

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

of his estate, or every particle of his reputation, would he have hesitated to part with the former? Is there not a loss of character, a stain upon honour, that is felt as a severer blow than any reverse of fortune? Do not the richest heiresses in the city marry for a title, and think themselves well off? Are there not patriots who think or dream all their lives about their country's good; philanthropists who rave about liberty and humanity at a certain yearly loss? Are there not studious men, who never once thought of bettering their circumstances? Are not the liberal professions held more respectable than business, though less lucrative? Might not most people do better than they do, but that they postpone their interest to their indolence, their taste for reading, their love of pleasure, or other pursuits? And is it not generally understood that all men can make a fortune or succeed in the *main-chance*, who have but that one idea in their heads?¹ Lastly, are there not those who pursue or husband wealth for their own good, for the benefit of their friends or the relief of the distressed? But as the examples are rare, and might be supposed to make against myself, I shall not insist upon them. I think I have said enough to vindicate or apologize for my first position—

‘ Masterless passion sways us to the mood
Of what it likes or loaths—’

or if not to make good my ground, to march out with flying colours and beat of drum!

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

The New Monthly Magazine.]

[*October and December, 1828.*

A. For my part, I think Helvetius has made it clear that self-love is at the bottom of all our actions, even of those which are apparently the most generous and disinterested.

B. I do not know what you mean by saying that Helvetius has made this clear, nor what you mean by self-love.

A. Why, was not he the first who explained to the world that in gratifying others, we gratify ourselves; that though the result may be different, the motive is really the same, and a selfish one; and that if we had not more pleasure in performing what are called friendly or virtuous actions than the contrary, they would never enter our thoughts?

¹ I have said somewhere, that all professions that do not make money *breed* are careless and extravagant. This is not true of lawyers, &c. I ought to have said that this is the case with all those that by the regularity of their returns do not afford a prospect of realizing an independence by frugality and industry.

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

B. Certainly he is no more entitled to this discovery (if it be one) than you are. Hobbes and Mandeville long before him asserted the same thing in the most explicit and unequivocal manner; ¹ and Butler, in the Notes and Preface to his Sermons, had also long before answered it in the most satisfactory way.

A. Ay, indeed! pray how so?

B. By giving the *common-sense* answer to the question which I have just asked of you.

A. And what is that? I do not exactly comprehend.

B. Why, that self-love means, both in common and philosophical speech, the love of self.

A. To be sure, *there needs no ghost to tell us that.*

B. And yet, simple as it is, both you and many great philosophers seem to have overlooked it.

A. You are pleased to be obscure—unriddle for the sake of the vulgar.

B. Well then, Bishop Butler's statement in the volume I have mentioned—

A. May I ask, is it the author of the *Analogy* you speak of?

B. The same, but an entirely different and much more valuable work. His position is, that the arguments of the opposite party go to prove that in all our motives and actions it is the individual indeed who loves or is interested in *something*, but not in the smallest degree (which yet seems necessary to make out the full import of the compound 'sound significant,' *self-love*) that that something is *himself*. By self-love is surely implied not only that it is I who feel a certain passion, desire, good-will, and so forth, but that I feel this good-will towards myself—in other words, that I am both the person feeling the attachment, and the object of it. In short, the controversy between self-love and benevolence relates not to the person who loves, but to the person beloved—otherwise, it is flat and puerile nonsense. There must always be some one to feel the love, that's certain, or else there could be no love of one thing or another—so far there can be no question that it is a given individual who feels, thinks, and acts in all possible cases of feeling, thinking, and acting—'there needs,' according to your own allusion, 'no ghost come

¹ 'Il a manqué au plus grand philosophe qu'aient eu les Français, de vivre dans quelque solitude des Alpes, dans quelque séjour éloigné, et de lancer delà son livre dans Paris sans y venir jamais lui-même. Rousseau avait trop de sensibilité et trop peu de raison, Buffon trop d'hypocrisie à son jardin des plantes, Voltaire trop d'enfantillage dans la tête, pour pouvoir juger le principe d'Helvétius.'—*De l'Amour*, tom. 2. p. 230.

My friend Mr. Bayle here lays too much stress on a borrowed verbal fallacy.

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

from the grave to tell us that'—but whether the said individual in so doing always thinks *of*, feels *for*, and acts *with a view to himself*, that is a very important question, and the only real one at issue; and the very statement of which, in a distinct and intelligible form, gives at once the proper and inevitable answer to it. Self-love, to mean any thing, must have a double meaning, that is, must not merely signify love, but love defined and directed in a particular manner, having *self* for its object, reflecting and reacting upon *self*; but it is downright and intolerable trifling to persist that the love or concern which we feel for another still has *self* for its object, because it is we who feel it. The same sort of quibbling would lead to the conclusion that when I am thinking of any other person, I am notwithstanding thinking of myself, because it *I* who have his image in my mind.

A. I cannot, I confess, see the connection.

B. I wish you would point out the distinction. Or let me ask you—Suppose you were to observe me looking frequently and earnestly at myself in the glass, would you not be inclined to laugh, and say that this was vanity?

A. I might be half-tempted to do so.

B. Well; and if you were to find me admiring a fine picture, or speaking in terms of high praise of the person or qualities of another, would you not set it down equally to an excess of coxcomby and self-conceit?

A. How, in the name of common sense, should I do so?

B. Nay, how should you do otherwise upon your own principles? For if sympathy with another is to be construed into self-love because it is I who feel it, surely, by the same rule, my admiration and praise of another must be resolved into self-praise and self-admiration, and I am the whole time delighted with myself, to wit, with my own thoughts and feelings, while I pretend to be delighted with another. Another's limbs are as much mine, who contemplate them, as his feelings.

A. Now, my good friend, you go too far: I can't think you serious.

B. Do I not tell you that I have a most grave Bishop (equal to a whole Bench) on my side?

A. What! is this illustration of the looking-glass and picture his? I thought it was in your own far-fetched manner.

B. And why far-fetched?

A. Because nobody can think of calling the praise of another self-conceit—the words have a different meaning in the language.

