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## HISTORY AND HISTORICAL PROBLEMS



# HISTORY AND HISTORICAL PROBLEMS

BY

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## PREFACE

THE substance of this book was delivered in the form of lectures, to audiences consisting largely of teachers of History, in Melbourne.

The purpose, as will be apparent to any who look into the book, was to create an interest in the method and processes of history, as well as in the matter of which it is composed.

I have reason to believe that this purpose was achieved, and am hopeful that the book will be found not without an appeal in a larger field.

E. S.





## CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. THE PURPOSE OF HISTORY - - - -	I
II. HISTORICAL METHOD - - - -	23
III. HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY - - - -	46
IV. HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY - - - -	70
V. HISTORY AND PHYSICAL SCIENCE - -	93
VI. HISTORY IN EDUCATION - - - -	117
VII. HISTORY AND PATRIOTISM - - - -	140
VIII. VARIETIES OF HISTORY - - - -	161
IX. HISTORICAL PROBLEMS - - - -	183
X. THE LIVING FORCE OF HISTORY - -	203
INDEX - - - - -	215



# I

## THE PURPOSE OF HISTORY

THERE is no need to apologise for historical studies, but it can never be considered out of place to define the purpose of any variety of intellectual effort. No true friend to humanistic learning should resent a challenge to any subject of the group dignified by that adjective, because, unless good reasons can be given for the study of it, obviously time ought not to be wasted upon it. The Hellenist does not state the case for Greek as an advocate unfolds the defence of a prisoner at the bar; if he stooped to that humility Greek would have done little for him. He explains what Greek has meant in the history of culture, and what it still has to give to a world that cannot afford the impoverishment of being deprived of its rich legacy of beauty, wisdom and truth. History has not quite escaped the slings and arrows of assailants who want to know what is the use of it. We ought to try to show them, not because the subject needs champions, but because they confess a need for enlightenment.

Another reason for attempting to define the Purpose of History is that there are very general misapprehensions concerning it, both on the part of teachers and the public. As to teachers, there is certainly less to complain about nowadays than was formerly the case,

and there are some to whom one cannot hope to say much about the Purpose of History that they have not thought out for themselves. But even in quarters where the standard of attainment is high, there are differences of opinion as to aims and methods, and an independent discussion of the subject may help to clarify thought. In other instances, perhaps, reflection on principles may help to check one or other of the two extremes of defective history-teaching, the overloading of the subject with masses of hard fact, or, on the contrary, the reduction of it to frivolity by dilution with anecdotal irrelevance, in an anxiety to be 'interesting' at all costs. The former method is calculated to obliterate the real educational value of history; the latter to deprive it of serious efficacy.

We desire that history shall be interesting, but this must not be achieved at the expense of making history something that it is not; we desire that the utility of it should be recognised by thoughtful people, but its cultural value is of greater consequence than its practical use. 'What is history to me?' asks the plain busy man, as interpreted by one who was both a great man of affairs and a philosophical historian.<sup>1</sup> We may tell the plain busy man, if he be not too busy to listen and too plain to care, that the whole present is the offspring of the past; and he will perhaps reply that he does not need to read many volumes in several languages to know that. We provoke his scepticism when we try to convince him that history will assist us to predict the future. It will do so to a limited degree, but historical parallels are never complete, and prediction is a ticklish business, at which it is easier

<sup>1</sup> Lord Morley, *Politics and History*, 3.

to lose a reputation than to make one. Sybel ventured the generalisation that he who knows the whence will also know the whither ; but our history schools teem with experts in whences, whilst being short of safe guides to the whithers. An English writer is more cautious, in the proposition that ' it is by a study of the past that we shall be able to understand the conditions of the present and best lay plans for the future.' <sup>1</sup> That is as much as can judiciously be claimed for history as an illuminant of the future.

Yet there are remarkable instances of accurate forecasting, based upon historical knowledge. Foremost among them is Burke's perfect vision of the outcome of the French Revolution, written in the earliest years of that stormy epoch. Napoleon Bonaparte was an obscure, impoverished officer with no prospects when Burke wrote that the period of faction would remain

' until some popular general, who understands the art of conciliating the soldiery, and who possesses the true spirit of command, shall draw the eyes of all men upon himself. Armies will obey him on his personal account. There is no other way of securing military obedience in this state of things. But the moment in which that event shall happen, the person who really commands the army is your master ; the master (that is little) of your king, the master of your assembly, the master of your whole republic.' <sup>2</sup>

The startling success of that prediction consisted in the phenomenal greatness of the man who harnessed his chariot to the runaway steeds of the Revolution, and drove them on beyond the heights of Imperial splendour to the precipice. But a whole crop of historical

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Boyd Carpenter in *Quarterly Review*, July, 1918, 336.

<sup>2</sup> Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution*, edit. of 1790, p. 318.

predictions could be quoted which have been falsified by events. They have rarely been made by historians. The prophets who go to this Delphic oracle usually have the answer they want to get ready made, if not in their pockets, at all events in their minds. They predict according to fancy and predilection, and cite historical analogies to support their conclusions. Prophecy according to prescription is akin to playing with loaded dice.

Do we admit, then, that history is of no practical use? Professor Pollard, in a mood of painful severity, goes to that length. He is inclined to say, he tells us, 'taking the words in the current conventional sense, that history is of absolutely no *use* whatever. Yet it is precisely on that assumption—that history is of no use whatever—that I would base its claim to a prominent place in the curricula of every University under the sun.'<sup>1</sup> Everything depends upon what is meant by 'use,' in this verdict. Certainly history is of no use in the sense in which a spade, or a motor-car, or electricity, are of use. It is not a material thing which can be employed in the running of a business. The man who knows no history can dig potatoes or milk a cow just as well as the man who knows several periods, if we may be allowed to assume that this knowledge need not incapacitate anyone from admittedly useful occupations. But there is more than one kind of 'use.'

Is experience of no use? Is an experienced man no better than one who is raw? Do we not consider experience to be valuable and desirable? History is the recorded experience of mankind in all ages. All that man has striven to attain, and has attained,

<sup>1</sup> A. F. Pollard, *Factors in Modern History*, p. 266.

all his balked aspirations and his unrealised dreams, all his splendid achievements and his disappointments, furnish the stuff of which history is made. The various forms which human society has assumed under stress of circumstances, the institutions which have been created to hold it together, their modifications in the course of time, the disappearance of some, the adaptation of others to fresh requirements,—history exhibits these things, unravelling the processes by which modes of government have been changed, and the experiments which have been tried and have failed, and the others which have been tried and retained as part of the working machinery of social order. The idealism of revolutions and the actual working out of the ideals; the conflict between theory and practice, the difference between vision and reality, the interplay of character and event, the cross currents of ambition, passion, pure faith, sheer cupidity, mob madness, craft, villainy, self-sacrifice, lofty principle, mean mendacity; the striving of masses of conflicting wills and the manipulation of opinion by master strategists—history analyses and straightens out these complexities and makes available the experience gained in a thousand crises. Is all this of no use?

No one man in a lifetime can obtain more than a fragment of the experience which is available even in his own generation. He may know something of politics, war, travel, tumult, wealth, poverty, sport, sickness, the exaltation of success, the depression of failure; he may enjoy a wide liberality of human contacts; he may have been richly dowered with opportunities, and may have had the wisdom to use them to the full. But he will still be a man of limited



experience, and his limitations will be enlarged by history, and be the more limited without it. Personal experience, too, however extensive, lacks the sifting, the co-relation, to which history subjects human experience in the wider ambit of time and conditions surveyed by it. History clarifies, criticises, compares, co-ordinates experience, and makes it available for all. To deny that this is not a utility would be a strange contention.

How otherwise than by means of history, also, can be obtained that wide knowledge of character in its vast variety without which we should suffer woeful intellectual impoverishment? To the student of human things it is apparent that, as Mill observed,

‘That which alone enables any body of human beings to exist as a society, is national character; *that* it is, which causes one nation to succeed in what it attempts, another to fail; one nation to understand and aspire to elevated things, another to grovel in mean ones; which makes the greatness of one nation lasting, and dooms another to early and rapid decay.’<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, Herbert Spencer submits that ‘the welfare of a society and the justice of its arrangements are at bottom dependent on the character of its members.’ A shrewd observer of mankind can learn much about human character in a lifetime, but only from history can he learn about it largely. National character is to be understood in no other manner than from the study of national history. When we say that Cromwell was typically English, Danton typically French, Bismarck typically German, Lincoln typically

<sup>1</sup> John Stuart Mill, essay on Bentham, in vol. i. of *Dissertations and Discussions*.

American, we sum up the characteristics of a people as exhibited in a person, and we may get close to the truth in so doing. England has produced thousands of Cromwells, France teems with Dantons, Germany reeks with Bismarcks, and in America there are so many Lincolns to the square mile. The traits which these typical men exhibit, come out over and over again in the national histories of their countries. The 'village Hampden' is not a poetic fancy of Gray, but is probably as prevalent in the rural life of England as are church steeples. George Loveless and the Dorsetshire labourers who were transported to Van Diemen's Land in 1834 for promoting a Trade Union among the peasantry, were very good Hampdens, and the embattled farmers at Lexington Green in 1775 will not be denied affinity with Lincoln because they 'fired the shot heard round the world' thirty-four years before he was born in the backwoods of Kentucky.

✓ We say, then, that history in one of its manifold aspects is the sum of human experience, clarified by criticism ; secondly, that it is a great school of human character ; and that in both of these manifestations we claim for it substantial utility. ✓

It is also mankind's memory. Without it, humanity would be an ephemeral agglomeration of units, born to-day, forgotten to-morrow. With it, our own age is an hour in recorded time, whose happenings are chronicled with perhaps too ample particularity. The very minutes have their biographies written to satisfy the thirst for news, and the trivialities of existence scream at us under big headlines. One of the most overworked words in the vocabulary of contemporary journalism is 'historic.' An 'historic occasion' in

the jargon of the day, is usually one when something happens which is of very little consequence even at the time, and of none whatever a day or two after. From the higgledy-piggledy confusion of things history picks out those which have enduring value. It brings to bear its sense of proportion, the quality which is so patently lacking to the mass of unreflecting people, and sets in perspective those events which have permanent interest. He who knows no history can only regard life as a flat surface. For him there is no past, and he can have little discernment of the influence of contemporaneous occurrences on the future. He is a fly buzzing in the window pane in company with other flies, with no conception of race-memory, national memory or memory of the forces which created the life around him. But it is this memory which gives dignity, breadth and cohesion to humankind. As we are the heirs to all the ages, we are shabby creatures indeed if we are regardless of the makers of the bequest. Man is man only because he remembers, says a great French writer ;<sup>1</sup> and if history were nothing more than this memory of the store of things precious and charming, useful and ennobling, radiant and instinct with the rich gifts showered down through all the generations of living men, if it were nothing more than the parchment title-deed of our inheritance, it would still be a great possession.

To insist upon the value of this experience and this memory is not to claim that history provides ready-made rules by which the future may be predicted, nor that by means of historical analogies we can surely determine what we ought to do to-day because of

<sup>1</sup> Anatole France, *Sur la Voie Glorieuse*, p. 52.

something which was done or not done yesterday. The experience which history co-ordinates is to be used very much as the individual should use his personal experience. Only an automaton would think of repeating his actions regardless of changing circumstances. History does not repeat itself. Repetition is a monotony to which it is a stranger. Halley's comet will swing again out of the infinite void into our sky according to astronomical prediction, but the Athens of Pericles, the Roman Empire, the Frankish monarchy, the Papal theocracy, the French Revolution, Reform Bill England, the American Civil War, Bismarckian Germany, will not recur. Things happen which are like things which have happened, but never quite like. The differences make *all* the difference; and if we would profit from the experience which history places at our disposal, we must be careful to note the differences even more carefully than we observe the resemblances. Otherwise we shall fall into misleading.

