

benignly on the incendiary. Surely we show our disposition towards the opposing forces of nature sufficiently by setting ourselves to overcome them; and if our neighbours were blind forces, we should do our best to overcome them in the same way. But they are not blind forces; they are intelligent agents, who know the effect of their actions, and have some comprehension of the relations they sustain to other human beings. They know, amongst other things, that they have, or desire to have, certain reserved rights of their own, and they may consequently be expected to respect similar rights in others. However, if, and in so far as, they interfere with us, we either resist their interference, or else acquiesce in it for reasons satisfactory to ourselves. We certainly *never* acquiesce in it on the ground that we cannot always have our own way with the natural forces of the universe, or cannot surmount the limits of our own constitution.

Mr. Mill has fully granted that the conduct a man pursues in matters which only directly concern himself may subject him to the unfavourable judgment of others, and that from such unfavourable judgment certain disadvantages are inseparable. Thus, if a man is extravagant, intemperate, foolishly vain, &c., we must estimate his conduct according to our own standards; and our bearing towards him will naturally express the judgment we have formed. Mr. Stephen says there is no difference between this and visiting such faults with specific penalties. It seems to us, however, that when a man has expressed his own disapproval of conduct that is not personally injurious to himself, he will feel that he has gone as far as he has a right to go. He is not his brother's keeper in the sense of being *responsible* for his faults; and, if he is not responsible, on what ground should he presume to interfere with another's liberty? In such a case no reason is required for non-interference, beyond the general reason, "*The man was doing me no harm;*" but for interference a special reason would certainly be required. And what would that special reason be?

Mr. Stephen next shows us that religions have in past times been established, in great measure, by force. Suppose they have; the question which Mr. Mill undertook to discuss was, what is right *now*. The peculiarity of the present age is that it is, as Mr. Bagehot has described it, "the age of discussion."

Many things are possible now that were not possible a century ago. Mankind are more given to reflection, and less swayed by instinctive feelings. There are a dozen ways out of a difficulty now to one that existed a couple of centuries ago. The fact that wars cannot even now be wholly avoided does not conflict with Mr. Mill's general principle in regard to the rights of individuals? If there were no true path there could be no false ones; and it is no answer to a man who undertakes to point out a true path to instance all the cases in which a false one has been taken. Of course brute force has had tremendous sway in the history of the race, and it will have some sway for years to come; but that in itself was an excellent reason for the writing of the "Essay on Liberty," with its wise counsels for the avoidance of irrational and hurtful struggles. "If Mr. Mill's view of liberty had always been adopted and acted upon to its full extent," says Mr. Stephen, "every one can see that there would have been no such thing as organized Christianity or Mahomedanism in the world." Does everybody see this? Supposing the Roman empire had never persecuted the Christians, why should not Christianity have "organized" itself? Are we to hold that Nero and Diocletian were the true fathers of the Church? or does Mr. Stephen mean that Christianity could never have made its way without having had recourse to persecution? Surely not. Christianity had made its way before it had the power to persecute,—while as yet its means of influence were wholly of a moral and intellectual kind. As to Mahomedanism, which Mr. Stephen, with broad liberality, brackets with Christianity, some persons will be inclined to think that, if Mr. Mill's principles would have impeded its development, there must be some truth in them. (*Non noster hic sermo est.*)

Mr. Stephen has a wonderful talent for coming up fiercely to the assault, and then, just when we expect a decisive blow, turning aside with some evasive phrase. For example: "Estimate," he says, "the proportion of men and women who are selfish, sensual, frivolous, idle, absolutely commonplace, and wrapped up in the smallest of petty routines; and consider how far the freest of free discussion is likely to improve them. The only way in which it is practically possible to act upon them at all is by compulsion or restraint. *Whether it is worth while to apply to them*