeed to any other person—you are perfectly at liberty to do so.—Yours sincerely always,

“T. CARLYLE.”

The election to the Chair took place on the 18th of June; and on the 19th the above letter was published in both the daily papers which Edinburgh at that time possessed (the *Scotsman* and the *Courant*) beneath the paragraph announcing that the “Rev. Henry Calderwood, LL.D., minister of the United Presbyterian Church, Greyfriars’, Glasgow,” had been appointed to the Chair of Moral Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh by a majority of one vote. The paragraph in the *Scotsman* concluded with the remark that “the appointment of the Rev. Mr Calderwood to the Chair of Moral Philosophy created strong feelings of surprise and otherwise, when it became known in the city,” while the *Courant* denounced the “heinous sin which had been committed against philosophy” by the appointment.

<sup>1</sup> The “one gentleman of the seven” referred to above. He was one of the four representatives of the Town Council.

The announcement was received with a general outcry of indignation, amid which the question, "Who *was* Mr Calderwood?" was frequently heard. It is two-and-forty years since then; and Professor Calderwood has gone to his rest, after having become known to a generation or two of students as an honest and kindly man, and a conscientious teacher, who fulfilled for thirty years the duties of the Chair to which he was raised. At the time of his appointment, however, there were several of the ten candidates better known than he, whose only claim to a Moral Philosophy Chair rested on a little book entitled *The Philosophy of the Infinite*, written fourteen years earlier, when its author was only twenty-four.

On the day following the election, Stirling wrote to Carlyle:—

"I beg to thank you with my whole heart for your exceedingly warm and to me invaluable letter of the 16th. It has made my fall light, and will yet operate to my substantial benefit. In presence of the proudest testimony I could get in this world, I knew my own unworthiness, and felt abashed before it.

"I send copies of *Scotsman* and *Courant*. I fear you will be sorely displeased to see your letter in them. I read it in the first instance to Mr Black, who was deeply shaken, but confessed himself 'committed to another.' I, then, at the urgent request of one's sort of committee of friends, ordered 25 copies to be printed for the Curators and friends. So far as the newspapers are concerned, there was no authority, no request, and no expectation on my part. What is said by everybody to-day is, 'That there was so much excitement on the subject that it was impossible to keep the letter back.' I trust, then, you will kindly pardon any annoyance this matter may have occasioned. I have been obliged in other instances to give in to

this way of printing 25 copies of letters, not formal testimonials, that may tell on an election. I enclose an example of this sort in the shape of a kind letter from Mr Emerson that, by a pleasant coincidence, arrived on the same day as your own one.

“This, dear Mr Carlyle, is not the letter which should be written in acknowledgment of such noble spontaneity of generous friendship, but the experiences of this canvass itself, rather than of its result, have left me in a sort of impotent vacuity, and I hope you will pardon it.”

The letter from Emerson referred to as arriving on the same day as Carlyle’s—*i.e.*, on June 17th, the eve of the election—is the one from which a quotation has already been made with respect to Stirling’s *Schwegler*. Referring to the approaching election, Emerson says:—

“I shall be well content if Edinburgh is to have you, and not Glasgow, and should be better pleased to have added the least assistance to such a result: but I had no means for a new judgment until it was too late for the 1st of June.<sup>1</sup> I cannot doubt the result, if qualification is to decide. It is really you must explore and declare to us the hid foundations of metaphysics and morals, let who will sit in the college chair. And yet I pray you to send me word that the Academic electors have justified themselves to our sense.”

On the desk at which these pages are being written, there lies a number of yellow newspaper cuttings, bearing dates in June, and even July, 1868, some of which contain indignant protests against the appointment to the Moral Philosophy Chair in letters addressed to the editor of the paper, while others contain still more indignant exposures of the schemes and intrigues which appear to have entered

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to the fact that Stirling’s recently-published volume of *Essays*, a copy of which had been sent to Emerson, did not arrive in America at the time expected.



into the case; but it is thought better, at this date, not to re-open old debates. Carlyle's opinion of the matter, however, as expressed in the following characteristic letter, will no doubt be found interesting:—

“CHELSEA, 26th June 1868.

“DEAR STIRLING,—Saturday last, about an hour before your letter, etc., arrived, —— had come in (with similar newspaper documents) and shocked me by the astonishing news! Nothing like it, that I remember, has occurred in my time. Fie, fie!— On the whole, since they were at it, I am better pleased they chose Calderwood of the two, and did their feat in so complete a style! Never mind, never mind. Such a *failure* to you is worth ten successes of the Calderwood kind;—possibly, too, nay by this time almost probably, it may turn to *good* for yourself and for all the world.

“By the newspapers (which copiously come to me often in duplicate) I see the immense excitement and emotion of the Edinburgh public on this matter; and by no means wonder at it. But the one thing which I notice of remedial nature is that of having you as supplemental or extraordinary Professor;<sup>1</sup> you and, if needful, others to follow; and keep ‘ordinaries’ awake at their guns henceforth! This seems to me excellent, as I hope it does to you—and that all effort will at once bend itself in that direction. In *Medicine* it has worked well for the University interests; and I have often heard shrewd people desiderate such a thing for the other Professorships too, whenever applicable to them. Certainly, in this instance, if the question be ever asked in my time there, I know one person who will strongly vote for it! Go ahead, therefore! —Yours always truly,  
T. CARLYLE.”

<sup>1</sup> A proposal to create an extra-mural Chair of Philosophy for Stirling had been discussed in the columns of the *Courant*,





JAMES HUTCHISON STIRLING.

(From photo of oil painting by his daughter Florence.)

To face p. 211.

In acknowledging this letter, Stirling remarked : "You have indeed converted my defeat into a triumph, and I am deeply grateful. Such warm expressions of sincere sympathy from you have removed all bitterness, and I can acquiesce patiently in the result."

Nevertheless, the failure of his candidature for the Edinburgh Chair marks another turning-point in Stirling's life. He never again became a candidate for any post. Henceforth, his life was devoted almost wholly to his books and his family. With his small patrimony lessened by losses, and unsupplemented by any salary, whatever his own or Mrs Stirling's inclinations might be, any outlay on social entertainments was well-nigh impossible.

Perhaps, in spite of the charge of caprice so often brought against Dame Fortune, there is after all a certain justice in her ways of dealing. Her awards, it may be, are not bestowed arbitrarily, but in conformity with the great law—You cannot both eat your cake and have it. To those for whom she reserves posthumous fame, the respect and reverence of after ages, she gives in their life-times no honours, or titles, or office, or wealth.

"What porridge had John Keats?"



## CHAPTER XIII

1868-1869

Offer from America—Carlyle's Advice—Stirling's Correspondents  
—The Hegel Monument—*As regards Protoplasm*

SOME two months or so after the appointment to the Edinburgh Chair was made, Stirling had an opportunity of seeing how it was regarded by philosophic men in America. Dr Francis Bowen, Professor of Philosophy in Harvard College, wrote to him: "Are you willing to emigrate to the United States, and become my colleague here by accepting a Professorship of Metaphysics in Harvard College?" The letter went on to say that the professorship did not as yet exist, although it was required at Harvard, and that, if Stirling expressed his willingness to accept, the necessary steps would be taken to get it endowed.