Some while ago, I had occasion to go into the laboratory of a scientific colleague while an interesting experiment was being tried. In a glass tank, filled with distilled water, some water fleas were swimming about. There were two holes in one wall of the tank. Upon these holes a blue light and a red light were concentrated by means of an electric lamp and lenses. If a water flea swam through the hole upon which the red light was shining, he got into a receptacle wherein there was no food, and the water was exceedingly disagreeable. But if he swam through the hole where the light was blue, he got into water where there was plenty of food which water fleas like, where the temperature was agreeable and where the conditions of existence

were blissful. But whichever hole he chose, after a while he was caught and put back again in the tank filled with distilled water. The question was, whether a water flea would learn that it was wise to choose the blue light every time; whether it was possible to induce a habit of discrimination in these lowly organisms. The experiment was not producing very encouraging results at the time, but the experimenter had hopes. An observer whose subject related to more considerable creatures than water fleas might be pardoned for wishing that it were possible to make use of red and blue lights also; but while history is fruitful of warnings, it is unable to point the way to bliss. It knows of no golden age, except as pictured by poets. It imagines no Utopia, and its fund of knowledge affords no reason for thinking that mankind is ready for one, or even seriously wishes for one. It inculcates the habit of seeing the past steadily and whole, and that habit does not breed illusions as to the future.

It is by means of chronology that we preserve that sense of perspective which saves us from regarding human things in the flat. One has heard the view expressed that history would be more tolerable if there were not so many dates to remember. It is possible to imagine that a jelly fish sympathises with the unfortunate creatures whose organism is built around a skeleton, but the vertebrates see no need to apologise for being osseous. A living historian who has managed to write a history of modern Greater Britain wherein dates have been disciplined to an unobtrusive modesty, nevertheless feels bound to protest that 'I cannot hold the epicurean doctrine sometimes favoured nowadays that because history increasingly deals with

generalisation it is safe for the student to neglect dates, which are the bones of historical anatomy.'<sup>1</sup> The view needs no defence, since it is obviously inadequate to discourse on how and why things occurred without explaining when they occurred. Correct chronology is a fundamentally important thing in history. The subject of historical time is in itself a highly interesting one, to which it would be profitable to devote more attention than is here possible. Our present mode of dating is not 1925 years old, but originated in 537 (or 532), when the computation from the year of the birth of Christ—or, more strictly, from the annunciation—was suggested by Dionysius Exiguus, and became generally adopted by European countries in the course of the three ensuing centuries. Loose methods of reckoning time have furnished occasion for historians to apply much critical nicety to the investigation of the dates of ancient history, with the result that many have been proved to be fictitious or doubtful. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is a mine of invented dates, supplied by the compilers of the early part of the work, apparently from the conviction that the events recorded ought to be dated, and that any dates were better than none.

Experts in Egyptian archaeology have established the probability that a calendar, based upon the observation that the length of the year was about 365 days, was fixed by a people living in the Nile Valley in or about the year 4241 or 4238 B.C.<sup>2</sup> When Caesar reformed the calendar in 45 B.C., he brought astronomers from Egypt to assist in setting right the Roman reckoning, which 'by a combination of wretched

<sup>1</sup> Trevelyan, *British History in the Nineteenth Century*, p. vi.

<sup>2</sup> See *Cambridge Ancient History*, i. 248 and 265.

mathematics and wretched administration had come to anticipate the true time by sixty-seven whole days.'<sup>1</sup> But a politician cannot even correct errors without provoking animosities. Caesar's 'enemies that envied his greatness did not stick to find fault withal.'<sup>2</sup>

The next important reform of the calendar occurred during the fury of the Reformation, when Pope Gregory XIII (February 24, 1582) sought to rectify the errors which had accrued through defective reckoning of the length of the year. But then 'the age was too full of religious polemics for any Protestant to raise his voice in favour of the change, except the mathematician Kepler of Graz.'<sup>3</sup> There is in the fourth volume of the *Cambridge Modern History* (p. 770), a list of the dates when the various states of Europe adopted the revised Gregorian calendar, and it is worth examining with a view to observing how religious feeling can affect even so sensible a thing as setting the clock right. As the Pope directed the correction to be made, the Catholic states of Germany made it almost at once (1584), but the Protestant states of the same country remained wrong for more than a century to come (1699). Great Britain, ever suspicious of new-fangled foreign notions, especially such as had been suggested by a Pope, remained obstinately attached to the erroneous reckoning till her calendar had slipped eleven days into arrear, and when Lord Chesterfield

<sup>1</sup> Mommsen, *History of Rome* (Everyman edition), iv. 524; and Ferrero, *Greatness and Decline of Rome* (Zimmern's translation), ii. 308.

<sup>2</sup> Plutarch, *Lives* (Temple edition of North's translation), vii. 198.

<sup>3</sup> *Cambridge Modern History*, iv. 707.

brought in a bill to rectify the almanack, the Duke of Newcastle begged him not to 'stir matters that had long been quiet.'<sup>1</sup> We know that type of mind painfully well. But the British calendar did get itself reformed in 1751. Great Britain was not quite the last country to make her peace with the sun, for Sweden crept in at the tail end of the procession of reformers in 1753.

The determination of dates in ancient history is often a matter of difficulty, but the Christian era, save for such corrections as need to be borne in mind owing to the reform of the calendar, is one of fairly stable chronology. The different mode of reckoning in Russia, however, and the Mohammedan calendar, which is respected by the millions of faithful but chronologically erroneous followers of the Prophet, maintain complications. The French revolutionary calendar was in some respects more logical than the accepted European calendar, and its descriptive names for the months, Floreal, Fructidor, Messidor, etc., were more commendable than the absurd old Roman names which we perpetuate, with their mixture of heathenism, adulation of ruling persons, and faulty arithmetic. Familiarity prevents us from being shocked at the mistake we make when we speak of September, October, November and December, when they are in fact not the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth months of our year, but the ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth. Thus in the one matter in which we ought to be scrupulously correct, our calendar, we perpetuate errors which the Romans made for us. Even the reformers of the

<sup>1</sup> Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, i. 334; Leadam, *Political History of England*, ix. 423.



calendar in 1793 managed to forget half the earth in their eagerness to re-name the months ; for while it is appropriate enough to speak of November as the month of frosts (Nivose) and January as the month of rain (Pluviose) in the northern hemisphere, it would be quite inappropriate to apply those names south of the equator. Those of us who live at the antipodes would prefer to be reminded of the god Mars than have his month re-named Germinal, since with us seeds do not sprout at that time of the year. Napoleon, therefore, in abolishing the revolutionary calendar in 1806, not only brought France into line again with a mode of reckoning which with all its incongruities, is convenient, but recognised that this sphere of ours consists of two hemispheres, wherein the seasons are not concurrent.

Before leaving the subject of chronology, a pretty bit of diplomatic juggling with the almanack may be mentioned. Lord Cromer related that while he was High Commissioner in Egypt in 1892, the Khedive Tewfik died. The rightful heir was Prince Abbas, who, however, would not attain his majority for seven months. 'The Firman provided that a Council of Regency should be appointed in the event of the Khedive being a minor ; but it was desirable to avoid an interregnum, which would probably have given rise to intrigue, and to difficulties of various kinds.' When, therefore, the suggestion was made that the age of a Mohammedan prince ought to be calculated according to the Mohammedan calendar, in virtue of which the year consists of only 354 days, Cromer jumped at the opportunity of avoiding an awkward situation. By this mode of reckoning Abbas had already attained

his majority, and was therefore at once proclaimed Khedive.<sup>1</sup>

But though there are many interesting things to be learnt about chronology, and though a strict chronology is essential to the construction of sound history, nevertheless the learning of dates is a barren business, which ought to be reduced to a minimum. Understanding is more important than memory; and generally if the reasons for historical occurrences be appreciated, the salient dates are likely to be impressed upon the mind without a conscious effort of memory. There are some crucial things in history which it is imperative to understand. They are the things which are like mountains and rivers in a landscape, signal events projected against the sky, or streams of tendency which flow through centuries. The immensity of a mountain can often be realised at a glance, but the length of a stream can only be apprehended a little at a time. In history, the vast looming event is likely to be of less consequence than the stream of tendency, though perhaps it may be more arresting.

The dates that are worth remembering are not such as the accession years of kings, except in a few instances where these are significant of great changes, like the beginning of the Tudor and Stuart dynasties in English, the end of the reign of Louis XIV in French, and the close of the Hapsburg dynasty in Spanish, history. The dates that show up the perspective of history are those of the mountain events and those that mark the flowing of the streams of tendency. The Norman Conquest of England, the sealing of Magna Carta by King John, the summoning of the Model Parliament,

<sup>1</sup> Cromer, *Abbas II.*, p. 2.

the defeat of the Spanish Armada, the outbreak of the Civil War, the dethronement of James II, are in the nature of mountain events very familiar to us. The streams of tendency are those movements and those phases of social growth which run through long reaches of history—the development of Parliament, the evolution of the theory of constitutional sovereignty, the growth of religious liberty, the building up of the industrial system and the conception of Imperialism, are British examples ; the development and destruction of absolutism in France, the aspiration and realisation of racial unity in Germany, the Italian nationalist movement, the development of the idea of the reformation before the time of Luther, the working out of the temper of independence in America are other instances. History is a wonderful complex of movements exhibiting

‘ In million-billowed consentaneousness,  
The flowing, flowing, flowing of the world,’

and we do well to mark the course of the flow by a few dates, and to remember them. If students of history were taught to pick out from a chart of dates those which they thought it most worth while to remember, and to give their reasons for their selection, that would be in itself an exercise of historical judgment of no small value.

If we adopt the anatomical figure that chronology is the skeleton framework of history, it follows that flesh, blood and spirit are equally part of its constitution. The deeds of men are translations of their thoughts into fact. That is why ideas are, as Lord Acton observed, the essence of history. ‘ The great object, in trying to understand history, political,

religious, literary or scientific,' wrote that great student, 'is to get behind men and to grasp ideas. Ideas have a radiation and development, an ancestry and posterity of their own, in which men play the part of godfathers and godmothers more than that of legitimate parents.'<sup>1</sup> Similarly, an American scholar insists that 'history deals with more than the mere outward actions of men: it has to do with ideals and purposes, with the spirit and character of man.'<sup>2</sup>

For that reason, the books which interpret the thought of an age, and those contemporary writings which reflect what men were thinking and feeling, are an indispensable accompaniment to those which relate the occurrences. The permanent value of Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*, and his *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*, apart from the glittering literary quality of certain pages in them, lies in the fact that Burke put into language what thousands of his countrymen were thinking about events in France; and Thomas Paine, in *The Rights of Man*, stated what thousands of others thought. Even some great works of philosophy have caught up, to a greater degree than is commonly realised, the thought of the time. Hobbes expounded his theory of sovereignty in *Leviathan* (1651), not as one aloof from the turmoil of the world, but because that turmoil forced him to think out the principles of government. Locke's *Treatises of Government* (1690) were not detached theorisings, but were a statement of the political ideas of the authors of the Whig revolution of 1688. Both works were built on solid philosophical foundations, but there blow through

<sup>1</sup> Acton, *Letters to Mary Gladstone*, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> A. M'Laughlin, in *American Historical Review*, xx. 257.

them winds that cannot be mistaken for the still air of the study. Mind-stuff, spirit, the soul of man expressing itself dynamically, these, in short, make history ; which is, therefore, thought in the concrete. And we shall not have a complete interpretation of mankind until the field of history is covered by such works as Mr. Gooch's *History of English Ideas in the Seventeenth Century* and his *Political Thought from Bacon to Halifax*, which do for an important period what needs to be done for every period for which material is available.

Another version of the same idea is that which Bolingbroke adopted from Diogenes Laertius, that history is ' philosophy teaching by examples,' and this is surely one more of its utilities.

