

whose body is not scored with half a dozen sword-cuts is a rarity hardly to be found among them. Their women only are safe. The Wuzereee, having a touch of knightly chivalry about him, scorns to injure a woman ; and if by chance one strays into their villages, she is treated with respect and courtesy, and restored to her friends. So possessed, too, are they by the instinct of hospitality, that if a Powindah had lost his companions, and could make his way to a Wuzereee hut, he would be sure of the protection and hospitality due to a guest.



ART. VI.—THE NATURAL HISTORY OF MORALS.

1. *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne.* By W. E. H. LECKY, M.A. London : Longmans. 1869.
2. *Macmillan's Magazine, July, 1869.* "A Questionable Parentage for Morals." By RICHARD HOLT HUTTON.

MR. LECKY has produced, in a marvellously short space of time, another of those works which, to borrow George Eliot's estimate of his "*History of Rationalism*," are eminently acceptable to the general reader. He displays as before a conspicuous industry, a praiseworthy erudition and a lively and attractive style. Had his industry been a little more patient, his learning more carefully digested, and his style somewhat more sober and chastened, we venture to think that he would have achieved a fame more solid and lasting. As it is, he seems to prefer the general reader to the learned student, and to write for a public which demands something more substantial than the popular novel and more attractive than the scientific history. For such a public works like Mr. Lecky's are admirably adapted. To combine the facile philosophy of a Hepworth Dixon with the judicial solemnity of a Hallam, in a style which naturally results from such a fusion, is a feat which, it may be, few would care to accomplish, but few, if they had the will, would accomplish so well. Mr. Lecky has, it seems, chosen his course in literature and is pursuing it steadily and successfully ; we yield him the homage which is due to success, but we cannot refrain from expressing our sincere regret that a man with such eminent powers should have chosen a course which is so distinctly beneath him, and preferred the fame of a popular *littérateur* to that of a diligent student and profound historian. In his graceful *éloge* of Dean Milman, in the preface to his present work, Mr. Lecky

shows that his ideal of historical composition is a high one ; it is the more to be regretted that he has allowed himself to fall short of it. We venture to predict that the works of Milman will be studied long after those of Mr. Lecky have been laid for ever on the bookshelves ; and this notwithstanding the conspicuous merits which will gain for them a noisier and more immediate fame than works of far greater sterling worth are ever likely to achieve. Historical work, if not of the first order, either for genius or for learning or for both, is sure to pass ere long into well-merited oblivion. Not every historian can be a Gibbon ; but every historian can at least determine that he will not consciously fall short of the standard of excellence which Gibbon's work exhibits. It is our deliberate and well-sustained conviction that Mr. Lecky is not a Gibbon.

We do not, however, propose on the present occasion to deal with Mr. Lecky's work as a whole. It is only the introductory chapter, occupying nearly one third of the first volume, which is to engage our immediate attention. The chapter is entitled, "The Natural History of Morals," and professes to be an introductory survey of the different theories of morals, as they are to be found in the writings of the leading moral philosophers of modern times. We are at a loss to understand the necessity of such a discussion as this in a work like Mr. Lecky's ; the subject is a vast one, and needs, as it deserves, attentive study and undivided attention. It can make little difference to Mr. Lecky's subsequent investigations whether he believes that moral sentiments are intuitive or derivative, so long as he believes, as most sane men do, that moral sentiments exist. At least such would be the impression of most students of moral philosophy before they had studied Mr. Lecky's chapter ; but when they find that he is under the strange delusion that all derivative moralists deny the existence of those moral sentiments which they have devoted all their energies to explain, their vague wonder at his entering on the discussion at all will be lost in astonishment at his audacity in entering on it so insufficiently prepared. It was in Mr. Lecky's power to have avoided this controversy altogether ; but having engaged in it, it was his duty to have prepared himself for it by at least ordinary study of his subject : whereas, notwithstanding his parade of authorities, we cannot discover that he has ever distinctly grasped the nature of the problem which he sets himself to solve.

In the first place we must enter our protest against this semi-popular style of discussing moral questions. Moral philosophy, or what is conceived as such, is just one of those subjects which is especially attractive to the general reader, but which the general reader is eminently unfitted to discuss. It uses terms

which are in everybody's mouth, it appeals to experience with which we are all familiar, it deals with feelings and actions which we every one of us recognise as our own, and we therefore are naturally apt to think that we may claim to have a share in its discussions without any previous study or training. There can be no greater or more fatal mistake: it is precisely because the subject-matter of moral philosophy is so familiar to us all that the general reader is disqualified for its discussion. All philosophical discussion needs calmness, a judicial insight, a trained habit of analysis, and a sustained power of abstraction; but when such discussion uses words of every-day import, and deals with feelings and acts of universal experience, as moral philosophy does, these special philosophic faculties are of more than ordinary necessity; and these are the faculties which the general reader is almost certain to lack. Such an one takes no interest and claims no voice in a discussion whose phraseology is unfamiliar to him and whose subject-matter lies beyond his experience; but let him hear the word "conscience," or "duty," or some other watchword of moral philosophy, and his attention is at once on the alert, and he claims to be heard with the wisest. Every word that a moral philosopher uses in his speculations is a household word with all; it carries associations which it requires the most careful analysis to remove, it is linked with feelings which it may need the utmost effort to repress, and yet this analysis and this effort are necessary before we can hope to make the slightest advance in speculation on the subject with which we are dealing. In other subjects no such effort is called for. We do not feel about "genus" and "species" as we do about "conscience" and "duty," and we can therefore reason about them better. There is no weapon more effective in the armoury of philosophic controversy than the device of enlisting the feelings of your supporters against the opinions of your adversary; and to this device the subject-matter of morals lends itself most easily. When this object is accomplished the battle is more than half won. It is not the least item in our indictment against Mr. Lecky that he has chosen an audience and a mode of controversy which renders this sort of attack easy and certain of success. We are not concerned to defend what is generally called the 'utilitarian theory'; it may be true or it may be false; but we are certain that it is not overthrown by Mr. Lecky's arguments, while he has done his best to discredit it with persons who have no sort of claim to be judges of the controversy.

It would matter little, however, that Mr. Lecky has chosen to plead before a tribunal which is wholly incompetent to hear the case, if the arguments which he has used were sound, and if the indictment which he prefers against his antagonist were a just

one. Our chief complaint is, that while pleading before this incompetent tribunal, Mr. Lecky condescends to arguments which elsewhere would be wholly without weight, and are only of importance because they enlist the feelings of an audience already predisposed in his favour. The advocates of a derivative theory of morals must ever be at a disadvantage in the popular estimation : to propose to analyse a feeling is, in the public mind, equivalent to denying its existence, and it is easy to raise an outcry against men who can be represented as denying the existence of feelings which are within the experience of all. To persons unversed in analysis, to explain the source and origin of feelings is very like explaining them away ; and in moral speculation especially, it is ever thought something profane to lay bare the roots of conscience and the moral nature. With the skill of a practised pleader, Mr. Lecky begins his discussion by enlisting the sympathies of his audience on his own side. "The intuitive moralist, for reasons I shall hereafter explain," he says, "believes that the Utilitarian theory is profoundly immoral." This, if it means anything, must mean that all utilitarians are either knaves or fools : Mr. Lecky seems to be unaware that the alternative is capable of retort. His dilemma is that utilitarians either do not understand their own theory, or that while proclaiming it to be true, they know it to be not only false, but pernicious. It would perhaps have been more modest and becoming in one who was about to enter on a great controversy, if, before offering such an alternative to opponents of acknowledged integrity and unquestioned renown, he had accepted it for himself so far as to give a little more patience and study to the comprehension of his antagonists. As it is, whatever may be thought of Mr. Lecky's success as a pleader, no one with even a moderate knowledge of the questions at issue, will allow that he has made a contribution of the smallest value to the history of Moral Philosophy, or that he has advanced the discussion of the question at issue by a single step. We shall give in the sequel, if space allows, our reasons for believing that Mr. Lecky, despite his unquestioned powers, is somewhat deficient in those special qualities of mind which are indispensable to speculative discussion : for the present it behoves us, having first briefly stated the problem to be solved, to examine the manner in which Mr. Lecky has approached it, and the success with which he has handled it.

"The two rival theories of morals are known by many names, and are subdivided into many groups. One of them is generally described as the stoical, the intuitive, the independent or the sentimental ; the other as the epicurean, the inductive, the utilitarian, or the selfish." Such is Mr. Lecky's introductory statement as to the subject matter of his chapter. Mr. Lecky despises

Bentham, or he might perhaps have benefited by his warning against the use of what he aptly called "question-begging appellatives." It is to beg the question at once to describe your opponent's theory as "selfish." Students of morals know that such language means no more than that you dislike the theory in question; but the public at large believe that you start with a moral superiority over your adversaries: the superiority, however, consists in this, that you deliberately use language which cannot mislead the wise, and cannot instruct the foolish, which we venture to think is a superiority the reverse of moral. We cannot accept even Mr. Lecky's preliminary statement; we yield him the title of "intuitive" for his friends, but we claim for his opponents that of "derivative," a phrase unobjectionable in itself, unassociated with any particular school or thinker, and expressing with sufficient distinctness the main point at issue.

Now, what is meant by saying that while one school of moral philosophers may be described as intuitive, their opponents claim the title of derivative? Simply this, that the former maintain that the moral sentiment, the moral sense, the conscience, or the moral faculty is immediate, intuitive, innate, inscrutable, incapable of analysis; while the latter hold that it is the product of simpler elements, derived from certain primordial facts of human nature by processes which psychology acknowledges in cases which are less open to dispute. Conscience is as real and as distinct a faculty to the derivative moralist as to the intuitive; but to the one it is a highly organized product whose growth it is possible to trace, to the other it is a primary element of human nature whose origin it is as mischievous as it is hopeless to seek.

