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## ORDINARY MEETING, APRIL 15, 1867.

THE REV. WALTER MITCHELL, VICE-PRESIDENT, IN THE CHAIR.

The minutes of the previous Meeting having been read and confirmed, the following Paper was then read :—

*ON UTILITARIANISM. By JAMES REDDIE, Esq., Hon. Sec. Vict. Inst.*

THE theory of Utilitarianism could have had no more able champion in our day than Mr. John Stuart Mill, and yet some of his most favourable critics have observed that he has rather apologized for it, and explained away its most objectionable features, than ventured upon its rigid vindication. Mr. Mill would probably not admit this description of his treatise to be correct; but, as a frank opponent of the theory, I can only say that I trust that those who have any doubts upon the subject will read and carefully study the book for themselves. I do not anticipate that it will make any converts to Utilitarianism. It will be found very full of startling propositions; and its admissions and qualifications will most probably drive most of its readers to the conclusion that some more simple and intelligible "foundation of morality" is requisite than "the utilitarian or happiness theory." Mr. Mill believes, however, that it is the very imperfect notion which people have of the utilitarian formula that is the chief obstacle which impedes its reception; and he commences his explanation of "what utilitarianism is" by exposing "the ignorant blunder of supposing that those who stand up for utility as the test of right and wrong, use the term in that restricted and merely colloquial sense in which utility is opposed to pleasure." He says, however, that the philosophical opponents of utilitarianism are incapable of "so absurd a misconception," and adds that "those who know anything about the matter are aware that every writer, from Epicurus to Bentham, who maintained the theory of utility, meant by it, not something to be contradis-

tinguished from pleasure, but *pleasure itself, together with exemption from pain.*" And "yet (he goes on) the common herd, including the herd of writers, not only in newspapers and periodicals, but in books of weight and pretension, are perpetually falling into this shallow mistake." Mr. Mill uses this rather strong language, although he admits that the term has been thus "ignorantly misapplied," not "solely in disparagement, but occasionally in compliment, as though it implied superiority to frivolity, and the mere pleasures of the moment." Now, as Mr. Mill claims to have been "the first person who brought the word utilitarian into use," he is, of course, well entitled to explain what he may have meant by it; but it does seem somewhat unreasonable to be angry that the term has been so generally understood in its obvious sense, as signifying that which is antithetical to "pleasure in some of its forms"—to beauty, ornament, or amusement. We find the word described as a "modern barbarism" in some of our dictionaries; and our lexicographers seem all unaware that by the useful is meant also the ornamental, beautiful, pleasant, and amusing. But whether the etymon of the term be regarded as the English word *utility*, or the Latin word *utilitas*, I am equally unable to see upon what philological ground Mr. Mill can claim to be so very right in the peculiar sense he applies to it, and "the herd of writers in newspapers and periodicals," and even "in books of weight," so very wrong and "shallow, mistaken and ignorant." If, again, there was really no difference between what Epicurus and Bentham taught, "the common herd" may be excused for thinking that it might have been quite as well not to have given a new name, and one so liable to be misunderstood, to an old and well-known system of heathen morals. Not that I can admit that Benthamism and the Epicurean philosophy, are really alike, though Mr. Mill seems to say as much; any more than I think it certain that Epicurus would have rejected a higher foundation and sanction for his system of happiness (based as it was upon virtuous action alone), such as the revelation of God's will affords, if he had only had the opportunity of knowing it as we have. We must not forget that what may have been an admirable theory of morals for the heathen, and for them a sound foundation for human virtue and goodness, may have a very different character when it is professedly put forward in antagonism with Christianity. It is one thing to reject, as Epicurus did, the heathen superstitions as to a future life, and quite another to reject what the Bible and Christianity teach as to future rewards and punishments. The best of the heathen philosophers, moreover, admitted the imperfections of their own moral

systems, and the need for some higher teaching and further light to satisfy their longings after the true, the good, the holy. Those who believe in the Bible and Christianity believe they have that higher teaching and light which the heathen wanted. They ought not, therefore, to be satisfied with any theory of being or living, or any foundation of morality, which coolly ignores, and requires them to ignore and disregard, what Christianity teaches. In this point of view, and logically so, what is not founded on Christianity is against it; though at the same time we may be glad to find adduced, however faintly, among other arguments in favour of Utilitarianism, that it is not at issue with certain recognized Christian principles, and that it is, therefore, so far not against Christianity.

The real fact is, that Utilitarianism is an inadequate theory of morality, rather than a positively and altogether false one. As far as there is truth in it, it is perfectly in accordance with Christianity; and, indeed, most modern spurious systems make very free use of principles, of which but for Christianity they would have had no knowledge. But when Utilitarianism claims to be a satisfactory foundation for a moral system, and of itself capable of being a test of right and wrong, and the means of ascertaining what is right or wrong, it puts forth pretensions to which it has not the slightest right. We shall find, moreover, that the same confusion of ideas which, it seems is connected with its very name, runs through all the arguments on which it professes to be based, even when they are employed by such an able advocate as Mr. J. S. Mill; and, if so, it will be evident that it can but have slight pretensions to be dignified with the title of "a philosophical theory."