' We need but to cast our eyes upon the world,' says Bolingbroke in his comment upon this pithy saying, ' and we shall see the daily force of example ; we need but to turn them inward, and we shall soon discover why example has this force. . . . Such is the imperfection of human understanding, such the frail temper of our minds, that abstract or general propositions, though ever so true, appear obscure or doubtful to us very often, till they are explained by examples ; and that the wisest lessons in favour of virtue go but a little way to convince the judgment and determine the will, unless they are enforced by the same means, and we are obliged to apply to ourselves what we see happen to other men.'

Bolingbroke throughout his *Letters on the Study and Use of History* is at pains to emphasise this point ; and if his reputation as a statesman has never been quite cleared from the stigma resting upon it, it must be admitted that he was a politician of originality and force, who wrote on this subject in the light of ripe

experience of affairs. Supporting his own contention, he cited the acknowledgment of Polybius that he wrote his history 'that they who read these commentaries— may be rendered better by them, for all men have two ways of improvement, one arising from their own experience, and one from the experience of others.'

✓It is likewise the purpose of history to mark the stages of human progress ;<sup>1</sup> and perhaps the most disconcerting thing which it has to teach in this domain is the slight improvement to be observed in respect to moral and intellectual growth, in comparison with the immense development of mechanical science and physical discovery. An enthusiastic young woman in one of Henry James's novels asks a young man, 'Don't you care for human progress?' 'I don't know,' he says, 'I never saw any. Are you going to show me some?' If he was demanding evidence of moral and intellectual progress, it is likely that all the young lady's enthusiasm could not have satisfied him. An experienced observer has said that 'In the evolution "from cannibalism to Herbert Spencer" nature has effected stupendous changes. The most remarkable phenomenon, however, is the small advance, if any, in intellectual power, between the days of Plato, Aristotle and Isaiah, and those in which we live.'<sup>2</sup> As to moral progress, it is a philosopher who writes :

'A good rule for optimists would be this: "Believe in moral progress, but do not believe in too much of it."✓

<sup>1</sup> See *The Idea of Progress, an Enquiry into its Origin and Growth*, by Professor J. B. Bury—a searching piece of historical investigation ; Dean Inge's Romanes lecture on *Progress*, both of these works dated 1920 ; and F. S. Marvin on 'The Idea of Progress,' in the volume *Progress and History*, edited by him (1916).

<sup>2</sup> Lord Sydenham, in *Edinburgh Review*, January, 1915, p. 192.

I think there would be more optimists in the world, more cheerfulness, more belief in moral progress, if we candidly faced the fact that morally considered we are still in a neolithic age, not brutes, indeed, any longer, and yet not so far outgrown the brutish stage as to justify these trumpeting.' <sup>1</sup>

But no observant man would think of denying the reality and extent of mechanical and scientific progress. The evidences of it are all around us. The possibilities of life have been immensely multiplied by the addition of aids to living. Great forces of nature can be pressed into service by touching a button, and the five continents can whisper to each other across thousands of miles through the imponderable substance which we call ether. It is folly to speak of 'mere material progress,' if by 'mere' it is meant to depreciate the moral value of it. For it is by a linking up of this mechanical progress with progress in the moral and political sciences, that we are justified in hoping for a real and substantial advance in human improvement. What we call progress has been lop-sided. Our race has made rapid strides in some directions, but little in others. If our moral advance had been tantamount to our mechanical advance, it would obviously be grotesque for a philosopher to speak of our still being 'in a neolithic age.' But we have one foot moving freely, and the other drags behind fettered. True progress requires an unimpeded movement forward.

If by progress we mean 'rise in quantity and quality of pleasurable life,' <sup>2</sup> we must moralise our mechanism and make it subserve both higher and wider purposes

<sup>1</sup> L. P. Jacks, in Marvin's *Progress and History*, p. 135.

<sup>2</sup> J. M. Robertson, *The Economics of Progress*, p. 1.

than it has hitherto done, before we can claim that there has been progress all round. This is the task of the future, and history has no more to do with it than to guarantee the assurance that civilisation has not reached the end of its tether. The whole past of mankind exhibits an infinite series of changes, and the whole future will continue to exhibit them. A static condition is perhaps thinkable, and the Spencerian philosophy postulates it as a necessity of evolution. But it is not conceivable within measurable time, and that means that it is not politically important. Change, however, that comes merely as a reshuffling or refurbishing, without being accompanied by moral and intellectual progress, will simply rob Peter to pay Paul ; and that kind of arrangement has often enough shown that Paul is in no way preferable to Peter. Treitschke held that 'human history progresses not in a straight line but in a spiral.' Another writer prefers the image of a squirrel in a cage fitted with a revolving wheel, which rotates as the squirrel climbs it, so that he gets nowhere. John Stuart Mill discusses the theory of the Italian philosopher, Vico, who 'conceived the phenomena of human society as revolving in an orbit, as going through periodically the same series of changes.'<sup>1</sup> All such analogies are apt to be misleading. The spiral, the squirrel, and the cycle, alike fail to explain the really baffling character of progress, which arises from the fact that when we use that general word we are thinking of a number of different things. The rapid progress in mechanics and physical science has not been accompanied by a similar progress in the moral, political and intellectual directions. We

<sup>1</sup> Mill's *System of Logic*, p. 596.



need not more progress so much as a series of progressions, proceeding *pari passu*; and unless these be secured, the historian of the future will have no more cause to celebrate the general advancement of mankind than they of the past have had.

## II

### HISTORICAL METHOD

EVERY subject of serious study has its own discipline to impart. A man with a trained mathematical mind does not look at life from the same angle as does a man who has nourished his mind with poetry or who has practised the fine arts. Out of the vast agglomeration of facts presented by the pageant of life, the mind selects those which are sympathetic to it and disregards those which it does not require. If you take a walk in the country with, say, a geologist, a botanist and a painter, you will probably find that though they are all looking at the same things, they are seeing different things ; that is, their minds are selecting different facts. The geologist will recognise at a glance whether the distant hills are granite, or basalt, or sandstone, because he knows how various kinds of rocks weather ; the painter will notice their form and colour and the shadows that play about them ; the botanist will be interested in the plants that grow upon them. This intellectual process of selection occurs because of the discipline to which the minds of the observers have been subjected by study, that is, by the formation of habits of mind.

History does little for those who study it if it does not conduce to a mode of looking at the world quite as

distinctive as the modes which are natural to the landscape painter, the botanist or the geologist. It has its own virtues. The facts of history are its apparatus, and many of these have to be remembered, as the facts of any other branch of knowledge have to be in the minds of those who profess to know them. But remembering is not the only process of the mind which is cultivated by systematic study of this subject. Judgment, the orderly marshalling and presentation of materials, the sifting of evidence, the discrimination of truth from falsehood and error, the selection of salient and relevant things from the mass of irrelevant and unimportant details, the estimation of character, the art of narrative, the comprehension of motives and principles,—these processes are surely developed more effectually through the study of history than by any other means. It is better to have acquired the historical habit of mind than to be able to remember the date of the battle of Platæa, important as that was; better to have trained the judgment to exercise itself calmly and temperately upon the issues raised in the English civil war than to have at the fingers' ends the dates of Cromwell's chief battles. The recollection of detail fades, do what we will. Even men of massive memory require to check their dates and quotations, or they trip here and there as badly as the least gifted of us. But a sound habit of mind is a more dependable possession; and the historical habit of consideration, the historical way of looking at events, is perhaps the best endowment that can come to a student in this field. Hence the observation of Acton, that 'the gift of historical thinking is better than historical learning.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Inaugural Lecture*, p. 20.

A consideration of historical method may have regard both to the principles of historical investigation and writing, and to the ways in which eminent historians have accomplished their work. Both are subjects which it is profitable to consider.

The principles of historical enquiry do not differ from those which may be employed in any other mode of investigation. Historical method is not the exclusive property of the historian.<sup>1</sup> Darwin's *Origin of Species* is in large measure an excellent historical work. The ascertainment of facts, the co-relation of facts, verification, the weighing of evidence, the exercise of judgment, the viewing of the facts in sequence, the drawing of conclusions from them, the attempt to establish generalisations—all these are the means by which the historian works, and they are the means by which other investigators work also. John Stuart Mill's section, in his *System of Logic*, on 'Outlines of the Historical Method,' is comprehended within a treatise on logic with complete appropriateness because the historical way of regarding phenomena is indispensable to a right understanding of them. Historical method, indeed, is just as essential to the physical sciences, in greater or lesser degree according to the nature of the facts

<sup>1</sup> 'Historical method is the same whatever the history investigated—whether that of the stellar universe, of the earth, of the forms of life upon the earth, or of man. It comes to be seen that in each case the problem is the same, namely, to show how things have come to be as they are; that in each case the investigation presupposes the antecedence of innumerable series of historical events; that in each case the inquiry is based upon the assumption or axiom that things have come to be as they are through the continued operation of natural processes, and that these processes are to be discovered only through examination of what has happened in the past.'—F. J. Teggart, *The Processes of History*, p. 33.

which they handle, as it is to history pure and simple. Geology is mainly petrified history ; and to the extent that any science is concerned with the probable origins of things, with their development, with change, it has to adopt historical methods of enquiry. When Richard Owen reconstructed the anatomical framework and bodily build of extinct animals from a few bones, he worked in much the same way as historians have done who from incomplete facts have reconstructed for us Roman-British towns, lake-villages and medieval manors. Owen's *Taxodon Platensis* and Ernst Curtius's representation of Athens were achieved by similar processes.

—The historian is concerned with two operations—finding the truth and telling it.<sup>1</sup> Neither is easy. If the whole truth were contained in documents which were classified and catalogued in record offices, the discovery of what happened on a particular important occasion, and why it happened, would be a comparatively simple business. But the whole truth about the things with which history is occupied, rarely, probably never, is contained in written form. History has its overtones, like music, which are caught only by the practised ear. A historian who 'lives' in a period, as Samuel Rawson Gardiner lived in the early Stuart period, who saturates his mind with its literature, who handles thousands of letters written by its leading characters, who examines masses of its state papers, acquires the kind of intimacy that exists between close personal friends ; so that not merely the words have

<sup>1</sup> ' Avant d'être un art de conter, l'histoire est une méthode de trouver, critiquer, et grouper les textes.'—Louis Batiffol, *La Duchesse de Chevreuse*, p. vii.

significance, but the tones, the shrugs, the silences even, convey meaning. Gardiner's style is so quiet, and his manner of delivering his judgments so mild, that his real profundity is apt to escape attention. But whenever he committed himself to an opinion on those subjects upon which no man who ever wrote was better qualified to give one, he not merely had ample documentary authority, but also that fullness of mind which can only come from prolonged thought and labour. One of the radical differences between a true historian and a mere compiler, is that the historian has absorbed the material about his chosen subject to an extent that enables him to write with that intimacy of acquaintance which cannot be derived merely from rapid and cursory reading.

