JOHN STUART MILL

the Man

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DRURY LANE LONDON

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1957

by C. A. Watts & Co., Ltd.
40 Drury Lane, London W.C.2

TO NANNA

who hoped

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to record my particular thanks to Professor F. A. Hayek, who first aroused my interest in John Stuart Mill. Since I assisted him during the war years in tracing original material about Mill, the world of my imagination has been peopled by Mill and his circle of friends.

I desire to thank the Librarian of the British Library of Political and Economic Science for permission to quote from unpublished material in their possession.

My sincere gratitude is due to Mrs. M. Binns for preparing the index and for her painstaking editing and correction of proofs.

Last, I should like to express my appreciation of those friends who contributed to the completion of the book by affording me relief in my care of family, house, and garden: Miss M. Zils, Mrs. E. Gardiner, and Mr. D. A. Smith.

CHAPTER I

Background and Early Training

1806–1813

AT ten o'clock on a May morning in 1823 John Stuart Mill, just turned eighteen, walked down Leadenhall Street in the City of London together with his father. It was with great bitterness that he entered the venerable building: India House, seat of the East India Company, which held the monopoly for the trade with, and ruled over, India. The elder Mill was a high executive of the Company.

John was familiar enough with 'I.H.' from the outside: a long, two-storey block of classical design and proportions, with regular high sash-windows, the pillared portico of the centre surmounted by the figure of a plump Neptune. But now they passed by the uniformed porter in his cocked hat, walked along a long dark passage and up two shallow flights of well-worn stairs. Through the messengers' small ante-room, where tea was being prepared at all times, they entered the long clerks' room. As they walked along the matted passage, his father took him into one booth after another adjoining the high windows and introduced him to his future colleagues. The cubicle nearest the door belonged to the youngest clerk: this was to be John's.

The young men looked him over with guarded interest. Not only was it intended that John was to be trained up as an early successor to one of the heads of the Company; but the unusual

education he had received at the hands of his stern father from the age of three had been much talked about. Everybody had been curious to see the 'manufactured man', the 'reasoning machine set in motion' by James Mill and his friend Jeremy Bentham, the Great Reformer. John passed their scrutiny outwardly unmoved. His manners were assured enough to allow him to appear at ease in most circumstances. But for the first time his face was assuming the proudly reserved and resigned expression that later experiences were to fix permanently on his features. Past the huge fireplace at the far end of the clerks' room father and son entered through a spring door into the passage adjoining the private offices, each of which was fitted with a green baize door. These rooms were spacious, about thirty feet long and twenty feet wide. In them John was to pass the greater part of his working life. After making the round of his father's senior colleagues, among them Edwin Strachey and Thomas Love Peacock, they went into James's large office. It was here that James explained why he had procured for his son the appointment as junior clerk of the Examiner's office.

To his friends, Grote, the banker and historian, and Ricardo, the economist and stockbroker, who remonstrated with him, James Mill had pointed to his own ill-health. This was only too obvious: like his mother before him James was seriously consumptive and realized that he had not many years to live. No one knew then that tuberculosis was an infectious disease, and, unwittingly, James passed it on to most of his nine children. He could justly claim that it was necessary for John to earn a substantial, as well as a secure, income as soon as possible, to safe-guard his younger sisters and brothers. For three years John, like all clerks, was to receive a gratuity of only £30 a year. After that he was due for £100 per year, with a £10 rise after each additional year. However, the first senior vacancy was to fall to him.

As John made ready to leave his father's room with a sheaf of his new work in his hand, we can well imagine James with his customary sarcasm pulling him up over his gloomy face.

'I expect you think all this much beneath you? You saw yourself heading straight for becoming England's first Radical Prime

Minister?' He changed his tone. 'John, do you believe me when I say I have good reasons for making India House your career?'

'You always have, my father.' He waited with head bowed.

James got up. He spoke with urgency, 'I have, my son. I have ambition for you—perhaps more even than you yourself. You shall leave your mark, not only on England—on the world. But not as a man of action. As a thinker. Here, at India House, you will hold within five years greater administrative power than any minister of the Crown. You will have security, income, position, but above all—you will have time to think. Think, John. There is a great turn of the tide under way in England. Grasp it. And direct it. I promise you: in that way you shall have more influence than any other man of your generation. Think, John!'

John straightened himself up. 'Yes, my father, I shall.' He left his father with a new serious determination glowing in his heart. John Stuart Mill, at eighteen, was his father's finished product. For good and for ill, in his mental and in his emotional make-up, he bore his father's imprint to his last breath. And this had been his father's deliberate intention to accomplish.

In 1806, when John Stuart Mill was born, it had not occurred to parents that children ought to be happy. They were brought up to be early workers, or to do honour to the family by a career, or a marriage. James Mill wanted his son to carry on his own life's work of public reform in England.

James Mill was a singular man. He was the son of a Scottish country shoemaker, who kept one or two journeymen and a cow. But his mother, Isabel Fenton, remembered her own family's better days. Her father, a farmer, had joined the rising for Prince Charles in 1745; in Lord Ogilvie's regiment he served under Captain James Stuart, an uncle of the squire of Fettercairn, whose life he once shielded with his own. Such personal loyalties count for much in Scotland. Proud Isabel Fenton would be sure to keep alive in her son James's imagination such Waverley stories of his grandfather's regiment. She set her heart on bringing up her firstborn a gentleman. While his sister and brother had to do their full share in the work of field, house, and shop, James was forbidden

all manual work. In the west room of their thatched cottage his mother hung up a canvas secluding James's bed, the fire, and the window from the draught and from the gaze of the others; this was his study, here he even took his meals by himself. Here, and on his solitary walks, the brilliant boy nursed his dreams of 'establishing for himself a name in the world for wisdom and knowledge'. He was soon noticed by the minister and by the squire, Sir John Stuart of Fettercairn. Gentle Lady Jane was in charge of a fund for training poor young men for the Church. With her help James proceeded from Montrose Academy to read Divinity at Edinburgh. But already in his second term he began the thorough reading of Plato that he kept up throughout his studies. The discovery of the writings of the Ancients as a living moral force was all James's own, for the universities of his time held the Greek philosophers in contempt. It was this discovery that largely shaped his own standards of life and, later, the education of his son.

When he was seventeen Sir John and Lady Jane engaged him as tutor to their only daughter, Wilhelmina, aged fourteen. For four years James taught her, at Edinburgh during term time, and in the summer at Fettercairn. The intelligent, poetical girl became James' first and only true love. It is not known what her feelings were for the handsome, blue-eyed young tutor. Later, she inspired a romantic passion in Sir Walter Scott. James Mill had strong, even vehement, feelings, which he early learnt to bridle by an iron will. But all his life he softened at the thought of the small cottage by the North Water Bridge from which he used to make his way across the brightly tinkling burn through the green meadows sweet with thyme and broom, to the old Scottish Manse of Logie. There, warmly welcomed by the frank, boisterous Sir John and gentle and pious Lady Jane, he tought his young lady-love and browsed in the library to his heart's content.

He was duly ordained but had to live as a tutor for several more years. Isabel Fenton certainly passed on to her son her own pride and independence. Serving as tutor to Mr. Burnet of Elrick he was once dismissed from the table by a motion of the thumb—and walked straight out of the house never to return. For the son of a

village shoemaker thus to defy a 'person of quality' was unheard of.

In 1802, at the age of twenty-nine, he posted to London in the company of Sir John. Romance was done with—Wilhelmina had married the son of wealthy Sir William Forbes, the banker. James gave up the ministry for conscientious reasons, and because livings were hard to come by—but mainly for the sake of higher ambitions. Full of spirits he set out to make a living by his pen and, deliberately, to leave his mark on his time.

His self-confidence was justified; his contemporaries are unanimous in their admiration for his manly charm, his good looks, his fiery intelligence, his industry and vitality, and his remarkable powers of conversation. These explain the influence that James Mill, single-handed, came to exert on the progressive side of English political life. This he accomplished without ever holding office or belonging to a political party, by the sheer force of his personality. No man seems to have met James Mill without having, to some extent, been directed by him. Bentham, Ricardo, Brougham, Romilly, Joseph Hume, Francis Place, George Grote, William Allen, Strutt, John Black, Fonblanque, and his own son John—all testify to his sway over men's minds. This was due to his outstanding energy of character coupled with a single-minded devotion to the cause of public reform, in the pursuit of which he spared neither himself nor others.

Early during his stay in London he began to frequent the house of Mrs. Burrow, a widow, who in the fashion of the time kept a private establishment for lunatics. The attraction was the three very handsome daughters. James, buoyed up by the adventure of making his way in London, quickly fell in love with Harriet, the much admired eldest daughter. She was about ten years younger than him, exceedingly pretty, small, finely made, with aquiline type of face and a pink-and-dun, warm complexion. They married in 1805 and moved into a small house in Pentonville. The vivacious, attractive girl, fond of gaiety, clothes, company, and admiration, and much concerned with appearances, soon resented the very modest circumstances to which she had

been brought. Kindly, dutiful, and easily led, she had in her the makings of a good wife. But James Mill, used to his mother's strong personality and the responsive intelligence of Wilhelmina, was the last man to suffer fools gladly. No tenderness, no companionship grew up between them. Contemptuously, goaded by his hot blood, and against his reason, James produced nine children in twenty years. Pretty Harriet Burrow soon became reduced to a weak, ever-toiling *Hausfrau*, chatting eagerly when given the chance, still caring greatly for her looks, but living in abject fear of her impatient, sarcastic husband and his fearful fits of temper. What happiness she found must have been found furtively, in her children.

Two of James Mill's fast tenets in life may be ascribed to his early emotional experiences. Bentham once remarked of him that his radical views derived less from love of the many than from hatred of the few. The young tutor who knew himself the undoubted superior in intellect and personality, and who yet could never be accepted as a social equal, brooded over social problems, and ended up by claiming that all men are born equal. And his long-sustained love for Wilhelmina, as well as the flare-up of passion that led to his unhappy marriage, made James suspect strong feeling in general. His son writes of him: 'For passionate emotions of all sorts, and for everything which has been said or written in exaltation of them, he professed the greatest contempt. He regarded them as a form of madness. "The intense" was with him a byword of scornful disapprobation . . .' (14, p. 34).

James Mill was infected with the Scottish reformers' limitless belief in education; a belief that was to transform the working population of Great Britain during Victoria's reign. He was an exception, however, in the stress he laid on an early training of character. Already in his second year in London he published a paper on this subject: man's mind at birth is a *tabula rasa;* through experience, associations are formed; first impressions are strongest and indelible.

This, then, was the man who set himself the task of 'making' his firstborn son. John Stuart was born on the 20th of May 1806 at

Pentonville. At Sir John's request he was named after the squire of Fettercairn.

The pathetic story of John Stuart Mill's extraordinary education is well known. As a result of it, he says in his *Autobiography*, he had a twenty-five years' start over his contemporaries. He also insists that he was in no way outstanding in intelligence, and that any averagely gifted boy or girl could do what he did. This may even be correct—learned educational opinion of today is divided on the subject. But few people now would be prepared to start teaching children Greek at the age of three, to put them through eight hours of concentrated mental work from the age of six, and to accept the emotional instability that James Mill's forced training inevitably produced in his son.

By the age of seven John had read, in the original, *Aesop's Fables*, the *Anabasis*, Herodotus, Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* and *Memorials of Socrates;* some of the lives of the philosophers by Diogenes Laertius; part of Lucian, two speeches of Isocrates. He proceeded to read the first six Dialogues of Plato. These had been done before John began learning Latin, at the age of eight. 'By the age of twelve his classical reading covered more than most of those who take a first in the classical school of a university can boast of' (23, p. 312).

But in the light of James Mill's relation to the classics all this assumes a very different significance. To him, these were the most alive books to be put into the hands of his small son. The thoughts and the conduct of these Ancients were of literally thrilling interest to both James and little John. Plato's works took the place of the Bible as a character-forming agency in this wholly secular education.

James's belief in the moral effect of the classics proved true in the case of his son and destined successor. 'Even at the very early age at which I read with him the *Memorabili* of Xenophon,' John wrote later, 'I imbibed from that work and from his comments a deep respect for the character of Socrates; who stood in my mind as a model of ideal excellence . . . At a somewhat later period the lofty moral standard exhibited in the writings of Plato operated on me with great force' (14, p. 33).

Every age reads its Plato anew. For James Mill, Socrates' 'central doctrine was that goodness is knowledge, that if a man knows what is right he will do it' (11, p. 9). With this belief James infected most of the early Victorian reformers, every one of whom believed implicitly in the power of education and institutions to alter individual character as well as society as a whole. This spirit was a union—far more than has as yet been analysed—between eighteenth century rationalism and a new nineteenth-century conception of classical humanism.

Leisure, play, imagination had no place in James's scheme of education. In his carefully allotted spare time John was encouraged to read true life-stories of energetic or heroic men like Philip of Macedon, Frederick the Great, of Drake and Cook; Condorcet's *Life of Turgot* he found one of the most inspiring. He delighted in heroic deeds in history.

From 1810 to 1813 the family lived at Newington Green. Here Harriet was born in 1812, James Bentham in 1814. John used to accompany his father on his walks before breakfast. From slips of paper he recounted what he had read of Greek and Roman history the day before. Every time a new slip had to be dug out of John's pocket they came to a stop. Every expression used was carefully tested by James, sarcasm lashing out at the boy's limited understanding. Every untidiness of word or thought or habit was remorselessly pointed out. Frequently in tears, but stoically, the boy would recite on. But when—how rarely!—his father nodded approval John would be moved almost to tears of joy.

On one of these walks John related the Apology of Socrates to his father. He warmed to his theme. James Mill was obviously touched by what he heard. He took up the narrative and explained why the death of Socrates was a calamity far greater to the Athenians who lost their truest mentor than for Socrates himself. This was not one of their usual lessons but a solemn experience for both, father and son. James stopped still and, looking into the distance, concluded: 'Socrates died, and died gladly, for the right of each man to follow the argument, regardless of where it takes him, with no other concern but to find the truth. The Truth—

whatever it may turn out to be.' John stood before him, his head thrown back, his small blue eyes ablaze and fixed straight into his father's: 'I would, too.'

'You would what?'

'Die for the Truth.'

James looked at him intently: 'Yes, my son, I believe you would.'

James Mill's older children: John, Wilhelmina, Clara, Harriet, James, all stood in too great fear of him ever to learn to love him. But it is certain that his exceedingly rare approval was what John lived for and that to attain it, however rarely, constituted his greatest happiness.

CHAPTER II

The Boy

1814—1822

JAMES MILL met Bentham in 1808. The famous, genial old man, from whom original ideas flowed in an uninterrupted, placid stream, soon grew dependent on the younger man's incisive intellect and driving force of character. James Mill drew a small circle of active reformers around them both. Spending the better part of the day in his father's study, John, from the earliest age, listened to the ardent, learned, witty, and most advanced talk in England.

These men were closely knit together much in the way in which a small fanatical religious minority would be among an overwhelming hostile majority. A further bond between most of them was their atheism—in those days a dangerous conviction to be held only in secret. In the discussions and activities of this small group Benthamism passed from a legal aspiration to a political force: Radicalism was born. Like the Fabians seventy-five years later, these men were the avant-garde of their generation. They were certainly far from being typical of their time. Fierce reaction reigned all round. Yet such was the influence their circle radiated into the future that the first quarter of the nineteenth century came to be called the age of early Radicalism.

In fact, however, it richly deserved the name of the age of repression. Since the horrors of the French Revolution, the English and European governing classes were deeply fearful. Momentous developments were afoot that did not fit into the pattern of the

established order and social hierarchy. There were at work in England 5,000 steam engines compared to France's 200. The English population had grown from six and a half to ten millions. The swelling anonymous, hapless, and rootless masses, scattered across the countryside in the mining and textile areas, frightened nobility and gentry. Mrs. Gaskell, in *Mary Barton*, described recurring periods of 'klemming'—gnawing hunger—which drove good-natured working men to risk everything in order to stop this cruel fate for their wives and children.

From 1797 to 1832 every effort of the lower classes to redress their desperate grievances by political or industrial action was met by savagely prohibitive laws. Any defence of the freedom of speech or organization, even insistence on *habeas corpus*, was treated alike as a revolutionary threat to the government, entailing prison, deportation, or even the death penalty. The old, small craft unions were left in peace—they were part of the traditional order of things. But any attempt on the part of the new industrial workers to form a trade union was treated by the magistrates as criminal conspiracy at common law.

Many were the discussions about these topics to which John listened in his father's study. Intently, he absorbed all he heard, always watching the signs of interest or displeasure on his father's handsome, expressive face, and identifying himself with his father's reactions. This, then, was man's work, this kind of talk. It was just what his singular education had led him to expect. Were not the Greek philosophers, these models of excellence, likewise for ever engaged in pitting their wits against each other and in trying to improve the common weal of their country? It is probable that the discussions among these early Victorian reformers were the closest parallels in English history to those of the Greek forum—though they were held in the strictest privacy.

James Mill at this period had a growing family, and an income of not more than about £300 a year, derived from his literary labours. By a system of rigid economy he was at all times perfectly independent. Every one of his articles was a spear broken for the unpopular cause of reform. This is truly admirable—but

one cannot help thinking with a sigh of pretty Mrs. Mill. Her lot was unending drudgery, for which she earned nothing but contempt. Pathetically she tried to preserve the shreds of gentility in her appearance. She derived some comfort from her close contact with her mother and sisters.

The relentless course of John's education went on. Before the age of twelve he read Greek and Latin with perfect ease. Throwing the matter of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* into synoptic tables was an exercise at the age of eleven. These were pleasurable lessons; dreaded were the courses in algebra and geometry that took place in the evenings when both father and son were tired out by the mental work of the day.

John's reading for pleasure was mostly historical. Even before he was eight he had read—with intense delight—Robertson's histories, Hume, Gibbon, Rollin and above all Hooke's *History of Rome;* while Millar's *Historical View of the English Government* and Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History* were required reading. His head was full of the most obscure details of Ancient history, while of modern history he knew only haphazard facts. Once, when asked by Bentham which was the most important event in English history the boy answered without hesitation: 'The battle of Marathon'—because in that battle the Asiatics were thrown back and Greece was given her chance to light the twin beacons of Western dynamic civilization: political freedom and rational enquiry after truth. Had the issue of that battle been different, the Britons and the Saxons might still be wandering in the woods.

He devoured the accounts of wars and battles, like the fight of the Netherlanders against Catholic Spain, and of the Knights of Malta against the Turks. Gradually, under the influence of what he heard among his father's friends, his interest shifted to the struggles against tyrants and demagogues, and between patricians and plebeians. Copying his father's incessant labour on his monumental history of India, he spent many hours of his boyhood writing histories, with his heart aglow for freedom and democracy. At the age of twelve he wrote a history of the Roman government, compiled from Livy and Dionysius, in which he

vindicated the Roman democratic party. All the fervour, aggression, and idealism that ordinary boys of his age and time spent on games, religion, patriotism, this small intellectual recluse poured into such 'amusement'.

In addition to his own work, John was set to tutor his two sisters and his brother, their father supervising the results of his teaching. No less than three hours of each day James used to devote to this instruction of his children. John was held equally responsible for any mistakes his young pupils made and he shared their punishments. These lessons were irksome in the extreme to all four children. Tutoring his sisters and brothers as they grew up was to become a habitual part of John's working day until he was well over thirty. Doubtless his later great lucidity as a writer was partly due to this discipline.

Once John had reached the ripe age of twelve, his father laid less stress on acquiring knowledge and more on teaching John to think for himself. He proceeded to read Logic in Latin and English and underwent a thoroughgoing drill in syllogistic logic; in later years he pronounced this a training in thinking much superior to mathematics.

The schooling of his eldest son was as near James's heart as his own had been to his mother. In 1812 during an illness he wrote to Bentham: 'If I were to die any time before this poor boy is a man, one of the things that would pinch me most sorely, would be the being obliged to leave his mind unmade to the degree of excellence of which I hope to make it' (1, p. 119).

The great relief and boon for the boy during these years were the summer months. From 1814 to 1817 the whole Mill family used to join Bentham at his new country seat, Ford Abbey, at Chard in Somerset. As a matter of course John's lessons went on—the habit of work must not be allowed to lapse. But many mellowing influences were here at work upon John. The sensitive, receptive boy reacted with his whole nature. The spaciousness of the Abbey satisfied a deep craving: always his surroundings had been cramped, while his imagination was at home in Greek temples. After his lessons from six to ten in the morning he loved to roam

his *Autobiography*. He was never permitted to meet a boy of his own age, so that he should not realize how different from other boys he was. He never played cricket. He was a grown-up *en miniature* feeling a grown man's responsibility, and more, for country and humanity.

At the end of their first holiday with Bentham, in 1814, the Mills moved into a house at Queen Square, Westminster (now engulfed in Queen Anne Mansions). The house belonged to Bentham, who wanted to have James near, for day-to-day collaboration. He let the house to James at half-price: £50 per year. Later, James sublet to a friend from Edinburgh, Dr. Thomson, the chemist, and at once paid the full rent. Here the family lived for sixteen years. Here four more children were born. The Mill's garden adjoined that of Bentham and the 'brats', as Bentham affectionately called them, had the run of both. Moreover James and John had the use of Bentham's extensive library, which was a great asset to them both.

During these years there occurred one of the most important events in the life of the family. Ever since he could remember, John had known his father at work upon his *History of India*. Little is known why James Mill chose this subject. In his early letters from London he plans writing some permanent book besides his many articles. But it meant finding the means of support while at work upon it. As editor of the *Literary Journal*, which he founded in 1803, he strongly advocated foreign trade as a means of subsistence for the growing English population. In 1806 he was outspoken in his criticism of the way in which the East India Company was handling Indian affairs, mangling trade to the detriment of both countries. Soon after John's birth he started on the *History*. He expected that the writing would take three years. Instead he spent twelve years of unremitting labour on it. 'Had I foreseen that the labour would have been one half, or one third, of what it has been, never should I have been the Author of a *History of India*' (1, p. 62). The kind of work-a-day heroism and discipline demanded was incredible, even during that harsh period when many thousands of children spent their lives in factories from the

age of four, and when the poor were considered 'worked out' at thirty. By many of his friends James was considered the most industrious fellow they knew.

The ten volumes of the *History* appeared in 1817. John, during his tenth and eleventh years, spent many months correcting proofs. The knowledge thus acquired on the side was to become part of his professional life. The *History* was one of the earliest attempts at a sociological interpretation of a people, and was considered a startlingly new approach. On the strength of it—although the book severely criticized the East India Company—James was proposed for a post at India House. It was certainly a feat for an acknowledged Radical to stand any chance with a thorough Tory body like the India Board. But in May 1819 James Mill was appointed 'Assistant to the Examiner of India Correspondence' at a salary of £800 and with the certainty of promotion. The financial struggles of the family were over. His appetite for work appalled his colleagues at India House.

John received the first inkling that he was different from other boys from his father himself. When he was fourteen, it was arranged that he should spend a year with the family of Sir Samuel, Bentham's brother, in France. Before he was due to leave James took him for a walk. John never forgot the exact place where the revelation occurred—he was standing in front of his father with a view towards Hyde Park Corner.

Suddenly James asked him: 'Do you realize that you are different from other boys?'

John was taken aback. 'No, my father.'

'Do you realize that you have learnt a great many things which boys of your age do not usually know?'

'No, my father.'

'You are bound to find out as you mix more with other people. They may call you clever. But after all the trouble I took to teach you, it would, indeed, be a disgrace if you did not know more than others who have not had the same advantages. Is that clear?'

'Yes, quite clear, my father.'

And it was in this light that John always regarded his own superiority.

The year in France was a happy one. Lady Bentham was a dignified, unemotional woman, strong-willed and undisputed head of the household, as she deserved to be. Thus to find the roles reversed in the family made a lasting impression on John. The idea dawned on him that some day women might be equals with men . . .

The Benthams and their four children, all older than John, were much impressed by the boy. Lady Bentham commented especially on the sweet and grateful way in which he accepted correction. This was small wonder after the merciless pulling up by his father to which John had been exposed.

John now took his habitual long walks with George Bentham. To this friendship John owed a life-long passion for collecting plants. It became his one relaxation. He derived much pleasure from this hobby—but yet another part of his life was thereby turned into a purposeful and exacting pursuit, and subjected to his bent for rigid classification, instead of offering an outlet for day-dreaming and the play of his imagination.

The greater part of his day, of course, was devoted to study. He was by now so used to continuous intellectual application that it became a semi-automatic habit with him. The Benthams were indeed hard put to it to tear him away from his books—like the bookworm he was, he felt lost away from them. He was made to learn to fence, which he loathed, to ride, which he disliked, and to dance, which to his own great surprise he loved. He also made great progress in his piano-playing.

On an excursion to the Pyrenees John had an unexpected experience, which left a permanent longing. Climbing to the top of a high mountain he felt an unknown elation. As with many of intellectual temperament, the heights seemed to clear his brain and senses, and to take away earthly heaviness.

In the autumn he moved with the Benthams to an estate near Montpellier. And here he spent the happiest six months of his youth. He also for the first time made a friend in Balard, a boy of

his own age, with whom he kept up a correspondence for several years.

Of these emotional experiences his father heard little or nothing. He received a dutiful account of how every hour of the waking day was spent: none must be wasted. And none was. A typical day was as follows: bathes before breakfast, usually with George. Reads two eclogues of Virgil, and a French treatise on pronouns. Reads Legendre's *Geometry* to acquire French mathematical terms. Begins the *Vocalium Judicium* of Lucian. Has his second dancing lesson. Reads a play by Racine on the advice of the family for the sake of French dialogue.—One wonders whether James Mill would not sometimes have preferred a line expressing a longing for him and for home. But of this there was none.

In July 1821 John returned home, greatly developed in knowledge, experience, and deportment. James looked upon his son and remembered Isabella Fenton: her grandson was a gentleman. He had acquired a full command of French, although his English accent remained rather pronounced. He also owed a lasting interest in French history and politics to this visit; during the next decade he was to become the best-informed writer on French affairs in the English press.

On the morning after his return he wrote out and pinned on the wall the way in which the hours of the day were to be passed by his three sisters and his brother. His time-table ruled their lives for years to come. He carried them all very far in most of the departments of knowledge in which he himself had been drilled by his father, including mathematics, logic, and economics.

On the whole his life became slightly less austere. He began reading law with their neighbour John Austin and liked and admired the deep-thinking, diffident man. Sarah Austin taught him German. This handsome, high-spirited, brilliant girl from one of the progressive Unitarian families of Norwich had turned her back on her large circle of admirers and become the devoted wife of her gloomy husband, as well as the hostess of a small but very advanced salon in London; at the same time she struggled to keep

the family finances afloat by translating. She did much to make known German thought in England. John became attached to her at once, he soon called her his 'Muetterlein'. She and her husband treated him as an equal. From her personality John finally evolved his ideas about equal rights for women, even to the vote. This was the first reasoning in which he differed from his father, who held with most early Radicals that the rights of women were included in those of their husbands. John took care to keep this difference of opinion to himself.

Lucy, the wild, original, animal-loving daughter of the Austins was his friend, too. To the strictly disciplined children of the Mill household, the untamed yet lovable ways of their young neighbour must have seemed strange enough. Probably under the influence of Sarah Austin, James softened in his behaviour. Henry, born in 1820, whom they all called Derry, was James's favourite child from the moment he was born. The younger children grew to love their father, but with the older ones the opportunity had been lost.

CHAPTER III

His Father's Adjutant

1823–1826

AT the age of sixteen, John stepped into the political arena as his father's adjutant.

Like a stream whose gathering forces had been dammed up, he rushed forth joyfully upon the straight free course ahead of him. Never was he more at one with himself and with all about him than during the next five young years. With mind and heart and all his youthful enthusiasm, he threw himself into the work of public reform for which he had been trained. James and he were joined in a fellow-soldier feeling that gave great happiness to them both.

It came as a revelation to John, surrounded by black reaction, that thirty years earlier, in France, democratic opinions had carried all before them. He eagerly collected material in order to write a book about the French Revolution. He had found his life's work: to bring about a similar downfall of Tory misrule and to reconstruct English institutions according to Bentham's famous principle of 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'. The importance of this Utilitarian principle had 'rushed in' upon John. He felt that now he had a creed, a message, an object in life. The discovery came with the force of a new light breaking and filled him with tense excitement.

The first stirrings of liberalism in England added to John's hopeful spring of life. The country was entering upon one of its most remarkable periods of intellectual ferment. Scott and Byron,

Shelley and Keats, were rising; Faraday and Davy were creating a new and fruitful approach to science. More and more writers and speakers up and down the country propounded the early reformers' main tenets: freedom of speech, organization, and the press; general education; extension of the vote; and reform of the judicature. More and more Radicals were prepared to defy the law forbidding the printing, publishing, or selling of cheap newspapers like Cobbet's *Political Register* or the *Poor Man's Guardian*. Francis Place and his working-class friends, with the support of many middle-class progressives, untiringly founded and re-founded trade unions, political unions, cooperatives, workingmen's institutes, and libraries. It was largely their triumph when, in 1824, freedom of coalition was won. The Tories, too, were caught up by the spirit of the times, and a group of active reformers gathered round Wilberforce. James Mill was in personal contact with many of these different progressives, including those in Parliament and in the Government.