B. Nobody has thought of confounding them hitherto, and yet they sound to me as like as selfishness and generosity. If our vanity

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

can be brought to admire others disinterestedly, I do not see but our good-nature may be taught to serve them as disinterestedly. Grant me but this, that self-love signifies not simply, 'I love,' but requires to have this further addition, 'I love *myself*,' understood in order to make sense or grammar of it, and I defy you to make one or the other of Helvetius's theory, if you will needs have it to be his. If, as Fielding says, all our passions are selfish merely because they are *ours*, then in hating another we must be said to hate ourselves, just as wisely as in loving another, we are said to be actuated by self-love. I have no patience with such foolery. I respect that fine old sturdy fellow Hobbes, or even the acute pertinacious sophistry of Mandeville; but I do not like the flimsy, self-satisfied repetition of an absurdity, which with its originality has lost all its piquancy.

A. You have, I know, very little patience with others who differ from you, nor are you a very literal reporter of the arguments of those who happen to be on your side of the question. You were about to tell me the substance of Butler's answer to Helvetius's theory, if we can let the anachronism pass; and I have as yet only heard certain quaint and verbal distinctions of your own. I must still think that the most disinterested actions proceed from a selfish motive. A man feels distress at the sight of a beggar, and he parts with his money to remove this uneasiness. If he did not feel this distress in his own mind, he would take no steps to relieve the other's wants.

B. And pray, does he feel this distress in his own mind out of love to himself, or solely that he may have the pleasure of getting rid of it? The first *mote* in the game of mutual obligation is evidently a social, not a selfish impulse, and I might rest the dispute here and insist upon going no farther till this step is got over, but it is not necessary. I have already told you the substance of Butler's answer to this common-place and plausible objection. He says, in his fine broad manly and yet unpretending mode of stating a question, that a living being may be supposed to be actuated either by mere sensations, having no reference to any one else, or else that having an idea and foresight of the consequences to others, he is influenced by and interested in those consequences only in so far as they have a distinct connexion with his own ultimate good, in both which cases, seeing that the motives and actions have both their origin and end in self, they may and must be properly denominated *selfish*. But where the motive is neither physically nor morally selfish, that is, where the impulse to act is neither excited by a physical sensation nor by a reflection on the consequence to accrue to the individual, it must be hard to say in what sense it can be called so, except in that sense

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

already exploded, namely, that which would infer that an impulse of any kind is selfish merely because it acts upon some one, or that before we can entertain disinterested sympathy with another, we must feel no sympathy at all. Benevolence, generosity, compassion, friendship, &c. imply, says the Bishop, that we take an immediate and unfeigned interest in the welfare of others; that their pleasures give us pleasure; that their pains give us pain, barely to know of them, and from no thought about ourselves. But no! retort the advocates of self-love, this is not enough: before any person can pretend to the title of benevolent, generous, and so on, he must prove, that so far from taking the deepest and most heartfelt interest in the happiness of others, he has no feeling on the subject, that he is perfectly indifferent to their weal or woe; and then taking infinite pains and making unaccountable sacrifices for their good without caring one farthing about them, he might pass for heroic and disinterested. But if he lets it appear he has the smallest good-will towards them and acts upon it, he then becomes a merely selfish agent; so that to establish a character for generosity, compassion, humanity, &c. in any of his actions, he must first plainly prove that he never felt the slightest twinge of any of these passions thrilling in his bosom. This, according to my author, is requiring men to act not from charitable motives, but from no motives at all. Such reasoning has not an appearance of philosophy, but rather of drivelling weakness or of tacit irony. For my part, I can conceive of no higher strain of generosity than that which justly and truly says, *Nil humani à me alienum puto*—but, according to your modern French friends and my old English ones, there is no difference between this and the most sordid selfishness; for the instant a man takes an interest in another's welfare, he makes it his own, and all the merit and disinterestedness is gone. 'Greater love than this hath no man, that he should give his life for his friend.' It must be rather a fanciful sort of self-love that at any time sacrifices its own acknowledged and obvious interests for the sake of another.

A. Not in the least. The expression you have just used explains the whole mystery, and I think you must allow this yourself. The moment I sympathise with another, I do in strictness make his interest my own. The two things on this supposition become inseparable, and my gratification is identified with his advantage. Every one, in short, consults his particular taste and inclination, whatever may be its bias, or acts from the strongest motive. Regulus, as Helvetius has so ably demonstrated, would not have returned to Carthage, but that the idea of dishonour gave him more uneasiness than the apprehension of a violent death.

B. That is, had he not preferred the honour of his country to his

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

own interest. Surely, when self-love by all accounts takes so very wide a range and embraces entirely new objects of a character so utterly opposed to its general circumscribed and paltry routine of action, it would be as well to designate it by some new and appropriate appellation, unless it were meant, by the intervention of the old and ambiguous term, to confound the important practical distinction which subsists between the puny circle of a man's physical sensations and private interests and the whole world of virtue and honour, and thus to bring back the last gradually and disingenuously within the verge of the former. Things without names are unapt to take root in the human mind : we are prone to reduce nature to the dimensions of language. If a feeling of a refined and romantic character is expressed by a gross and vulgar name, our habitual associations will be sure to degrade the first to the level of the last, instead of conforming to a forced and technical definition. But I beg to deny, not only that the objects in this case are the same, but that the principle is similar.

A. Do you then seriously pretend that the end of sympathy is not to get rid of the momentary uneasiness occasioned by the distress of another ?

B. And has that uneasiness, I again ask, its source in self-love ? If self-love were the only principle of action, we ought to receive no uneasiness from the pains of others, we ought to be wholly exempt from any such weakness : or the least that can be required to give the smallest shadow of excuse to this exclusive theory is, that the instant the pain was communicated by our foolish, indiscreet sympathy, we should think of nothing but getting rid of it as fast as possible, by fair means or foul, as a mechanical instinct. If the pain of sympathy, as soon as it arose, was decomposed from the objects which gave it birth, and acted upon the brain or nerves solely as a detached, desultory feeling, or abstracted sense of uneasiness, from which the mind shrunk with its natural aversion to pain, then I would allow that the impulse in this case, having no reference to the good of another, and seeking only to remove a present inconvenience from the individual, would still be properly self-love : but no such process of abstraction takes place. The feeling of compassion, as it first enters the mind, so it continues to act upon it in conjunction with the idea of what another suffers ; refers every wish it forms or every effort it makes, to the removal of pain from a fellow-creature, and is only satisfied when it believes this end to be accomplished. It is not a blind, physical repugnance to pain, as affecting ourselves, but rational or intelligible conception of it as existing out of ourselves, that prompts and sustains our exertions in behalf of humanity. Nor

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

can it be otherwise, while man is the creature of imagination and reason, and has faculties that implicate him (whether he will or not) in the pleasures and pains of others, and bind up his fate with theirs. Why, then, when an action or feeling is neither in its commencement nor progress, nor ultimate objects, dictated by or subject to the control of self-love, bestow the name where every thing but the name is wanting?

