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Lukas M. Verburgt

John Venn: Unpublished Writings and Selected Correspondence

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Introduction

John Venn, eminent English logician, President of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, Fellow of the Royal Society, and inventor of the famous diagram that bears his name, was born in 1834 and died in 1923. His long and remarkable life spanned several major intellectual developments which his wide-ranging activities as a scholar and as a teacher helped shape, to a greater or lesser degree – ranging from the professionalization of British philosophy and the reception of *Essays and Reviews* (1860) and *The Origin of Species* (1859) to the development of the Moral Sciences Tripos at Cambridge and the creation of modern logic.

The present volume contains unpublished writings and correspondence documenting Venn's transition from an Evangelical son to a Cambridge don. Venn has been very little studied compared to Moral Sciences colleagues like Henry Sidgwick and Alfred Marshall and scientific collaborators such as Francis Galton and William Stanley Jevons.¹ In lieu of something that might be called 'Venn scholarship', Venn's writings and correspondence offer a rich source of insight into his life, work and thought and, as such, can add new dimensions to understanding the world to which he belonged. This world was essentially that of what has become known as – and what Venn himself also called – the mid-Victorian generation of reading men at Cambridge for whom John Stuart Mill was the 'dominant teacher who expounds for all' and Alfred Tennyson the 'dominant poet who sings for all' (see letter 134). Like so many of his contemporaries, including Henry Sidgwick (1838–1900) and his cousin Leslie Stephen (1823–1904), Venn struggled deeply and intensely with the relation between science and religion, between reason and

¹My intellectual biography of Venn, entitled *John Venn: A Life in Logic*, is forthcoming at The University of Chicago Press. On the other figures mentioned see, for instance, Bart Schultz, *Henry Sidgwick – Eye of the Universe: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Peter Groenewegen, *Alfred Marshall: Economics, 1842–1924* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Simon J. Cook, *The Intellectual Foundations of Alfred Marshall's Economic Science. A Rounded Globe of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Nicholas Wright Gillham, *A Life of Sir Francis Galton. From African Exploration to the Birth of Eugenics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); and Harro Maas, *William Stanley Jevons and the Making of Modern Economics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

faith and, perhaps most accurately said, between intellectual honesty and emotional attachment to tradition. Unlike John Henry Newman, for instance, Venn never experienced a crisis of faith followed by the emergence of a new certainty. Instead, in the period between 1862, when he returned to Cambridge after a series of curacies, and 1883, when he resigned Holy Orders, Venn moved from a hereditary Evangelicalism to a liberal Broad Church position. Rather than following those around him into agnosticism and antagonism to the Church of England, Venn for the rest of his life retained an undogmatic form of faith as well as a keen affection for clerical work (see for instance letters **124** and **134**). Both were inspired in great part by reverence for five generations of Evangelical Venns, including his own father, Henry Venn, the influential honorary secretary of the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) (see letter **121**). From around the turn of the century, Venn keenly felt that the mid-Victorian world to which he had belonged was gone; tellingly, the years between 1900 and 1923 were spent in looking back, upon his personal history as well as that of his family, College and University. One outcome was the monumental *Alumni Cantabrigienses* (11 vols., 1922–54) which is still used today as a standard reference source. Originally a project of his son, John Archibald Venn (1883–1958), who would become President of Queens' College, Cambridge, the drudgery of plodding through long lists of names and dates of matriculations and degrees helped Venn fill up all his time and occupied his thoughts during the First World War (see letter **137**).

Venn's change of religious identity, which he analysed in detail in *Annals: Autobiographical Sketch* – reproduced here for the first time (Part I) – was paralleled by the acquisition of an academic identity. In fact, both informed each other on several levels. When Venn entered Gonville and Caius College in 1853, Cambridge was still largely a classical and mathematical seminary where religious tests kept all degrees, fellowships and offices as Anglican monopolies, though university reform had been brought nearer with the appointment of the Graham Commission in 1850. Venn's undergraduate experience as a pensioner and scholar not only provide a point of contrast for the reforms that followed, and in which he himself was a participant; in their recorded form, they are also the chief documents for the mid-nineteenth-century history of his College. About a decade later, in 1862, when he resigned his curacy in Mortlake to take up the role of Catechist, teaching Logic and Political Economy to Indian Civil Service candidates, Venn threw in his lot with the 'ardent young' reformers at Cambridge (see letters **117** and **123**). Facilitated by recent institutional changes that had created opportunities for an academic career independent from religious expectations, Venn came to belong to a small circle of religiously unorthodox men committed to bringing the new course of study called the Moral Sciences to maturity. Many of them gathered around John Grote (1813–1866), who in 1855 had succeeded William Whewell (1794–1866) as Knightbridge Professor of Moral Philosophy, forming the 'Grote Club', where Venn spent some of his 'happiest hours' (see letter **40**) freely discussing all kinds of philosophical topics. During that same period, Venn continued to occasionally take clerical duty in churches near Cambridge in response to requests from prominent Evangelicals, emerged onto the public Evangelical platform – for instance attending

meetings of missionary and philanthropic societies – and became a regular contributor to the *Christian Observer*, the Evangelical outlet of which his father was editor between 1868 and 1872. Much to his father's delight, in 1869 Venn was elected to give the Hulsean lectures before the University, to be delivered from the pulpit of Great St. Mary's Church. Venn's chosen subject – the nature of belief, both religious and scientific, and the evidences for it – was an attempt to make the intellectual demands of academia (rigour, method and honesty) bear upon one of the major religious themes of the day (church party differences). His central point was that, from a purely logical standpoint, there was no essential difference between religious and scientific belief. Both were mental states in which we are prepared to act upon the truth of a proposition, and both were true in terms of their beneficial consequences for our daily interaction with the world. It was no surprise that there was far less unanimity on religious matters than on scientific subjects, as religion embodied truths intended for all humankind and for all human experiences. Venn's definition of belief and truth – boiling down to a hitherto forgotten early formulation of Cambridge pragmatism² – went against the grain of positivism and secularism by showing that religious faith was entirely rational. But it was not nearly orthodox enough to satisfy his father, who insisted that his son referred to the Bible as the origin of the truth of religion (see letters 49–50).