From the first John's appearance in politics commanded attention. His influence flowed through three main channels: his writings, his public speaking, and his friendships.

According to the custom of the time he wrote under a great many pen-names. But now, as later, many of his weightier contributions appeared over the signature 'A.' or 'Antiquus'. As an 'antiquus', John entered the political fight of the day. From antiquity he derived his standards of judgment of contemporary events.

In his usual systematic and persevering way, John kept a list of his published writings. The small green notebook covers nearly fifty years. The first entry reads: '1822. Two letters in *The Traveller* . . . controversy with Col. Torrens on the question whether value depends upon the quantity of labour'; and the list was to conclude: '1873. Should public bodies be required to sell their land? Article *Examiner*' (12, original MS. p. 20).

Before he was twenty years of age he had contributed to the press about fifty reviews, letters, and articles. He wrote copiously on questions of the day: on the corn laws, the game laws, the laws

of libel; on freedom of speech; on economics; on the faults of the judicature; on the horrors of the tread wheel; on Malthus's doctrine of the necessity for checking the growth of population; on war expenditure. He reviewed contemporary histories; he denounced *The Times*, which had called economists 'louts and coxcombs', and, even at that time, he argued the case for Irish peasant holdings.

These were dry enough subjects. But what a chance for a zealous young propagandist to war against the iniquities of the age. This he did to his heart's content, in the most declamatory style he was ever to permit himself.

His principal essays appeared in the *Parliamentary Review* and in the *Westminster Review* founded by Radicals in 1824. The central themes of his later books were forecast distinctly in these earliest writings: germs of ideas that accumulated material round them in the course of the years. The last and best composition of this period was his sixty-page review of Sir Walter Scott's *Life of Napoleon*. Sure of his subject, he crossed swords with the mature and famous writer. Into this essay he poured his ideas for the book on the French Revolution that he had been pondering for several years. In preparation for this he corresponded with several French historians asking their advice. His exposure of Scott's Tory prejudices and factual errors is devastating, perhaps the more so because he had a great affection for Scott as a romantic writer.

And now, at sixteen, for the first time he met young Englishmen of his own age.

His contemporaries were eager to meet the much talked of paragon. They found a slight, boyish figure, with fine features and delicate colouring, an aquiline nose, a strong though fine jaw that expressed his determination, and rather thin, compressed lips showing already his lack of emotion and a bent for order and classification. His small blue eyes were filled with a compelling truthfulness, yet were at the same time secretive. Innocence and idealism shone from him. He was propounding his high mission with complete assurance and immense powers of reasoning. Yet personally he was extremely diffident. He spoke in a rather high,

shrill voice which nonetheless, because of its honesty, at once evoked sympathy in his listeners. His year in France had polished his bearing, 'eminently gentleman' he was pronounced by the poet Thomas Love Peacock, his father's senior colleague at India House.

Soon it was said of him that 'he went over an adversary in argument like a ploughshare over a mouse'—and that the mouse liked him for it. Arguing, convincing, converting, were his means of personal contact and of making friends. He did not even realise that companionship for its own sake, without ulterior purpose, was possible. Every young man he met he tried to infect with his own ardour for public reform and to press into the service of one cause or another. All through his life, despite his great personal charm, he was to fall back on this pattern of personal relationship through ideas and common causes.

He at once proceeded to form a debating society of the young men he was meeting. They used to gather at Bentham's house and, later, as the circle grew wider, they met twice a week from 8.30 to 10 a.m. at Grote's house in Threadneedle Street in the City. The writings of James Mill, Ricardo, and Bailey on political economy, of Whately and Hobbs on *Logic*, of Hartley and James Mill on analytical psychology, were perused and systematically discussed by the young men. In these exercises, which were practised with utmost thoroughness and down to the minutest detail, Mill first grew into a thinker in his own right.

Discussions of a more public character were held at Robert Owen's Cooperation Society, where John met a group of working men. Their interest led to the foundation of a more ambitious public forum: the Speculative Debating Society, which drew speakers of renown, and flourished for several years, largely owing to John's tireless activity.

The list of persons John met in these various pursuits makes curious reading, for nearly every one of these young men was to leave his mark on nineteenth-century history. But in fact, this merely illustrates a point well known to every active reformer now or then, namely, that in every age the circle concerned is extremely small—in the many various organizations for progressive

causes one always meets with the same few persons. Among this younger generation of reformers, John first felt himself, not a pupil, but 'a man among men'. Leadership fell to him naturally, more owing to his unbounded and infectious enthusiasm than to mental superiority.

Perhaps only those who are, or once were, possessed by an idea to which they gave whole-hearted adherence, can understand the effect this has on the whole personality. This single-mindedness pervades and stamps all activities, all personal experiences, for good or ill. To Englishmen today such intensity is bad form. It was not so in Mill's youth.

His zeal for reform derived not from any warm feelings for mankind, nor from pity for the poor and an awakening social conscience, as was the case with so many Victorian reformers: it sprang wholly from abstract ideas. This made his concern no less ardent. Like a youth who burns with religious fire, so he wanted to convert the world and everybody he met to his political creed. Coupled with this was his ambition to become a great man, which had been nourished by the many books about heroes, ancient and modern, that the lonely boy had devoured.

The group of young zealots liked to think of themselves as the new school of philosophic Radicalism. What they held more or less in common were Bentham's ideas on reform, the new science of economics, Malthus's doctrine of population, and agnosticism, in the sense that nothing can be known about what lies beyond this life. These beliefs they propagated by writing, speaking, and debating.

They firmly believed that Malthus's ideas held the only promise of bettering the working man's lot and they did all they could to spread them. With John as leader, they even went to preach birth control to the fishwives of Billingsgate—with the result that James Mill received an urgent appeal to get John and his friends out of the hands of the police. This young innocent setting out against forces of which he comprehended nothing . . . few incidents illustrate better the gap between his experience of life and his being possessed by abstract ideas.

During his first few years in public life John dreamt of himself as a great figure in future politics. He saw himself as the standard-bearer of the new Radicalism and as the head of a third party in the House of Commons.

But on his eighteenth birthday James abruptly announced that John was to begin work at India House. This was a great blow. Hitherto the Bar had been suggested for him; his reading law with John Austin had been towards that end. A friend of his father's, Professor Townsend, had repeatedly urged James to send John to Cambridge; however both father and son held the universities in contempt. But now the India House! Nobody employed at India House could accept a public office. All John's bright political hopes were dashed to the ground. He was to spend his life in an obscure and discreet office career.

James Mill had stipulated that his son was to work as his immediate subordinate; even in his professional work he wanted John as his adjutant.

John soon recovered his spirits. He struck up a happy friendship with William Eyton Tooke, also a clerk at India House, and with William Ellis. To Eyton John was particularly drawn. Although their talk was all of public affairs and rational philosophy they were mutually aware that each possessed a more sensitive side to his nature.

Soon he was to form an inseparable trio with George John Graham and John Arthur Roebuck. The three Johns were known as the 'Trijackia'. Graham was a steady, sensible young man. Roebuck was short, vehement, bold in his aggressive optimism, which soon earned him the nickname 'tear 'em'. The three used to meet once or twice every day, usually walking for miles between Kensington and the City.

Sundays, too, were spent together, nearly always on long rambles in the country. Since 1822 the family had spent six months of every year at Dorking in Surrey. In 1828 James bought two adjoining cottages in nearby Mickleham (behind the present post-office) and had them converted into a summer residence. The house was primitive but roomy. Was James attracted to it by a

likeness to his native cottage? He loved it, though the hour-long rides on the coach in dust and heat were extremely bad for his 'cough'. Every week-end brought visitors. James used to go there on Friday night, while John travelled on the Saturday afternoon coach, the guests usually joining him. Frequently, from Croydon or some other point, the trio of young friends walked out. Often John would fill his pockets with the seeds of wild flowers, some procured from France, which he scattered in the hedgerows of the Surrey lanes.

His father, however, was far from pleased about his friendships. Where John was concerned James was extremely possessive. Always so full of lofty public spirit, so charming among his many men friends, he was habitually the most discourteous and tyrannical of men in his own family. Perhaps his mother bred this attitude in him when, in his youth, she set him so much above the rest of the family. Even before guests he would not trouble to restrain his temper, and would run down his wife and children with unbridled sarcasm. So now he made no effort to hide his dislike of John's young companions. The energetic Roebuck was the last person to put up with such behaviour. He openly expressed the hope that James Mill's notions of politics might be superior to his notions of hospitality. A scene followed. The guests left the dining-room. Surrounded by his tearful family, John, for the first time in his life, stood up to his father. Pale but resolute, he told him that he had a right to choose his own friends. Unless his father treated them civilly he, John, would leave the house. His father, always fair in argument, gave in. To see James thus defeated made a deep inpression on all of them. Their respect and love for John grew. But naturally Graham and Roebuck did not come to the house any more.

Perhaps James's very severity drew the rest of the family more closely together. Their mother was more a fellow-conspirator than a parent holding authority. Fond, indulgent, kind, she contrived, by many ruses, to fulfil their wishes as best she could. John was eighteen at the birth of the ninth and last baby, George Grote, who was to grow into a light-hearted, whimsical boy, always

ready to joke and laugh. The children were fond of each other, and as large families will, managed to have a lot of fun as long as James was safely out of the way. As soon as he joined them a hush descended. Even in his genial moods the children did not feel at ease with him, except perhaps Derry and Geordie. John was the general favourite. They were all so proud of him. Though a stern taskmaster at their studies he always had the *mot de rire* in their circle. They loved having him in their midst. They were expecially delighted when he set them guessing, from his mimicking, in whose company he had lately been. Also, he was the one who, through carefully laid diplomatic approaches, interceded for them with their father.

James's educational mill ground on along its established course, the older children teaching the younger ones and sharing the harsh punishments. Going without their mid-day meal and additional study time instead were almost daily occurrences. James heard their lessons while dressing between 6.0 and 6.30 a.m. or, worse, in the evening. The forcing of the younger children grew a little less rigorous because both James and John were more and more taken up with outside work.

James's harsh treatment contributed to the ill health of several of his children; this is expecially true of the angelic, unselfish Derry, beloved of them all and above all by his father, who early caught the family disease. Moreover, the boy himself seems to have been quite conscious that he was being ground down under the discipline. Yet such was parental authority at the time that to the last he strove to live up to his father's excessive demands upon him.

From 1821 until the autumn of 1826, when he was twenty, John was thus simultaneously engaged in writing for the press, in extensive public speaking, in running several discussion groups, in reading law, and in studying intensively logic and philosophy in general. From 1823 onwards he spent the hours from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. working at India House. He walked habitually for one or two hours a day, all the while strenuously and systematically thinking or discussing with his father or his friends. He spent several hours a day teaching his sisters and brothers. He often had

to read aloud to his father. Furthermore, during 1825, he spent most of his spare time in making intelligible three huge masses of Bentham's incredibly untidy manuscripts and compressing them into the five large volumes of the *Rationale of Judicial Evidence;* much to his surprise Bentham insisted on naming him as editor on the title page.

It is clear that he must have spent twelve to sixteen hours of every day in intense intellectual application. Little can have been left by now of the gentle day-dreamer, of the boy of poetical imagination and musical hallucinations. But the despised and ruthlessly suppressed side of his nature was soon to take a bitter revenge against the iron discipline imposed by his conscious will-power.

CHAPTER IV

Melancholia

1827–1829

IN the autumn of his twenty-first year all this activity suddenly, from one day to the next, seemed to John 'as a dream'. From having felt moody and irritable for some time, and striving to shake this off, he involuntarily asked himself one day: 'Suppose that my highest aim in life—complete public reform—could be effected at this very instant, would this really make me happy?' And a distinct voice within him answered: 'NO!'—At this his heart sank within him. What was there to live for, if not this?

He was overcome by deep depression. In his *Autobiography* he gives us a moving account of his suffering. Except for Bunyan's account of a like experience, there is perhaps no more touching description of a young heart helplessly and hopelessly in the throes of deep and bitter melancholia.

With lost hope he was groping about for something to stir heart or mind. He would go to sleep hoping that by the morrow this dull state of nerves would have passed off—only to wake up to the same stifling dejection. He tried all his old favourites: books like Condorcet's *Turgot*, his Plato. He tried to read poetry, to listen to music, but there was no response in him. The days passed into weeks, autumn into winter, and the anguish seemed to grow ever more pressing.

He had been so drilled in intellectual work that he was grinding on even now. In fact, the void seemed far worse when the half

automatic mental activity stopped. But the spirit had gone out of everything. He went on with the task begun in France of transcribing into lucid English most of the major *Dialogues* of Plato. He also wrote and even delivered speeches at his debating societies. But later on he could not recall anything he had done or said during this time.

The longer this condition lasted the more hopeless it seemed to him. He strained his will to the utmost—but how can one *will* to *feel?* He tried to argue himself out of his state. The mature brain set relentlessly to work—and succeeded only in finding more reasons to prove that his case was irredeemable; that the early analytical habits had for ever killed in him the springs of all feeling. Idealism as well as ambition had lost all power to stir.

Spring and summer came and went, but nature held no comfort or delight. Rural scenery, formerly one of his greatest joys, left him as indifferent as all else.

Was there nobody to whom he could turn for advice? His father was the last person on whom he could call for support; such misery would have been quite incomprehensible to him. In fact, John spent most of the trickle of energy left in him, in keeping up the old façade before his father. As for his mother—his opinion of her was far too low for him ever to think of turning to her for guidance of any kind. Roebuck, that incarnation of forcefulness, was certainly not the person to approach with spiritual troubles. Graham had left in 1825 to serve as Military Secretary in Bombay. All his friends, even the older ones like Grote and Austin, were fellow-fighters in the cause of progress—how could he let them see his betrayal of their common faith?

In any case he was beyond help from any quarter. All feeling was for ever exhausted in him. He was like a dry desert. A stock and a stone. A ship, well equipped and with a good strong rudder, but without a sail. He felt like a man who is dead, but no one else realized it.

For many months he asked himself hourly if he were bound to go on living. And the strange inner voice told him that he could not possibly endure it much longer. Then even this ceased to

torment him. Even his suffering grew dull, ashen. All that was left was, in Coleridge's words:

> A grief without a pang, void, dark and drear
> A drowsy, stifled, unimpassioned grief,
> Which finds no natural outlet or relief
> In word, or sigh, or tear.

What were the roots and what the psychological implications of this mental crisis, and of the two later ones of a similar, though slighter, nature? This question necessarily leads to an appreciation of J. S. Mill's personality as a whole.

Mill's *Autobiography* is an outstandingly truthful book. Yet it is misleading. Mill always weighed his every word; and except for *On Liberty* the *Autobiography* is his most deliberate book. But it induced students of Mill to accept his own one-sided version of his personality. The very fact that he conceived of his personal development as a purely mental process is revealing. Even the great passion of his life for Harriet Taylor is depicted as an intellectual relationship. Gladstone called him the 'saint of rationalism'. The *Autobiography* gives the story of the making of this saint. But the story of the very human personality who imposed the rigours of this sainthood upon himself is certainly not contained in its pages.

Mill was essentially a father's son, in the individual as well as in the psychological sense. His ideal of a personality was modelled entirely upon his father, while everything connected with his mother was, from the earliest age, felt to be inferior and was neglected and repressed. Although he lived in the greatest fear of his father, at the same time the boy looked up to him: strict, righteous, intellectually fearless, and of exceptional strength of character and will-power, he fulfilled all the boy's conception of a superior being. In trying to live up to his father's demands, which were always beyond his utmost efforts to fulfil, John acquired his enormous industry, his thoroughness and patience, his painstaking accuracy, his methodical procedure, and above all his ability to think. Only by giving the whole of his energies to his intellectual aspirations did he achieve the almost scientific precision of his

reasoning processes. Every idea was clearly evolved from the concept preceding it, all the steps leading from one thought to the next were supplied, nothing was skipped, every link in the chain of his thoughts was thoroughly worked out, no less than the cogent basic conceptions.

His reasoning processes, as well as his mental development as a whole, were dialectic: thesis, antithesis, synthesis. This way of proceeding was as inescapable to him as his urge for mental classification; both amounted almost to an obsession. Even at the age of sixteen we find him applying this method when, as an exercise for his father, he wrote two speeches, one an accusation, the other a defence, of Pericles. Later, in *On Liberty* he was to constitute this urge of his nature as an ethical postulate: 'the necessity of taking account of the negative to every positive affirmation; of laying down side by side with every proposition, the counterproposition', and he praises the 'livening influence of negation on thought'.

However extensive the ground covered in his mental growth, there occurred no basic change, either in his character or in his approach to thought, action, and emotion. He never underwent the complete reversal we find with so many free-thinkers of his time. His growth was, rather, a continuous widening of horizons, an ever expanding inclusion. Often this widening occurred suddenly with the effect of a bursting of the earlier boundaries, in which case it imparted to him intense excitement and happiness. Indeed, 'intellectual ecstasy' is one of the keywords for understanding Mill. Such flashes of fresh comprehension called forth a relentless process of checking the new discovery against the opinions he formerly found true. Always his beginning was implicit in his end.

There were three distinct periods in his life. Up to the age of twenty he was the wholly satisfactory product of his father's and Jeremy Bentham's educational efforts, holding earnestly the one and only right set of Utilitarian ideas on every subject. There followed about ten years of almost violent reaction against the rationalism in which he had been brought up. He felt himself to

be a 'changed man'. But, in fact, this reaction also took place entirely on the intellectual plane. His intellect was the only organ in him which was sufficiently differentiated to register experiences. After this he settled down to his life's business of integrating the two modes of thought; of bringing about the synthesis between progressive rationalism and historical tradition, of striking the just balance between democracy and authority, between individualism and collectivism, between freedom and discipline. This endeavour and his extraordinary receptiveness for new ideas made him probably the most comprehensive thinker of his century.

His sensitiveness towards mental stimuli was extreme. His whole organism shared in the process. Significantly, the transition between the first and the second, and again between the second and the third, phases of his development was marked by a serious and protracted nervous depression.

Even these periods of deep melancholia were not yet the whole price he had to pay for the one-sided forcing of his energies. To achieve this concentration he had to push another part of his being on to the shadow side of his life, to choke its natural growth towards beauty and fulfilment, and to starve and deform it.

Compared with the grand domain of ideas, abstractions, and universal laws in which he tried to live with his strong father, everything psychologically represented by a man's mother seemed petty and futile, in his own nature as well as in others. Personal feelings, attachments, physical sensations, pleasures, and pains seemed to him like so many nonsensical and mostly inconvenient, or embarrassing, trifles. Weakness set him on edge and provoked the worst in him. While all his aspirations were for the betterment of humanity he loathed everything human, most of all his own human nature. It required his utmost will-power to submit his natural impulses and urges to the constant discipline of work and thought. As leisure, relaxation, emotion were to him and his father mere waste of time and energy, these urges crept in through the back door and teased and tortured him, especially while young, to the limits of his endurance. In the midst of a purposeful intellectual pursuit he would suddenly be overcome by

sullen moodiness, despondency, and extreme irritation. He suffered, and made those around him suffer, a great deal under these emotional upsets. He realized so little of his own inner life that he hardly knew when (let alone why) such black moods laid hold of him. This made them none the easier to bear. By slaying all his animal spirits he was utterly cut off from his natural instincts—instincts for life, for understanding of the irrational ways of nature, of human nature in general, and of his own in particular.

His lack of contact with his own feelings made his understanding and evaluation of character as infantile as his intellectual judgment was mature. He was always the worst possible judge of character.

Furthermore, this aversion from all feeling debarred him from every intimate emotional contact. He was frightened of personal emotions involving him with others. 'My father's older children,' he wrote later 'neither loved him nor with any warmth of affection anyone else . . . I thus grew up in the absence of love and in the presence of fear . . . I grew up with an instinct of closeness. I had no one to whom I desired to express everything which I felt . . .' (9, pp. 31-2). He was reluctant to give affection, even to the extent of meanness. In his personal relations he took shelter in conventionality. He behaved according to the accepted pattern, particularly before others, not according to any inner promptings. He quite enjoyed such display of correctness in his behaviour towards his mother, his sisters and brothers, his friends and his father's friends—until natural emotions jarred again by urging to break through these safe bounds of convention. In him Logos was forever engaged in slaying Eros.

But his father's upbringing was to produce another effect that shaped his life even more decisively. The yoke of authority to which his father had accustomed him from infancy became indispensable to him. He was never to outgrow an infantile dependency on another strong personality that he could look up to and idolize. He was well aware of this: 'Another evil I shared with many of the sons of energetic fathers. To have been through childhood under the constant rule of a strong will is certainly not favourable

to strength of will. I was so well accustomed to being told what to do . . . that I acquired the habit of leaving my responsibility as a moral agent to rest on my father and my conscience never speaking to me except by his voice' (9, p. 32).

Between the exalted realm of abstract thought and the despised level of instinct there existed in him a veritable gap.

We are left with the tantalizing question whether, without James's training, his instincts and sensuality would have found their natural outlet? And whether, in consequence, the *Logic*, *On Liberty*, *Principles of Political Economy*, *Representative Government*, and *Utilitarianism* would ever have been written as they stand? For there can be little doubt that without the continual repression of his human and animal nature his thinking processes would have run differently. The dynamic processes of life, the irrational manifestations of nature, fluctuations and changes of energy, became increasingly disturbing phenomena to him. He could not understand them. He could not tolerate them. So he tried to reason them away. Life to him was an imperfect organization rather than an organic process. 'So far,' he wrote, 'are the contrivances in nature from being superior to those of art that when a delicate artificial instrument, a watch, for example, goes unaccountably wrong, it is then that we feel that it almost resembles a piece of nature's machinery, a living being' (4, Vol. II, p. 373).

To have been possessed of such human weakness in no way belittles the man and his achievement. Perhaps without paying some such price greatness is not possible.

But neither his tremendous exaltation of Logos over Eros, nor the lucidity and comprehensive range that he achieved at such high personal cost, are enough to account for the greatness that undoubtedly became his. His greatness was founded in true and original inspiration. He had a creative intuition—'instantaneous bolts of passionate perception'—that was not the result of his reasoning power, but rather the substance on which his reasoning fed. His ideas emerged from the deepest unconscious layers that reach below the individual down into the collective or racial level. They 'flashed in' upon him. This gave these intuitions their absolutely

convincing power in his mind. They appeared to him inevitable—almost self-existent. Like the stars in their courses, the thoughts in his mind obeyed for him universal, eternal laws.

It was this origin which, furthermore, lent his intuitions their general and universal significance for the thought of his contemporaries and of the generations following him. In them the *Zeitgeist* was manifesting itself. Mill was neither the deepest nor the most original thinker of his time. But more than any other he represented the nineteenth century as a bridge towards our own.

It was also due to these mighty springs of his unconscious that, from a boy, and in spite of all his personal modesty, he harboured an almost haughty sense of vocation. He felt himself to be the bearer of a mission. It was to fulfil his destiny as a thinker that the natural man in him was so painfully crucified.

The question whether he was constitutionally liable to recurring depressions will probably remain unsolved. No doubt mental strain, habitual overwork, and emotional frustration contributed towards producing these phases.

It was, characteristically, a deeply intimate and emotional scene that first had power to stir his youthful feelings again; Marmotel describes his father's death, the distressed position of the family, and his sudden stout resolve as a boy that he would take the father's place in the family. The pathos of this scene made John cry. He cried to his heart's content. With the tears came relief—after such endless months. He could feel. Emotion was not, then, for ever dead for him. From this moment the utter hopelessness left him. He had relapses of days, of weeks, but now he knew that if he waited patiently some subdued stirring of pleasure or pain would eventually be vouchsafed to him: a book, a poem, rural scenery in particular, a cloud lit up by sunlight, conversation, a public event—one or the other would be sure to touch upon his sensibility again.

This first protracted and most bitter spell of melancholia was worsened by the loosening of his father's hitherto iron hold over him. One might read a deeper meaning into the fact that it was the description of a father's death that first moved him to feel again.

During his very gradual emergence from his melancholia he conceived a dislike for controversy. He retired from the debating societies and followed his bent for meditative thought. It is pathetic to watch him consciously seeking the balance of his personality by the 'needful cultivation of the passive faculties'. He discovered, and methodically dosed himself with, the works of Wordsworth and other poets. He listened with a new intentness to music. He took a fresh interest in painting.

His intake of new ideas was enormous. Within the next few years he assimilated contemporary English, French, and German thought, and the whole romantic reaction then raging against the rationalism of the eighteenth century. Coleridge and Carlyle, Goethe and the German metaphysical thinkers, Saint Simon and, first in 1828, Comte were greedily studied, analysed, and assimilated. He discovered a sense of historical development instead of applying absolute philosophical maxims to all countries and all ages. Incessantly he checked the new ideas against the old; wherever the fabric of his former inculcated opinions gave way, he was busy weaving it anew. 'I never, in the course of my transition, was content to remain, for ever so short a time, confused and unsettled.' And with pride he says that 'Goethe's device of "many-sidedness" (*Vielseitigkeit*) was one which I would most willingly, at this period have taken for mine.'

The change in his outlook scandalized his old companions. Perhaps if a sworn communist of today were to announce to his comrades that he still held firm to their ideas, but had also discovered the value of feudalism and fairy-tales, the effect might be comparable. No, they considered him a deserter from the standard.

Fortunately, he was as strongly as ever in agreement with his father on the political questions of the day, which engrossed James's thoughts and conversation. As far as possible John avoided talking about their fundamental differences of opinion—either to avoid giving pain, or from his old fear of his father. But several of James's letters to other members of the family show how much John's secretive detachment from him irked his father. The

relationship between them, as it now took shape, lasted until James's death.

His father and his old friends were even more shocked by the new friendships that John formed at this time. This was the only time of his life when he actively sought personal contacts. He saw much of Maurice and Sterling, two young disciples of Coleridge, of James Stephen, who was an open evangelist, of d'Eichthal, and of the French Saint Simonians. Most of all James detested the friendship that sprang up between John and Carlyle, whose writings were to James nothing but 'insane rhapsody'. Carlyle read a series of articles from John's pen entitled 'The Spirit of the Age', which teemed with John's new-found truths, exclaimed 'Here is a new mystic', and sought John out when in London. The letters to Carlyle and Sterling are the warmest he ever wrote. His friendship with them was the nearest he ever came to a real human relationship. To Sterling, this 'most lovable of men' who 'had a genius for friendship', he became more attached than he ever was to any other man. The generous, ardent, impetuous Sterling fascinated the younger man, so shut up in himself and desperately craving for warmth and expansiveness. John became as intimate with him as it was possible for him to be and they met 'as brothers'. Sterling was the only man to whom John, for all his truthfulness, ever permitted a glimpse of his inner self.

But in spite of this he felt insecure, aimless, and intensely lonely. And he expected, as he wrote to Sterling, to remain so through life. Nobody had taken his father's former place as the centre of his existence. For a time, he abounded in admiration for Carlyle and was ready to assign to him the role of the super-being who was to rule his life. But Carlyle insisted that they met as equals, as 'two somethings'.

However, very soon he was to meet with the forceful, domineering personality, enhanced by all the magic of the utterly unknown other sex, who was to answer to the full his need for a spiritual sheet-anchor: Harriet Taylor. He was also to shock his father and his old and new friends alike by his headlong pursuit of the great passion of his life.

CHAPTER V

Love and the Good Life

1830–1832

FOUR Christopher Street, Finsbury Circus, in the City of London, was the home of a prosperous young couple. Every morning the husband departed for his office round the corner, while the young wife devoted herself to running the smooth establishment, supervising her two small sons, giving the necessary time to the complicated dress of the period, and attending to her cultural interests.

John Taylor was a junior partner in the family business which his grandfather, a stern Scotch Puritan, had founded over fifty years ago. The Taylors were drysalters or wholesale druggists. The firm and the family were highly respected, and counted among the more prominent merchants in the City.

But 'young Taylor's' interests were by no means restricted to money-making and the enjoyment of his home, position, and the good things of life, although he had a keen relish for all these. He was one of the leading members of the new Unitarian Chapel at South Place, which his family had helped to found and finance.

The small Unitarian congregations produced a great many of the progressive politicians and administrators and heads of committees. South Place Chapel was an important centre of advanced thought in London. Many links existed between the Unitarians and the group of Radicals round Bentham and Mill.

John Taylor was a convinced Radical. He gave a good deal of his time to public activities. Besides managing the finances of South Place Chapel he represented the London Unitarians on

several progressive committees, one of them set up by James Mill in 1825 for the establishment of London University. He was particularly concerned with the many political refugees flocking to England for asylum, after having conspired against the Bourbons in France or the hateful Austrian rule in Italy.

