

FOUR PHASES OF MORALS :—Socrates, Aristotle, Christianity, Utilitarianism. By John Stuart Blackie, F.R.S.E., Professor of Greek in the University of Edinburgh. Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas.

There is in all that Professor Blackie speaks and writes a grotesqueness which prevents our sitting at his feet, but does not prevent our being amused and even occasionally instructed. The present work is a lively raid on the region of moral philosophy from the transcendentalist and tory quarter, and we should read it with pleasure, if it were only as a relief from the rather oppressive domination of physicists and utilitarians. The presentation of Socrates, if it contains nothing very new, is clear and vivid. The causes assigned for the great teacher's death are, however, in part at least, rather evolved from the Professor's inner consciousness and political sympathies, than deduced from the established facts of history. The indictment was for religious innovation and the corruption of youth. This is a conservative indictment, and the precise legal embodiment of the charges levelled against Socrates in the satiric drama of the conservative Aristophanes. It was addressed obviously to vulgar orthodoxy, and from vulgar orthodoxy no doubt the sentence of condemnation was obtained. But the real motives of the prosecutors still remain, to us at least, a mystery, the key to which we suspect is lost with many other details of the political troubles of those times. We are rather surprised that Aristotle should be selected as one of the originators of the leading phases of morals. He is a wonderful analyst and nothing else. His Ethics contain no special motive power, nor, we should say, has any special type of character ever been formed by his influence. He dominated in the middle ages, he has even dominated to no small extent in modern Oxford; but, while both in medieval and in Oxford philosophy we find plenty of Aristotelian method and phraseology, it would be difficult to point to an Aristotelian character. In fact, whatever nominal deference Aristotle as a man of the world might pay to theistic belief, he was philosophically an atheist; and his type of perfect virtue involves a self-sufficiency and a self-appreciation clearly inconsistent with the sense of dependence upon God. The admission of Aristotle is rendered more singular by the exclusion of the founders of Stoicism, a phase of morals which was embodied in characters of the boldest and and strongest kind, which played an immense part in history, and which is far from having ceased to be influential even at the present day. As the fundamental distinction of Christian morality Professor Blackie rightly assigns its theological character, the motive power, or as the Professor terms it,

"the steam-power," being entirely religious; whence also humility is a virtue as prominent in Christian ethics as self-respect is in those of Aristotle. The propagation of Christian ethics was the effusion of the Holy Spirit. The "aggressive attitude" of Christianity, as Professor Blackie after Chalmers terms it, springs from the same root. What Professor Blackie's personal views of Christianity as a revelation are, his book does not clearly indicate, and perhaps it would be impertinent to inquire. Priesthood, dogmatism, asceticism, and ritualism, are severely tossed whenever they come within reach of his horns; but he is an advocate for a national church, though we suspect the church he desires is one which would be wanting in "steam power" to extract tithes from the ordinary tax-payer, who fancies that in maintaining a church establishment he is providing for the propagation of some definite belief. The Professor's torism shows itself in his extreme anxiety to relieve Christianity of the disgraceful imputation of forbidding war; what Christianity really prescribes, he thinks, is only fair fighting and military courtesy. We are not confident that St. John would have accepted the vindication.

When Professor Blackie gets among the Utilitarians he carries out the advice given by the Irishman to his son who was going to Donnybrook fair :— "Whenever you see a head, hit it." Locke gets hard epithets for his notion of innate ideas. He has given particular offence by saying that "children do not join general abstract speculations with their sucking-bottles and rattles." The consistency of his successors is dismissed as "a virtue which even thieves and murderers may achieve." Mill is accused of "extreme nonsensicality," and of "flinging open defiance in the face of reason, and making a public ovation of unmitigated nonsense." Hartley, Hume and Bain come off little better, though Hume gets the benefit of his nationality. Paley, a clerical dignitary, and, unlike most Utilitarians, a Conservative, passes comparatively unscathed. Utilitarianism, as a theory of morals, has in truth burst in attempting to stretch itself so as to embrace self-sacrifice. But partly from the same quarter, partly from that of the Darwinians, has arisen a question as to the genesis of conscience, which Professor Blackie imperfectly apprehends, and has not attempted to investigate.

Curious little crotchets crop up here and there. The Professor of Greek seems not very deeply to reprobate the classic practice of infanticide. We are frequently reminded that the author enjoys the inestimable advantage of being a Scotchman. The world is agreed, we believe, in regarding a somewhat obtrusive patriotism as a grace in the members