It would seem, therefore, that the controversy between the rival schools is exclusively concerned with what in ordinary ethical speculation is called the Analysis of the Moral Sentiment. The intuitive moralist denies that such analysis is possible, and if he can make his denial good, all further questions fall to the ground. But from the derivative point of view another and not less important question arises. If moral sentiments are capable of analysis at all, if they can be shown to be derived, by whatsoever process, from some simple elements of human nature, a test of their validity may be found in a consideration of the sources whence they spring, and, in a comparison of the circumstances of their birth with those of their continued existence. Thus arises the question of the Standard or Criterion—a question distinct from though intimately connected with the former: it is a question which is more practical and legal than speculative and ethical, and one the proper discussion of which belongs to the philosophy of law rather than to that of morals. To analyse the moral senti-

ment is to go back to the past ; to apply the criterion which such analysis furnishes is to look forward to the future. It is true that the solution of the problem of analysis contains implicitly the solution of the problem of the criterion, but the two questions must always be kept distinct, and have generally been considered apart in the writings of derivative moralists. We give in a subsequent page the emphatic declaration of Bentham on this point. Bentham was one who, from the impatience engendered by an ardent philanthropy and the burning indignation roused in a generous mind by blatant and triumphant wrong, might have been tempted in the pursuit of his practical ends to ignore or forget a distinction which is mainly of speculative importance : it is possible that he occasionally did so : still, the passage to which we refer shows that he distinctly recognised that in purely moral speculation the question of the origin of the moral sentiment may and can be distinguished from that of its criterion. It will probably surprise our readers, as it did us, to find that this distinction, which is perfectly familiar to all students of morals, is one of which either Mr. Lecky has never heard, or which he finds it convenient to forget. No doubt under certain circumstances, and from certain points of view, these two questions or problems coincide, and the answer and solution of the one furnishes or contains the answer and solution of the other. An intuitive theory of morals, from the nature of the case, discards the distinction ; but every theory, which, on whatsoever ground, maintains the derivative character of moral sentiments does and must recognise that the sentiments themselves are distinct, and in many cases utterly removed from the circumstances and relations out of which they arise, or in which they continue to exist. Mr. Lecky, as the advocate of an intuitive theory, may consistently refuse to recognise the distinction ; but for him, as the impugner of a derivative theory, to ignore it is to argue beside the point. Mr. Lecky reasons as if all derivative moralists deny the existence of the sentiments whose origin they endeavour to explain ; whereas, when the controversy is regarded in its true light, the question at issue is, whether the sentiments of mankind on moral subjects are immediate and intuitive, or derivative and secondary : one side no less than the other recognises the existence of these sentiments ; were it not so, there could be no controversy at all. The utilitarian, like the advocate of a moral sense, acknowledges a conscience, and would strengthen its authority ; nor would he in cases of immediate and individual action substitute considerations of utility for the promptings of the moral sentiment. On the side of action, at least, both parties to the controversy are agreed : it is only when we approach the speculative side that their divergence becomes manifest. A man

does such and such an act: when asked why he does so, he answers without hesitation, Because my conscience bids me; and both utilitarian and intuitionist accept the answer: their difference arises when they come to consider what the conscience is, and whence it springs, and while the one maintains that it is something primordial and inexplicable, the other endeavours to analyse it, to discover its constituents, and to exhibit its sources: at this point then controversy begins. Intuitionists may struggle as they please to shift the ground; they have done so over and over again, not without considerable temporary success: but misrepresentation has its limits, and even misunderstanding may in time be corrected; it is however, no slight argument in favour of the intuitional theory that frequently as this particular misrepresentation has been exposed, and this misunderstanding corrected, it is revived again and again by each fresh assault of the utilitarian theory, and arguments are brought forward that have been so often refuted and exposed, that, if reason and argument had anything to do with conscience, they would long ago have been abandoned for very shame. Argument is useless now on such a matter; it would long ago have been superfluous had it ever been of any avail: it is sufficient to say with Austin "It was never contended or conceited by a sound, orthodox utilitarian, that the lover should kiss his mistress with an eye to the common-weal."*

This fundamental distinction then being premised, we are in a position to examine the relation in which the leading derivative moralists stand to the fundamental problems of their science.

Ethical speculation may be said to have commenced in England with Hobbes. He was one of the first among English writers who treated the moral sentiment as derivative. His analysis was possibly crude and premature; but the question was in modern times first raised by him, and the discussions to which his writings gave rise were more instrumental than anything else in keeping the controversy alive. Ethical speculation, more perhaps than any other branch of philosophy, is stimulated and advanced by continual controversy: we probably have to thank the crude sagacity of Hobbes for the position which the derivative theory of morals holds in the present day. For Hobbes it was sufficient to point out that the conscience is not final and inscrutable; time and discussion were sufficient for the rest, and time and discussion have added much to the original suggestions of Hobbes. Moral sentiment is in some way or other derivative, said he; and he added that it was largely derived from our feelings of pleasure and utility. But the process of derivation of the moral sentiment,

* Austin on "Jurisprudence," vol. i. p. 101.

and the mode of its growth were never completely investigated by Hobbes, or his immediate followers. They seem to have confounded the developed conscience with the sources from which they conceived it to be derived, and it needed the emphatic declarations of Shaftesbury, Butler, and their school, that the moral faculty is independent and distinct, to redress the balance and to give their due weight to the inquiries of the intuitive school. The problem, as it presents itself for solution in this early stage of the controversy, is widely different from that which forms the battle-ground of utilitarians and intuitionists in the present day. From Hobbes to Herbert Spencer many stages have to be passed, each one of which has to be carefully discriminated from the rest, while the right appreciation of their various relations is essential to a due understanding of the questions at issue. The fundamental principles on which the so-called utilitarian theory is based have been exhibited in various forms at different stages of the controversy. We have, at first, the crude doctrine, that duty may be resolved into pleasure, that all our actions are based on calculations, immediate or remote, of personal, or else of general utility, without any attempt to face the real problem—namely, how it is that our moral sentiments arise, whence we derive those feelings and judgments which in their mature form are as remote from all consideration of utility as a scarlet colour is from the sound of a trumpet. It is first in the pages of Hartley that such an attempt as this is systematically made. The doctrine of association of ideas is in its simplest form, as Mr. Lecky observes, at least as old as Aristotle; but for its application to the analysis of the moral sentiment Hartley, notwithstanding that, as he himself candidly admits, the germs of his speculations are to be found in the dissertation of Gay, is entitled to the chief credit. A revolution was thenceforth effected in ethical inquiry; the question now was not, as it had been previously, Are all our actions selfish? Is duty pleasure? but, Are the moral sentiments which all men profess, and some men at least endeavour to act upon, capable of analysis? Can any process be suggested whereby they may be supposed to have arisen, any source be indicated from which they may be conceived to have sprung? The term ‘utilitarian’ is itself of later date; it sprang from the impulse given to inquiry on these subjects by the writings of Bentham, and was adopted by Mr. J. S. Mill, to express a general adhesion, not without important modifications, to the doctrines which Bentham had enunciated. It is now perhaps time that this term also should be discarded, and that the controversy should be placed in its true light, by setting the opponents face to face with one another as advocates respectively of the derivative and intuitive theories of morals. The word ‘utility,’ together with others connected with

it, is now encumbered with associations which are misleading ; and like many other terms employed in ethical inquiry, it tends to obscure the main point at issue. A man may fairly avow himself a derivative moralist, and may even call himself an utilitarian, without in the least degree committing himself to that view of utility as expounded by Bentham, which is now inevitably associated with the name. Let us, then, discarding the term utilitarian and the theories of which it is the badge, examine what is the present state of the controversy, and investigate its main issues ; we shall then be in a better position for appreciating Mr. Lecky's performance, both as regards his exposition of his opponent's views, and the arguments with which he endeavours to combat them.

It is obvious from what has already been said that the two problems presented for solution must be carefully distinguished. In the first place, we have to inquire whether the moral sentiments, the conscience, or the moral sense admit of analysis at all ; and if this question is answered in the affirmative, the further question arises, What are the conditions whereon they depend, what is the criterion whereby they are to be distinguished ? It is not necessary to go beyond these questions ; the question whether moral sentiments exist is at an end ; all moralists acknowledge them, for to deny them would be to fly in the face of the most obvious facts : it may be doubted, indeed, whether their existence was ever seriously denied, save in the writings of those intuitive moralists who, in order to make their own case stronger and their task easier, have not scrupled to ascribe the denial to their opponents. But at this stage of the controversy the existence of moral sentiments is admitted by both sides, the question at issue being as to their origin.

First, then, let us inquire whether there is any possible way whereby we can explain the growth of moral sentiments. This problem, like all questions of origin, is one of amazing complexity, and the solution of it, if it can be solved at all, will necessarily only be partial and approximate. We cannot isolate a man, or a society, and examine the characters they exhibit in their isolation ; we cannot turn to records of men in their earliest state, for there must always have been a state earlier than the records. All we can do is to appeal to obvious phenomena of psychology, and to analogous mental processes, and to show, if we can, that if the moral sentiment be not innate, the recognised principles of human nature are sufficient to account for its growth, and thus, by an appeal to the law of parcimony, to throw the burden of proof on our opponents. Now it is maintained by Hartley and his followers that we have in the ordinary process of association of

ideas a clue to the mystery of moral sentiment. It is of course a well-known psychological fact that ideas which at any time enter the mind together tend subsequently to recall each other, and that the association between them is strong in proportion to the frequency of their simultaneous repetition: by ideas must, of course, in this case be understood all operations of consciousness, sensations, thoughts, feelings, sentiments, whatever can enter the mind through the medium of the senses, or be formed therein by the operation of the laws of intelligence. It is almost superfluous to give illustrations of this well-known fact; it is familiar to all, and the operation of the law, either consciously or unconsciously, is a part of our daily and hourly experience: we give in a note the homely but apt illustration of Hobbes.*

Now when we come to apply this principle to the investigation of moral phenomena, a new phase of association presents itself. Along with the ordinary association of ideas which we have briefly described above, we observe in certain cases a corresponding and simultaneous dissociation, or as Tucker called it, 'translation;' and this especially in cases where ideas or feelings are accompanied or followed by acts which in some way or other depend upon them. Thus an idea may give rise to a desire or other feeling which becomes the spring or motive of an act to gratify that feeling; the act of course primarily depends on the idea which was its original source, but being likewise associated with the feeling which prompted it, and with other feelings which surround it or which spring up when it is done, it becomes severed from its original source, and associated with the feelings which form its immediate environment. This process may be illustrated by cases beyond the region of dispute, and is familiar to all who have made human nature in any degree their study: the illustration given by Hartley is that of the passion of avarice; the greed whose primary source is the desire for the enjoyment which wealth can purchase becomes dissociated from its origin, and transferred to the passion for hoarding which shrinks from every expense. This is not the only case which might be brought forward to illustrate the theory, though it is such a striking one

* "For in a discourse of our present civil war, what could seem more impertinent, than to ask, as one did, what was the value of a Roman penny? Yet the coherence to me was manifest enough. For the thought of the war introduced the thought of the delivering up the king to his enemies; the thought of that, brought in the thought of the delivering up of Christ; and that again the thought of the thirty pence, which was the price of that treason; and thence easily followed that malicious question, and all this in a moment of time; for thought is quick."—*Hobbes' Works*, vol. iii. p. 12, ed. Molesworth.

that it has been used, perhaps too freely, by nearly all the followers of Hartley. We are probably most of us familiar with classes of actions, in themselves indifferent, which have been condemned by individuals or by society, because they have been surrounded, owing to circumstances, by vicious associations; and there are perhaps few who do not reckon among their acquaintance certain amiable and well-disposed persons, who, while they would not admit a pack of ordinary playing cards into their houses, would readily sit down to a game framed on precisely the same principles as those played with ordinary cards, but which they play, for the soothing of their conscience, with cards of their own construction purposely made as unlike the ordinary cards as possible in everything, except the only thing which is essential—namely, the method of play.