At Cambridge, the Moral Sciences Tripos had been established in 1848, but initially only led to honours: a degree had first to be earned in Classics or Mathematics. It was not until 1860 that a degree could be earned in moral sciences alone, with philosophy, logic and ethics, on the one hand, and history, political philosophy, jurisprudence and political economy forming two separate groups of the curriculum. A rather exciting opportunity for Venn, Sidgwick, J.B. Mayor and other young teachers, who managed the moral sciences – in which none of them had been educated – more or less by themselves, the Tripos itself was nonetheless held in low repute until the 1870s, when gifted graduates like William Cunningham and F.W. Maitland moved into desirable positions. Venn captured the main issue in a letter to his father from October 1863: 'Those who could really understand it [i.e. moral sciences topics] are already engrossed in Classics or Mathematics, so for the most part the poor remainder fall to my share' (letter 27). Other problems would surface in the 1870s–80s: new Triposes were founded (e.g. the History Tripos in 1875), which further reduced the number of potential moral sciences students and it also turned out that there were almost no employment opportunities at Cambridge for Moral Sciences Tripos graduates. As Sidgwick wrote to Venn a few months before his death, in 1900: 'As you say our work in Moral Sciences at Cambridge does not afford a triumphant retrospect' (letter 118). Sidgwick, of course, could not predict the great successes of two of his own pupils: G.E. Moore and Bertrand Russell.

Among his colleagues at Cambridge, Venn emerged as the most dedicated follower of John Stuart Mill's work – with which he had become acquainted around

² See Lukas M. Verburgt, 'Pragmatism at Cambridge, England before 1900', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 29:1 (2021): pp. 84–105.

1860 – and the undisputed authority in the field of logic. As well as being a dedicated teacher, he became a productive scholar, publishing three books and two dozen papers and reviews, especially in *Mind* – the world-leading journal on philosophy founded in 1876 of which Venn became a co-editor in 1892, when G.F. Stout, another Moral Sciences graduate, was made the editor. There was a direct link between Venn’s teaching and writing as most of the ideas found in his logical trilogy, *Logic of Chance* (1866), *Symbolic Logic* (1881) and the *Principles of Empirical or Inductive Logic* (1889), had originally been developed in the lecture-room. Venn, in other words, became an expert in the fields he himself introduced into Cambridge: probability theory, formal (algebraic or symbolic) logic and inductive logic.

All his contributions to these fields bore the stamp of Mill’s influence in one way or another. Indeed, the most helpful way of structuring Venn’s academic career as a logician is to see it as falling into three periods of engagement with Mill’s groundbreaking *System of Logic* (1843): support (1860s), criticism (1870s) and disillusion (1880s). During the 1860s, Venn, with the help of his cousin James Fitzjames Stephen (see letter **15**), published one article (‘Science of History’, 1862) – a short commentary on the discussion between Auguste Comte, Henry Thomas Buckle and Mill on the possibility of a social science – and one book (1866). This book, the *Logic of Chance*, was written as a systematization of Mill’s definition of probability as the frequency of like events in the long run. Mill himself praised it as the ‘best and most philosophical I have met with’ (letter **42**). The five years from 1876 to 1880 was the period in which Venn published almost all his journal articles. After a lengthy review of his main rival William Stanley Jevons’s *Principles of Science* (1874), there followed a steady stream of increasingly critical discussions of the so-called material outlook on logic, originating in Mill and further elaborated by Alexander Bain, Herbert Spencer, Carveth Read and John Neville Keynes. Venn never deserted to the enemy’s camp – that of the conceptualists, such as George Boole, Augustus De Morgan and Jevons – who thought that logic dealt with laws of the mind – but he did abandon the ideal of a purely objective treatment of logic, one in which logic deals with inferences from and about ‘matters of fact’. Instead, Venn developed a pragmatic, proto-conventionalist alternative, which said that logic’s subject matter was the world as it was constructed out of ‘assumptions’ and ‘conventions’.³ This alternative would be fleshed out in *Principles of Empirical or Inductive Logic*, whose first five chapters discussed all the subjective and objective postulates needed to construct ‘the universe as the logician regards it’.⁴ The rest of this almost 600-page book provided an account of all parts of, what Venn and his peers took to belong to, logic – traditional deductive logic (term, proposition and argument) and its formal-algebraic extension, inductive logic, and methodology (e.g. scientific units, standards, explanations) – viewed from this new perspective. Although the book itself was considered a failure by the reviewers, the admittedly

³ John Venn, ‘The Difficulties of Material Logic’, *Mind* 4:13 (1879): pp. 35-47, on p. 47.

⁴ John Venn, *The Principles of Empirical or Inductive Logic* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1889), on p. 1.

half-hearted break with the material view of Mill, whom Venn, in Jevons's opinion, simply admired too much (see letter **65**), had opened up a theoretical door for Venn. Most importantly, it allowed him to engage with the recent developments in formal logic associated with George Boole (1815–1864), whose *Laws of Thought* (1854) Venn first read in the late 1850s upon the recommendation of Isaac Todhunter, his former mathematics coach at Cambridge. It took him several periods of study to make sense of it and, especially, to see how Boole's new algebraic logic, that is, his calculus of deductive reasoning, could be reconciled with Mill's material system of inductive logic. This task, which he shared with Jevons – one of his frequent correspondents (see letters **62–66**, **68**, **70**, **72** and **74**) – was by no means an easy one, especially not for someone like Venn who – unlike Jevons – wished to remain loyal to both Mill and Boole, who were almost complete opposites. For example, Mill not only equated deductive logic with syllogistic logic but also held that there is no inference of a non-deductive kind; Boole, for his part, initiated the move that took logic far beyond the syllogistic and argued that what Mill called induction did not belong to logic at all. What Venn tried to do, in brief, was to come up with a compromise based on a criticism of Mill and an opinionated reading of Boole. Venn believed that Mill's claim that there is no process of inference involved in deductive arguments was due to his 'over-objectifying' of logic. There was a crucial difference between the *subjective* recognition of facts and what is given in the *objective* facts themselves: to go from the premises to the conclusion always requires a mental step, even in such a simple case as inferring Socrates's mortality from the mortality of mankind. For this reason, Venn argued, any tool that can aid us in recognizing what conclusions can be drawn from given premises are welcome, especially when dealing with cases far more complex than those considered by Mill. For over two thousand years, this tool had been Aristotle's syllogism. What Venn took Boole's algebraic logic to have done was nothing less, but also nothing more than this: the generalization of Aristotelian logic in such a way that it can deal with much more complex cases of reasoning. Unlike Boole, however, Venn remained committed to the view that deductive logic is just a formal tool: the premises from which we reason are drawn from, and the conclusions at which arrive ultimately concern, the observable world. This was, roughly put, the position elaborated in *Symbolic Logic*, which also contained Venn's famous diagrams.

