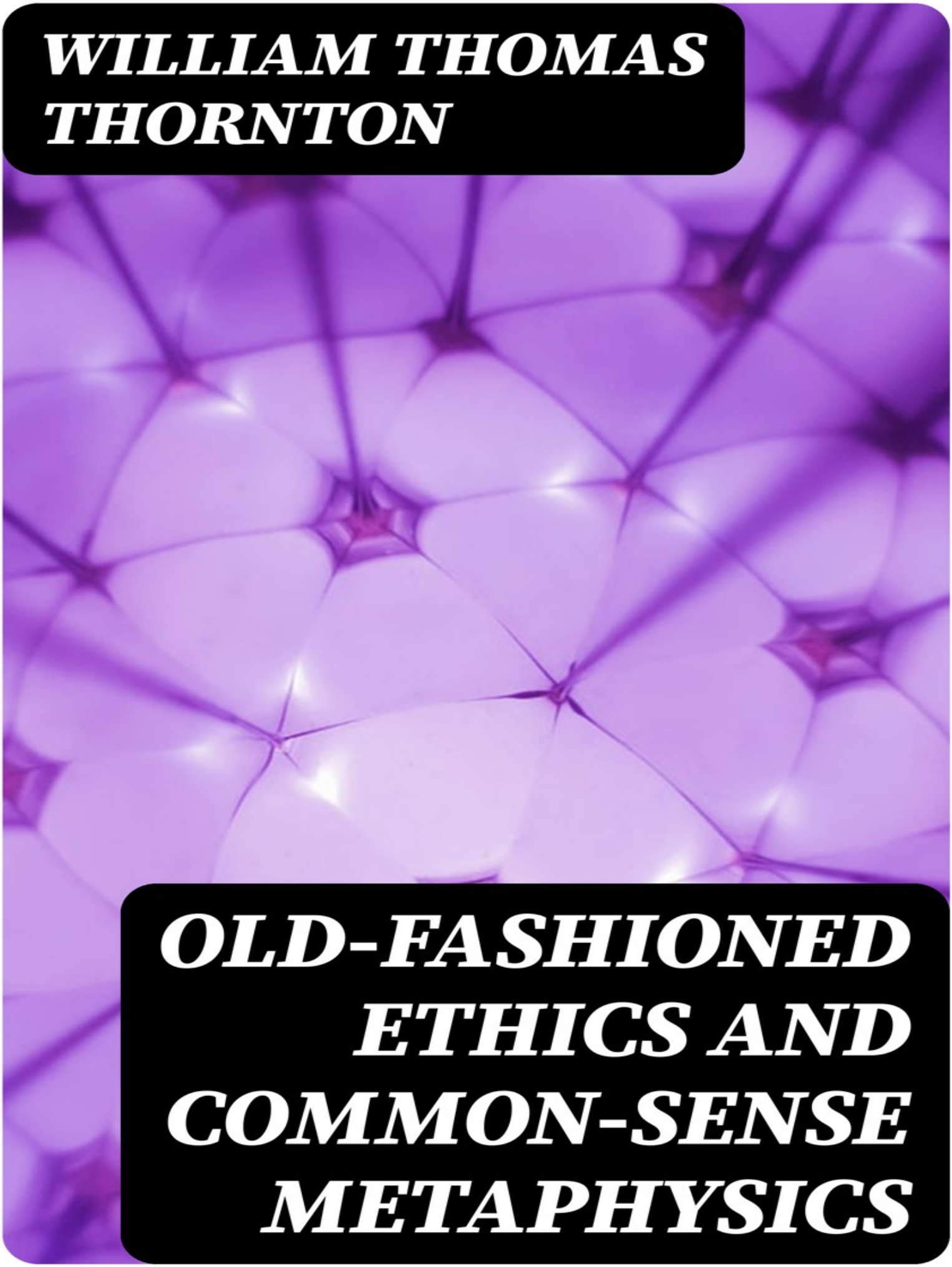
WILLIAM THOMAS THORNTON
OLD-FASHIONED ETHICS AND COMMON-SENSE METAPHYSICS


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Old-Fashioned Ethics and Common-Sense Metaphysics

With Some of Their Applications

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PREFACE.

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The book was all but finished, and only the Preface remained, over which I was hesitating, apprehensive equally of putting into it too much and too little, when one of the most frequent 'companions of my solitude' came to my aid, shewing me, in fragments, a preface already nearly written, and needing only a little piecing to become forthwith presentable. Here it is.