Mr. Mill gives the following tolerably full definition of his professed faith. He says: "The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness; wrong, as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure." But, notwithstanding these postulata, we find Mr. Mill thus expressing himself in another place: "The medical art is proved to be good by its conducing to health; but how is it possible to prove that health is good?" This will certainly puzzle ordinary readers, who would naturally reverse the proposition, and say they have no difficulty in proving health to be good, but it often appears to them more than questionable whether the medical art really does conduce to health. That it ought to do so, and aims at doing so, all may admit; but that is not Mr. Mill's proposition. A first diffi-

culty, also, might well be raised as to which of the various medical arts is to be regarded as *the* "medical art" that Mr. Mill calls good as being conducive to health. And what are we to think of a theory of morals which is founded upon our knowledge of what conduces to happiness, or what is, therefore, good, if at the outset we are in doubt whether we can prove that health is good? Surely, if by happiness and pleasure is meant the absence of pain, there can be no difficulty in proving health to be good, unless it be alleged that what conduces to happiness and pleasure is not good. And if, as Mr. Mill says, the absence of pain is one primary meaning of happiness, one would imagine that nothing could more logically follow than that health is good as conducive to the absence of pain, and therefore to pleasure or happiness, according to this definition or major proposition.

Side by side with this he places the following, which may be regarded as striking at the very root of the theory of utilitarianism itself: "The art of music is good, for the reason, among others, that it produces pleasure; *but what proof is it possible to give that pleasure is good?*" I venture to think that if a prior question, "What is good?" had been determined, these other inquiries would have been more logically and satisfactorily answered. It is not, however, my business to do this; and, indeed, most of the abstract questions of this kind, as raised by Mr. Mill, are much more fully and satisfactorily answered in the Dialogues of Plato than in his Essay. But, admitting that it is impossible to prove that pleasure is good, what then becomes of a theory which is professedly based upon pleasure as its grand criterion? I mean, if pleasure cannot be proved to be good, can a theory of moral action based upon the production of pleasure, as its test and foundation, be proved to be good? And if not proved, are we really expected to be satisfied with this theory of morals, which rejects the principles of Christianity, on a mere assertion that it is good, and to accept it in blind faith, without any proof whatever? We are. This is precisely what Mr. Mill demands of us in the very next sentence. "If, then," he says, "*it is asserted that there is a comprehensive formula, including all things which are in themselves good, and that whatever else is good is not so as an end, but as a mean, the formula may be accepted or rejected, but is not a subject of what is commonly understood by proof.*" I have no wish to misrepresent the claims of Utilitarianism, and I therefore add, that the above extraordinary dictum is afterwards qualified thus: "The subject is within the cognizance of the rational faculty, and neither does that faculty deal with it solely in the way of

intuition." By "rational faculty" the sense requires us here to understand *reasoning* faculty; and then the latter clause of the sentence becomes very strangely superfluous. The succeeding sentence completes the confusion and self-contradictions which seem to be intimately associated with all that relates to the nature as well as the name of utilitarianism. It is not susceptible of proof, but yet it seems that it may, after a fashion, be proved; for he adds: "*Considerations* may be presented *capable of determining the intellect* either to give or withhold its assent to the doctrine; and this is *equivalent to proof*." I quite agree with this last position; and it is solely because I consider that arguments, capable of determining the intellect, may be adduced for and *against* Utilitarianism as a moral theory, that I discuss the subject at all.

In order to make my argument as intelligible as possible, I will at once state the propositions I think may be established against the theory. First, that (as already said) it is an inadequate theory, and this in two senses—inadequate as not being practicable as a principle of action, and inadequate as not being a whole truth. Second, that whether utility (in the proper sense) or pleasure, or both, be regarded as the basis of the theory, then, in so far as either utility or pleasure, or both, can be regarded as good, so far are they recognized as good in the Christian system. Third, that therefore, so far as Utilitarianism is good or true, it belongs to Christianity. And lastly, that wherever utility or pleasure, or both, are made a motive of moral action beyond what Christianity sanctions, they will mislead, and are false principles.