Thus, Harriet Hardy first knew John Taylor as an outstanding member of their church. The Hardys lived at Walworth, South London, where Thomas Hardy had been practising for many years as a successful surgeon and 'man-midwife'. He was an erratic and difficult man, particularly over money matters. The mother was an emotional woman, conscious of her own superior family background and forever 'denouncing forms and insisting that she would never act upon them'. Harriet was the third of seven children. As the first girl among several boys she was much indulged. A great deal of heated and unamiable argument went on in the home. Hardy earned enough money to have his children well educated. Several of the sons made good in life. Harriet herself, besides possessing the usual accomplishments, excelled in Italian, and took an interest in religious controversy.

John Taylor was almost thirty and a most eligible bachelor when he met Harriet, then eighteen, probably through a business connection between her father and his firm. He seems to have succumbed once and for all to the young girl—small, beautiful, intelligent, and intense. And Harriet felt happy and relieved to pass from the house of her sombre and domineering father to the shelter of this upright, generous, laughter-loving man, to whom she could look up, and who adored her.

With the consent of both families they were married on the 14th of March 1826. Their first son, Herbert, was born the following year, and a second son, Algernon called Haji, in 1830.

Their married life followed the expectedly even and prosperous course. Harriet was a competent woman. Authority and dignity came naturally to her. She had extremely good, if somewhat expensive, taste. Young Taylor, secretly proud, was pleased to gratify her wishes. His family approved of the hospitable young household. Uncle David, the senior partner, took a strong liking to this

pretty new niece, who had at last seduced 'young Taylor' into marriage and so promptly produced two successors for the firm.

Little did anyone suspect the thoughts that were hidden in the elegantly dressed, dark, small head, the turmoil that was stirring under Harriet's shapely bosom. She loved her husband and she loved the life beside him—but the facts of life had come as a horrible shock to her. What incredibly coarse and low indulgences of man were veiled by a white wedding! How could her husband, gentle, loving John Taylor, giving in to her every whim—how could he insist on such uncouthness? What *right* had he, had any man to enforce his will like this? She tried her best to hide behind headaches and ailments. She grew even more passionately fond of all things beautiful: paintings, music, above all her beloved poetry. She began to compose poetry—oh the heavenly escape into pure infinity!

Whence comst thou, sweet wind?
Didst take thy phantom form
'Mid the depth of forest trees?
Or spring, new born,
Of the fragrant morn,
'Mong the far-off Indian seas?

Where speedest thou, sweet wind?
Thou little heedest, I trow—
Dost thou sigh for some glancing star?
Or cool brow
Of the dying now,
As they pass to their home afar?

What mission is thine, o wind?
Say for what thou yearnest—
That, like the wayward mind,
Earth thou spurnest,
Heaven-ward turnest,
And rest canst nowhere find!

What did her husband think of it? He smiled indulgently—or was it a grin? It was no good showing him her poems, her essays.

He would only want to kiss her and he would end up by making love to her. No good trying to speak her mind to him. He would never understand her.

Thus, according to the classic psychological pattern, from a marriage in which the sexual cement was missing, the misunderstood, high-minded wife was emerging.

In many pages of passionate though strictly intellectual essays she poured forth her rebellion—in her mother's vein—against the power of 'the opinion of Society' against 'individual character'. There is a Nietzschean outcry against the 'conspiracy of the weak against the few who are strong'. And what a burst of disgust hides in the apparently balanced statements that she wrote at her elegant desk. 'It seems that all men, with the exception of a few lofty minded, are sensualists more or less—women on the contrary are quite exempt from this trait' (9, p. 76). What confession of personal experience in her sentence: 'In the present system of habits and opinions, girls enter into what is called a contract perfectly ignorant of the conditions of it, and that they should be so is considered absolutely essential for their fitness for it' (9, p. 77).

Sometimes John Taylor must have found his wife's reactions rather trying, particularly her habit of continuous arguing. Surely he was doing his best to please her in every way. But if he tried to shut her up with a kiss and a pat, she would turn quite stony for long spells on end.

At any rate she was not dull like many wives—you never knew what to expect next. And how proud a man could be of her! She was beautiful, now even more than as a girl. How well she entertained, with what grace and assurance she received their many English and foreign guests, how intelligently she talked on all the different subjects of the day, whether it was the exciting first steam-train now actually running between Stockton and Darlington; the Duke of Wellington's pigheadedness; Catholic Emancipation; the opera; or religious speculation. No, he was a lucky fellow and he adored her, and so did their two fine small boys. Probably all little women had their odd fancies, and the best thing to do was to laugh about them and wait for them to pass over.

To Harriet this condescending and phlegmatic attitude was maddening, the more so since by now she considered him much inferior to herself in intellect and refinement. She confided her secret rebellious thoughts to one or two chosen friends. Every Sunday, leaning on her husband's arm, she would go to South Place Chapel. Here the sermons of its minister, William Johnson Fox, were moving and elevating to the most sluggish of hearts. Fox was 'one of the few possessors of the natural gift of supreme oratorical power'. The burly little man with the black mane and piercing grey eyes ascribed his gift to the 'power of grace'. His fame as a preacher was quickly spreading. His speeches were like musical compositions appealing wholly to the emotions. After listening to him raptly for an hour or two, people would go home feeling as though their feet were raised several inches from the ground.

The spiritual effect of his sermons at the Chapel was heightened by the two gifted and unusual sisters, Eliza and Sarah Flower; their hymns and music often moved the congregation to tears.

These two poetic, fragile creatures had been brought up by their unorthodox father, Benjamin Flower, or rather had been left by him to develop their own inmost bent without any restraint or interference whatever. They were wholly unaffected and quite uninhibited; music and poetry and sympathy flowed from them in a fresh and natural stream. Sarah, the poetess, left to posterity her hymn 'Nearer, my God, to Thee'. But Eliza was the more remarkable of the two. She was an 'utterly spontaneous, almost involuntary character'. Her friends called her Ariel, and she indeed resembled this ethereal being when, lost to the world around her, she was playing upon her harp, her fine, symmetrical, spiritual face transfigured by the music. Transported by Fox's waves of passionate speech, the congregation would watch Eliza 'with heart, soul, voice, finger, frame, seeming all but born upward by the strain, as on wings of heaven. There were not many . . .' wrote Sarah of her, 'who could fly in her track' (7, p. 67).

One, however, felt she could. Harriet felt very near Eliza. They were kindred spirits and became close friends. Eliza, though the

elder, looked up to the beautiful young matron with the dignified ways.

Eliza, too, had her share of trouble to confide. When Benjamin Flower died in 1829, he left his daughters under the guardianship of Fox and they came to live at Fox's house. Eliza began to help Fox with his ever increasing work; without her as an untiring secretary, ready to do his donkey-work at all times of day and night, he could never have fulfilled his obligations as minister, public speaker, and editor of the *Monthly Repository*, the Unitarian periodical. Also, in the home, her sweet, self-effacing presence was soon felt all around, the house looked tidier, the meals were better, and above all his three children were at last looked after. The eldest, a deaf-mute, had never known such loving care before. Fox and Eliza were soon deeply in love with each other. And Mrs. Fox became justly restive. Her marriage, which had been unhappy for many years suddenly assumed importance for her through hurt vanity.

Under the influence of these experiences, Fox came to hold more and more advanced opinions on marriage and divorce, which he did not hesitate to propound in the *Monthly Repository*. He was, moreover, one of the few men to advocate completely equal rights for both sexes.

The ties uniting Harriet to Eliza and to Fox were soon to grow much more powerful.

Full of energy, rebellion and restlessness, sensitive and romantic like her favourite poet Shelley—such was Harriet's frame of mind. And romantic was the mood and the dress of the period. Regency was having its last flutter; the rigours of Victoria's reign were soon to begin and the chastisement of the Hungry Forties to subdue moods and fashions. But early in the eighteen-thirties ladies were attired in the most extravagant fashion of the nineteenth century. Tired of the classical white and the high Grecian waist of the Revolutionary period, women were intent on extravagant adornment. The tiny waist was accentuated by more and more puffing of the sleeves; while many skirts, expanded by padding and buckram, and lace jabots and ruffles, billowed the female form out still

further. Skirts were on the short side, hats were enormous and loaded with lace, frills, ribbons, plumes, and marabou. The coiffure was a pile of high puffs and loops and tortoiseshell combs.

All these demands of fashion Harriet adapted with taste and expensive restraint to her individuality. The romantic attire suited her admirably. 'Pale and passionate and sad-looking, a living romance heroine'—thus Carlyle describes her at this stage (6, p. 441). She carried herself so well and was so well proportioned that one did not notice how small she was. She had the drooping shoulders and the elongated, pearly throat that the taste of the time demanded. Enormous, expressive black eyes dominated her small dark head, bespeaking the overload of impassioned feeling and an active inquisitive intelligence. The features were regular, the nose long and fine, the mouth very round and full, the chin slightly receding, and the ears tiny, strangely deformed, and set extraordinarily low in the head. Her voice was memorable: low and sweet and extremely well articulated, it always commanded attention, though some thought it affected. Her movements were unusual, of undulating, swanlike grace. Her looks were striking, but too distinctive and individual to be of universal appeal. Harriet was indeed what she, wholly engrossed in her own fascinating personality, proudly felt herself to be—different.

This was the woman whom John Stuart Mill met in 1830—himself as innocent of woman as a babe. He was twenty-four, Harriet twenty-three years old.

John was still suffering from relapses into melancholia. He was still unable to take an interest in writing or discussions. His spirits had recently been depressed anew by the suicide of Eyton Tooke, his companion of several years. John was even more cast down by his own inability to feel deep personal grief, than by the loss of his friend. All he could do in honour of his friend's memory, he told himself, was to toil on for the good of humanity, which they both had had at heart.

Fox and James and John Mill knew each other through common friends and through Fox's contributions to the *Westminster Review*. Fox, who knew Harriet's dissatisfied state of mind and

nerves, had urged her for some time to meet young John Mill as a kindred spirit. Thus, one day early in 1830, John, as well as his friends Roebuck and Graham, received a note from Harriet requesting the pleasure of their company at dinner at five o'clock at Finsbury Square; Fox and Harriet Martineau, Fox's new literary *protégée*, were also of the party.

Thus, at the Taylors' dinner table, John faced for the first time those great dark eyes, challenging, provoking, adoring, which, from this moment onwards, were completely to dominate him until, as an old man, he closed his own eyes.

This was a company in which John could speak his mind freely. Even on this first night he revealed himself in his precise, hesitant manner as one of the few men alive who held views as extreme as Harriet herself on the position of women in society.

He was invited again and was soon communicating with Harriet on their mutual interests. But, from the first their deepest mutual interest was in each other. Feeling, sweet undreamt-of feeling, welled up and overflowed in John. Her presence, the very thought of her, were like a talisman holding at bay the aridity of emotion that had been his bane for years.

Accustomed by training and experience to the acceptance of ascetic, masculine values, he was completely overpowered by her intensely feminine atmosphere. Living in the realm of the intellect and extremely unobservant of his surroundings, he found almost uncanny Harriet's perception of life through the senses. Her quick grasp of the small practical concerns of life, her insight into human nature, and above all her passionate concern with beauty and human relationships were a revelation to him. Beauty as a value in its own right! He became deeply convinced then and there that the 'great occupation of woman should be to *beautify* life: to cultivate, for her own sake and that of those who surround her, all her faculties of mind, soul, body; all her powers of enjoyment; and to diffuse beauty, elegance, and grace, everywhere' (9, p. 67).

What more handsome compliment from her young philosopher friend could Harriet wish for?

Never having been in love before, he had no experience of the way in which love transforms all things. Anything Harriet's interest touched upon acquired a glow for him as under a magic wand. But neither now nor later did he realize that this heightened meaning derived from his own state; he fully ascribed it to every object in itself. With enthusiasm he read her favourite poets, went to see paintings and sculpture, admired Shelley and Corregio with her, discovered good and bad taste in furniture, clothes, the lay-out of a house or of a street, began to discern between feeling-truth and conventional correctness of behaviour, between subtle differences of motives and resultant behaviour—differences that his father had always derided.

With all these new worlds of wonder and interest opening out for him, how dull, gauche, *borné*, and smug John felt himself to have been before. How humbly he bowed before Harriet: did not her intelligence encompass all his old sphere—and so much more; her sensibility was that of an artist; her judgment of character that of an experienced man of the world; all pictorial and concrete aspects struck her at once, while he in his writings never trusted himself to use an image because he felt it might be incorrect; her capacity for loving and feeling was infinite compared with his own scanty endowment in this respect—and how accomplished and beautiful she was! Here at last was the superior being whom he could revere; to strive humbly to please her, to win her approval, made life worth living. He never learnt to discern between the image of Harriet created by his abject, immature love and the real woman.

Thus began the most conventional and, at the same time, most unconventional of Victorian love affairs. Life became incredibly full and rich. Never before or after was John so overflowing with energy as during the first flush of his passion for Harriet.

Having lain fallow during his depression his brain now began to teem with ideas. His most original thoughts began to germinate. Most were not written down until many years later. Early in 1830 he put on paper a first rough draft of his *Logic*. The essential ideas on the subject 'flashed upon him all at once' in the course of other

studies. He proceeded at once to write out the theories later contained in the second book of the *Logic*. The subject was then left in abeyance for five years. Also at this time he wrote *Five Essays on Some Unsettled Questions of Political Economy*, which are considered his most striking contribution to economic theory. His mind also grew once more full of plans for a book on the French Revolution, kindled by the political ferment that was now animating England and France simultaneously. This was one of his favourite subjects of conversation, his vast knowledge of French affairs set aglow by his old boyhood fervour.

With delight he joined the poetic circle of Harriet's unconventional friends, at which he could meet her as well as at the as yet formal gatherings at her house. Leigh Hunt in his *Blue Stocking Revels* has drawn a picture of the group: in addition to Fox and Eliza and Sarah Flower, there was Harriet Martineau with her robust, outspoken intellect, William Bridges Adams, who was later to make a fortune on railways, contributing his energetic argument, and another pair of charming, gifted, and pretty sisters, Margaret Gillies, the miniature painter, and Mary Gillies, the novelist. Young Robert Browning appeared as an adjunct of his adored Eliza Flower, who served him as a model for his epic poem *Pauline;* he was deeply mortified when accidentally he came across a mordant criticism by Mill and Harriet on the flyleaf of his work. But Mill and this circle were the first to hail another rising young poet: Alfred Tennyson.

Mill could not but perceive that his feelings were fully returned by Harriet—although nothing was said—barely admitted even to thought. All the proprieties were strictly observed. There was some relief of the strain in the close intercourse with Fox and Eliza, whose love was known to them all. Yet nobody doubted Eliza's goodness and purity—so why, Harriet thought, should she, in a similar position, suffer censure.

Between her and Mill there was a growing exchange of notes, manuscripts, and ideas; and as his visits became more and more frequent and informal, John Taylor grew restive, as well he might. He remonstrated with Harriet. Harriet argued, with faultless

logic, and a great many words, and considerable superiority, that she and Mr. Mill were doing nothing the world might not see, as her husband well knew, and that their relationship was above common gossip. 'But you are fond of him—too fond of him!' Yes, Harriet was very fond, indeed, of Mr. Mill. But this did not affect either her husband or her children, her feeling for all continued the same as before.

Nonetheless a coldness developed between the two men, which made it impossible for John to frequent the house. But at the end of the year Harriet found, to her dismay, that she was pregnant again. The child, Helen, was born on 31 July 1831. When it was conceived, and during her pregnancy, Harriet was permeated with her fresh passion for Mill. In a strange way the child's life was to be dedicated to shielding the relationship between her mother and Mill from public censure. Even before its birth it brought about the reconciliation between Mill and Mr. Taylor: the husband's uneasiness was stilled; besides it was imperative to humour Harriet in her condition. John began his calls again. Harriet resumed her sway over him.

Their mounting tide of feeling coincided with the rise of political unrest. Their whole circle and all their many Radical friends were passionately involved in the agitation for the reform of Parliament.

The nineteenth century has come to be regarded as a period of inevitable progress towards democracy. It seems hard to realize that in 1831, during the 'great agony week' from the 8th to the 16th of May, the English revolution was ready to break loose from one hour to the next. Never since then have political passions run so high in England.

The governing classes were firmly entrenched in the Commons, the Lords, the Church, the Judicature. But ever since the American Revolution there had been a movement urging reform of what was rotten in the state. Earl Grey, in 1797, was the last Whig in the House to move for Reform. After that time the French Revolution had frightened Whigs as much as Tories. During the ensuing years of repression the Radicals alone kept alive the

demand for reform: Radical working men and small groups of Radical middle-class reformers fought for the enfranchisement of all men earning £100 or over per annum—a measure that would give one million men the vote. This reform the privileged classes strenuously opposed.

In 1828 the Duke of Wellington, Prime Minister and symbol of reaction, defied a hostile House of Commons with his famous 'No surrender!' to any reform whatever. From then on Parliamentary Reform (now with a capital R) and the conditions of the industrial classes were the two subjects on which the efforts of all Radicals centred. The Political Unions up and down the country were rallying the working men, while the farm labourers were marching and burning ricks in their agitation for Reform.

The July Revolution of 1830 in Paris gave great impetus to the revolutionary mood in England. Throughout the country news from France was eagerly awaited. There had been no arrivals from Paris for three or four days. Rumours of fighting in France were spreading.

Radicals from all over London were flocking to Francis Place's library at Charing Cross, which had become known as a Radical coffee-house and meeting-place. An unusual crowd of politicians, working men, orators, gathered there discussing possible developments in Paris. Then somebody came in waving a French paper printed on the evening of the 29th of July. Somebody who knew French caught hold of it, was lifted up on a table, and amid intense silence haltingly translated the news: the brave French people had deposed the despot Charles X. A storm of cheering broke out, there were embraces, tears. A clear voice broke into a hymn of thanksgiving in which they all joined. Then people streamed out to spread the splendid news.

Were Fox, Mill, John Taylor present at this gathering? The news aroused John's utmost enthusiasm. With some friends, John Austin, Roebuck, and Graham, he dashed over to Paris to be among those glorious people, to look, listen, and bring back to England the spirit of the age. John gained access to several of the leading young men of the popular party in Paris. He was much

impressed by their spirit of '*Aide-toi-même*' and by their wisdom and restraint coupled with purposefulness. He spent the greater part of August in France.

Upon his return he once more began to write furiously for the press. He made it his business to inform the English public about French politics. During the next few years his writings on this subject alone, mainly in the *Examiner*, would add up to several volumes.

When the Duke of Wellington seemed inclined to start another war in order to interfere in France, an ugly mood began to spread among the English populace. Lord Grey's liberal ministry came in March 1831, and the people were holding their breath in hope. On the 21st of March the second reading of the Reform Bill was carried. A wave of enthusiasm swept the country; the night found all London illuminated, from every window shone bright lights, fires were lit on commons—it was an entirely spontaneous demonstration.

But the Bill was defeated in two committees. And on the 22nd of April the King prorogued Parliament.

Now every reformer throughout the country made ready in earnest. Those who could write, wrote—like John. Those who could speak, spoke—like Fox; 'the little preacher was the bravest of us all' said Francis Place, himself indefatigably organizing. Eliza kept by Fox's side in all he did. 'The Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill' was the general warcry shared by the new Parliament. But the Tories successfully obstructed its passage. And on the 8th of October reform newspapers all over the country appeared with the black edge of mourning: the Lords had turned down the Bill!

Huge meetings sprang up everywhere at once. Fires in the countryside were spreading wildly. In the Political Unions it was Reform or Revolution. Many of them were training their members in the use of firearms. A mammoth procession, organized by Place, crossed London on the 13th of October. On the 8th of May, the belligerent Duke of Wellington was instructed to form a new tough ministry. 'My own regiment alone can beat all the rabble of

London,' the Duke boasted, and he told a Manchester deputation 'if the people of England won't be quiet there is a way of making them!'

But by now the people had got the bit between their teeth. London was placarded as never before, it looked like a city in revolution. Housewives stocked up food as for a siege. The slogan 'No taxes will be paid' appeared in countless windows. Nobody dreamt of working—meetings took place all day long and everywhere, on every kerbstone. The middle classes were at one with the working class. The revolution was felt to be imminent from one hour to the next; all that was wanted was a lead.

At this point Francis Place's political instinct achieved a triumph. He drew up a poster that next day appeared all over London and one day later all over England:

TO STOP THE
DUKE
GO FOR
GOLD

The people began a nation-wide run on the banks, demanding their deposits in gold. The depletion of the gold reserve was not a thing to be contemplated with detachment by the Governors of the Bank of England. On the 18th of May 1832 a deputation from the City and the Bank saw a representative of the King.

In consequence, the King, at last, asked Lord Grey to form a ministry with powers to carry the Bill. The will of the people prevailed.

The Reform Act did not enfranchise the greater part of the working class. Not until 1867 was universal manhood suffrage attained. In retrospect it is tempting to treat this development as obvious and inevitable. But in truth, England, a great imperial power with a strong governing class, might just as easily have taken the road of Bismarck's Imperial Germany. It was due to the untiring efforts of thousands of democratic speakers and writers propounding universal suffrage that England finally became a democracy.

John Mill was engrossed in all this political excitement. Yet he wrote to Sterling who had turned planter in the West Indies: 'You will perhaps think from this long, prosing, rambling talk about politics that they occupy much of my attention; but, in fact, I am myself often surprised how little I really care about them . . . The only thing which I can usefully do . . . is to work out *principles* . . . principles of morals, government, law, education, above all self-education' (4, vol. I, p. 8).

The surpassing interest had been taken out of politics by Harriet and her preoccupation with self-cultivation. Shortly before and after her confinement she could naturally see but little of John. During his summer holidays in 1831 he went on one of his habitual walking tours to the Lakeland. His love heightened his sensibility, and he was more than ever receptive to the 'splendid scenery' surrounding him. He visited Wordsworth and yielded himself to the older man's tranquil and many-sided personality and to the charm of his harmonious household. Of all the methodically kept diaries of his journeys and walking expeditions, this one makes perhaps the most lively reading—it was written for Harriet.

He returned to her orbit. From now on none of his writings went to press without her having seen and approved it.

Her comments, though usually sweetly admiring, were also quite unforseeable. This, to him, was an attraction. It supplied the mixture of fear and delight that he had grown used to under his father. Harriet had a knack of suddenly reproaching, of making those near her feel guilty and uneasy, for quite unexpected reasons, that would have put off another man, but was for John an added bond. It made her approval all the sweeter.

Harriet herself quickly resumed her interests. She even began to publish some articles, poems, and book reviews in Fox's *Monthly Repository*. But being *femme inspiratrice* to John Mill was far more rewarding. She induced him to write out his new views on poetry and poetic cultivation and to publish them in the *Repository*. The more Harriet saw of him and the better she came to know his pure and lucid mind, the more enraptured she became with this auburn-haired, clear-featured, and refined young man who was

so obviously destined for greatness. To be near him spiritually was, so she thought, her greatest wish. He showed her also his old writings, and Harriet professed herself so delighted with his translations of Plato's Dialogues that he published them in the *Repository*.

John carried his feeling for Harriet into all his occupations, and with Harriet it was the same. They became the heart of each other's existence. But still no avowal of their feelings had been made. In May 1832 he wrote privately for Harriet a paper on the question that touched so nearly her personal problems: marriage and divorce. He began: 'She to whom my life is devoted—' and Harriet knew that it was. But she chafed under the conventions and yearned with all her heart to hear from him the everlastingly magic words. Is woman always the one to cast aside conventions when passion is roused? Is man always more bound by convention? It certainly was so in this case. In all their high-flown discussions, in their almost daily meetings, with fire flashing from her enormous dark eyes, colour transfusing her pale pearly skin, Harriet challenged anything that restricted feelings as low and vulgar. In her every word and gesture she dared him: 'If I could be Providence for the world for a time, for the express purpose of raising the condition of women, I should come to *you* to know the *means*—the *purpose* would be to remove all interference with affection, or with anything which is . . . demonstrative of affection' (9, p. 75) Could anything be more direct?

Under such fire it took a John Mill with all his innocence, rigid self-consciousness, and top-heaviness to keep dutifully within the bounds of theoretical discussion. But he was feeling bemused—where really lay duty, virtue, strength of character?

Poor, jolly, good-natured Mr. Taylor who was expected to live up to such daily comparison! He even became ashamed of his healthy appetite! Harriet, of course, had lost hers in her passion, and John habitually subsisted on so little: tea and toast and an egg for breakfast at ten at India House, and a sparing dinner at five at home, that was all.

In spite of his long forbearance, and although he knew that he

was in for interminable arguments, Mr. Taylor, in the summer of 1832 delivered an ultimatum. John was away on a walking-tour in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. But his diary was pouring in to Harriet in the form of long letters.

On his way back, in the New Forest, he found her longed-for answer. But the contents were to be a great shock: Mr. Taylor had demanded that Harriet should 'renounce sight' of Mr. Mill—and Harriet had had to consent. She was suffering, oh how deeply! She was being deprived of the only companionship that made life worth living. But it had to be—her innermost being had to be crushed by conventions, sacrificed to idle gossip. They must not meet any more. He must not even write any more, she could not bear it.

John, in agony, replied. His heartfelt letter is in French, he found it easier to let go emotionally in the language of that emotional people:

'Blessed be the hand that traced these letters! She has written to me—it is enough: well though I realise that it is to bid me an everlasting adieu.

. . . Her road and mine have parted, she decrees it: but they can, they must meet again. Whenever that may be, where-ever that may be . . . she will find me always the same I have ever been, I am now.

She will be obeyed: my letters shall not trouble her tranquility any more, nor add a single drop to her cup of griefs. She will be obeyed for the reasons she gives—she would be even if she had merely indicated to me her wishes. To obey her is for me a necessity of existence.

She won't refuse the offer, I hope, of the little flowers which I gathered for her in the depth of the New Forest . . .' (9, p.38)

'To obey her is to him a necessity.' This is, indeed, the key to their whole relationship.

However, a *rapprochement* was engineered soon by their circle of friends. John called, with Mr. Taylor's consent, to introduce two of his French friends who had come to England as refugees.

Mr. Taylor received all three of them cordially enough. Did he trust that Harriet had seen reason, at last, or else was he worn down by her?

During the winter the Taylors moved house to 17 Kent Terrace, Park Road, on the western edge of Regent's Park. This was a new, fashionable district. Harriet had urged this move on her husband in order to escape from the confines of the Taylor family and the South Place congregation. John Taylor knew his wife's fondness for arranging new surroundings and hoped that it might take her mind off John Mill. But with a woman in love everything revolves around the one thought, which animates and pervades all else.

Harriet threw herself into the making of her new home, the setting-to-be of many heart-to-heart talks with her adored and adoring friend. She furnished it in the current style in which, as in personal attire, accumulation of detail was taken for beauty. The heavily patterned wallpapers were crowded with pictures and miniatures, the floors were thickly carpeted, the windows heavily hung with curtains. Every piece of furniture was upholstered, decorated, embroidered—even coal scuttles, doorstops, and the indispensable spittoon. Flowers made of shells were mounted under glass and arranged on tables along the walls. Vases, fire-screens, the heavily lacquered tables were adorned with pictures, the newly-invented photographs were grouped about. It required special agility to move about a room without upsetting any of the many pieces of furniture and ornaments. It must have taken Harriet a good deal of time and thought to arrange her new house to her own exacting taste.

Did she receive John working at one of the beaded embroideries on which the ladies of her time were for ever engaged? At the new residence John was an almost daily caller. Frequently he would walk from the City along the river and then ride to Regent's Park. Their literary cooperation became even closer; much of his writing for the press, John came to look upon as a joint enterprise, many of the subjects were suggested first by Harriet. Yes—'to obey her was to him a necessity of existence'.

CHAPTER VI

Cleaving unto Woman

1833–1834

JAMES MILL'S last years brought fulfilment in many ways. In 1830 he reached the highest position attainable in his office career, that of Chief Examiner. His circumstances were opulent. He wielded great influence, both in Indian affairs and home politics. He moved to a fashionable house and had all his nine children growing up around him. He saw the Reform Bill passed and was full of hopes for the country. He had fame and was, perhaps, the richest man alive in true friends, from working men to those in the highest positions. The only clouds were his declining health and the grief John caused him by his stubborn attachment to Mrs. Taylor.

John, too, gained a step in his office career. He had been his father's assistant at £600 a year; he now moved up to Head of his Department and fifth in rank in the hierarchy of the Company, at a salary of £800. Although he could have afforded to set up house for himself, he continued to live at home as a matter of course. He must have felt it a relief not to be any more his father's direct subordinate at the office. They were, however, closely cooperating in piloting the East India Company through a major trouble: the renewal of its charter by the Government. It is likely that James Mill had been made Chief Examiner for the express purpose of doing this.

By an act of 1813 the Company had received a renewal of its power of India Government, but lost its monopoly of Indian

trade, keeping only the monopoly of the China tea trade. By now, public opinion in England had grown very hostile to the renewal of the Company's charter, which was due to expire in 1834. In both Houses unusually large committees of forty to fifty members were appointed. Their work of collecting evidence was carried on during all the upheavals of the Reform agitation, the committees being dissolved and reconstituted with every new Parliament.