'In these sick days, in a world such as ours, richer than usual in Truths grown obsolete, what can the fool think but that it is all a Den of Lies wherein whoso will not speak and act Lies must stand idle and despair?' Whereby it happens that for the artist who would fain minister medicinally to the relief of folly, 'the publishing of a Work of Art,' designed, like this, to redeem Truth from premature obsolescence, 'becomes almost a necessity.' For, albeit, 'in the heart of the speaker there ought to be some kind of gospel tidings burning until it be uttered, so that otherwise it were better for him that he altogether held his peace,' still, than to have fire burning within, and not to put it forth, not many worse things are readily imaginable.

'Has the word Duty no meaning? Is what we call Duty no divine messenger and guide, but a false, earthly fantasm, made up of Desire and Fear?' In that' Logic-mill of thine' hast thou 'an earthly mechanism for the Godlike itself, and for grinding out Virtue from the husks of Pleasure? I tell thee, Nay! Otherwise, not on Morality, but on Cookery, let us build our stronghold. There, brandishing our frying-pan as

censer, let us offer up sweet incense to the Devil, and live at ease on the fat things *he* has provided for his elect,' seeing that 'with stupidity and sound digestion, man may front much.'

Or, 'is there no God? or, at best, an absentee God, sitting idle ever since the first Sabbath, at the outside of His universe, and *seeing* it go?' Know that for man's well-being, whatever else be needed, 'Faith is one thing needful.' Mark, 'how, with it, Martyrs, otherwise weak, can cheerfully endure the shame and the cross; how, without it, worldlings puke up their sick existence, by suicide, in the midst of luxury.' Of how much else, 'for a pure moral nature, is not the loss of Religious Belief the loss?' 'All wounds, the crush of long-continued Destitution, the stab of false Friendship and of false Love, all wounds in the so genial heart would have healed again had not the life-warmth of Faith been withdrawn.' But this once lost, how recoverable? how, rather, ever acquirable? 'First must the dead Letter of Religion own itself dead, and drop piecemeal into dust, if the living Spirit of Religion, freed from this, its charnel house, is to arise on us, new born of Heaven, and with new healing under its wings.'

Beside these burning words of Mr. Carlyle any additional words of mine would stand only as superfluous foils, and are, therefore, considerately pretermitted.

CADOGAN PLACE: *December 1872.*

OLD-FASHIONED ETHICS
AND
COMMON-SENSE METAPHYSICS

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CHAPTER I.

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ANTI-UTILITARIANISM.

I.

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Having, by the heading of this essay, announced that it is intended to be partly controversial, I can scarcely begin better than by furnishing the reader with the means of judging whether I myself correctly apprehend the doctrine which I am about to criticise. If, then, I were myself an Utilitarian, and, for the sake either of vindicating my own belief, or of making converts of other people, had undertaken to explain what Utilitarianism is, I should set about the task somewhat in this wise:—

The sole use and sole object of existence is enjoyment or pleasure, which two words will here be treated as synonymous; happiness, also, though not quite identical in meaning, being occasionally substituted for them. Enjoyment, it must be observed, is of very various kinds, measures, and degrees. It may be sensual, or emotional, or imaginative, or intellectual, or moral. It may be momentary or eternal; intoxicating delight or sober satisfaction. It may be unmixed and undisturbed, in which case, however short of duration or coarse in quality, it may in strictness be called happiness; or it may be troubled and alloyed, although of a flavour which would be exquisite if pure, and if there were nothing to interfere with the perception of it. Understood,

however, in a sufficiently comprehensive sense, enjoyment or pleasure may be clearly perceived to be the sole object of existence. The whole value of life plainly consists of the enjoyment, present or future, which life affords, or is capable of affording or securing. Now, the excellence of all rules depends on their conduciveness to the object they have in view. The excellence of all rules of life must, therefore, depend on their conduciveness to the sole object which life has in view, viz., enjoyment. But the excellence of rules of life, or of conduct or modes of acting, would seem to be but another name for their morality, and the morality of actions obviously depends on their conformity to moral rules. Whence, if so much be admitted, it necessarily follows that the test of the morality of actions is their conduciveness to enjoyment.

But the enjoyment thus referred to is not that of the agent alone, for if it were, no action whatever could possibly be immoral. Whatever any one does, he does either because to do it gives him or promises him pleasure, or because he believes that the not doing it would subject him to more pain than he will suffer from doing it. Besides, one person's enjoyment may be obtained at the expense of other people's suffering, so that an act in which the actor takes pleasure may destroy or prevent more pleasure altogether than it creates. The enjoyment or happiness, therefore, which Utilitarianism regards, is not individual, but general happiness; not that of one or of a few, but of the many, nor even of the many only. It is often declared to be the greatest happiness of the greatest number, but it may with more accuracy be described as the largest aggregate

of happiness attainable by any or by all concerned.[1] Again, an action which, in some particular instance, causes more pleasure than pain to those affected by it, may yet belong to a class of actions which, in the generality of cases, causes more pain than pleasure, and may thus involve a violation of a moral rule, and, consequently, be itself immoral. Wherefore the enjoyment which Utilitarianism adopts as its moral test is not simply the greatest sum of enjoyment for all concerned, but that greatest sum in the greatest number of cases. In its widest signification it is the greatest happiness of society at large and in the long run. From these premises a decisive criterion of right and wrong may be deduced. Every action belonging to a class calculated to promote the permanent happiness of society is right. Every action belonging to a class opposed to the permanent happiness of society is wrong.