Let us now have as plainly before our minds the claims of Utilitarianism. "The theory of life on which this theory of morality is grounded" is as follows, namely, "that pleasure, and freedom from pain, are the only things desirable as ends; and that all desirable things (which are as numerous in the utilitarian as in any other scheme) are desirable either for the pleasure inherent in themselves, or as means to the promotion of pleasure and the prevention of pain." This theory being announced in these terms, it is then spoken of as if it were identical with the system of Epicurus; though afterwards Mr. Mill adds: "I do not, indeed, consider the Epicureans to have been by any means faultless in drawing out their scheme of consequences from the utilitarian principle. *To do this in any sufficient manner, many Stoic as well as Christian elements require to be included.*" Here, again, we have an important concession that is fatal to Utilitarianism as a moral theory; or, at least, which requires certain important principles to be

previously accepted, if they cannot be shown to be false; and which, if true, really settle the main question, and leave no place for a theory of Utilitarianism. These principles are, That God is the moral governor of the world, and that reason and conscience are the voice of God in man's heart, and enable us to discover or to know intuitively what is right, or in accordance with God's will. Zeno taught this so far, according to the light of nature; Christ added the light of revelation of the Truth and will of God. God is the basis of the Stoical system, as it is of Christianity; but Utilitarianism is essentially atheistic. And yet it now confessedly requires to borrow "many Stoic as well as Christian elements," before it can claim to draw out its scheme of consequences "in any sufficient manner." In other words, modern Utilitarianism may now be defined as Epicureanism *plus* some of the elements of Theism, to be found in Stoicism and Christianity. But, then, I must point out that these incorporated elements are heterogeneous to the theory that adopts them. The moment the idea of God is entertained, as the author of created existence, His will must necessarily override and supersede all other considerations as the proper and only true basis of morality. This is so, whether that will is only known or sought after by the aid of natural reason and conscience, or whether a fuller knowledge of it is further revealed to man by the Scriptures. Moreover, professing Christians have a right to demand of any teacher of new moral theories—and especially of one who admits the necessity of certain Christian elements to complete the theory he propounds—that he will plainly tell them what other Christian elements the advocates of Utilitarianism are prepared to show should be set aside as false. Christians cannot be content to be merely told that "Utility is not only not a godless doctrine, but more profoundly religious than any other;" nor satisfied to learn that "the Utilitarian who believes in the perfect goodness and wisdom of God, necessarily believes that whatever God has thought fit to reveal on the subject of morals, must fulfil the requirements of utility in a supreme degree." All this the Christian himself believes, but also something more than this. Let us at least raise perfectly clear issues in all such discussions, and begin at the beginning logically. Christianity is a long-established system, which claims to be wholly true. Those who reject it, or set it aside, are bound to attack it seriously, if they have anything better to teach. They have no right to appropriate some of its "elements" to bolster up an adverse system, in order to make the latter palatable to those whose minds have been elevated, however unconsciously,

far beyond Epicureanism, or even Stoicism, solely by means of the teaching of Christianity.

We may well be surprised to find a writer, having the high reputation of Mr. J. S. Mill as a logician and reasoner, making use of an illustration by way of argument, which is no better than the vulgar *tu quoque* fallacy, which can only be answered by the common proverb that "two blacks cannot make a white." Ignoring Christianity as the lamp of moral truth, he admits there are endless difficulties, confusion, and little progress yet made among mankind in the decision of the controversy respecting the criterion of right and wrong; in short, he acknowledges, among those who thus reject the Christian rule, a condition of "ever learning, but never being able to come to the knowledge of the truth." But he pleads that "similar confusion and uncertainty, and in some cases similar discordance, exist respecting the first principles of all sciences, not excepting that which is deemed the most certain of them, mathematics;" and he says that this is so "without much impairing, generally indeed without impairing at all, the trustworthiness of the conclusions of these sciences." "Were it not so," he goes on, "there would be no science more precarious, or whose conclusions were more insufficiently made out, than algebra, which derives none of its certainty from what are commonly taught to learners as its elements, since these, as laid down by some of its most eminent teachers, are as full of fictions as English law, and of mysteries as theology."

All this may be very true, and may afford a very good reason for being on our guard against the irrational mysteries of modern analytical mathematics; but it should be remembered that these corruptions and contradictions and mysteries in pure mathematics, have crept gradually into the science, and not without protest on the part of honest thinkers. But such a description of algebra would scarcely be given by any one who accepts its methods as trustworthy. And such a bad example of credulity in a science which is admitted to be full of contradictions and insufficiently proved conclusions, affords no reason why men should reject the plain teaching of Christianity, in order to adopt a system which its very author (as we may concede Mr. Mill to be) confesses to be thus full of difficulties and contradictions. But to do justice to the analogy before us; contradictory, confused and mysterious as Mr. Mill admits modern mathematics to be, what would he think of a philosopher who, in opposing their conclusions, wished all their teaching to be quietly ignored, instead of attacking their main principles by strictly mathematical reasoning, and

so proving their alleged contradictions to be really such, or else disproving the conclusions by a *reductio ad absurdum*? What, as Christians, we must wish to know, is, Why we are to give up Christianity as the best rule of morals, and to have recourse to Utilitarianism? But in the meantime, waiving this point, and content with having stated it, let us follow Mr. Mill briefly in his advocacy of Utilitarianism upon its merits.