Now it is possible that this process of translation and metamorphosis may take place in the case of the moral sentiments, or rather may have taken place in those remote ages of society when the more prominent moral sentiments were, on this hypothesis, formed. These sentiments we may suppose to have arisen out of very various conditions, and to rest on very various considerations, some of utility, some of affection, some of resentment, some of desire; they sprang up unconsciously, with no direct reference to the basis on which they rest, and they are now so transformed that all connexion with their origin is obliterated. We are not concerned to discriminate in each particular case the foundations whereon each of the moral sentiments which constitute the mature conscience rests; it is sufficient to suggest that these sentiments are derived, indirectly it may be, and certainly unconsciously, from the ordinary relations in which a man stands either to himself or to his fellow-creatures. Moral action, according to this view, rests primarily and in its origin on some one or other of the sanctions, physical or social, wherewith neglect of the rule is visited; but the sentiment which arises out of the sanction becomes by translation entirely severed from its source and indissolubly attached to the course of action which it enjoins. I must do this because if I refrain I shall suffer for it, may be the primary form of the moral law; but the Categorical Imperative is its mature expression. The transition from the one to the other is doubtless difficult and obscure, but this characteristic it only shares with many other of the less obvious phenomena of human nature. It rests with the opponents of the theory of Hartley to show that no such transition could take place. That the mature conscience is widely different from the crude promptings of interest, or of affection, is only what is to be expected when the strange effects of the process of

translation are fully realized.* The theory would lack its chief recommendation if it did not recognise this difference and at least endeavour to account for it; but it is mere idle metaphor to talk, as Mr. Lecky does, of "the moral chemistry of Hartley" (p. 66), or to speak of evolving "by a strange process of philosophic alchemy, the most heroic and the most sensitive virtue out of this original selfishness" (p. 26); and it is metaphor worse than idle to say, "the virtue of Hartley is, in its last analysis, but a disease of the imagination. It may be more advantageous to society than avarice, but it is formed in the same manner, and has exactly the same degree of binding force" (p. 68). Mr. Lecky seems to think that the theory is refuted by calling it moral chemistry or philosophic alchemy—the latter phrase we presume is not meant for more than a rhetorical synonym for the former. But can he be unaware that chemistry deals with innumerable compounds wholly unlike the elements of which they are formed, or did he ever hear of a chemist who denied that water was composed of oxygen and hydrogen because it was so exceedingly unlike them? Again, Mr. Lecky argues that because avarice is a disease therefore virtue is. What would be thought of a physiologist who should argue that all growth of tissue is a disease because of the analogy which subsists between the normal growth of tissue and the morbid growth of a tumour? "With self-interest," says Hartley, in a sentence which cannot be too often quoted nor too steadily borne in mind, "a man must begin; he may end in self-annihilation." The end is as unlike the beginning as it can be, but we need not be deterred by the unlikeness if it can be shown that the two are connected by a process of continuous growth. The whole process of organic growth consists in the transformation of dead matter into living tissue; shall we at once reject a theory which applies this analogy to the growth of moral feelings merely because we can trace no resemblance between the mature feeling and the materials out of which it is constructed? We may with truth apply to the theory of Hartley Dumont's application of the parable of Samson: "C'est le doux qui sort du terrible. C'est le miel recueilli dans la gueule du lion."†

The question, however, of the analysis of the moral sentiment covers only one half of the controversy between derivative and intuitive moralists, and, belonging as it does as much to the sphere

* We adopt the term 'translation,' suggested by Tucker, in preference to the more usual term 'association,' because it seems more distinctly to express the double process of association and dissociation which takes place in the formation of moral sentiments.

† Quoted by Mr. Lecky, p. 42, note.

of psychology as to that of ethics, it has been debated with less keenness than the other question which we have now to investigate. It remains to ask, What is the criterion or standard to which all moral sentiments, supposing them to be derivative, are or may be referred? This question, closely connected as it clearly is with the question of analysis, nevertheless is one which can be distinguished from it. It is a more practical question, for if a standard or criterion exist it may be appealed to as against sentiments which have outlasted the conditions out of which they sprang or in any other way have become obsolete. At the same time it is a question involving no less difficulty and perplexity than the former one; but holding as we do that moral sentiments are derivative and not intuitive, it is necessary for us boldly to face the difficulty, and to declare as distinctly as we can the sources from which these sentiments, in our judgment, spring. In the most general sense then, while still disclaiming the title utilitarian, we do not hesitate to declare that we believe that moral sentiments have their root in a general desire to promote human happiness. We do not in the least mean that a conscious regard for the general welfare is the motive whereon people act, or ever have acted; all we mean is that primary moral sentiments spring unconsciously from some such considerations, dimly and obscurely felt but never clearly and intelligently realized until men have reached that stage, far in advance of the period when moral sentiments arise, when they begin to reflect on their actions and to investigate their consciousness. The utility felt and acted upon may be, and probably is, in the early stage of man's moral progress, of a very low character and of a very limited scope, just as the first principles of many of the sciences are recognised in a restricted form long before their wide-spread or universal application is perceived; but the sense of utility either expands with the extension of human society and the growth of human relations, or else subsides when the conditions and relations out of which it originally sprang no longer exist. Thus, utility (we use the word under protest in a sense widely different, as we shall hereafter show, from that of Bentham) being the original source from which moral sentiments flow, properly becomes the criterion whereby they are to be judged, though not the motive nor spring of human action. This distinction, though one of vital importance, is one that is constantly and most persistently ignored by the opponents of utilitarian ethics. It was perfectly familiar to Bentham as the extract we give in the note will show.* It may perhaps surprise

* "But is it never, then, from any other considerations than those of utility, that we derive our notions of right and wrong? I do not know, I do not

Mr. Lecky to find that even the despised Bentham has not overlooked this cardinal point. It certainly has surprised us that one whose contempt for Bentham ought at least to be justified by familiarity with his writings should have ignored a distinction so clearly laid down by Bentham and recognised by all utilitarian writers.

While, however, thus declaring our general adhesion to the fundamental doctrine of utilitarianism, we must at once disclaim any sympathy with the form that that doctrine assumed in the hands of Bentham. The great work that Bentham set himself to perform, and which in a great measure he did perform, of letting the light of common sense and common justice into the most barbarous system of jurisprudence in Europe, is one that entitles him to the gratitude and respect of all who hold the cause of human advancement dear, and there is nothing more ungenerous in Mr. Lecky's chapter than the words in which he characterizes Bentham (p. 25 n.). It is far otherwise that a real master of the subject speaks of his revered teacher and friend, and we quote Mr. Mill's words with greater pleasure, because while we dissent from many of Bentham's doctrines, and shall have occasion to express our dissent, we cannot better exhibit our respect for his name and our admiration for the work he achieved :—

"There are two men, recently deceased, to whom their country is indebted, not only for the greater part of the important ideas which have been thrown into circulation among its thinking men in their time, but for a revolution in its general modes of thought and investigation. . . . These men are, Jeremy Bentham and Samuel Taylor Coleridge—the two great seminal minds of England in their age."*

Nevertheless, great as were Bentham's achievements, they were not in the region of pure philosophy. The criterion of morality, which he proposed, fertile as it was in the domain of jurisprudence, is one that will not bear the test of sound criticism. Bentham seemed to imagine that he had discovered a moral standard, independent of individual caprice, and capable of universal application. The greatest happiness of the greatest number, though in the majority of cases, a sound test of legislative

care. Whether a moral sentiment can be originally conceived from any other source than a view of utility, is one question: whether, upon examination and reflection, it can, in point of fact, be actually persisted in and justified on any other ground by a person reflecting within himself, is another: whether, in point of right, it can properly be justified on any other ground, by a person addressing himself to the community, is a third. The two first are questions of speculation: it matters not, comparatively speaking, how they are decided. The last is a question of practice: the decision of it is of as much importance as that of any can be."—*Principles of Morals and Legislation*, p. 33, ed. 1823.

* "Dissertations and Discussions," vol. i. p. 330.

[Vol. XCII. No. CLXXXII.]—NEW SERIES, Vol. XXXVI. No. II. L L

prudence, is not, as was fondly imagined by Bentham, a universal criterion of moral sentiment : and it is fairly open to the criticism of Mr Lecky, a criticism, be it observed, anticipated and enforced by the great modern champions of utilitarianism, Mr. Mill and John Austin : — “ Notwithstanding the claim of great precision which utilitarian writers so boastfully make, the standard by which they profess to measure morals is itself absolutely incapable of definition or accurate explanation. Happiness is one of the most indeterminate and undefinable words in the language, and what are the conditions of ‘the greatest possible happiness’ no one can precisely say. No two nations, perhaps, no two individuals, would find them the same” (p. 40). Utilitarian moralists, as a rule, make no greater claim to precision than their subject matter admits of : it is true that Bentham opposes the principle of utility to what he calls the “principle of sympathy and antipathy” whereby each man proclaims that to be right or wrong which happens to harmonize with his sentiment on the subject, but this is precisely the part of Bentham’s doctrine in which he has not been followed by those who may especially be called his disciples. If we may take Mr. Mill as the exponent of the fundamental canon of utilitarianism, we find him distinctly maintaining that the pleasures from which, as their source, all moral sentiments ultimately spring, unquestionably differ in kind, and that the true criterion is not the verdict of the greatest number, but the opinion of those who have the greatest amount of experience on the subject. This view in no way conflicts with the general theory of those who maintain that moral sentiments are derivative, though it is of course widely distinct from the special doctrine of Bentham. Utilitarians can no longer say that their theory makes the moral judgment as clear as a mathematical axiom, but they can at least claim that it is not at variance with obvious experience. It is true no doubt that no two nations, or even no two individuals would find the conditions of happiness the same ; but the discovery is not Mr. Lecky’s, it is at least as old as Aristotle, and utilitarians would have made but little advance if they could not make their theory square with this very obvious fact. It is admitted on all hands, by intuitive and derivative moralists alike, that morality advances with the advance of human nature and the growth of human society ; and it is one of the greatest claims of the derivative theory to respect that it recognises this fact, and at least endeavours to account for it : the straits in which the intuitive theory finds itself when it is brought face to face with this fact, are exhibited in the impotent distinction which it is forced to draw between “innate moral faculties and innate moral ideas” (Lecky, p. 23) : it must be admitted by candid observers that when the controversy is narrowed to this

very minute issue, there is very little left on either side to fight about.

