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MIND

A QUARTERLY REVIEW

OF

PSYCHOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY.



I.—HENRY SIDGWICK.

BY LESLIE STEPHEN.

I HAVE undertaken after some hesitation the task of writing an obituary notice of Henry Sidgwick for this journal, which owes so much to him both as a contributor and, for many years, as a financial supporter. I could not now try, even if I held myself to be more competent than I am, to give any estimate of his work in philosophy. Readers of MIND have formed their own judgment in that matter. I am, however, qualified to say something of the man, partly because I was for many years honoured by his friendship; and more because I have been enabled to fill up the gaps in my own knowledge by the help of those who were in closer relations to him.¹ Though I hope that I did not wholly fail to appreciate Sidgwick during his lifetime, I can now see, not without regret, that I had scarcely recognised to the full the singular merits of one of the purest and loftiest natures of our generation. I think, too, that a clear appreciation of

¹ Mrs. Sidgwick has been so good as to give me information and has, in particular, allowed me to make use of a brief autobiographical fragment, written during his last illness, from which I have quoted some sentences. I have also to express my warm thanks to Mr. Arthur Sidgwick, to Dr. Jackson of Trinity College, to Dr. Venn of Caius, to Prof. Ward and to Prof. Maitland. Interesting notices by the Master of Christ's College (in the *Cambridge Review* for 25th October); by Sir F. Pollock (in the *Pilot* for 15th September); by Mr. Masternan (in the *Commonwealth* for October) have also been useful.

the man will throw some light upon the philosopher, though I must be content to indicate very briefly the general result.

Henry Sidgwick, born 31st May, 1838, was the third (and second surviving) son of the Rev. William Sidgwick. The father was the son of a cotton-spinner at Skipton, graduated at Cambridge in 1829, married Miss Mary Crofts and died as headmaster of Skipton Grammar School, 22nd May, 1841. Henry was sent to Rugby in September, 1852, after some time at a preparatory school. His mother took a house there in 1853. Sidgwick says that though 'successful in schoolwork' he had not been 'altogether happy' at the house where he had previously boarded, and he remained 'inobservant and bookish'. He was not of the Tom Brown type. The chief influence¹ upon him at this time was that of his second cousin, E. W. Benson, who afterwards married his sister and died as Archbishop of Canterbury. Benson became a master in the school in 1852 and had already helped Sidgwick in the study of Sophocles. Though not his tutor, Benson did much to stimulate Sidgwick's perception of the charm of classical literature, and by certain religious utterances 'startled' him into a reverential appreciation of the 'providential scheme of human history, which was not soon to be forgotten'. Sidgwick went to Trinity College, Cambridge, instead of standing in accordance with Rugby tradition for the Balliol Scholarship, because he knew Benson's affection for Trinity. His one ideal was to be a scholar as like his cousin as possible. For the present, Sidgwick was a thoughtful schoolboy of unusual precocity and the highest promise as a scholar. In 1855 he left Rugby as senior exhibitioner.

At Cambridge Sidgwick was probably the youngest man of his year. His career was a series of triumphs. He won a Bell Scholarship in 1856; the Craven Scholarship in 1857; the Greek Epigram in 1858; and graduated in 1859 as thirty-third wrangler and senior classic, winning also the first Chancellor's Medal. He was elected to a Trinity Scholarship in 1857, and in 1859 became fellow and assistant tutor of his college. The normal sequel to such achievements would have been a rise to the highest academical or ecclesiastical positions. He had, however, been led to a pursuit which promised no such tangible rewards. His autobiographical fragment was written to explain how a central aim had determined the course of his intellectual life even when it

¹ See Sidgwick's interesting reminiscences in the *Life of Benson*, vol. i., pp. 145-151 and 249-255.