This letter Stirling sent to Carlyle, with the following from himself:—

"DEAR MR CARLYLE,—I beg to be allowed to send you the enclosed letter for perusal. I thought it my duty to submit this matter to you, but am glad to be supported in this opinion by Professor Masson.

"All my friends agree in acknowledging the great compliment implied in the proposal contained in the letter, but they are all reluctant to speak for (or, indeed, against) the proposal itself.

"Were I just as much over thirty as I am over forty, I should not hesitate about it; but all see that it is expatriation for life, and something of an *enterprise*. This I, who had been abroad long

enough, and had returned *home*, feel also. The money, however, is of some importance, especially with reference to this crippled North British Railway—which, for my interests, nevertheless, will probably be quite restored in a year and a half.

“Some friends opine that, with my German and French, I should try for a consulship, and point to Hannay, who, in such an appointment, has more leisure for literature than ever he had. It is against hopes in that direction that I have never been a party politician. I propose at this election, however, either to decline voting, or to vote for Lord Dalkeith here, and for the Lord Advocate at Glasgow. . . . I am very delicate to intrude, but I hope you will excuse me. It is my duty to show this to all my friends, and especially to you.”

Carlyle replied in the following characteristic letter:—

“CHELSEA, 12 Oct. 1868.

“DEAR STIRLING,—This voice from New England is a sufficient triumph over the do. from the Edinburgh Bailies, if you needed any triumph over such a thing: but I can well fancy it must be gravely embarrassing to you no less than gratifying. I wish there were in me any counsel that could avail, in return for the trust you show in asking it! I will at least put down what my vague and distant *outside* notions of it are as clearly as I can in this sad whirl of bothers I am in to-day; not to keep you waiting longer.

“Professor Bowen seems a very friendly, honest and candid man; and I doubt not may pass for a sample of the general feeling you would meet with in Harvard, in Boston, and over New England and intellectual America at large. They are an honest, faithful, intelligent, and really friendly people; and would receive you (as I have instances to teach me) with brotherly welcome, not *vocal* only, and be

proud and glad to lend you practical furtherance whenever possible. They much respect talent and proficiency; are a very clear-seeing people, the better kind of them; and would make, I should think, about Harvard especially, a fairly desirable public for a man to lecture to. In fact they seem to me to have many *Scotch* features; Boston not unlike Edinburgh probably—deducting perhaps the huge admiration for *America*, Nigger Emancipation, etc., or *substituting* it for do. of Scotland, and of some equally egregious nonsense of our own! Emerson himself, I have understood, is some kind of head superior (permanent ‘Lord Rector,’ one of 3, perhaps not altogether titular) over Harvard University, since the last year or two; that is itself a significant fact.—Well, all this, *plus* £450 additional income, *can* be yours if you like; all this, and nothing or little more, I take to be the *credit* side of the account.

“On the other hand, it is evident you would have to expatriate yourself, and become *Yankee*—if at this age you possibly could—Yankee you and yours, or else be more or less of a failure in your new environment! This seems to me a heavy *debit*; and the more I think of it, the heavier. Could you ever get to admire sublime ‘stump oratory’ as *not* the crying nuisance of our era, but the topmost excellence of it; to accept Ballot-box as the Ark of the Covenant, and roaring ‘liberty’ (*in fæce Romuli*) as heaven’s supreme and finest boon to us? Or would it be an improvement if you could? It is true, we have now pretty well got the ‘Devil emancipated’ in this country too; and with our late Jamaica Committees, etc., etc.—and here even in Chelsea round me, with the walls and flag-stones (in green paint, or voluntary chalk) all suasive of me to ‘VOTE FOR ODGER,’—how can I upbraid America with anarchy more dismal or disgraceful than our own! But there is, in this country,

an immense mass of silent *protest* (which, though bewildered, I take to be inexorable) against all that; and a man here can openly consider it, *it* in itself, as vile ruin and fetid mud, which I doubt if he can in America, without penalty exacted. To me expatriation to *America* as it now is (grand as are the *hopes* that perhaps loom through it from the centuries far in the future) would be too like expatriation to a certain *Infinitely* Anarchic Realm, perpetual Chief President of which is called Satanas, who truly seems to me the realized Ideal, and practical consummate flower of what stump oratory, ballot-box, and universal suffrage can do for us in that kind! As to the increase of income to be set against all this, no doubt it is a desirable thing: but I understand you to be already *secure* against *scarcity*, let the gambling of railways fall out as it will, and to be perhaps considerably *out* of thralldom to such lower interests. Pope says once, 'Fire, meat, and clothes, what more? Meat, clothes, and fire!' '*Liberté, vérité, pauvreté*' was D'Alembert's motto: and indeed a literary man that would do anything considerable, in these or in any times, will mostly have to defy Poverty and Mammon both before beginning.

"I seem as if I am advising you, with great clearness and emphasis, to *reject* the American offer: but that is not my meaning at all;—these are merely my own hasty feelings on it, and remote impression from the outside; *your* feelings (which are the determining point) may essentially differ, and indeed in *degree* are likely to differ; but these always are what you have to follow as the guidance for *you*. I can only *advise* (if that were needful) a serious scrutiny and deliberation with your own best judgment; and hope and wish with all my heart that whatever you decide on may prove itself to have been what was best for you. Privately, in my own mind, I sometimes have an IDEAL for you of a very



high kind, achievable in whatever *place* you are, a really invaluable service of the moral kind, which metaphysic, through her acknowledged British chief, might do the distracted, ever-increasing multitudes who appeal to metaphysic as their ultimate divine oracle; and who are not only in supreme danger of 'forgetting God' (if they have not already quite done it), but even of 'learning to steal spoons' (as old Samuel had it)—and of realizing by and by a very devil of a world for themselves and others, poor blockheads!— But of all this I say nothing at present, my very *hand*, you see, is unwilling to write.—Yours sincerely always,

“T. CARLYLE.”

Those whom recent publications have disposed to look upon Carlyle as a selfish egoist, must feel that this letter, and the others contained in this and the previous chapter, if they exhibit something of his characteristic intolerance and extravagance of speech, shed a kindly light on the character of the man. All who read the letters must admit that they show a warmth of friendliness, and a readiness, in the midst of his own troubles, to bestow his best thought on the difficulties of another, which do the writer of them infinite credit.

Stirling's reply to the above letter is no longer extant; but that he decided to give the American offer his serious consideration we can gather as well from a letter from Professor Bowen as from the following from Carlyle—the last from him which Stirling received, or at least has preserved:—

“CHELSEA, 16 Nov. 1868.

“DEAR STIRLING,—My distinct impression is that your decision in the American matter is the right one; that if those terms are secured to you, it will be your clear course to go. *Philosophic* Scotland, I must say, ought to be ashamed of herself!