Upon finishing *Principles*, Venn quit logic, donating his private collection of 1100 logical books to Cambridge University Library, where it is still held today. He longed for more applied work, which he found, for instance, in the collaboration with Francis Galton in the Cambridge Anthropometric Laboratory (see letters **78**, **80–83**, **85**, **88**, **94–97**, **99**, **103–104**), aimed at testing the physical characteristics of students, comparing these with the results from the laboratory at South Kensington and, thereby, investigating their relation to mental abilities. Venn's task was to apply the kind of statistical tools given pride of place in the third edition of the *Logic of Chance* (1888) – means, medians, averages, correlation, etc. – to the data on, among other things, eye-sight, head-size and strength of pull, obtained with Galton's instruments at the Library of the Philosophical Society in Cambridge. By that time, Venn had already campaigned with his colleague and former pupil James Ward (1843–1925) for the establishment of a laboratory in psychophysics, on which

subject Venn also claimed expertise in his 1889 application for a chair in Oxford (see letter **90**). Venn's practical involvement in anthropometry and psychophysics incidentally led him to give the first-ever lecture course on statistics in England in 1890 (see letters **100** and **104**).

It is rather difficult to assess Venn's influence and legacy as a logician. On the one hand, he received academic recognition for his work through election as a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1883, the award of the degree of Doctor of Science in 1884, and the offer of an honorary degree at Princeton in 1896 (see letter **111**). On the other hand, his books and articles may be said to have stood at the apogee of developments in philosophy that soon went out of date. For example, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the tradition of algebraic logic – which had started with Boole and was climaxed by Ernst Schröder – was superseded by the mathematical logic of Gottlob Frege, Giuseppe Peano and others. One way of approaching the issue, and of highlighting its complexity, is to focus on the notion of a local tradition of Cambridge philosophy. Due to the short-lived rise of British Idealism, associated mainly with J.M.E. McTaggart, G.E. Moore and Bertrand Russell came to regard the work of Sidgwick, Venn and other men from that generation as hopelessly old fashioned. At the same time, it were Moore and Russell who, through their own work as well as through their teaching of pupils like C.D. Broad, W.E. Johnson, J.M. Keynes and Frank Ramsey, made logic at Cambridge return to its formal, inductivist and probabilist course. Indeed, Venn was actively read and discussed by Broad, Johnson and Keynes, who recognized him as the 'father' of probability theory at Cambridge (see letter **149**).

Venn's career was not altogether a successful one, in terms of academic preferment. Despite several attempts (1866, 1872, 1890 and 1897), Venn never became a professor, and in 1903 he was passed over for the position of Master of his College, instead being elected President, more or less by way of consolation. Upon losing the 1897 election to the newly erected Chair of Mental Philosophy and Logic at Cambridge to Ward, Venn, bitterly disappointed, resigned his teaching position and even talked of leaving Cambridge (see letters **112–115** for this episode). The appointment of Ward, as painful as it was to Venn on a personal level, was also a clear sign that the times were changing. Like Cunningham, Maitland, Stout, and J. Neville Keynes, Ward, about ten years Venn's junior, was a home-grown product of the Moral Sciences Tripos who had continued as one of its teachers and who stood at the vanguard of a rapidly developing new academic discipline, in his case psychology. Venn, for his part, belonged to an older, mathematically trained generation whose research was less discipline-based. This is borne out perhaps most clearly by the freedom Venn felt – and which was permitted to him by the income from his fellowship, teaching and examining – to abandon logic as a topic of research and start exploring other kinds of intellectual pursuits. Although he continued to teach logic until the late 1890s, from around 1889 onwards, until his death in 1923, Venn was *de facto* an historian and antiquarian. During these three decades, he compiled a three-volume biographical history of Gonville and Caius College, worked on the first part of the *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, edited historical records of the University of Cambridge, contributed numerous articles to the College magazine, *The Caiian*, and published a history of his family.

The year 1900 marked another turning point. While Venn had already shown a strong interest in the history of his family, College and University, the past also came to play a central role in Venn's own life. When Sidgwick died in 1900, Leslie Stephen wrote to Venn that 'the old world to which we belonged is vanishing very rapidly' (letter **120**). Venn's correspondence with Albert Venn Dicey (see letters **139–141**, **143**, **145–148** and **150**), the surviving male family relation with whom he retained the closest contact, and with Laura M. Forster (see letters **121–124**, **126**, **134–137** and **144**), a descendant of the Clapham Thorntons and, like Venn, a friend of the Cambridge Darwins, was centred around sharing and reflecting on memories of past events, friends and relatives. Venn's feeling of a 'tie of gratitude to the past' also came with a sense of 'obligation to the future'.⁵ Once a dedicated reformer who believed that all that had gone on at Cambridge 'for more than 30 or 40 years must be bad' (letter **123**), with old age Venn became a political and cultural conservative. In 1912, he wrote to Dicey that much strength was needed to 'stamp the life out of' such developments as female suffrage (letter **139**). He also made no secret of the underlying ambition of his many historical volumes: to strengthen a 'sense of historic unity and continuity' which he believed was urgently needed in a modern society where lack of respect for national traditions was leading to 'anti-patriotism' (letter **136**).⁶

Structure of the Book

The present volume is divided into two parts. Part I contains Venn's *Annals: Autobiographical Sketch*. This text, originally written in 1887, was revised in 1903 and offered to his wife, Susanna Venn (née Edmonstone) to correct in 1917. Although never published, it was privately circulated among close family members: Venn's brother Henry Venn read it in 1910, his son Archibald in 1917 and Albert Venn Dicey in 1919. The *Annals* cover the period of Venn's upbringing, early years at Cambridge, curacies and his academic life up to 1866. It is both selective and incomplete. Venn's main goal was to figure out the emotional logic, so to speak, behind his gradual abandonment of the Evangelicalism inherited from his father. His careful analysis of the intellectual inadequacy of a religious orientation founded largely on emotion leaves out key elements, such as his writing for the *Christian Observer* in the 1860s–70s. What is also left out is an explanation of the long period between his rejection of Evangelicalism and his eventual resignation of Holy Orders in 1883. The *Annals* do nonetheless offer many interesting materials, especially on College life in the 1850s and the early days of the Moral Sciences Tripos at Cambridge. Part I also includes a short, unpublished lecture delivered in 1889 at

⁵ John Venn, 'Address Delivered in the College Chapel, After the Commemoration Service, Dec. 21, 1894', *The Caian* 4:3 (Lent Term 1895): pp. 188–198, on p. x.