In the foregoing exposition I have, I trust, evinced a sincere desire to give Utilitarianism its full due, and I shall at least be admitted to have shown myself entirely free from most of those more vulgar misconceptions of its nature which have given its professors such just offence. Many of its assailants have not scrupled to stigmatise as worthy only of swine a doctrine which represents life as having no better and nobler object of desire and pursuit than pleasure. To these, however, it has, by the great apostle of Utilitarianism, been triumphantly replied that it is really they themselves who insult human nature by using language that assumes human beings to be capable of no higher pleasures than those of which swine are capable; and that, moreover, if the assumption were correct, and if the capacities of men and of

swine were identical, whatever rule of life were good enough for the latter would likewise be good enough for the former. But I am not an assailant of this description. Inasmuch as there undeniably are very many and very various kinds of pleasure, I of course allow Utilitarianism credit for common sense enough to acknowledge that those kinds are most worthy of pursuit which, from whatever cause, possess most value—that those which are most precious are those most to be prized. But whoever allows thus much will have no alternative but to concede a great deal more. The most precious of pleasures is that which arises from the practice of virtue, as may be proved conclusively in the only way of which the case admits, viz., by reference to the fact that, whoever is equally acquainted with that and with other pleasures, deliberately prefers it to all the rest, will, if necessary, forego all others for its sake, and values no others obtainable only at its expense. By necessary implication it follows that, as being more valuable than any other, the pleasure arising from the practice of virtue must be that which Utilitarianism recommends above all others as an object of pursuit. But the pursuit of this particular pleasure and the practice of virtue are synonymous terms. What, therefore, Utilitarianism above all other things recommends and insists upon is the practice of virtue. Now, the practice of virtue commonly involves subordination of one's own interest to that of other people; indeed, virtue would not be virtue in the utilitarian sense of the word unless it did involve such subordination. Wherefore the pleasure arising from the practice of virtue, the pleasure which occupies the highest place on the utilitarian scale,

and that which Utilitarianism exhorts its disciples chiefly to seek after, is nothing else than the pleasure derived from attending to other people's pleasure instead of to our own.

Nor is this all. In order adequately to appreciate the loftiness of utilitarian teaching, and its utter exemption from the sordidness with which it is ignorantly charged, we must devote a few moments to examination of those distinctive peculiarities of different kinds of pleasure which entitle them to different places in our esteem.

All pleasures may be arranged under five heads, and in regularly ascending series, as follows:—

1. Sensual pleasures:—To wit, those of eating and drinking, and whatever others are altogether of the flesh, fleshly.

2. Emotional, by which are to be understood agreeable moods of the mind, such as, irrespectively of any agreeable idea brought forward simultaneously by association, are produced by music ('for,' as Milton says, 'eloquence the soul, song charms the sense'), by beauty of form or colour, by genial sunshine, by balmy or invigorating air.

3. Imaginative, or pleasures derived from the contemplation of mental pictures.

4. Intellectual, or those consequent on exercise of the reasoning powers.

5. Moral, or those which are alluded to when virtue is spoken of as being its own reward.[2]

That of these several kinds, each of the last four is preferable to any preceding it on the list will, it is to be hoped, be allowed to pass as an unquestioned truth, for to any one perverse enough to deny it, the only answer that

can be made is an appeal to observation in proof that all persons who are equally acquainted with the several kinds do exhibit the preferences indicated. Neither, so far as the two kinds first-named alone are concerned, is it possible to go much more deeply into the reasons why emotional pleasures are to be preferred to sensual, than by pointing to the fact that all competent judges of both are observed to like the former best. If all those who are endowed with equal sensitiveness of ear and of palate prefer music to feasting, and would any day give up a dinner at Francatelli's for the sake of hearing a rejuvenescent Persiani as Zerlina, or Patti as Dinorah, the one thing presumable is, that all such persons derive more enjoyment from perfect melody than from perfect cookery, and little else remains to be said on the subject. The same ultimate fact need not, however, limit our inquiry as to the preferableness of imaginative or intellectual to emotional pleasures, and of moral to any of the other three. This admits of, and demands, a more subtle explanation, from which we may learn, not merely that certain preferences are shown, but also why they are shown. The preferences in question are demonstrably not due to the greater poignancy of the pleasures preferred. It is simply not true that the keenest of imaginative pleasures is keener than the keenest of emotional, and still less that the keenest of intellectual is so. The very reverse is the truth. The supremest delight attainable in fancy's most romantic flight is, I suspect, faint in comparison with the sort of ecstasy into which a child of freshly-strung nerves is sometimes thrown by the mere brilliance or balminess of a summer's day, and with which even we, dulled adults,

