

important episode, in nineteenth century thought. It began and ended with Agnosticism, though this term, with the special meaning attached to it, was only adopted at the end. James Mill<sup>1</sup> was, according to the testimony of his son, neither a believer nor an unbeliever in any ultimate theory of the origin and destiny of the world. In spite of his acquaintance with the pronounced opposition to religious beliefs contained in the writings of some of the French encyclopædists he was never an avowed atheist. The writings of his son, John Stuart Mill,<sup>2</sup> notably his 'Autobiography,' and the post-

<sup>1</sup> "My father, educated in the creed of Scotch presbyterianism, had by his own studies and reflections been early led to reject not only the belief in Revelation, but the foundations of what is commonly called Natural Religion. . . . Finding no halting-place in Deism, he remained in a state of perplexity until, doubtless after many struggles, he yielded to the conviction that, concerning the origin of things, nothing whatever can be known. This is the only correct statement of his opinion; for dogmatic atheism he looked upon as absurd; as most of those, whom the world has considered atheists, have always done" ('Autobiography,' p. 38). James Mill's Agnosticism was, however, as we are told further on, founded, not upon intellectual difficulties, nor upon a mechanical or naturalistic direction of thought, but upon the difficulties which surround the problem of physical and moral evil in the world. It is, at the same time, remarkable that, living so near the age during which the philosophy of Kant had made a lasting impression upon Continental thought, his philosophical interests should not have led

him to take some notice of the critical and idealistic philosophy of Germany. In his 'Life of James Mill,' A. Bain has published a reference to Mill's 'Commonplace Book' "as a clue to his studies." From this it is interesting to see that among the many authors, ancient and modern, English and foreign, there is not one representative of German philosophy, nor even of the great and broad current of speculation which began with Descartes and was continued by Spinoza and Leibniz, leading on to contemporary German transcendentalism.

<sup>2</sup> Although earlier and contemporary French thought played a considerable part in the development of J. S. Mill's convictions, we find no reference to the 'Discourse on Method' of Descartes, nor did the shallow philosophy of Condillac satisfy him. Starting, as he said, without any creed, he felt the necessity of finding and possessing one. Satisfied at an early age with the "principle of utility" as understood by Bentham, he found in it "the keystone which held together the detached and fragmentary component parts of [his] knowledge and beliefs. . . . It gave him a