James Mill was examined on all aspects of the government of India from London: the land tax, the salt and opium taxes, the China tea revenue, village settlements, and the machinery of Indian government, both in London and in India; on the judicial system, and on the dependent States. John was heard on education in India. Both impressed the many committees by their consummate knowledge of details of Indian customs and by the free admission of grave faults in the government of India.

James, with the help of John, also wrote the carefully deliberated state papers to the Government on behalf of the East India Company, which really settled the terms of the new Bill. The result was that the Company continued to govern India from India House but lost its monopoly of the China tea trade.

In one of these committees the question was put: could a person form a valid judgment of Indian natives and customs without being personally acquainted with them? James replied: 'If the question refers to myself, I am far from pretending to a perfect knowledge of the people of India.' It is indeed strange that neither of them ever showed any inclination to visit India.

Together with the Reform Bill, the renewal of the charter must have occupied a great deal of their conversation during the years up to 1834.

In the summer of 1831 the family moved to the new house James had bought, a large villa, Maitland House, at Vicarage Place in Kensington. Here James and the family entertained in much grander style but in the same manly spirit as before. The summer months were spent as before at the cottage at Mickleham. The extremely abstemious personal habits of the family remained unchanged; they continued to eat most sparingly, to walk

extensively, and all of them worked inordinately as a matter of course.

James took great interest in his new garden—the old country-dweller asserting himself. He had new fruit trees planted and each tree was dedicated to one of the children.

By their peculiar mode of home education the children were much more solidly united, spent longer hours together than others, and had fewer outside friends. John was now drawing near his thirtieth year, while 'the three little ones', Derry, Mary, and Geordie, were between fifteen and twelve years old. Except for John's year in France, none of them seems ever to have been away from home for any length of time. All the children, including John, still did duty in reading aloud to James, and all detested the task. 'I have been reading to my father,' Derry wrote, 'when out in the carriage for his airing . . . (He) got tired of Swift's Lilliput and Brobdingnag, and he said I read it so ill, that unless the subject was so interesting as to take his attention from my reading, he could not bear it; but reading against the sound of the carriage wheels, for two hours and a half, I should not mind, if I had the consolation of giving any pleasure, but in addition to my sore throat, I have the satisfaction of being reminded at every turn that I am giving pain, instead of pleasure' (1, p. 407).

The second son, James Bentham, now about twenty, was destined for the Indian Civil Service. After being trained by his father and John he was allowed to attend the University of London for four years. His post-graduate work was again done under his father, who set and heard his reading. Later the young man excelled himself at the Indian Civil Service College. But his father persisted in considering him mediocre. One of the father's letters to this son at college is characteristic:

'My dear James, . . . I was much pleased to see you had the highest mark in everything last month. You must strive hard to have the same in the remainder.

The difficulties you are in about the fate which awaits you in point of honours can only be met by your utmost exertions. He

who works more than all others will in the end excel all others. Difficulties are made to be overcome. Life consists of a succession of them. And he gets best through them, who has best made up his mind to contend with them.

I do not like to give you any instructions about your Essay; both because it would not be fair towards those with whom you have to contend, and because I am desirous to see what you yourself make of it. . . .

We have had H. Bickersteth and Lady Jane for several days of last week (at Mickleham). And his conversation is always an enlivener. I am the better for it.

Yours truly,

J. Mill' (1, p. 397).

This second son was the first to leave the family circle. Early in 1836 he took up his appointment in India. Every member of the family joined in the monthly epistle to him. His father concludes his first contribution—which was also to prove his last letter to him: '*Sis felix et ne sis indignus ut sis*'.

Still living as dutiful eldest son, brother, and tutor in his father's house, John must have had a gruelling time of it. He was torn between conflicting loyalties. On the one hand there was Harriet urging complete abandonment to their feeling as the highest truth and reality in their lives, and on the other was his old code of honour and a crescendo of warnings from all sides against the alliance. He was suffering intensely.

Harriet had set the tone of their intercourse which was the frank showing of their deep regard for each other to her husband and to the world in general; no impropriety, and a lofty disregard for gossip. She considered their relationship 'an edifying picture for those poor wretches who cannot conceive friendship but in sex'. John went to Regent's Park almost daily. He accompanied Harriet to lectures, concerts, exhibitions. Twice a week he dined alone with Harriet, while Mr. Taylor dined at his club.

But Harriet was yearning for more—she had still received no declaration of John's love. All her beauty, wit, seductiveness, and

intelligence were bent on extracting the confession from him. She pleaded 'higher sincerity', denounced his 'reservation', his 'closeness' and 'the ponderous dull atmosphere of custom and respectability'.

In an impassioned letter to John, she wrote:

The difference between you and me . . .is, that I have always *yearned* to have *your* confidence with an intensity of wish which has *often*, for a time, swallowed up the naturally stronger feeling —the affection itself—you have not given it, not that you wished to reserve—but that you did not *need* to give—but not having that need of course you had no perception that I had and so you had discouraged confidence from me 'til the habit of *checking first thoughts* has become so strong that when in your presence timidity has become almost a *disease* of the nerves. It would be absurd only it is so painful to notice in myself that every word I ever speak to you is detained a second before it is said 'til I am quite sure I am not by implication asking for your confidence. It is but that the only being who has ever called forth all my faculties of affection is the only person in whose presence I ever felt constraint (9, p. 47).

In their interminable discussions of their situation John's wish for the respect of the world came to be designated as his 'old vanity of vanities'. He was made to feel acutely guilty over the hard struggle it cost him to part company with the opinion of the world, and with his 'former mode of doing good in the world'. Did not Harriet, as a woman, sacrifice infinitely more? And yet she did not even count it a sacrifice.

While he was in the enchanted circle of her presence, Harriet seemed so right. Yet, when he stepped out of it, how wrong his position appeared to himself; here he was, breaking up a home, damaging a good man's name, endangering the honour and social position of the woman he loved, and—this last he could not help feeling acutely—damaging his own reputation. What was right, what was wrong? His letters are full of references to this question, which he tried to solve in his usual theoretical way. He

even read, for the first time in his life, the New Testament in an attempt to find an answer to his moral dilemma.

He began to dread visitors at India House and private talks with friends. Any of his old associates who dared broach the subject to him came under an immediate ban. Mrs. Grote, in whose house he had come and gone since he was a young boy, whose tea - and dinner-parties he had attended for many years, felt called upon to bring him to his senses. One day she sailed into his office and, to his utter mortification, with her usual frankness and in a loud voice, made a resounding scene, calling him a 'wayward intellectual child' dangling from Mrs. Taylor's apron-strings; she left, telling him archly to mend his ways at once. He never set foot in her house again.

The impetuous Roebuck, who also felt himself to be John's truest friend, could not restrain himself. He felt he had to protect John against himself. He could not stand by and let him, of all people, make a fool of himself. A force like John Mill's to be lost for Reform—over a petticoat! John heard him in stony silence. In the afternoon, when Roebuck called at the office for their habitual walk together along the river, he was told that John was 'not available'. John never spoke to him again.

Old Grote, too, came. He enquired about John's writing—yes, the draft of the *Logic* was progressing well enough. John raised eyes of suffering to him. Grote in his mild way asked meaningfully: 'John, I refuse to lose you for a friend. May I speak?' John bowed his head. 'Peace of mind, an honourable name, John, are great things to a man. I have known cases—a very, very few—where the woman was worth sacrificing them. Yes. My dear boy, it is for you to be the judge. Think well, John, and coolly. And above all, John: you may well despise me for giving you advice which I myself have been too weak to follow in my own life: do not let yourself be pushed by a woman against your own better judgment. Be—more of a man than me.' John walked with him to the door.

Life at home became a terrific strain. James Mill, outraged by the gossip of their circle, spoke his mind freely in the family and

among friends. And he could be extremely scathing. His cough was rattling incessantly, consumption was rapidly killing him. But he still had his incisive manner. In a burst of fury he taxed his son with being in love with another man's wife. For the first time in his life, he even begged his son to give up the relationship. 'My father, I will try—to do what is—right. I cannot promise more'.

The right and the wrong of the case seem patently obvious, but who will deny Harriet's assertion that a true great love such as theirs also had a right to life? Her entrancing, masterful personality and John's own crying need for submission to another's authority were powerful allies. In the summer of 1833 the dam of John's resistance broke.

Harriet was staying at the cottage Mr. Taylor had taken for her and little Helen at Kingston-on-Thames, where John visited her for the week-end, Here, at last, Harriet heard from his lips that he loved her. She was elated. She wrote him a triumphant note:

In the beautiful stillness of this lovely country—and with the fresh feeling of all the enjoyment it has been to him—and so soon after that which to him is such a quick-passing pleasure—. . . heart and soul take their rest in the peace of ample satisfaction after how much worry and care which of that kind at least has passed for ever—o this sureness of an everlasting spiritual home is itself the blessedness of the blessed . . . O my own love, whatever it may or may not be to you, you need never regret for a moment what has already brought such increase of happiness and can in no possible way increase evil (9, p. 45).

John put up one last struggle before surrendering for good. He confessed to Harriet even now his weak hesitation, his feeble aversion to scandal, 'My strength is not equal to the circumstances in which I have placed myself'. He felt himself to be in a dishonourable position, His weakness maddened Harriet. She entreated him, she half-fearfully commanded him, to show himself equal to their troubles now:

'*Yes* these circumstances *do* require greater strength than any other—the greatest—that which you have, and which if you had

not I should never have loved you, I should not love you now. In this, as in all these important matters there is no medium between the *greatest*, *all*, and none'.

Her one dread was that even now his confession of love might prove quicksand.

'I am glad that you have said it—I am *happy* that you have—no one with any fineness and beauty of character but must feel compelled to say *all* to the being they really love, or rather with any *permanent* reservation it is not love . . . If all the good you have written in the last two or three notes be *firm truth*, there is good enough even for me. The most horrible feeling I ever know is when for moments the fear comes over me that *nothing* which you say of yourself is to be absolutely relied on—that you are not sure even of your strongest feelings. Tell me again that it is not' (9, p. 47).

Harriet prevailed. 'I have ceased to will,' John told her. Henceforth, and for ever after, he obeyed her will—and gladly.

John was not the only one with whom Harriet had to contend for her passion. Her husband, too, struggled against this growing entanglement. Again and again he demanded of Harriet that she should give up communication with Mr. Mill. He genuinely loved his wife. She had the power of making him soar to his highest level. But he had no wish to stay in the clouds for ever. It was the very devil being involved with a woman like Harriet. He had the same experience as John: in her own estimation she was always right. One could hardly help believing so while listening to her. Her affection for him, her regard for him, her husband, had not grown less. On the contrary, the longer she knew the general run of men the more she admired, she liked, his uprightness, his honesty. She did her duty by the children. The attachment between Mr. Mill and herself was pure—her husband knew that as well as they themselves. It was despicable to listen to low scandal. All true. And yet, when he entered his club and the fellows stopped short in their talk, and then hailed him with too great a heartiness, when he came back to his home in the evening, never

able to escape the traces of another man who pervaded his wife's every thought—God, how wrong she was. The things he had to listen to from his family. Even the office boy did not seem to respect him any more, He could not bear it any longer. She must either give up Mr. Mill, or live apart from him, her husband.

During endless wearying arguments, Harriet stubbornly refused to give up seeing John, and furiously resented and contended her husband's right to dictate to her. Finally a trial separation was agreed upon. In September 1833 Harriet went to Paris. She was to stay there for six months. On the 10th of October John joined her there. The die was cast—or so it seemed.

Now that the struggle was over, John felt deeply happy. He was full of hopes and plans for the future. Whatever was good for Harriet, must be good for him, too. They were one. They must begin a new life, somewhere in a new world. Australia was talked of. John had taken an active interest in the activities of Wakefield, Molesworth, and Charles Buller in the National Colonization Society, which worked for assisted emigration and organized development of Australia and New Zealand. He and Harriet would go there.

The weeks in Paris with Harriet were the most intensely emotional in John's whole life. For once he was on the verge of beginning to let go. Alone with his beloved in the enchanting city, surrounded by the tongue so dear to him, and the easy-going, lively French—his inner rigidity began to loosen. Harriet felt that all this was right—so it must be right: their staying at the same hotel, addressing each other with endearments, holding hands in the little cafés on the pavement, walking through the galleries arm in arm, in the evening slipping his hand round Harriet's waist while she played with his fingers, eating grapes from the same bunch like any young lovers, and kisses in the dark, warm, summer nights. They revelled in being together at all hours. And they talked and talked and talked, without reserve. A week seemed like an age of living to John—and now they had six of them together. They came nearer to each other than ever before, and were happier together than either had believed possible. Their mutual

adoration increased. John had never thought more humbly of himself compared to Harriet, never felt himself less worthy of her —'I am ready to kill myself for not being like her and worthy of her' (4, vol. II, p. 378). While Harriet wrote of him to Eliza Flower: 'O this being seeming as though God had willed to show the type of the possible elevation of humanity. To be with him wholly is my ideal of the noblest fate for all states of mind and feeling which are lofty and large and fine, he is the companion spirit and heart desire' (9, p. 54).

Yet, contrary to all appearances, their relationship remained even now strictly Platonic. Harriet willed it so. The gossips in London might well shrug their shoulders: what else does a man go off to Paris with another man's wife for? Why this reservation now that all thoughts of their reputation had finally been flung to the winds? John was entirely guided by Harriet. The explanation must be sought in her.

An aversion against sexuality on Harriet's part might be accounted for by her early experiences in marriage. But her overriding passion for John might well have healed this. This continence, sitting so ill on her emphatic unconventionality, was probably based on more morbid inclinations. In later years we find her again and again dwelling, with the utmost intensity, on cases of wife-beating, of cruelty towards women at home or in factories, of sexual assaults, and of corporal punishment. She induced Mill to publish articles against such offences. In the small notebook containing the list of his published writings there appears again and again, after such subjects the entry 'Very little of this was mine'. It is indeed hard to imagine Mill indulging on his own initiative in a most drastic description of the flogging of a maid at the hands of her employers. This preoccupation with, and passionate railing against, such practices denote that some primitive spring in Harriet herself was touched. A trace of masochism is part of a normal woman's psychology; it fits her for the job of childbirth. But Harriet's self-conscious pride in her loftiness and purity, her aversion to all 'coarse' sexual appetites, her clinging to 'propriety', coupled with her hungry interest in sadistic treatment of

women—all point to a deep-seated masochism unfitting her for normal physical love. It was this urge that also forced her to arrange her life as a self-sacrifice, at the same time hopelessly tangling up that of John and her husband.

Soon, by her tortuous reasoning, to have stopped short of sexual intercourse was to become the 'sacrifice of her own happiness' to husband and children.

Stirred in all her emotions she was writing long explanatory letters to John Taylor. She protested that she was the same as ever, she showed him her affection, her respect, her concern for the children, and she regretted deeply the grief she was causing him. Mr. Taylor, naturally optimistic, was induced to believe that 'distance makes the heart grow fonder', that the separation was doing its work. He answered begging his wife to return to her home and declared that her loss would make him for ever wretched and would break up his whole life.

Harriet saw that he had misunderstood what she had written to him. But his letters threw her into new indecisions. She felt she could not bring herself to ruin his life. On the other hand giving up her love was out of the question, now more than ever. But to John's dismay she now began to assert that it was equally impossible to surmount her consideration for her dear husband, and that this blocked the path to their complete union and their beginning of a new life together.

After protracted negotiations she finally accepted neither man as a life companion. She was proud to be henceforth no more than a *Seelenfreundin* to both. And both men felt under the deepest obligation to her. Had she not sacrificed her social position to John? Was she not giving up the great love of her life for her husband's sake? Both men accepted this version and position.

John returned to London in November. Mr. Taylor went to Paris and brought Harriet home with him in time for Christmas.

CHAPTER VII

Withdrawal from the World

1835–1840

JOHN and Harriet continued their course of braving the opinion of the world. They went out together, they visited their common friends, John introduced Harriet to the Bullers and the Carlyles; they attended some parties together. But the circle was of necessity limited.

Whereas Harriet, with her natural inclination to martyrdom, gloried in thus bearing witness to her love, to John each appearance in public was an ordeal. He found it hard to live up to the part assigned to them by Harriet: to be of the few, the strong, the outstanding, who defy conventionality. Also, more of the gossip about them reached his ears than hers. On the other hand nothing was more precious and satisfying to Harriet than the hours that they spent alone together, while John felt a great need to balance her intenseness and her incessant discussion of their respective feelings and positions by the presence of others. There was a 'Saturday plan' afoot under which W. J. Fox, the Flower sisters, and John and Harriet were to go on walking expeditions together. 'I hope we shall meet oftener,' he wrote to Fox, 'we four or rather five—as we did on Tuesday—I do not see half enough of you—and I do not see half enough of *anybody* along with her—*that* I think is chiefly what is wanting now—that and other things like it'.

But the circle of friends whom they had in common was soon to shrink even more. Perhaps the very precariousness of her own

social position caused Harriet to pass censure on Eliza Flower's departure from accepted moral standards.

In 1834 Sarah Flower married William Bridges Adams. Eliza stayed on in the Fox family. Mrs. Fox protested, and finally invoked the judgment of the South Place congregation. Things came to a head. The majority stood by Fox and, with him, cut loose from organized Unitarianism. Mr. and Mrs. Fox separated. Fox and his children moved to Bayswater, and Eliza appeared as the head of the household. Indeed, who else was there to look after Fox and the children? But many drawing-room doors shut against her—Harriet Taylor's among them. Both Fox and the unworldly Eliza felt incredulous surprise. Fox's cordial visits to Mill's home at Kensington, and his meetings there with Carlyle, naturally stopped also.

Harriet's motto was: defy the conventions but within the limits of propriety. She never acknowledged even to herself that trespassing beyond these limits was no temptation to her but rather the reverse. She always claimed full credit for observing the proprieties. She was quite sincere in regarding her own conduct as exemplary and above reproach. 'I should spoil four lives and injure others' by any other course. And she sanctioned Mill's apologia of their course in the *Autobiography:* 'We did feel bound that our conduct should be such as in no degree to bring discredit on her husband nor therefore on herself.'

Their friendship with the Carlyles crumbled more slowly but owing to a more dramatic incident. The four people had been strongly drawn to each other in the beginning. Carlyle found John 'one of the best people he ever saw and surprisingly attached to him which was another merit'. Jane Carlyle and Harriet, each so unusual in her own way, had taken a great liking to each other. For years and as late as October 1833, John had been planning to write on the French Revolution, observing that he found the greatest difficulty involved in 'how to speak of Christianity . . . as by far the greatest and best thing which has existed on this globe, but which is gone never to return'. When Carlyle decided to write on the Revolution John with a mental generosity typical of

him handed over the rich material he had accumulated over the years. Carlyle finished the first volume early in 1835 and gave it at once to Mill to read and correct. He read much of it aloud to Harriet. Then, on the evening of the 6th of March, he and Harriet drove up to the Carlyle's house in Cheyne Row. On looking out of the window and seeing them both pale and shaken Mrs. Carlyle exclaimed: 'Gracious Providence, John Mill has gone off with Mrs. Taylor!' But what had actually happened was far more serious for the Carlyles. John ran in and stammered that the manuscript of the *French Revolution* had been destroyed—burnt—through a terrible carelessness of his, the manuscript had got among the waste paper for kitchen use. It was gone, to the last scrap! After Harriet had driven home, John sat with the Carlyles till late at night, and Jane had to try to console both men. To John's intense relief, Carlyle at least accepted money compensation. Later, when the volume, rewritten, appeared, John made its fame by a bold review beginning thus: 'This is not so much a history, as an epic poem; and notwithstanding, or even in consequence of this, the truest of histories. On the whole, no work of greater genius, either historical or poetical, has been produced in this country for many years, (2, pp. 49-50). This established Carlyle's success. Even so, the Carlyles persuaded themselves that Harriet had been the instigator of the burning of the original manuscript. Although the facts are against this myth, which has survived in literary history, modern psychology would, perhaps, allow this version.

Thus their inner circle contracted.

Gradually the elegant and clever dinner parties at the Taylors' became less frequent. John Taylor's genial, generous ways with all men were smothered by self-consciousness; what were these people saying among themselves about him, the husband who had not been found good enough by his wife? He turned increasingly to wine and food and the grosser pleasures of life for his comfort. Harriet was concerning herself about his health, but always on a note of reproach and blame—it was not in her nature to bear weakness with patience. Neither did she seek the cause of her

husband's broken spirit in her own defection. Someone did, however: her eldest son Herbert. He was passionately on his father's side, tried to show his grief by the sulkiness of a young boy, and could barely bring himself to treat Mill with civility. All this was dismissed by Harriet as 'Herby's usual stupidness and lack of manners'.

To Harriet, a beauty and a wit, this narrowing of her social life must have been a real sacrifice. Here, perhaps, lies the root of an unamiable trait she was to develop later: jealousy of every woman of distinction. Harriet Martineau and her books, George Eliot's morals, Sarah Austin and her lively salon, Mrs. Trollope's writings—none escaped her scathing comments. Her peculiar circumstances made her even more touchy than she was by nature. Even Mill could not help perceiving that her 'character was the extreme of anxiety and uneasiness'. But never was there a moment's doubt in Harriet's mind about the surpassing value of their attachment. In the midst of their besetting anxieties she wrote to John:

'*Yes*—dearest friend—things as they are now—bring to me, besides *moments* of quite complete happiness, a *life* and how infinitely to be preferred before all I ever knew! I never for an instance could wish that this had never been . . . it seems to me that personal feeling has more of infinity in it than any other part of character—no ones *mind* is *ever* satisfied, nor their imagination nor their ambition—nor anything else of that class—but feeling *satisfies* . . . The desire to give and to receive feeling is almost the whole of my character' (9, p. 96).

This was a far cry from his father's hatred of the 'intense'.

John could not find comfort in an equal gratification by emotion. His lack of feeling and of spontaneous confidence, which Harriet always reproached him with, he came to regard as his greatest deficiency. Their awkward situation—from which there seemed no possible escape—galled him far more than it did Harriet. Why, then, did he continue to submit to it? Why did he put up with a life that condemned him, in his own bitter words, to an 'obscure and insignificant' existence when the reward that made

it all worth while to Harriet—the intensity of feeling—was so sadly lacking in him?

In one of her letters Harriet rates him roundly and soundly on the subject.

'Good Heaven have you at last arrived at fearing to be "obscure and insignificant"! What *can* I say to that but "by all means pursue your brilliant and important career". Am *I* one to choose to be the cause that the person I love feels himself reduced to "obscure and insignificant"! Good God what has the love of two equals to do with making obscure and insignificant. If ever you *could* be obscure and insignificant you *are* so whatever happens and certainly a person who did not feel contempt at the very idea the words create is not one to brave the world . . . There seems a touch of Commonplace vanity in that dread of being obscure and insignificant—you will never be that—and still more surely *I* am not a person who in any event could give you cause to feel that *I* had made you so. Whatever you think I could never be either of those words' (9, pp. 99–100).

Harriet never hesitated to scold him in this forceful manner. And it was this that constituted her hold over him. She had successfully taken his father's place in his life.

It was indeed curious that John, who from an early age had made conventionality the channel of all his human relations, should find himself in the most unconventional position imaginable; and, furthermore that these two people who let convention and propriety regulate their most intimate conduct should yet deliberately break all conventions in their public behaviour. They were both, as a contemporary remarked, 'comically sincere and tragically ignorant of life'. For a long time Harriet hoped to avoid paying the price of isolation that Victorian society exacted for such a relationship. John had less illusions on this score and therefore suffered more.

Their situation made them even more conscious of the power that custom, tradition and convention exert over the individual. Throughout Mill's writing runs the awareness that political

liberty is only one of the two components of freedom; that individuality can be repressed more ruthlessly by the force of public opinion than by a political tyranny. In de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* he found a kindred argument that was to enter into all his future political writings.

Harriet deeply influenced the tone of his writings; the far-flung possibilities that he visualized with her also crept into his essays on subjects of the day. Moreover, she made him more outspoken, more aggressive, more critical towards other writers. As she plainly told him: 'I now and then find a generous defect in your mind or your method—such is your liability to take an overlarge *measure* of people'. While this was true where Mill found himself in intellectual agreement, Harriet certainly did not suffer from a like defect. She declared of Comte: 'This dry sort of man is not a worthy . . . opponent'. And of Carlyle, Mill writes in the *Autobiography*: 'I never presumed to judge him with any definiteness, until he was interpreted to me by one greatly the superior of us both—who was more a poet than he, and more a thinker than I—whose own mind and nature included his, and infinitely more'. We can well deduce Harriet's estimation of lesser men. But her faith in Mill's own greatness never wavered: 'You are in advance of your age in culture of the intellectual faculties; you would be the most remarkable man of your age if you had no other claim to be so than your perfect impartiality and your fixed love of justice' (9, p. 114).

But John was concious that even for this feeling of mental growth he was paying by further isolation. 'Every increase of insight,' he wrote to Carlyle, 'carries with it the uncomfortable feeling of being separated more and more widely from almost all other human beings . . . One feels more and more that one is drifting so far out of the course of other men's navigation as to be altogether below their horizon; . . . However, this must be borne with when one's own path is clear—and mine is always becoming clearer' (4, vol. I, p. 98).

Not only in his social but also in his public life he suffered from a sense of frustration. Never did he feel more keenly than during

the years after the Reform Act the shackles imposed upon him by his position at India House. Here was a reformed Parliament, containing of his old associates Grote, Roebuck, Buller, Molesworth, the two Romillies, besides the veteran Radicals Strutt, Joseph Hume, Warburton, and others. John and his father were full of the highest hopes about what might be achieved. For years to come, until 1840, John exerted himself to the utmost, by personal talk, by letters, by briefing them, by writing in the press, 'to put ideas into their heads, and purpose in their hearts'. He blamed their feeble performance in Parliament on lack of a leader. How he chafed at not being in Parliament himself, so that he might take the iniative in daily contact, and summon others to follow him to exploit the golden opportunity of reform. Instead he had to prod other lesser men to take the lead while he himself remained in the background—obscure. 'What I could do by writing I did.' At first his attempts at rousing the Radicals out of their torpor appeared mostly in the *Examiner*. But in 1834, as a means towards the same end, a Radical review was projected, and in April 1835 the *London Review* was started. Sir William Molesworth was the owner, J. S. Mill the editor in all but name. He was so full of purpose that he declared he would run the review single-handed it need be. The periodical absorbed a very great deal of his energy until 1840. All the political articles, his own as well as those of other contributors, had but one theme: to incite the Radicals in Parliament to action. He continually urged the liberal-minded middle class to cooperate with the educated sections of the working classes. His contemporaries compared his political onslaughts to the Phillipics of Demosthenes.

John tried to make the review as non-sectarian as possible. All 'on the movement side in philosophy, morality, and art as well as in politics and the socialities' were welcome to him as editor—much to the chagrin of the more orthodox Radicals. Another of his aims was the discovery of fresh talent. Many well-known authors broke into print for the first time in the pages of the *London Review*. John said that he could always tell a man's intellectual honesty from his hand-writing. He thus tried to make the review

a forum of advanced opinion, with each writer responsible for the opinions he expressed; and in this he was largely successful.

One of the causes that he pressed was to prosper beyond all expectations: an association of self-governing dominions settled by the surplus population of England and Ireland. The British Commonwealth was to grow from what Victorian Tories considered as the Malthusian spleen of some Radical agitators. Mill's part in this development is little appreciated. As early as 1831 he was behind his friends Graham and Wakefield in their plans for turning Southern Australia from a dumping-ground of English criminals into a decent colony of assisted white settlers. The Church and the Government of the day were both bitterly opposed to these plans. He was behind Molesworth in his proposals for the development of Australia and New Zealand by the initiative of private companies. He was 'the prompter of the prompters' of Lord Durham; his old friend Charles Buller was Durham's secretary, and wrote the report on the Canadian rebellion of 1837, which was to open the new era in English colonial policy. Buller's report recommended complete internal self-government; this came into operation in Canada within the next three years and was later extended, again largely owing to the pressure of Mill's old associates, to nearly all the other colonies of white settlers.

John continued his writing on French contemporary affairs in the *Examiner*, in addition to contributing to the *Monthly Repository*, the *Globe*, *Tait's*, and other periodicals. For sheer quantity of output these were among his busiest years.

As always, work was his answer to the emotional strain under which he was living. In his work, he knew beyond doubt what was right and good and useful. That work might also become an excessive indulgence, that a man can become an addict to work, neither he nor his father would ever have conceded. Work was virtue *per se*.