But so the fact stands. America has made conquest of you in fair battle.—America, with all her world-anarchies, is without that special one of having dirty puddling Bailies, of the Free kirk or Slave kirk type, set to decide on the highest *Philosophic* interests of their country! Go, therefore, since the Heavens so beckon.—I was not aware the railway jobbers had eaten in upon you to any such extent. That is decidedly too small a sum for keeping house with: £450 per year additional will give right welcome elbow-room,—of which I have no doubt you will profit honestly for your own highest benefit and everybody's.

“I will read the account of *Browning* with the due thanks and attention;—not without one sad reflection that you are so distinctly *ill paid* hitherto for your literary work. Fifty-six pages for £20; Hegel still coming to you in the shape of a *fine*, etc., etc.: it is too bad! And part of it, I do believe, might be remedied,—that of the *rate per page*, and your present revenue from Periodicals, for one thing. Permit me to be clear with you. I do not think writing about literary people, even about Browning and the better class of them, is your special work, very far from it,—and by no means seems your best as a thing for odd hours and by way of PARERGON. ‘Literary people’ are but a fisonless matter at present: not one in the thousand of them worth a moment's serious thought from a wise man. But beyond doubt there are a great many solid and important things, not specially *Hegelian* at all, which you could write of wisely, and to the interest of serious people, who would hear you far more gladly than on Browning, Longfellow, Hawthorne & Co. I wish you would think of this; and also of trying London for a vehicle to it. The thing has struck myself so much that I mean, the first time I can fall in with Froude (the only Editor known to me, and I believe far the best of them all),

to sound him as to (*e.g.*) a *right* article from you on *Comte* and his *ism*;—popular, yet as *deep* as you like; strong, earnest, yet soft-spoken, etc., etc.: I am convinced you could do it better than any other man; and that it would be welcome to the best men in England, and do some little good. You don't forbid me to try at any rate,—as I will.—Yours sincerely,  
T. CARLYLE.”

As was said above, this is, so far as is known, the last letter written by Carlyle to Stirling, and so concludes the correspondence which had been carried on, at long intervals, for twenty-eight years. It may as well be said here that Carlyle kept his word as regards “sounding” Froude, and that the latter, some five days later, wrote to Stirling that he would be “heartily glad of his help” in *Fraser's Magazine*, of which he was then editor. In the following May, Stirling sent, for insertion in *Fraser*, his lecture entitled *As regards Protoplasm*; but this Froude found too long and too technical for his readers, and the correspondence between the two ended there.

Two years later, in a letter to Ingleby, dated April 7, 1870, Stirling refers to the brief episode of his correspondence with Froude in his characteristically outspoken way: “*Fraser* I shall not write for—Froude made such an ass of himself *à propos* of *Protoplasm*, which he read in MS. exactly as you in print; but I never thought Froude would do for me, and only yielded as it was Carlyle wished it. Froude was too much of the radical and common *aufgeklärter* for me. I knew he, as under Longmans, etc., never could print *my* way of it on Mill & Co., and what I said of these in *Protoplasm* was said just to let me see how Froude would stand the shock. It was as I expected—he was breathless—felt he had a powder-magazine in his house, and returned it at once with a cry of horror, and—*bête* stupidity.”



As regards the American professorship, events proved that, after all, the "Heavens" did not "so beckon." Professor Bowen wrote, on Dec. 2 (1868), that "so many changes" had taken place at Harvard that the execution of his project to endow a new professorship in the department of Philosophy must be "indefinitely postponed." This, as we can gather from his letters to Dr Ingleby, was not altogether a disappointment to Stirling, though he had been much touched by the generosity of the offer. "I am sorely troubled," he writes on October 26, 1868, "by an offer just to hand to endow a Chair for me (£450) at Harvard. It is intensely gratifying as an offer—but to expatriate myself for life, when I had been abroad enough, and had come *home!*"

Stirling had no more regular, or more frequent correspondent, during the years from 1868 to 1883, than Dr Ingleby, who has shown the value he placed on the correspondence by carefully preserving Stirling's letters in bound volumes, which form most interesting reading. In the letters, besides personal matters, all sorts of philosophical questions are discussed in the writer's characteristic style.

Another regular correspondent of this period was George Cupples, of whom we shall see more later; and two others with whom he corresponded at less frequent intervals were Edmund Lushington, professor of Greek in Glasgow University, and the German philosophical professor and writer, Ueberweg. For Professor Lushington, Stirling had the highest respect. He was a man possessed of that fineness of nature which sometimes accompanies classical scholarship—chivalrous, yet gentle and modest. The two remained for years (until Lushington's death, in fact) on the most friendly terms, exchanging letters at intervals, and always contriving to meet when Lushington was in Edinburgh. With Ueberweg, Stirling's correspondence was more purely philosophical than with the other three; but



nevertheless Stirling was able to form from it a high opinion of the other's personal character. On his death, which took place in 1871 at the comparatively early age of forty-five, Stirling writes to Dr Ingleby:—

“Poor Ueberweg! One of the best souls that ever lived, and such a worker as was transcendent even in Germany. His professorship seems to have been only £150 per an. For many, many years he had only his mother, and her pension of £30! He dies at forty-five after immense suffering from hip-joint disease. To me personally Ueberweg's is a very severe loss, for we corresponded pretty well regularly.”

Early in 1869, the approaching centenary of Hegel's birth (which took place on August 27, 1770) involved his English interpreter in a good deal of correspondence. Dr Maetzner, President of the Philosophical Society of Berlin, of which Stirling had been elected Foreign Member, wrote to him asking his assistance in collecting subscriptions to raise a monument in celebration of the occasion. Stirling undertook to collect in Great Britain; and succeeded in raising about £70—no small achievement when we consider that, only some four or five years before, Hegel had scarcely been known in this country. Among the subscribers were Professor Jowett, Dr Thompson, Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, T. H. Green of Oxford, Professors Blackie and Masson of Edinburgh, and Dr John Brown (author of *Rab and his Friends*).

But the chief event of 1869 was the appearance of Stirling's *As regards Protoplasm*, first in the form of a lecture, delivered before the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, and afterwards as a pamphlet. Carlyle had declared that Stirling's appointment to the Philosophy Chair was a matter of importance “not for the sake of Edinburgh University alone, but for the whole world for ages to

come." It is doubtful, however, whether much of Stirling's best work might not have been lost to the world had his time been occupied with the daily drudgery of class lectures.