It claims to be "the Greatest Happiness Principle." But then does not the Christian system, proclaiming "Peace on earth and goodwill to men"—or as some translate the phrase, "Peace to men of good will"—put forward a prior claim to having enunciated "the greatest happiness principle"? Utilitarianism claims that its "ultimate end, with reference to and for the sake of which all other things are desirable (whether we are considering our own good or that of other people), is an existence exempt as far as possible from pain, and as rich as possible in enjoyments, both in point of quantity and quality." And what, pray, is the teaching of the whole Bible, Old Testament and New, and what the main thesis of Bishop Butler's *Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion*, but this? In the Old Testament we have blessing and cursing, or happiness and the contrary, put before men as the great "end" of true morality or obedience to God's will. The paths of the just or wise or virtuous are described as paths of pleasantness and peace; and again, as "the ultimate end," it is declared that "at God's right hand there are pleasures for evermore." And we have the simple principle, "Love God first, and thy neighbour as thyself," coupled in the New Testament with the equally simple yet comprehensive rule of action, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them, for this is the law and the prophets." But the law and the prophets and the gospel, from the first to the last book of revelation, are also full of "the Greatest Happiness principle," culminating in the description of the joys of heaven in the Apocalypse, where there shall be no more death, where sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and where all tears shall be wiped from all eyes. And the means to this end are love to God and man, as principles, and the practice of universal benevolence, including justice, mercy, kindness, and whatsoever things are lovely or of good report.

Now, why is this to be rejected? We find nothing superior or at all equal to it in the Greatest Happiness Principle of Utilitarianism. It we also find to be defective as regards its foundation, since it "cannot prove pleasure to be good;" and in fact its author almost admits that some pleasures are not

good. He supplies us with no simple rules for moral action, like the Ten Commandments of Moses, or the Christian precept to do unto others as we would be done by. He only promises at best, hereafter, to set forth a code of morals.

Mr. Mill does not believe that we have any innate moral feelings; but says he thinks that if "once the general happiness were recognized as the ethical standard, this would constitute the strength of the utilitarian morality." If, however, we consider for how long the doctrine of rewards and punishments has been taught in the world, and we may say, how largely it has been admitted into the human conscience under almost every system of religion, and especially if we have regard to the promises and precepts of love and benevolence in the Old and New Testament, and the millions who have really believed in them, without acting consistently with their professed belief, we may well conclude that this laudable utilitarian hope is also somewhat Utopian. In another place Mr. Mill speaks of "the comparatively early state of human advancement in which we now live." I know not whether he accepts the old-fashioned Bible genealogy of mankind, or the new theories of man's much greater antiquity. But alas! for man's progress and ultimate end, if either six thousand years, or twice as many millions, must be regarded as "an *early* state of human advancement"!

The practical difficulties which mankind at large would experience, had they no other moral guide than Utilitarianism, would consist in their never being certain whether this or that act would conduce to the *greatest happiness* or not. No higher motive or basis being recognised, self-denying virtue and the suffering of temporary pain, or refraining from immediate pleasure, for the sake of ourselves or others ultimately, would be impossible. Why one man should suffer for the sake of others' happiness; or how an individual could satisfy himself that he should be that man; may be regarded as inevitable puzzles that would arise under a system which has no higher or simpler standard of right and wrong. Mr. Mill thinks these difficulties could easily be got over by utilitarian precepts which might be propounded for men's guidance. But he does not propound them. When he does, I have little doubt we shall find, that many of "the elements of Christianity" must needs be incorporated with his new code of morality. Notwithstanding his definition of the Greatest Happiness Principle, however, it is satisfactory to learn that Utilitarians "do desire things which, *in common language*, are decidedly distinguished from happiness." As any system of morality in my opinion ought certainly to be suited to mankind generally,

I am therefore persuaded it must have regard to "common language" in order to be intelligible. We may hail, therefore, with great satisfaction the further announcement that Utilitarians "desire, for example, virtue, and the absence of vice, no less really than pleasure and the absence of pain." All this is very hopeful; as also is the plain admission that all pleasures are not real pleasures, or conducive to happiness. After all, "the lovers of pleasure" which throng the crowded circles of "vanity fair" will find little to please them in Mr. Mill's essay. The moment a qualification becomes necessary as to *what* pleasures conduce to real happiness, the definition of utilitarianism shows itself imperfect. These words, virtue and vice, are like the small end of a wedge of truth, and once admitted and pondered and fairly understood, only require to be driven home and logically applied, in order to make an end of Utilitarianism. The moment mankind is furnished with a higher motive than "Pleasure," or "the Greatest Happiness Principle;" and when words like virtue and vice, good and bad, are introduced as ideas (which are intelligible enough under the Christian system, as well as under that of the Stoics and the systems of all theistical moral teachers), the Theory of Utilitarianism falls to the ground, and its very name remains but a "modern barbarism," as defined in some of our dictionaries.