But worry, overwork, the antagonistic atmosphere at home, frustration in his public as well as in his private life all told heavily on him. Many of his friends remarked on the rapid change these years wrought in him. They did not hesitate to attribute it to his

entanglement with Harriet. His wavy auburn hair was quickly thinning. His face was thin, brown, and dry. His manner was as calm as ever but there was a jerkiness about him, a twitching of face and eye, as though he constantly was controlling himself with the utmost difficulty. In 1836 Carlyle wrote to John Sterling:

'Is it not strange, this pining away into dessication and nonentity, of our poor Mill, if it be so, as his friends all say, that his charmer is the cause of it? I have not seen any riddle of human life which I could so ill form a theory of. They are innocent says Charity: they are guilty says Scandal: then why in the name of wonder are they dying broken-hearted? One thing only is painfully clear to me, that poor Mill is in a bad way. Alas, tho' he speaks not, perhaps his tragedy is more tragical than that of any of us: this very item that he does not speak, that he never could speak, but was to sit imprisoned as in the thick ribbed ice, voiceless, uncommunicating —is it not the most tragical circumstance of all?' (9, p. 85).

His overtaxed nerves began to cause serious trouble again. During the winter of 1835 he developed obstinately disagreeable sensations in the head and eyes, besides his usual weak digestive and lung conditions. He consulted several doctors, tried many cures, mostly of Harriet's devising, but without effect. In 1836 the illness was diagnosed as a 'derangement of the brain'. He had to suspend work at the office for some weeks and stayed at Brighton, much dejected about being cut off from his one and only antidote to depression. In his letters home he worried about his father's illness, which they all, including James, knew to be his last, and also about Mary and George who were missing his tutoring for too long a time.

James died as he had lived—a stoic. His greatest concern was for his younger children and that he had to leave them 'too young to be sure how they would turn out'. He earnestly and urgently committed them to John's care. He finally sank away on the 23rd of June 1836, mourned as few men are by his many friends. He was buried in Kensington Church.

John had been carrying on at India House with his father's

work as well as his own. He was now promoted to first Assistant and third in rank at a salary of £1200 per annum. This was to be his rank and salary for the next eighteen years. But his head was so troublesome that he had at once to apply for sick leave for three months and was ordered abroad by young Dr. King, a friend of the family, who was to marry his eldest sister, 'Willie', later on.

On the 30th of June he left London for Paris, taking with him Henry and George. Henry, now sixteen, was already suffering seriously from the family disease, consumption. They planned to join Harriet, who travelled accompanied by her three children who were now nine, six, and five years old. The youngsters were to be company for each other. George Mill was now eleven, and he and Herbert and Haji Taylor actually became great friends during this trip and remained so for many years. It was a satisfaction to John to see his young brother happy with a play-fellow at an age when he himself had been denied meeting other boys.

He and Harriet left the four boys at Lausanne and with little Helen proceeded to Italy. During this journey John's symptoms did not greatly improve in spite of energetic and drastic changes of regimen. Sometimes John was seized by acute fears: if he could not *think* any more—what was left? Surely it would be better to be 'dead than useless'. Harriet, too, had been ailing, also with lung trouble; almost worse were her recurrent painful headaches which all around her lived in fear of producing if they opposed her wishes. But it was she who was the strong-minded one of the party. They stayed in Northern Italy for about two months.

Early in November John was back at his desk at India House. Although his head was only slightly better he resumed his heavy commitments, working off arrears at the office, editing the *Review* and doing his best to breathe life into the Radical movement.

During the next two years he and Harriet and, invariably, Helen made several short trips together. But in the winter of 1839 both he and Harriet were seriously ill once more. Mill was now also threatened with consumption. He suffered from pains in the chest in addition to severe stomach trouble. He had to obtain six months' leave, and the party of three wintered in Italy, making

their longest stay at Naples. From this time on, one of his lungs was out of action. He made up his mind that he would have to live as a semi-invalid. 'I am not at all cured but I cease to care much about it . . . if I can only avoid getting worse, I shall have no great reason to complain as hardly anybody continues after my age to have the same vigorous health they had in early youth' (2, p. 45). He was then thirty-three.

For invalids they certainly 'did' Italy with remarkable energy, taking Venice and the Tyrol in their stride as well. 'I may say', he reports to his brother James, 'that I have seen it pretty thoroughly —I have left nothing out except Sicily, and a few stray things here and there.'

These journeys together inevitably set tongues wagging afresh. Their battle against society strikes one as almost quixotic. Travelling abroad together for months on end, they still expected people to believe in their 'purity'. 'I was greatly indebted', Mill wrote in his *Autobiography*, 'to her strength of character which enabled her to disregard the false interpretation liable to be put . . . on our travelling together, though . . . our conduct . . . gave not the slightest ground for any other supposition than the true one, that our relation to each other . . . was one of strong affection and confidential intimacy only.' Men and women more earthy than Mill and Harriet were to react in the way least of all expected by them. Harriet was prepared to endure censure. But in their high-minded conception of their love they were certainly not prepared for what was actually to strike them: ridicule. Yet this was exactly how public opinion got its own back. In their circle, in the clubs, Harriet was commonly designated as 'John Mill's Platonica', and there can be little doubt of the snigger that went with the name. Carlyle's description of them as 'two innocent sucking doves' had the same ring.

Laughter conquered even Harriet's superiority. She ascribed it to deep malevolence. They both withdrew from the world and society and assumed in future a highly disdainful tone about its failings, particularly those of English society. Harriet's delicate health furnished the excuse for her living more than ever away

from London. She lived much at Kingston-on-Thames, until in 1839 her husband rented for her a cottage in Walton-on-Thames, where she was to spend most of her time until 1848. Naturally Mill could not frequent a society in which Harriet risked being snubbed and ridiculed. He withdrew not only from social contacts, but in 1839 from politics also, and from the management of the *Review* which had been making heavy inroads upon his energy and money. His hopes of bringing about a new Radical movement had failed.

But this withdrawal and the rebuff with which they had met made Harriet even more hungry for Mill's fame. That and nothing else would eventually prove to herself and to the world that her sacrifice had been worth while. Henceforth she devoted her undivided efforts towards John's work, suggesting subjects, criticizing, copying, reading, editing for him. Thus the one and only intimate relationship of his life did not release him from, but tied him even more firmly to, the rack of his intellectual pursuits. On the other hand by being shared with Harriet, these pursuits acquired an emotional intensity of their own. Had their love taken the usual course satiety might have overtaken them. It might not have endured for twenty long years. As it was, Eros made glow for them all their common concerns, however dry in themselves.

Through it all their great mutual love survived.

No conscious regret ever crossed John's devoted mind. Indeed, as Carlyle succinctly put it: 'he was a most luckless man, seeming to himself all the way to be a very lucky one' (3, pp. 225–6).

CHAPTER VIII

Fame

1841–1849

HIS hopes of a Radical party having failed, John withdrew from active politics—as he thought for good. He continued, however, to watch with his usual intense interest the signs of changes in public opinion.

The forties were a time of ferment. The economic depression of 1839–43 had given impetus to the middle-class movement for freeing trade from the old shackles imposed in favour of agriculture. The Chartists were voicing the discontent of the working classes with the limited franchise won under the Reform Bill and with economic distress. The two movements fused with the strongly awakening Victorian social conscience. The new 'social' theme began to dominate literature: Mrs. Gaskell wrote *Mary Barton*, Mrs. Browning *The Cry of the Children*, Thomas Hood his *Song of the Shirt*, Charles Kingsley *Alton Locke* and *Yeast*, Carlyle *Chartism* and *Past and Present*—they all heralded reform as certainly as the literature glorifying the underdog in the nineteen-twenties heralded the Welfare State in the nineteen-forties. Social awareness had originated in the nonconformist religious sects but soon permeated all religious life in England. The emphasis was on self-improvement and on duty to God and to others. To spend one's time well, to work well, became part of religious life. This personal discipline was a powerful factor in shaping the remarkable expansion that set in during the middle forties and, during one generation, transformed England into the most prosperous,

populous, advanced workshop of the world, and the technological pioneer among nations. Railways to every town and hamlet in Britain and abroad were its dizzy hallmark. In Mrs. Gaskell's charming *Cousin Phyllis* we get a picture of the impact of this restless engineer's drive on pastoral England.

But together with the intensification of religious practice went a hitherto quite unheard-of freedom of religious discussion. John was more interested in this than in any other sign of the time. He was used to the utmost freedom in this respect in French contemporary literature; now the crumbling of the taboos surrounding religion in England appeared to him as promise of freedom in every other respect. The time was getting ripe for him to speak a piece of his mind.

Released from the exacting demands of editorship, he now evolved the mode of life that was to last until his eventual marriage to Harriet in 1851. After their father's death the family had moved to a smaller house in Kensington Square. John was undisputed head of the family; he held the family capital in trust, and saw to the money matters of every member of the household. His father's charge of his sisters and brothers he fulfilled as he saw fit; to tutor them faithfully continued to be one of his foremost duties. George entered India House and later became his assistant, supervised by John as John had been by their father. Henry's health caused grave concern, but Dr. Arnott assured them constantly that his incessant hard cough was nothing serious even when blood began to appear in the sputum. John and George were also afflicted with a 'cough', and for years they had all been used to their father's continuous coughing. . . . The monthly epistle to James in India was duly written by the whole family.

John was of the family but they little realized how small his inner share in their life was. He evolved a routine in his dealings with them as he did in discharging his duties towards them. His real life lay at the office at India House and in the hours he spent with Harriet. His face was beginning to set in the withdrawn, intellectual lines by which posterity knows him. He was now almost bald, slim, and of ruddy complexion. Invariably he wore a

black dress suit with a black silk tie; this at a time when other men's trousers shimmered in all shades of grey, yellow, or blue.

In the morning he would hear his pupils' lessons and set their new tasks. Even the youngest sister ended up by being able to write articles for the press on political economy. Without breaking the night's fast he would walk to India House, arranging the day's work in his mind. Upon arrival he had his customary light breakfast. India House business came in spasms and left him time for his own concerns. His correspondence was comparatively small now, in spite of the exchange of long letters with Comte, begun by Mill in 1840. Pacing to and fro in his long office room he would set his mind into its swaying motion. Walking was indeed so necessary for his thinking process that he only stopped for the actual act of writing, which he did standing at his desk. All his profounder thought was carried on during long walks, in town or while rambling in the country. Many of his contemporaries remarked on his extraordinary powers of conversation while walking, and upon its smooth and rhythmic flow; they were witnessing the semi-automatic revolving of a highly disciplined mind. One may even fancy one can detect this even pacing motion in his written style. Trained though his brain was to function at all hours, he was by nature a morning worker. The summer, too, was more propitious than the winter. To Comte, to whom he confided many of these small habits of work although he had never met him personally, he wrote of the 'voluptée intellectuelle dans les beaux jours de l'été où ma tête travaille toujours mieux'. *Voluptée* was the correct description of his intellectual climaxes. As with many truly creative minds, his whole organism partook in the creative excitement, which usually involved the digestive organs—thus showing the origin of inspiration in the borderland between body and soul.

But the most important hours of the week were those spent with Harriet. Every week-end that she was able to keep free found him speeding out to her cottage at Walton. When her family claimed her, he went for his customary cross-country walks, pondering, cogitating, returning to the knotty problems

reserved for these occasions—but interrupting himself to alight with a boy's keenness on any rare plant.

Those week-ends without him, Harriet counted even more lost than he—sacrifices to her duty. She would then try to come up to town during the week in order to renew the contact so indispensable to them both. They would dine together at Kent Terrace or visit a theatre or a lecture, such as Carlyle's 'On Hero Worship'. Harriet never visited at Kensington and, while on friendly terms with Mill's young brothers since the holiday in Paris, carefully avoided meeting Mrs. Mill or the sisters. John never permitted Mrs. Taylor's name to be mentioned by his family.

Besides these short visits to Kent Terrace Harriet moved constantly about from one health resort to another; Bath, Tunbridge Wells, Brighton, were visited for short or long periods. John usually managed to join her for a brief stay. In addition there were their summer holidays abroad together. An incessant restlessness and discontent drove Harriet from place to place. These constant changes, the packing and unpacking, travelling in all weathers and conveyances, and settling down in one hotel room after another—none ever satisfactory—were strenuous, yet proved a tonic for Harriet.

Mr. Taylor patiently paid for this expensive mode of life. Harriet had no money of her own, and her family were, by now, not at all well off.

The two boys were at a boarding-school, spending the holidays at Kent Terrace or Walton. But the burden of this unsettled life fell on young Helen Taylor.

From babyhood, Helen was her mother's constant companion, her life wholly subordinated to her mother's needs. Even as a small girl she learnt to wait upon her ailing mother, to attend her at her toilette, to look after her with solicitude. Harriet was unable to sleep unless Helen shared the room with her. As Harriet became more of an invalid, Helen's cares increased. She was in charge of the purse during these travels, of housekeeping money when at Walton, and of making travel arrangements. It was a thankless task, and even as an old woman Helen complained of

her mother's unnecessary strictness. The bond between Helen and her father seems to have been close and affectionate. It shows the weakness of his character that he allowed his little daughter to be used as a shield for Harriet's name. As the child grew older she deeply resented this abnormal life of everlasting travel. She longed intensely for a quiet home, for her father and brothers—especially Haji—for school and friends, and to stay in one place for ever and ever. She became passionately interested in the theatre and from the age of twelve nursed a dream of becoming a famous actress or of following some other career. But as always her mother, who could not spare her, had to come first. Yet again Harriet's extraordinary dominance over those around her is shown by the intense mutual dependence that persisted between her and her daughter until her death.

Meanwhile the state of young Henry Mill's health had become unquestionably alarming. He was looking more ethereal, more delicately angelic than ever, making light, in his musical voice, of his constant cough and the harrowing pains in his chest. Early in 1840 Dr. Arnott ordered Henry to winter in Madeira. Mrs. Mill and Clara accompanied the patient. They missed the packet at Falmouth, however. Sterling, also consumptive, had recently arrived at Falmouth, and there met with his friend, Dr. Calvert. Sterling called on Barclay Fox to enquire about the Mills' forfeited passage money. The Foxes were one of the outstanding Quaker families of the time. Readily Barclay called on the Mills, met the two ladies, found them 'ladylike', and brought his mother to help them find lodgings in the Terrace. The Foxes were most kind to the dying boy. In February Clara's reports home grew so serious that her sister Harriet joined them too, and John followed in March as soon as he could arrange his affairs at India House. He plied his young brother with kindness and was often overwhelmed by grief.

Much emotion was released during the ten spring weeks that he was to spend at Falmouth. The events were faithfully chronicled in her diary by Caroline Fox, the clear-eyed young Quakeress. Not since a boy in France had John opened his heart as he did now.

He was cut off from Harriet who, as a rule, claimed all his emotion. He was worked up over his 'poor dear Derry'. The deeply harmonious life of the various Quaker households permeated his ever receptive sensibility. And he was here together with Sterling, who always had the gift of giving life to all around him. Sterling himself was attracted to young Caroline, and deeply stirred her heart. Later, nine months after his wife's death when he was a dying man, he proposed to her, pleading the cause of his children; though she loved him, Caroline refused him, for she felt that he was too far removed from her in her Christian faith. John and Caroline, too, found an immediate, deep sympathy. 'He is a very uncommon-looking person,' Caroline recorded, 'much acuteness and sensibility marked in his exquisitely-chiselled countenance . . . His voice is refinement itself, and his mode of expressing himself tallies with his voice and countenance' (8, p. 144). With death ever present, much communing took place in the small circle.

On the 14th of April Henry died. When all was over, Dr. Calvert, standing on one side of the deathbed, remarked to John: 'This sort of scene puts an end to Reason, and Faith begins', and John concurred with deep feeling. Later he quietly told Caroline, 'I too, expect to die of consumption'.

By the end of April he was back at India House, and he wrote to the Fox family summing up the effect of Henry's death on his own life in terms strangely reminiscent of those after Eyton Tooke's death so many years before. 'Among the many serious feelings which such an event calls forth, there is always some moral which each person extracts from it for his own more especial guidance; with me that moral is "Work while it is called today; the night cometh in which no man can work." . . . But there is only one plain rule of life eternally binding . . . embracing equally the greatest moralities and the smallest; it is this—try thyself unweariedly till thou findest the highest thing thou art capable of doing, faculties and outward circumstances being both duly considered, and then DO IT' (8, p. 159).

These words of John's sprang from the consciousness that he

had, finally, collected himself around a central task of his very own and was *doing it*.

He put aside as far as possible all other pursuits and concentrated entirely on writing his treatise on logic. In this work he was giving full rein to his strongest faculty—that of introspective thought. He analyzed the functioning of the mind. He himself defined the theme of his *Logic* as the 'Science of Proof or Evidence' or, earlier, as a 'definition of the methods of philosophical investigation'.

From early childhood he had been drilled in exercises of this kind, and he delighted in the mental *finesse* and exactitude required by the task. Also his natural urge for creating rigid systems came legitimately into play. As he wrote to Barclay Fox about the 'big book': 'My concern is to bring *out* of me what is *in* me.'

He was proudly conscious of being one of the line of those who have, through the ages, held high and passed on the torch of Reason; he felt as one of the warriors in the everlasting war against Magic, the first decisive victory over which was won in the Battle of Marathon. The tiny spark kindled in glorious Greece amid an ocean of darkness—*his* breath was blowing it to brighter flame now in the nineteenth century.

Why—he exclaims—do we call the Greeks great?

'They, the first, questioned nature and the universe by their rational faculties, and brought forth answers not suggested by any established system of priest-craft; and their free and bold spirit of speculation it was, which surviving in its results, broke the yoke of another enthralling system of popular religion, sixteen hundred years after they had ceased to exist as a people. . . . History points out no other people in the ancient world who had any springs of unborrowed progress within themselves. We have no knowledge of any other source from which freedom and intellectual cultivation could have come, any other means by which the light never since extinguished might have been kindled, if the world had been left, without any elements of Greek origin, to be fought for between the unlettered Romans and the priest-led and despot-governed Asiatics' (15, p. 156ff.).

To this day the heritage of Reason is precarious. This fact was deeply felt by John. In the Orient, 'you see hundreds of millions of people to whose habits of thought supernatural agency is of such everyday familiarity that if you tell them any strange fact, and say it is miraculous, they believe you at once, but if you give them a physical explanation of it, they think you a juggler and an impostor' (4, vol. I, p. 144-5).

Magical thinking is for ever springing up anew. In the nineteenth century it was represented by the German philosophical school of innate ideas which greatly influenced English thought. John's antipathy to this mode of thinking was almost physical, he was unable to bring himself to read the German books through. His own and his father's intense dislike of the 'priesthood' also derived from this deep-seated source. Through the ages priests had been the guardians of magic. And now as always this philosophy of intuition, as opposed to reason, as the only source of knowledge was allied to the vested interests in politics and used as a shield to uphold them against the forces striving for progress.

Into this alignment of traditional forces he threw the weight of his *Logic*. 'Désormais,' he proudly wrote to Comte, 'on pourra choisir; on ne sera plus rejeté vers le camp allemand faute de trouver ailleurs un système philosophique nettement formulé . . . Je commence à espérer que ce livre pourra devenir un vrai point de ralliement philosophique, pour cette partie de la jeunesse scientifique anglaise qui ne tient pas beaucoup aux idées religieuses (10, p. 165ff.).

Nevertheless it was within the scope of his nature fully to share the thought processes of his philosophical opponents. He told Barclay Fox: 'I might perhaps discuss with you your curious speculation respecting a duality in the hyper-physical part of man's nature. Is not what you term the mind, as distinguished from the spirit or soul, merely that spirit looking at things as through a glass darkly, compelled in short by the conditions of its terrestrial existence to see and know by means of media, just as the mind uses the bodily organs; for to suppose that the eye is *necessary* to sight seems to me the notion of one immersed in matter.

What we call our bodily sensations are all in the mind, and would not necessarily or probably cease because the body perishes. As the eye is but the window *through* which, not the power *by* which, the mind sees, so probably the understanding is the bodily eye of the human spirit, which looks through that window, or, rather, which sees (as in Plato's cave) the camera obscura images of things in this life, while in another it may or might be capable of seeing the thing themselves' (Letter to Robert Barclay Fox, 5 April 1842. 5, vol. I).

But with deliberate intention he limited himself to analysing the working of the understanding by rational process, fully conscious of choosing his position on the weaker side of the ancient struggle.

The most personal part of the *Logic*, born from the travails of his innermost spirit, is the book on Liberty and Necessity. It was his favourite chapter in the whole work, which ran to over a thousand closely printed pages. For this reason he sent it to Caroline Fox to read. The problem contained in it had haunted him in his periods of melancholia.

'The doctrine of what is called Philosophical Necessity weighed on my existence like an incubus. I felt as if I was scientifically proved to be the helpless slave of antecedent circumstances; as if my character and that of all others had been formed for us by agencies beyond our control, and was wholly out of our own power. I often said to myself, what a relief it would be if I could disbelieve the doctrine of the formation of character by circumstances . . . I pondered painfully on the subject, till gradually I saw light through it. I perceived . . . that though our character is formed by circumstances, our own desires can do much to shape those circumstances and that what is really inspiring and ennobling in the doctrine of freewill, is the conviction that we have real power over the formation of our own character. . . . I . . . drew a clear distinction between the doctrine of circumstances, and Fatalism; I no longer suffered under the burden, so heavy to one who aims at being a reformer of opinions, of thinking one doctrine true, and the contrary doctrine morally beneficial' (14, p. 118ff.).

Later he succinctly summed up his position: 'The doctrines of free will and of necessity rightly understood are both true. It is necessary, that is, it was inevitable from the beginning of things, that I should freely will whatever things I do will' (4, vol. II, p. 375). Thus abstract philosophy is rooted in the depth of the personality, and perhaps this lends it its impact upon the reader.

When in the autumn of 1840 he had finished the first draft, he showed old Grote the title page of the manuscript entitled *A System of Logic*, saying with his thin smile: 'This is for the very few'. The ardent writing and the careful re-writing that occupied him all through 1841 were carried on with the consciousness that the book would be unpopular even with these few. 'I don't suppose many people will read anything so scholastic, especially as I do not profess to upset the schools but to rebuild them, and unluckily everybody who cares about such subjects nowadays is of a different school from me' (Letter to Robert Barclay Fox, 6 May 1841. 5, vol. I).

But having finished the manuscript in the spring of 1842 he felt a great certainty that he had delivered himself of a message. 'I had things to say on the subject, and it was part of my task on earth to say them, and therefore having said them, I feel a portion of my work to be done' (Letter to Gustave d'Eichthal, 10 January 1842).

His relief was intense. His old playfulness reasserted itself in the family and among his acquaintances. The spring of 1842 saw him in such spirits that he even refused to discuss serious topics! 'My family have no idea how great a man I am,' he teased Caroline Fox, and promised her a copy of the 'Work' with the best passages marked with notes of admiration by himself.

But his happy exuberance was quickly to be crushed by various blows. There was an irritating delay of a year over bringing out the book. He lost a very considerable sum of money of his own and capital held in trust for the family for which he was responsible. This disturbed him thoroughly. For several years he allowed himself no holiday. He also called in small loans that he had made to various writers. Yet, at the same time he supported Comte by

regular gifts of money. He did not tell his family of his losses; they went on a spree to Paris quite unconcerned. But, worst blow of all, Harriet met with a carriage accident; her back was seriously injured and to see her in despair preyed on Mill. He felt so low, both mentally and physically, that he could not manage his customary walk to and from the office, and even work afforded him no relief. This was always the worst extremity. For, as he confided to Comte, 'J'ai le malheur . . . d'être très peu amusable. Je ne suis guère capable de goûter longtemps aucun délassement.' But in spite of his 'faiblesse nerveuse' and extreme 'langueur intellectuelle' he crowded into the winter of 1842-3 the entire work of seeing the *Logic* through the press. The book came out in March 1843.

The year 1843 produced an astonishing output of classics-to-be: Macaulay's *Essays*, Carlyle's *Past and Present*, Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, Dickens' *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Borrow's *Bible in Spain*, Lytton's *Last of the Barons;* Thackeray, Tennyson, Browning, Landor, Leigh Hunt, de Quincey, were all actively writing; James Wilson founded the *Economist*, and was soon joined by Herbert Spencer as sub-editor.

The success of the *Logic* was immediate, totally unexpected, and astounding. The first edition was sold out at once. A second much larger one sold equally quickly. The papers and reviews were full of it. Chapman, the bookseller in the Strand, had a shop-window showing nothing but the *Logic*. It was the chief topic of discussion at the universities. Sir John Herschel praised the book at the Cambridge Meeting of the British Association, much to John's gratification. It was also 'the best attacked book of the time', which added to its effect. By it, John Stuart Mill was indisputably established as one of the foremost writers in Europe. One wonders if even after this he 'hated to see his own ugly name in print' as he used to do.

Fame had come.

It must have been a heady draught for Harriet. So she had been justified in dedicating her life to this man. Their association was now of thirteen years standing. He was famous, and she was his *femme inspiratrice*. Now that the *Logic* was over she could influence

him much more than she had done hitherto. She did—to an extent which posterity has only lately discovered. She became what he called her, his 'only guide and oracle' (9, p. 141). The more the unconscious source of his own intuitions dried up the more he relied on Harriet for his decisive ideas. He trusted her even against his own considered judgment as implicitly as Socrates his Daimon, submitting his reason to her utterly.

The success of the *Logic* enabled him to publish his *Essays on Some Unsettled Questions of Political Economy*. Even they sold well. 'I think anything we put our name to would sell,' he told Harriet triumphantly.

Since finishing the *Logic* he had been pondering what major subject to tackle next. Under the influence of Comte he was contemplating a work on sociology. Comte's distinction between social statics and social dynamics was the first great truth John, as a very young man, had absorbed from him. It entered all his social theorizing. It was also to furnish the groundwork of the sociology he was now contemplating. Typically he was attracted mainly to the exposition of social statics, which Comte himself had dealt with only briefly. The cornerstone of the book was to be 'ethology', the science of human character. This subject occupied his mind as late as 1859. He never felt, however, that he had found a sufficient clue. He had as his premise the absolute equality of all men of all races and ages, of man born as a complete blank. He even asserted that there was 'no distinction between the highest masculine and the highest feminine character'. This premise may have been his main difficulty, but he never abandoned it. He eventually gave up the plan of writing a work on sociology.

There were several other works that he planned at one time or other but did not execute. We know of the book on the French Revolution. He had also planned a book on the greatness of Greece, but was satisfied that Thirlwall had already said most of what he had intended to say. The rise of the Roman Empire puzzled his mind during many a long walk—he again failed to find a clue, the spring of action behind this rise. He planned a book on Sterling in answer to Hare's misleading *Life*—here again he was

anticipated—by Carlyle—and in this case to John's regret. He considered writing his father's Life; a task that was to have fallen to Derry, who had been the first in the family to unseal the tenderness in their father; during his last years James had delighted in revealing himself to him, and the notes for the Life of James Mill had been accumulating. It is a loss to English letters that this Life is still unwritten.

In the summer of 1844 Harriet was fit to travel again, and John accompanied her and Helen on a trip to Normandy. Together they decided upon the *Political Economy* as their next project. Upon his return John spent two months clearing up work accumulated at the Office and domestic business. This was increased by George's first serious outbreak of the family disease; John added his brother's work at India House to his own. This done, he settled down to the new book which was to embody much of the thinking on sociology. It was the first major work that he called a 'joint production' with Harriet. And this, in fact, it was, in conception and execution.

Once again he was clear in his mind what place this book was to occupy: '. . . it is a book to replace Adam Smith, that is, a book which, while embodying all the abstract science in the completest form yet attained, incorporating all important improvements, should at the same time be essentially a book of applications exhibiting the principles of the science in the concrete.'

The *Political Economy* was the most quickly written of his books. The manuscript went back and forth continually between him and Harriet. It occupied much of their conversation during a two months' journey up the Rhine in 1846. Harriet ungrudgingly took upon herself most of the donkey-work involved.

The work was laid aside for six months during the Irish famine of 1846 to 1847. John thought he saw a chance of a thoroughgoing regeneration of agriculture in Ireland. With great spirit he urged the formation of small peasant properties. He had long recognized the superior productivity of small peasant owners like those who kept the French economy stable and healthy. Even for England he advocated this system; 'If I could really think that free

trade would break up the present system of landlords, farmers (tenants), and labourers for hire, I should think the repeal of the Corn Laws a far greater and more beneficial event than I have hitherto believed it.'

In Ireland the system of foreign absentee landlords was the root of economic distress, creating a nation of paupers. Merely by diverting the money now pouring into public assistance into converting waste lands into small-holdings, a body of self-respecting small landowners might be created. But the vested interests were too strong in the English Government. Continued unrest and misery and the emigration of two and a half million Irishmen to America were the consequences. Mill wrote about sixty articles in the *Morning Chronicle*; later during the Fenian risings, still upholding the same views, he published them as a small book.