Among his writings subsequent to the *Secret*, none deserves a higher place, in spite of the unimportance of its appearance, than his *As regards Protoplasm*. It is one of the most concise, acute, and irresistible pieces of scientific reasoning ever written. Here, as in *Materialism*, to which allusion has already been made, the advantage of Stirling's medical training becomes apparent. Without that training, the subject to be dealt with would have been so unfamiliar to him that it is doubtful whether he would have attempted to deal with it at all. Even as it was, it is obvious from the paper itself that, before beginning to write, he made a most thorough study of the works of the latest physiologists, both British and German; and from beginning to end of his argument he meets Professor Huxley on his own ground, physiology. *As regards Protoplasm* is, in fact, a refutation, by means of reasonings based on physiological considerations, of Huxley's theory "that there is one kind of matter common to all living beings," named by him Protoplasm; that "all animal and vegetable organisms are essentially alike in form, in power, and in substance"; and (2) that "all vital and intellectual functions are the properties of the molecular disposition and changes of the protoplasm of which the various animals and vegetables consist."

Taking each of these statements separately, Stirling shows, by means of irresistible arguments, and with abundance of illustration and reference to authorities, that the protoplasm of the various organs and organisms differs (1) in chemical substance, (2) in structure, and (3) in power or faculty.

"All the tissues of the organism are called by Mr Huxley protoplasm; but can we predicate identity for

muscle and bone, for example? . . . There is nerve-protoplasm, muscle-protoplasm, brain-protoplasm, bone-protoplasm, and protoplasm of all the other tissues, *no one of which but produces its own kind, and is uninterchangeable with the rest.* Lastly, on this head, we have to point to the overwhelming fact that there is the infinitely different protoplasm of the various infinitely different plants and animals, in each of which its own protoplasm, as in the case of that of the various tissues, but produces its own kind, and is uninterchangeable with that of the rest."

With respect to Huxley's second proposition, that all vital and intellectual functions are but the properties of the molecular changes of protoplasm, Stirling points out, in the first place, that it rests on no better argument than an analogy drawn between water and its chemical constituents, on the one hand, and protoplasm and its chemical constituents on the other. There is no greater difference, Huxley argues, between the properties of protoplasm and those of its chemical constituents, carbon, hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen, than between the properties of water and those of its chemical constituents, hydrogen and oxygen. With the help of an electric spark, hydrogen and oxygen can be converted into water; with the help of pre-existing protoplasm, carbon, hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen can be converted into protoplasm.

This analogy, however, Stirling goes on to point out, breaks down at once when applied to *living* protoplasm, though applicable to dead protoplasm. Water exhibits different properties from those of its constituents, but the new properties are only *chemical and physical*; protoplasm — living protoplasm — exhibits new chemical and physical properties, but it exhibits also a new *kind* of property which is neither chemical nor physical.

"Life, then, is no affair of chemical and physical structure, and must find its explanation in something else. . . . Water, in fact, when formed from hydrogen and oxygen, is, in a certain way, and in relation to them, no



new product; it has still, like them, only chemical and physical qualities; it is still, as they are, *inorganic*. So far as *kind* of power is concerned, they are still on the same level. But not so protoplasm, where, with preservation of the chemical and physical likeness, there is the addition of the unlikeness of life, of organization, and of ideas . . . it is *not* mere molecular complication that we have any longer before us, and the qualities of the derivative are essentially and absolutely different from the qualities of the primitive. . . . As the differences of ice and steam from water lay not in the hydrogen and oxygen, but in the heat, so the difference of living from dead protoplasm lies not in the carbon, the hydrogen, the oxygen, and the nitrogen, but in the vital organization."

If chemical combination, or molecular change, is proved to be inadequate to account for the phenomena of life and organization, it must be even more inadequate to account for those of thought. Here Stirling, in passing, introduces, in opposition to the statement that thought is simply a *function* of matter, an argument, which is more fully developed in his address on *Materialism*, from which the following passage is taken:—

"But we are met here by the word *function*. . . . Thought is but a function of the brain, says the materialist; and so fancies that he has solved the problem. . . . Does the word function really remove the mystery? . . . Can consciousness be compared with, or set down in the category of, other functions? The function of the lung . . . can be followed throughout, and understood throughout. Though the peculiarity of vitality mingles there, it can still, in a certain aspect, be called a physical function, *and its result is of an identical nature*. If, and so far as, the function is physical, the result is physical. So with the stomach; function and result are there in the same category of being. The liver is so far a physical organ that it can be seen, it can be touched, it can be handled; but is it otherwise with the bile, which is the result of its function? Can it, too, not be seen, and touched, and handled? . . . But look now to the brain, and the so-called product of *its* function. Do we any longer find the same identity of its terms? No, the terms there are



veritable extremes—extremes wider than the poles apart—extremes sundered, as I have said, by the whole diameter of being. The result here, then, is not like the result of any other function. . . . The result here, in fact, is the very antithesis, the very counterpart, of the organ which is supposed to function it. An organ, after all, consists of parts; but thought has no parts, thought is *one*. Matter has one set of qualities, mind another; and those sets are wholly incommensurable, wholly incommunicable. A feeling is not square, a thought is not oval. Hardness, impenetrability, etc., are quite meaningless in reference to any simple constituent of mind, just as *its* properties again are wholly inapplicable to any constituent of matter.”

It is impossible to follow out here Stirling's entire argument of the conclusions of which what has been given above is only the barest outline, the steps to which—generally the most interesting part of the reasoning—have perforce been left out. The general conclusion of the argument, however, must be given; and it will be found to prove that, if, as was said above, Stirling throughout bases his reasoning entirely on physiological grounds, he is nevertheless still the metaphysician.

“In the difference, rather than in the identity, it is,” he remarks, “that the wonder lies. Here are several thousand pieces of protoplasm; analysis can detect no difference in them. They are to us, let us say, as they are to Mr Huxley, identical in power, in form, and in substance; and yet on all these several thousand little bits of apparently indistinguishable matter an element of difference so pervading and so persistent has been impressed, that, of them all, not one is interchangeable with another! Each seed feeds its own kind. The protoplasm of the gnat will no more grow into the fly than it will grow into an elephant. Protoplasm is protoplasm; yes, but man's protoplasm is man's protoplasm, and the mushroom's the mushroom's. In short, it is quite evident that the word modification, if it would conceal, is powerless to withdraw, the difference; which difference, moreover, is one of kind and not of degree.”

From this passage we see that, while throughout

the entire paper, Stirling has been bringing forward only physiological arguments, at the back of his mind there has been all the time the fundamental Hegelian distinction of *Identity* and *Difference*. This he himself afterwards admitted in the preface to the second edition of the pamphlet. He relates there how Professor Ueberweg, the German philosopher, had written to him: "As I am neither a physiologist nor a zoologist, I cannot be expected to follow your argument into its details, but I am vividly interested by its logical or dialectical leading thought—the contention, namely, for the right of the logical category of Difference, as against that of Identity one-sidedly accentuated, as it seems, by Huxley." To which Stirling replied, as he tells us, "that he (Ueberweg) had hit the mark—that I had been simply laughing all through, and holding up to the category of identity the *equally authentic* category of difference—but that it had taken a German to find me out."

