

treatise certainly stimulated the followers of Evolution to elaborate more fully the ethical bearings of their creed, whilst opponents prepared a fuller criticism of what they termed the Ethics of Naturalism, meaning by this denomination the peculiar development and amplification which utilitarian Ethics had received by assimilating the aspect of Evolution. The first or constructive task was performed on a large scale by the philosopher of Evolution himself, Herbert Spencer; the second or critical task has been taken in hand by several thinkers who came under the direct personal influence of Sidgwick as well as of his writings. Their work is by no means completed; I confine myself to mentioning Professor Sorley's 'Ethics of Naturalism' (1885, second edition 1904)¹

¹ To this must be added three Lectures delivered by Professor Sorley at Cambridge in 1904, entitled 'Recent Tendencies in Ethics,' dealing mainly with the ethical views of Nietzsche in Germany, of Darwin and Spencer and of Green and Bradley in this country. A significant remark is made in the introductory pages of the first Lecture. Contrasting the ethical question of to-day with the same ethical question as conceived by earlier thinkers in the course of the nineteenth century especially in this country, Prof. Sorley lays it down as a fact "that the ethical question is no longer so purely an academic question as it was some years ago" (p. 13). As I have had occasion to state repeatedly in this and former chapters, the idealistic philosophers in Germany had no intention to combat or change the existing ethical and religious doctrines traditionally handed down, but rather to understand, to rationalise, or to spiritualise them. So also Prof. Sorley refers to "the

large amount of agreement between the two [earlier prevailing] schools regarding the content of morality. The Utilitarians no more than the Intuitionists were opponents of the traditional—as we may call it—the Christian morality of modern civilisation" (p. 7). The change is shown by a growing alarm, abroad even more than in this country, that practical morality itself is really in danger. This apprehension is certainly most distinctly alive in France, as I shall have opportunity to show later on. It contrasts markedly with what, as late as 1878, Mr Balfour stated—but could hardly repeat to-day: "Ethics is a subject which has suffered a somewhat singular fate; for whereas on its practical side there has been a more perfect agreement about it than about any other important branch of human knowledge, on its speculative side it has been, and still is, the centre of apparently endless controversy—the subject of every species of confusion" ('Mind,' vol. iii., 1878,