seemed 'most erratic and fitful'. He fortunately wrote enough to explain how this aim was suggested to him and affected his first philosophical studies. In the first volume of this journal Sidgwick gave an account of the position of such studies at Cambridge. The indifference of an earlier generation had been finally broken up by the influence of Whewell. Whewell had lectured upon Moral Philosophy; he had introduced a paper upon philosophy into the fellowship examinations at Trinity, and he had procured the foundation of the Moral Sciences Tripos in 1851. A series of eminent lecturers at Trinity, Julius Hare, Thirlwall and Thompson, the last of whom had become Greek professor in 1853, had encouraged the study of Plato and Aristotle. The new tripos, however, had flagged, and was only admitted as a qualification for a degree in 1860. Sidgwick, absorbed in his studies for the old triposes, did not become a candidate; and he received no impulse from the official system. Cambridge, however, was to gain a philosopher by a kind of accident. In the beginning of his second year Sidgwick was invited to become an 'Apostle'. The invitation implied a high compliment from his ablest contemporaries. He fortunately accepted it after some hesitation in admitting a distraction from his regular studies. The effect was remarkable. The society has from the days of Tennyson and Maurice included a remarkable number of very eminent men. They preserved the tradition of the famous 'band of youthful friends' described in "In Memoriam". To discuss all topics with perfect frankness and with 'any amount of humorous sarcasm and playful banter' was the practice; and absolute candour the only duty enforced by the society. Any principle might be questioned, if questioned in sincerity; and Sidgwick observes characteristically that the apostles learnt to understand 'how much suggestion and instruction might be derived from what is in form a jest—even in dealing with the gravest matters'. 'The tie of attachment to the society formed,' he says, 'the strongest corporate bond which I have known in life.' It revealed to him that 'the deepest bent of his nature was towards' the life of thought—thought exercised 'upon the central problems of human life'. He could not, however, for many years take the study of philosophy for his principal task. He was a poor man and his first duty was to support himself. He accepted, therefore, a classical lectureship in October, 1859, and for the first two years after his degree allowed himself to be 'seduced into private tuition'. He read philosophy during his vacations and was especially

interested by J. S. Mill, then at the height of his remarkable influence. He had also looked at Comte 'through Mill's spectacles'.¹ He had not broken with the orthodox doctrine in which he had been educated, but had become sceptical as to many of its conclusions and especially as to the methods of proof. He and his friends were convinced of the need of a social reconstruction guided by scientific methods and of a religious reform founded upon an examination of the evidence for historical Christianity conducted 'with strict scientific impartiality'. His striking remarks upon Tennyson's "In Memoriam" explain his feeling.² He could never read the lines beginning 'If e'er when faith had fallen asleep' (in the 124th poem) without tears. "In Memoriam" had impressed upon him 'the ineffaceable and ineradicable conviction that humanity will not and cannot acquiesce in a godless world'. He could not find rest in agnosticism, and, though accepting the methods of modern science, revolted against its atheistic tendencies. Mill's philosophy offered no solution of the great difficulties. He oscillated for a time between religious and philosophical studies, while, 'as a matter of duty,' he also gave much thought to economic and social problems. In 1862 Renan's *Études d'histoire religieuse* suggested a new line of inquiry. Wearied with the indecisive results of the controversy between theologians and agnostics, he turned to the investigation of religious history. In the autumn of 1862 he spent five weeks at Dresden, devoting his whole time to the study of Arabic under a private tutor.³ For the next three years his spare time was given to Arabic and Hebrew. He thought of aspiring to one of the two Arabic professorships at Cambridge. They had the advantage of being tenable by laymen, whereas the Knightbridge Professorship, which then expressly included Moral Theology, would probably be given to a clergyman. He gradually found that his Arabic studies would deduct too much time from the study of the fundamental problems. The comparative history of Semitic religions which he had planned, would, after all, not supply an answer to the great questions, whether the doctrine of the Incarnation could be accepted as historically true and what element of truth could be disengaged

¹ *Life of Benson*, ii., p. 249. Dr. Venn also tells me that for a time Sidgwick seemed to be much attracted by positivism.

Tennyson's Life, i., pp. 300-304.

³ His friends speak of his having studied at Göttingen under Ewald, and of his ambition to become the 'English Ewald'. I follow Sidgwick's own account in his autobiographical fragment.

from the traditional creed. He turned again towards philosophy and worked hard to qualify himself as an examiner for the Moral Sciences Tripos in 1865 and 1866.