The little book, which was published in the autumn after the address had been delivered (1869), was received with enthusiasm by men of science and letters not belonging to the materialistic school. The great Sir John Herschel, who was then an old man, and nearing the end of his life, wrote to a friend of Stirling's: "Anything more complete and final in *the way of refutation* than this Essay, I cannot well imagine"; and this opinion was shared by such men as Dr Lionel Beale (author, himself, of a work on *Protoplasm*), Dr John Brown (author of *Rab and his Friends*), Professor Masson, and Dr Hodge of Princeton.

## CHAPTER XIV

1870-1871

Offer of Lectureships in America—Stirling's Reasons for Declining—Reviews in *Courant* (Berkeley, Bain, etc.)—Stirling's Friendships—James Scot Henderson—Articles on Rüge—*Lectures on the Philosophy of Law*—Death of Stirling's Daughter—Letter from George Cupples

It was a natural consequence of Stirling's extraordinary vitality and intellectual energy that, when he was not fully occupied with intellectual work, he was apt to become depressed and low-spirited. Several of his letters of 1870 show him in this mood. The excitement of the contest for the Chair in 1868, and the occupation afforded, in 1869, by the preparation of his lecture on Protoplasm, first for an audience, and afterwards for the Press, were followed by a period of reaction.

"I?" he writes to Ingleby in April 1870—"Only clearing up little engagements—reading books sent me—Ueberweg's, Emerson's, Harris' (of St Louis), Bain's (not sent by Bain), etc., etc. . . . I feel sick, sour—have heart for nothing public—retreat into absolute retirement."

He had abundance of materials in hand still for important philosophical works—as, for instance, on Kant—but his books, so far, had not been a *pecuniary* success, whatever renown they had brought him; and, with a young family growing up round him, and a capital diminished by losses, he could not afford to disregard the pecuniary aspect of the case.

To Mr Hale-White, who had written urging him to bring out the exposition of Kant referred to in the *Secret*, he replied on May 8, 1870: "I am

still some two hundred pounds out of pocket by the works on Hegel and Hamilton, and consequently am not warranted to risk a publication on Kant. . . . Very curiously, too, directly after publication of the book on Hegel, certain investments began to look gloomy, so that till lately (that is, for about five years) I have had to live in such a state of misery and apprehension that the very sight of a volume of the *Secret of Hegel* made me shudder as if it had been my evil genius. I have no greater pleasure in the world than writing on those things, but I think you will see that I cannot at present be much tempted to go on with my Kant."

Early in the year, he had received a gratifying offer from America. The President of Harvard College wrote inviting him to give a series of lectures on philosophy at Harvard. For those lectures, the pecuniary return would not be large, but accompanying the letter of the President of Harvard was another from the Secretary of the Lowell Institute, Boston, inviting Stirling to give a series of twelve popular lectures at the Institute, for which he would receive £312.

"The whole expedition would be over in 3 months," Stirling wrote to Ingleby. "Of course, it is admirable, and would be quite the thing for an old habitué to lecturing with his material in his desk. I wish I could say it tempts me. Mere money will not. I have a great dislike to move. Let me just rotate in my daily routine. For the size of my family, I should just like my income doubled, but were I dead, my keep would be saved, and they would only be better off (I produce nothing, as you know), so that I have properly no anxiety there.—It is really hard to get me to move so decidedly as that—thirty lectures on I know not what—and off to America."

Although he was unwilling to "move so decidedly" as to America, another letter, written later



in the same year and to the same correspondent, proves that he at least contemplated another move, more permanent, if less distant.

"I had a visit on Saturday," he wrote on October 31, "from an old friend whom I knew many years ago in Wales (though he is a Scot)—a Mr Menelaus. He is the one great man now of Dowlais (the largest iron work in the world—the property of Sir — Guest—which netted sometimes in my time £300,000 per an., and now has trebled, according to Mr M., its average annual product). This visit has given me some new ideas. I am doing no good here—I have spent enormously, laboured enormously, with scarcely any result . . . money gets more and more a good daily—I do not require to live here—why not go back to Wales and—at least—practise as a physician? I suppose it would not be difficult to add M.D. to my other titles. Dowlais has some six surgeons, the chief has £600 per an., and all found him—house, horses, gas, coal, medicines, etc. It is not such a place as that I will take now—I should only go to some Welsh centre within reach of my old friends, as a physician only. I conceive Scotland to have disgraced herself in my case, and, though I had little fancy for an American exile, will be quite willing to shake the dust of my feet in her face—for something in England or Wales. Mr M. thought my ideas feasible, and I have *carte blanche* to go to him—indeed others—to look about me . . . so you see I am all for throwing philosophy and literature, as they only deserve at my hands, to the dogs, and going in for occupation that will pay."

It is perhaps scarcely necessary to say that the step contemplated was never taken; medicine had been abandoned, for good and all, twenty years before; and it would have been hardly possible for Stirling to return to it, even if he had been

really resolved to throw up philosophy, instead of merely writing in a passing mood of depression, as was the case. Almost the only work of Stirling's published during 1870 consisted of a number of short papers—chiefly reviews of books on very different subjects—which appeared in the *Courant* newspaper during that year and the previous one. The most important of the reviews were those on Ueberweg's German translation of Berkeley's *Principles of Human Knowledge*, on Semple's translation of Kant's *Metaphysic of Ethics*, on Beale's *Protoplasm*, on Bain's *Logic*, and perhaps we may add that on Sylvester's *Laws of Verse*.

Of Berkeley's philosophy, Stirling had no high opinion, as can be seen from the following extract from a letter to Dr Ingleby, dated March 7, 1869, in which he is refuting an attempt to find a resemblance between the idealism of Hegel and Berkeley:—

“Berkeley's subjective idealism is almost an incessant object of sincere rejection on the part of Hegel. I can see no resemblance. Hegelianism is hardly at all even idealism. Though thought is substance, yet a real independent *outer* is part of its machinery. There is nothing in Berkeley but—Things are sensations, and must be *where* these are, and *as* these are. Then to the question, Whence the sensations? Berkeley gives for reply the *word* God. That is, as Hegel says, God is Berkeley's Gosse (spout). Berkeley never thinks of the further question—but this Gosse, then, which you only abstractedly name, can you show it me—concretely, and its connexion with me—concretely? Berkeley is a *phrase*—Hegel is a vast *system* of metaphysics, logic, philosophy of nature, mental, moral, political, æsthetical, religious, historical science.”

To quote from the *Courant* article:—

“Berkeley's idealism, according to the Germans them-

selves, was but the *dogmatic* idealism ; that is, he set up the single proposition that things were mental, and merely explained and defended it. In him there is no *system* of philosophy whatever, whether theoretical or practical. . . . The entire matter of Berkeley's *Principles* and of his *Dialogues* can be reduced to the simple equation *Perceptum = perceptio*. That is, things are perceptions, and as perceptions can only be mental. This to a Hegel is a change but of small consequence. I do not ask you what things are, of what substance they are (he says); to explain these references is to explain neither things nor their system, and it is precisely things and their system that I want to understand. Here is a watch (we may suppose him to say); to explain it is to show me its system, and not to tell me it is silver, or it is gold, it is here or it is there. To tell me I am a spirit, too, and that a greater Spirit *gives* me the things, is again only to *tell*, it is not to explain. Spirit so used is an empty word."