To some extent the process of elucidating historical truth is akin to the legal method of eliciting evidence from witnesses. But there are important differences. A court of law sees the witnesses face to face, and is entitled to consider their manner, appearance, hesitations and steadiness under cross-examination, in estimating the credibility of their testimony. But the historian has to do with dead witnesses. His means of testing them can never be perfect. Corroboration of important statements is often lacking. Sometimes he has to wrestle with testimony which was deliberately concocted to deceive. The forged Donation of Constantine was for six centuries accepted as a genuine instrument, until Lorenzo Valla demonstrated its swindling nature. The work of critical historians for the last half century has been directed mainly to testing, proving and disproving, amplifying and correcting, statements generally accepted as true history. The search is constantly directed to obtaining a basis of

certainty or a greatest measure of probability for historical statements. The inadequacy of the testimony which is available, its frequent unreliableness, its occasional deceitfulness, the proneness of human nature towards error, are the cardinal difficulties. We are apt to think that we are on safe ground when we can handle published state papers, but those who have examined the manuscripts from which such documents were printed, are aware that they were often 'doctored,' and that the 'inconvenient' passages cut out of them were extremely important.<sup>1</sup>

Historical writers themselves are sometimes responsible for the perpetuation of errors through copying statements without checking them, or through varying the phraseology, thereby converting an assertion which might pass muster into one which can by no means be true. It is often amusing to trace such a statement through a range of volumes, and to observe how the original becomes twisted in transmission. One example out of several which could be cited will have to suffice. In January, 1788, Captain Arthur Phillip arrived in Botany Bay in command of the First Fleet despatched from England for the founding of a colony in Australia. Phillip's flagship, the *Sirius*, arrived in Botany Bay

<sup>1</sup> Dr. R. C. Mills informs me that when he was working at the Public Record Office on his book, *The Colonisation of Australia*, he was surprised to find that despatches laid before Parliament, and printed in the Sessional Papers, were so frequently 'edited,' by omission of inconvenient passages, that he could never rely upon the printed versions—in which there was no indication that anything had been left out. See also the 'Suppressed Parts' of Canning's 'Polignac Memorandum' of 1823, printed as Appendix B to the *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, ii. 633; but in this instance the published Parliamentary Paper was confessedly 'an extract.'

on January 18; his whole fleet came to anchor there on January 20. On the 24th, two French ships appeared off the entrance. They proved to be the vessels commanded by Lapérouse, who had been exploring in the Pacific, notably in the regions of Kamschatka, the Philippines and the sea of Japan. The reasons for his visit to Botany Bay are quite clear from his own published narrative. He had lost a number of men on the voyage from various causes, and while his ships lay at the Samoan Islands a boat's crew had been massacred, and his two long-boats were destroyed. He could not afford to lose any more men, or he would be compelled to beach and destroy one of his ships, because he now had barely enough sailors to work both. He had on board the frames of two spare long-boats, and he desired to find a safe anchorage where these could be put together. He had read a description of Botany Bay in Cook's *Voyages*, and concluded that it would be prudent to sail for that harbour, where he had hopes that he would be able to obtain wood and water, and could have his new long-boats fitted up without molestation. There was no design of sailing for Botany Bay to take possession of any part of Australia for colonising purposes. There was no mystery about Lapérouse's visit. The motive is plain and adequate.

But Jenks, in his *History of the Australasian Colonies*,<sup>1</sup> relating the circumstances of Lapérouse's visit to Botany Bay, made the remark that 'it is seizure, not discovery, which gives a title by the law of nations, and there is, therefore, some justification for the saying

<sup>1</sup> Edward Jenks, *History of the Australasian Colonies*, Cambridge, 1896, p. 30.



that England won Australia by six days.' What that sentence means is not quite clear, since Phillip did not in any sense 'seize' Botany Bay, which Cook had discovered in 1770. Probably no more was meant by the comment that 'there is some justification' for saying that England 'won Australia by six days,' than that 'in a manner of speaking,' or 'so to say,' such a claim might be made. But Jenks's book has been used by later writers who have given to the statement a twist that the author surely never intended. Take a few instances. Mr. A. D. Innes, in *England and the British Empire*,<sup>1</sup> writes that 'Within a week of the landing some French ships appeared on the scene. It is possible that if Phillip had been only *seven days* later Australia would have been annexed not to the British but to the French dominions.' Another writer puts it that the English 'were running a neck-to-neck race with Lapérouse.'<sup>2</sup> In a third instance the version runs: 'It is said that England only won Australia by six days; for six days after the arrival of this expedition a *French ship* was seen in the offing, though it disappeared again when it saw the *British ships*.'<sup>3</sup> Several other variations on the tune originally played by Jenks could be cited, but these are enough for the purpose for which they are mentioned, which is not simply to exhibit errors, but to illustrate the point that history is one thing, and the statements of historians may be quite other things.

✓ One of the difficulties of historical writing is to find

<sup>1</sup> Vol. iii. 414. Italics in this and other instances are mine.

<sup>2</sup> J. D. Rogers, *Australasia*, p. 49, in the series 'Historical Geography of the British Colonies.'

<sup>3</sup> Warner and Martin, *The Groundwork of British History*, p. 702.

words which shall suitably summarise a collocation of facts, and shall at the same time carry on the narrative in good readable form. A writer who works with a sense of proportion, wishes to keep a group of facts within a short compass, and aims at stating them both correctly and picturesquely, may find a formula which combines both qualities; but if writers who use his work vary his phrasing without having an original acquaintance with the circumstances related, they may easily play havoc with veracity.

Few historians have escaped the influence of their own times in writing about the past. Macaulay was aware of this failing in other authors, and no historian was more a victim to it than himself. 'There is no country where statesmen have been so much under the influence of the past' as England, he wrote; and 'no country where historians have been so much under the influence of the present.'<sup>1</sup> Professor Pollard alludes to this weakness in the comment that 'every historian, whatever the period with which he is trying to deal, is unconsciously but none the less really writing the history of his own times'; and he is careful to add that the best historian is 'one who can forget the present.'<sup>2</sup> Mitford wrote the greater part of his *History of Greece*—all but the first volume—under the influence of the French Revolution, and of Burke's fervid detestation of its ruinous course. He read into Greek history a series of warnings against unbridled democracy, and reserved all his admiration for the stern rulers.

'Statements unfavourable to democracy,' Macaulay wrote of him with strict justice, 'are made with unhesitating

<sup>1</sup> *History of England*, Firth's edition, i. 22.

<sup>2</sup> A. F. Pollard, in *History*, July, 1923, 94-5.

confidence, and with the utmost bitterness of language. Every charge brought against a monarch or an aristocracy is sifted with the utmost care. If it cannot be denied, some palliating supposition is suggested, or we are at least reminded that some circumstance now unknown may have justified what at present appears unjustifiable. Two events are reported by the same author in the same sentence. Their truth rests on the same testimony. But the one supports the darling hypothesis, and the other seems inconsistent with it. The one is taken, and the other is left.'<sup>1</sup>

George Grote, on the contrary, wrote his *History of Greece* about sixty years later under the influence of the Radical and Benthamite philosophy of his day. Using precisely the same authorities as Mitford had done, he denied that the Greeks showed any deterioration of character from the adoption of democratic forms, but, on the contrary, maintained that 'their democracy had worked to their improvement.' Alison's *History of Europe*, a work whose merits have been overlooked since fresh evidence has evolved new presentations of its period, wrote while the penalties of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic era were still undischarged, and while democratic agitation for the breakdown of aristocratic government was rife in Great Britain. His work is permeated with the Toryism tinged with Calvinism of his own political school. J. R. Green was a Gladstonian Liberal, and his historical writings no less clearly manifest the leanings of his mind in respect to the party which he favoured.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Macaulay, essay on the 'Greek, Roman and Modern Historians,' *Edinburgh Review*, May, 1828.

<sup>2</sup> See Gooch, *History and Historians of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 356.

There was no conscious bias, but a colouring, an intellectual viewpoint, which could hardly have been avoided by one who was so much interested in the problems of his age; and this was reflected, not so much in the handling of modern history, wherein Green was not on familiar ground, but in the consideration of English history in the Middle Ages. So much was this the case that one of his critics denounced his *Short History* as a democratic manifesto—an exaggerated verdict, though one which can be understood.

The peculiar fallacy which is engendered by viewing the events of the past in the light of the present has been aptly called 'reading history backwards.' It is a fruitful source of misinterpretation. There is always the temptation 'to find in the past the present, not simply conditions out of which the present came; and to find just what we expect to find and not the almost infinite variety of motive and interest and of personal and social character which changed and changed again under new environment and responded to new suggestion.'<sup>1</sup> It is certain that what to one age may be regarded as vicious, may to another be esteemed virtuous; and it is common to attribute to people in the past sentiments which they would have vehemently repudiated. In how many histories, American and English, can it be read that the Puritans who emigrated to New England in the seventeenth century were emissaries of liberty and pioneers of democracy? Did they not fly from their home land to escape

<sup>1</sup> Professor M'Laughlin, in *American Historical Review*, xx. 260. P. S. Allen (*The Age of Erasmus*, p. 194) speaks of 'that commonest of "vulgar errors," judging the past by the ideas of the present.'

persecution and to establish freedom in a new land? In fact, they did no such things. The theocracy of New England—except in Rhode Island—was as bitterly exclusive and tyrannical as the rule of uniformity which Archbishop Laud endeavoured to fasten upon England and Scotland; and there was no more semblance of anything approaching democracy in America during the colonial period than there was in Stuart England. Every purposive act is the realisation of an idea, but when we find an act by men in the past which pleases us, or repels us, we must guard against attributing to them our own ideas, or ideas with which we are at variance. We may be quite sure that their angle of vision was quite different from ours. They may have been mistaken, or may have been inspired to do right; but however they acted, it was from motives which were theirs, in circumstances whose urgency was more apparent to them than it can be to us, and with hopes of consequences which may have been far remote from what we should consider desirable. The motives which impelled King John's barons to force him to affix his seal to Magna Carta were in no degree like the motives which occasioned the agitation for the Reform Bill of 1832; and if the second event seems to have been in some sense an outcome of the first, the thread of connection winds through such dense thickets of history that to trace it is a very stiff enterprise.

Croce would have us believe that 'every true history is contemporary history.'<sup>1</sup> 'Spirit itself is history,' 'history is in all of us, and its sources are in our

<sup>1</sup> *On History*, by Benedetto Croce, trans. by Douglas Ainslie, p. 12 *et seq.*

own breasts.' History 'is knowledge of the eternal present.' 'Contemporaneity is not the characteristic of a class of histories, but an intrinsic characteristic of every history.' The changes are rung upon this theme with much verbal subtlety throughout Croce's book, which aims at 'the recognition of the identity of philosophy with history.' But the identity, if accomplished at all, makes of history something which is unrecognisable by those who have spent their lives in studying it, and endows it with features which they would prefer that it should not have. Croce gives to the word history a meaning different from that which it ordinarily possesses, but one which it is convenient it should have in order to fit in with the requirements of his philosophy. One would not have expected such conduct from the author of a work on 'Logic'; but philosophy is sometimes a very portentous form of frivolity.

Historical method, then, involves, 1st, the investigation of the truth about the past by the establishment of fact and probability; 2nd, the criticism of authorities whose testimony enables the facts and probabilities to be established, the comparison of their evidence; 3rd, the estimation of character and motive; 4th, strict chronology and regard to the sequence of events; 5th, the analysis of causes; 6th, the avoidance of the fallacy of seeing the past as a mirror of the present; 7th, the endeavour to see things which occurred in the past from the point of view of those who did them, which means that we should not judge them exclusively from our point of view, since that may be one which would have been impossible to them; 8th, the understanding of the philosophical basis of the

action of historical personages, that is, of the ideas by which they were actuated ; 9th, the construction of narrative ; 10th, the practice of the virtuous habit of verification.<sup>1</sup>

There are two good ways of writing history, and many bad ways. The two good ways are fundamentally one, both being dependent upon the thorough absorption of material by the mind before writing. But, the material being absorbed, the difference consists in the mode of constructing narrative. Gibbon's way was to write his story as a piece of homogeneous literary art. He rarely quotes, no matter how much pith there may be in a passage from one of his original authorities which he may be using at the moment of writing. A quotation would disturb the regular, cadenced, carefully balanced structure of his sentences. He never forgot that he was writing a piece of literature, as well as a history, and the artist in letters was an equal partner of the historian in the rounding of his periods and the building of his paragraphs. If he has to cite figures, relative to the size of armies or of populations of countries, he carefully copies out the words, and never uses numerals, since the syllables have their due rhythmic value, and must be read as syllables, not taken in by the eye, as figures usually are. The entire narrative is Gibbon's, and it moves from the first volume to the seventh with the rhythm which satisfied the ear of the author, and is so mellow and harmonious

<sup>1</sup> 'Natural ability being presupposed, the qualities necessary for a historian are diligence, accuracy, love of truth, impartiality, the thorough digestion of his materials by careful selection and long meditating, and the compression of his narrative into the smallest compass consistent with the life of his story.'—James Ford Rhodes, *Historical Essays*, p. 20.

to the reader. But this art of Gibbon concealed rather than exposed a completeness of knowledge of the material handled by him, which can only be appreciated by one who has taken the trouble to examine his references over a good stretch of his narrative. He misses nothing of importance; he selects with the nicest care, he puts every fact in its proper place, and he fuses the whole body of knowledge in the furnace of his mind before he pours it out upon the page. Gibbon's latest editor acknowledges that his 'slips are singularly few,' and that his 'diligent accuracy in the use of his materials cannot be overpraised';<sup>1</sup> though of necessity the discovery of new materials and the researches of numerous scholars in the course of a hundred years have modified or upset conclusions which he was justified in drawing from the evidence upon which he worked. But even if he had made many more errors than he did, the point here advanced would not be affected, that his singular quality as a historian consists in the thoroughness with which he absorbed his material, and the art with which he moulded his work into a masterpiece of English prose.