Dr. Venn informs me of another connexion which had some influence at this time. Venn had returned to Cambridge to lecture upon moral science; the only other lecturer in the same department was the Rev. J. B. Mayor of St. John's College, to whose influence upon Cambridge studies Sidgwick (in his article upon Cambridge philosophy) ascribes great weight. Venn, Mayor and Sidgwick, with a few later recruits, formed a society which was known to their friends as the Grote Club. They dined with John Grote, then Knightbridge professor, once a term at his vicarage at Trumpington, and afterwards read and discussed papers. Grote was a most efficient moderator, supplying a keen criticism and enforcing steady abstinence from digression. A certain affinity to his young friend is suggested by Sidgwick's remark that Grote's 'subtle and balanced criticism, varied and versatile sympathy, hardly qualified him—original as he was—to be founder of a school'. Croom Robertson notes¹ that Grote invented certain phrases, 'felicific' and 'hedonics,' of which Sidgwick afterwards made use. In any case, Sidgwick's philosophical studies must have been encouraged and his dialectical acuteness sharpened in his debates with these congenial friends. In later years, Sidgwick belonged to other societies of a similar kind, especially to the Metaphysical Society, in which he crossed swords with Huxley, Mivart, W. G. Ward, Dr. Martineau, and other champions of various causes; to the 'Eranus,' a Cambridge body on the same model, and to the later Synthetical Society. They gave a most appropriate arena for the display of his characteristic powers. His early associates of the 'Apostolic' circle were struck by the 'amazing maturity' of his intellect. Though one of the youngest, he was already among the most competent. He had thought out the problems sufficiently to see the bearing of the various arguments, and would select some apparently trifling point assumed by his opponent and by a Socratic method bring out unexpected consequences with which it was pregnant. Socrates became a bore by pressing similar discussions upon unwilling ears. But Sidgwick's friends had invited the discussion, and, if a momentary vexation might follow a fair fall in the wrestling, his entire freedom from arrogance or dogmatism left no excuse for irritation. If he could not produce agreement he always

¹ In his life of Grote in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

promoted good-will. If, as has been said, the Metaphysical Society, died 'of love,' Sidgwick was one of the unintentional assassins. His readiness to argue implied, not the pugnacity which resents contradiction, but the desire to profit by it; and the sense of humour shown in his 'Apostolic' banter always played round his arguments. The foundation of another society about 1862 illustrates one of the qualities which added an extrinsic charm to his dialectical displays. His elder brother, Mr. William Sidgwick, was at this time a resident fellow at Oxford. The brothers founded the 'Ad Eundem' Society, which met alternately at Oxford and Cambridge for purely social purposes. Philosophising, if not forbidden, was certainly not compulsory. The society flourished, and Sidgwick attended a meeting within three months of his death. I had the honour of being an early member and, without offence to my comrades, I may safely say that the expectation of meeting Sidgwick was always one of the main inducements to attend; and that a pleasant bond which kept up old college associations and enabled representatives of the two universities to forgather on most agreeable terms owed much of its strength to the Sidgwick element. The charm of Sidgwick's society could be felt even by those who cared nothing for philosophy.

The 'Ad Eundem' illustrated another point. It included at starting such men as W. H. Thompson and W. G. Clark, then public orator, who had long been the ornaments of the upper sphere of academical society. Sidgwick, young as he was, was already admitted to the friendship of his most august seniors. In the following years, he gained the respect of the upper academical circles, especially of the more intellectually disposed, and his influence became potent among the younger dons. The first great changes in the university system had taken place during Sidgwick's undergraduate career. The proposal to abolish religious tests had afterwards come to the front: and to carry a bill for that purpose through Parliament was understood to be a necessary preliminary to further reforms. Sidgwick took an important, though necessarily a subordinate, part in the agitation. In Trinity he was one of a body of fellows led by J. L. Hammond, a man of singular charm who was prevented by ill health from making a mark proportioned to his great powers. In December, 1867, Sidgwick supported (and probably proposed) a resolution for abolishing the declaration imposed by the college statutes. It was rejected; but Sidgwick's later action had an indirect effect in securing the adoption of the policy. In June, 1869, he accepted a lectureship in Moral Philosophy