Here I might stop; but before I conclude I am anxious to show, by some additional extracts from Mr. Mill's book, how the teaching of Christianity can be coolly appropriated by moral theorists, whose object is to substitute something else for Christianity; and who, it seems, can get on satisfactorily, and, as they think, produce "the power and efficacy of a religion," even "without the aid of belief in a Providence"! Mr. Mill says:—"The desire to be in unity with our fellow-creatures is already a powerful principle in human nature, and happily one of those which tend to become stronger, even without express inculcation, from the influences of advancing civilization." It pleases him, it will be observed, to ignore the fact that, even if the world is still in a "comparatively early state of advancement," there has, nevertheless, been time enough within "the historical period" for various developments of civilization to take place, but which never did happen to develop into "a desire to be in unity with our fellow-creatures," till "that powerful principle" was enunciated to human nature as the express inculcation and teaching of the religion of Christ. Again, our author says:—"In an improving state of the human mind, the influences are constantly on the increase, which tend to generate in each indi-

vidual a feeling of unity with all the rest; which, if perfect, would make him never think of, or desire, any beneficial condition for himself, in the benefits of which they are not included. If we now suppose *this feeling of unity to be taught as a religion*, and the whole force of education, of institutions, and of opinion, directed, as it once was in the case of religion, to make every person grow up from infancy surrounded on all sides both by the profession and practice of it, I think that no one who can realize this conception will feel any misgiving about the sufficiency of the ultimate sanction for the Happiness morality." I really know not what to call this kind of thing. We know what plagiarism is, and literary piracy. But what name can we give to a "moral" system that seizes upon the grand distinctive principle and peculiar characteristic of Christianity, and puts it forth as a new thing, to be "*now taught as a religion*," in order to prove the sufficiency "of the Happiness morality," which goes by the name of Utilitarianism! What follows is, if possible, yet more startling:—"To any ethical student who finds the realization difficult, I recommend, as a means of facilitating it, the second of M. Comte's two principal works, the *Traité de Politique Positive*. I entertain the strongest objections to the system of politics and morals set forth in that treatise; but I think it has superabundantly shown the possibility of giving to the service of humanity, *even without the aid of belief in a Providence*, both the psychological power and the social efficacy of a religion, making it take hold of human life, and colour all thought, feeling, and action, in a manner of which the greatest ascendancy ever exercised by any religion may be but a type and foretaste, and of which the danger is, not that it should be insufficient, but that it should be so excessive as to interfere unduly with human freedom and individuality."

I need not comment upon this. I can, however, fully agree with Mr. Mill as to the probable effect of "a religion" that dispenses with a GOD! When, also, any system full of "contradictions, fallacies, and insufficiently-proved conclusions," comes to be credulously accepted by men, their real freedom and individuality must not only be unduly interfered with and ultimately perish; but in my opinion they must already have become mental slaves, and have ceased to be independent thinkers.

Rev. Dr. THORNTON.—I shall take the liberty of offering a few remarks upon the paper of Mr. Reddie; not that I presume to add anything of my own, but as a mere appendix, I think one may be able to say something which may confirm those conclusions to which he has come, to the satisfaction

of all members of this Institute. As he has told us, Mr. Mill is not the first Utilitarian. The Utilitarian theory was known long before his time. In fact, the first Utilitarians arose at Athens, and were called Sophists. They were persons who, seeing doubt and difficulty pervading men's minds as to right and wrong, laid down this easy and intelligible rule, that what appeared right was right, what appeared pleasant was pleasant, and what a man would like to do he was bound to do and ought to do. Against this pernicious doctrine the great man of his age, Socrates, set himself most decidedly. In his disputations (those disputations which have gained him the name of "the Prince of Bores"! ) he maintained that good was not what appeared to a man to be good, or rather could not be tested by each individual man's opinion of it ; but that the chief good must contain three elements :—1. Intellectual truth ; 2. Moral excellence ; and 3. An element commending it to the feelings of those who possessed it, by means of what (for want of a better word) he called pleasure. Socrates was followed by disciples having minds differing from his and from one another's, each of whom caught hold of some one of those elements of good and maintained it exclusively. With those who maintained moral excellence to be the chief good, who were the Cynics, and afterwards the Stoics, we have nothing to do ; nor with those who, with Plato, considered a highly-trained and developed intellect to be the chief good. Then we have the third school of *Aristippus* ; and he maintained that what was pleasant was good, and what was not pleasant was not good. He was a Utilitarian very different to the Sophists, but he was one still : he did not perceive the logical fault he was committing in making pleasure and good coextensive with one another. Socrates had said there were three elements required in good. He required only one, and fell into the same error which the Sophists had committed ; so that, though professing to be a follower of Socrates, he came to the same conclusion as those whom Socrates combated. His fallacy was this : laying down that "All that is good is pleasant"—which is true,—he simply converted the proposition, and said "All that is pleasant is good," which of course every logician knows to be incorrect. The fact is, that the pleasure is a test of the presence of good, but the goodness does not depend on the pleasantness. Granted that a certain thing is good, there must be a certain pleasure ; but you must not therefore argue, because pleasure attends a course of action, that course is necessarily good. It would be a fallacy, and it is that fallacy which the Utilitarians fall into now, when they say the test of the goodness of an action is its producing pleasure, or freedom from pain, amongst the greatest number. Now this question is a very important one, because it leads to still further considerations, to what I may call the boundless realm of moral obligations and moral sanctions. (Hear, hear.) Why are we bound to act in a certain way, and not to act in another certain way ? Why has there been a certain stamp fixed upon a certain course of actions by which the Deity says, This shall not be done ; That course shall be adopted ? The whole question is one of difficulty ; but the Utilitarians, it seems to me, appear to