This distinction, to which Mr. Lecky attaches great weight, brings us naturally to the latest and, in our judgment, the least controvertible form which the derivative theory of morals has assumed. We refer to the theory of Mr. Herbert Spencer as to the origin of moral ideas. The work of Mr. Spencer on "*Social Statics*," which is unfortunately out of print, we have not immediately at hand, and the great *System of Philosophy* by the same author has not yet advanced as far as the section which is to treat of moral philosophy: we are therefore obliged to content ourselves for the present purpose with a very succinct exposition of his fundamental principles, given by Mr. Herbert Spencer in a letter to Mr. Mill, lately reprinted by Professor Bain, in his handbook of "*Mental and Moral Science*." In expanding, as we shall have to do, the theory there laid down, we run the risk of introducing ideas which Mr. Spencer might repudiate, and of attributing to him theories for which he cannot be held responsible. Before entering on the discussion of his views, we cannot refrain from offering our tribute of respect to one who, whether for the extent of his positive knowledge, or for the profundity of his speculative insight, has already achieved a name second to none in the whole range of English philosophy, and whose works will worthily sustain the credit of English thought in the present generation.

Mr. Herbert Spencer is well known as the author of a system of philosophy based on the general conception of Evolution; the form in which this theory is applied to the explanation of moral phenomena, is in his own words as follows:—

"To make my position fully understood, it seems needful to add that, corresponding to the fundamental propositions of a developed moral science, there have been, and still are, developing in the race certain fundamental moral intuitions; and that though these moral intuitions are the result of accumulated experiences of utility gradually organized and inherited, they have come to be quite independent of conscious experience. Just in the same way that I believe the intuition of space possessed by any living individual to have arisen from organized and consolidated experiences of all antecedent individuals, who bequeathed to him their slowly developed nervous organizations;—just as I believe that this intuition, requiring only to be made definite and complete by personal experiences, has practically become a form of thought, apparently quite independent of experience; so do I believe that the experiences of utility, organized and consolidated through all past generations of the human race, have been producing corresponding nervous modifications, which, by continued transmission and accumulation, have become in us certain faculties of moral intuition—certain emotions responding to right and wrong conduct, which have no apparent basis in the individual experiences of utility. I also hold

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that, just as the space intuition responds to the exact demonstrations of geometry, and has its rough conclusions interpreted and verified by them; so will moral intuitions respond to the demonstrations of moral science, and will have their rough conclusions interpreted and verified by them."*

This doctrine, as those who are acquainted with Mr. Spencer's work on Psychology know, is an application of his general psychological theory to the elucidation of moral phenomena; it may be added, as was said above, that the psychological theory itself is but a branch of the general theory of evolution, which forms the basis of his System of Philosophy. If it be possible to express the fundamental conception of this profound and elaborate system in a few words, we should say that Mr. Spencer's general theory is, that the various phenomena of the universe are the successive modifications of a single primordial and inscrutable force, tending gradually through all its phases of evolution towards equilibrium, and thence to subsequent dissolution. The special application of this general formula to the interpretation of psychological phenomena will be seen when it is stated that, in Mr. Spencer's view all psychological phenomena are successive terms in the gradually increasing correspondence between an organism and its environment. Reflex action accumulating its residua within the organism develops a rudimentary sense of touch; the sense of touch, by an increasing complexity, differentiates into the other senses; the accumulated responses to the impressions of sense engender a nascent habit; habit become hereditary exhibits itself as instinct; instinct brought to bear on an ever-varying environment loses its fixity of action, and grows into intelligence; intelligence, the response of a highly organized individual to an infinitely complex environment, exhibits a fixity in its fundamental principles corresponding to the uniformity of the environment, and a variety in its special responses not less analogous to the variety of phenomena, but gradually tends to complete equilibrium, and to a uniformity as mechanical and as constant as that of instinct.

It will be seen that a theory such as we have here roughly and imperfectly sketched holds a position midway between the ordinary philosophy of experience and its *à priori* opponents. All our knowledge comes directly or indirectly from experience, Mr. Spencer would say without hesitation; but to this he would add a rider, that the experience is not the experience of the individual—not perhaps in all cases the experience of the species,—but experience organized and embedded in the nervous system, some, "when wild in woods, the noble savage ran," some, it may be,

* Bain, "Mental and Moral Science," p. 722. The preceding paragraphs quoted by Mr. Bain deserve the most careful attention.

long ere the noble savage or his more immediate ancestors had made their appearance on the earth. We are the heirs of all the ages, according to this theory, in a strictly literal sense, and our knowledge and intuition of space may be the lineal descendant of the dull and feeble irritability of a "structureless speck of jelly," in the depths of a motionless and sunless ocean.*

There is perhaps no more striking portion of Mr. Spencer's work on psychology than the chapter wherein he points to the reconciliation of the extreme experimental and intuitive schools of philosophy as one of the consequences of the theory which he expounds: we quote a passage from this chapter which expresses with greater precision than we can hope to do the view which we have indicated.

"Such, as it seems to me, is the only possible reconciliation between the experience-hypothesis and the hypothesis of the transcendentalists: neither of which is tenable by itself. Various insurmountable difficulties presented by the Kantian doctrine have already been pointed out, and the antagonist doctrine, taken alone, presents difficulties that I conceive to be equally insurmountable. To rest with the unqualified assertion that, antecedent to experience, the mind is a blank, is to ignore the all-essential questions,—whence comes the power of organizing experiences? whence arise the different degrees of that power possessed by different races of organisms, and different individuals of the same race? If at birth there exists nothing but a passive receptivity of impressions, why should not a horse be as educable as a man? or, should it be said that language makes the difference, then why should not the cat and dog, out of the same household experiences, arrive at equal degrees and kinds of intelligence? Understood in its current form the experience-hypothesis implies that the presence of a definitely organized nervous system is a circumstance of no moment—a fact not needing to be taken into account! Yet it is the all-important fact—the fact to which, in one sense, the criticisms of Leibnitz and others pointed—the fact without which an assimilation of experiences is utterly inexplicable. The physiologist very well knows that throughout the animal kingdom in general the actions are dependent on the nervous structure. He knows that each reflex movement implies the agency of certain nerves and ganglia; that a development of complicated instincts is accompanied by a complication of the nervous centres and their commissural connexions; that in the same creature in different stages, as larva and imago for example, the instincts change as the nervous structure changes; and that as we advance to creatures of high intelligence, a vast increase in the size and complexity of the nervous system takes place. What is the obvious inference? Is it not that the ability to co-ordinate impressions and to perform the appropriate actions in all cases implies the pre-existence of certain nerves arranged in a certain way? What is the meaning of the human brain? Is it not that its immensely numerous and involved re-

* See the chapter on The Correspondence as extending in Space, pp. 394–412, in "The Principles of Psychology," 1st ed.

lations of parts stand for so many *established* relations among the psychical changes? Every one of the countless connexions among the fibres of the cerebral masses, answers to some permanent connexion of phenomena in the experiences of the race. Just as the organized arrangement subsisting between the sensory nerves of the nostrils and the motor nerves of the respiratory muscles not only makes possible a sneeze, but also, in the newly-born infant, implies sneezings to be hereafter performed; so, all the organized arrangements subsisting among the nerves of the cerebrum in the newly-born infant, not only make possible certain combinations of impressions into compound ideas, but also imply that such combinations will hereafter be made—imply that there are answering combinations in the outer world—imply a preparedness to cognize these combinations—imply faculties of comprehending them. It is true that the resulting combinations of psychical changes do not take place with the same readiness and automatic precision as the simple reflex action instanced—it is true that a certain amount of individual experience seems required to establish them. But while this is partly due to the fact that these combinations are highly involved, extremely varied in their modes of occurrence, made up therefore of psychical relations less completely coherent, and so need some further repetitions to perfect them; it is in a much greater degree due to the fact, that at birth the organization of the brain is incomplete, and does not cease its spontaneous progress for twenty or thirty years afterwards. The defenders of the hypothesis that knowledge wholly results from the experiences of the individual, ignoring as they do that mental evolution which is due to the autogenous development of the nervous system, fall into an error as great as if they were to ascribe all bodily growth to exercise, and none to the innate tendency to assume the adult form. Were the infant born with a mature sized and completely-constructed brain, their arguments would have some validity. But as it is, the gradually-increasing intelligence displayed throughout childhood and youth is in a much greater degree due to the completion of the cerebral organization than to the individual experiences—a truth clearly proved by the fact that in adult life there is often found to exist a high endowment of some faculty which, during education, was never brought into play. Doubtless the individual experiences furnish the concrete materials for all thought; doubtless the organized and semi-organized arrangements existing among the cerebral nerves, can give no knowledge until there has been a presentation of the external relations to which they correspond; and doubtless the child's daily observations and reasonings have the effect of facilitating and strengthening those involved nervous connexions that are in process of spontaneous evolution; just as its daily gambols aid the growth of its limbs. But this is quite a different thing from saying that its intelligence is wholly *produced* by its experiences. That is an utterly inadmissible doctrine—a doctrine which makes the presence of a brain meaningless—a doctrine which makes idiocy unaccountable.”*

* “Principles of Psychology,” p. 580.