In this extract, we see what was perhaps Stirling's fundamental objection to Berkeleianism—the absence of philosophical explanation and *system*, in place of which there is only *assertion*. In this reference, Stirling contrasts, in the article, the great German philosophers with Berkeley, and points out how, with the Germans, the main interest was *system*—"the system of philosophy in general, and in all its departments—physical, political, moral, religious, and æsthetic, not less than metaphysical and logical." This leads naturally—considering who the writer of the article is—to some discussion of the position of Hegel with respect to the theory of perception in a passage of remarkable lucidity, from which the following brief extract is quoted:—

"We have always thought it a mistake on the part of the adherents of the New Empiricism in Germany to fancy themselves and their movement in opposition to Hegel and his. . . . Hegel never denied the position of Empirical Psychology; and into the results of inquiry *from* that position, he was as curious as another. . . . Nevertheless, it is quite certain that from that position there never can be philosophy. Demonstrate never so clearly every link in the chain of connection between an assumed object and



an assumed subject, and you leave all the same, let the *medium* be understood as it may, the *terms* unexplained: both subject and object are still *assumed*. Now, precisely the removal of this assumption is the business of philosophy. Philosophy must demonstrate the single *necessity*, and its necessarily resultant single system. It is no explanation to exhibit *experience* as the source of our ideas . . . we must still explain experience. As Hegel says, the question at last is, not how came ideas into me, but how came they into the things themselves? The question in fact is—are ideas themselves *true*? How establish the *truth* of existence and its contents?"

The passage which follows, on Hegel's Absolute, ought to be light-giving to students of Hegel:—

"That is what Hegel means by the Absolute, of which it is peculiarly amusing to hear the uninitiated speak as if it might be the roc's egg that was the master of the genii in the *Arabian Nights*. . . . Mr. Micawber, with the intense sympathy of Mr Pecksniff, shakes his head, and thinks 'the constitution of the solar shade precarious'! Hegel, however, when—having remarked that 'Greece was pressing forward towards the idea of a god that had become man, and not as a remote foreign statue, but as an actually present god in the godless world'—he asks, 'was not, moreover, the infinite now shifted into self-consciousness?' is neither emptily prating with parade about the constitution of the solar shade, nor noisily babbling about a roc's egg. He is only saying, by his infinite and his absolute, what we have said a thousand times by the word truth. 'Truth, or the truth of things, was now supposed to lie in self-consciousness.' The absolute and the infinite—that is, the fundamental and abiding truth of things—was to Hegel simply self-consciousness *in a universal sense*. Thought was the one *Anagkē* and alone competent to the entire system of its own constituent particulars; of which system nature was but externalization as externalization. Nor is this Pantheism in any sense in which Christianity is not Pantheism.<sup>1</sup> The system of thought ends with the

<sup>1</sup> The following quotation from a letter to Cupples seems to furnish a reply to those who accuse Hegel of Pantheism: "Etymologically there is no Pantheism but materialism. To Hegel Nature is as much outer as it is to any man, and he never for a moment fancies that God and Nature are not *two*."



Absolute Idea, and that of nature with Life; these, then, are but the constituents of the absolute spirit that sums the whole. He is the living subject of the creative thought, and in Him it is that finite subjects live and move, and have their being. . . . And this is at once Philosophy and Christianity."

This passage seems to contain a reply to those who object, to the God of Hegel, the want of personality. Hegel's fundamental principle is Self-consciousness—not the *subjective* self-consciousness of the Cartesian *Cogito ergo sum*, but the universal self-consciousness—and self-consciousness surely implies personality.

The whole of the article, did space permit, might be quoted with advantage. It is full of thought and suggestion on many points, expressed with all the writer's usual vividness and originality, and with more than his usual clearness. But some of the other *Courant* articles deserve a word or two.

The *Bain* article, as might be expected, is purely *polemical*. Bain was an *aufgeklärter*, an empiricist, and therefore, philosophically, anathema to Stirling. "Bain seems to belong wholly to the Mill and Lewes school," he writes in a letter to George Cupples. "No apodictic exists for him: he asks what you mean by necessity, and has succeeded in persuading himself it does not exist even in Mathematics." This being so, it is only natural that Stirling's review on Bain should be an assault in full armour. We shall give here only the concluding paragraph:—

"But interesting points to discuss with Mr Bain crowd on us. Practically, however, we shall just indicate our dissent from the dictum that 'there can be no end beyond human enjoyment—the gaining of pleasure and the averting of pain.' Respectfully and moderately, but firmly, we must be allowed to deny this. Never since the world began has such been the principle of action to any one civilized community. *Eudæmonism never appears in this world but when the community is in dissolution, and the*

*individual must look out for himself.* And theoretically, we would point out that there can be no *philosophy* of subjectivity, but only of objectivity. To have so many sensations, and so many laws of association, and then imaginatively to combine them into the formed world as we know it, that is not philosophy. Philosophy is to give us the *reason* of and for the *formed* world itself. It is quite curious to watch Mr Mill and Mr Bain in what they think philosophizing—Mr Mill concealing himself from his own presuppositions behind the shadowy heads of a ghostly asparagus-bunch of possible sensations; and Mr Bain, with a sobriety of aspect that becomes the occasion, intently milking, if we may use the word, his own biceps into Time and Space.”

Perhaps it may be permitted, before passing on, to express the hope that the sentence italicized in the above quotation is not prophetic; for, surely, never was the spirit of Eudæmonism more rampant than at present—never was it more generally accepted—at any rate, in practice—as the principle of action!

The Bain review seems to have made some talk on its appearance in the *Courant*. Writing to Ingleby on May 1 (the article had appeared on April 19), Stirling says: “*Courant* hears on all hands of the Bain article—‘crushing,’ ‘clear,’ ‘serve ’em right,’ ‘so-and-so, far and away our best philosophical writer,’ etc., etc. Wal! I guess it wur about time. We ain’t through the wood yet, though—I have so much to do yet for Kant and Hegel.”

The publication of a book on the *Laws of Verse* by the great mathematician, Sylvester, gave to Stirling, in October 1870, the opportunity for a spirited and characteristic review. The following brief passage is the spontaneous expression of the literary man “by the grace of God” :—

“We have here ample proof of Mr Sylvester’s acquaintance with the most delicate secrets of the art . . . but we feel that, after all, much must be left, so far as execution is

concerned, to the *unconscious* instinct of the poet himself. The secrets of the true poet are even infinite, and, after all that is done for consciousness, he must be left for the most part to himself. Take Milton, for example. Who can ever hope to name, or give a reason for, all that entrances him in the numbers of that divinest of masters? Nay, were all finally named and reasoned, would the charm be as great? Or might not the resultant *rules* but prove as mechanical appliances and destructive of life?"