A. I must give you fair warning, that in this last *tirade* you have more than once gone beyond my comprehension. Your distinctions are too fine-drawn, and there is a want of relief in the expression. Are you not getting back to what you describe as your *first manner*? Your present style is more amusing. See if you cannot throw a few high lights into that last argument!

B. *Un peu plus à l'Anglaise*—any thing to oblige! I say, then, it appears to me strange that self-love should be asserted by any impartial reasoner, (not the dupe of a play upon words), to be absolute and undisputed master of the human mind, when compassion or uneasiness on account of others enters it without leave and in spite of this principle. What! to be instantly expelled by it without mercy, so that it may still assert its pre-eminence? No; but to linger there, to hold consultation with another principle, Imagination, which owes no allegiance to self-interest, and to march out only under condition and guarantee that the welfare of another is first provided for without any special clause in its own favour. This is much as if you were to say and swear, that though the bailiff and his man have taken possession of your house, you are still the rightful owner of it.

A. And so I am.

B. Why, then, not turn out such unwelcome intruders without standing upon ceremony?

A. You were too vague and abstracted before: now you are growing too figurative. Always in extremes.

B. Give me leave for a moment, as you will not let me spin mere metaphysical cobwebs.

A. I am patient.

B. Suppose that by sudden transformation your body were so contrived that it could feel the actual sensations of another body, as if your nerves had an immediate and physical communication; that you were assailed by a number of objects you saw and knew nothing of before, and felt desires and appetites springing up in your bosom for which you could not at all account—would you not say that this addition of another body made a material alteration in your former situation; that it called for a new set of precautions and instincts to provide for its wants and wishes? or would you persist in it that you

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

were just where you were, that no change had taken place in your being and interests, and that your new body was in fact your old one, for no other reason than because it was yours? To my thinking, the case would be quite altered by the supererogation of such a new sympathetic body, and I should be for dividing my care and time pretty equally between them.

Captain G. You mean that in that case you would have taken in partners to the concern, as well as No. I.?

B. Yes; and my concern for No. II. would be something very distinct from, and quite independent of, my original and hitherto exclusive concern for No. I.

A. How very gross and vulgar! (whispering to D——, and then turning to me, added,)—but why suppose an impossibility? I hate all such incongruous and far-fetched illustrations.

B. And yet this very miracle takes place every day in the human mind and heart, and you and your sophists would persuade us that it is nothing, and would slur over its existence by a shallow misnomer. Do I not by imaginary sympathy acquire a new interest (out of myself) in others as much as I should on the former supposition by physical contact or animal magnetism? and am I not compelled by this new law of my nature (neither included in physical sensation nor a deliberate regard to my own individual welfare) to consult the feelings and wishes of the new social body of which I am become a member, often to the prejudice of my own? The parallel seems to me exact, and I think the inference from it unavoidable. I do not postpone a benevolent or friendly purpose to my own personal convenience, or make it bend to it—

‘Letting I should not wait upon I would,
Like the poor cat in the adage.’

The will is amenable not to our immediate sensibility but to reason and imagination, which point out and enforce a line of duty very different from that prescribed by self-love. The operation of sympathy or social feeling, though it has its seat certainly in the mind of the individual, is neither for his immediate behalf nor to his remote benefit, but is constantly a diversion from both, and therefore, I contend, is not in any sense selfish. The movements in my breast as much originate in, and are regulated by, the *idea* of what another feels, as if they were governed by a chord placed there vibrating to another's pain. If these movements were mechanical, they would be considered as directed to the good of another: it is odd, that because my bosom takes part and beats in unison with them, they should become of a less generous character. In the passions of hatred,

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

resentment, sullenness, or even in low spirits, we voluntarily go through a great deal of pain, because *such is our pleasure*; or strictly, because certain objects have taken hold of our imagination, and we cannot, or will not, get rid of the impression: why should good-nature and generosity be the only feelings in which we will not allow a little forgetfulness of ourselves? Once more. If self-love, or each individual's sensibility, sympathy, what you will, were like an animalcule, sensitive, quick, shrinking instantly from whatever gave it pain, seeking instinctively whatever gave it pleasure, and having no other obligation or law of its existence, then I should be most ready to acknowledge that this principle was in its nature, end, and origin, selfish, slippery, treacherous, inert, inoperative but as an instrument of some immediate stimulus, incapable of generous sacrifice or painful exertion, and deserving a name and title accordingly, leading one to bestow upon it its proper attributes. But the very reverse of all this happens. The mind is tenacious of remote purposes, indifferent to immediate feelings, which cannot consist with the nature of a rational and voluntary agent. Instead of the animalcule swimming in pleasure and gliding from pain, the principle of self-love is incessantly to the imagination or sense of duty what the fly is to the spider—that fixes its stings into it, involves it in its web, sucks its blood, and preys upon its vitals! Does the spider do all this to please the fly? Just as much as Regulus returned to Carthage and was rolled down a hill in a barrel with iron spikes in it to please himself! The imagination or understanding is no less the enemy of our pleasure than of our interest. It will not let us be at ease till we have accomplished certain objects with which we have ourselves no concern but as melancholy truths.

A. But the spider you have so quaintly conjured up is a different animal from the fly. The imagination on which you lay so much stress is a part of one's-self.

B. I grant it: and for that very reason, self-love, or a principle tending exclusively to our own immediate gratification or future advantage, neither is nor can be the sole spring of action in the human mind.

A. I cannot see that at all.

D. Nay, I think he has made it out better than usual.

B. Imagination is another name for an interest in things out of ourselves, which must naturally run counter to our own. Self-love, for so fine and smooth-spoken a gentleman, leads his friends into odd scrapes. The situation of Regulus in a barrel with iron-spikes in it was not a very easy one: but, say the advocates of refined self-love, their points were a succession of agreeable punctures in his sides,

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

compared with the stings of dishonour. But what bound him to this dreadful alternative? Not self-love. When the pursuit of honour becomes troublesome, 'throw honour to the dogs—I'll none of it!' This seems the true Epicurean solution. Philosophical self-love seems neither a voluptuary nor an effeminate coward, but a cynic, and even a martyr, so that I am afraid he will hardly dare show his face at Very's, and that, with this knowledge of his character, even the countenance of the Count de Stutt-Tracy will not procure his admission to the saloons.