He overworked frantically in order to keep up as much as possible his pace with the *Political Economy*. By March 1847 the first draft of the large treatise was finished. When the book was ready for publication Harriet conceived from a book by Sismondi the idea that it might be dedicated to her; John was only too eager to make known her share in the work. Tentatively Harriet wrote to Mr. Taylor about it. The poor incredulous man received a shock; the whole trouble was to be stirred up again. Only Mill and Harriet in their maddening unworldliness could conceive of such an idea. His letter, half defiant, imploring, written on a note of helplessness, makes pathetic reading, and throws perhaps more light on his sad part in this whole long-drawn-out entanglement than any other document preserved:

'My dear Harriet, [he wrote], I was so much surprised on Saturday when I received your note and found you to be inclined to have the Book dedicated to you that I could not reply until I had a little time to reflect upon the question, and this I had during a walk to Pall Mall from whence I wrote my letter.—Consideration made me decidedly think, as I did at the first moment of reading your letter, that under our circumstances the proposed one would evince on the author's part, as well as the lady to whom the book

is to be dedicated, a want of taste and tact which I would not have believed possible.—Two days have since passed and my conviction remains the same notwithstanding your letter of yesterday.

It is not only "a few common people" who will make vulgar remarks, but all who know any of us—the dedication will revive recollections now forgotten and will create observations and talk that cannot but be extremely unpleasant to me.

I am very sorry you should be much vexed at my decided opinion. You asked me, "what do you advise"—and . . . I felt bound to give my opinion in decided terms, and such as could not be mistaken.

No one would more rejoice than I should at any justice and honour done to you— . . . But I do not believe that either would result from anything in such bad taste as the proposed dedication would, in my opinion, show. I can assure you that this subject has given me much anxiety and trouble these last two days,—it is never pleasant to differ with you—most of all upon questions such as this.

Yours affy.

J.T.' (9, pp. 120–1).

As always, Harriet was not to be deterred.

When the *Principles of Political Economy* appeared in April 1848, a limited number of copies had a separate sheet pasted in bearing the dedication

To Mrs. John Taylor
As the most eminently qualified
of all persons known to the author
either to originate or to appreciate
speculations on social improvement,
this attempt to explain and diffuse ideas
many of which were first learned from herself,
is
with the highest respect and regard
dedicated (9, p. 122).

John and Harriet themselves distributed many of the gift copies.

The *Political Economy* was even more successful than the *Logic*. Three editions of the large tomes sold out in a few years. It was the most popular exposition of a most popular subject. Of all Mill's books it had the greatest influence by far on our own time and way of life.

But his joy in it was marred by another long bout of illness. Except for the period of melancholia suffered in his youth, he was now to pass through the worst phase of his life. On a late summer day in 1848 he met with a serious accident. When crossing into Hyde Park he tripped and fell heavily on the hip. The fall lamed him for many months. Almost worse, a belladonna plaster applied to the hip affected his eyes and for nearly a year he was more than half-blind.

Not being able to walk and think, not being able to work or read, confined to being read to, and to dictating, and his thoughts refusing to flow—he was in despair. Sleep, too, refused to come. All his habitual nervous processes were interrupted. While his family gathered in the evenings, he would play the piano to himself, his own improvisations, to while away the hours. He battled against his frustrations like a trapped animal.

As John was cut off from visiting Harriet in the country, she and Helen left for fashionable Pau in the Pyrenees, in search of health. Mill was to join them there as soon as possible. Mr. Taylor, who had for long been troubled by internal pains, begged Harriet to stay in England within reach. Harriet reacted with her usual irritation: 'I am very sorry to find you say *you are sorry* I am going to Pau. I can assure you I do not do it for my pleasure, but exceedingly the contrary, and only after the *most* anxious thought. —Indeed I am half killed by *intense anxiety*. . . . Your saying that you are sorry I am going has given me ever since I read your note so *intense* a headache, that I can scarcely see to write.—However it is only one of the vexations I have to bear and perhaps everybody has' (9, pp. 130–1).

At the end of her three months' stay Mr. Taylor wrote more urgently to say that he felt very ill. But Harriet still refused to be alarmed. John was to join her at Pau very soon now, also an

invalid, also in need of her care, and as she told her husband: 'I feel it a duty to do all in my power for his health . . . nothing but a feeling of right would prevent my returning at once'. (9, p. 151).

When in May 1849 Harriet finally returned, she found John Taylor dying of cancer.

It was a slow and painful 'dying by inches'. Harriet, terribly upset, threw herself with Helen into nursing him day and night. She noticed his drab surroundings and, with her strong aesthetic sense, set herself to brighten all around him, convinced that it must still greatly matter to him. John Taylor's spirit showed itself at its truest and finest: enduring, patient, full of consideration for others, and without a trace of self-pity to the last. What may have passed through his mind, thus re-united to the woman whom he had set out loving so well, now committed to her pitying care? No word of reproach crossed his lips. Upon his death it was found that he had left his wife a life interest in the whole of his property—thus doing his last and best to redeem her name from the slander that had hung around it for so long.

As Harriet, strange woman, was able to write without a trace of remorse in one of her daily notes to Mill: 'Alas poor thing, what a mocking life has been to him!' (9, p. 161).

CHAPTER IX

Mentor of the World

1850—1853

ON the strength of his major published books Mill's reputation grew rapidly at home and abroad; more so after they had been translated into most European languages.

His influence spread in ever-widening circles with every year until his death, and was increased with each new publication. He was deluged by correspondence, mostly from persons unknown to him, asking his advice as an expert, on constitutions to be drafted, on taxation, wages, trade unions, cooperatives, socialism, on problems, serious and trivial, of economic theory, on parliatary reform, on immigration, on slavery, on education, on sanitation, on religion, on laws of inheritance, on peasant holdings, on philosophy, on the emancipation of women, on foreign policy, on Indian administration, on colonial problems; young authors consulted him about their manuscripts—the personal letters were few and far between. Had he dealt with it fully this steady stream of inquiries would have required all his time. The tone of his answers was measured, definite, dignified, sparing no weakness in the questioner; sometimes he even grew acrimonious. But to any serious problem he gave full justice.

During the next twenty years his became the best-known English name abroad. And Victorian England was the intellectual power-station of the world; more foreign students were educated in England than in all other Western countries together. Mill became indeed a sort of mentor to the world. He calmly accepted

the position of a great, wise man pronouncing deliberate, assured judgment for the enlightenment of poor doubting humanity.

In curious contrast he was clinging ever more anxiously to Harriet. His dependence was the more extraordinary since he was fully conscious of it and even gloried in it. But, in justification, he was compelled to exalt her eminence and perfection to even greater heights—hers was 'a soul and an intellect . . . such as the good principle perhaps never succeeded in creating before—one who seems intended for an inhabitant of some remote heaven, and who wants nothing but a position of power to make a heaven even of this stupid and wretched earth' (4, vol. II, p. 371). Such obvious delusion has induced writers on Mill to discount as equally fantastic his claims about her influence on his thought, that she had become 'the presiding principle of his mental progress'. Yet every word he wrote on the subject is only too true. His unquestioning submission extended from the most profound questions of principle to the smallest details of personal relationships and practical affairs; his one anxious aim in life was to please Harriet. And even after twenty years of closest communion her reactions were to him totally unpredictable. She would praise him when he apologized for consulting a doctor without first having asked her; when he worried whether the typography of the title page of his book, or the contract he had concluded with his publishers would satisfy her. She would pounce upon him with utmost severity on occasions when he least expected it. After every short separation he approached her with trepidation: would she be disappointed in him as she so often was? A warm welcome was an undeserved boon. The fault lay always with him, never with her. To him she was as cryptic as the Delphic oracle, and as such he accepted her. Thus everything he thought, wrote, or decided was tentative, and subject to Harriet's final pronouncement upon it.

'I write only for her . . . for only one reader,' he confesses in his diary. 'My only rule in life . . . is what you tell me you wish,' he assured Harriet. When Chapman asks him to write a review of Comte, he enumerates all his reasons pro and con and concludes:

'You dearest one will tell me what your perfect judgment and your feeling decide.' There are innumerable instances of this submissiveness. But more; he felt himself to be Harriet's humble amanuensis: 'I do not see . . . who in this weak generation . . . will even be capable of thoroughly mastering . . . your ideas . . . so we must write them and print them, and then they can wait until there are again thinkers . . . I should like everyone to know that I am the Dumont and you the originating mind, the Bentham, bless her!' (9, p. 185). His adoration knew no bounds: 'As for me, nothing but the division of labour could make me useful . . . I am but fit to be one wheel in an engine not to be the self moving engine itself—a real majestic intellect . . . like yours, I can only look up to and admire.'

That Harriet calmly accepted all his eulogies as her due is one of the strangest facets of this strange relationship. Never in all her notes to him is there a word of refutation. The many pages devoted to her praise in the *Autobiography* passed her censorship and had her approval.

But her influence on Mill can hardly be over-estimated. Whatever influence Mill exerted in his own time and over English history must be equally ascribed to Harriet. And the strong impetus given by his books towards socialism and the present welfare state must certainly be attributed more to Harriet than to Mill himself.

Mill's *Political Economy* did more than any other single book to bring about socialism in England. The science of political economy held all thinking on social problems under its ban during the latter part of the Victorian era, and Mill's *Political Economy* was the standard textbook on the subject. As such it was greeted upon publication by the *Economist* in 1848:

'Mr. Mill's two thick volumes of 1,142 pages . . . treat of a great variety of subjects, classified in five distinct books, on Production, Distribution, Exchange, Influence of the Progress of Society on Production and Distribution, the Influence of Government, etc. . . . There are extensive dissertations on large and small farms,

peasant proprietors . . . on property, on Communism, on Colonisation, on *laisser faire*, on national debt, besides all the ordinary subjects usually embraced in such systematic works. Every topic touched on is minutely, carefully and elaborately treated . . . and not only does the work embrace many more topics than other similar works, but they are all examined as if each one were a favourite with the author. Throughout, the style is clear and pleasant, sometimes eloquent and impressive; on the whole, it is a remarkable book, which will add to the great reputation of the author, and become a standard work . . .'

The book was laboriously studied by countless working men and trade unionists, who gathered from its pages 'scientific' justification for their struggle. At some working men's requests Mill later gave over his royalties to bringing the work out in cheap popular editions. It was mostly through the *Political Economy* that he acquired his large following among the working class. Sidney Webb paid tribute to it when he called Mill's *Political Economy* one of the main causes of socialism in England. He was referring to the third and final edition of the book, which had been radically altered from the first. Harriet had suddenly insisted upon this change in the whole orientation of the book—to Mill's utter surprise.

Mill's socialism derives from two sources: his early Radicalism and Harriet's far-flung social speculations, which were grafted on to the body of his thinking, often against his own judgment.

In the extensive literature on the subject, Mill's socialism has often been called in question. This is surprising, for in his *Autobiography* he stated unequivocally that 'our ideal of ultimate improvement went far beyond democracy, and would class us decidedly under the general designation of Socialists', and this he reiterated in his letters. Yet the great body of his writing is so decidedly liberal that his socialism has always seemed somewhat ambiguous. Comte's 'Système', which replaced religion by the cult of humanity, appalled Mill; he called it 'the completest spiritual and temporal despotism' that had ever been brought to bear upon the conduct and lives of individuals 'with an energy and potency truly alarming to think of' (14, p. 149).

His and Harriet's professed aim was 'the union of the greatest liberty of action for the individual with common ownership'; but there is no explanation how this could be achieved while at the same time avoiding 'the tyranny of society over the individual which most socialistic systems are supposed to involve'. Harriet's answer to this was education. But Mill himself repeatedly queried this solution as too facile and asked her who was to educate the educators.

Patiently and thoroughly he criticized the many French and English socialist schemes brought forward at the time; of German socialism he knew little and the name of Marx does not occur once in his writings. About Comte's socialism he writes: 'I think his political writings (apart from his admirable historical views) likely to be mischievous rather than useful; except *qua* socialist, that is, calling for an entire renovation of social institutions and doctrines, in which respect I am entirely at one with him.'

This is revealing. His own leaning to socialism was, in fact, neither more nor less than a direct continuation of his early Benthamite and eighteenth-century approach to social questions: the unprejudiced rational working out of first principles and the modelling of institutions according to them. Socialism appealed to him as a welcome broom for sweeping away irrational historical debris; in this sense he called socialism 'the greatest element of improvement in the present state of mankind', and claimed that socialism afforded the 'guiding principles to give the present competitive economic system of society its best chance'—again by means of sweeping away the feudal relics impeding it. He advocated an empirical approach to socialism involving cleansing the system of private enterprise and property of abuses while experimenting in all different forms of socialist ownership. This was to constitute the basis of Fabian socialism.

The political developments in France heightened his natural inclination towards sweeping social changes. His happy year there as a boy had given him a life-long bias in favour of everything French. His extensive writings on French contemporary affairs and French historians give—like the *Logic*—the impression of

being born of inclination, whereas most of his other writings, except those on Greece, seem to be born of the will. He persistently upheld that 'the whole problem of modern society . . . will be worked out . . . in France and nowhere else,' for 'we are the ballast of Europe, France its sail'. The revolution of 1848, culminating in the proclamation of a French Republic, thrilled him as the July Revolution of 1830 had thrilled him as a young man; he was 'out of breath from reading and thinking about it' and he 'felt an entireness of sympathy' with the members of the French revolutionary government that he 'never expected to have with any political party'.

But the *Political Economy* became a pro-socialist book owing to Harriet, as their correspondence makes abundantly clear. He and Harriet eagerly studied the French socialist writers. Most of their practical schemes he called '*passablement ridicules*'. He detested their sectarianism. But whereas the first edition of the book had been in the main a refutation of socialism, the third edition became its banner. The two crucial chapters altered were those on 'Property' and on 'The Future of the Labouring Classes'. The only important objection against socialism preserved is the workers' present 'extreme moral unfitness for the rights which socialism would confer and the duties it would impose'.

Harriet's sudden turn-about in favour of socialism came as a complete surprise to Mill himself:

'I received your dear letter . . . and the first instalment of the Pol. Ec. This last I will send again . . . when I have been able to make up my mind about it. . . . that paragraph . . . what you object to so strongly and totally, is what has always seemed to me the strongest part of the argument [against socialism] (it is only what even Proudhon says about communism). As omitting it after it has ever been printed would imply change of opinion it is necessary to see whether opinion has changed or not. Yours has . . . for you have marked strong dissent from . . . what was inserted on your own proposition and very nearly in your words' (9, p. 134).

In this paragraph it had been upheld that in a socialist community human life would settle down to monotonous routine,

that no one could by his own exertions improve his conditions, that each would be the slave of all—this paragraph came out.

In the first edition Mill had written: 'I believe that the condition of the operatives in a well-regulated manufactory . . . is very much like what the conditions of all would be in a socialist community. I believe the majority would not exert themselves for anything beyond this . . . and that on this basis human life would settle itself in one invariable round.' To this, too, Harriet now objected. Here Mill put up some fight. He wrote to her: 'If this is not tenable, then all the two or three pages of argument which precede and of which this is but the summary are false and there is nothing to be said against communism at all. One would have to turn round and advocate it,—which if done would be better in a separate treatise and would be a great objection to publishing a new edition until after such a treatise' (9, p. 135). Yet this sentence disappeared without alterations in the two or three preceding pages.

The first edition relegates to the 'proper sphere for collective action' the 'things which cannot be done by individual agency', and argues that 'where individual agency is at all suitable, it is almost always the most suitable'. This, too, fell under Harriet's axe.

Mill at once tried to justify these changes to himself. They were 'probably only the progress we have been always making, and by thinking sufficiently I should probably come to think the same (as you)—as is almost always the case, I believe always, when we think long enough'. A few days later he put up another feeble defence of his own opinion: ' despatched yesterday to the dear one an attempt at a revision of the objectionable passages . . . You will judge . . . whether any objection can be maintained to communism . . . I think there can—and that the objections as now stated to communism are valid; but if you do not think so, I certainly will not print it, even if there were no other reason than the certainty I feel that I never should long continue of an opinion different from yours on a subject which you have fully considered' (9, p. 137).

And a month later he writes: 'I have followed to the letter every recommendation'.

The new edition asserts: 'Under the communistic scheme . . . there would be an end to all anxiety concerning the means of subsistence; and this would be much gained for human happiness.'

It was this version dictated to Mill by Harriet that ran through nearly a hundred reprints and made history.

Instead of treating economic theory as a static, unchangeable science he put it into its social setting. Here, for the first time, it was asserted that, while production is governed by laws like natural laws, distribution depends on human will and on the contending forces in a society; distribution is subject to human will and alterable by human effort and progress. The book was a challenge to each reader; what social environment for economic laws was he willing to fight for? It was Harriet who gave to the book the twist that ensured its activating influence.

Later, in his closing years, Mill went even further in shaking the ramparts of economic theory as embedded in natural laws. He 'pleaded guilty' to having accepted the wage-fund theory 'with out the limitations and qualifications necessary to make it admissible.' Collective action can, indeed, win for the workers 'a larger share . . . of the produce of labour'. This recantation caused a great stir at the time. For in 1869 a Royal Commission was in progress of reporting on the Combination Laws, and feeling was running high on both sides. Mill's pronouncement had a far-reaching influence. It helped to establish the theoretical basis of the bargaining power of the trade unions.

But Mill's intellectual dependence on Harriet was nothing compared with his submission to her advice on all personal and practical questions. The basis of his dependence on her lay in the fact that she alone was the pivot upon which turned his feeling of safety in an overwhelming and hostile world; he clung to her much as a young child clings to its mother.

John Taylor had died in July 1849. They let pass little more than the minimum period required by convention and arranged their marriage for April 1851.

This news caused some surprise and a further outburst of gossip and ridicule. Harriet's extreme sensitiveness to this explains a good deal of their personal and social behaviour after the marriage. The idea that their intimate relations, which she hardly touched upon in her own mind, might now be under discussion by all and sundry was an outrage to her feelings. Her sensitivity in this matter caused her to radiate resentment in all directions. They appear to have informed no one of the intended event except Mill's family at Kensington and Harriet's children, two of whom were to share their new home.

Throughout the years their comments on marriage had been acid and outspoken. Mill had stated that in nine cases out of ten marriage changed an Englishman very much for the worse, without making him any happier. And Harriet used to compare the marriage vow to the vow of a nun: in both, young women bound themselves irrevocably to obedience without realizing what they were binding themselves to.

They determined that their own marriage should be a partnership of two equals. A fortnight before their wedding Mill made out a solemn document renouncing the 'odious powers' that the law gave the husband over the wife; and promising Harriet the same absolute freedom of action and disposal of herself and her property as if no marriage had taken place. This he formally dated and signed. Her inheritance from Mr. Taylor as well as her half-share in Mill's books was therefore absolutely at Harriet's own disposal.

The marriage took place on Easter Monday, the 21st of April 1851, at the Register Office at Melcombe Regis; only Algernon and Helen Taylor, who acted as witnesses, were present. Mill had reached his longed-for haven. But even now he did not feel absolutely sure of his 'only and greatest good on earth'.

George Mill in his letter of congratulation expressed what many felt: surprise at this union 'in which . . . there seemed less to be gained than in almost any other marriage'. This sentence was never to be forgiven him. It drew withering replies from both John and Harriet. This genial, mercurial youngster, who refused to take

serious things seriously, had for years been a thorn in Mill's side. For some time now he had been forced to live in Madeira on account of tuberculosis. Through his friendship with Harriet's sons, he was the one member of John's family who knew about their relationship. It must have been trying to John to see himself, and especially Harriet, judged by his whimsical young brother.

But George was probably right; it is legitimate to doubt whether the marriage was ever consummated. Harriet had been an invalid for years, being partially lamed as well as suffering from tuberculosis. Mill was in a state of great debility. Moreover, all his life the passions of his brain had consumed the passions of his body. The passions of the brain were what he shared with Harriet. Their letters after their marriage support this view; they show them as deeply in love as before, greatly concerned about each other's health and spirits—but there is no inkling of intimacy in them. Instead they keep up their former queer sort of baby language, substituting he and she for you and I; Mill begging 'dearest one to make right' whatever it was he submitted for her approval.

Little, however, did George and the world in general realize how much John stood to gain from his marriage in spite of these limitations. He had yearned for it with an intensity that no ardent young lover could have surpassed. 'The days seem always short to me as they pass, the time that seems long, the time that I am often impatient of the length of, is the time till spring—the time till we have a home, till we are together in our life instead of this unsatisfactory, this depressing coming and going, in which . . . the atmosphere of happiness has not time to penetrate and pervade in the way I know so well even by the most imperfect experience . . .' (9, p. 167). Only near her did he feel really safe. 'What a sense of protection is given,' he wrote in his diary, 'by the consciousness of being loved, and what an additional sense, over and above this, by being near the one by whom one is and wishes to be loved the best.' She is to him a 'kind of talisman' warding off all evil; even illness, he feels, cannot touch him while she is near.

This craving for her presence sometimes even assumed a hysterical note. On a railway journey that was carrying him away

from her he got into a 'half mad state' at the idea of not being able to get to her, he felt as if he *must* turn back and return to her.

A most curious document can also be understood only as a result of his ever-present fear that, after all, the centre of his existence might not be even now quite assuredly his for good. Three months after their marriage this anxiety dictated the following letter:

'My dearest wife, . . . Our marriage by the Registrar Mr. Richards was perfectly regular, but . . . my ordinary signature being J. S. Mill, I at first signed in that manner; but on being told by the Registrar that the name must be written at full length . . . I filled in the remaining letters of my name and . . . the signature consequently has an unusual appearance . . . It cannot possibly affect the legality of our marriage, which I have not the smallest doubt is as regular and valid as any marriage can be; but as long as it is possible that any doubt could for a moment suggest itself either to our own or to any other minds, I cannot feel at ease, and therefore, unpleasant as I know it must be to you, I do beg you to let us even now be married again, and this time in a church, so that hereafter no shadow of a doubt on the subject can ever rise. The process is no doubt disagreeable, but I have thought much and anxiously about it, and I have quite made up my mind that . . . it is better to undergo the annoyance than to let the matter remain as it is. Therefore I hope you will comply with my earnest wish—and the sooner it is done the better.

Your
J. S. Mill' (9, p. 169 ff.).

The document betrays almost neurotic anxiety. Of course, no second ceremony took place.

The absence of physical union in this marriage may well have been the cause of this continued feeling of insecurity.

One of the very few dreams Mill ever recorded is significant in that it reveals the unconscious longing for sex that one would naturally expect in this sexless life.

It was a dream about that symbol of voluptuousness, Magdalen.

'I was seated at a table like a table d'hôte, with a woman at my

left hand and a young man opposite. The young man said . . . "there are two excellent and rare things to find in a woman, a sincere friend and a sincere Magdalen". I answered "the best would be to find both in one"—on which the woman said "no, that would be *too* vain"—whereupon I broke out "do you suppose when one speaks of what is good in itself, one must be thinking of one's own paltry self interest? No, I spoke of what is abstractedly good and admirable". How queer to dream stupid mock words, and of a kind totally unlike one's own character. According to the usual oddity of dreams . . . I thought . . . that the right words were "an *innocent* Magdalen" not perceiving the contradiction' (9, p. 254).

Whatever psychologists may make of this, to the modern mind it is clear that here speaks a longing for a true Magdalen—and *not* an innocent one as the dream deliberately underlines,—and that there is a wish to find her in the sincere friend, in Harriet; a lot of excitement is exhibited in denying such a paltry, selfish design. Alas, Harriet—nearing fifty, invalid, priggish, superior, refined, intellectual, domineering—who could less resemble a Magdalen?

For a few months after the wedding, Mill continued to live at Kensington while Helen and Harriet were looking for a suitable house. This was not easy: it was to be in a rural setting, and Mill was keen on a wide view; it was to be a gentleman's residence yet within daily reach of the City for him; and it was to be far enough out to make them unavailable for ordinary social life in London. For they were both quite decided on a quiet, withdrawn existence. They took their customary holiday together in France and Belgium, and in September moved into a house in Blackheath Park. It did 'overlook a wide open space of rolling meadow bounded far off by a blue outline of distant hills'. But it was a dark, rather bleak place, especially in winter, densely overgrown, surrounded by high hedges, and from the first it gave an inordinate amount of trouble with repairs; which sort of trouble John was singularly unfit to cope with. He at once settled down to recasting the *Political Economy* into its final shape; it came out in 1852.

Several of Mill's friends made an effort to draw him and his wife back into social intercourse. But Harriet emphatically refused to be patronised. Those who, despite their innocence, had shut their drawing-rooms to them before were not to receive the benefit of their company now. The most cordial invitations were categorically refused. Harriet always felt herself surrounded by a world of enemies spreading malicious gossip, and she infected John with the same notion. He inquired of her on what footing he should place himself even with old friends, like Grote and Austin; against Sarah Austin, his '*liebes Muetterlein*' of old, Harriet held a particular grudge. None of their friends was ever asked to Blackheath, nor did John now have time for walking in town with old Grote, Alexander Bain, his young philosopher friend, or G. H. Lewes, the oncoming writer, and a few others. A quarter of an hour at the office was the only time during which he could be seen. He hurried home each day from India House in order to make tea for Harriet and himself between five and six o'clock. Conversation of the highest order, preferably while walking, had been one of the main pleasures of his austere life. This, too, was sacrificed to Harriet. He now took his long Sunday walks alone. Their marriage isolated him more than ever—and made him even more dependent on Harriet.

Harriet also cut him off completely from his family. She professed to take extreme offence that his mother and sisters had not called on her after they had been informed of his intended marriage. His peaceable, submissive mother would have done anything to please him; so would his sisters. After his removal he and Harriet arrived in a carriage and paid a formal call—to the utter amazement of the ladies. John behaved with extreme coldness, even showing contempt as his father used to do; he was obviously dreading an outburst of feeling in front of his wife on the part of his mother. Had not Harriet informed him that 'want of the good breeding which is the result of good feeling was a family failing' of the Mills? His sisters called at Blackheath Park only to be told by him with the same iciness that his wife was unable to see them. His youngest sister, Mary, remonstrated with him in a long, deeply felt letter. She had married a Plymouth Brother and become

a devout Christian. The forbearing tone of her letter intensely irritated John and Harriet. After that he avoided all contact with the family. His brother James Bentham Mill, returned from India in 1853 and pensioned off because of the family illness, saw him only at the office. So, humbly, did his mother. For a long time she refused to reconcile herself to the break; she kept blaming her two daughters for the estrangement. After seeing him for the allotted fifteen minutes at India House she would return home with some fresh reproach to them—which John would afterwards impatiently deny as coming from him. It was a complete mystery to them why they should thus 'lose him at once and forever'. Mary came nearest to guessing the true reason: he had never held any personal feelings for them; his habitual kind ways sprang from principle and conventionality. Now he had but one desire, to close the Kensington chapter like that of a completed book—as earlier he had closed the chapter of the *Westminster Review*—and to turn to the new chapter of home life with Harriet. The older he became the more did his writing habits dominate all others.

Even his mother's long and painful last illness brought him to her bedside but once and at the urgent call of his sisters. Mary wrote to him on April 3rd 1854:

'My dear John,—My Mother is very unhappy because she thinks that she has not behaved well to your wife: She is constantly urging me to go to Blackheath and call on her, saying that it would please her very much, and nothing will divert her mind from this one point. She is still very weak, unable to stand, and thinks evidently that you are very angry with her and do not come to see her on that account. . . . We cannot of course intrude upon Mrs. John Mill unless she would wish to receive us. . . .

Will you therefore either let me know what you think we had better do, or, for my Mother's sake, write *her* a few lines to prevent her from wishing us to go, or in some way set her mind at ease' (20).

This drew the almost incredible reply from John:

'My dear Mother,—I received . . . another of Mary's vulgar and

insolent letters. The impertinence appears the only motive for writing them and I cannot waste my time in answering any more of them. In this she affects to think that I wish to see her. Will you tell her that neither I nor my wife will keep up any acquaintance with her whatever.

I hope you are gaining strength and will soon be quite well again. When you are able to write will you let me know how you are. I need not say that we shall always be glad to see you. yrs. affy.
J.S.M.' (20).

He well knew that his mother was dying. In her few lines of an answer she hopes 'that Mrs. Mill will do her the favour and take a family dinner with her'. She died in June 1854. Mill was abroad and received with complete detachment the news of her death and of the dissolution of the family home.

He and Harriet, complete with Helen and Haji, maid Kate, and cat, had not even been settled at Blackheath Park for a year before Harriet was overcome by her restlessness. Because of this and the ill-health of them both, very little of the seven and a half years of their married life was spent at home together. Also the romantic excitement of their former precious short hours together could not be kept up, and this Harriet felt to be a loss. Harriet first went to stay in Devon. But by October it was obvious that they were both suffering from consumption, although they themselves still refused to believe it. When Mill applied for leave from India House his colleagues hardly expected to see him again alive. He and Harriet wintered at Nice. It increased their hidden fears for themselves to learn that George had committed suicide at Madeira; having as a boy witnessed his father's lingering painful death he cut short the inevitable end. The family virtue of stoicism had never appealed to 'Geordie'.

But John's indomitable energy brought him back to his standing desk at India House, getting through the accumulated work of five and a half months in eight weeks. Harriet stayed on at Hyères till April.