We are now in a position to understand more completely the doctrine as to the origin of our moral ideas, set forth in the passage quoted from Mr. Bain some pages back, and criticised by Mr. R. H. Hutton, in the article in the July number of *Macmillan's Magazine*, whose title we have placed at the head of this essay. Mr. Spencer, it would seem, proposes to take up the controversy at the point where the ordinary utilitarian and association theories leave it, to concede somewhat to the intuitional school, but to concede nothing of which they can make such use as to establish their own theory. This innate feeling of right and wrong which the intuitionists insist on is admitted by Mr. Spencer; it is now, he says, innate, but it is the heritage of the race, acquired, in some cases easily enough from the simplicity of the conditions involved, but in many cases laboriously, and with difficulty; now however registered in the general conscience of mankind, and endowed with the greater authority that its origin is involved in a mystery well-nigh impenetrable.

It will probably not be denied that the theory which we have thus endeavoured to lay before our readers, is a most important contribution to the philosophy of morals; it must, however, be at the same time admitted that it is at present only a hypothesis and as such stands in need of such verification as is, from the nature of the case, attainable. The hereditary transmission of intellectual qualities is, we are aware, an open question with the best physiologists, though it would seem that the tendency of speculation on the subject is towards an affirmative answer; indeed the arguments of Mr. Spencer in the chapter from which we have largely quoted, seem to us very nearly to decide the point. But if the question be left open, it is only one of the issues of the hypothesis which, we acknowledge, stands in need of verification: to those who wish to see how far the verification has at present been carried in the direction of what may be called comparative psychology, we commend the attentive perusal of the later chapters of Mr. Spencer's "*Principles of Psychology*." It appears to us that, even in its present stage, this theory of the progressive development of moral sentiments in the hereditary conscience of the race is the greatest advance that has been made in ethical speculation since the time of Hartley. It strengthens the derivative theory at the point where it was avowedly weakest, and supplies a basis for association, which it has long been felt to want; and, whether ultimately verified or not, it deserves the most careful attention, and the most patient scrutiny, for it can scarcely fail to leave its mark on the history of moral philosophy.

If we have conceived this theory aright, we should say that while recognising and maintaining the theory of Hartley on the

part that association or translation plays in the growth of moral ideas, it carries the analysis further and throws the formation of these ideas back to a point far transcending conscious experience. It thus goes far to explain the real mystery which surrounds moral phenomena viewed as the product of association, for it shows distinctly why it is impossible within the limits of a single life, or even within the conscious experience of the human race, to trace the complete growth of the fundamental provisions of the moral law. These have been determined once for all long ago: it may be that they rested originally on grounds insufficient and incomplete, but as all experience tends to confirm them, and all moral action is—at least indirectly—based on them, their sanction is for ever renewed, and they become invested in the mature conscience with a mysterious sanctity and an overwhelming force. “We never can in practice repeat,” says Mackintosh, in his remarks on Hartley, “though we may in theory perceive, the process whereby the moral sentiments were formed.” It is idle to say that experience, by which is meant the direct observation of a single thinker, furnishes no evidence of the process; a limited experience, such as this, gives but little evidence of geological formations; but if the observation be extended throughout the range of time, the evidence becomes tolerably complete. So, in morals, although the fundamental distinctions must have been drawn at the very origin of human society, yet history is not without examples of ideals of conduct which arose out of the conditions of the time, and which afterwards perished although, with the vitality peculiar to the products of association, they may for a long time have survived their origin. So, on the other hand there have been many practices which a low moral standard has sanctioned, or a perverted one enjoined, which have afterwards been unanimously condemned by the awakening conscience of mankind.

Mr. Hutton, in the article in *Macmillan's Magazine*, to which we have referred, discusses at some length this theory of Mr. Spencer's: but we venture to think that he has scarcely given to the subject the attention which it deserves: at any rate he discusses the moral theory shadowed forth in Mr. Spencer's letter to Mr. Mill almost without reference to the other works of the author. For instance, he commences *in limine* with the objection that the growth of moral ideas cannot be illustrated by the growth of intuitions of space, inasmuch as the development-theory fails to account for the growth of these intuitions:—

“I can quite understand how our ancestors' experiences of space might very much shorten the necessary apprenticeship for us in attaining the same experience of space—but I cannot understand how we could inherit from them any mental habit which they had not

themselves acquired—and I do not see how they could acquire that which seems to me to be peculiar to the intuition of space, the character of absolute *necessity*, as distinguished from mere empirical certainty, belonging to our judgments on it.”—p. 268.

It would carry us too far from our immediate subject to pursue the discussion which this objection opens up. We can only say that absolute necessity is, according to Mr. Spencer, begotten by empirical certainty and indissoluble association; that the uniformity of response in the organism is the reflex of a corresponding uniformity in the environment; thus so long as space relations in the external world remain uniform, their correlatives in the human mind remain uniform also, and this uniformity is strengthened and enforced by continuous and hereditary association. We are here merely stating the theory advanced and developed by Mr. Spencer in his work on Psychology; and to that we must refer Mr. Hutton for a detailed discussion of the question raised by him.

When the arguments of Mr. Hutton more immediately directed to the ethical application of Mr. Spencer's theory are examined, it will be found that they are based on the supposition that the theory is intended as a complete solution of the problem of the Analysis of the Moral Sentiment. As we have shown, however, this is not the case. Mr. Spencer's purpose is to take up the question where Hartley left it, and while maintaining the theory of Hartley as to the growth of the moral sentiment, to suggest a further explanation of its origin. Mr. Hutton directs against Mr. Spencer's theory arguments which are answered by that of Hartley, and while neglecting to show that Mr. Spencer does not account for the origin of our ideas of right and wrong, he challenges him to account for their growth and development.

“The theory that a moral intuition is nothing but the final equivalent of a number of experiences of utility accumulated through many generations, with the predicate of their ‘utility’ forgotten or obscured, seems to me to be a thing which reduces a ‘moral’ intuition to a dry habit or tendency, which it is *uncomfortable* to resist; which if we do resist we feel put out as we do by a disturbance of the regular order of our meals, or the routine of our daily occupations, but which has either no reason or sacredness at all, or if it has any, just that which led us to approve it at first, and no other. If then, we inherit a dislike to certain actions, and a liking for certain others, apart from any inheritance of our ancestors' reasons for disliking and liking them, and apart also from any experience of our own as to their consequences, that dislike and liking seem to me not to resemble a sense of absolute right and wrong *more*, but *less*, than the original utilitarian experience which according to Mr. Spencer, probably gave rise originally to that dislike and liking.”—pp. 269-70.

Mr. Hutton here writes as if it were maintained that the original perception of utility—dim, partial, and imperfect—were to be taken as all that is contained in a mature moral sentiment : whereas we conceive Mr. Spencer's theory to be that, given the original perception, association, education, and the gradual extension of the sphere of positive duty with that of human relations are sufficient to do the rest. The sacredness which attaches to moral sentiments of the higher kind, is the product of innumerable associations which in the course of ages have overgrown the rule. We find in our conscience a sentiment urging us to a particular course of action : in children, or in persons of a low moral type, Mr. Hutton will hardly maintain that this sentiment amounts to much more than a feeble liking or dislike which untoward circumstances may easily stifle or suppress ; but if once acted on, the sentiment is strengthened by the action, and the growth of a nascent habit is commenced : the sentiment grows in sanctity the longer it is obeyed ; if it is reflected on and analysed, the perceived utility which is its source lends it a fresh authority, and clothes it with renewed sacredness : thus from a dim, half-conscious feeling a full-grown conscience is produced, which, as Butler says, "if it had strength as it has right, would rule the world."

We have little space left to deal with Mr. Hutton's remaining objections, which we give in his own words :—

"That Mr. Spencer's theory could not account for the intuitional sacredness now attached to *individual* moral rules and principles, without accounting *à fortiori*, and still more triumphantly, for the general claim of the 'greatest happiness' principle over us as the most final of all moral intuitions—which is conspicuously contrary to the fact, as not even the utilitarians themselves plead any instinctive or intuitive sanction for their great principle : and lastly, that there is no trace of positive evidence for any single instance of the transformation of a utilitarian rule of right into an intuition, since we can find no utilitarian principle of the most ancient times which is now an accepted moral intuition, nor any moral intuition, however sacred, which has not been promulgated thousands of years ago, and which has not constantly had to stem the tide of utilitarian *objections* to its authority,—and this age after age, in our own day quite as much as in days gone by."—p. 268.

In the first place we have to reply that the dim perceptions of utility which, according to Mr. Spencer, are the primordial basis of the human conscience, are of a character widely distinct from the mature and reasoned judgment called the "greatest happiness principle."* A man may well be supposed to have

* We adopt this term because Mr. Hutton has used it, but we have no desire to attach ourselves to it in the signification given to it by Bentham.

an intuitive perception that two and two make four, or that two straight lines cannot enclose a space, without his intuitive knowledge extending throughout the domain of geometry or the calculus. Perfect knowledge would no doubt include the whole region of the knowable, and a perfect conscience would be coextensive with the whole sphere of duty; but it is not maintained that this absolute equilibrium between the mind and its environment has yet been reached, we are at present at a very backward stage of the correspondence, to use the phrases sanctioned by Mr. Spencer: it is no objection to the theory in question that it cannot be shown to hold good on ground which it was never intended to occupy. The subsidence of the final canon of duty into an universal intuition is a consummation which hope may aspire to, but which imagination itself almost fails to foresee.

Lastly, Mr. Hutton, in his final objection, seems to confound the dim perception, which is all that Mr. Spencer contends for, with the conscious calculation of utility which may take place at a subsequent stage of moral growth. In tracing back the intuition of space to the listless response of the *Amœba* to an external stimulus, we do not credit the *Amœba* with a knowledge of even the first elements of geometry; it is only maintained that here at any rate is the germ from which such knowledge may after countless ages spring. So in the moral sphere, actions spring, it may be, from a mere feeling of uneasiness, their consequences are noted almost without a thought, and thus unconsciously sentiments may arise which it is the business of future generations to analyse and explain. Many sentiments may thus have arisen and again subsided in competition with others of greater perceived utility; those which survived in this struggle for existence were those which the general conscience of humanity pronounced on experience to be most worthy of life. For historical evidence of such a process we necessarily look in vain. History can never furnish direct evidence on a question of origin, for all conscious observation, on which history rests, belongs to a period far later than the origin of any of the primary elements of human nature. But history can at least point to analogous processes, and thus indirectly strengthen a theory which it cannot directly prove.