A. The Count de Stutt-Tracy, did you say? Who is he? I never heard of him.

B. He is the author of the celebrated 'Idéologie,' which Bonaparte denounced to the Chamber of Peers as the cause of his disasters in Russia. He is equally hated by the Bourbons; and what is more extraordinary still, he is patronised by Ferdinand VII. who settled a pension of two hundred crowns a year on the translator of his works. He speaks of Condillac as having 'created the science of Ideology,' and holds Helvetius for a true philosopher.

A. Which you do not! I think it a pity you should affect singularity of opinion in such matters, when you have all the most sensible and best-informed judges against you.

B. I am sorry for it too; but I am afraid I can hardly expect you with me, till I have all Europe on my side, of which I see no chance while the Englishman with his notions of solid beef and pudding holds fast by his substantial identity, and the Frenchman with his lighter food and air mistakes every shadowy impulse for himself.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

The New Monthly Magazine.]

[*December, 1828.*

D. You deny, I think, that personal identity, in the qualified way in which you think proper to admit it, is any ground for the doctrine of self-interest?

B. Yes, in an exclusive and absolute sense I do undoubtedly, that is, in the sense in which it is affirmed by metaphysicians, and ordinarily believed in.

D. Could you not go over the ground briefly, without entering into technicalities?

B. Not easily: but stop me when I entangle myself in difficulties. A person fancies, or feels habitually, that he has a positive, sub-

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

stantial interest in his own welfare, (generally speaking) just as much as he has in any actual sensation that he feels, because he is always and necessarily the same self. What is his interest at one time is therefore equally *his* interest at all other times. This is taken for granted as a self-evident proposition. Say he does not feel a particular benefit or injury at this present moment, yet it is he who is to feel it, which comes to the same thing. Where there is this continued identity of person, there must also be a correspondent identity of interest. I have an abstract, unavoidable interest in whatever can befall myself, which I can have or feel in no other person living, because I am always under every possible circumstance the self-same individual, and not any other individual whatsoever. In short, this word *self* (so closely do a number of associations cling round it and cement it together) is supposed to represent as it were a given concrete substance, as much one thing as any thing in nature can possibly be, and the centre or *substratum* in which the different impressions and ramifications of my being meet and are indissolubly knit together.

A. And you propose then seriously to take 'this one entire and perfect chrysolite,' this self, this 'precious jewel of the soul,' this rock on which mankind have built their faith for ages, and at one blow shatter it to pieces with the sledge-hammer, or displace it from its hold in the imagination with the wrenching-irons of metaphysics?

B. I am willing to use my best endeavours for that purpose.

D. You really ought: for you have the prejudices of the whole world against you.

B. I grant the prejudices are formidable; and I should despair, did I not think the reasons even stronger. Besides, without altering the opinions of the whole world, I might be contented with the suffrages of one or two intelligent people.

D. Nay, you will prevail by flattery, if not by argument.

A. That is something newer than all the rest.

B. 'Plain truth,' dear *A*—, 'needs no flowers of speech.'

D. Let me rightly understand you. Do you mean to say that I am not *C. D.* and that you are not *W. B.* or that we shall not both of us remain so to the end of the chapter, without a possibility of ever changing places with each other?

B. I am afraid, if you go to that, there is very little chance that

'*I shall be ever mistaken for you.*'

But with all this precise individuality and inviolable identity that you speak of, let me ask, Are you not a little changed (less so, it is true, than most people) from what you were twenty years ago? Or do

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

you expect to appear the same that you are now twenty years hence?

D. 'No more of that if thou lovest me.' We know what we are, but we know not what we shall be.

B. A truce then; but be assured that whenever you happen to fling up your part, there will be no other person found to attempt it after you.

D. Pray, favour us with your paradox without farther preface.

B. I will then try to match my paradox against your prejudice, which as it is armed all in proof, to make any impression on it, I must, I suppose, take aim at the rivets; and if I can hit them, if I do not (round and smooth as it is) cut it into three pieces, and show that two parts in three are substance and the third and principal part shadow, never believe me again. Your real self ends exactly where your pretended self-interest begins; and in calculating upon this principle as a solid, permanent, absolute, self-evident truth, you are mocked with a name.

D. How so? I hear, but do not see.

B. You must allow that this identical, indivisible, ostensible self is at any rate distinguishable into three parts,—the past, the present, and future?

D. I see no particular harm in that.

B. It is nearly all I ask. Well then, I admit that you have a peculiar, emphatic, incommunicable and exclusive interest or fellow-feeling in the two first of these selves; but I deny resolutely and unequivocally that you have any such natural, absolute, unavoidable, and mechanical interest in the last self, or in your future being, the interest you take in it being necessarily the offspring of understanding and imagination (aided by habit and circumstances), like that which you take in the welfare of others, and yet this last interest is the only one that is ever the object of rational and voluntary pursuit, or that ever comes into competition with the interests of others.

D. I am still to seek for the connecting clue.

B. I am almost ashamed to ask for your attention to a statement so very plain that it seems to border on a truism. I have an interest of a peculiar and limited nature in my present self, inasmuch as I feel my actual sensations not simply in a degree, but in a way and by means of faculties which afford me not the smallest intimation of the sensations of others. I cannot possibly feel the sensations of any one else, nor consequently take the slightest interest in them as such. I have no nerves communicating with another's brain, and transmitting to me either the glow of pleasure or the agony of pain which he may feel at the present moment by means of his senses. So far, therefore,

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

namely, so far as my present self or immediate sensations are concerned, I am cut off from all sympathy with others. I stand alone in the world, a perfectly insulated individual, necessarily and in the most unqualified sense indifferent to all that passes around me, and that does not in the first instance affect myself, for otherwise I neither have nor can have the remotest consciousness of it as a matter of organic sensation, any more than the mole has of light or the deaf adder of sounds.