The other way of writing good history is to weave into the fabric of the narrative sufficient of the original material to give the reader a flavour of the contemporary writings. There is an art in quotation. Excessive resort to it destroys the flow of the story, and makes

<sup>1</sup> Bury, Introduction to his edition of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, I. xlii.-iii. 'I call his genius perfect because, though limited, it had no faults in its kind. As all historians should aspire to do, Gibbon united accuracy with art. His scientific work of sifting all the evidence that was in his day available, has suffered singularly little from criticism, even in our archaeological age, when the spade corrects the pen.'—G. M. Trevelyan, *Clio, a Muse*, p. 37.



the literary workmanship rough, uneasy and jagged. But if the quotations be selected with skill and fitted neatly into the sentences, the effect conveyed is one of intimacy and vividness. Two modern works may be mentioned in which this method is used with remarkable success, namely, the volumes contributed to the *Political History of England* by Mr. H. A. L. Fisher and Professor Pollard. Both are lively examples of historical work, and both make free use of contemporary writings with so much skill that while the pictures are bright there is no flagging or jerkiness in the movement.

But no good writing is possible by either method unless the writer has command of his material. Compilation is not writing. Everyone who reads much in this branch of literature is acquainted with jerry-built history, stuff made to order, done with little more than a brief, recent acquaintance with the material used. It never conveys the conviction that the evidence has been absorbed and fused in consciousness, but has a texture of crudeness. Ultimately it comes to this, that historical writing is an art and requires the methods of the artist. There is more than one way of being an artist, no doubt, but without art historical writing is likely to fail to convince or please.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'He (the historian) must be an artist, not in the sense of the creative genius, but only in the limited sense of one who employs the methods of the artist. He should give shape, but only to that which is already there, not to that which his fancy may mirror. Philosophical history is a desert; fanciful history an idiot asylum. We must therefore demand that the artistic designer should have a positive tendency of mind and a strictly scientific conscience. Before he reasons he must know; before he gives shape to a thing he must test it.'—Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, I. lx.

The writing of a history involves great labour and requires a capacious memory, no matter how perfect may be the system which the author adopts to assist him in marshalling his facts. It would be extremely interesting and instructive to know how the writers of our most important histories worked, but hardly one of them has thought it worth while to enlighten us. Gibbon, in a valuable page of his Autobiography, vouchsafes to describe how he prepared himself for the writing of the *Decline and Fall*, and in another he gives an account of his elaborate re-writings of the early chapters till he satisfied himself as to their form. He 'reviewed again and again' the French, English, Latin and Italian classics, he worked assiduously at the Greek historians, he says: 'I investigated with my pen almost always in my hand the original records, both Greek and Latin, from Dion Cassius to Ammianus Marcellinus, from the reign of Trajan to the last of the western Caesars'; he studied medals and inscriptions of geography and chronology; and above all he made diligent use of the range of folios which Lenain de Tillemont devoted to the Roman Emperors and to the ecclesiastical history of the Middle Ages. He worked at the collections of Muratori, Maffei, Baronius and Pagi 'till (as he says) I almost grasped the ruins of Rome in the fourteenth century, without suspecting that this final chapter must be attained by the labour of six quartos and twenty years.' He made experiments till he satisfied himself as to the kind of history he intended to write; three times did he compose the first chapter, twice the second and third, before he was tolerably satisfied with their effect. Later chapters he compressed till they were reduced to appropriate

dimensions.<sup>1</sup> These particulars Gibbon supplies, but of his methods of working at his immense task he says nothing. His indebtedness to Tillemont is, however, apparent to anyone who makes an acquaintance with that laborious compilation. Tillemont had ploughed the field ; Gibbon followed his furrows.

Of Macaulay's method of working we know no more than of Gibbon's, and probably there is even less that is interesting that could have been told if he had thought it well to admit his readers to his workshop. He read enormously and had a vast memory ; he wrote slowly, and worked over his first draft till his sentences possessed the polish and point and picturesque allusiveness that it was his aim to produce. ' I shall not be satisfied,' he wrote to a friend, ' unless I produce something which shall for a few days supersede the last fashionable novel on the tables of young ladies ' ; and nothing pleased him more than the receipt of a resolution thanking him for ' having written a history which working men can understand.' He referred several times in his diary to the labour that the composition of his work cost him—' what a labour it is to make a tolerable book, and how little readers know how much trouble the ordering of the parts has cost the writer.' It pleased him when, after struggling with a ' tough chapter,' the result seemed as if no labour whatever had been devoted to the glistening pages : ' What trouble these few pages have cost me ! The great object is that they may read as if they had been spoken off, and seem to flow like table-talk.' With a mind saturated in the literature of his chosen period, especi-

<sup>1</sup> See Murray's edition of *The Autobiographies of Gibbon*, pp. 284 and 308.

ally that which threw light on manners, dress, habits, the fads, fashions and foibles of mankind, their passions, prejudices and pleasures ; with a pen trained to decorate every sentence with a touch of colour and to round off a paragraph with an explosion, Macaulay needed no systematic aids to the writing of history. His memory, his temperament, and his cultivated artifices were always ready at command, and though the road was long and uphill they carried him through brilliantly.

Carlyle once told Charles Gavan Duffy that it was his habit to pin portraits of the people with whom he was dealing upon a screen, so that they might be continually before his eye while he wrote about them. It was not so much method as imagination that was employed in the production of his works. ' It stands pretty fair in my head,' he wrote while he was working upon *The French Revolution*, ' nor do I mean to investigate much more about it, but to splash down what I know in large masses of colour that it may look like a smoke and flame conflagration in the distance.' A dyspeptic Scotch mouse in labour brought forth mountains, and much he groaned in the process. Writing was hard labour, and all the harder because everything he wrote had to come hot out of himself. When the manuscript of the first volume of his *French Revolution* was burnt by accident while in the possession of John Stuart Mill, to whom Carlyle had lent it for criticism, he had no notes from which to re-write it, but had to grind it out of his tired brain as an entirely fresh effort. ' It never seemed to Carlyle as good as the first copy,' said Mrs. Carlyle, ' and yet he could not remember what the first was.' His *Frederick the*

*Great*, which was written with immense effort, and requires no small amount to read it, was undertaken with the consciousness that it was a work for a giant. The assistance of two secretaries, a German and an Englishman, was required to get it committed to paper; and this was not achieved without terrible perturbation of spirit. 'A task that I cannot do, that generally seems to me not worth doing, and that yet must be done. No job approaching it in ugliness was ever cut out for me; nor had I any motive to go on, except the sad negative one, Shall we be beaten in our old days?' So Carlyle wrote to Emerson while *Frederick* was undergoing painful gestation. On the whole, in respect to methods of work, the chief things to be learnt from Carlyle are the several ways not to do the kinds of things that he did—and that observation remains true notwithstanding the acknowledgment that he, being the genius that he was, could have worked in no other ways.

George Bancroft, the American historian, appears to have had a method of working peculiar to himself. He provided himself with a quarto book filled with blank paper. He appropriated to each page a day of each year of the period whose history he intended to write. He wrote down on that page all the events which occurred in the day to which it was devoted. He even entered such astronomical data as the changes of the moon. These dated pages, with their arranged memoranda, served as notes when he began to write his history, and, with a rigid chronology in front of him, he worked in the information gleaned from his large reading of manuscripts and printed material, trusting to his memory to find the facts

required among the mass of transcripts which he had accumulated.<sup>1</sup>

Bryce, whose history of the *Holy Roman Empire* grew with his acquisition of fresh knowledge, from a slim thesis into a substantial volume, tells the readers of his still more important work on *The American Commonwealth*, what his method of work upon that book was. Perhaps no book written about the institutions of a foreign country has won such respectful consideration among the people criticised as this work has done, and the passage wherein the author refers to his system is interesting :

‘ He who regards a wide landscape from a distant height sees its details imperfectly, and must unfold his map in order to make out where each village lies, and how the road runs from point to point. But he catches the true perspective of things better than if he were standing among them. The great features of the landscape, the valleys, slopes and mountains, appear in their relative proportion ; he can estimate the height of the peaks and the breadth of the plains. So one who writes of a country not his own may turn his want of familiarity with details to good account if he fixes his mind strenuously on the main characteristics of the people and their institutions, while not forgetting to fill up gaps in his knowledge by frequent reference to native authorities. My own plan has been first to write down what struck me as the salient and dominant facts, and then to test, by consulting American friends and by a further study of American books, the views which I had reached.’<sup>2</sup>

Another account of methods of working, in an instance where large masses of detail had to be arranged

<sup>1</sup> Bassett, *The Middle Group of American Historians*, p. 208.

<sup>2</sup> Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, i. p. 7.

and digested, is furnished by Sidney and Beatrice Webb, in the preface to their *Industrial Democracy*; and we may take it that the method described has been pursued in the writing of the other important works which these authors have written in co-operation. They say : <sup>1</sup>

' We have found it convenient to use separate sheets of paper, uniform in shape and size, each of which is devoted to a single observation, with exact particulars of authority, locality and date. To these, as the enquiry proceeds, we add other headings under which the recorded fact might possibly be grouped, such, for instance, as the industry, the particular section of the craft, the organization, the sex, age, or status of the persons concerned, the psychological intention, or the grievance to be remedied. These sheets can be shuffled and reshuffled into various orders, according as it is desired to consider the recorded facts in their distribution in time or space, or their coincidence with other circumstances. The student would be well advised to put a great deal of work into the completeness and mechanical perfection of his note-taking, even if this involves, for the first few weeks of the enquiry, copying and re-copying his material.'

The card index, with suitable group-headings, is another convenient device, similar to that described in the passage just quoted. But though these mechanical systems are commendable, and indeed necessary when collections of facts, garnered over a succession of years, have to be mastered and kept ready for use, they are never more than aids to the intellectual processes through which good history gets itself written. The discipline that enables facts to be

<sup>1</sup> Webb, *Industrial Democracy*, i. p. x.

regimented, the play of mind upon them, the illumination of them that comes from reflection, and the fusing of them in consciousness, are the supreme requisites. Important historical writing has been achieved without much method, for genius will find its own way of gathering the material necessary for utterance in finished form; but sound method will enable those who are not blest with genius to accomplish work of great value.<sup>1</sup> Method is to history what grammar is to speech, but style does not come by requisition.

<sup>1</sup> 'Method, not genius, or eloquence, or erudition, makes the historian.'—Acton, *History of Freedom and other Essays*, 235.