Mill kept house alone with Haji and young Kate, who proved

satisfactory; his extremely modest wants were easily enough satisfied provided that everything was kept in meticulous order. His routine was the same as ever. But there was now a definite feeling of death upon him and upon everything he did. In February 1854 he first found blood in his expectoration. Harriet's reaction to this news is typical of her; she received it in much the same way in which she used to learn of Mr. Taylor's ill-health: a call to pull himself together. 'I cannot help believing that the practice of looking at the expectoration in the morning, is itself in great measure the cause of there being any at all. I cannot but think that if you tried as earnestly as I have done since Oct. to avoid any expectoration that you could lose the habit altogether as I have done' (9, p. 175). Mill, by way of response, reported to her his long, strenuous Sunday walks, as lonely as ever.

In his diary Mill contemplated his near death with complete calm and hoped only to be spared outliving Harriet. He felt a nostalgic affection for his surroundings, his desk, office, the old India House, the City, the streets and smells: they 'appear like old friends that one is reluctant to lose . . . Even the tiresome and vexatious parts of life look pleasant and friendly, and one feels how agreeable it would be to remain among them'. And: 'It is a happy effect of habit that the daily occupations . . . continue to interest one . . . even with the end full in view. I quite appreciate the wish to "die in harness". I look upon it as a piece of excellent good fortune to have the whole summer before one to die in'.

But his most overwhelming feeling is one of regret: 'When death draws near, how contemptibly little appears the good one has done! how gigantic that which one had the power and therefore the duty of doing! I seem to have frittered away the working years of life in mere preparatory trifles, and now "the night when no one can work" has surprised me with the real duty of my life undone.'

He had frittered away his working-years! Every death in his path—that of Eyton in his youth, his father's, Henry's—had evoked the same reaction in him: hurry up, work harder. And work harder he did for the eighteen more years of life granted him, under the beloved dictate of Harriet.

CHAPTER X

'On Liberty' and Harriet's Death

1854—1858

ALL his life Mill was a 'Greece-intoxicated man'. As a child, under his father's guidance, his whole being had thrilled to the adventurous history of the Greek nation.

How short a history—barely two hundred years. Yet, he writes:

'The interest of it is unexhausted and inexhaustible . . . As a mere story, hardly any other portion of authentic history can compare with it. Its character, its situations, the very march of its incidents are epic. It is a heroic poem, of which the personages are people. It is also, of all histories of which we know so much, the most abounding in consequences to us who now live. The true ancestors of the European nations (it has well been said) are not those from whose blood they are sprung, but those from whom they derive the richest portion of their inheritance. The battle of Marathon, even as an event in English history, is more important than the battle of Hastings. If the issue of that day had been different, the Britons and Saxons might still have been wandering in the woods.

'The Greeks are also the most remarkable people who have yet existed . . . It is . . . the powers and efforts required to make the achievement, that measure their greatness as a people. They were the beginners of nearly everything, Christianity excepted, of which the modern world makes its boast . . . They alone among

nations, emerged from barbarism by their own efforts, not following in the track of any more advanced people . . . They were . . . the originators of political freedom, and the grand exemplars and sources of it to modern Europe . . .

'They were the first people who had a historical literature; as perfect of its kind . . . as their oratory, their poetry, their sculpture, and their architecture. They were the founders of mathematics; of physics; of the inductive study of politics, so early exemplified in Aristotle; of the philosophy of human nature and life . . . they originated freedom of thought' (15, pp. 281-5).

Thus wrote Mill about his favourite topic, taking up, at forty, the thread spun by the boy who religiously transcribed Plato's *Dialogues* into English as a leisure pastime. At forty-seven, with his name risen to world renown, he expressed the same trend of thought:

'From the legislation of Solon to the field of Marathon, a hundred years of preparation; from Marathon to Chaeroneia, barely a hundred and fifty years of maturity—that century and a half is all that separates the earliest recorded prose writing from Demosthenes and Aristotle, all that lies between the first indication to the outer world of what Greece was destined to be, and her absorption by a foreign conqueror' (15, pp. 516 ff.).

And, at sixty-one, he told the students of St. Andrews University:

'And the actual truths we find in classical literature . . . are even surpassed in value by the encouragement and help they give us in the pursuit of truth. Human invention has never produced anything so valuable, in the way both of stimulation and discipline to the inquiring intellect, as the dialectics of the ancients . . . The noblest enthusiasm, both for the search after truth and for applying it to its highest uses, pervades these writers . . . ' (16, pp. 31-4).

As 'Antiquus' the youth had stepped into the world of letters, and an antiquus he remained to the end. His imagination was as much at home in Syracuse and Athens as in England, perhaps more.

His bad health was to afford him his first visit to Greek soil; in 1854 he went on eight months' sick leave to Italy, Sicily, and Greece. He wrote to Harriet from Syracuse:

'I cannot look at that greater harbour which my window in the Albergo del Sole looks directly upon, without thinking of the many despairing looks which were cast upon the shores all round (as familiar to me as if I had known them all my life) by the armament of Nicias and Demosthenes. That event decided the fate of the world, most calamitously. If the Athenians had succeeded they would have added to their maritime supremacy all the Greek cities of Sicily and Italy, Greece must soon have become subordinate to them and the empire they formed in the only way which could have united all Greece, might have been too strong for the Romans and Carthaginians. Even if they had failed and got away safe, Athens could never have been subdued by the Peloponesians but would have remained powerful enough to prevent Macedonia from emerging from obscurity, or at all events to be a sufficient check on Philip and Alexander. Perhaps the world would have been now a thousand years further advanced if freedom had thus been kept standing in the only place where it ever was or could then be powerful. I thought and felt this as I approached the town till I could have cried with regret and sympathy . . .' (9, pp. 228–9).

He traversed the country, in the same spirit of intense participation, investigating every single historic locality, however remote. Even had he not been an invalid on sick leave, his feats of endurance in that primitive land would have been astounding. His digestive disorders gave him continuous trouble. But all his life he possessed the gift of the true stoic—the capacity to withdraw his attention from his body, disregarding physical discomfort by concentrating on some outside interest. Even against sea-sickness, to which he was prone, he found the best remedy is distracting the mind with an exciting train of thought.

To his chagrin he was travelling alone. Harriet had undergone two operations, presumably for her lameness, and was not strong

enough to go abroad. He reluctantly left her at Torquay. There might be so little left of their lives—why did they have to spend that little apart? But his doctor insisted. On the 8th of December he set off by himself. At times, the thought that every hour was carrying him farther away from her, and the idea that an emergency would find him out of her reach, separated by a journey of many days, drove him half mad. He was continually longing for her; continually talking to her in his mind if he was not actually composing one of his almost daily letters, He turned his energy to work, his habitual cure for all ills. If he could write something worth while it might make the absence more bearable. But what? he asks of her. 'Nothing that is not large will meet the circumstances.' This problem he was turning over in his mind while being rocked on boats and trains and carriages.

Some months previously he and Harriet had made out a list of subjects on which he was 'to say his say'; to which he was to apply the principles involved in the *Logic*. Together they had put them down in confused order as they came to mind: 'Differences of character (nation, race, age, sex, temperament). Love. Education of tastes. Religion de l'Avenir. Plato. Slander. Foundation of Morals. Utility of Religion. Socialism. Liberty. Doctrine that Causation is Will . . . Family, and Conventional' (9, p. 192).

In a race with death, he had already thrown several of these subjects into the shape of concentrated essays. Harriet had also always insisted that his greatest book was yet to come. In Rome the plans germinating in his mind were interrupted by sightseeing, while the feeling of contact with antiquity was constantly growing in him.

Then, one morning in January 1855, while mounting the steps of the Capitol, there fused in his mind Harriet's suggestion of an essay on liberty with his old notion that it was for him to keep alive the 'sacred fire' first kindled in Greece. He had already, in the *Logic*, done his share to perpetuate the pursuit of Truth as he saw it. What about the other spark first lit in the world by the Greeks, Freedom? He suddenly visualized the volume *On Liberty*.

Liberty—What is Liberty? To each generation it needs defining

in new terms, always the dangers threaten from different angles—not only from tyrants for ever rising anew, but from over-government, from customs that strangle the individual, from anarchism . . . Was it possible to indicate all the ramifications, all the dangers, to show the delicate balance between all forces, between the individual conscience and society—was it possible to write on Liberty?

This might be his final, his lasting word to the world. Each successive generation, whether living in excessive individualism or under the new despotisms that would again rise and fall, should read this book *On Liberty* and, finding its own needs stated in it, be inspired to strive once more for Liberty. It should be a song of praise of strong and vivid and independent personalities—such as Harriet—of heroes and of energy and originality. It should be against conventionality and modern mass society's trend towards uniformity. He would write *On Liberty*, stating eternal truths and passing on the spirit of Greece, and at the same time write the apologia of his and Harriet's life!

The small volume was the chief occupation of his and Harriet's limited spare time during the next two years. 'None of my writings,' he states in his *Autobiography* 'has been either so carefully composed, or so sedulously corrected as this. After it had been written as usual twice over, we kept it by us, bringing it out from time to time, and going through it *de novo*, reading, weighing, and criticising every sentence. . . . The *Liberty* was more directly and literally our joint production than anything else which bears my name, for there was not a sentence of it which was not several times gone through by us together, turned over in many ways, and carefully weeded of any faults, that we detected in it. . . . The *Liberty* is likely to survive longer than anything else that I have written' (14, p. 177).

On Liberty appeared in 1858, after Harriet's death. It was another unexpected, great, and immediate success. It was translated into nearly all living languages, read by men of all nations, colours, creeds. It is still one of the great torches of Western civilization. It was forbidden, burnt by totalitarian régimes of all kinds,

read secretly, reprinted, brought out triumphantly upon the downfall of a tyranny—*On Liberty* lives on as Mill had foreseen. While most of his books are today to be found on the shelves of second-hand book-shops the *Liberty* always appears in new editions. The latest translation of it is into Hebrew for the new state of Israel. Through it Mill became one of the great European humanists, of equal stature with Wilhelm von Humboldt, his German contemporary (18).

In the history of ideas, J. S. Mill was the chief channel by which the Rationalism of the eighteenth century flowed into the nineteenth. This has been duly recognized. But the 'Hellenizing tendency' of his influence has been neglected to a surprising extent. Yet it was through him that nineteenth-century humanism was brought into living communion with the classical humanism from which it drew its moral force.

Mill's deep appreciation of the dynamics generated for Western society by Greece derived from his life-long contact with one of the vast stationary Eastern civilisations, that of India. What to most Western sociologists is a half-theoretical idea was to him an ever-present reality; his daily work at India House consisted in coping with it. He commanded a singular vantage point, indeed, for surveying historical, political, sociological horizons; nursed on Greece, reared on his father's *History of India*, working as a practical administrator at India House, in close contact with contemporary French thought, and immersed in the English Reform movement from boyhood. From his Aristotelian range he looked with justified contempt upon 'cockneys' like the popular Macaulay, without even a thought of French or German origin in their minds.

Very little is known of the influence that both James and John Mill exerted on India. Yet there should be extraordinary interest in the study of the impact made on a society such as that of India by these two enlightened men during their combined years of service.

When John joined the India House administration at eighteen, his mind was already clear about the end to which he was to use whatever power might become his in Indian affairs:

'All English institutions and modes of political action are adapted to the case of a nation governing itself. In India, the case to be provided for is that of the government of one nation by another, separated from it by half the globe; unlike it in everything which characterises a people; as a whole, totally unacquainted with it; and without time or the means of acquiring knowledge of it or its affairs.

History presents only two instances in which these or similar difficulties have been in a considerable degree surmounted. One is the Roman Empire; the other is the government of India by the East India Company' (19, p. 3).

Like his father, he strenuously upheld the opinion that such a large and lethargic continent could not be given self-government like the colonies of white settlers. Direct government from London was equally fatal. England could govern India well only by appointing good rulers and good permanent Indian civil sevants. Both must uphold delegated authority, both must be vigorously controlled and, in the last resort, be responsible to London.

The principle animating John's whole generation of India House administrators was the 'protection of the interests of the great mass of the population'.

He firmly believed the East India Company rule to be for the good of India; a vast continent torn by incessant warfare and robbery and ruled by despotism was pacified, brought under the rule of law, and turned to productive usage in the grand manner. In his view, the administration of India had stumbled from the importation of quite unsuitable English institutions through trial and error towards a thorough knowledge of Indian customs and, meticulously preserving these, had adapted them to the most enlightened ideas of government. For instance:

'The history of the judicial administration of British India bears a striking analogy to that of the revenue administration. It began with well-intended, but premature and ill-considered measures, which produced many evils and but a small part of the good which their author expected from them. When experience had disclosed

the faults of the system at first adopted, similar errors were avoided, and a better system introduced into our later acquisitions; while palliatives of great value, though falling short of the full exigencies of the case, were adopted in the older provinces. Last came the plans, now in an advanced stage of their progress, for effecting a complete reform. . . . By the Act of 1853 . . . the Indian Law Commissioners . . . have prepared complete codes of civil and criminal procedure, grounded on a rare combination of appropriate local knowledge with the mature views of enlightened jurists . . . These codes . . . will constitute the most thorough reform probably ever yet made in the judicial administration of a country. . . . India is likely to possess so far as judicial institutions can secure that blessing, as good and as accessible an administration of civil justice, as the lights of the age are capable of conferring on it' (17, p. 31).

He described in detail a similar development regarding the revenue administration on which government in India largely hinges. The British conquerors first introduced a system of landlordism quite alien to the country; later, trying to remedy the ill effects, in their new acquisitions, they gave the right to cultivate the soil to the peasants; only during J. S. Mill's time came recognition that in India property in land was mainly invested in the village community, and on this the administration was henceforth founded whenever possible.

Despite his intensely critical attitude to everything English, Mill nevertheless held that the English were the fittest people to rule over Eastern nations 'precisely because they are the stiffest and most wedded to their own customs, of all civilised people. All former conquerors of the East have been absorbed into it, and have adopted its ways, instead of communicating to it their own. So did the Portuguese; so would the French have done. Not so John Bull; if he has one foot in India he will always have another on the English shore' (4, vol. II, p. 363).

This was his deliberate and confident summing-up after a lifetime of service in the India administration.

He knew what he was talking about; a list of India dispatches written in his own hand between 1824 and 1958 fills a quarto volume of almost 400 pages and contains over 1,500 titles, in answer to about 4,800 reports or letters from India. The originals are at the Record Office of the India Office in London; for more than twenty years running he composed two volumes, foolscap size, five inches thick, every year. For twenty-three years Mill wrote nearly 'every despatch of any importance that conveyed the instructions of the merchant princes of Leadenhall Street to their pro-consuls in Asia'.

In 1856 the genial Peacock retired, and John, in spite of his precarious health, succeeded him as Examiner of India Correspondence. He had served in this department for thirty-three years. Instead of composing dispatches he now had to supervise all correspondence. This took up considerably more time and was one of the reasons why his literary output during his married years was comparatively small. Two major reorganizations of administration in India during this time are probably due to his particular exertions: that of education and that of public works (irrigation and roads, which are of major importance in India). The whole systematic review and unified new approach are most un-English —and very much J. S. Mill.

Competitive examinations for entering Indian administration were first introduced in 1853 and were later extended to the whole of the English Civil Service.

Only a year after his final promotion, Parliament (under Lord Palmerston) put an end to the government of India by the East India Company. Mill conducted the fight against the Company's extinction; perhaps, like his father before him, he had been promoted for this purpose. He wrote the *Report on the Two Bills Now Before Parliament Relating to the Government of India* for the Court of Directors. He emphatically argued two points: first, 'The forms of business are the real constitution of India'; the advisors of the ultimate British government of India (the Council-to-be) must not be nominated by the English Government but by an independent body and from among experts on India. Secondly, nothing

must be done during the transfer to undermine local authority in the eyes of the Indians.

He finally wrote the *Memorandum on the Improvements in the Administration of India during the last Thirty Years*. This is a proud document. It is also a *résumé* of his life's work as an administrator. He concludes:

'It is believed . . . that few governments . . . have attempted so much for the good of their subjects, or carried so many of their attempts to a successful and beneficial issue. A Government of foreigners, over a people most difficult to be understood, and still more difficult to be improved,—a Government which has had all its knowledge to acquire, by a slow process of study and experience, and often by a succession of failures (generally, however, leading to ultimate success)—has a right to take pride to itself for having accomplished so much; and most certainly cannot be justly reproached, by any existing Government or people, with not having effected more' (17, p. 94).

Earl Grey described the memorandum as the ablest state paper he had ever read. Mill received ten thousand pounds for it—probably the largest sum of money that had ever been paid for a piece of writing.

Largely owing to his efforts, the new British Government of India embodied most of the principles the East India Company upheld. But on the whole Mill took a gloomy view of the possibility of ruling India by Parliament; this opinion deepened in the course of his life. In his view the new administration constantly allied itself with the reactionary forces in India.

After this intensive activity he was happy to finish with life at the office. At last he and Harriet would be able to have more time together. During the last two years they had been snatching their hours of mental communion, of working on the *Liberty*. Harriet had had to go alone to visit her daughter Helen in Glasgow; to her mother's discomfiture Helen had insisted on trying her luck on the stage. Mill, in the thick of the fight at India House, was suddenly struck by the news that Harriet had had another haemorrhage; she

lay dangerously ill at Edinburgh. He was also informed imperiously that on no account did Harriet want him to come to her. He wrote back imploringly: 'O my beloved, have pity on me and save that precious life which is the only life there is for me in this world'. There is true pathos in his: 'It is true I am pained by the sense of my own helplessness and uselessness in mechanical matters when they are so much needed. But I never so needed, so longed to be with you—and always with you—as when you are ill' (9, p. 312). A few days later he rushed to Edinburgh to accompany his wife home.

Although they were both in need of wintering in some warm climate Mill could not leave the office. In the spring Harriet went to Brighton by herself. Even their summer holiday had to be deferred. All Mill managed were a few days of 'his real rest'—walking, in September 1857, in the Lakeland and in Yorkshire. India House business also kept them cold, damp, desolate for the following winter, at Blackheath Park. And in the summer he snatched a short walking-holiday in the Peak District, while Harriet stayed at home.

Helen's professional engagements had caused the first long separation from her mother. They wrote to each other nearly every day. These letters are, perhaps, more revealing of Harriet's character than those she wrote to John. They are intense, uneasy, unpredictable in their reactions; she feels hurt by quite harmless remarks, she is soothing and sympathetic where Helen feared to offend her and least expected it. They contain a great deal about Helen's dress, health, and about keeping up appearances—nobody must even guess why Helen is away from London. Helen is in turn defiant and anxious to live up to her mother's expectations. But nevertheless there is a pronounced likeness between the two women.

The very unpredictability of Harriet's character probably partly accounted for her continued attractiveness to John. Since childhood his moments of highest elation had been shot through with uneasiness; from fear of his father and from desire to win James's curt approval sprang his flashes of intellectual ecstasy. Harriet's

unaccountable nature lent the same charm of habitual discomfiture to the flights of the spirit that they shared. There was intense mutual attachment, longing for and dependence upon each other. To the end, theirs was an uncomfortable but undeniably deep and true and exclusive love.

In the autumn of 1858 Mill was at last ready to retire from India House. The old system of governing India from India House had come to an end. After thirty-five years of service Mill retired on a generous pension of £1,500. He and Harriet happily planned to spend the winter at last in the South of France and the spring in Italy, and to give the small volume *On Liberty* its final cast. They left London on October 11th.

During the journey, at Avignon, John was hit 'by the most unexpected and bitter calamity' of Harriet's death. Now as always he had been guided by her judgment; Helen must not be called although Harriet was suffering from dangerous bronchitis, congestion of the lungs, a high temperature, and such agonizing headaches and general discomfort that she was almost out of her mind. John, beside himself with helpless anxiety, clung to her assurances that she was hourly getting better. For a few days it even seemed likely. She could pencil a note to Helen. But on the 28th of October there was a relapse. Mill wrote a desperate letter to Dr. Gurney, who had once before saved Harriet after a haemorrhage at Nice in 1853, offering him £1,000 for his immediate attendance. But he, as well as Helen, arrived too late. Harriet had died on the 3rd of November—died in one of the many hotel bedrooms in which she had spent so much of her life.

'The spring of my life is broken,' John cried despairingly.

Harriet was buried in the cemetery of Avignon at St. Veran. John's one remaining craving was to remain near her Grave, (he ever after spelt this with a capital G). He bought a small summer house overlooking the cemetery. Here he was to spend the greater part of his remaining years. When at St. Veran he never let a day pass without meditating by Harriet's resting-place, often visiting it several times a day. Thus the strange French cemetery, crowded with marble mausoleums, became his spiritual home.

He gave great attention to the erection of an expensive monument of finest Carrara marble over Harriet's grave; and for it he composed after much deliberation this epitaph:

To the Beloved Memory
of
Harriet Mill
The Dearly Beloved and Deeply Regretted
Wife of John Stuart Mill.
Her Great and Loving Heart
Her Noble Soul
Her Clear Powerful and Original
Comprehensive Intellect
Made Her the Guide and Support
The Instructor in Wisdom
And the Example in Goodness
As She was the Sole Earthly Delight
Of Those who had the Happiness to Belong to Her
As Earnest for the Public Good
As She was Generous and Devoted
To All who Surrounded Her
Her Influence has been Felt
In Many of the Greatest
Improvements of the Age
And will be in Those still to Come
Were There but a few Hearts and Intellects
Like Hers
The Earth would Already Become
The Hoped-For Heaven.
She Died
To the Irreparable Loss of Those who Survive her.
At Avignon
Nov. 3 1858

What was left? 'I seem to have cared for things or persons, events, opinions on the future of the world, only because she cared for them' he wrote to old Grote. But as ever Death was to urge

him on in his labours. 'The sole motive,' he continues, 'that remains strong enough to give any interest to life is the desire to do what she would have wished. . . . I shall best fulfil her wishes by not giving up the attempt to do something useful.' Intellectual activity was his only solace. Work harder! . . . was his refrain after every death—even Harriet's.

CHAPTER XI

Statesman of Ideas

1859—1865

'HENCEFORTH, I shall be only a conduit for ideas,' he told Bain upon his return to England after Harriet's burial. He was now fifty-two, but felt an old man. Conscientiously he set about devoting himself to the causes with which Harriet had charged him: women, working men, slaves; above all, the clearing of 'cobwebs' from men's brains. Drowning his griefs in work he began one of his most active periods of publication.

During those years he reached the height of his fantastic influence and renown. He was fully conscious of the responsibility this involved. He had acquired in his father's school a statesmanlike attitude towards the injection of ideas into the stream of thought of the time. He deliberately measured men's prejudices; than he administered at the right time as much of the truth as he thought beneficial. It took a great deal of courage and patience to strike the balance between what to say and what to omit. Thus, although he cut at the roots of theology in his writings, and his considered arguments against 'priestcraft' were fired by the most primitive animosity, in his voluminous and largely polemical writings we find hardly a sentence to offend a devout believer. 'If it were possible,' he once exclaimed, 'to blot out entirely the whole of German metaphysics, of Christian theology, of the Roman and English systems of technical jurisprudence . . . there would be talent enough set at liberty to change the face of the world' (4, vol. II, p. 369). He did a good deal to draw men's energies away from

these pursuits and to direct them towards the social question. But as an administrator of Indian affairs he had early learnt to accept with stoicism limitations to his efforts. Between 1840 and 1870 the social question gained ascendancy over thoughtful minds. Mill, more than any other single man, set the problems and guided reflection on the subject. However many of his particular tenets failed, he obtained his main end: broad and liberal discussion. He himself came to marvel at the liberality of opinion achieved in his lifetime. Wisely, he ascribed part of this change to the weakness of a 'time of transition' in history. He had a clear and proud conception of his importance as a writer of his age: 'It is long since there has been an age of which it could be said, as truly as of this, that nearly all the writers, even the good ones, were but commentators: expanders and appliers of ideas borrowed from others. Among those of the present time I can think only of two (now that Carlyle has written himself out . . .) who seem to draw what they say from a source within themselves . . . Comte, on the Continent; in England (ourselves excepted) I can think only of Ruskin' (4, vol. II, p. 361). That today so many of his utterances appear rather commonplace merely shows how far he succeeded in making them so.

On Liberty came out in February 1859. It was at once likened to *Areopagitica*, Milton's noble piece on the liberty of unlicensed printing of two hundred years earlier. It had an electrifying effect on the ardent men and women of the younger generation. 'I do not know whether then or at any other time so short a book ever instantly produced so wide and so important an effect on contemporary thought as did Mill's *On Liberty* in that day of intellectual and social fermentation', John Morley wrote of it. He knew much of the book by heart. This book, essentially aristocratic though it was, proved to have an immensely democratizing influence in England, where feudal snobbery lingered so tenaciously in all social relations.

He next got ready for press *Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform*, which had already been thoroughly discussed with Harriet. She had told him that the secret ballot he had formerly advocated was

unmanly; so from then on he held that it was conducive to cowardice, and this was his reply to the many letters he received on the subject.

He carried through the press a collection of his minor writings that Harriet had selected. The two large volumes, *Dissertations and Discussions*, are still the only collections of his essays, apart from a small volume of *Early Essays* edited by Gibbs in 1897 and long out of print. He and Harriet had considered a collected edition of his works but, with so much left to do, had decided against it. The only one ever to appear came out in Germany.

What was the next important item on Harriet's list of subjects? 'Foundation of Morals, Education of Tastes'. He had often felt the need of a book 'fit to form a course in Moral Philosophy. None such, to my knowledge exists. In my opinion', he had told an inquirer in 1854, 'ethics, as a branch of philosophy, is still to be created' (4, vol. I, p. 181). In the same year, with Harriet's approval, he set out to do so. Taking the work of his early mentors, Hartley on *Man* and his father's theories as basis, he set down his *Utilitarianism*. This he brought out in 1861. The small volume called forth a great deal of criticism and was, for this very reason, of the greatest influence.

In the same year he published the lengthy work *Considerations of Representative Government*. This set out to do for politics what the *Political Economy* had done for economics: to be the most comprehensive and up-to-date standard work on the subject. It may well prove one of the most fruitful of his books for our time, since it is concerned with the problem of 'the combination of complete popular control over public affairs, with the greatest attainable perfection of skilled agency'. Today, in an era of nationalized industries, this problem has assumed vast proportions, and Mill is worth consulting on its theoretical aspects.

Now all that had been prepared jointly with Harriet had appeared. He next turned to the theme which had always been nearest her heart. He expanded her essay *The Enfranchisement of Women* which had appeared in the *Westminster Review* of October 1852. Holyoake had reprinted this, without Harriet's permission. Under

the 'excessively vulgar' title of *Are Women fit for Politics? Are Politics fit for Women?* this had sold many thousand copies. Mill wrote the *Subjection of Women* as a memento for Harriet—but withheld it from publication until 1869.

Then he methodically brought his *Autobiography* up to date as sanctioned by Harriet. Like *On Liberty*, this book will remain a classic. The breath of truth in it will make it so. It is a singular account of the making of a mature and dedicated mind—but, between the lines, can be detected a singular emotional immaturity.

This rapid yet placid intellectual harvesting was interrupted by the American Civil War of 1861 to 1865; fifteen Southern states were upholding slavery against eighteen Northern states of the Union. The struggle stirred Mill almost as much as the French revolutions had done: he felt it was 'destined to be a turning point for good or evil, of the course of human affairs of an indefinite duration'. His feelings on this matter were all the more aroused because the English upper and middle classes, even Liberals, were wildly favouring the slave-owning states who were at first the gainers in the contest. The English working men alone were on the side of the North. Mill's article *The Contest in America*, published in January 1862, extolled in passages of a rare fervour the 'exalted character' of the struggle then waging; it did much to win English opinion over to the side of the North. It was also one of the foundations of his fame in America, which never underwent the eclipse that it suffered in England during the present century.

He next surveyed the philosophical scene. The head of the enemy school of intuition (versus experience and association or 'phenomenalism') was Sir William Hamilton. He had been professor of logic at Edinburgh for twenty years and had made a great name for himself as a Kantian and an historian of philosophy. His *Lectures* were published by two of his pupils after his death.

Mill's book *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* makes hard reading for the layman. It is his most forthright exposition of phenomenalism; it 'faces the ultimate metaphysical difficulties of every question' touched in the *Logic;* by some adherents of his school of thought it is considered his best book. Mill himself

later felt quite satisfied with the effect of his attack upon the 'great fortress of the intuitional philosophy' in England.

The most outspoken passages are directed against Mansel, a follower of Hamilton. In his *Limits of Religious Thought*, Mansel held that it behoves man to worship a supreme Being without comprehending its moral attributes. To this 'loathsome' thesis Mill made his famous retort: 'Whatever power such a being may have over me, there is one thing which he shall not do: he shall not compel me to worship him. I will call no being good, who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow-creatures; and if such a being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell will I go' (13, p. 124).

The book on Hamilton cleared away the thickest and most successful of contemporary 'cobwebs'. It also enabled Mill to delete from Harriet's list of subjects the item 'Doctrine that Causation is Will'. Where next should he attempt to rectify the thought of his time? After having hit at the Right it was natural for him to attack the extreme Left in philosophical thought. 'Religion de l'avenir' had figured on their list. Harriet had always reproached him for having unduly propagated Comte and his creed of positivism in England.