"Mr. Spencer," says Mr. Hutton, "would scarcely refer to instances like the sanitary laws of the Jews which prohibited the eating of pork, and other well-known and peculiar physical rules to which great sacredness was attached. For not only would it be impossible to show that, in any of these cases, the utilitarian benefit derived from the observance had led to the rule; but obviously, had that been so, the rule would, by Mr. Spencer's own canon, have grown in authority from

generation to generation, instead of having speedily become obsolete."—p. 272.

Now if, as can scarcely be doubted, the Mosaic laws are, to a very great extent, the codification of a mass of pre-existing customs, we certainly find an extremely probable basis for the prohibition of pork in the fact that pork is to this day unwholesome food in the East. What then more natural than that a perception of this fact gave rise to the custom which, once established, soon acquired a sacredness not intrinsically its own, and found a place in the laws which moulded the polity of the Jewish race? So long as the conditions remained the same the rule did "grow in authority from generation to generation," and its universal observance by the Jews, now that its original sanction has disappeared, seems to us no slight corroboration of the general theory which we have put forward. Here is a rule based on obvious utility when first established, but retained with obstinate tenacity long after its origin is forgotten and its utility has ceased to exist. This is but one instance out of many that might be brought forward of rules that have survived the circumstances which originally gave them birth. Does not the revolt of St. Paul against "the law" show vividly how moral sentiments may survive their origin, and become a stumbling-block rather than a guide to a healthy and vigorous conscience? Does not the whole history of human progress teach that the chief note of moral and spiritual regeneration is a death to the letter of the law and a new life in its spirit?

We return to Mr. Lecky; but we cannot part from Mr. Hutton without thanking him for calling attention to the very remarkable theory of Mr. Spencer and giving an impulse to its discussion. It will readily be seen that if the derivative theory of moral sentiments be set forth in anything like the aspect in which we have endeavoured to exhibit it, the great majority of Mr. Lecky's criticisms fall wide of the mark. As soon as it is perceived that the so-called theory of utility does not propose to substitute calculations of utility, of happiness, or of pleasure, or indeed calculations of any sort whatever for the spontaneous and immediate promptings of the conscience or the moral sense, the controversy passes out of the region of practice, wherein it has been assailed with so much passion, and repudiated with so much prejudice, into that of speculation, where we may be permitted to breathe a purer atmosphere and to reason with greater calmness. It will be admitted by all candid opponents that if the derivative moralists are at one with them in their recognition of the existence of moral sentiments, and in their anxiety to strengthen and refine them, no assumption of moral superiority is possible. It is scarcely necessary to observe, were it not that the contrary

belief is so persistently held and so industriously propagated by the opponents of utilitarianism, that no utilitarian ever wished to weaken the sanctions of morality or to relax the bonds of duty. A chivalrous and almost Quixotic allegiance to the moral standard has ever been characteristic of the utilitarian school. Bentham was sneered at (Mr. Lecky repeats the sneer) for upholding the duty of humanity to animals; Mr. Mill was thought too clever and too good for the House of Commons because he ventured to apply the highest standard of morality to questions of public policy. Let all to whom utilitarianism is at first sight repugnant consider the character of its leading advocates, and diligently apply themselves to a patient understanding of the theory. We venture to assert with confidence that if this be conscientiously done, we shall hear no more of the moral superiority of the intuitive theory, or of the dangerous tendency of utilitarian doctrines.

This notion of dangerous tendency deserves, perhaps, a few moments' attention. We venture to submit that in cases of speculative enquiry the only question to be asked is, Is such and such an opinion true? If it is true it cannot be dangerous except to such things as depend on the assumption of its falsehood; and such things being based on a lie may be allowed to perish without regret. So with utilitarianism; if it be true it cannot be dangerous, save to those who misunderstand it. All weapons are dangerous in the hands of those who know not how to use them, but this is no reason why the State should absolutely prohibit the manufacture and sale of dangerous weapons. If then utilitarianism be true, we must meet the danger, if danger there be, as best we may; if it be false, it can be proved to be so without any reference to its danger. In any case, therefore, the plea of dangerous tendency is wholly out of place. It is true that every advance in speculation is dangerous to some pre-existing beliefs; but the warrant for such beliefs must be absolute before we can assume that the new opinion is false because it clashes with them. The danger of utilitarianism cannot be that it tends to weaken or obliterate moral distinctions; we have shown that its leading advocates yield an allegiance to virtue which their fellow-men regard with wonder and almost with contempt, and we should be sorry to credit them with a moral sense of so little delicacy as that which Mr. Lecky displays in one or two passages to which we shall presently refer; but besides this, the existence of moral distinctions is the one fact on which utilitarianism and all other theories of morality are based, so that to deny their existence would be equivalent to founding a system of geometry on the assumption that space does not exist. These considerations are so elementary that we feel that an apology is due to our readers for bringing them forward; our excuse must

be that Mr. Lecky has overlooked them. It would be superfluous to dwell further on the inadequacy of his treatment of the subject.

The true explanation of the supposed dangerous tendency of utilitarianism would seem to be this : it is believed by many excellent and well-meaning persons that men's minds are unsettled, and, it may be, their consciences weakened, by learning that the sense of duty which they have looked on as something absolute and inscrutable is a thing of definite growth, and capable of complete analysis. This may be so ; in fact, it must be so ; but we are not all children for whom an absolute rule and an unquestioning faith are necessary. Save on the assumption that the philosophy of human life is irrevocably fixed and determined we must speculate, and our speculation must to a certain extent be unsettling ; the consequences may in isolated cases be disastrous, but the disaster is the price at which human progress is purchased. If mankind is to advance at all this danger, such as it is, must be faced ; Ultramontanism itself scarcely ventures openly to take the other alternative.

It remains for us, finally, to examine more minutely the way in which Mr. Lecky has discharged the task which he has undertaken. His discussion of the rival theories of morals may conveniently be divided into two parts ; in the first, consisting of thirty-three pages, he professes to give, "a brief but, he trusts, a clear and faithful account of the inductive theory," while in the second part, to which the remainder of the chapter is devoted, he "proceeds to state some of the principal objections that have been and may be brought against it . . . and then endeavours to define and defend the opinions of those who believe that our moral feelings are an essential part of our constitution, developed by, but not derived from, education."* The first impression which a perusal of the chapter creates is that while the statement of the derivative view is in the main fair and accurate, and more than ordinarily free from the misrepresentation which, in this particular controversy, the advocates of the intuitive theory think it not inconsistent with their moral sense to indulge in, the refutation of it is a most unfortunate misunderstanding of

* It is necessary to state that the phrase 'inductive theory of morals' is, in our view, erroneous and misleading : it is essential to clearness of thought and to accuracy of expression that the term 'induction' should be limited to its strict scientific signification, and of course no utilitarian moralist of the present day dreams of maintaining that our moral sentiments are reached by a strictly inductive process. The terms 'derivative' and 'intuitive,' which we have generally adopted in this essay, appear to express without ambiguity the essential distinction between the rival schools. We may add, that few utilitarians would deny that "our moral feelings are an essential part of our constitution."

the greater part of those arguments which the author has set himself to examine, and which in an earlier page he had at least appeared to understand. On a closer examination, however, this paradox explains itself; for when the earlier portion is examined closely it is found that the misrepresentation is not more complete, than, in the latter portion, the misunderstanding is profound. It is painful to us to have to deal so severely with an author whose amiability is no less conspicuous than his candour, and whose industry and erudition adorn a genius which is incontestable; but Mr. Lecky has, of his own accord, engaged in a contest for which he is apparently unfitted, and certainly unprepared, and we are bound in the interests of truth and justice to deal no less severely with him than he has dealt with those whose theories we have, in some sense, undertaken to defend.

The charge of misrepresentation is easily established. Mr. Lecky is apparently perfectly familiar with the different stages which the utilitarian theory has passed through, and in more than one passage (pp. 24, 29, 30, 33) recognises, that as he is good enough to express it, "there is a broad difference between the refined sensuality of the utilitarians we have last noticed" (to wit the Mills, father and son, Tucker, and Austin), "and the writings of Hobbes, of Mandeville, or of Paley." Without staying to comment on the grotesqueness of describing the ex-member for Westminster as a refined sensualist, we would ask why, if this distinction is occasionally recognised, it should be deliberately ignored and even obliterated in pp. 6-10, where Bentham, Mill, Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Paley, and Helvetius are credited without distinction with the whole canon of utilitarian doctrine, and all rendered responsible for the extravagances of each? Mr. Lecky must know by this time that this is not the way that history of any kind should be written; still less history of an important branch of speculation, requiring pre-eminently a nice discrimination, a *sentiment de la nuance*, no less than a profound and accurate knowledge of the writers and theories under examination. It is true that Mr. Lecky notes and gives some, but not, we think, sufficient weight to the revolution effected in ethical thought by the pregnant theory of Hartley; but can he be considered to have studied his authorities at all, still less to have digested them, when the distinction between the form of the utilitarian theory prior to Hartley, and that which it has subsequently assumed, is scarcely so much as recognised and never clearly enforced?*

* We are not forgetting the remarks on p. 23, which in our judgment only show the haste with which Mr. Lecky has compiled this portion of his work;

To descend more into details, we were astonished on reading p. 4, to find Hume enrolled among the intuitive moralists on the strength of two passages quoted, one from the *Enquiry Concerning Morals*, and another from the *Appendix* to the same. Willing to be taught, for we were not yet aware of the extent to which Mr. Lecky could mislead us, we turned to the passages referred to, and found that Mr. Lecky's momentous discovery, that Hume was "far from denying the existence of a moral sense," amounted simply to this, that Hume's strong sense and patient analysis had led him to recognise the distinction which more impetuous reasoners, like Bentham, seem occasionally to have missed, the distinction, namely, to which we have already several times referred, between the moral sentiment itself and the sources whence it springs, a distinction which no derivative moralist of the present day ever dreams of denying or disregarding. Hume can only be claimed for the intuitive school, if it can be shown that this moral sense which he recognises, which we recognise, which all sound moralists, of whatever school, recognise, was in his judgment immediate and inexplicable, and not, as his views on the subject of the criterion show, derived from our perception of the utility, or the reverse, of the several classes of actions. We thought Aristotle had long ago shown that reason is not virtue, and alone without feeling never can be virtue; but to acknowledge this is not to be an intuitive moralist, unless all moralists who have so far studied human nature as to perceive the existence of feelings and sentiments which reason can sustain and control, but which it cannot alone create, are intuitive. It would seem that Mr. Lecky is determined to misunderstand the opponents with whom he is dealing. If a derivative moralist maintains the existence and independence of moral sentiments, Mr. Lecky replies, "This is sheer fallacy and transparent sophistry; you have no right to believe in moral sentiments at all, your moral sentiments are nothing but calculations of utility,* your sense of duty is a sense of pleasure, your virtue is a disease, your analysis is alchemy; away with you, sordid, unfeeling, reprobate, degraded, pollute not the presence of an intuitive moralist whose superiority is so obvious that he can

the distinction in question is a cardinal one, and we can only account for Mr. Lecky's practically missing it, as he does in passages too numerous for reference and in the whole tenour and spirit of his argument, by supposing that he has not given to the subject on which he has written so dogmatically the attention which it both requires and deserves.