try to do away with it. Every one who considers the matter dispassionately, and thinks of it as deeply as thinking men should, will say that the subject is one of boundless extent. The Utilitarians, however, endeavour to narrow it by saying, "We have an easy test of goodness and propriety of actions; they are obligations upon us, and their sanction is tested by the pleasure, positive or negative, produced by them in certain individuals." Into this subject I do not now profess or wish to go. It is one which would occupy much more time than at present we have to spare. I shall, however, endeavour to point out one thing, that the Utilitarians have neglected in their theory (their theory of goodness and pleasure being equipollent and coexistent), namely, the true consideration of what causes the pleasure of good actions. Why is a good action pleasant, and why is an evil action unpleasant? Because of a faculty which we call moral taste. As the moral sense is the intuitive perception of that which is considered moral good, so the taste is the intuitive perception of that which is beautiful. Moral taste, then, is the intuitive perception, not of the goodness, but of the beauty and fitness of virtue. That is the faculty which Utilitarians ignore, by making goodness and pleasure equal to one another, and each a test of the other. They have forgotten there is this faculty of moral taste; or they confound it with the conscience, or moral sense. Is this faculty implanted in us, or is it one gained by training? If we look to our Scriptural guide (and that is a very safe one,—it is a good philosophical book, as well as our guide for affairs of higher concern), we shall find what philosophy would have already taught us, that the moral taste is something gained by training and by experience; the faculty, the power of perceiving the beauty of virtue and goodness, arises from the education of the man by obedience to his moral sense. One who habitually follows the dictates of conscience will arrive at a state of mind in which he will intuitively perceive that a virtuous mode of action is not only the one he is bound to adopt, but the most delightful to adopt; he will perceive the pleasure connected with virtue: but that state of mind does not come until after the mind has been trained. We find it in Scripture in these words, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." We shall have not the mere discerning that good is not evil, and evil not good, but more than that: we shall have the moral taste exercised to perceive that good is in itself essentially beautiful, and evil in itself the reverse; that goodness, if we may say so, shows, even on earth, some reflex of the bright face of that Deity whose will we believe it to be. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. R. G. M. BROWNE.—One thing occurs to me, that Dr. Thornton has referred to Scripture in support of his assertion that moral taste enables us to judge of the beauty of goodness. Should we not rather discuss the theory which Mr. Mill would put forward on its merits, independently of Scripture? That is a point which it occurred to me might be regarded by some as rather a weakness in the argument; and whether Utilitarianism should not be considered independently of Scripture. I think Dr. Thornton quoted from Scripture in support of his assertion.

Dr. THORNTON.—Far from it; I wish you to understand distinctly that I

do not refer to Scripture as a proof of philosophy, I merely say (perhaps I failed to express myself clearly) that the philosophical principle is, that there is a moral taste or perception of the beauty of the goodness of virtue, distinct from its fitness ; and this, I said, I cannot express better than in the words of Scripture,—for I believe Scripture to be a book which contains true philosophy, as well as guidance on higher subjects ; and therefore I rather use the words of Scripture, as the best words to express my philosophical principle, than found my argument upon them. I may apologize for using words of Scripture, which occur naturally to a person of my profession ; but I wish it to be understood that I do not appeal to Scripture as a proof of science ; but I do think that the words of Scripture express the scientific truth so well, that I may be pardoned for employing them. (Hear, hear.)

REV. A. DE LA MARE.—I am unwilling to put myself before the meeting this evening, though I cannot refrain from making a few observations. As you are aware, I have not been able to attend the meetings for some time, and I may be a little behind the course of lectures which have been delivered. I would first say, I thank Mr. Reddie most sincerely and heartily for myself, for the paper he has read to us. It has opened an important question, which I think might be very usefully discussed at some future time, and would likely bring forth a rejoinder or awaken a desire to pursue the subject further. The remark of the gentleman who just now demurred to Dr. Thornton's quotation of Scripture suggested to my mind, that if philosophers would adhere as strictly to their own definitions of their own systems as they require theological students to do, we should have less trouble in understanding each other, and in keeping separate truths which they are prone to amalgamate. We have often high claims put forth for different branches of science and systems of philosophy, which men choose to introduce as if they were new things under the sun ; but if we look to it, I think we shall find, as Mr. Reddie says to-night, that all the real good in their systems, from beginning to end, is to be traced from that one source from which Dr. Thornton has quoted, and for doing which I thank him. With regard to the subject which has been brought before us to-night, it is one which has occupied perhaps some of the most acute intellects of the day, and one which requires a great deal of reflection before speaking upon it in public. I would not, therefore, attempt to discuss the question, I only feel most distinctly and decidedly, that Utilitarianism involves a wrong principle, inasmuch as it does not go upon the system of right and wrong. Mr. Reddie has brought before us how its advocates are beginning to introduce the terms of virtue and vice ; but when that is the case, I do not see how they can stop short of introducing the principles of right and wrong ; and when that is done, and virtue and vice are treated in their real characters, they are reducing Utilitarianism to Christianity. I must excuse myself for intruding upon the meeting these few remarks ; but as this is the first time I have been able to be present in the Institute after a long absence, I felt desirous of stating my feelings with reference to the subject before us. (Hear, hear.)