provided we be in the right humour, and that all things are in a concatenation accordingly, are now and then momentarily affected while listening to the wood-notes wild of a nightingale, or a Jenny Lind, or while gazing on star-lit sky or moon-lit sea, or on the snowy or dolomite peaks of a mountain range fulgent with the violet and purple glories of the setting sun. And yet the choicest snatches of such beatitude with which—at least, after the fine edge of our susceptibilities has been worn away by the world's friction—we creatures of coarse human mould are ever indulged, are but poor in comparison with the rich abundance of the same in which some more delicately-constituted organisms habitually revel. If we would understand of what development emotional delight is capable, we should watch the skylark. As that 'blithe spirit' now at heaven's gate 'poureth its full heart,' and anon can

Scarce get out his notes for joy,
But shakes his song together as he nears
His happy home, the ground,

what poet but must needs confess with Shelley, that in his most rapturous dream, his transport never came nigh the bird's? And yet what poet would change conditions with the lark? Nay, what student or philosopher would? albeit the utmost gratification ever earned by either of these in the prosecution of his special calling—in acquiring knowledge, in solving knotty problems, or in scaling the heights of abstract contemplation—is probably as inferior in keenness of zest to that which the poet knows, as the best prose is inferior in charm to the best poetry. It may even be that both poet and philosopher owe, on the whole, more unhappiness than

happiness—the one to his superior sensibility, the other to his superior enlightenment, and yet neither would exchange his own lesser happiness for the greater happiness of the lark. Why would he not? It is no sufficient answer to say that in the lark's happiness there are few, if any, imaginative or intellectual ingredients; that it is almost utterly unideal, almost purely emotional, exactly the same in kind, and only higher in degree, than the glee of puppies or kittens at play. The question recurs as forcibly as ever, why—seeing that enjoyment is the one thing desirable, the only thing either valuable in itself, or that gives value to other things—why is it that no intelligent man would accept, in lieu of his own, another mode of existence, in which, although debarred from the joys of thought and fancy, he nevertheless has reason to believe that the share of enjoyment falling to his lot would be greater, both in quantity and sapidity, than it is at present? The following seems to me to be the explanation of the mystery.

It might be too much to say that nothing can please a person who is not pleased with himself, but it is at any rate clear that nothing can greatly please him which interferes with his self-satisfaction. Now imaginative and intellectual enjoyment, each of them, involves the exercise of a special and superior faculty, mere consciousness of the possession of which helps to make the possessor satisfied with himself. It exalts what Mr. Mill aptly terms his sense of dignity, a sense possessed in some form or other by every human being, and one so essential to that self-satisfaction without which all pleasure would be tasteless, that nothing which conflicts with it can be an object of serious desire. In virtue

of this special faculty, the most wretched of men holds himself to be superior to the most joyous of larks. To divest himself of it would be to lower himself towards the level of the bird, and to commit such an act of self-degradation would occasion to him an amount of pain which he is not disposed to incur for the sake of any amount of pleasure obtainable at its expense. It is, then, the fear of pain which prevents his wishing to be turned into a lark. He is not ignorant that he would be happier for the metamorphosis, but he dreads the pain that must precede the increase of happiness, more than he desires the increase of happiness that would follow the pain.

The force of these considerations will be equally, or more apparent, on their being applied to analysis of moral pleasures. That these are the most truly precious of all pleasures, is proved by their being habitually more highly prized than any others by all who are qualified to make the comparison. But why are they so prized? Not, as I am constrained, however reluctantly, to admit, on account of their greater keenness as pleasures. It would be at best but well-meaning cant to pretend that the self-approval, the sympathetic participation in other people's augmented welfare, the grateful consciousness of having done that which is pleasing in our Heavenly Father's sight, together with whatever else helps to compose the internal reward of virtue, constitute a sum total of delight nearly as exquisite as that which may be obtained in a variety of other ways. The mere circumstance of there being invariably included in a just or generous action more or less of self-denial, self-restraint, or self-sacrifice, must always sober down the