⁶ John Venn, 'A Chapter in College History', *The Caian* 1:1 (Easter Term, 1891): pp. 13–39, on pp. 36–38.

Caius House, Battersea, entitled ‘Science and Common Thought’. Although addressed to a non-expert public, it arguably offers a valuable insight into Venn’s mature philosophical thinking in the late-1880s. More specifically, its emphasis on science’s continuity with everyday life re-emphasizes the pragmatic aspect of Venn’s work, already present in his 1869 Hulsean lectures. As such, it adds to the recent interest in the connections between the British and American roots of the pragmatism of William James and Charles Sanders Peirce.⁷

Part II contains annotated transcriptions of a selection of some 150 letters from and to Venn, divided into four periods starting in his undergraduate years at Cambridge. Venn’s surviving correspondence is highly uneven in interest and value. On the one hand, most likely because of their close proximity, no letters appear to have been exchanged between Venn and his Moral Sciences colleagues in the 1860s–90s. These letters would have contributed much to the picture of the moral sciences at Cambridge in this fascinating period. On the other hand, a large number of letters were sent only for practical matters, such as those from his father Henry Venn of C.M.S., or for information, with men contacting Venn at Caius to inquire about their pedigrees and with Venn asking Caians to consult local records to fill gaps in College information. Some of the letters from and to Venn have unfortunately not survived. For example, there is no trace of his long correspondence with the Scottish logician Hugh MacColl, mentioned in a letter to Jevons (see letter **74**).

The primary aim of the selection is to present a representative picture of Venn’s life and work in the period between 1854 – his first year at Cambridge – and 1923 – the year of his death – the focus being on his academic career, which began in 1862 and officially ended around the turn of the twentieth century. These editorial choices have several implications, of which the following are the most important. First, this selection covers about one-tenth of the total amount of surviving letters. Second, the early letters exchanged between Venn and his father, Henry Venn of C.M.S. – which give a rather vivid impression of an Evangelical childhood in the early Victorian era – have not been included. The same goes for many of their written exchanges during Venn’s time as a regular curate. Third, whereas only a few letters from Venn’s extensive correspondence with Albert Venn Dicey, which took place in the first two decades of the twentieth century, have been included, his correspondence with Jevons and Galton, from the 1870s–90s, is reproduced almost in full. Fourth, only those letters from after 1900 have been included which are particularly exemplary of that which characterizes the last twenty years or so of Venn’s life: the fact that, with his academic career behind him, and most of his personal links to Cambridge snapped by the death of relatives, friends, and colleagues, his was a life lived ‘mostly in the past’ (letter **121**). (Many of these letters have been abridged, in so far as some of their more miscellaneous details have been omitted.) This also means that those letters pertaining, for instance, to Venn’s antiquarian pursuits have not been included.⁸

⁷ See Cheryl Misak, *Cambridge Pragmatism: From Peirce and James to Ramsey and Wittgenstein* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press). See also Verburgt, ‘Pragmatism at Cambridge’, and Alexander Klein, ‘How American is Pragmatism?’ forthcoming in *Philosophy of Science*.

⁸ This aspect of Venn’s career is explored in detail in Verburgt, *John Venn*, chapter 12, and Michelle Clewlow, ‘Intersecting Sets: John Venn, Church and University’, unpublished PhD-thesis, The

Any selection of writings and correspondence is unavoidably arbitrary. It goes without saying that other editorial decisions could have been made. For example, it would have been possible to omit and condense certain passages in Venn's *Annals*, especially the long descriptions of his childhood surroundings and country rambles. However, given the autobiographical nature of the text, the objective in preparing it has been to maintain its integrity, representing it as Venn himself (re-)wrote it. To give another example: an alternative volume could have been made with a focus on Venn's extensive correspondence with his father in the 1850s–70s, seeking to highlight the way in which Venn parted ways with the religion of his youth and contrasting it with that of his cousins, Leslie and Fitzjames Stephen, and his second cousin, Albert Venn Dicey. Likewise, the reproduction of the letters, notes, notebooks, and printed material used by Venn for his books on the history of Gonville and Caius College would give an interesting account of the work of an 'amateur' or 'gentleman' historian.⁹ Instead, the present volume seeks to provide a picture of Venn as a university don, a moral sciences teacher and a professional logician, offering the source material for a further exploration of the mid-Victorian generation of Cambridge thinkers to which he belonged.

It may here be mentioned that the bulk of the material reproduced in this volume comes from three archival collections held, in order of size, at the Church Missionary Society Archive, University of Birmingham; Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge; and the Society of Genealogists, London. These collections were originally part of one larger collection held by Venn's son John Archibald Venn, who was the last member of his branch of the family. After his death in 1958, the Venn family papers were divided and portions were sent to the three aforementioned locations.

The 'Biographical List of Names', found at the end of the book, contains short biographical sketches of the individuals whose names occur frequently (at least more than twice) in the texts in Part I and, in Part II, of the recipients and senders of more than one letter. When an individual is included on the list, his or her name appears in bold in the annotated text. When a name or individual occurs only once or twice, biographical information – limited to dates and a one-phrase characterization – is provided in footnotes. Further details of editorial practice are given in the 'Notes to the Reader' preceding Part I and Part II.

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⁹This interesting category is discussed in Philippa Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional. Antiquarians, Historians and Archaeologists in Victorian England, 1838–1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

Contents

Introduction	vii
Abbreviations	xix
Part I Unpublished Writings	
Note to the Reader	3
Annals – Autobiographical Sketch	4
Science and Common Thought	89
Part II Selected Correspondence	
Note to the Reader	99
List of Letters	101
I. Student: 1853–1857	105
II. Curate: 1858–1862	109
III. Moral Scientist: 1862–1899	119
IV. Looking Back: 1900–1923	214
Biographical List of Names	243
Acknowledgments and Permissions	249
Bibliography	251
Index	259

Abbreviations

CMS	Church Missionary Society Unofficial Papers Accession 81: Venn Manuscripts, Cadbury Research Library: Special Collections, University of Birmingham
CUL	Cambridge University Library
GCA	Gonville and Caius College Archive (Venn Papers)
GL	University of Glasgow Library, Archives & Special Collections
JRUL	John Rylands University Library of Manchester (Jevons Papers)
SGL	Society of Genealogists Library, London
TCL	Trinity College Library, Cambridge
UCL	University College London Library (Francis Galton Papers)

Part I
Unpublished Writings

Note to the Reader



Part I contains two documents: *Annals: Autobiographical Sketch* (CMS/ACC81 F27), written in 1887 and revised in 1903 and 1917, and the lecture ‘Science and Common Thought’ (GCA D1), delivered in October 1889 at Caius House, Battersea.