### III

## HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

HISTORY as ordinarily written is concerned with the social and political life of human beings, their conflicts of will, their attempts to realise their ideas, and so forth. But mankind, despite many conquests over nature, is dominated by the physical conditions of the earth. The whole life of man upon this planet is a process of adaptation. Geography is supreme over history. A former president of the French Republic put it that history is born of geography,<sup>1</sup> and an English geographer of the early Stuart era, Peter Heylyn, in his *Microcosmus, a little Description of the Great World* (1625), expressed a kindred idea more quaintly :

‘ ‘Tis true that Geography without History hath life and motion, but very unstable and at random ; yet History without Geography, like a dead Carcass, hath neither life nor motion at all, or moves at best but slowly on the understanding.’

It needs no demonstration that if the configuration

<sup>1</sup> Paul Deschanel, *Gambetta*, p. 36 : ‘ L’Histoire naît de la géographie. La politique d’un État résulte de sa constitution physique.’ See also Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, I. xxxix. : ‘ Geographie and Chronologie I may call the Sunne and the Moone, the right eye and the left, of all history.’

of the earth had been otherwise than it is, history would have been entirely different ; and it is equally true that climate, mountains, rivers, seas and deserts are the masters of statesmen, however wisely they may plan. As an eminent authority on territorial boundaries has written, a League of Nations and other devices for regulating the affairs of the world may be successful in smoothing out the folds and wrinkles of international disagreements, but ' they can hardly touch the fundamental motives which underlie these disagreements without recognising that nine tenths of them owe their existence to geographical inequalities and difficulties.' <sup>1</sup>

The modern science of anthropo-geography regards history as little more than geography expressed in terms of human action. It is, in the language of one of its expositors, ' in no small part a succession of geographical factors embodied in events. Back of Massachusetts' passionate abolition movement it sees the granite soil and boulder-strewn fields of New England ; back of the South's long fight for the maintenance of slavery it sees the rich plantations of tide-way Virginia and the teeming fertility of the Mississippi bottom lands. This is the geographical significance of Herder's saying that " history is geography set in motion." What is to-day a fact of geography becomes to-morrow a factor of history.' <sup>2</sup> Inspired by this theory, some investigators make the suggestion that the true story of the rise and decay of civilisations is to be read in the light of the changes to

<sup>1</sup> Holdich, *Boundaries in Europe and the Near East*.

<sup>2</sup> E. C. Semple, *Influence of Geographic Environment, on the Basis of Ratzel's System of Anthro-Geography*, p. 10.

which the climate of certain regions of the earth has been subject. We must have regard to 'the historical effect of suppressed isotherms.'

We know very little about the type of climate enjoyed by Egypt, Greece and Mesopotamia in the centuries when civilisations flourished therein. Some authorities maintain that there is no reason for thinking that these lands have undergone any appreciable climatic changes during two or three thousand years. But doubt is thrown upon this assumption by others, who, however, have to admit that they have not much precise evidence to justify the conclusion that changes have taken place which have bereft these regions of the climatic conditions which are most stimulating to the human mind and body.

Mr. Ellsworth Huntington, nevertheless, ventures the generalisation that 'prolonged study of past and present climatic variations suggests that the location of some of the most stimulating conditions varies from century to century, and that when the great countries of antiquity rose to eminence they enjoyed a climatic stimulus comparable with that existing to-day where the leading nations now dwell.'

'To-day,' says the same author, 'a certain type of climate prevails wherever civilisation is high. In the past, the same type seems to have prevailed wherever a great civilisation arose. Therefore, such a condition seems to be a necessary condition for great progress. This is not the cause of civilisation, for that lies infinitely deeper. Nor is it the only, or the most important, condition. It is merely one of several, just as an abundant supply of pure water is one of the primary conditions of health. Good water will not make people healthy, nor will a favourable

climate cause a stupid and degenerate race to rise to a high level.'<sup>1</sup>

The difficulty of substantiating such large claims consists in the absence of evidence on the historical side, and the inadequacy of the facts so far collected, from which conclusions have to be deduced, on the geographical side. But the subject has not yet been fully explored. Buckle, in his *History of Civilisation* (1857), made some suggestive observations on climate in his chapter on the 'Influence exercised by physical laws over the organization of society,' but his method and knowledge were less satisfactory than are those of Mr. Ellsworth Huntington, whose several writings on climate are of high interest.

A flaw in the argument respecting the influence of climate on civilisation, is that insufficient distinction—in some instances no distinction—is made between climate *per se*, and the disabilities brought upon human beings by preventable diseases which are climatic in their incidence. Bilharzia, for instance, is a disease which has been rife in Egypt for thousands of years. An examination of mummies has yielded evidence showing that people who inhabited Egypt centuries before the Christian era, died from this disease. The micro-organism which causes it breeds in water, and penetrates the skin of a person coming into contact with the infected water. The result is lowered vitality, wasting sickness and death. The evidence that the climate of Egypt has changed substantially since the era of the dynasties which ruled there three thousand years ago, is not satisfying, but the probability is extreme that the bilharzia parasite

<sup>1</sup> Ellsworth Huntington, *Civilisation and Climate*, pp. 4 and 9.

was busy among the Egyptians when the Theban and Herakleopolite kings, and their predecessors and successors, were governing with full pomp and circumstance. Yet the cause of this very prevalent disease was not known till pathologists set to work to discover in what mode it affected British troops quartered in Egypt during the Great War. Bilharzia is incidental to the climate of Egypt, no doubt, but, now that the cause has been determined, it is a preventable incident. Again, hookworm is a disease incidental to a belt of tropical country stretching right round the globe. The parasite gets into the intestines of human beings, devours the red corpuscles of the blood, and induces anaemia, listlessness and mental dullness in its victims. Until Dr. Charles Stiles showed that hookworm could be eradicated in the southern states of America, no serious effort had ever been made to cope with it.<sup>1</sup> Climate was blamed for effects that were due to a microbe.

Malaria has played quite a major part in history. It has been argued with much probability that the decline of civilisation in Mesopotamia is attributable largely to this disease. The total collapse of the Scottish colony at Darien in 1698 was partly due to it—and that statement remains true notwithstanding that the colony would have been politically suppressed even if it had not been devastated by disease. Malaria made the Roman Campagna a fever-haunted region for centuries. But the researches of Sir Ronald Ross proved that the disease was due to a parasite transferred by the bite of the anopheles mosquito; and since that important discovery was made, malaria has been

<sup>1</sup> See the interesting account of the initiation of the anti-hookworm campaign, in *The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page*, i. pp. 98-9.

banished from some parts of the earth where formerly it was a deadly plague, and can be banished from other places as soon as the inhabitants are induced to take the necessary preventive measures.

These examples show that climate has often been blamed for injurious effects which were, truly, incidental to climatic conditions, but were not essentially the accompaniments of those conditions. It is quite proper to speak of the effects of climate on history, and legitimate to speculate on the extent to which vanished civilisations owed their downfall to climatic causes. But it is doubtful whether we require the hypothesis of changes in climate in the course of centuries to account for the decline. Is it not much more likely that the causes were parasitic, rather than climatic, in the strict sense of that word ?

Moreover, there is a general warning which we must heed in considering phenomena so complex as the rise and fall of states. There are many probable factors to be considered, apart from the assumed factor of climatic change, or of racial degeneracy due to climatic or parasitic causes. Repeated shocks of invasion, conquest, changes in trade routes, mistakes in policy, bad government, internal strife, weakness through over-indulgence in war, are other causes. It would be regrettable if an obsession for the geographical interpretation of history took possession of some acute minds, similar to that which has afflicted others who have over-stressed the economic interpretation. Work along the lines of geographical enquiry is good, and we should be grateful for such value as we can derive from it. But in greeting it, we may as well keep on the cautious side of enthusiasm.

The influence of climate and geography on history, and of weather on particular events in history, is not, however, a matter of speculation. The migration of the Arabs from their home land in the seventh century is not attributable solely to the fanaticism inspired by the preaching of Mahomet. It had commenced before the Prophet arose. Conditions of life in Arabia, which could only sustain an increasing population by the maintenance of irrigation, compelled migration as an alternative to starvation. 'Hunger and avarice, not religion, are the impelling forces, but religion supplies the essential unity and central power.'<sup>1</sup> Arabia had been undergoing a process of desiccation for centuries before Islam burst upon the world, and this physical change, combined with a decline of commercial prosperity due to political causes, necessitated a migration movement on a large scale.

Geological evidence suggests that a subsidence of part of the shores of the Baltic in a period before written records, caused a considerable migration of Goths from that region to the Black Sea and the Danube Valley. The flatness of the Russian steppes and of the plain of central Europe facilitated and encouraged the incursions of Huns and Goths into the Romanised lands of the west in the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries. It has been said that Rome fell because the Chinese built a wall to keep out the Tartars; and the strength of the paradox lies in the supposition that when the nomads of central Asia could not successfully prey upon the east, they turned their

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Carl Becker, in *Cambridge Mediaeval History*, ii. pp. 331-2. There is a suggestive consideration of 'The Geographical Factor in History' in Teggart, *The Processes of History*.

attention to the west. Had Europe been ruled off from Asia by a great mountain range, there would have been no need for Constantine to build another capital on the Bosphorus, nor, perhaps, for Gibbon to write his history. The Pyrenees broke the incursions of the Saracens, for though they were able to pour through the passes into Gaul, when Charles Martel smashed them at Tours they did not venture to tempt their fate by crossing the range again.

The tragic history of Poland in the latter part of the eighteenth century has been attributed to her 'vicious constitution' and the corruption of her governing classes, and doubtless these failings have not been unduly stressed. But the geographical position of Poland, a flat country with no natural frontiers, offered a standing temptation to the three military powers by which she was surrounded. It was easy to pour armies into Poland. But on the other hand, the mountain ramparts of Switzerland offered a natural protection, and have enabled a people consisting of three races, speaking three languages, and professing both Catholic and Protestant forms of religion, to maintain independent national existence.

The character of English colonisation on the American continent was entirely different from the Spanish. The difference is not attributable to any one cause. The disposition of the people, the policies of the respective governments, are features of the utmost importance. But when Captain John Smith was explaining the small success made by the English in Virginia in his time, in comparison with the wealth derived by the Spaniards from their possessions to the south, he was on sound ground in pointing to the



different physical conditions. The Spaniards, he observed, 'got the spoil and pillage of the country people, and not the labours of their own hands. . . . Had those fruitful countries been as savage, as barbarous, as ill-peopled, as little planted, laboured and manured, as Virginia, their proper labours it is likely would have produced as small profit as ours.' But the English, says Smith, 'chanced in a land even as God made it, where we found only an idle, improvident, scattered people, ignorant of the knowledge of gold and silver, or any commodities, and careless of anything but from hand to mouth.' They had to make provision to live 'ere they could bring to perfection the commodities of the country.' 'If,' he says in concluding his argument, 'If we had happened where wealth had been, we had as surely had it as obedience and contribution ; but if we have overskipped it, we will not envy them that shall find it.'<sup>1</sup> It seemed to an age which looked for a prolific supply of the precious metals as the chief reward of colonisation, that the English had stumbled on poor fortune in North America. There was no gold or silver in Virginia and New England. Geographical conditions made them work for their sustenance, and they saved their soul in so doing.

It would be interesting to make a list of instances in which, not so much climate and geography as continuous factors, but the sheer incidence of the weather, has influenced historical events. Fogs, storms, wet seasons and dry seasons, snow, hail and rain, have had their effect. The turning point in the military history of the French Revolution was the battle of Valmy

<sup>1</sup> *Travels and Works of Captain John Smith*, Arber's edition, ii. 465.