Captain FISHBOURNE.—I may observe with reference to that objection to Dr. Thornton's remarks, that the paper distinctly mentioned as one of the defects in the theory, acknowledged by Mr. Mill himself, that it requires to draw from Christianity; and, if he does that, he must admit the propriety of any opponent appealing to that system he draws from. With respect to those attacks made on Christianity, they have one general characteristic,—the persons who attack it evince the most profound ignorance as to what Christianity is; and when they are shown to be wrong, they give a different interpretation to their expressions, in order to get out of the difficulty, and say that "We do not understand them." Now we can fairly retort, and can make it obvious to any one, that they are essentially wrong, and do not really understand Christianity. To take one illustration that is patent to all, in which this system that Mr. Mill proposes, of making happiness a test, is utterly wrong and false. Happiness, he says, is a test of what is right. Why, the whole moral government of God is impeached by this. The whole of the physical difficulties, the physical suffering in the world, is all remedial, and although all painful, is intended to be good in its issue. If we go into a hospital, I could show him there the result of Christian principle as a fact—deal with it as he will.—I would take him in there, and we should see persons under the power of Christian principle, raising them altogether above the sense of pain to a certain extent; so much so that they would not be without pain, because of the superabundant enjoyment which they get from the realization of that Divine power and presence which accompanies the pain, and lifts them above themselves and surrounding circumstances. (Hear, hear.) You will find Christians at the present moment at the East End of London, and I could show there persons without a single outward condition that constitutes, in his estimate, happiness, yet enjoying all the feelings of happiness; and they would despise anything he could offer as a substitute for the condition in which they are living, though bereft of everything—of all the conditions which he would say are indispensable for happiness. He breaks down in these cases in every phase. I think we must congratulate Mr. Reddie upon the not only dispassionate, but I would say far more than dispassionate tone, towards Mr. Mill; for Mr. Reddie really gives him credit where he does not deserve it. Here is a passage, for instance, in which he has given him credit for Christian principle; but I do not think Mr. Mill understands it himself,—“The feeling of unity to be taught as a religion.” But how is the feeling to exist unless the unity has taken place? How can there be the feeling of unity if there is not unity? Then there is a power in Christianity which produces unity, which no mere human system can do. It is a Divine power; a Christian united to Christ is united to God, united to all Christians; but there is no human system that can produce that. Now, all that is overlooked; there is nothing to contrast with it, and yet Mr. Mill's ignorance of this induces him to set forward his system or theory, because he is utterly ignorant of what Christianity is,—because he won't see what evidences there are to be seen by any man in any country like this where Christianity is preached.

Mr. BROWNE.—It was by no means with any feeling of opposition to the Scriptures that I ventured to make the remark I did, for I am a thorough believer in them, but it was on account of my jealousy for them. I think they are maintainable on independent grounds, but I thought it was quite right, when an observation was made that seemed to be somewhat dependent on Scripture, to say that the point was by no means dependent upon the Scriptures.

Captain FISHBOURNE.—I hope you do not mean I fancied it was ; but I thought it was a fair answer to be urged, that Mr. Mill had given the warrant for the introduction of the Scriptures by himself borrowing from the Scriptures.

