

Pensione Lucrezia Firenze, Italia,
29 Nov. 1887.

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My dear Sir,

Your kind letter of the 16th has been forwarded to me by Dr Chapman. It gave me very great pleasure to find that my *Studies on Greek Philosophy* had attracted the attention of so competent an authority. I must confess that, although I have been using your edition of Ritter & Preller for some years past, your independent works are known to me only through the very brief references to them contained in that volume; but in preparing my essays for separate republication, I shall be particularly glad to avail myself of the light which you have thrown on

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The disputed points referred to.
It seems to me, however, that what
Plato exactly taught with regard to the
ideal theory is beyond the reach of
certain knowledge. It may be also
that he held two or three different
views on the subject in the course
of his life. as you may have observed
I do not regard him primarily as a
great speculative genius, but as a
great practical reformer who used
speculative ideas for the reconstruction
of society. And I also think that
Aristotle's arguments will retain much
of their value as against all metaphys-
ical mythology, even if his interpretation
of Plato was mistaken. My mistake
was to treat a subject as closed
which is still open to controversy; and

this I shall be careful to correct.
My articles have been written
under considerable disadvantages due
to the wandering life which my
delicate health obliges me to lead.
Spending the summer in the high
Alps and the winter on the Riviera,
I have for years had access to no
large library except the Biblioteca
Nazionale here in Florence, which
since the bankruptcy of the city has
almost ceased to be supplied with
new German books on philosophy; and
which besides is being yearly made
more difficultly of access. The last
change has been to preclude the public
from consulting the catalogue for
themselves; and so ignorant are the
inspiration that much valuable time

is lost in trying to make them understand the title of the book desired.

I am thus obliged to buy every book that I wish to consult, a circumstance which tends to limit the range of my studies. Besides the English public sets little value on minute scholarship in philosophical investigations. Our audience resembles that which attends the lectures given by the Professors of the Sorbonne. It consists largely of men of the world and educated women who demand a clear interesting style, plenty of general ideas, and a continual reference to the questions of the present day. But this is a subject which would weary me too far, and I must now conclude.

With heartfelt gratitude for your kind interest in my labours, I remain
Dear Sir Yours faithfully, Alfred Benn