(1792). The French had lost in all previous engagements. There had been rain for more than a fortnight before the morning when this battle was fought. The Prussians had been marching all the morning in the wet through the heavy clay-mud of the Argonne, to reach the road to Paris. A mist which had blotted out the landscape lifted shortly before noon, disclosing the French army strongly posted on a low range of hills. From this position the Prussians had to endeavour to dislodge them. But their charge up the hill-side was ineffective, mainly, it would appear, because the tired troops could not make headway through the mud, in face, also, of the plunging fire which the French artillery poured into them. Reading narratives from both sides, it seems clear that the saturated clods of the Argonne rather than the valour of the French was responsible for the victory of Valmy. An equivalent example from civil politics may be found in the downfall of protection in Great Britain. The arguments of Cobden converted Sir Robert Peel, but the weather determined his reversal of policy. The autumn of 1845 was the wettest in the memory of man and was ruinous to the harvest; 'it was the rain that rained away the corn laws.'<sup>1</sup> In these and many other instances which could be cited, caution has to be observed similar to that which applies to climate in the more extended sense. The strategy of Dumouriez and the skilful placing and well-directed fire of the French artillery at Valmy counted for very much; and of course the agitation of the repealers in Great Britain enabled the weather to administer the *coup de grâce* to the corn laws.

<sup>1</sup> Morley's *Life of Cobden*, p. 334.

Civilisation may be said to be a fresh-water plant. Primitive man settled on the banks of streams, or along the water-bearing strata in which he could sink wells.<sup>1</sup> The great civilisations of the past were river-side products. The Tigris, the Euphrates, the Nile, the Indus, the Ganges, the Brahmapootra, the vast rivers of China, the Rhine, the Seine, the Tiber, the Po, have developed each its own civilisation.

' Among the divinities, so numerous in Gaul,' writes a French scholar, ' those that recur most frequently and that seem to have received the greatest share of devotion and fame, were connected with springs, streams and rivers. This I believe to be due to the important part played by springs in the economic life of families and villages. They give assurance of life to man and his cattle, and therefore, to quote Pliny the Naturalist, " They create towns and engender gods." ' ' <sup>2</sup>

The sea became important as a medium for diffusing civilisation after it had been established, but people had to be fairly far advanced in the art of shipbuilding, and in navigation, before they could use the sea. The life of mankind in communities was in the beginning, and still is, based upon fresh water. The growth of a

<sup>1</sup> For example : ' One characteristic of modern scenery is the town or village, directly due to man, but indirectly, in its situation and architecture, to local geological structure. When man had arrived at a state of civilisation sufficient to appreciate a fixed abode, he had also no doubt perceived the desirability of a dry site for a dwelling equally with the nearness of water, which led to the selection of spots on porous soils near to springs. This, and the possibility of getting water by means of shallow wells in such situations, no doubt, more than anything else, ultimately fixed the site of the little group of dwellings which afterwards grew into a village or town.'—Beeby Thompson, in *Victoria History of Northamptonshire*, i. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Camille Julian, in *Cambridge Mediaeval History*, ii. 460.

population is limited not by the capacity of the country to feed its people, because in normal circumstances food can be transported from foreign sources, but by its capacity to supply its people with fresh water. Many of the regions of the earth which are quite properly classed as desert, are only unproductive, and consequently uninhabitable, because of the lack of fresh water. Those deserts whose soil contains a large proportion of mineral constituents which are injurious to food-plants may be more difficult to subject to human service, but there certainly are other deserts which, if it were practicable to irrigate them, would be richly productive.

Next to fresh water as a geographical element in the development of civilisation comes mud. Mud has been not inaptly described as 'the most valuable mineral on earth.' The fertility of valleys, and of plains whose soil is constantly renewed by the erosion of neighbouring mountains, is due to mud. Mud has changed the configuration of the continents more, probably, than earthquakes and volcanic eruptions have done. The city of Angkor Thom, in Cochin-China, was once a seaport. It now lies two hundred miles inland. Its position has been changed by the vast quantity of silt borne down by the Mekong river.<sup>1</sup> The town of Abbadan, about twenty-five miles from the head of the Persian Gulf, was once a coastal town. It has been thrust inland by the mud deposits of the Euphrates. The rich plain of Lombardy, for which through the centuries Goths, Lombards, Spaniards, Austrians, French and Italians have fought, is a sheet of mud washed down from the Alps and the Appenines.

<sup>1</sup> Clifford, *Further India*, p. 12.

The great mountain chains of the earth grind the rocks with their glaciers, and the streams and rains sluice the sediment into the valleys, where it forms fresh soil for the growth of crops.

Fresh water and mud, the least stable of substances, have done more than anything else to impel men to form stable communities. They have been the fundamental incentives to the making of families, tribes, nations. Where they are to be found in abundance, there is an inducement to settled life. Where they are not found, the tendency has been for man to become a nomad. The Huns of Central Asia, the Arabs who spread from Arabia, through Egypt and northern Africa to Gaul, the Semitic peoples whose life is reflected in the book of Genesis, were not nomads from choice. Nomadism was imposed upon them by the physical and climatic conditions of the countries wherein they wandered. 'The nomad is the son and product of the peculiar and variable constitution of the Asiatic background.'<sup>1</sup> Mahomet spoke like a true descendant of a race of nomads when he said of the plough, 'wherever this implement has penetrated, it has always brought with it servitude and shame.' The plough is an implement of settled people. But the nomad did not cultivate. He moved with the seasons in quest of fodder for the livestock which supplied him with milk, meat and transport. The nomad throughout ancient and medieval times was the persistent foe of settled civilisation. He preyed upon the Chinese to the east and upon the Roman empire to the west. The

<sup>1</sup> See the remarkable analysis of the conditions which caused nomadism, by Peisker, 'The Asiatic Background,' in *Cambridge Mediaeval History*, i. 323.

Gothic invasions of Gaul and Italy, the Anglo-Saxon invasions of Britain, were probably caused by the pressure of the nomadic Huns and the disturbance of normal conditions by their raids in central Europe.<sup>1</sup> Nomadism continued to be the most disruptive danger which settlement in Europe had to fear until feudalism gave a stiffening to the fabric of society, and the military virtues of the settled people, under capable leadership, proved more than a match for the mobility of the mounted nomad. But the motive for nomadism did not really disappear till the railway was invented. Where it now survives it is as a picturesque remainder of a mode of life that is no longer imposed by the necessities of geographical circumstance upon a large proportion of mankind.

The growth of civilisation has been accompanied by an ever-widening variety of foods consumed by mankind. The diet of primitive man, and that of the backward peoples of the earth to-day, was very simple, and the quantity consumed was probably much less than is ordinarily required by moderns. The Spaniards, when they first made an acquaintance with America, found that one of them ate as much food in a day as was sufficient for ten Indians. Henry Hawkes, the Englishman who lived for five years in New Spain in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, and gave an account of his experiences to Hakluyt, records that the Indians there 'live with a marvellous small matter,'<sup>2</sup> and Sir John Hawkins likewise observed of the Indians of the Spanish Main that 'these people be

<sup>1</sup> See Chadwick, *The Origin of the English Nation*, p. 177: 'The impulse to these movements came largely from behind.'

<sup>2</sup> *Hakluyt's Voyages*, MacLehose edition, ix. 395.

very small feeders.'<sup>1</sup> Australian aborigines alternated between starvation and gorging. The whole of the lands in which European races have colonised, were, before their advent, characterised by a very poor agricultural development, or none whatever. In North America, agriculture of a primitive type was practised among the Pueblo Indians, who were a comparatively settled people, but for the greater number of the tribes nature was sufficiently bountiful in the production of berries, roots, edible seeds and animal food, to enable them to live without cultivating the soil. If the Indians had been an agricultural people, they would have been far more numerous, and consequently there would have been much less room for the white immigrants than was the case.

The Japanese before the revolution by which the ancient empire shook off the armour of feudalism and prepared herself for competition in the modern world, were almost entirely a rice-feeding people. Rice is still the staple food of the country, though the prohibition against the eating of flesh, which under Buddhistic influence prevailed under the ancient regime, is no longer operative. But Japan has expanded her diet as one of her steps in modernity. One of the best-known writers on Japan observed that even while the Buddhistic prohibition of meat-foods prevailed,

'The permission to eat fish, though that too entailed the taking of life, which is contrary to strict Buddhist tenets, seems to have been a concession to human frailty. Pious frauds, however, came to the rescue. One may even now see the term "mountain whale" (*yama-kujira*) written

<sup>1</sup> *Hakluyt's Voyages*, MacLehose edition, x. 27.

up over certain eating houses, which means that venison is there for sale. The logical process is this. A whale is a fish. Fish may be eaten. Therefore, if you call venison "mountain whale" you may eat venison.'<sup>1</sup>

The subterfuge recalls the story told by Dumas in *La Dame de Monsoreau* of the monk who, unable to get anything to eat on a Friday at an inn than a fine capon, christened it a carp and fell to with keen appetite and a clear conscience.

The enlargement of the diet of the world has been accomplished by the migration of food plants and domestic animals, and by modern methods of packing and transporting foods from the lands where they grow to greatest advantage, to those where they are consumed. The world was never better fed than it is to-day. An ordinary grocer's shop supplies a range of foods which could not have been commanded by a Croesus or an Alexander, a Charles V or a James I. A citizen of limited means may easily consume in the course of a day products from all the continents, and many climates.

The direct concern of modern history with geographical problems dates from the middle of the fifteenth century. Improvements in ships and in navigation by the Portuguese enabled them with ever-increasing confidence to explore the West African coast, till in 1486 Bartholomew Diaz rounded the Cape of Good Hope, and in 1497-8 Vasco da Gama conducted his ships to India by the Cape route. The Portuguese voyages brought Asia within intimate and direct relations with Europe. The dazzling wealth of India, the marvels of Japan and China, the spicery of the

<sup>1</sup> Basil Chamberlain, *Things Japanese*, 175.



Malay Archipelago, became the subject of travellers' tales, and profitable material for the enterprise of merchants. The West began to know the East, to its advantage; the East to know the West, and be modified by it.

Meanwhile a series of voyages across the Atlantic added the American continent to the map of the globe. The two first voyages of Christopher Columbus, 1492 and 1493, revealed the islands of the West Indies, but the discoverer believed himself to have found not a new world but a new approach to Asia. John Cabot came upon the mainland of North America in 1497. Ten years later, the geographer Walzmüller, in preparing an introduction for a new edition of the writings of Ptolemy, discussed the recent progress of discovery, and, no name having yet been applied to the lands of the west, a map of which he had before him, he suggested that the name of Americ Vespucci should be given to them. The pilot of that name had written a private letter to a friend describing his own adventures in Atlantic voyaging. The letter had been published, apparently without Americ's consent. A copy had fallen into Walzmüller's hands, and he did not see 'what is rightly to hinder us from calling it America, the land of Americ.' The accident of an unauthorised publication of a private letter, and of its falling under the notice of a diligent editor in Lorraine, conferred immortality upon an obscure pilot about whose *bona fides* experts have not ceased to differ.

The opening of the sea route to Asia and the discovery of America were the two great achievements of the age of geographical discovery, which extended

from the first timorous attempts of the Portuguese to master the problems of African navigation, to the achievement by the Spaniards, the English and the French of a fairly complete knowledge of the dimensions of America. But it was not till the beginning of the nineteenth century that geographical science became possessed of a knowledge of the outlines of all the continents. This was attained when Matthew Flinders discovered the south coast of Australia, and circumnavigated the island.

Still later, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the penetration of Africa disclosed large possibilities for the activities of European peoples within it. English, French, Germans, Italians, Portuguese and Dutch, have taken part in the process of subjecting Africa to European policies. The 'dark continent,' though the first to be explored by sea, was the last to be thoroughly traversed by land, and is even now to a considerable extent unknown. But all that now remains to be unveiled may be said to invite the curiosity of the sportsman, the traveller, and the zoologist, though probably it has no more to disclose that will have a material bearing on history.