in exchange for the classical lectureship, and now made up his mind to attempt to found a philosophical school in Cambridge. Meanwhile, he was pressed by the question whether he had a moral right to retain his fellowship. The problem involved some delicate casuistry. He had qualified himself for the fellowship by a sincere declaration of belief. Could he hold it, now that he could no longer make the declaration? It might be urged that the legal measured the moral obligation and that, as no one had a right to inquire into his belief, he had a right to the position without regard to his present beliefs. He tried, he says, to settle the point 'on general principles'. But Sidgwick was pretty sure to be biassed by his own clear interests—that is, in the direction opposed to them. Anyhow, he resigned his fellowship in October, 1869. Sir George Young, a most competent witness, says in the *Cambridge Review* that the effect of his resignation was very great. Fellows of other colleges followed his example. An important meeting, held at Cambridge in December, showed that a majority of residents was in favour of the abolition; and a similar meeting at Oxford two days before had been suggested by a knowledge of the intended meeting at Cambridge. The parliamentary action followed which led to the final abolition of tests in June, 1871. How far Sidgwick's action had all the influence ascribed to it can hardly be decided. Sidgwick would have been the first to condemn any exaggeration of his own part. I must therefore note that the parliamentary proceedings had shown clearly that the main obstacle to a liberal success was the abnormal slowness of the process of converting Gladstone upon such questions, and that a more popular argument was the disqualification for fellowships of the senior wrangles of 1860, '61 and '69. But there can be no doubt of the great moral significance of Sidgwick's action. He was giving up for a scruple, which to most people seemed refined, his chief support and as it seemed the chances of academical position. Happily by that time, the fellows of Trinity were singularly free from any theological bigotry. Sidgwick was permitted to retain his position as lecturer with the social privileges of a fellow.

Sidgwick now began the course of teaching which continued through his life. In October, 1875, he became Prælector on Moral and Political Philosophy in Trinity; and in 1883 was elected to the Knightbridge Professorship upon the death of Prof. Birks. He had been a candidate for the post in 1872, when Birks succeeded F. D. Maurice. He had not then published his great book. In 1883 his fitness

was so obvious that the election might be almost said to be by acclamation.

Sidgwick's influence as a lecturer was both important and characteristic in kind. The position of the study at Cambridge was so far unfavourable that his classes were necessarily very small. Sidgwick himself expressed some doubt as to the utility of metaphysical studies for men at the early age of his hearers. A youth, not endowed with a special predisposition, is more apt, he might think, to learn a philosophical jargon than to gain a clear insight into the real issues. This view prevented him at a later period, according to some of his colleagues, from pressing the claims of his own faculty so vigorously as they thought desirable. His own example, however, proves sufficiently that an aptitude for such study may show itself early and be well worth cultivation. I lately heard an intelligent person inquire what was the meaning of 'ethics'. Some explanation being offered, the inquiry arose how it could be possible to devote volumes to setting forth the objections to breaking the ten commandments. For practical purposes, perhaps, the state of that person was the more gracious; but Sidgwick's *Methods of Ethics*, of which his lectures were now giving the substance, would have answered the question effectually. To the select few his speculations revealed whole fields of interesting speculation. Sidgwick, of course, could hardly found a school in the ordinary sense. A 'Sidgwickian,' as connoting acceptance of a definite philosophical platform, would be almost a contradiction in terms. At anyrate where there were two Sidgwickians, they would necessarily resolve themselves into a debating society. Sidgwick had not the attraction of the teacher who has attained definite results and can give the watchword to a band of enthusiasts. His influence was free from the defects, if it had not the characteristic merits of such a position. It did not lead to ignoring difficulties but to facing them fairly. Though not claiming to have solved the great problems, he was fully convinced both that they were soluble, and that a man might well devote his life to hastening the solution. His subtlety in seeing difficulties and his candour in admitting them did not lead to a mere play of skilful dialectics. He set his hearers' minds to work and to work in the interest of truth. Several of his hearers have turned his lessons to good account; and have acknowledged most emphatically the debt which they owe to him. Close contact with such a man was no small part of 'a liberal education'. For Sidgwick had the ethical genius; and was as sensitive to the moral as some men to

the æsthetic aspects of life. His transparent simplicity, extraordinary alertness of mind and intense love of truth enabled him to preach by the effectual method of personal contagion.