gratification by which virtue is rewarded, and make it appear tame beside the delirium of gladness caused by many things with which virtue has nothing to do. We will charitably suppose that the occupant of a dukedom, who should secretly light upon conclusive proof that it was not his by right, would at once abandon it to the legal heir, and we need not doubt that he would subsequently be, on the whole, well content to have so acted, but we cannot suppose that he would make the surrender with anything like the elation with which he entered on the estate and title. If there were really no pleasure equal to that with which virtue recompenses its votaries, the performance of a virtuous act would always make a man happier than previously; moreover, the greater the virtue, the greater would be the consequent pleasure. But any one may see that an act of the most exalted virtue, far from increasing, often utterly destroys the agent's happiness. Imagine an affectionate father, some second Brutus or second Fitzstephen of Galway, constrained by overwhelming sense of duty to sentence a beloved son to death, or a bankrupt beggaring himself and his family by honestly making over to his creditors property with which he might have safely absconded. Plainly, such virtuous achievement, far from adding to the happiness of its author, has plunged him in an abyss of misery, his only comfort being that in the lowest deep there is, as we shall presently see, a lower deep still. Far from being happier than he was before acting as he has done, he would be much happier if, being vicious instead of virtuous, he had not felt bound so to act. Unquestionably, what either upright judge or honest bankrupt has incurred—

the one by becoming a saticide, the other by making himself a beggar—is pure and simple pain, unmitigated by one particle of positive pleasure. Yet it is at the same time certain that the virtue of each has in some form or other given full compensation for the pain it has occasioned, for not only was that pain deliberately incurred in lieu of the pleasure which it has supplanted, but restoration of the pleasure would now be refused, if reversal of the virtuous conduct were made a condition of the restoration. In what, then, does the compensation consist? In nothing else than this, in judge or bankrupt having been saved from pain still greater than that which he is actually suffering. Wretched as he is, infinitely more wretched than he was before there was any call upon him to act as he has done, he is less wretched than he would be if, recognising the obligation so to act, he had not so acted. He has escaped the stings of conscience, the sense of having wronged his neighbour and offended his God; he has escaped, in short, self-condemnation—a torment so intolerable to those so constituted as to be susceptible of it, that hell itself has been known to be, in imagination at least, preferred to it. Mr. Mill's splendid outburst that, rather than worship a fiend that could send him to hell for refusing, he would go to hell as he was bid, will doubtless occur to every reader.

This, however, is all. In both the supposed cases, as in every one in which virtue consists of compliance with a painful duty, the pleasure arising from the practice of virtue cannot in strictness be called pleasure at all. At best it is but a partial negation of pain; more properly, indeed, the substitution of one pain for another more acute. Yet this

mere negation, this ethereal inanity, is pronounced by Utilitarianism to be preferable to aught that can come into competition with it. Truly it is somewhat hard upon those who attend to such teaching, to be reproached with their grossness of taste and likened to hogs, for no better reason than their predilection for the lightest of all conceivable diets. Still harder will this seem, when we recollect that Utilitarians are exhorted to be virtuous, less for their own than for other people's sakes. If, indeed, virtue were practised by all mankind, the utilitarian idea of the greatest possible happiness, or, at least, of the greatest possible exemption from unhappiness, would be universally realised. Still, it is in order that they may afford pleasure to the community at large, rather than that they may obtain it for themselves; it is that they may save, not so much themselves, as the community, from pain, that individual Utilitarians are charged to be virtuous. Among those pleasures, whether positive or negative, which it is allowable to them to seek for themselves, the first place is assigned to the pleasure arising from the sense of giving pleasure to others. Thus, not only is it the purest of pleasures that Utilitarianism chiefly recommends for pursuit: even that pleasure is to be pursued only from the purest and most disinterested motives.

All this I frankly acknowledge; and I own, too, that, far from deserving to be stigmatised as irreligious, Utilitarianism is literally nothing else than an amplification of one moiety of Christianity; that it not adopts merely, but expands, 'the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth,' exhorting us to love our neighbour, not simply as well, but better than

ourselves; to do for others, not simply what we would have them do for us, but much more than we could have the face to ask them to do; not merely not to pursue our interests at the expense of theirs, but to regard as our own chief interest the promotion of theirs. That on account of these exhortations Utilitarianism is godless can be supposed by those only who suppose that love to one's neighbour is contrary to the will of God. By those who believe that works are the best signs of faith, and that love to God is best evinced by doing good to man, Utilitarianism might rather seem to be but another name for practical religion.