* "The habit of in all cases regulating actions by a precise and minute calculation of their utility, is the very ideal of utilitarian virtue."—p. 45. Who told Mr. Lecky this?

afford to believe that selfishness is practically better than virtue,* that harlots are a necessary part of the world's order,† and that superstition is a blessing."‡ And if the spiritless outcast ventures to rejoin that he has a conscience and a moral faculty, which he would fain cultivate and sustain, Mr. Lecky replies, with crushing effect, "Go to, I have long known you to be a knave, I now see that you are a fool; your principles are vicious, as all the world knows, and as your conduct shows or would show if you were not a hypocrite. If you have not the wit to see it, so much the worse for you; I will take care, however, that the British public shall know it, and you must take the consequences as best you may." We do not fear that any competent student of morals will say that we have here caricatured Mr. Lecky's method of controversy. The cases where he summarily puts his opponents out of court, or steadily attributes to them opinions for which they are in no degree responsible, are too numerous for detailed reference. We give a few examples of a style of argument which prevails throughout the chapter.

"Circumstances and disposition," we read in p. 63, "will make one man find his highest happiness in the happiness, and another man in the misery, of his kind; and if the second man acts according to his interest, the utilitarian, however much he may deplore the result, has no right to blame or condemn the agent. For that agent is acting according to his interest, and this, in the eyes of utilitarians, in one form or another, is the highest, or to speak more accurately, the only motive by which human nature can be actuated." Such a sentence as this must for ever deprive its writer of a voice in speculative controversy. It is impossible to reach a greater height of blunder and confusion. We have read the words over several times, and each time they become more obscure than before. If interest is the only motive, how can happiness be distinguished therefrom, as it is in the preceding words? Does utilitarianism in its modern form proclaim that the individual's own conception of his interest is the sole motive

* "The whole tendency of political economy and philosophical history which reveal the physiology of societies, is to show that the happiness and welfare of mankind are evolved much more from our selfish than from what are termed our virtuous acts."—p. 38. We forbear to comment on this astounding sentence: we content ourselves with asking what is likely to be the fate of philosophy or of history in the hands of its writer?

† "If utility is the sole measure of virtue, it is difficult to understand how we could look with moral disapprobation on any class who prevent greater evils than they cause. But with such a principle we might find strange priestesses at the utilitarian shrine. 'Aufer meretrices de rebus humanis,' said St. Augustine, 'turbaveris omnia libidinibus.'"—p. 43.

‡ See pages 52-54 on the beneficial effects of superstition.

[Vol. XCII. No. CLXXXII.]—NEW SERIES, Vol. XXXVI. No. II. M M

of action? Mr. Lecky must be sent back to the very rudiments of the subject he professes to discuss with the authority of a master, if he honestly believes this to be a true representation of the utilitarian view; and if he does not believe it, what shall we say of his moral sense? We must again distinctly and emphatically assert that no utilitarian denies the existence of moral distinctions, and if the opponents of the theory cannot see this they put themselves out of court. It is tedious to have so constantly to repeat a proposition so elementary as this; but we have seen no attack on utilitarianism which does not directly or indirectly ignore it, and there is perhaps no more flagrant and persistent offender in this respect than Mr. Lecky himself. He even refuses to concede to utilitarians the right to amend their theory and to defend it from legitimate attack. "You must either," he says, "accept your theory in its crudest and most assailable form, or you must consent to be called intuitive moralists after all."* Considering that Mr. Lecky reckons Hume an intuitive moralist, and that he speaks (p. 93) of "reason revealing to us intuitively" certain truths, it must be admitted that the consequences of the alternative are not so appalling as Mr. Lecky would have us believe. If words are to be used in this loose manner, it can matter little how they are applied; but it occurs to us to remark, that the subject is scarcely worth discussing at all if it cannot be discussed with greater precision.

We have said enough, we think, to show that neither Mr. Lecky's statement of the leading points of the derivative theory, nor his criticisms of them, are in any degree adequate to the importance of the questions he has presumed to raise. That we have not said more is not for lack of material, for we can scarcely open the chapter at random without alighting on some passage which calls for comment and criticism; but we should only weary our readers if we were to pursue the argument in detail. As a contribution to the philosophy of morals, the whole chapter is scarcely worthy of notice; and we confidently assert that should it arrest the attention of competent judges of either school, such will be their unanimous verdict. Ethical speculation needs, perhaps, more than any other branch of philosophy the special characteristics of the philosophic intellect for its successful pursuit. Calm and patient reflection, diligent precision of language, cautious but searching analysis, firm impartiality, and refined delicacy of perception, are more than ever indispensable in speculations where every word is a snare, every theory a battle-ground,

* See the note on page 92, where the difference between Mr. Mill and intuitive moralists is described as "not very much more than verbal."

and every opinion a flag of defiance. We regret that, notwithstanding his unquestioned powers, we cannot credit Mr. Lecky with these special characteristics of mind. What can be thought of the powers of precise language of a philosopher who speaks of the "intuitive revelations of reason"? He might as well have spoken of probable axioms. We once heard of a candidate for a degree at Oxford, who, on issuing from the schools, assured his friends that he had made several propositions of Euclid extremely probable; but we are not aware that he claimed to be an authority on geometrical questions, nor are we quite sure that he satisfied the examiners on that occasion. We fear that if he had to face a similar tribunal, Mr. Lecky might meet with a fate not wholly dissimilar. He may well talk of "unstudied language" as he does in the same paragraph: had his language as well as his subject been a little less unstudied his attack might have been more successful.

We take another passage:—"If the excellence of virtue consists solely in its utility or tendency to promote the happiness of men, a machine, a fertile field, or a navigable river, would all possess in a very high degree the element of virtue. If we restrict the term to human actions which are useful to society, we should still be compelled to canonise a crowd of acts which are utterly remote from all our ordinary notions of morality:"—then follows the remarkable sentence on the superiority of selfishness to virtue which we have already quoted. The first sentence of this passage is scarcely less remarkable than the last: it proves nothing whatsoever save the convenience of restricting the use of the term virtue to excellence in human action. This will be admitted by moralists of every school. Such a restriction, however, is not necessary; in the earlier stages of moral speculation it was not adhered to at all. The Greek word ordinarily translated "virtue" was used by Aristotle to signify excellence of any kind, and it would not have startled him to speak of the virtue of a fertile field. Be the restriction, then, admitted or not, it makes no difference either way: while, as to the alternative presented by Mr. Lecky, we challenge him to produce a single instance from the whole range of history of a selfish action, in the ordinary acceptation of the word, which can be shown to have produced greater happiness than would have been produced by the corresponding act of virtue. It is not enough to show that many selfish actions have been in some degree or other beneficial to the world at large: private vices may be public benefits in a restricted and wholly secondary sense; but that the world's happiness is advanced by virtue and impaired by vice, is a proposition which has never yet been questioned by any moral philosopher worthy of the name. If Mr. Lecky is prepared seriously to

MM 2

impugn it, he will find himself involved in controversy with friends and foes alike.

Again, students of morals are aware of the baffling ambiguity which, owing to carelessness of thought and intricacy of association, attaches in popular language to the word "pleasure;" they are aware, too, of the patience and care that the best moralists have ever devoted to the task of clearing this perplexing word of its ambiguity. Even so early as Aristotle (whose theory of moral distinctions, we may remark in passing, though incomplete is unquestionably derivative), the main ambiguities were traced, and the subject was so far cleared of obscurity, that, if misunderstanding had any limits at all, the question might have been speedily and for ever set at rest. There is no sounder test of the qualifications of those who undertake the discussion of ethical questions than the precision of thought and language which they bring to the investigation of this branch of their subject; but when tried by this test, Mr. Lecky will be found grievously wanting. The confusion to be found in the five pages (87 to 92) wherein Mr. Lecky deals with the subject of pleasure, is unsurpassed by that of any other part of his work. We pass by his statement that the distinction in kind between pleasures "has been neglected or denied by most utilitarian writers," a statement of which the point is perhaps weakened by its being more than half retracted in a note; for we have already seen that misrepresentation or misunderstanding or both are only what his opponents have to expect from Mr. Lecky. We prefer to dwell on the peculiarity of his own views of the subject. Mr. Lecky is, perhaps, the only English writer of distinction, since the death of Macaulay, who could have written the following sentence:—"It is probable that the American inventor of the first anæsthetic has done more for the real happiness of mankind than all the moral philosophers from Socrates to Mill." We do not think so; but it is perhaps fortunate that Mr. Lecky has so little claim to the title of moral philosopher, or his inclusion in the list might have gone far to redress the balance. Mr. Lecky seems here to ignore the generic distinction of pleasures on which he lays so much stress in the next page: it may be that he is only doing so as a concession to his opponents; if so they have little to thank him for; for it is a poor style of argument to attribute odious opinions to your adversaries in order to gain the cheap credit of having refuted them. But we would further ask Mr. Lecky whether, in his opinion, an intense pleasure is the same thing as a violent one, or whether he imagines that this is an opinion that utilitarians hold, or ought to hold? If not, what is the meaning of the following paragraph:—

"It is probable that a more intense pleasure is usually obtained

from the grotesque and the eccentric than from the perceptions of beauty. The pleasure derived from beauty is not violent in its nature, and it is in most cases peculiarly mixed with melancholy. The feelings of the man who is deeply moved by a lovely landscape are rarely those of extreme elation. A shade of melancholy steals over his mind. His eyes fill with tears. A vague and unsatisfied longing fills his soul. Yet, troubled and broken as is this form of enjoyment, few persons would hesitate to pronounce it of a higher kind than any that can be derived from the exhibitions of oddity."—p. 87.