Meanwhile he had already taken up a function which absorbed much of his energy and fully illustrates his moral enthusiasm. Devotion to philosophy would not, he held, justify abstinence from the active duties of life. He desired to do something for the good of mankind and was naturally led to promote the education of women.¹ Girls had been admitted to the Cambridge examinations; and in the autumn of 1869 Sidgwick thought out and proposed a scheme for providing lectures for the candidates. It was warmly taken up, and its success suggested the advantage of providing a house for the students in Cambridge. Sidgwick made himself responsible for the rent of such a house and in 1871 invited Miss Clough to undertake the superintendence. This again led to the formation of a company in 1874, to which Sidgwick subscribed money as well as labour; and to the opening of Newnham Hall, built by the company in 1876. In that year Sidgwick married Miss Balfour. It would be as impertinent as happily it would be superfluous for me to speak of that event in any other way; but its bearing upon this part of his career is matter of public knowledge. When in 1880 the North Hall was added to Newnham, Mrs. Sidgwick became vice-president, and the Sidgwicks took up their residence there till her resignation two years later. Sidgwick was a main supporter of the important measure by which, in 1881, women were admitted to the honours examination, and a great stimulus given to the movement. Upon Miss Clough's death, in 1892, Mrs. Sidgwick succeeded to her post, and the Sidgwicks resided in the college during the remainder of his life. Throughout the whole of this period Sidgwick, who had been the chief founder of the organisation, was at the heart of the resulting movement: suggesting the schemes which ultimately succeeded, advising Miss Clough through all her difficulties, taking the keenest interest in all the details of management, winning the affection of teachers and students by his social charm and judicious counsels, contributing munificently in money and taking the lead in the university legislation which was required by the novel experiment. He was always a member of the Council of Newnham, and was also for some years connected with the college at Girton. The main difference between the two

¹ I refer to the life of Miss Clough for full details.

bodies was that Sidgwick and the supporters of Newnham were less anxious than their friendly rivals to assimilate the education of women precisely to the system established for men. For Sidgwick may be claimed, without hesitation, a leading part in the remarkable changes which have transformed the whole theory and practice of the higher education of women in England.

Another set of duties fell to him in later years. The University Commission of 1877 had been appointed in consequence of proposals by Cambridge Liberals which Sidgwick helped to formulate. Not being a member of the governing body, he had no direct share in the changes made at Trinity College under the Commission. The new statutes for the university came into force in 1882. Sidgwick's value was by this time fully appreciated in the university; and in November, 1882, he became a member of the General Board of Studies created under the new system. He held this position till the end of 1899 and acted for several years as secretary. He was also a member of the Council of the Senate from 1890 to 1898. His colleagues on both speak emphatically of his conscientious discharge of his duties; his skill in debate and his power of incisive criticism tempered by unflinching courtesy. The Cambridge system went through very important changes, in which he played his part. I am not qualified, nor would it be here possible, to deal with questions of university politics; but one or two points, which I learn from Dr. Jackson, are characteristic. The new order of things raised some delicate questions. The taxation of the colleges for university purposes was made burdensome by agricultural depression. Sidgwick, with two colleagues, was appointed by the General Board to investigate the necessary rearrangement. He took the whole work upon himself: collected all the information and devised an elaborate scheme for settling the difficulty. He threw himself heartily into financial problems and Dr. Jackson thinks that he would have liked nothing better than to be Chancellor of the Exchequer. He would have 'devised an amazingly ingenious budget and his exposition would have been a marvel of lucidity and address'. His scheme failed of acceptance by an appearance of over subtlety, and Dr. Peile admits that, if ever a doctrinaire, he was so on the General Board. He delighted in framing schemes for compromise, and became at times too obstinate in adhering to his own compromise. He had allowed so carefully for all interests that any other arrangement seemed to him unjust. He was, it is also suggested, so much interested in the details as occasion-

ally to lose sight of the broader and more obvious issues. No one, however, doubted the great value of his energetic co-operation in a period of important changes. When he indicated by giving up his place on the General Board that he was probably abandoning administrative work, says Dr. Jackson, the news seemed 'almost tragic'. It was 'like the parting of a parent and child'. One most tangible proof may be given of Sidgwick's keen interest in the reforms. The university was enabled by his munificence to introduce, or to hasten the introduction, of various additions to its agencies. He supplied the funds by which Dr. Maitland, now Professor, was restored to the university as reader in law; he helped in the same way to start the professorship now held by Dr. Ward, and he enabled the university to build a museum required by the School of Natural Sciences.