So I say in all sincerity, though not without some misgiving, as while so speaking I involuntarily bethink myself of Balaam, son of Beor, who having been called forth to curse, caught himself blessing altogether. Mine eyes, too, have been opened to the good of that which I was purposed to condemn, and behold I have as yet done nothing but eulogise. No warmest partisan of Utilitarianism, not Mr. Mill himself, ever spoke more highly of it than I have just been doing. What censures, then, can I have in reserve to countervail such praises? What grounds of quarrel can I have with a system of ethics which I have described as ever seeking the noblest ends from the purest motives; whose precepts I own to be as elevating as its aims are exalted? On reflection, I am reassured by recollecting several, which I proceed to bring forward one at a time, beginning with a sin enormous enough to cover any multitude of merits.

My first charge against Utilitarianism is that it is not true. I do not say that there is no truth in it. That I have found much to admire in its premises has been frankly avowed;

and in one, at least, of the leading deductions from those premises I partially concur. I admit that acts utterly without utility must likewise be utterly without worth; that conduct which subserves the enjoyment neither of oneself nor of any one else, cannot, except in a very restricted sense, be termed right; that conduct which interferes with the enjoyment both of oneself and of all others, which injuring oneself injures others also, and benefits no one, cannot be otherwise than wrong; that purely objectless asceticism which has not even self-discipline in view, is not virtue, but folly; that misdirected charity which, engendering improvidence, creates more distress than it relieves, is not virtue, but criminal weakness. But though admitting that there can be no virtue without utility, I do not admit either that virtue must be absent unless utility preponderate, or that if utility preponderate virtue must be present. I deny that any amount of utility can of itself constitute virtue. I deny that whatever adds to the general happiness must be right. Equally do I deny that whatever diminishes the general happiness or prevents its increasing must be wrong. An action, be it observed, may be right in three different senses. It may be right as being meritorious, and deserving of commendation. It may be right as being that which one is bound to do, for the doing of which, therefore, one deserves no praise, and for neglecting to do which one would justly incur blame. It may be right simply as not being wrong—as being allowable—something which one has a right to do, though to refrain from doing it might perhaps be praiseworthy. There will be little difficulty in adducing examples of conduct which, though calculated to diminish

the sum total of happiness, would be right in the first of these senses. Nothing can be easier than to multiply examples of such conduct that would be right in the third sense. I proceed to cite cases which will answer both these purposes, and likewise the converse one of showing that conduct calculated to increase the general happiness may nevertheless be wrong.

When the Grecian chiefs, assembled at Aulis, were waiting for a fair wind to convey them to Ilium, they were, we are told, warned by what was to them as a voice from heaven, that their enterprise would make no progress unless Agamemnon's daughter were sacrificed to Diana. In order to place the details of the story in a light as little favourable as possible to my argument, we will deviate somewhat from the accepted version, and will suppose that the arrested enterprise was one of even greater pith and moment than tradition ascribes to it. We will suppose that upon its successful prosecution depended the national existence of Greece; that its failure would have involved the extermination of one-half of the people, and the slavery of the other half. We will suppose, too, that of all this Iphigenia was as firmly persuaded as every one else. In these circumstances, had her countrymen a right to insist on her immolation? If so, on what was that right founded? Is it sufficient to say in reply that her death was essential to the national happiness, to the extent even of being indispensable to prevent that happiness from being converted into national woe? Manifestly, according to the hypothesis, it was expedient for all concerned, with the single exception of herself, that she should die; but were the

others thereby entitled to take her life? Did the fact of its being for their advantage to do this warrant their doing it? Simply because it was their interest, was it also their right? Right, we must recollect, invariably implies corresponding duty. Right, it is clear, can never be rightfully resisted. If it be the right of certain persons to do a certain thing, it must be the duty of all other persons to let that thing be done. Where there is no such duty, there can be no such right. Wherefore, if the 'stern, black-bearded kings, with wolfish eyes,' who sate 'waiting to see her die,' had a right to kill Iphigenia, it must have been Iphigenia's duty to let herself be killed. Was this then her duty? 'Duty,' as I have elsewhere observed,[3] 'signifies something due, a debt, indebtedness, and a debt cannot have been incurred for nothing, or without some antecedent step on the part either of debtor or creditor.' But it is not pretended that in any way whatever, by any antecedent act of hers or theirs, Iphigenia had incurred or had been subjected to a debt to her countrymen which could be paid off only with her life. It could not, then, be incumbent on her to let her life be taken in payment. If it had been in her power to burst her bonds, and break through the wolves in human shape that girdled her in, she would have been guilty of no wrong by escaping. But if not, then, however meritorious it might have been on her part to consent to die for her countrymen, it was not her duty so to die, nor, consequently, had they a right to put her to death. She would have been at least negatively right in refusing to die, while they were guilty of a very positive and a very grievous wrong in killing her, notwithstanding that both she and they were perfectly agreed that for her to be

killed would be for the incalculably greater happiness of a greater number, exceeding the lesser number in the proportion of several hundreds of thousands to one.

