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DISSERTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

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AND

DISCUSSIONS

POLITICAL, PHILOSOPHICAL, AND HISTORICAL

REPRINTED

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BY

JOHN STUART MILL.

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PREFACE.

THE republication in a more durable form, of papers originally contributed to periodicals, has grown into so common a practice as scarcely to need an apology; and I follow this practice the more willingly, as I hold it to be decidedly a beneficial one. It would be well if all frequent writers in periodicals looked forward, as far as the case admitted, to this reappearance of their productions. The prospect might be some guarantee against the crudity in the formation of opinions, and carelessness in their expression, which are the besetting sins of writings put forth under the screen of anonymousness, to be read only during the next few weeks or months, if so long, and the defects of which it is seldom probable that any one will think it worth while to expose.

The following papers, selected from a much greater number, include all of the writer's miscellaneous productions which he considers it in any way desirable to preserve. The remainder were either of too little value at any time, or what value they might have was too exclusively temporary, or the thoughts they contained were inextricably mixed up with

comments, now totally uninteresting, on passing events, or on some book not generally known; or lastly, any utility they may have possessed has since been superseded by other and more mature writings of the author.

Every one whose mind is progressive, or even whose opinions keep up with the changing facts that surround him, must necessarily, in looking back to his own writings during a series of years, find many things which, if they were to be written again, he would write differently, and some, even, which he has altogether ceased to think true. From these last I have endeavoured to clear the present pages. Beyond this, I have not attempted to render papers written at so many different, and some of them at such distant, times, a faithful representation of my present state of opinion and feeling. I leave them in all their imperfection, as memorials of the states of mind in which they were written, in the hope that they may possibly be useful to such readers as are in a corresponding stage of their own mental progress. Where what I had written appears a fair statement of part of the truth, but defective inasmuch as there exists another part respecting which nothing, or too little, is said, I leave the deficiency to be supplied by the reader's own thoughts; the rather, as he will, in many cases, find the balance restored in some other part of this collection. Thus, the review of Mr.

Sedgwick's Discourse, taken by itself, might give an impression of more complete adhesion to the philosophy of Locke, Bentham, and the eighteenth century, than is really the case, and of an inadequate sense of its deficiencies; but that notion will be rectified by the subsequent essays on Bentham and on Coleridge. These, again, if they stood alone, would give just as much too strong an impression of the writer's sympathy with the reaction of the nineteenth century against the eighteenth: but this exaggeration will be corrected by the more recent defence of the 'greatest happiness' ethics against Dr. Whewell.

Only a small number of these papers are controversial, and in but two am I aware of anything like asperity of tone. In both these cases some degree of it was justifiable, as I was defending maligned doctrines or individuals, against unmerited onslaughts by persons who, on the evidence afforded by themselves, were in no respect entitled to sit in judgment on them: and the same misrepresentations have been and still are so incessantly reiterated by a crowd of writers, that emphatic protests against them are as needful now as when the papers in question were first written. My adversaries, too, were men not themselves remarkable for mild treatment of opponents, and quite capable of holding their own in any form of reviewing or pamphleteering polemics. I believe

that I have in no case fought with other than fair weapons, and any strong expressions which I have used were extorted from me by my subject, not prompted by the smallest feeling of personal ill-will towards my antagonists. In the revision, I have endeavoured to retain only as much of this strength of expression, as could not be foregone without weakening the force of the protest.

CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

	PAGE
THE RIGHT AND WRONG OF STATE INTERFERENCE WITH COR- PORATION AND CHURCH PROPERTY	1
THE CURRENCY JUGGLE	42
A FEW OBSERVATIONS ON THE FRENCH REVOLUTION	56
THOUGHTS ON POETRY AND ITS VARIETIES	63
PROFESSOR SEDGWICK'S DISCOURSE ON THE STUDIES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE	95
CIVILIZATION	160
APHORISMS: A FRAGMENT	206
ARMAND CARREL	211
A PROPHECY	284
WRITINGS OF ALFRED DE VIGNY	287
BENTHAM	330
COLERIDGE	393
APPENDIX	467