Sidgwick's final retirement from the Council was partly connected with the last phase of the question of admitting women to degrees. He never wished to adopt the university system of education for women without modification, and objected in particular to 'compulsory Greek'. He supported the proposal to grant titular degrees to women, though he had at first thought it premature or imprudent. Opponents thought that it was a step which would necessarily lead to further changes; Sidgwick and his friends considered it as a compromise for an indefinite time, though they could not pledge themselves to its absolute finality. The rejection by a great majority was a blow to the party of advance. Nobody could ever suspect Sidgwick of the slightest insincerity; but the measure advocated might seem equivocal, however good the motive: and a love of compromise, though prompted by simple desire for justice, may have an appearance of diplomacy.

Sidgwick's influence was for the moment injured; but he had other motives for not again standing for election to the Council. He was anxious to finish literary work, of which it is only strange that he had performed so much under so many distractions. Besides the duties already noticed he had from a very early time (certainly from 1864) taken an interest in 'Psychical Research'. The interest was connected with his course of speculation. His ethical position led him to desire some 'direct proof of continued individual existence'. He was president of the society founded in 1882 from 1882-1885, and again, 1888-1893; and for some time edited or superintended the editing of its journal. He brought to it all the conscientious spirit of scientific investigation; and a desire to discover the truth of

alleged facts led him to investigate them with the most rigid impartiality. He was not the man to accept Don Quixote's method of testing his armour leniently when he wished it to be trustworthy. He fully recognised and helped to expose the impostures which obscured any real substratum of truth. Yet another application of his energy is mentioned in the organ of the Charity Organisation Society. He was one of the founders of the Cambridge branch in 1879, having previously belonged to the Mendicity Society. He drew up its rules, presided over the weekly meetings for many years, contributed liberally, and was president till his death. 'It will never be fully known,' it is added, 'how much of all that is best in Cambridge to-day was due to his inspiration and example.'

Sidgwick had found time in the midst of these labours to produce his three books, the *Methods of Ethics* in 1874; the *Principles of Political Economy* in 1883; and the *Elements of Politics* in 1891. He has also left work still in manuscript, a considerable part of which will, it is hoped, be published. The amount and quality of the purely intellectual work is the more remarkable considering his activity in practical directions. I have tried, however, to indicate in how many ways Sidgwick's employments fitted in with his pursuit of philosophical truth. A moralist is none the worse for some practical acquaintance with applied morality. His other work gave weight to his convictions if it limited his output within a moderate compass. Indeed, considering the temptations of so versatile an intellect to excessive discursiveness, his other occupations may well have suppressed only corollaries which though interesting would be, in strictness, superfluous.

Sidgwick had hoped that after reaching sixty he might resign his professorship to some worthy successor and devote himself to finishing his literary work. The warning that he was suffering from a dangerous disease came to him early in 1900, and was accepted with the most admirable courage and simplicity. He afterwards read a paper at the Synthetic Society and took part in the debate with his usual brilliancy. Friends who met him still later, without being aware of his position, found the old charm in his conversation and were only impressed by a rather more marked tone of friendly interest. He resigned his professorship; quietly wound up his affairs; and parted from life as nobly as he had lived it. He died on 28th August, 1900.