It is true that throughout this affair every one concerned was labouring under a gross delusion—that there was no real use in putting Iphigenia to death, and that nothing but superstition made anybody suppose there was. I do not think the case is one less to our purpose on that account, for Utilitarians, like other fallible mortals, are liable to deceive themselves. They never can be quite secure of the genuineness of the utility on which they rely, and in default of positive knowledge they will always be reduced to act, as the Grecian chiefs did, according to the best of their convictions. Nevertheless, for the satisfaction of those who distrust romance and insist upon reality, we will leave fable for fact, and take as our next illustration an incident that may any day occur.

Imagine three shipwrecked mariners to have leapt from their sinking vessel into a cockboat scarce big enough to hold them, and the two slimmer of the three to have presently discovered that there was little or no chance of either of them reaching land unless their over-weighted craft were lightened of their comparatively corpulent companion. Next, imagine yourself in the fat sailor's place, and then consider whether you would feel it incumbent on you to submit quietly to be drowned in order that the residuum of happiness might be greater than if either you all three went to the bottom, or than if you alone were saved. Would you not, far from recognising any such moral obligation, hold yourself morally justified in throwing the

other two overboard, if you were strong enough, and if need were, to prevent their similarly ousting you? But if it were not your duty to allow yourself to be cast into the sea, the others could have no right to cast you out; so that, if they did cast you out, they would clearly be doing not right but wrong. And yet, as clearly, their wrong-doing would have conduced to the greater happiness of the greater number, inasmuch as, while only one life could otherwise have been saved, it would save two, and inasmuch as, *cœteris paribus*, two persons would necessarily derive twice as much enjoyment from continued existence as one would. Moreover, their wrong-doing would be of a kind calculated always to produce similarly useful results. It cannot, I suppose, be denied that a rule to the effect that whenever forfeiture of one life would save two, one life should be sacrificed, would—not exceptionally only, but at large and in the long run—conduce to the saving of life, and therefore to the conservation of happiness connected with life.

The foregoing cases are no doubt both of them extreme, involving exaction of the largest possible private sacrifice for the general good; but in all cases of the kind, whether the exaction be small or great, the same governing principle equally applies. If you, a foot-sore, homeward-bound pedestrian, on a sweltering July day, were to see your next-door neighbour driving in the same direction in solitary state, would you have a right to stop his carriage and force yourself in? Nay, even though you had just before fallen down and broken your leg, would the compassionating by-standers be justified in forcing him to take you in? Or, again, if you were outside a coach during a pelting shower, and

saw a fellow-passenger with a spare umbrella between his legs, while an unprotected female close beside was being drenched with the rain, would you have a right to wrest the second umbrella from him, and hold it over her? That, very likely, is what you would do in the circumstances, and few would be disposed greatly to blame the indignant ebullition. Still, unless you are a disciple of Proudhon, you will scarcely pretend that you can have a right to take possession of another's carriage or umbrella against the owner's will. You can scarcely suppose that it is not for him but for you to decide what use shall be made of articles belonging not to you but to him. Yet there can be no doubt that the happiness of society would be vastly promoted if everyone felt himself under an irresistible obligation to assist his neighbour whenever he could do so with little or no inconvenience to himself, or, consequently, if external force were always at hand to constrain anyone so to assist who was unwilling to do so of his own accord.

So much in proof that among things of the highest and most extensive utility there are several which it would be decidedly the reverse of right to do, and several others which it would be perfectly right to leave undone. I proceed to show that there are many other things not simply not of preponderating utility, but calculated, on the contrary, to do more harm than good, to destroy more happiness than they are capable of creating, which, nevertheless, it would be not simply allowable to do, but the doing of which would be highly meritorious, acts possibly of the most exalted virtue.

Let no one distrust the doctrine of development by reason of its supposed extravagance of pretension who has

not duly considered to what a sublime of moral beauty the united hideousness and absurdity of Calvinism may give birth. In that Puritan society of New England of which Mrs. Beecher Stowe has given so singularly interesting an account in her 'Minister's Wooing,' and among whose members it was an universal article of belief that the bulk of mankind are created for the express purpose of being consigned to everlasting flames, there are said to have been not a few enthusiasts in whom a self-concentrating creed begat the very quintessence of self-devotion. 'As a gallant soldier renounces life and personal aims in the cause of his king and country, and holds himself ready to be drafted for a forlorn hope, to be shot down, or help to make a bridge of his mangled body, over which the more fortunate shall pass to victory and glory,' so among the early descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers many an one 'regarded himself as devoted to the King Eternal, ready in his hands to be used to illustrate and build up an eternal commonwealth, either by being sacrificed as a lost spirit, or glorified as a redeemed one; ready to throw, not merely his mortal life, but his immortality even, into the forlorn hope, to bridge, with a never-dying soul, the chasm over which white-robed victors should pass to a commonwealth of glory and splendour, whose vastness should dwarf the misery of all the lost to an infinitesimal.' And while by many the idea of suffering everlasting pains for the glory of God, and the good of being in general, was thus contemplated with equanimity, there were some few for whom the idea of so suffering for the good of others dearer than themselves would have been greeted with positive exultation. 'And don't I care for your