D. Spoken like an oracle.

B. Again, I have a similar peculiar, mechanical, and untransferable interest in my past self, because I remember and can dwell upon my past sensations (even after the objects are removed) also in a way and by means of faculties which do not give me the smallest insight into or sympathy with the past feelings of others. I may conjecture and fancy what those feelings have been; and so I do. But I have no *memory* or continued consciousness of what either of good or evil may have found a place in their bosoms, no secret spring that touched vibrates to the hopes and wishes that are no more, unlocks the chambers of the past with the same assurance of reality, or identifies my feelings with theirs in the same intimate manner as with those which I have already felt in my own person. Here again, then, there is a real, undoubted, original and positive foundation for the notion of self to rest upon; for in relation to my former self and past feelings, I do possess a faculty which serves to unite me more especially to my own being, and at the same time draws a distinct and impassable line around that being, separating it from every other. A door of communication stands always open between my present consciousness and my past feelings, which is locked and barred by the hand of Nature and the constitution of the human understanding against the intrusion of any straggling impressions from the minds of others. I can only see into their real history darkly and by reflection. To sympathise with their joys or sorrows, and place myself in their situation either now or formerly, I must proceed by guess-work, and borrow the use of the common faculty of imagination. I am ready to acknowledge, then, that in what regards the past as well as the present, there is a strict metaphysical distinction between myself and others, and that my personal identity so far, or in the close, continued, inseparable connection between my past and present impressions, is firmly and irrevocably established.

D. You go on swimmingly. So far all is sufficiently clear.

B. But now comes the rub: for beyond that point I deny that the doctrine of personal identity or self-interest (as a consequence from it) has any foundation to rest upon but a confusion of names and

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

ideas. It has none in the nature of things or of the human mind. For I have no faculty by which I can project myself into the future, or hold the same sort of palpable, tangible, immediate, and exclusive communication with my future feelings, in the same manner as I am made to feel the present moment by means of the senses, or the past moment by means of memory. If I have any such faculty, expressly set apart for the purpose, name it. If I have no such faculty, I can have no such interest. In order that I may possess a proper personal identity so as to live, breathe, and feel along the whole line of my existence in the same intense and intimate mode, it is absolutely necessary to have some general medium or faculty by which my successive impressions are blended and amalgamated together, and to maintain and support this extraordinary interest. But so far from there being any foundation for this merging and incorporating of my future in my present self, there is no link of connection, no sympathy, no reaction, no mutual consciousness between them, nor even a possibility of any thing of the kind, in a mechanical and personal sense. Up to the present point, the spot on which we stand, the doctrine of personal identity holds good; hitherto the proud and exclusive pretensions of self 'come, but no farther.' The rest is air, is nothing, is a name, or but the common ground of reason and humanity. If I wish to pass beyond this point and look into my own future lot, or anticipate my future weal or woe before it has had an existence, I can do so by means of the same faculties by which I enter into and identify myself with the welfare, the being, and interests of others, but only by these. As I have already said, I have no particular organ or faculty of self-interest, in that case made and provided. I have no sensation of what is to happen to myself in future, no presentiment of it, no instinctive sympathy with it, nor consequently any abstract and unavoidable self-interest in it. Now mark. It is only in regard to my past and present being, that a broad and insurmountable barrier is placed between myself and others: as to future objects, there is no absolute and fundamental distinction whatever. But it is only these last that are the objects of any rational or practical interest. The idea of self properly attaches to objects of sense or memory, but these can never be the objects of action or of voluntary pursuit, which must, by the supposition, have an eye to future events. But with respect to these the chain of self-interest is dissolved and falls in pieces by the very necessity of our nature, and our obligations to self as a blind, mechanical, unsociable principle are lost in the general law which binds us to the pursuit of good as it comes within our reach and knowledge.

A. A most lame and impotent conclusion, I must say. Do you

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

mean to affirm that you have really the same interest in another's welfare that you have in your own?

B. I do not wish to assert anything without proof. Will you tell me if you have this particular interest in yourself what faculty is it that gives it you—to what conjuration and what mighty magic it is owing—or whether it is merely the name of self that is to be considered as a proof of all the absurdities and impossibilities that can be drawn from it?

A. I do not see that you have hitherto pointed out any.

B. What! not the impossibility that you should be another being, with whom you have not a particle of fellow-feeling?

A. Another being! Yes, I know it is always impossible for me to be another being.

B. Ay, or yourself either, without such a fellow-feeling, for it is that which constitutes self. If not, explain to me what you mean by self. But it is more convenient for you to let that magical sound lie involved in the obscurity of prejudice and language. You will please to take notice that it is not I who commence these hairbreadth distinctions and special-pleading. I take the old ground of common sense and natural feeling, and maintain that though in a popular, practical sense mankind are strongly swayed by self-interest, yet in the same ordinary sense they are also governed by motives of good-nature, compassion, friendship, virtue, honour, &c. Now all this is denied by your modern metaphysicians, who would reduce every thing to abstract self-interest, and exclude every other mixed motive or social tie in a strict, philosophical sense. They would drive me from my ground by scholastic subtleties and newfangled phrases; am I to blame then if I take them at their word, and try to foil them at their own weapons? Either stick to the unpretending *jog-trot* notions on the subject, or if you are determined to refine in analysing words and arguments, do not be angry if I follow the example set me, or even go a little farther to arrive at the truth. Shall we proceed on this understanding?

A. As you please.

B. We have got so far then (if I mistake not, and if there is not some flaw in the argument which I am unable to detect) that the past and present (which alone can appeal to our selfish faculties) are not the objects of action, and that the future (which can alone be the object of practical pursuit) has no particular claim or hold upon self. All action, all passion, all morality and self-interest, is prospective.

A. You have not made that point quite clear. What then is meant by a present interest, by the gratification of the present moment, as opposed to a future one?

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

B. Nothing, in a strict sense; or rather in common speech, you mean a near one, the interest of the next moment, the next hour, the next day, the next year, as it happens.

A. What! would you have me believe that I snatch my hand out of the flame of a candle from a calculation of future consequences?

D. (*laughing.*) *A.* had better not meddle with that question. *B.* is in his element there. It is his old and favourite illustration.

B. Do you not snatch your hand out of the fire to procure ease from pain?

A. No doubt, I do.

B. And is not this case subsequent to the act, and the act itself to the feeling of pain, which caused it?

A. It may be so; but the interval is so slight that we are not sensible of it.

B. Nature is nicer in her distinctions than we. Thus you could not lift the food to your mouth, but upon the same principle. The viands are indeed tempting, but if it were the sight or smell of these alone that attracted you, you would remain satisfied with them. But you use means to ends, neither of which exist till you employ or produce them, and which would never exist if the understanding which foresees them did not run on before the actual objects and purvey to appetite. If you say it is habit, it is partly so; but that habit would never have been formed, were it not for the connection between cause and effect, which always takes place in the order of time, or of what Hume calls *antecedents* and *consequents*.