All editorial interventions, including the indication of the original pagination in the main text and information in footnotes, appear within square brackets. Venn’s original footnotes – which were inserted according to the old-fashioned system of beginning with ‘1’ on each page – appear at the bottom of the page, in a smaller font; additions and corrections made in the original text in 1903 and 1917 are rendered as follows: [*del*: deleted word] and //added word in main text or footnote//. Editorial annotation in Part I has been kept to a minimum and is appended only to identify names and where further clarification of meaning or allusion was deemed essential to the readability and usefulness of the material. All biographical information has been taken from the *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, 11 vols. (1922–1954) unless otherwise stated. As explained in the Introduction, names appear in bold in the footnotes when included in the ‘Biographical List of Names’.

Annals: Autobiographical Sketch

John Venn

[1] My grandfather¹ kept a careful diary, which, though very brief, indicates most of the events of his life, from the data of his being admitted at College in 1777, till near the time of his death.² My father³ always thought it desirable to do the same, but though he made repeated attempts to keep it up during parts of his early and middle life, he only very partially succeeded. Towards the close of his life however he used often of an evening to dictate to my sister⁴ the principal details of his day's work. These details have been drawn upon for his published Life.⁵ As to myself unfortunately, I never at any time attempted to note down the events of the passing day. And now, in late life, (//June, 1887//, June 28, 1902) wishing to leave some record which shall give information to those who come after me, I find that the only contemporary records consist in letters, account books, pocket Diaries, etc. I have however a good memory for past events, so far as I am personally concerned, and with the help of such records as those just mentioned, composed by my father and myself, I have now put the following brief narrative, or rather notes, together.

1834

I was born at Drypool, Hull, of which parish my father was then the incumbent, on the 4th of August.

[2] 1839

This is the year from which my earliest recollections date. In the autumn my mother first developed symptoms of consumption, and for her sake, - as well as that of my father, who was only just recovering from a dangerous heart-attack -, we went to spend the winter at Torquay. Of our life there I have just a few fragmentary glimmerings of recollection, but nothing worth record.

¹[John Venn of Clapham (1759–1813).]

²[As Venn wrote in *Annals of a Clerical Family*: 'To my grandfather, John Venn, we owe a large part of our family reminiscences. He was the first of our line to take any interest in genealogical inquiries. The *Parentalia* were begun by him, and carried down to his father's time; and without his industry, and his care in noting what he heard and remembered, many early facts would have been hopelessly lost. Of the main incidents in his life we have a complete account, for he kept a brief diary, or at least made notes of current events, from the time he entered college'. John Venn, *Annals of a Clerical Family* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1904), on p. 12.]

³[**Henry Venn of C.M.S.** (1796–1873).]

⁴[Venn had one sister, Henrietta Venn (1832–1902).]

⁵[William Knight, ed. *Memoir of Henry Venn, B.D. Prebendary of St. Pauls, and Honorary Secretary of the Church Missionary Society*, with an introductory biographical chapter and a notice of West African commerce by his sons, the Rev. John Venn, M.A., and the Rev. Henry Venn, M.A. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1880).]

1840

My mother⁶ died March 21, 1840. I remember my father coming into the room and telling us that she was gone: my sister bursting into tears (she was two years older than myself); and my doing the same, rather from sympathy with her than from appreciation of what it meant. She was buried at St John's Holloway. My father went by sea, with the body, from Plymouth to London, a journey of 48 hours. Shortly afterwards my father returned home to the house in Hornsey Lane, Highgate, where he had lived since about 1838. He had driven the whole way to Torquay in his two-horse phaeton, the same vehicle, I suppose, in which he had been accustomed to take so many long drives about England with my mother. He returned in the same way as far as Basingstoke, where he took the railway. I have just one vivid recollection of this homeward journey. This was as we were crossing the vast open plain of Salisbury, to which I remember his calling my attention as we came to it. I remember well, too, our stepping at Stonehenge, and my nurse (old "Burder" as we called her, – though she was not then old) perching me on [3] one of the smaller stones to get a sight of that wonderful monument.

For the next six years, till we went to school, (1840-6) my brother⁷ and I lived under the charge of governesses. As our father found it essential to his health to go to Switzerland as frequently as he could, – not every year, and never for more than a month –, we used generally to be taken in at Hereford by our devoted uncle and aunt, John and Emelia Venn⁸: sometimes we went with the governess and nurse to Brighton, to join our cousins the Stephens or the Elliots.⁹

1841

Thus, June 6, 1841, we paid one of these visits to Brighton. I have just the common recollections of the sea-side, which might apply to any other time: - the chain-pier, the bathing, the camera on the cliff above the pier, and so forth.

1843

July 5, 1843, my father took us down to Hereford, left us there, and went to Switzerland. We had been at Hereford before, but this is probably the visit from which all my earliest recollections of our delightful stays there date. It was then that we made our first acquaintance with several neighbours and friends, the Bulmer children, and others of our own age. At the end of August my father returned to us at Hereford, and took us for a 4 or 5 days trip into Wales. We saw Llangollen, the Devil's Bridge, and one or two other places. This is my earliest recollection of those Welsh mountains which I got to love so in after days.

⁶[Martha Venn (née Sykes) (1800–1840).]

⁷[**Henry Venn of Walmer** (1838–1923).]

⁸[**Henry Venn of C.M.S.**'s brother John Venn of Hereford (1802–1890) and sister Emelia Venn (1794–1881).]

⁹[The children, respectively, of (Sir) James Stephen (1789–1859) and (Lady) Jane Catherine (née Venn) Stephen (1793–1875), and Henry Venn Elliott (1792–1865) and Julia Marshall (1816/17–1841).]

[4] 1844

In May 1844 we went to Brighton, and in June into France. This was not actually my first visit abroad, for I had been taken to Dieppe during my mother's life, and again in 1842, but it is the earliest I can remember. We went to Havre, Honfleur, and Caen. There was then much of the old-world life of France still to be seen. I remember, – as a boy would –, a church or two near the coast crammed with the small ships put up by sailors as votive offerings for their escape, and which naturally seemed to me to be sadly wasted there. The country women still often wore astonishingly lofty and varied caps of lined and lace: – our cousin Emelia Gurney was one of the party, and already something of an artist; we used to be set to pick out in the market-place the finest of these caps, for her to sketch them and their wearers. My first recollection of wild flowers dates from this visit. In the chalky soil of Normandy orchids are very plentiful. I remember being startled by my first sight of the bee-orchids, which for a moment I really took for the live insect.