soul, James?' exclaims Mary Scudder to her lover. 'If I could take my hopes of heaven out of my own heart and give them to you, I would. Dr. H. preached last Sunday on the text, "I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen," and he went on to show how we must be willing to give up even our own salvation, if necessary, for the good of others. People said it was a hard doctrine, but I could feel my way through it. Yes, I would give my soul for yours. I wish I could.' Now we must on no account permit admiration of Miss Scudder's transcendent generosity in desiring to make this exchange blind us to the fatal effect on social happiness which, if such exchange were possible, the prevalence of a disposition to make it could not fail to have. If Calvinism were true instead of blasphemous, if God were really the Moloch it represents Him, and if, moreover, Moloch were indifferent as to which of his offspring were cast into the fire, caring only that the prescribed number of victims should be forthcoming in full tale, nothing can be conceived more likely to prove an encouragement to evil-doers, and a terror to them that did well, than observation that well-doing not infrequently led to eternal misery, and evil-doing to eternal bliss. Again, if in China, where criminals under sentence of death are permitted, if they can, by purchase or otherwise, to procure substitutes to die in their stead, a son were to propose to die for a parent base enough to take advantage of the offer, could any arrangement be more plainly repugnant to the common-weal than that by which society would thus lose one of its noblest, instead of getting rid of one of its vilest members? Or, when in England, a thrifty son, by consenting

to cut the entail of an estate to which he is heir-apparent, enables a prodigal father to consume in riotous living substance which would otherwise have eventually become his, is he not clearly taking the worse course for the public by permitting the property to be wasted, instead of causing it to be husbanded?

Beyond all question, American Puritan, Chinese or English devotee to filial affection, would thus, each in her or his degree, have, in the circumstances supposed, acted in a manner opposed to the general interest, and would therefore be condemned by Utilitarianism as having acted immorally. Nor could this verdict be gainsaid if utility and morality were, as Utilitarianism assumes them to be, one and the same thing. Clearly, that the just should suffer for the unjust, the innocent for the guilty, is diametrically opposed to the welfare of society; wherefore, according to utilitarian principles, by consenting so to suffer, the just becomes unjust, the innocent renders himself guilty. But can there be a better proof that utilitarian principles are unsound than that this should be a legitimate deduction from them? Can there be better proof that utility and morality are not identical, but two absolutely distinct things? Plainly, there can be no meritorious or commendable immorality; neither can there be any virtue which is not meritorious and commendable. Is there, then, no merit, nothing commendable, in accepting ruin or in volunteering to die temporarily, or to perish everlastingly, in order to save a fellow-creature from ruin, or death, or perdition? Does not such conduct, considered independently and without reference either to its utility or its hurtfulness,

command our instantaneous and enthusiastic admiration? But how, being so admirable, can it be immoral? how other than virtuous? What else is it, indeed, but the very perfection of that purest virtue which, content to be its own reward, deliberately cuts itself off from all other recompense? Without changing the immemorial meaning of the most familiar words, there is no avoiding the obvious answers to these questions. If virtue and morality, right and wrong, are to continue to mean anything like that which, except by Utilitarians, has always been considered to be their only meaning, it is not simply not wrong, it is not simply right, it is among the highest achievements of virtue and morality to sacrifice your own in order to secure another's happiness, and the disinterestedness, and therefore the virtue, is surely the greater, rather than less, if you sacrifice more happiness of your own than you secure to another. So much follows necessarily from what has been said, and something more besides. It follows further that Utilitarianism is not less in error in declaring that actions calculated to diminish the total sum of happiness must necessarily be wrong, cannot possibly be allowable, still less meritorious, than it had previously been shown to be in declaring that actions calculated to augment the sum total of happiness must necessarily be meritorious.

There is but one way in which Utilitarianism can even temporarily rebut the charge of fallacy, of which otherwise it must here stand convicted, and that is by renouncing all claim to be a new system of ethics, and not pretending to be more than a new system of nomenclature. And even so, it could not help contradicting, and thereby refuting itself.