A. I confess I think this a mighty microscopic way of looking at the subject.

B. Yet you object equally to more vague and sweeping generalities. Let me, however, endeavour to draw the knot a little tighter, as it has a considerable weight to bear—no less, in my opinion, than the whole world of moral sentiments. All voluntary action must relate to the future: but the future can only exist or influence the mind as an object of imagination and forethought; therefore the motive to voluntary action, to all that we seek or shun, must be in all cases *ideal* and *problematical*. The thing itself which is an object of pursuit can never co-exist with the motives which make it an object of pursuit. No one will say that the past can be an object either of prevention or pursuit. It may be a subject of involuntary regrets, or may give rise to the starts and flaws of passion; but we cannot set about seriously recalling or altering it. Neither can that which at present exists, or is an object of sensation, be at the same time an object of action or of volition, since if it *is*, no volition or exertion of mine can for the instant make it to be other than it is. I can make

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

it *cease* to be indeed, but this relates to the future, to the supposed non-existence of the object, and not to its actual impression on me. For a thing to be *willed*, it must necessarily not be. Over my past and present impressions my will has no control: they are placed, according to the poet, beyond the reach of fate, much more of human means. In order that I may take an effectual and consistent interest in any thing, that it may be an object of hope or fear, of desire or dread, it must be a thing still to come, a thing still in doubt, depending on circumstances and the means used to bring about or avert it. It is my will that determines its existence or the contrary (otherwise there would be no use in troubling oneself about it); it does not itself lay its peremptory, inexorable mandates on my will. For it is as yet (and must be in order to be the rational object of a moment's deliberation) a non-entity, a possibility merely and it is plain that nothing can be the cause of nothing. That which is not, cannot act, much less can it act mechanically, physically, all-powerfully. So far is it from being true that a real and practical interest in any thing are convertible terms, that a practical interest can never by any possible chance be a real one, that is, excited by the presence of a real object or by mechanical sympathy. I cannot assuredly be induced by a present object to take means to make it exist—it can be no more than present to me—or if it is past, it is too late to think of recovering the occasion or preventing it now. But the future, the future is all our own; or rather it belongs equally to others. The world of action then, of business or pleasure, of self-love or benevolence, is not made up of solid materials, moved by downright, solid springs; it is essentially a void, an unreal mockery, both in regard to ourselves and others, except as it is filled up, animated, and set in motion by human thoughts and purposes. The ingredients of passion, action, and properly of interest are never positive, palpable matters-of-fact, concrete existences, but symbolical representations of events lodged in the bosom of futurity, and teaching us, by timely anticipation and watchful zeal, to build up the fabric of our own or others' future weal.

A. Do we not sometimes plot their woe with at least equal goodwill?

B. Not much oftener than we are accessory to our own.

A. I must say that savours more to me of an antithesis than of an answer.

B. For once, be it so.

A. But surely there is a difference between a real and an imaginary interest? A history is not a romance.

B. Yes; but in this sense the feelings and interests of others are

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

in the end as real, as much matters of fact as mine or yours can be. The history of the world is not a romance, though you and I have had only a small share in it. You would turn every thing into autobiography. The interests of others are no more chimerical, visionary, fantastic than my own, being founded in truth, and both are brought home to my bosom in the same way by the force of imagination and sympathy.

D. But in addition to all this sympathy that you make such a rout about, it is *I* who am to feel a real, downright interest in my own future good, and I shall feel no such interest in another person's. Does not this make a wide, nay a total difference in the case? Am I to have no more affection for my own flesh and blood than for another's?

B. This would indeed make an entire difference in the case, if your interest in your own good were founded in your affection for yourself, and not your affection for yourself in your attachment to your own good. If you were attached to your own good merely because it was *yours*, I do not see why you should not be equally attached to your own ill—both are equally yours! Your own person or that of others would, I take it, be alike indifferent to you, but for the degree of sympathy you have with the feelings of either. Take away the sense or apprehension of pleasure and pain, and you would care no more about yourself than you do about the hair of your head or the paring of your nails, the parting with which gives you no sensible uneasiness at the time or on after-reflection.

D. But up to the present moment you allow that I have a particular interest in my proper self. Where then am I to stop, or how draw the line between my real and my imaginary identity?

B. The line is drawn for you by the nature of things. Or if the difference between reality and imagination is so small that you cannot perceive it, it only shows the strength of the latter. Certain it is that we can no more anticipate our future being than we change places with another individual, except in an *ideal* and figurative sense. But it is just as impossible that I should have an actual sensation of and interest in my future feelings as that I should have an actual sensation of and interest in what another feels at the present instant. An essential and irreconcilable difference in our primary faculties forbids it. The future, were it the next moment, were it an object nearest and dearest to our hearts, is a dull blank, opaque, impervious to sense as an object close to the eye of the blind, did not the ray of reason and reflection enlighten it. We can never say to its fleeting, painted essence, 'Come, let me clutch thee!' it is a thing of air, a phantom that flies before us, and we follow it, and with respect to all but our past and present sensations, which are no longer any thing to

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

action, we totter on the brink of nothing. That self which we project before us into it, that we make our proxy or representative, and empower to embody, and transmit back to us all our real, substantial interests before they have had an existence, except in our imaginations, is but a shadow of ourselves, a bundle of habits, passions, and prejudices, a body that falls in pieces at the touch of reason or the approach of inquiry. It is true, we do build up such an imaginary self, and a proportionable interest in it; we clothe it with the associations of the past and present, we disguise it in the drapery of language, we add to it the strength of passion and the warmth of affection, till we at length come to class our whole existence under one head, and fancy our future history a solid, permanent, and actual continuation of our immediate being, but all this only proves the force of imagination and habit to build up such a structure on a merely partial foundation, and does not alter the true nature and distinction of things. On the same foundation are built up nearly as high natural affection, friendship, the love of country, of religion, &c. But of this presently. What shows that the doctrine of self-interest, however high it may rear its head, or however impregnable it may seem to attack, is a mere 'contradiction,'

'In terms a fallacy, in fact a fiction,'

is this single consideration, that we never know what is to happen to us before-hand, no, not even for a moment, and that we cannot so much as tell whether we shall be alive a year, a month, or a day hence. We have no presentiment of what awaits us, making us feel the future in the instant. Indeed such an insight into futurity would be inconsistent with itself, or we must become mere passive instruments in the hands of fate. A house may fall on my head as I go from this, I may be crushed to pieces by a carriage running over me, or I may receive a piece of news that is death to my hopes before another four-and-twenty hours are passed over, and yet I feel nothing of the blow that is thus to stagger and stun me. I laugh and am well. I have no warning given me either of the course or the consequence (in truth if I had, I should, if possible, avoid it). This continued self-interest that watches over all my concerns alike, past, present, and future, and concentrates them all in one powerful and invariable principle of action, is useless here, leaves me at a loss at my greatest need, is torpid, silent, dead, and I have no more consciousness of what so nearly affects me, and no more care about it, (till I find out my danger by other and natural means,) than if no such thing were ever to happen, or were to happen to the Man in the Moon.