The CHAIRMAN.—I feel that anything I can possibly say, after what Mr. Reddie has written upon this subject, and has been so ably followed by Dr. Thornton, would be only weakening the argument. I think this is one of those subjects which only require to be brought before men who know something of Christianity, in order to see how worthless that philosophy must be, and that it is essentially atheistical. It comes before us as atheism, inasmuch as it is an attempted foundation of a morality without a God, and without recognizing the existence of a moral principle, or the admission of anything like moral principle. Those who have advocated this system in ancient or modern times have always lapsed into atheism ; and therefore the Theist must see that the matter does not end in a controversy as to the principles of morals, but ends in a controversy as to whether there is, or is not, a God. For, if we admit there is a God, I think we must admit that man is a responsible being, as man's responsibility is entirely derived from the existence of God. I think there is one thing that the whole of this system of Utilitarianism sets before us in a very full manner, and that is, the utter incapability of such a system as this, to account for the history of the world, or what we know to be in existence amongst men. It is a system which must essentially ignore moral evil and sin. I cannot conceive how moral evil and sin can have any existence under such a system as this. If, however, we were to use this vague term of Utilitarianism in another way, and ask ourselves what we know from the history of the human race to have been the most useful system of morals, I think that we might well test Utilitarianism, as contrasted, I won't say with Christianity, but with Stoicism, or any of the Theistical principles of the heathen world. What has most conduced to human happiness in this world ? Has it not been a principle which has always been Theistic in its origin, a system of morals admitting the existence of evil in the world, and seeking the aid of the Creator to diminish the evil that exists in the world ? The "greatest happiness principle," no doubt, can only be found in Christianity. (Hear, hear.) We may test and try all other systems by the experience of the human race. What is there in Christianity which causes those who are in the midst of bitter trial and suffering—who seek here for no happiness—who only know here pain and suffering—whose whole religion is consecrated to the following of One who was made perfect in suffering—I wish to ask, How is it that that principle conduces to the greatest amount of happiness even

here in the midst of suffering ; that it contributes to that feeling, when every other system of man's invention has been found to be utterly and entirely faulty ? (Hear, hear.) How, upon such a principle of morals as Utilitarianism, could you go among the heathen or the neglected outcasts of our own population, and bring happiness home to them ? Where, upon such a principle as this, could you find the men who have devoted their lives, not doing that which they conceived conduced to their own happiness, but for the benefit and the good of their fellow-Christians, altogether irrespective of any Utilitarian doctrine of happiness for themselves ? (Hear, hear.) It is true that Christianity shows that all that it inculcates will ultimately conduce to happiness, but it teaches man that that happiness is only to be arrived at through suffering. I think we should test Utilitarianism—for I think the fairest test of any system of morals is to bring it in contact with the history of the human race—by asking what it has effected for the human race ? and why it is to be substituted for Christianity,—why Christianity is now to be taken away from men, as a thing unsuited for the philosophical age in which we live, and another system made a substitute for it, which is to be essentially atheistical in its character, and, according to its own showing, is only by a species of slow development to lead man up to anything like that amount of happiness which Christianity has already afforded him ?

Mr. REDDIE.—I am almost sorry that the unanimity prevailing this evening has left me little to do except to thank you for the very kind—I am sure much too kind—manner in which you have received my paper. I should have been glad if another paper had been read this evening, as you know ; and I should really have been better pleased now, if this paper had been criticised. We miss some of our usual members this evening, or, perhaps, it might have had the benefit of some adverse criticism ; for I feel sure there must be some weak points in the paper which it would have been desirable to have had pointed out to the author. There is, however, one consolation I feel, and that is derived from having elicited the remarks of Dr. Thornton and yourself upon this subject. I would make one remark with reference to the observation of Mr. Browne. I do not think that Dr. Thornton's use of the text of Scripture he employed has been quite as clearly advocated as I should like it to be. Dr. Thornton argued that you could only arrive at a proper appreciation of the beauty of goodness by the cultivation of the moral taste ; and in saying this he was arguing in a perfectly philosophical manner and from human experience ; but he also took the words of Scripture to show that there was in Scripture an anticipation of our philosophy as to this, an appreciation and enunciation of that same principle, not put forward philosophically—because nothing is put forward “philosophically” in the Scripture—but yet a previous knowledge and recognition of that very principle which we arrive at only by slow degrees—and that it is to be found in those texts the language of which he made use of to express his own philosophical conclusion. I think the argument of Captain Fishbourne was also a very pertinent one. Mr. Mill tells us that, in order to complete the theory of Utilitarianism, many Stoical (or, I think we

may fairly say, Theistical) and Christian principles are necessary. That being the case, I think there would be no departure from a truly philosophical mode of argument, even were we to make direct use of passages of Scripture in discussing Utilitarianism. I myself in my paper have been obliged to make use of them, because I am forced to show that the principle enunciated by Mr. Mill, as a new discovery and as deduced from his theory of Utilitarianism, is positively a plagiarism from Christianity. The duty of men to be at unity with one another is a principle of Christianity. But it was not merely taught by Christ, but even in the Old Testament; for we, Christians, do not acknowledge there have been two true religions. The religion of the New Testament is merely the religion of the Old Testament more fully taught, and made plainer and patent to the whole world, instead of being confined to a chosen people. And when we find Mr. Mill telling us, without going to the origin of that doctrine, that if we would *now* teach the principle of unity, we should have something which would re-convert the world,—we are surely entitled to point to the fact, that this teaching is not new, but that it is old; and that, if it has failed, it is from no defect of the principle, but because people, knowing what is good, will yet do what is not good. This is an unfortunate truth, with which we know the heathen were acquainted, from the well-known poet's reflection, "Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor;" and the Apostle St. Paul also taught the same thing, with reference to his personal experience before he was converted to Christianity and became a consistent follower of Christ.

The Meeting was then adjourned.