A word or two upon personal characteristics may be permitted. Sidgwick had no great physical power. He suffered

a good deal from hay fever, and in late years from insomnia. He soothed hours of wakefulness by reading a great quantity of novels, and remembered their plots with singular retentiveness. Dr. Peile records that when meditating he liked to take a sharp walk, often 'breaking into a little run'. The starts indicated, perhaps, the flashing of some new thought upon his mind. The vivacity of such impressions made him one of the best of talkers. The difficulty of describing conversation is proverbial, and when I seek for appropriate epithets I am discouraged by the vagueness which makes them equally applicable to others. Henry Smith, for example, who often met Sidgwick at the 'Ad Eundem,' had an equal fame for good sayings; and both might be credited with un-failing urbanity, humour, quickness and other such qualities. Their styles were nevertheless entirely different, while to point out the exact nature of the difference is beyond my powers. Smith, perhaps, excelled especially in the art of concealing a keen epigram in a voice and manner of almost excessive gentleness. Sidgwick rather startled one by sudden and unexpected combinations and arch inversions of commonplace. His skill in using his stammer was often noticed. His hearers watched and waited for the coming thought which then exploded the more effectually. Sidgwick not only conceded but eagerly promoted contributions of talk from his companions. He would wait with slightly parted lips for an answer to some inquiry, showing a keen interest which encouraged your expectation that you were about to say a good thing, and sometimes, let us hope, helped to realise the expectation. He differed from Smith—who preserved a strict reticence upon the final problems—by a readiness to discuss any question whatever, if it were welcome to his companions. He was not only perfectly frank but glad to gain enlightenment even from comparatively commonplace minds. Johnson commended a talker who would fairly put his mind to yours. That marks one of Sidgwick's merits. He would take up any topic; made no pretension to superiority, and was as willing to admit ignorance or error as he was always fertile in new lights. He delighted in purely literary talk; and his criticisms happily combined two often inconsistent qualities: the freshness of impression which suggests a first reading of some book, with the ripeness of judgment which implies familiarity with the book and its writer. He might, I think, have been the first of contemporary critics had he not devoted his powers to better things. Sidgwick could not be unconscious of his own abilities; but was as free from arrogance as from any approach to ostentation; and, in

fact, freedom from the weaknesses of morbid self-consciousness was one of his most obvious characteristics. When he resigned his fellowship, he made no fuss about doing a simple act of duty; and when the fatal sentence was pronounced, he accepted it with perfect quietness, without complaint, and with no display of resignation. There was no merit in Boswell's good humour, said Burke, it was so natural. I had the same feeling about Sidgwick's unselfishness and high principle. I fancied that he could not really have a conscience—much as he professed to esteem that faculty—because I could not see that his conscience could ever have anything to do. He had plenty of scruples, because he saw the full complexity of any special case; but, when he had the facts properly arranged, the decision to act followed spontaneously.

I must try to indicate in a few words the relation between Sidgwick's thought and his personal characteristics. I may take for granted the singular activity and subtlety of his intellect. The whole substance of his books is logic, with a minimum of amplification or rhetoric. They are a continuous and unflinching scrutiny of the positions to be established or confuted. The subtlety again is always at the service of common sense. It is directed to secure clearness and solidity, not the construction of an elaborate system. I remember his once speaking of certain philosophies. They resemble cardhouses: you can perhaps coax your first principle into an appearance of stable equilibrium; but when you build a second upon the first and go on to a third and fourth, the collapse of the whole edifice is certain. It was therefore Sidgwick's aim to lay secure foundations on solid ground. He has given in a fragment (to be published in a forthcoming edition) a 'genetic account' of his book upon ethics. He had been repelled by Whewell's arbitrary system of intuitions, and attracted by the plain common sense of Mill's Utilitarianism. But difficulties revealed themselves which sent him to all the great moralists from Aristotle to Butler and Kant. The final result seemed to some of his critics to be a rehabilitation of Utilitarianism. He protested against this view and said that he had criticised Utilitarianism as unsparingly as Intuitionism. He had 'transcended the difference; or (as he says in the fragment) become a Utilitarian on an Intuitionist basis. The first principle of Utilitarianism is 'the most certain and comprehensive of Intuitions'. But the reconciliation itself brings out most sharply a fundamental contrast—that, namely, between this first principle and the conflicting principle of 'rational