'And coming events cast their shadows before.'

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

This beautiful line is not verified in the ordinary prose of life. That it is not, is a staggering consideration for your fine, practical, instinctive, abstracted, comprehensive, uniform principle of self-interest. Don't you think so, D——?

D. I shall not answer you. Am I to give up my existence for an idle sophism? You heap riddle upon riddle; but I am mystery-proof. I still feel my personal identity as I do the chair I sit on, though I am enveloped in a cloud of smoke and words. Let me have your answer to a plain question.—Suppose I were actually to see a coach coming along and I was in danger of being run over, what I want to know is, should I not try to save myself sooner than any other person?

B. No, you would first try to save a sister, if she were with you.

A. Surely that would be a very rare instance of self, though I do not deny it.

B. I do not think so. I believe there is hardly any one who does not prefer some one to themselves. For example, let us look into *Waverley*.

A. Ay, that is the way that you take your ideas of philosophy, from novels and romances, as if they were sound evidence.

B. If my conclusions are as true to nature as my premises, I shall be satisfied. Here is the passage I was going to quote: 'I was only ganging to say, my lord,' said Evan, in what he meant to be an insinuating manner, 'that if your excellent honour and the honourable court would let Vich Ian Vohr go free just this once and let him gae back to France and not trouble King George's government again, that any six o' the very best of his clan will be willing to be justified in his stead; and if you'll just let me gae down to Glennaquoich, I'll fetch them up to ye myself to head or hang, and you may begin with me the very first man.'¹

A. But such instances as this are the effect of habit and strong prejudice. We can hardly argue from so barbarous a state of society.

B. Excuse me there. I contend that our preference of ourselves is just as much the effect of habit, and very frequently a more unaccountable and unreasonable one than any other.

A. I should like to hear how you can possibly make that out.

B. If you will not condemn me before you hear what I have to say, I will try. You allow that D——, in the case we have been talking of, would perhaps run a little risk for you or me; but if it were a perfect stranger, he would get out of the way as fast as his legs would carry him, and leave the stranger to shift for himself.

A. Yes; and does not that overturn your whole theory?

¹ *Waverley*, vol. iii. p. 201.

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

B. It would if my theory were as devoid of common sense as you are pleased to suppose; that is, if because I deny an original and absolute distinction in nature (where there is no such thing,) it followed that I must deny that circumstances, intimacy, habit, knowledge, or a variety of incidental causes could have any influence on our affections and actions. My inference is just the contrary. For would you not say that *D*— cared little about the stranger for this plain reason, that he knew nothing about him?

A. No doubt.

B. And he would care rather more about you and me, because he knows more about us?

A. Why yes, it would seem so.

B. And he would care still more about a sister, (according to the same supposition) because he would be still better acquainted with her, and had been more constantly with her?

A. I will not deny it.

B. And it is on the same principle (generally speaking) that a man cares most of all about himself, because he knows more about himself than about any body else, that he is more in the secret of his own most intimate thoughts and feelings, and more in the habit of providing for his own wants and wishes, which he can anticipate with greater liveliness and certainty than those of others, from being more nearly 'made and moulded of things past.' The poetical fiction is rendered easier and assisted by my acquaintance with myself, just as it is by the ties of kindred or habits of friendly intercourse. There is no farther approach made to the doctrines of self-love and personal identity.

D. E., here is *B.* trying to persuade me I am not myself.

E. Sometimes you are not.

D. But he says that I never am.—Or is it only that I am not to be so?

B. Nay, I hope 'thou art to continue, thou naughty varlet'—

'Here and hereafter, if the last may be!'

You have been yourself (nobody like you) for the last forty years of your life: you would not prematurely stuff the next twenty into the account, till you have had them fairly out?

D. Not for the world, I have too great an affection for them.

B. Yet I think you would have less if you did not look forward to pass them among old books, old friends, old haunts. If you were cut off from all these, you would be less anxious about what was left of yourself.

D. I would rather be the *Wandering Jew* than not be at all.

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

B. Or you would not be the person I always took you for.

D. Does not this willingness to be the Wandering Jew rather than nobody, seem to indicate that there is an abstract attachment to self, to the bare idea of existence, independently of circumstances or habit?

B. It must be a very loose and straggling one. You mix up some of your old recollections and favourite notions with your self elect, and indulge them in your new character, or you would trouble yourself very little about it. If you do not come in in some shape or other, it is merely saying that you would be sorry if the Wandering Jew were to disappear from the earth, however strictly he may have hitherto maintained his *incognito*.

D. There is something in that; and as well as I remember there is a curious but exceedingly mystical illustration of this point in an original Essay of yours which I have read and spoken to you about.

B. I believe there is; but *A*— is tired of making objections, and I of answering them to no purpose.

D. I have the book in the closet, and if you like, we will turn to the place. It is after that burst of enthusiastic recollection (the only one in the book) that Southey said at the time was something between the manner of Milton's prose-works and Jeremy Taylor.

B. Ah! I as little thought then that I should ever be set down as a florid prose-writer as that he would become poet-laureat!