This passage conveys, in very inaccurate language, a statement which no serious moralist ever dreamt of denying. Has Mr. Lecky never read Shelley? Does he not remember the lovely lines—

" We look before and after,
And pine for what is not ;
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught ;

Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought ?"

We do not forget that Bentham declared in a passage that, of course, Mr. Lecky does not omit to quote, that "quantity of pleasure being equal, push-pin is as good as poetry;" but then Bentham never proposed a standard whereby quantity of pleasure could be estimated. If pleasure is to be measured by its violence, or by the amount of laughter that accompanies it, no doubt a farce excites more pleasure than a tragedy ; but no moralist, save Mr. Lecky, has ever ventured to propose so ridiculous a standard. In a similar strain Mr. Lecky says—

"If, as is not improbable, the lower animals are happier than man,"—note the conception of happiness here implied—"and semibarbarians than civilized men, still it is better to be a man than a brute, better to be born amid the fierce struggle of civilization than in some stranded nation, apart from all the flow of enterprise and knowledge. Even in that material civilization which utilitarianism delights to glorify, there is an element which the philosophy of mere enjoyment cannot explain."—p. 89.

What, then, is the philosophy of mere enjoyment? Is it the utilitarianism which delights to glorify material civilization? And if so, where is it to be found? Mr. Lecky creates a monster which he calls utilitarianism and would fain have us believe that it has an existence outside his own morbid imagination. Let us see what are the sentiments of the "refined sensualist," who must be acknowledged as the foremost champion of the utilitarian school:—

"It is indisputable that the being whose capacities of enjoyment are low, has the greatest chance of having them fully satisfied; and a highly endowed being will always feel that any happiness which he

can look for, as the world is constituted, is imperfect. But he can learn to bear its imperfections, if they are at all bearable; and they will not make him envy the being who is indeed unconscious of the imperfections, but only because he feels not the good which those imperfections qualify. It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, is of a different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question. The other party to the comparison knows both sides.”*

Mr. Lecky would have us believe that Mr. Mill is in this and similar passages (which abound in his book) inconsistent with his general theory; but on this point we venture to think Mr. Mill is a better judge than Mr. Lecky. We confess that for ourselves, without any extravagant reverence for Mr. Mill, we would rather be wrong in his company and Mr. Spencer's, than right in that of Mr. Lecky.

We have now examined at sufficient length both Mr. Lecky's statement of his opponents' views, and his criticisms on the views as so stated; and we think our readers will agree with us that whatever the value of Mr. Lecky's criticisms as against a system which he himself constructs with a view to its speedy demolition, they are of little weight against that theory of derivative morality which is held by the leaders of the utilitarian school. It only remains for us briefly to notice the theory which Mr. Lecky himself seems to prefer. It is not particularly easy to discover what that theory is: Mr. Lecky speaks much of a moral faculty, of a moral sense, of moral ideas; and to some of these phrases the term 'innate' is applied, while to others it is denied: we have, too, a great parade of names—Hutcheson, Clarke, Lord Kames, Dugald Stewart, Hume, and others, though without that minuteness of reference which characterized the statement of the utilitarian view. Still there is a vagueness and indecision which after all leaves us in a very perplexed state of mind; indeed, from a writer who talks of our “reason revealing to us intuitively the hierarchy of our being,” it is perhaps hopeless to expect precision. The following passage expresses, perhaps, as distinctly as any the view which Mr. Lecky intends to put forth as his own:—

“Those who maintain the existence of a moral faculty, do not, as is sometimes said, assume this as a first principle of their arguments, but they arrive at it as their conclusion by a process of induction quite as severe as any that can be employed by their opponents. They examine, analyse, and classify their existing moral feelings, ascertain in what respects those feelings agree with or differ from others, trace them through their various phases, and only assign them to a special faculty when they think they have shown them to be incapable of resolution, and generically distinct from all others.”—p. 75.

* Mill's “Utilitarianism,” p. 14.

It appears, then, that induction informs us of the existence of an inscrutable moral faculty generically distinct from all others. But Mr. Lecky is candid enough to admit that this primary faculty is subject to almost indefinite modification by the agency of surrounding circumstances. Indeed so strongly does he insist on this argument, which is usually one of the strongholds of the derivative theory, that were we to open the book at random and light on the following passages, we should suppose that Mr. Lecky was arguing strenuously for the utilitarian view. Indeed it is rather difficult to deny what some of his admirers have already begun to suspect,* that Mr. Lecky is after all but a derivative moralist without knowing it, and a utilitarian in disguise:—

“If we examine the undoubted diversities that exist in judgments of virtue and of beauty, we soon discover that in each case a large proportion of them are to be ascribed to the different degrees of civilization. The moral standard changes within certain limits, and according to a regular process, with the evolutions of society. There are virtues very highly estimated in a rude civilization which sink into comparative insignificance in an organized society, while, conversely, virtues that were deemed secondary in the first become primary in the other. There are even virtues that it is impossible for any but highly cultivated minds to recognise. Questions of virtue and vice, such as the difference between humanity and barbarity, or between temperance and intemperance, are sometimes merely questions of degree, and the standard at one stage of civilization may be much higher than at another.”—p. 80.

“If any accidental circumstance has elevated an indifferent action to peculiar honour, if a religious system enforces it as a virtue or brands it as a vice, the consciences of men will after a time accommodate themselves to the sentence, and an appeal to a wider than a local tribunal is necessary to correct the error. Every nation, again, from its peculiar circumstances and position, tends to some particular type, both of beauty and of virtue, and it naturally extols its national type beyond all others.”—p. 81.

What derivative moralist can seek for wider concessions than this? The moral sense of individuals and of actions, says Mr. Lecky, is the product, nay, the sport of surrounding circumstances. What then is the moral sense of mankind? If, as we maintain, it is the result of determinate conditions, then, all that is permanent in it corresponds to conditions that are permanent, while its fluctuations will be due, as Mr. Lecky admits, to the variety of surrounding circumstances. This is all that utilitarians and derivative moralists contend for, and by far the most important point in the dispute is freely conceded by Mr.

* See the article on Mr. Lecky's work in the last number of the *Edinburgh Review*.

Lecky. It will be seen at once how slight, when narrowed to this issue, is the controversy between Mr. Lecky and his opponents. The fluctuations of the moral faculty are admitted on both sides, and referred by both disputants to the same source. The existence of a permanent element is likewise agreed upon; but while the utilitarian would apply to this the analysis which is admitted to be applicable to the remainder, Mr. Lecky refuses to subject it to analysis at all. We leave our readers to determine which course is the more philosophical.

It may not perhaps be amiss to recapitulate briefly, in conclusion, the theory we have endeavoured to explain in the foregoing pages, and to state how far and in what sense it can be fairly described as utilitarian. We hold then that moral distinctions are the product of the relations in which the human spirit finds itself towards its environing circumstances and conditions, uniformity of environment resulting in uniformity of sentiment, and fluctuation of environment producing that part of the conscience which is acknowledged to be variable and temporary. The conscience thus being organized in the moral nature of mankind, is to a certain extent transmitted from one generation to another, so that what was immediately derivative in one age may almost be described as intuitive in another. The extent of this hereditary transmission has of course never yet been clearly defined, and even the fact itself is so obscure that it can only at present be considered as an hypothesis in great need of verification; but while direct evidence is wanting, and must to a certain extent be wanting, indirect evidence and very powerful analogy point, not obscurely, towards its truth.

We have no objection to calling this theory 'utilitarian;' for we most unhesitatingly believe that utility dimly perceived is the primary source of the rudimentary conscience. But the word 'utilitarian' is so closely associated with the special theory of Bentham, and the world is so persistently determined to refuse to the word 'utility' any but an ignoble meaning, that we much prefer the neutral title of 'derivative,' which expresses clearly enough the fundamental contrast between this view and that of Mr. Lecky and his friends. On the other hand, we are ready to accept the title of 'intuitive,' if it be only meant thereby, that the more permanent part of the conscience is so imbedded and ingrained in the moral nature of mankind that its origin and growth is now well-nigh inconceivable. This is an inevitable consequence of the conditions of the case; immutability of the environment necessarily produces immutability in the conscience which is its product; and the primary relations of a man, both to the different parts of his own nature and to his fellow-creatures, are so constant that the sentiments springing from such relations cannot but be constant also. Dull, feeble, and sluggish in its

origin, the conscience expands with its growing relations, justifies and fulfils itself in strange innumerable ways, and grows at last into that perfect moral law which, according to Kant, is the supreme work of God and the noblest heritage of man.

Lastly, if any one should urge that this theory, because it assigns to the conscience a definite origin and growth, tends to obliterate moral distinctions and to relax the bonds of duty, let him consider that what is permanent in the conscience owes its permanence to the constancy of the relations whereon it rests, that these relations have in the main continued constant throughout the recorded history of mankind, and that they are morally certain to remain so for the future. No change in the sentiments dependent on them can take place unless it is preceded by a change in the relations themselves, and our sure warrant for their permanence in the future is their uniformity in the past. We have no stronger warrant for the belief that the sun will rise to-morrow morning, but we make all our dispositions and arrangements on the assumption of that belief, and we find that practically our assumption is justified. So long as conscience is held to depend on the fundamental conditions of human nature, it cannot be truly maintained that its dictates are uncertain or its sanctions weak. To ask what would happen if the fundamental conditions were to change is equivalent to asking what would happen if the sun were to stand still in his course or the moon to drop out of the sky.

We venture to hope that Mr. Lecky will pardon us for the severity with which we have spoken of his performance. We have done so not in the interests of controversy, but in those of pure philosophy and sound speculation. We have no wish that the utilitarian or derivative theory should turn out to be true; our only wish is that the truth, on whichever side it may happen to lie, may speedily be discovered. It is our profound conviction that the style of controversy adopted by Mr. Lecky is little calculated to lead to such discovery, that has induced us to enter the lists with him and to strike as hardly and as straightforwardly as we could. We have cheerfully and candidly expressed our respect for Mr. Lecky's unquestioned powers; but we must no less candidly avow our conviction that the strength of those powers does not lie in the direction of pure philosophy. By a style notable for its ease and grace, though not for its over-refinement, by learning which is unquestionable if not quite complete, by a picturesque grouping of materials, by a general liberality of judgment, and especially by a savour of heterodoxy of that particular shade which rather attracts than repels, Mr. Lecky has succeeded, as he deserved, in attracting a large circle of readers: we wish we could add that he had likewise succeeded in establishing his claim to be esteemed a philosophic historian.