To the last, John considered Comte one of the few original thinkers of the century. But, again as usual, Harriet had pointed out to him Comte's great short-comings; in particular (and unforgivably) he held the wrong opinions on the position of women. With Comte's fame had grown also the influence of his faulty notions. In his *Auguste Comte and Positivism*, Mill set himself to sift the good from the bad.

The account in the *Autobiography* of his labours after Harriet's death until 1865 is on a rare note of complacency. He had by then, as it were, executed most of Harriet's charges and surveyed the result: it was good, it might have pleased her.

Alongside this literary output went a vast correspondence. There was a continuous stream of books and pamphlets sent to him with requests for his opinion. On the whole his tone was mellower now, somewhat distant and resigned; but he could be

very snappy, too, when up against persistent folly: 'Sir— . . . you are not the first, nor the hundredth, person who has thought that he was able to prove "that a large majority of the principles . . . of economists . . . are wholly fallacious". I have read many such attempts . . . all showing equal incapacity of seeing through the most obvious paralogisms' (4, vol. I, p. 206). Some of the more testy letters can be safely ascribed to Helen Taylor, who acted as his rather independent secretary.

He never knew how far reaching would be the effect of his letters; his American correspondents especially had a knack of conveying private letters to the press if they came from 'that most distinguished friend of the United States, Mr. John Stuart Mill . . . the illustrious author', like the following upon the death of Lincoln:

'Dear Sir,—I had scarcely received your note . . . when the news came that an atrocious crime had struck down the great citizen who had afforded so noble an example of the qualities befitting the first magistrate of a free people, and who, in the most trying circumstances, had gradually won not only the admiration but almost the personal affection, of all who love freedom or appreciate simplicity and uprightness. But the loss is ours, not his. It was impossible to have wished him a better end than to add the crown of martyrdom to his other honors, and to live in the memory of a great nation as those only live who have not only laboured for their country, but died for it. And he did live to see the cause triumphant, and the contest virtually over. How different would our feelings now be if this fate had overtaken him . . . a month sooner!' (20).

This letter shows unusual emotion. Most of his correspondents agreed with the eminent American who said, after contact with many European statesmen of the day: 'The man who impressed me most of them all was Stuart Mill; you placed before him the facts on which you sought his opinion. He took them, gave you the different ways in which they might fairly be looked at, balanced the opposing considerations, and then handed you a final

judgment in which nothing was left out. His mind worked like a splendid piece of machinery; you supply it with raw material, and it turns you out a perfectly finished product'.

Owing to his great fame, Mill was much in demand. He affected, in honour of Harriet's memory, to be as much as before her death a 'recluse who reads the newspapers for contact with the world'; but in fact, after his first grief had subsided he became quite sociable again. He and Helen Taylor would visit with his old friends the Grotes, or Thornton, or with dear young Lord and Lady Amberley, who had sought him out at Avignon in 1864, or John Morley. When in London, his Saturday dinners at Blackheath Park became an institution; to be invited to them was a mark of intellectual distinction. While doubtless he enjoyed these contacts, they were quite impersonal, on the plane of ideas only, although his great charm of manner would disguise this fact from his visitors. But on this plane he had so much to give, was so stimulating, that his friends were hardly conscious of this limitation of the friendship.

The selection of his visitors was strictly according to their influence and purity as 'conduits of ideas'. It was literally easier for a working man struggling for enlightenment to gain access than for a princess of the royal family.

Mill's five o'clock Saturday dinners had a mellow charm of their own. The guests would travel down from Charing Cross. Mill met them at the station, his tall slim frame, his healthy clear skin and eyes, and his black clothes unmistakable even as the train pulled in. Helen drove the ladies of the party up in a carriage. Mill was very much the gentleman of the old school, his ease and simplicity of manner soon drew out every guest. There was nothing austere in the entertainment: the food and the wine were of as high quality as the table-talk. Most of the guests belonged to the younger generation, men whose names were to acquire renown during the next twenty years: Bain, Amberley, Fawcett, Cairnes, Moncure D. Conway, Spencer, Louis Blanc, Gomperz (Mill's translator into German), and John Morley were among them.

The 'tranquil and retired' mode of life evolved after Harriet's

death suited Mill's tastes in every way. Several months every year were passed in London. On occasional journeys he was accompanied by Helen Taylor. The rest of the time was spent at Avignon.

Helen had spent considerable energy on adapting the French summer cottage to their needs and had done well. It stood amid vineyards and mulberries, about two miles out of Avignon. The small, square, whitewashed building with green Venetian blinds and a vine-covered verandah, had a friendly look. Downstairs were the living-room, the dining-room, and Mill's study. Upstairs a bedroom for each of them and a guest-room. The bedrooms opened upon a terrace from which one overlooked a wide range of mountains—a constant delight and challenge to Mill.

Breakfast was at eight, then Mill worked till twelve or one. After a light lunch there would be a walk or work in the garden or the cemetery, then work again till dinner-time, after which Mill attended to correspondence or read aloud from some lighter sort of book. Once a week he would set out for an all-day excursion, either alone or with a companion—Helen, a local French friend, or a visitor from England. His old friends, like Thornton, visiting at Avignon, were pleased to see him so cheerful, contented, even happy. But still he clung tenaciously to Harriet's memory; it was to him a 'religion' and he persisted in his extreme touchiness in all regarding her. Mrs. Gaskell, the well-known novelist, the mature, sweet-natured wife of a minister, had in her *Life of Charlotte Brontë* unwittingly offended Mill by describing the author of Harriet's article 'The Emancipation of Women' as priggish. This had drawn a withering reproof from Mill. After reading his heartfelt dedication to Harriet in *On Liberty*, Mrs. Gaskell wrote to apologize for wounding his feelings. But she was coldly rebuffed.

His youngest sister, Mary, met with the same treatment. In an attempt to heal the breach of many years' standing, she appealed to him: 'I wish you to know the simple truth that nothing can alter my affection for you and that nothing but knowledge that you were a Christian could give me so much happiness as to know that you would be glad to see me again. Do you never think of the

last that is left of the children whom my father committed to your charge' (20).

Mill replied, obviously incensed: 'Mary—I have received your note of Febr. 15, 1858. I do not know why you write to me after so long an interval if you cannot show more good sense or good feeling than are shewn in this note. There is besides, a total want of modesty in supposing that I am likely to receive instruction from you on the subject of my strongest convictions—which were also those of your father regarding Christianity. There is certainly nothing in your note to make me desire that there should be any more communication between us than there has been for many years past.—J.S.M.' (20).

But the craving of his whole personality for a living mastermind and idol was overriding. So he soon began to endow Helen Taylor with all the necessary attributes of superiority.

In his *Autobiography* he wrote of her:

'Though the inspirer of my best thoughts was no longer with me, I was not alone: she had left a daughter, my stepdaughter, Miss Helen Taylor, the inheritor of much of her wisdom, and of all her nobleness of character, whose ever growing and ripening talents from that day to this have been devoted to the same great purposes, and have already made her name better and more widely known than was that of her mother, though far less so than I predict, that if she lives it is destined to become. Of the value of her direct co-operation with me something will be said hereafter, of what I owe in the way of instruction to her great powers of original thought and soundness of practical judgment, it would be vain to give an adequate idea. Surely no one ever before was so fortunate, as, after such a loss as mine, to draw another prize in the lottery of life—another companion, stimulator, adviser, and instructor of the rarest quality. Whoever, either now or hereafter, may think of me and the work I have done, must never forget that it is the product not of one intellect and conscience but of three, the least considerable of whom and above all the least original, is the one whose name is attached to it' (9, p. 268).

The posthumous autobiography contains only two or three of these sentences; upon Alexander Bain's strongly expressed insistence, Helen finally consented to omit most of this highflown passage. This may have been better for Mill's reputation; but for a true appraisal of the man and his psychology, these words are among the most revealing he wrote. Indeed, without knowledge of his relationship with Helen Taylor, one would be reluctant to evaluate his relationship with Harriet. But enough is known of Helen to make it perfectly clear that concerning her, at any rate, he was labouring under a complete delusion. She was a worthy, intellectual, somewhat unbalanced woman, of the highest moral sentiments, who displayed a superior, irritable attitude to all around her and was much given to reforming her inferiors.

Their peculiar relationship did not pass unnoticed by some of Mill's later visitors, who felt subdued by Helen's superior airs. In 1870, Charles Eliot Norton commented upon the 'powerful influence of his daughter, Miss Taylor, who is an admirable personage doubtless, but is what, were she of the sex that she regards as inferior, would be called decidedly priggish. Her self-confidence, which embraces her confidence in Mill, is tremendous, and Mill is overpowered by it. Her words have an oracular value for him, —something more than their just weight; and her unconscious flattery . . . has a not unnatural effect on his tender, susceptible and sympathetic nature' (9, p. 313).

It is safe to conclude that, if not Harriet or Helen, someone else —man or woman—would have occupied the pedestal erected in Mill's soul during his impressionable childhood. Someone had to be his guiding star, to whom he could submit his mind, actions, decisions. Without this guidance he was lost.

CHAPTER XII

The Last Years

1866—1872

MILL had considered himself settled for life as a recluse and a writer. But early in 1865 he was asked to stand as Member of Parliament for Westminster.

He was in two minds whether to accept. Would he be able to do more good inside Parliament than out?

Mill decided to stand. But he laid down four conditions that made his election seem well-nigh impossible: he would undertake no personal canvassing; he would not contribute any money towards his election expenses; he would not answer questions upon his religious views; and, if elected, he would not give any time to local Westminster interests.

When these conditions appeared in a public letter to the *Daily News* they created a sensation. All his unorthodox views were widely discussed: on workmen's votes, on women's votes, on religious disabilities, on high death-duties designed to break up large fortunes and, especially, landed estates; on the worker's right to strike, on colonies, on Irish peasant properties. . . . His famous 'To hell will I go' was widely quoted by his enemies. His band of supporters, slaving away during the hot summer weeks, became more and more worried. Mill, however, calmly retired to Avignon to await the upshot. He once again revised his *Logic*. Only a week before the election day did he consent to show himself for the first time in his constituency. He put in two appearances. One was before his electors, and went off smoothly. The other was

open to all—which meant mostly the working men clamouring for the vote.

The large hall was filled to capacity, with many people waiting outside. It was dimly lit and hot. Mill was greeted with guarded, respectful applause. His audience looked at their candidate, the famous philosopher, who, like Locke before him, had always made time for public affairs: they saw a tall, thin man, with small, keen, blue eyes and a clear skin, who addressed them succinctly in a high, clear voice. Then he sat down. There was little response from the stolid mass below the platform. His supporters sitting beside him began to look glum. 'Questions may now be addressed to the candidate.'

Was he in favour of the vote for working men? Yes. But would they please read what he had written on the representation of minorities. Applause. Was he in favour of Irish Home Rule? Yes. His supporters looked more glum. An opponent rose and asked for his opinion on women's rights. 'I am as much in favour of the vote for women as for the working class.' Women in the gallery embraced each other with shrieks of delight; it was the first time a man seeking public office had made this avowal in public. The audience gave a loud guffaw, which suddenly subsided as they realized that this was not meant as a joke. On the platform one of Mill's supporters wiped his brow: 'The Almighty Himself would have no chance of being elected on such a programme!' Odger, Secretary of the London Trades Council and a leading trade unionist, thought it wise to plead that these views might seem advanced even to the most advanced political gathering in the most advanced constituency in England. But that everybody present knew Mr. Mill as the most sincere friend the working class had.

At this an opponent rose and unfolded a placard on which was printed a passage from Mill's *Parliamentary Reform* stating that 'English gentlemen do not lie. The English working classes—though differing from those of some other countries in that they are ashamed of lying—are yet generally liars.' He read this to the meeting. Then he passed the placard to Mill on the platform and asked whether he admitted to writing this statement.

Mill rose: 'I did.' And he sat down again. As one man the working men, so lately called liars, rose. The applause was thunderous and prolonged. This was their man. Odger, beaming, thanked Mill: 'My class has no desire not to be told its faults; we want friends not flatterers.'

This incident is typical of Mill's attitude to working men. It was an odd mixture of disdain and respect, dislike and esteem. It held no trace of the romantic regard for the proletariat common among intellectuals at the beginning of the twentieth century, nor of the Victorian pity for the poor animating the Christian socialists. There was no patronage in it. He—and Harriet—wanted the workers to stand up for themselves, to 'come out of leading strings' and take their share of responsibility for the community. They wanted them to become 'unbrutalized' and by 'free discussion with them as equals' taught to think for themselves. '*Aide-toi-même*' he had greeted as their motto in the French revolution of 1830. Yet he—and Harriet—deeply distrusted the masses. And ever since the 'wretched usurper' Napoleon III had come to power in France after his *coup d'état* in 1851 with the help of the masses, and thus dashed all hopes of freedom on the Continent, Mill had been crusading for minority rights. His and Harriet's real aim was to help the masses to become individuals—the more diverse and strongly marked the better.

Mill's strong and manly attitude to them appealed to the working men of his time. His following among them had been growing steadily through the years. They had swelled the sale of his cheap editions 'like wildfire'.

Mill was elected with a good majority. As of old, his aim in entering Parliament was to cement the alliance between the advanced liberals and the working class. By this he largely contributed to the spiritual foundations of the British Labour movement. Furthermore, he determined to 'spend what prestige he might possess upon unpopular causes'.

He took his duties in the House extremely seriously. He meticulously attended Parliamentary meetings and committees. He was not popular. He appeared pedantic, a constant reproach to the

jollier, less responsible members. 'Ah, I see,' Disraeli, eyeing him for the first time, remarked coldly, 'the finishing governess.' Even his friends, like the blind reformer Fawcett, thought that he erred by an excess of duty. But Mill's heart was in these belated and burdensome labours, involving infinite patience and attention to detail. He gradually earned the respect of the House; he always spoke for the policy he had followed all his life with earnest patience and truthfulness, and with the intellectual fearlessness he had from boyhood so much admired in his father. Even his rare humour had this same tinge.

One of Mill's main channels of influence was W. E. Gladstone, who had a high regard for him. It was Gladstone who said of Mill's term in Parliament 'He did us all good'.

He spoke in favour of the vote for the whole working class. And when the Bill for extending the vote to all municipal householders was introduced, he proposed that the word 'man' in the bill be substituted by 'person'; 73 members voted in favour, 196 against, a result showing a surprisingly large bloc in the House in favour of the vote for women.

But, unexpected by himself, his prestige was to be 'spent' mostly on questions of British foreign policy. His acute hatred of the 'puny emperor' Louis Napoleon led him to deliver one of his best speeches (although his speech on Reform had much the greater practical effect). On France he spoke as one deeply conscious of the stream of History. He deplored his own party's appeasement of France under Napoleon III.

He called the weakening of England's sea-power a 'national blunder'. Later, in 1870, he and Helen Taylor were to see nothing but 'stern justice' in the defeat of the French by Prussia.

But his attitude on Irish affairs cost him more dearly in popularity. He had always held that the troubles in Ireland were due more to the English than to the Irish. When now the English Government joined forces with the Irish Catholic priests against the Irish rebels, the 'Fenians', suppressed them ruthlessly, suspended *habeas corpus*, and condemned the leaders to death by hanging, Mill decided to make a stand. By his personal agitation and

skill in oratory at a public meeting the Fenians escaped the hangman.

In one other personal fight, however, vested interests proved too strong for him. These were the facts: distress reigned in the Crown Colony of Jamaica. The sugar estates were being ruined by American competition. The former slaves, now freed, were free only to starve. Governor Eyre considered the social unrest as a rebellion to be put down by force. He summarily flogged and hanged scores of black men, women, and children after trials that were a travesty of justice; houses were razed to the ground. The Royal Commission sent out to investigate blamed the Governor for the horrifying punishments meted out with complete lack of justice. Had it not been for Mill's initiative the matter might have rested there. But his deepest feelings were aroused. His experience as an administrator of India prompted him to action. In his own words:

'I consider myself as an Englishman, called upon to protest against what I believe to be an infringement of the laws of England; against acts of violence committed by Englishmen in authority calculated to lower the character of England in the eyes of all foreign lovers of liberty; against a precedent that would justly inflame against us the people of our dependencies; and against an example calculated to brutalise our own fellow-countrymen . . . That the real or supposed crime of men in authority should be subject to judicial examination is the most important guarantee of English liberty; and I am not aware that any reason has ever yet been brought forward why Mr. Eyre should be the sole and solitary exception for this liability.'

His fierce and dogged attacks upon Eyre earned him a reputation for lack of patriotism. But in fact Mill's effort was the 'action of a stout patriot'. One of his keenest adversaries over this issue was Carlyle. In the end Mill's party won a theoretical victory; the Lord Chief Justice delivered his charge at the Old Bailey, making it clear that Governor Eyre was indeed answerable for his offences and thus settling the question 'in favour of liberty', as far as the

law went. But the jury threw out the bill and no trial ever took place. Eyre lived to a peaceful old age. But, as Mill said, public feeling had been awakened to oppression in the colonies.

In his work Mill drew around himself a circle of outstanding men, reformers and thinkers, of whom there was an unusually large number during these years. Charles Eliot Norton was struck by the contrast with the situation in the United States:

'Now in England there is . . . abundance of solid reasoning faculty applied to the difficulties of the time; abundance of the strong convictions and firm principles that result from the possession and exercise of trained and disciplined reason . . . There is a marked revival of (mainly under the stimulus of Mill) and interest in the higher branches of speculation, in philosophy as applied to life.'

He, like Mill himself, was surprised 'by the marked progress of liberal sentiments in England both in matters of religion and politics within late years'.

Mill, then, had a wide range of interests to choose from. He urged on the various reform schemes afoot, most of which have long since been realized, except for Thomas Hare's plan for proportional representation.

Of personal friendships there were perhaps only two deserving of the name, and these also were deeply tinged by public purpose: that with the young Amberleys and with John Morley.

Lord and Lady Amberley—'Kate' as she soon became to Helen and Mill—were a very young couple, handsome, well-born, rich, and full of fire and enthusiasm. They were both ready to be infected with Mill's most advanced ideas and, paying for it by a loss of social prestige, they spent their short lives in a glow of public service. They were devoted to Mill. He even became godfather to one of their children. Both he and Helen spent many pleasant hours in their company

But probably the most fruitful relationship of Mill's later years was with John Morley. Morley had had a hard struggle as a freelance journalist in London. Then he became a regular contributor to the *Saturday Review*, and one of his essays on 'New Ideas'

arrested Mill's attention and brought Morley an invitation to Blackheath Park. Morley became one of Mill's main channels of influence on contemporary thought. In 1867, Morley became editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, which had been launched in the previous year by Frederick Chapman together with Trollope, H. G. Lewes, and Cotter Morrison. In Morley's hands and with Mill's guidance, the *Fortnightly* became an outstanding organ of liberal, bold, and original thought. Owing to Mill, it also became a powerful ally of the women's movement for equal rights. The circulation rose quietly month by month. Here the signed article was first introduced—a novelty in a serious review. Mill published most of his last papers in its pages. For years after Mill's death Morley never tired of writing about him—his books, his views—always upon a note of deep reverence. Morley's most enduring work, his biography of Turgot, was inspired by Mill: Mill strongly urged him to bring home to English readers this great Frenchman who, next to Socrates, had been his boyhood ideal of a man. Much of what Morley wrote about Turgot's character we may read as his image of Mill himself. He almost wrote Mill's biography, too.

In his obituary of Mill, Morley praised his 'gift of intellectual fatherhood', and this is indeed the relation in which they stood. Stunted as a lover, as a family man, as a personal friend—Mill was at his human best in this relationship. As his father had done with him, he, in turn, was now training a thinker, a reformer, a successor, with devotion and enthusiasm. And, as in his own case, the training proved a success: Lord Morley's distinguished career of public service bears witness to it.

For three and a half years Mill divided his time between London and Avignon; between Parliament, social intercourse, writing, and correspondence. Many critics think that his later essays weakened his reputation as a great thinker. But his long and splendid reviews of his old friend Grote's books on Plato and Aristotle are some of his most personal work—they give the fruit of his life long contemplation of the classics and manifest all his fervent love for the Ancients.

In November 1868 Disraeli's short and bad ministry came to an

end. Mill stood again for Parliament. But his prestige had indeed been spent over unpopular causes. Moreover he insisted on supporting every working-class candidate in the field and thereby antagonized his own party. In his first election he had had the support of many socially inclined churchmen. But by subscribing to Bradlaugh's election fund and supporting this militant atheist he lost all adherents of this kind.

His defeat, together with that of Chadwick, Roebuck, Amberley, and Morley, was a great blow to his devoted admirers. But Mill himself returned with utter relief to his liberty and privacy as a contemplative thinker and writer.

He looked around: what was left for him to do? Which were the ends most in need of tying up? A relentless and habitual systematizer, he detested all loose ends. He had attained to the unexpectedly ripe age of sixty-three, now indeed time might run out. But no matter—not too much was left to be done.

He retired more frequently than ever to Avignon and to Harriet's tomb. Soon he and Helen gave up the lease of the troublesome house at Blackheath Park, and spent only a few weeks every year in their flat in Victoria Street, Westminster, where Mill was nearer his political collaborators. At Avignon they became positively sociable and hospitable; many of their friends came for short stays and were made most comfortable in the serene, even atmosphere of Mill's everyday life. Mill was still able to outwalk most of them with ease. Mountains especially gave as much of a lift to his physique as ever: with every yard gained he felt lighter in body and spirit. He delighted in twelve- or fifteen-mile walks up and down hill, spent in good conversation. Invariably he returned laden with plants, which were methodically sorted and preserved.

While he was in London attending to his parliamentary duties, Helen had made many thoughtful improvements to their cottage; a pleasant covered terrace nearly thirty feet long on two sides of the house where he could take his walks in bad weather; a new bathroom, and a herbarium fitted with closets for his plants. Full of contentment, he described the changes to his old colleague

Thornton, adding 'and you may be sure that I am lost in wonder and admiration of the ingenuity with which Helen has contrived to manage it all'. It had always been a necessity for him to be lost in wonder and admiration of someone, and now it was to be Helen. Her robust self-esteem was quite equal to the demands made upon it. It embraced Mill's fame, to which, indeed, her own life from babyhood had been dedicated. After his father and Harriet, it was now Helen who stood as his *directeur d'âme*. But she was a more lenient taskmaster than either of her predecessors. She was less fearsome than his father, and she was certainly more predictable and reliable in her reactions than Harriet had ever been. Yet, copying her mother's attitude to Mill, she was apt to upbraid him soundly, particularly if he showed hesitation or indecision in his public bearing.

She acted as his secretary and took the greatest liberty with his writings, large and small, altering words, rejecting whole paragraphs and making him re-write whole pages. Mill, far from resenting this, only told her what a capital editor she would make. She dealt with a great deal of his correspondence. All the letters he received and his or her draft replies were as methodically catalogued and preserved as his plants.

It must be said for Helen that she in her turn sincerely welcomed Mill's criticism of her writings. But he looked at the one person he adored through rose-tinted spectacles and, unless his intellectual honesty was too flagrantly violated, would overflow with praise for all Helen did.

Helen assumed less authority than Harriet had done over the direction of his theoretical writings. In his more practical interests Mill was glad to follow her initiative. Much of his efforts went into the preservation of rural beauty in England. We owe Epping Forest to him and even the preservation of the elm trees in Piccadilly.

He generously gave to the various good causes near to his heart —but for private charity and pity he had as little use as ever. In his charitable activities he had Helen's approval. She was a good and economical housewife, but did not have her mother's anxious regard for money.

Mill was comfortably off and felt that he could afford to be generous. His liberal pension from India House, returns from investments, royalties from his library editions, and the unexpected additional royalties from his cheap editions afforded him an income of well over £2,000 a year. For his occasional articles in the *Fortnightly* he now never accepted payment. With wholehearted generosity he gave to writers in need, like Herbert Spencer, and to struggling liberal periodicals; this he considered a contribution towards keeping discussion alive in England. His own labours, too, he proffered in the same spirit: when John Morley fell ill and groaned under the burden of editing the *Fortnightly*, Mill proposed to take over the management till his recovery.

But his and Helen's foremost interest attached to Harriet's greatest concern: the movement for the equal status of women in society. Mill systematically made converts of any outstanding man or woman with whom he came in contact; many of the leaders of the suffragette movement were converted by him and Helen personally. With committees and societies for the cause springing up in all big towns, Mill decided the time was ripe for the publication of his *Subjection of Women*. When it came out in 1869, it raised the greatest outcry of all his books. Men's most primitive emotions were roused. For us today the antagonism against equal rights for women is difficult to understand; the discussion deliberately started by Mill has made the subject almost commonplace, even though equal rights are still a long way off. But we need only imagine a Bill brought in today establishing a woman's legal right to know and jointly dispose of her husband's income to realize that violent prejudice against equal rights for women still prevails. In Mill's time even most of his advanced friends were horrified. His book became the shield and Bible of the women fighting for the vote, and it won for him an army of devoted female followers. It was rapidly translated into many languages and devoured in secret by women in backward countries. Probably no other book of his has transformed our public and private life as much as did the *Subjection of Women*.

In philosophy, Mill felt that there was but one field left to be

brought up-to-date according to the principles of the *Logic:* psychology. Unwaveringly he had adhered to his father's conception of the mind as a blank at birth, subsequently filled with associations by experience. The nineteenth-century romantic school of innate ideas had passed the climax of its influence, and the reaction against it had set in. To strengthen the trend, and as a memorial to his father, Mill patiently re-edited James Mill's *Analysis of the Human Mind.* He wrote a long preface, applauding James's method, and added well over a hundred long foot-notes; Bain and Grote also contributed signed foot-notes.

On the list of subjects to be dealt with, drawn up by Harriet and him in 1854, there were now but two items left unexecuted: 'Nature and Utility of Religion' and 'Socialism'.

The last large work he planned was on socialism. It was left unfinished. The four completed chapters were published in 1879 in the *Fortnightly.* In them he predicted universal suffrage, the right to strike, and, in consequence, the inevitability of socialism. They came to be one of the foundations of Fabian socialism, further weaning from violence English socialist thinkers. It has often been said that, had he lived, Mill would have been one of the foremost Fabians, and one can but wonder . . .

While under Harriet's tutelage he had written two essays on religion. During his last years he wrote another long essay on theism. The three essays were published together by Helen after his death. They evoked great and somewhat pained surprise among his closer friends; so many of them were agnostics or, as the term then went, positivists, and had felt themselves to be his pupils. As such they held that Comte's 'religion of humanity' would and should supersede supernatural beliefs as an incentive for the good life. From his many definite anti-metaphysical and anti-clerical utterances, they had always supposed Mill to be one of the foremost among them. He certainly adhered to both convictions to the end. But his inveterate habit of attempting an intellectual synthesis had long driven him to investigating the claims of the opposite opinion. In his last essay there is a tentative attempt at belief in an after-life and in the existence of a finite, benevolent,

but certainly not all-powerful Deity. His friends, disappointed, ascribed his last essay to an old man's longing to believe in re-union after death with the woman of his life. This was a mistake. As early as 1854, before Harriet's death, he had written in his diary:
'If human life is governed by superior beings, how greatly must the power of the evil intelligences surpass that of the good when . . . [we judge by] this world of unfinished beginnings, unrealised promises, and disappointed endeavours—a world the only rule and object of which seems to be the production of a perpetual succession of fruits, hardly any of them destined to ripen, and, if they do, only lasting a day' (4, vol. II, p. 371).

These thoughts he had mulled over for many years. Although his thoughts about an after-life were inextricably intermingled with those of Harriet and were pursued mostly at her graveside, he had done no more than come round to the view already held by his father: the Manichean conception of the universe as a fighting-ground between two opposing principles.

In June 1871 George Grote died. In the solemn procession which deposited the old sage at Westminster Abbey, Mill, much against his inclination, acted as pall-bearer. After the crowd had departed he lingered on. How old Grote had seemed to him when, as a small boy, he had met him in his father's study—why, Grote was already a grown man and married. Now the last link with his boyhood had gone. As he walked away with Bain, he remarked quietly: 'In no very long time, I shall be laid in the ground with a very different ceremonial from that.'

He was to have two more quiet, composed years. Three days before his death, on a Saturday, he went for the last of his beloved botanical expeditions. The May day was hot. Mill walked fifteen miles and returned home to Helen, who joyfully received 'dear Mr. Mill' (as he remained to her to the last) and his bundle of plants. He may have caught the fever that was to prove fatal by his habitual visit that night to Harriet's grave. He died in the morning hours of the 7th of May 1873. His last words, spoken in fever, were: 'You know that I have done my work'. Were they the parting words of the wise old man of mature intellect who left

his legacy complete? Or were they the anxious, fearful, defensive words of the little boy who never grew up, seeking approval—his father's, Harriet's, Helen's? There is no way of knowing.

The following day he was carried along the short way he had walked so often and so faithfully during the last fifteen years. He was laid in the grave under the marble tomb. He had gone home to Harriet. Perhaps he was now nearer to her than ever in his life.

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