J. D. here took the volume from his brother, and read the following passage from it.

‘I do not think I should illustrate the foregoing reasoning so well by any thing I could add on the subject, as by relating the manner in which it first struck me. There are moments in the life of a solitary thinker which are to him what the evening of some great victory is to the conqueror and hero—milder triumphs long remembered with truer and deeper delight. And though the shouts of multitudes do not hail his success—though gay trophies, though the sounds of music, the glittering of armour, and the neighing of steeds do not mingle with his joy, yet shall he not want monuments and witnesses of his glory—the deep forest, the willowy brook, the gathering clouds of winter, or the silent gloom of his own chamber, “faithful remembrancers of his high endeavour, and his glad success,” that, as time passes by him with unreturning wing, still awaken the consciousness of a spirit patient, indefatigable in the search of truth, and the hope of surviving in the thoughts and minds of other men. I remember I had been reading a speech which Mirabaud (the author of the “System of Nature”) has put into the mouth of a supposed Atheist at the last judgment; and was afterwards led on, by some means or other to consider the question, whether it could properly be

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

said to be an act of virtue in any one to sacrifice his own final happiness to that of any other person or number of persons, if it were possible for the one ever to be made the price of the other? Suppose it were my own case—that it were in my power to save twenty other persons by voluntarily consenting to suffer for them: Why should I not do a generous thing, and never trouble myself about what might be the consequence to myself the Lord knows when?

‘The reason why a man should prefer his own future welfare to that of others is, that he has a necessary, absolute interest in the one, which he cannot have in the other—and this, again, is a consequence of his being always the same individual, of his continued identity with himself. The difference, I thought, was this, that however insensible I may be to my own interest at any future period, yet when the time comes I shall feel differently about it. I shall then judge of it from the actual impression of the object, that is, truly and certainly; and as I shall still be conscious of my past feelings, and shall bitterly regret my own folly and insensibility, I ought, as a rational agent, to be determined now by what I shall then wish I had done, when I shall feel the consequences of my actions most deeply and sensibly. It is this continued consciousness of my own feelings which gives me an immediate interest in whatever relates to my future welfare, and makes me at all times accountable to myself for my own conduct. As, therefore, this consciousness will be renewed in me after death, if I exist again at all—But stop—as I must be conscious of my past feelings to be myself, and as this conscious being will be myself, how if that consciousness should be transferred to some other being? How am I to know that I am not imposed upon by a false claim of identity? But that is ridiculous, because you will have no other self than that which arises from this very consciousness. Why, then, this self may be multiplied in as many different beings as the Deity may think proper to endue with the same consciousness; which, if it can be renewed at will in any one instance, may clearly be so in a hundred others. Am I to regard all these as equally myself? Am I equally interested in the fate of all? Or if I must fix upon some one of them in particular as my representative and other self, how am I to be determined in my choice? Here, then, I saw an end put to my speculations about absolute self-interest and personal identity. I saw plainly that the consciousness of my own feelings, which is made the foundation of my continued interest in them, could not extend to what had never been, and might never be; that my identity with myself must be confined to the connection between my past and present being; that with respect to my future feelings or interests,

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

they could have no communication with, or influence over, my present feelings and interests, merely because they were future; that I shall be hereafter affected by the recollection of my past feelings and actions; and my remorse be equally heightened by reflecting on my past folly and late-earned wisdom, whether I am really the same being, or have only the same consciousness renewed in me; but that to suppose that this remorse can re-act in the reverse order on my present feelings, or give me an immediate interest in my future feelings, before they exist, is an express contradiction in terms. It can only affect me as an imaginary idea, or an idea of truth. But so may the interests of others; and the question proposed was, whether I have not some real, necessary, absolute interest in whatever relates to my future being, in consequence of my immediate connection with myself—independently of the general impression which all positive ideas have on my mind. How, then, can this pretended unity of consciousness which is only reflected from the past—which makes me so little acquainted with the future that I cannot even tell for a moment how long it will be continued, whether it will be entirely interrupted by or renewed in me after death, and which might be multiplied in I don't know how many different beings, and prolonged by complicated sufferings, without my being any the wiser for it,—how, I say, can a principle of this sort identify my present with my future interests, and make me as much a participator in what does not at all affect me as if it were actually impressed on my senses? It is plain, as this conscious being may be decomposed, entirely destroyed, renewed again, or multiplied in a great number of beings, and as, whichever of these takes place, it cannot produce the least alteration in my present being—that what I am does not depend on what I am to be, and that there is no communication between my future interests, and the motives by which my present conduct must be governed. This can no more be influenced by what may be my future feelings with respect to it, than it will then be possible for me to alter my past conduct by wishing that I had acted differently. I cannot, therefore, have a principle of active self-interest arising out of the immediate connection between my present and future self, for no such connection exists, or is possible. I am what I am in spite of the future. My feelings, actions, and interests, must be determined by causes already existing and acting, and are absolutely independent of the future. Where there is not an intercommunity of feelings, there can be no identity of interests. My personal interest in any thing must refer either to the interest excited by the actual impression of the object, which cannot be felt before it exists, and can last no longer than while the impression lasts; or it may refer to the parti-

THE FREE ADMISSION

cular manner in which I am mechanically affected by the idea of my own impressions in the absence of the object. I can, therefore, have no proper personal interest in my future impressions, since neither my ideas of future objects, nor my feelings with respect to them, can be excited either directly or indirectly by the impressions themselves, or by any ideas or feelings accompanying them, without a complete transposition of the order in which causes and effects follow one another in nature. The only reason for my preferring my future interest to that of others, must arise from my anticipating it with greater warmth of present imagination. It is this greater liveliness and force with which I can enter into my future feelings, that in a manner identifies them with my present being; and this notion of identity being once formed, the mind makes use of it to strengthen its habitual propensity, by giving to personal motives a reality and absolute truth which they can never have. Hence it has been inferred that my real, substantial interest in any thing, must be derived in some indirect manner from the impression of the object itself, as if that could have any sort of communication with my present feelings, or excite any interest in my mind but by means of the imagination, which is naturally affected in a certain manner by the prospect of future good or evil.'

J. D. 'This is the strangest tale that e'er I heard,

C. D. 'It is the strangest fellow, brother John!'

THE FREE ADMISSION

The New Monthly Magazine.]

[*July, 1830.*

A FREE Admission is the *lotos* of the mind: the leaf in which your name is inscribed as having the privileges of the *entrée* for the season is of an oblivious quality—an antidote for half the ills of life. I speak here not of a purchased but of a gift-ticket, an emanation of the generosity of the Managers, a token of conscious desert. With the first you can hardly bring yourself to go to the theatre; with the last, you cannot keep away. If you have paid five guineas for a free-admission for the season, this *free-admission* turns to a mere slavery. You seem to have done a foolish thing, and to have committed an extravagance under the plea of economy. You are struck with remorse. You are impressed with a conviction that pleasure is not to be bought. You have paid for your privilege in the lump, and you receive the benefit in driblets. The five pounds you are out of pocket does not meet with an adequate compensation the first night, or on any single occasion—you must come again, and use double diligence