We went on this occasion, I believe, partly with a view to meet our Aunt Emelia, who had been spending the winter in Italy with her sister Caroline and niece Emelia, and was returning to England with them.¹⁰

1845

My first visit to Cambridge was in May of this year. My father took us three children to the Lodge at Queens',¹¹ staying [5] there for a few days from May 16. He drove us down, in the day, in his phaeton, having sent his own horse on, half-way, and hiring one for the first part of the journey. I remember "the Wash at Edmonton" passed by John Gilpin,¹² and which then lay across the road. My father told us, as we approached Cambridge, that if it had been earlier in the afternoon we should have seen numbers of men in caps and gowns out for their walk. We of course, as children, lived mostly in the nursery, with the King¹³ children, but we had our early dinner in the President's dining room. He was already completely paralysed, but was put in his seat and fed by his footman. One little incident dwells in my mind connected with this visit. It was the sight of the Boat Procession. Our nurse

¹⁰ [Henry Venn of C.M.S.'s sisters Emelia and Caroline Venn (1798–1870), the mother of **Emelia Russell Gurney**; and Caroline Emelia Stephen (1834–1909), daughter of (Sir) James and (Lady) Catherine Stephen.]

¹¹ [Henry Venn of C.M.S. studied at Queens' College, Cambridge, graduating as Nineteenth Wrangler in 1818. He was elected Fellow in 1819.]

¹² [John Gilpin was the main character in a well-known comic ballad by William Cowper, written in 1782. The ballad describes John Gilpin riding a runaway horse. Venn's reference is to the stanza "Thus all through merry Islington / These gambols he did play, / Until he came unto the Wash / of Edmonton so gay".]

¹³ [Joshua King (1798–1857), Senior Wrangler in 1819 and Lucasian Professor of Mathematics between 1839 and 1849, served as the President of Queens' College from 1832 to his death. King had been appointed to the professorship despite his physical abilities. He was succeeded in 1849 by G.G. Stokes. See A.A.D. Craik. *Mr Hopkins' Men: Cambridge Reform and British Mathematics in the 19th Century* (London: Springer-Verlag, 2008), on p. 101.]

came running in to us, – I suppose we had gone to our bedroom –, telling us to come and look out of the window on the river below. It was the well-known “boat-procession” night.¹⁴

In the early summer we went again to Hereford. Most of my early recollections of riding on a coach are connected with these visits. The Great Western Railway did not for many years get nearer to Hereford than Gloucester, – I can remember still earlier when we had to start driving from “Cirencester Road”, as the station was called from whence we went by coach through Ross. It was a charming drive, and at one point (as we got to know in later days, in 1878) the road commanded a superb view over the Welsh mountains. In the course of this same summer my father took us for a short trip into N. Wales. With his usual liberality where missionaries were concerned, he extended his hospitality during part of this holiday to [6] most of a family of six boys, named Adley, whose father was in India, and who from my remembrance, proved rather a handful. They were schoolboys, away for their holiday from King William’s College, Isle of Man. We went in the usual way travelling in open cars and driving from place to place. We stayed amongst other places, at Llanberis, Beaumaris, etc. Later on we paid our first visit to our Sykes cousins at Raywell near Hull.¹⁵ We went by steam-boat from Beaumaris to Liverpool, – the Holyhead Line was not then quite finished, I think –, stopped a night at Liverpool, and thence by train to Hull. There was a mechanical invention then on show at Liverpool, (I suppose in some public garden) which has been since revived under the name of switch-back, but instead of only descending and ascending, the cars made one, or perhaps two, complete revolutions. I have a vivid recollection of the sight of an old gentleman in the car, whose hat flew off whilst he was upside down. The ‘cousinhood’ at Raywell was then very large, for, of the 13 in the family, most were alive and at home. They were very friendly and hospitable, and I wish we could have seen more of them in other years, as this was my only introduction to the family life of a country squire.

Our general life at home as children was not, I think, a joyous one, though it was far from being actually unhappy. Our father, who was now beginning to recover his health, was naturally much absorbed in his parish, and he soon began to give more and more of his time to his work at the Missionary House, Salisbury [7] Square.¹⁶ We were therefore mostly in the care of the governess for the time being, who was a changeable person, and the nurse, who was a fixture. The latter deserves some notice. She was a vigorous Yorkshirewoman who had come as nursemaid soon after my sister’s birth in 1832, and who never left the family until she died at Mortlake in the summer of 1868. We did not think of criticizing her then; but looking back at her

¹⁴ [The annual procession of the University boats upon the river Cam.]

¹⁵ [Venn’s mother, Martha, was the daughter of Nicolas Sykes. Her sister, Frances (Fanny) Sykes (1797/8–1878), married Matthew Babington (1792–1836). They had six children.]

¹⁶ [The home of the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.), and the nucleus of the Evangelical party in the Church of England. Henry Venn had been appointed honorary secretary of the C.M.S. in 1841. For his work as one of the foremost Evangelical mission strategists see Wilbert R. Shenk. *Henry Venn Missionary Statesman* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1983).]

now I should say that she was a perfectly honest, faithful, and devoted woman, with scanty education and not much manner for her position, and with a decidedly hot temper. This latter she kept, like a dog, for those whom she regarded as trespassers; and many and violent were the altercations that went on, – upstairs, between her and the governess, and downstairs between her and the other servants, especially the footman or whatever maid he might be supposed to be attached to. The dominant governess of our childhood, – a Miss Lemon, – was no mean antagonist, and on the whole held her ground. Now and then she got routed by a combination of allied forces. This was mostly when some aunt, of whom we had two or three who were most affectionate, came and took our part against the common foe: – our Aunt Fanny (Babington)¹⁷ our mother's younger sister, was the chief of these. It used to be her delight to come in from Kentish Town where she then lived with her young family, and make her way into the nursery and stir the nurse on to resistance and rebellion. The governess however mostly held her own in the long run. Another aunt, calling one day, related how she found us [8] three children distributed: – my sister was on the mat outside the room (being a girl she could be trusted not to run away): my brother was standing on the balcony outside the window (being too small, he could not swarm down the posts and get into the garden, as I should have done): I was in the corner of the room, in similar but more obvious disgrace; whilst Miss Lemon sat at the table in the middle of the room in solitary state.