In this passage we hear the voice of Nature's *littérateur* (as contrasted with the school-made, or University-made species), to whom it is utterly absurd, and even profane, to expect to acquire the divine afflatus by means of any course of teaching—an opinion which appears unhappily to be becoming uncommon in these days.

After 1870, Stirling appears to have written no more articles for the *Courant*, the reason being probably a change in the editorship of the paper. During the years when the series of articles mentioned above appeared in its pages, Stirling had no more intimate friend and associate than its then editor, James Scot Henderson. Henderson, however, gave up the editorship in order to go to London, where for several years he supported his wife and family by that most desperate of all means of procuring a livelihood—writing articles for the various periodicals—and died many years before Stirling, worn out with the daily strain and struggle of his life. He left Edinburgh in the autumn of 1871, and in a letter written in 1872, Stirling writes: "Henderson writes from London. He is *indefatigable*. Has articles almost every day somewhere or other—*Pall Mall*, *Saturday*, *Fortnightly*, *Spectator*, *Globe*, *British Quarterly*."

In his pamphlet on *Cholera*, Stirling had expressed the belief that, for the procurement of even bodily health, certain moral and intellectual, as well as physical, conditions were necessary, and among those he included friendship. The model man

whom he describes in the pamphlet must have a friend, or friends, "and know the clear deliverance of a full communion." When he wrote those words, he was expressing his personal conviction, his personal experience. Throughout his life—in his student days in Glasgow, in Wales, in France—he was never without at least one personal friend; and during the period we have now reached, if his slender means cut him off, more or less, from Society properly so-called, they could not deprive him of the satisfaction of friendship.

During the years of his maturity and old age, three men stood, at different periods, in the closest friendship with him, and of these three, Henderson was the special friend of the last years of the "sixties" and the first of the "seventies." Other friends and acquaintances he had. It was about this period that he met again, after an interval of many years, two friends of his student days—the Rev. Andrew Gunion, and the Rev. James Simpson, both of whom he saw at frequent intervals. Then there was Professor Campbell Fraser, whom he sometimes met; there was Professor Masson, with whom he occasionally enjoyed a smoke and a talk; and there was the Rev. James Mitchell, Parish minister of South Leith, and afterwards Moderator of the Church of Scotland, to whose sympathy and practical wisdom he often resorted for counsel and support in domestic difficulties and anxieties; but of them all, at that time, Henderson undoubtedly stood closest to him—not even, perhaps, excepting George Cupples (one of the three men referred to above), with whom he was then carrying on a frequent correspondence.

In his friendship with Stirling, Henderson—as was perhaps the case with each of Stirling's most intimate friends—was *celui qui baise*. Considering Stirling's commanding intellect, and force of character, this was indeed almost inevitable, though



he returned the affection bestowed on him with warmth. Soft, and flabby, and somewhat sickly of hue, as the desk man is apt to be, slow of movement and slow of speech, with sleepy, half-closed dark eyes, and a sleepy, soft voice, Henderson's attitude to his fervid, vehement, energetic friend was almost that of an admiring wife to an admired husband. Whenever he had a few hours' leisure from his editorial duties, he was eager to spend them in a smoke and a talk with Stirling, he contributing to the talk, as might be expected, immeasurably the smaller share. Sometimes in summer they would take a long walk together, by the sea, or among the Pentland Hills, accompanied by Henderson's big retriever, "Hector," for which its master cherished an almost paternal affection; and once or twice they spent a few days under the same roof in the island of Arran. Perhaps the following extract from a letter of Henderson's will show, better than anything else, the kind of friendship which Stirling was capable of inspiring, and did actually inspire. There had evidently been some little unpleasantness between the friends; the editor had somehow offended Stirling, and he had avenged himself on the friend. Henderson's letter is one of explanation and self-defence, ending with this paragraph:—

"I CANNOT allow myself to contemplate as possible any interruption of our friendship and intercourse. Whatever you do or determine, *that* MUST be put out of the question. Tell me what you wish—impose on me what test you please—do anything, say anything, write anything, rather than contemplate the possibility that I can ever cease to be towards you anything but your affectionate and admiring friend."

In July of 1870, the two friends had taken a little trip together to the Firth of Clyde, which to Stirling remained throughout life the epitome of all

the beauty in the world. It was the year of the Franco-Prussian war, and Stirling writes to his wife: "I am quite undecided about future movements. 'Othello's occupation is gone': there is no use to write philosophy in these war times."

Yet, in that summer it was that, besides the reviews in the *Courant* mentioned above, Stirling had two articles in the *British Controversialist* on Arnold Rüge, of which it is to be regretted that, in consequence of want of space, no summary or analysis can be given here. Besides a vivid characterization of the man Rüge (who, born in the island of Rügen, lived many years in Brighton in England), and of his writings, the articles throw valuable sidelights on Hegel and Kant, on Berkeley and Hume, on Grote and Mill and Bain, and even on Goethe and Kotzebue. Rüge may be said to have attempted, in his person, the conciliation of contraries—he was a Hegelian and an *Aufgeklärter*. He belonged, in fact, to what is called the Hegelian school "of the left"—at least latterly, for, according to Stirling, he began with "the Hegelian centre or right," from which his career was "a retrocession to the extremest radicalism and heterodoxy—that is, to the extremest anti-Hegelianism."

"Rüge, as we have seen, is anti-Christian in religion, and a radical in politics; and in both respects he acknowledges himself to be anti-Hegelian. Nevertheless, he believes himself, even so, to have been truer to the principle of Hegel than Hegel himself was. In this we think he was wrong. . . . The principle of Hegel—and of this we feel sure—can only lead, politically, to the reconstruction of *organic* or *objective* liberty [in contrast with the individual, or subjective freedom, which is Rüge's desideratum], and religiously, to a distinct, positive, and living Theism" [in contrast with the Pantheism of Rüge].

"Glad you liked Rüge 2," its author writes to Cupples in June 1870. "I thought the Hegel part would please. Evidently, however, for English

readers something like a reproduction of the essential *matter* of Hegel is a necessity, before all my revelations in regard to *form* (and motives) can be appreciated at its true value. Had Ferrier lived, who was generous, an *homme de lettres* by the grace of God, and who had for many years hopelessly turned Hegel's volumes round and round in his hands, what I have done would long ago have had the true word said for it."

The same note which is struck here (in the reference to Ferrier) is heard again in a letter to Ingleby, written some two months later. Stirling had taken his family for a month's holiday to Millport, on the Firth of Clyde, and wrote from there. "I brought no book here but Catullus, Greek Testament, Aristotle's *Poetic* (Ueberweg's text, notes and version) and Hegel's *Rechts Philosophie*. The last has got the most of my reading (for actually I *can* READ Hegel now), and, ah me! what wisdom, and wisdom for the hour that now is, and not the slightest dream of it in England to anyone who has not read something of my own."