egoism'. It is 'reasonable' to seek our own happiness; and yet it cannot be proved empirically that this harmonises with the other reasonable principle of seeking the general happiness. Conduct, then, cannot be made 'intrinsically reasonable' without accepting a hypothesis 'unverifiable by experience'. Unless, therefore, we can believe that the moral order imperfectly realised in this world is actually perfect, the 'cosmos of duty is really reduced to a chaos' and the attempt to form a perfect ideal of rational conduct foredoomed to inevitable failure. Sidgwick, that is, had not found a final solution for the old Utilitarian difficulty. A sufficient criterion of morality could be found in the 'greatest happiness' principle; but the difficulty was to discover a sufficient 'sanction'. How much this difficulty affected Sidgwick is shown by his remarks upon "In Memoriam". He frankly admitted that he could not give a solution. Meanwhile, whatever the true answer, the effect of his elaborate scrutiny into the fundamental conceptions of Ethics gave, as I think from my own experience and that of others, the most important of all modern contributions towards a clear realisation of the conditions of approaching the problems involved.

A similar tendency marks his *Political Economy*. His early interest in social problems had led him to the subject. His love of all intellectual activities took him far into some technical discussions, upon bimetallism for example, which have little bearing upon ethics. But his main point is closely connected with the problem of what Bentham called 'self-regarding conduct'. He had been again greatly influenced by Mill. He adopts old methods, but endeavours to restate the results so as to meet later criticisms. The 'classical economists' had insisted upon the supreme importance of self-interest and had deduced the *laissez faire* doctrine. Sidgwick by a careful and acute investigation of their arguments, tries to recognise the true place of the 'self-interest' principle, and to get rid of the excessive absolutism of his predecessors. He refutes in particular, the 'wage fund' theory, which had been used as an argument against the possibility of social improvement. The old rigid system is thus broken down, and free play is left for hopes of social regeneration. It is, however, equally characteristic that Sidgwick endeavours to do full justice to the importance of the self-interest principle, which had been unduly magnified into the sole axiom of political economy; and, without adopting the old *non possumus*, emphasises the necessity of appealing to experience. He

is characteristically opposed¹ to the claims of sociologists, who have jumped prematurely to general theories of society which would invalidate or absorb political economy; and to such followers of the historical school as incline to deny the possibility of anything beyond purely empirical results. Sidgwick's mixture of cautious scrutiny with a hearty respect for the common sense embodied in the old system is again conspicuous.

Both in the *Ethics* and the *Political Economy*, his common sense leads him to assign less importance than many of his contemporaries to evolutionist theories. They tend, he clearly holds, to exaggerated claims of scientific infallibility and after all leave the fundamental questions to be answered. If you could show how morality has come into being, you would not show what it actually is. The effect of his position is marked in the *Elements of Politics*. He was always keenly interested in political questions and showed his characteristic common sense in speaking of them. There is abundance of that quality in the *Politics*, when he again expressly takes up the line of Bentham and his followers. We have the old problem of the proper relation between the State and the Individual, or self-interest and public spirit. Common sense is invaluable; but I confess that to my mind it is impossible to discuss political questions effectively without constant reference to historical development; and that, from the absence of such reference, Sidgwick's book is rather a collection of judicious remarks than a decided help to the formation of political theory. He afterwards, I believe from a sense of this weakness in his method, took up some historical investigations into political institutions and delivered lectures upon the topic. I do not know whether they were sufficiently finished to justify republication, or how they might be related to the general treatise.

Sidgwick published nothing, I think, expressly treating of the ultimate problems which always occupied his mind. Friends have told me that in later life he drew rather nearer to orthodox views. The Synthetic Society, of which he was an important member, endeavours, I understand, to promote efforts towards a reconstructive process with which he no doubt strongly sympathised. He perhaps felt that he had no definite help to give to the solution of the final difficulty suggested in the conclusion of the *Ethics*, or hoped that he might be able to utter his convictions more fully when he

¹ See his "Scope and Method of Economic Science" (address to the British Association, 1885).

was relieved from the pressure of his active employments ; and could complete his speculative labours, if not by offering a full answer to his doubts, yet by indicating the best method of approximating to such a result.

A meeting of Sidgwick's friends was held at Cambridge upon the 26th November. It was resolved to raise funds for some memorial ; but it is not yet decided whether it should be a library of philosophical books, a studentship in philosophy or a lectureship in moral science.