The person to whom we really owed the most at the time in question was, I think, our Aunt Emelia. She was my father's third sister, and at the time in question (1846) would be about 52. She did much to supply our mother's place, though as she lived at Hereford with our uncle John, and had not only to look after him and her own old aunt, but also to take all the clergy-wife's share of a large parish as well, she was not able to be with us nearly so often or so long as she and we could have wished. Her coming was always a bright and happy incident in our lives. It was she who selected the governesses, with a labour and a patience which only those can appreciate who remember what sort of work it was, in the days before women's education and the rise of examinations, to ascertain what a teacher knew and whether she could teach. It was our aunt again who mainly chose our books for us. Here too she must have taken infinity of pains, and considering the strictness of her views it was an astonishing how various and interesting a selection she managed to make. She used also to spend some time during her stay with us in reading such books [9] aloud to us. Miss Martineau's "Feats on the Fjords"¹⁸ was one book of her choice. She was a remarkable woman. Full of life and interest and cheerful humour which rather blended with, than set aside, her strong evangelical convictions, one never had a dull moment in her society. It was not so much that she was full of tales of the past, like many old people; her interests in the present whether near or remote, never seemed to flag to the last. She had paid several visits to Rome in which [*added in pencil*: city] not even her hereditary horror of Popery could prevent her from taking the keenest interest. To her last day she would delight in comparing notes with any

¹⁷ [See note 15.]

¹⁸ [Harriet Martineau's "Feats on the Fjord", first published in 1841.]

friend or visitor who had recently been in Italy. She was one of the very few old people I have known who never ceased to the last [*del*: to] deliberately //to// cultivate new friendships and call on new comers. On our last visit to Hereford in her life time, – when she was about 86, – she took [*del*: Susie] //my wife//¹⁹ quite a round of visits to new neighbours and friends on Aylestone Hill.

She remains the centre of some of my brightest and happiest childish recollections. We saw most of her and of her brother, - my uncle John, - on our summer holiday visits to Hereford. For some time these visits took place about every other year, and were keenly enjoyed by us. Not only did we get a welcome such as that from indulgent parents, and a most enjoyable house and garden on the top of the hill overlooking the town, but we also had opportunities of making friends which we could not secure at home. These were the sons and daughters of clergymen and gentlemen in the neighbour-[10]hood, young people with whose parents our uncle and aunt were on familiar terms, and who therefore supplied an element which was greatly lacking in our own surroundings at home. Our holidays at Hereford were the pleasantest we had.

1846

In the autumn of this year the governess regime came to an end for my brother and myself, for we were sent to the Cholmondely School on Highgate Hill.²⁰ This was about the middle of November. Whether my previous notice had been given to us, as is tolerably certain, I do not remember, but when my father told us, after breakfast, that he was about to take us to school; it came as [*del*: such] a surprize, [*del*: that] //and// we raised so tearful a commotion that he was obliged to defer the proceeding to the next day. The fact was that we had heard such vivid accounts of Mr Dyne,²¹ the master, from my cousin Frank Babington,²² who had been at the school before going to Eton, – he used to declare that he was one of the only two boys who had not been flogged, and gave us [*del*: vivid] //graphic// descriptions of the weapons used, – that we were fairly terrified. Dyne certainly was of the old type; and the birch for serious offences (and his interpretation of ‘serious’ covered a very wide range) and the cane for lesser matters, were constantly resorted to. The school was, I apprehend, pretty much in the condition of most grammar schools of the day. I may have a better memory than many persons for early details, but I seem to recall hardly anything [11] except the sound of the floggings heard overhead in the headmaster’s room, the fights

¹⁹[Susanna Carnegie Venn (née) Edmonstone (1844–1931).]

²⁰[A free grammar school founded in 1565 by an endowment from Roger Cholmondeley (or Cholmeley) (c. 1485–1565). It still exists today under the name of Highgate School, London.]

²¹[Rev. John Bradley Dyne (1809–1898), Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford 1832–38 and Dean and Lecturer in Divinity, 1837–38, was headmaster from 1838 to 1873. Under his direction, the school grew from a small institution of nineteen boys to more than 200 boys. See J.S. Cockburn et.al., eds. “School: Highgate School,” in *A History of the County of Middlesex*, vol. 1 (London: University of London Press), pp. 302–304. Dyne was generally remembered as a proficient classics teacher but a cruel headmaster.]

²²[Francis Evans Babington (1831–1920), Trinity 1849; B.A. 1853; subsequently manager of a bank at Norwich.]

of the boys amongst themselves, the bullying of the small by the big, and the habitually filthy and blasphemous language of almost every boy, at least among the lower forms. From subsequent report I gather that the boys in the upper forms were well grounded in classics, and that they had some respect for Dyne. J.M. Fletcher,²³ afterwards fellow of Caius, was near the head of the school at that time; and one distinguished man, – Skeat,²⁴ afterwards Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Cambridge –, must have joined the school soon after I left. After a very short experience however we got to like the school life; and, in fact, there was almost as much of a commotion when we had to quit it as there had been when we were first called on to join it.

1847

After the Christmas Holidays, when the weather, I remember, was very severe, we returned to school. In the spring I must have broken down in health, and was kept at home for a time. I was certainly away on Oak-apple day (May 29). It was a custom of the school that every boy, who did not bring a piece of oak in some form or other with him that morning, should be severely punished, and I remember my brother coming back and telling me about the goings on. I was in the 1st (or lowest) form of the six,²⁵ – below this there were ‘senior grammar’ and ‘junior grammar boys’ – and got a prize for classics, the only subject in which we were [12] examined. The prize was however, not awarded, as I had left the school before Speech Day. I think that, if I had remained at the school, I should have done fairly well, though I am sure that I had not in me the making of an accurate, or least graceful ‘scholar’ in the classical sense.

1847 [*sic*]

In the autumn of this same year my father took us by Folkestone to Boulogne, where we left with the governess whilst he went for a short trip to the Rhine, returning to take us home in September.

During the winter of this year and the spring of the next we remained at home, under the charge of tutors. My father may have come to the conclusion that the Highgate school was not a good one, but in my case he had resolved to quit Highgate and move nearer to London, for convenience in attending to his secretarial work at Salisbury Square.