The mention here of the Greek Testament recalls the fact that it was an inseparable companion in all Stirling's wanderings. He possessed a small pocket edition, which he carried with him everywhere, and which became yellow, and thumb-marked, and thin at the edges with much use. Mrs Stirling used to tell how, during a brief holiday to somewhere on the Clyde, being kept indoors by three wet days, Stirling read the Greek Testament continuously aloud to her, first in Greek and then in English. She was a truly religious woman; but she owned to being glad when the rain ceased.

On the occasion of the holiday to Millport in 1870, the house in Edinburgh, which had been shut up during the absence of the family, was entered by tramps, who seemed to have made it their head-



quarters for some days at least! Writing to Dr Ingleby, Stirling refers to the fact thus:—

“Yes, once more *domi!* But we found someone had been there before us, and carried off articles which it will take some £15 to replace. We thank Messieurs the tramps for their mercy, but, besides another full suit, they have carried off my black dress trousers and waistcoat (dress *coats* not pawnable—and, after trial, my boots had proved impracticable), and so, being so poor at present, rather than buy new ones, I shall not give or take socially—till the British nation think fit to pay me for my work!!”

It was in the following year (in November 1871) that his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Law* were delivered before the Juridical Society of Edinburgh. These lectures Stirling believed to contain some of his best work. “You would see I have been lecturing to the lawyers,” he writes in the December following. “The lectures will be printed in the *Journal of Jurisprudence*, and I think the first lecture will be a *revelation* out and out, while the second will put the Freedom of the Will on a new and permanent basis for ever—I hope.”

Twenty-one years later, he had evidently not changed his opinion of the importance of the lectures. Writing in 1892 to an earnest student of philosophy, who was anxious to get light on Hegel, he says: “I write by this post to Messrs Oliver & Boyd to send you a copy of my *Lectures on Law*. The first 15 pages have Hegel in full, but in sum.”

This opinion was shared by such men as Professor Jowett of Oxford and Professor Campbell Fraser of Edinburgh, the first of whom wrote, “You have made the general idea of Hegelianism more plain than it was ever made before in English”; while the latter stated, “I do not remember to have encountered in our British literature a more densely-packed mass of thought.” “Densely packed” with



thought, the first lecture (the 15 pages alluded to by Stirling) especially is—so much so that the lecturer hardly seems to have allowed his audience a moment to take breath, and one cannot help wondering what “the lawyers” made of the two sentences into which the systems of Kant and Hegel are respectively shut—even with the help of the explanations which follow.

If, as one philosophical admirer of Stirling’s said, this lecture is “Hegel in a nut-shell,” however, it is a shell which the completely uninitiated reader would find very hard to crack—just because it is so “densely packed” with thought—though even he would find some passages in it clear and light-giving. On the other hand, to the reader who has already made some study of Hegel, and understands the enormous difficulty of the subject, the lecture will indeed prove, as its author said, a “revelation” of what can be accomplished in a few pages by the man who has made his subject absolutely his own—who knows his Hegel, as Stirling claimed to know him, “back and front, inside and out, as well as other men know their A B C.” There is nowhere else perhaps in all Stirling’s writings where the student of Hegel will find, in such small space, so much help in the comprehension of the Hegelian significance of the terms *Notion*, universal, singular and particular, identity and difference, etc. The lectures are founded chiefly, if not wholly, on Hegel’s *Rechts Philosophie*, which Stirling regarded with the deepest admiration, as perhaps the most important of all Hegel’s works.

When, some two years after they were delivered, the lectures were published in book form, the London correspondent of the *Scotsman* telegraphed: “Dr Hutchison Stirling’s new work was published to-day. . . . Here the renowned Hegelian appears in his might, and the manner in which he lays about

him is indicative of the intellectual giant in the world of metaphysics."

The period we have now reached in Stirling's life was domestically a sad one. It was now that his family began to break up. His eldest son, an intelligent lad, who had taken several prizes at the High School, including a first in Greek, showed, as he advanced in his "teens," a certain restlessness of disposition, and an unwillingness to settle down to a sedentary life; and in compliance with his wishes, an opening was found for him on the farm of a cousin in Buenos Ayres, who was a doctor as well as a sheep farmer.

The first break in the family was followed, two or three years later, by another more complete than the first. Though Stirling was now a man of fifty-one, he had never as yet, except in his professional capacity, stood close to that "one incommunicable gulf—the mighty gulf between life and death," and vainly sought to pierce with his sight its unfathomable dark depths. It can well be understood, therefore, that the death, in 1871, of his second daughter, Elizabeth Margaret—a girl of a bright, but sensitive, artistic temperament, and the promise of great charm—must have left a permanent mark on his life and character.

The event drew from his friend, George Cupples, a letter of condolence, so beautiful in its simple, literary expression, so *real* in its sympathy, so truly human and Christian in its thought and the spirit that breathes in it, that it seems to deserve a place alone, and therefore some portions of it are given here:—

"MY DEAR STIRLING,—The heart prompts me to write to you at once, as I hasten to do. I know that all words are foolish in such a case—uncommon as it is in its affliction. It is as of old—the best a friend could do would be to come and sit

silent in acknowledgment of the stroke that brings all thought and feeling to the dust. Be assured at least that sincere friendship moves me towards you, willing to mourn as you do—if it might be. If that is the best. Perhaps it is not so—perhaps it is better to try to be like to the sounds outside, and if possible something like the coming slip of natural sunshine which will afterwards light down into the gloom from God, to begin the slow restoration of acquiescence. . . . No event of such a kind ever came upon me so stunningly in its utter unexpectedness. The thought of it came full on my mind in the night, and woke me into anxious desires on your behalf and your wife's—half hopelessness of words to write to you, and half prayer. The worn-out feeling of it to-day brings up some satisfaction in thinking that grief wore you out—and watching. . . .

“It so happens that among all the clear remembrances I have of bright and sweet girlhood in its early spring-time, there is none clearer, none brighter or sweeter than of her. . . . And so she is to remain henceforth all your own, in as far as this world goes—never to go through the other love, nor the cares, nor the fretting and down-dragging common-place. . . . We know that in the temple of our God many pillars are needed . . . but it seems that there are other materials required in its making—adornments from the most precious of human treasure, blossoms of love to be made amaranth, with their eyes still the same to receive you. Some have no such to lay up there—you could never have found in your heart to do it, but it is done past your power. . . . What household is there that does not need one such messenger to be taken up with the dew of innocence still worn, and the bloom never brushed off the cheek?

“The fleeting years fleet so fast now, that this world, oftener and oftener, seems the shadow, *that*

world the substance. I seem to myself at times to be speeding towards the reality of all this, with the swiftness of the moments. . . . There *is* a secret to be discovered—I do not doubt that we shall discover some of it, though often questioning whether so much will be made known at once, as people seem to fancy. Of one grand certainty we are possessed—the certainty of God—the One who makes Himself manifest through human love to human love in the growing creature of His hand. . . . How soon it seems to be coming that we shall attain to the stage of finding this to be the central reality of our life, in a new sphere, leaving the old behind.”