1848

As at midsummer 1848 we quitted Highgate, and moved to Highbury in Islington, I may say a few words about our life in the former place, where my father occupied the house (afterwards known as No 9, Hornsey Lane, and as the home of the Edmonstones) for 10 years.²⁶ It was on the whole a //fairly// happy time. This, I think,

²³[John Martineau Fletcher (1832–1915), Caius 1850; B.A. (Classical Tripos, First Class) 1854; Fellow, 1854–67.]

²⁴[Walter William Skeat (1835–1912), Christ’s College 1854; B.A. (14th Wrangler) 1858. Skeat was elected Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Cambridge in 1878.]

²⁵[The system was to count downwards from six, making the first class the lowest.]

²⁶[This is the house where Venn’s wife grew up, being the daughter of the Rev. Charles Welland Edmonstone (1811–1897).]

was largely due to the garden. Only those who had a free run [13] in a big garden when they were children, can realize the delight, and I should say the profit, of such an experience. Our garden was unusually large, and must have been planted long before the neighbouring houses were built, as it extended behind these and hemmed then in on each side. It contained about 4 acres, and much money must have been spent on it by some former occupant. There was a pond artificially made, a small rookery, some magnificent elms, a big lawn suitable for cricket, and a very extensive kitchen garden. The governess and nurse for some reason interfered but little with us here, and the result is that I have such a vivid recollection of every hole and corner of the grounds that I could at this day draw a fairly accurate plan of them and insert the name and place of all the principal trees. I wish I had, at visits of a later date, made notes of the size of some of these trees, as they were really remarkable*.

// *My brother contests this, & maintains that any 'recollections' of the magnitude of the trees, &c, is due to the usual mirage of old age. I might knock of 6 inches from the diameter of the laurel, but not more. I may say that I paid a visit to the garden, in after years, about the time of first penning these reminiscences. //

There was a Portugal Laurel on the lawn, such as I have never seen or heard of elsewhere, which was at least two-feet diameter in the trunk a little above the ground; an arbutus very little less than this; and the finest cedar I have seen near London. The remark as to size may be applied also to a larch tree, and to two Spanish chestnuts. The garden must have been 'established' some time in the 18th century, and I much wish we could have known something about its history. It so imprinted itself on my childish mind, that, though I never saw it after the age of 14, except on occasional visits after my engagement and marriage, it constantly recurs in dreams. [14] I doubt if a month ever passes, even now, without my nightly fancies carrying me back to wander there amongst those splendid old trees. Our guides in this garden were two. First a wonderful old gardener – [*del*: John] //James// Boston, a Lincoln-shire man – who managed somehow by almost superhuman industry, to keep all this large extent of ground in admirable order. He was enthusiastic in his work, and would have gladly taught us more than we ever had the patience to learn from him. Never did anyone have a more faithful and honest servant. He had come to the garden before our time, and remained on with the Edmonstones after we left, dying of cancer in old age [*del*: about] //in// [*del*: 1868] //1869//. Our other 'tutor', out of doors, was Robert the manservant. He was a thorough-bred country youth having been brought up on the estate of Lady Olivia Sparrow, a well-known Evangelical lady in Huntingdonshire.²⁷ He was intimately acquainted with the bird and beast life of the place, and all I ever learned as a boy about such things was gained from him. He had got possession of an old gun which my father had bought (when an undergraduate, on the occasion of his long vacation visit to Tenby in S. Wales) and used to take us out into the neighbouring fields. There was more sport then to be had than most believe would now

²⁷[Lady Olivia (née French Acheson) Bernard Sparrow (c. 1778–1863), a devout Christian committed to education and care of the poor whose houses in London and Huntingdonshire were strongholds of Evangelicalism.]

believe. I remember the flocks of field-fares which used in winter to frequent the fields in Maiden Lane. This lane was then absolutely unoccupied by any building (except one old empty barn) from Highgate Hill, where ‘St. Joseph’s Retreat’²⁸ now stands, where there was a [15] turnpike. This lane was our frequent resort, for it was the way to Fort[*del*: r]ess Terrace, where our cousins the Babington’s lived till 1845, and was also the route by which my father used to drive from Hornsey Lane to Salisbury Square. Robert (I forget his surname) was also our stand-by in most domestic matters, and I suspect in most matters of mischief. He taught us cricket; he taught us to climb; he helped us in carpentry; he gave us an introduction to bird stuffing, an art of which he had picked up the rudiments; and, it must be admitted, aided and abetted us whenever there was an opening to resist the governess or bring her into ridicule. He was not a very edifying companion; but I don’t suppose he did us harm in any way, and we certainly picked up a great deal of miscellaneous information, which we should not have acquired elsewhere, from his suggestions.

Altogether we had a very fair life as children, our main deficiency being that of suitable friends. In this respect we were certainly at a strange disadvantage compared with the generation before us. Of course much of what those at Clapham rectory²⁹ were, and what they did, was due to their own intrinsic character; but I cannot suppress a slight feeling of envy when I compare the host of eminent and life-long friends [with, *added*] whom they had first [acquired, *del*] [made acquaintance, *added*] as children, with the [very, *added*] few companions of our youth whom, owing to their mental [qualities, *added*] and social position we could regard as permanent acquaintances. Our father, with his old-fashioned courtesy and refinement, must have keenly felt the difference between the friends of his own youth and those of ours. He [16] probably regarded it as the inevitable result of circumstances, and of the life to which he had devoted himself.

I seem to have said but little about our father and our relations with him, and I find it difficult not to give a misleading impression. I can never recall the time when my feelings towards him were not those of the profoundest reverence, in fact of awe. [*Del*: With a boy of a higher moral stamp than the ordinary, – as was indeed pretty much the case with my sister, – I imagine that the feelings entertained would] //It is quite possible that with some very exceptional kind of boy, – of unusual maturity of character & moral strength – the relations between father and son might in consequence// have been those of perfect confidence and affection. As it was, in my own

²⁸ [Founded in 1858, St. Joseph’s Retreat, 107 Highgate Hill, Highgate, London, was the first Catholic church in the area (Islington, London).]

²⁹ [Venn’s grandfather, another John Venn, was the rector of Clapham, near London, from 1792 to his death in 1813. Here he ministered among the families associated with the famous coterie of religious philanthropists later called the Clapham Sect – the Wilberforces, the Thorntons, the Stephens, the Macaulays and the Venns. Both through friendship and inter-marriage, these and other families continued to form a close-knit network in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. See, for instance, Michael Hennell, *John Venn and the Clapham Sect* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1958) and Adam Kuper, *Incest & Influence. The Private Life of Bourgeois England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).]