The first important effect of the geographical discoveries was to add to the trade routes of the world. Before the discovery of the Cape route to the East, the whole of the trade between Europe and Asia had been done through the Mediterranean. Venice, Genoa, Florence and Pisa had grown to commercial importance through the Mediterranean trade. The better part of the commerce of the Orient now passed to the Portuguese and to the Dutch, who soon became their rivals.

Trade borne by sea all the way from the East, was both cheaper and safer than that which came by caravan routes to the Levant, or across Egypt, and had to be transferred at Levantine ports to the vessels of one or other of the Italian maritime republics. The effect of the colonisation of America was to give an importance to the Atlantic seaboard of Europe which it had not hitherto possessed. The Norman and Breton ports of France, Cadiz and Lisbon, Bristol and Plymouth, faced the sea across which a trade commenced, small at first, but destined to become the greatest trade in the world. The axis of the commerce of the world, indeed, had shifted. Two countries in particular, which had hitherto been of minor importance, became first-class maritime and commercial states. England and Holland prospered directly as a consequence of the geographical discoveries. England, indeed, became the very centre of the world's trade. Throughout the Middle Ages she had been but a small country lying off the north-west of the politically most important part of Europe. But the discovery of America, by bringing a vast new field of trade into being, altered the geographical relation of England to the trading centres, and left her within easier reach of all the fields of profitable commerce than any other country. Holland, also, by the courage of her people in wresting their political freedom from their Hapsburg sovereigns, and their enterprise in forcing their way into the trade of the East Indies, gained a commercial status in northern Europe which has never since been lost.

There are certain regions which have an especial saturation with historical significance, by reason of

the frequent recurrence of important happenings in them. Just as in a military campaign there is ground which to the eye of the strategist is of high importance, so in a wide survey of history there are strategic areas, to which the attention is directed in century after century. Asia Minor with Syria is perhaps the most interesting of such regions. In all the periods, ancient, medieval and modern, the history of the world has again and again hinged on occurrences there. Romans and Greeks fought there as invaders; Hittites and Jews and a host of peoples of whom we read under a wide variety of names, fought there as inhabitants. There the West and the East came into collision, in a series of wars extending from the dawn of history down to the Mesopotamian and Palestine campaigns of the Great War. The importance of the region lay in the fact that it is the bridge between Europe and Asia. The caravan routes to the Mediterranean littoral traversed it. Tyre, Sidon, Smyrna, Antioch, as termini of the caravans, became cities of commercial importance because they were the emporia whereat Europe and Asia met to barter; and the control of this trade furnished a large motive for the military activities of so many peoples there. The Crusades, notwithstanding the great burst of religious emotion which provided the popular enthusiasm for them, were essentially military enterprises for getting possession of the trade routes to and from Asia. In all the Crusades after the first the motive was so blatantly evident that the religious impulse was only secondary to it; and even as to the First Crusade, which was organised with such an intense evocation of Christian hatred of the Infidel, Anna Comnena,

the sister of the Byzantine Emperor Alexius, wrote that : <sup>1</sup>

‘ There were among the Latins such men as Bohemund and his fellow counsellors, who, eager to obtain the Roman Empire for themselves, had been looking with avarice upon it for a long time. Seeing an opening for their plans in the expedition which was promoted by Peter (the Hermit), they stirred up this huge movement ; and, in order to deceive the more simple, they feigned a crusade against the Turks to regain the Holy Sepulchre.’

The Balkan region has for a thousand years been one of peculiar political instability. It was in this peninsula in 378 that the Roman Empire sustained its first great defeat at the hands of barbarian invaders, when the emperor Valens was slain at Adrianople ; and it was a murder committed in the peninsula in 1914 that provoked the most calamitous war in history. The Danube valley made the Balkans dangerously susceptible to invasion from the un-Romanised peoples settled to the north, when these in turn were pressed by Hunnish raids from the Steppes. The Balkans

<sup>1</sup> Kray, *The First Crusade*, p. 78. See also Professor Oman, paper on ‘ The Crusades ’ in *Colonel Despard and other Studies*, p. 117 : ‘ We are prone to look upon the Crusades as a unique phenomenon, because of the predominantly religious character of the impulse which in the eleventh and twelfth centuries hurled the legions of the Christian West upon Palestine and Syria and Egypt. A few generations ago historians who regarded themselves as citizens of the world, and presumed to look down on the affairs of men from some point of view of philosophic cosmopolitanism, taught that the Crusades were irrational outbreaks of blind fanaticism, leading to endless loss of life and waste of wealth for no adequate end. They did not see that the great movement was but one of the most stirring and picturesque episodes of the unending struggle between East and West.’

became a pot into which many metals were poured, which for centuries have been kept at molten heat without fusion of the elements. The northern plain of Italy, and the mountain passes leading from it into Germany, were, as previously mentioned, the scene of many deadly conflicts until Italy solved the problem by unity under the house of Savoy; and Belgium has unfortunately for herself earned the lamentably true description of being the cockpit of Europe. Similarly, in India, the gateway leading from the plain of the Punjab to Hindustan, has made Delhi 'the historical focus of all India.'

'Here the fate of invasions of India from the north-west has been decided. Some have either never reached this gateway or have failed to force their way through it. The conquest of Darius in the latter part of the sixth century B.C. and of Alexander the Great in the years 372-5 B.C., were not carried beyond the Punjab plain. On the other hand, the invasions which have succeeded in passing the gateway and in effecting a permanent settlement in Hindustan have determined the history of the whole sub-continent.'<sup>1</sup>

A final point of much interest relates to the influence of landscape upon character. Lord Bryce, in the last book that came from his hand, mentioned that when he was occupied with the study of the institutions of the United States, it was part of his plan to give some account of the scenery of North America, 'finding in it a feature of the country which will continue through all the ages to affect the mind of its inhabitants.'<sup>2</sup> But he did not fulfil this purpose, either then or in the later book which he devoted to the narratives of his

<sup>1</sup> H. J. Mackinder, in *Cambridge History of India*, i. p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Bryce, *Memories of Travel*, p. 226.

extensive experience as a traveller. Ruskin made the interesting speculation that the grey sandstone country stretching between Fribourg in Switzerland towards Berne was, 'for general development of human intelligence and sensibility,' about the most perfect that exists.

'A richer landscape, as that of Italy, enervates, or causes wantonness; a poorer contracts the conceptions, and hardens the temperament of both mind and body; and one more curiously or prominently beautiful deadens the sense of beauty. Even what is here of attractiveness,—far exceeding, as it does, that of most of the thickly-peopled districts of the temperate zone, seems to act harmfully on the poetical character of the Swiss; but take its inhabitants all in all, as with deep love and stern penetration they are painted in the works of their principal writer, Gotthelf, and I believe we shall not easily find a peasantry which would completely sustain comparison with them.'<sup>1</sup>

M. André Siegfried, in an acute study of 'géographie humaine' as applied to western France, finds a peculiar accord between geology and politics. The whole history of France since the great revolution, he holds—and he supports his conclusions by many maps—proves that those parts of the country which are based on limestone have been Radical whilst those parts which were based on granite were Conservative.<sup>2</sup> One cannot, however, discover that these conclusions, even if locally verified, hold true when applied to a larger field of observation. Nor can sound views be based on the influence of scenery, or geological structure, on human character and political disposition,

<sup>1</sup> Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, iv. 142.

<sup>2</sup> Siegfried, *Tableau politique de la France de l'ouest*, p. 36.

widely regarded. Race, education, religion, language, occupation, the subtle influences of tradition and history, all exert their weight. The isolation of the geographical element might be more likely to generate fallacies than to yield dependable results.



## IV

### HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY

'As I take it,' said Thomas Carlyle, 'universal history, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the history of the great men who have worked here. . . .' History, he said again, is 'the essence of innumerable biographies.' Carlyle varied this definition occasionally with an interpretation of history as an epical and prophetic outburst. 'All history is an imprisoned epic, nay an imprisoned psalm and prophecy.' Again: 'Is not God's Universe a symbol of the Godlike; is not Immensity a temple; is not Man's History, and Men's History, a perpetual Evangel?' And in a third example: 'Men believe in Bibles, and disbelieve in them; but of all Bibles the frightfullest to disbelieve in is this Bible of Universal History. This is the Eternal Bible and God's Book, which every born man, till once the soul and eyesight are extinguished in him, can and must, with his own eyes, see the God's-Finger writing!' But when Carlyle was writing of Bibles, epics and psalms, he was thinking always of history as an expression of what great men have done and taught. His recurrent theme was Heroes and Hero Worship. 'Yes, from Norse Odin to English Samuel Johnson, from the divine Founder of Christianity to the withered Pontiff of

Encyclopedism, in all times and places, the Hero has been worshipped. It will ever be so. We all love great men ; love, venerate and bow down submissive before great men ; nay, can we honestly bow down to anything else ? ’

This theory impregnated, if indeed it did not vitiate, Carlyle’s own historical work. His *Frederick the Great* is a voluminous *Iliad* with the Prussian king as its Achilles ; for having commenced the book with the theory that Frederick was a hero, Carlyle had to keep it up, though the effort to maintain the halo on a man whose ‘ vulpine morality ’ left its trail on all his tracks involved the slurring over of many things which candour would have desired to have set in a stronger light. His *Cromwell* accomplished an important purpose in disestablishing the false view of the Protector as a hypocritical usurper who masked his ambitions behind a fanatical Puritanism. Carlyle set Cromwell before his country as one of her patriot rulers, and not even the hero-worshipping vein of distortion which permeates the book made him a greater figure than he truly was. But Carlyle was so little critical in the handling of material that he accepted the Squire forgeries as a series of genuine letters, and published them as such.

His *French Revolution* achieved its end in so far as it splashed the colour on the canvas with a scene painter’s brush, and it will always have value as a vivid pictorial representation of the more sensational episodes of the Revolution. The outstanding figures are drawn with such powerful strokes that any student who reads Carlyle’s work early among the books on this piece of history with which he makes acquaintance, can never wholly free himself from the deep impression

they make. 'That swart, burly-headed Mirabeau,' with his lion-voice; Danton, the Mirabeau of the *sans-culottes*, that 'gigantic mass of valour, ostentation, fury, affection and wild revolutionary force and manhood'; the sea-green, incorruptible Robespierre; Camille Desmoulins, 'with the face of dingy black-guardism, wondrously irradiated with genius, as if a naphtha lamp burnt within it'; Orleans with his carbuncles, 'dark studs on a ground of burnished copper'; Marat, with his bleared soul looking forth through his 'bleared, dull-acrid, woe-stricken face,'—these and a complete gallery of portraits, lit up with the red Greek-fire colouring with which Carlyle dyed his work, give vitality in extraordinary measure to it.

But he found no hero in the Revolution. Plenty of rough-hewn character, good and bad, there was; plenty of flare and madness, bustling motion, roaring of cannon, and thud of the guillotine; and of these elements for the building of lurid and reverberating scenes he made more use than any previous writer on history had had the capacity, or perhaps the wish, to do, in respect to any piece of description. But he broke off the story before the complete revelation of the one man who was large enough to dominate the scene with that gesture of mastery that Carlyle liked in his heroes. The 'whiff of grapeshot' of 1795 did not end the Revolution; the final stormy paragraph was only the flourish of an author who had grown tired of his task. It was misleading to say that 'the thing we specifically call French Revolution is blown into space by it, and become a thing that was.' The prophet of heroes and hero worship rang down his curtain when the real hero of the drama had only just dressed for the part.

The *French Revolution* of Carlyle is a sequence of spasms rather than a history. It gives undue stress to picturesque events, and neglects the real meaning of the whole movement. He had no sympathy for, and consequently an imperfect understanding of, the constructive activities of the revolution, which, indeed, was very much more than a display of fireworks and fury on a grand scale.

The hero theory of history breaks down when applied to any movement which is the result of a series of efforts, aspirations, philosophies, affecting a wide range of classes. The French Revolution was in fact a chain of revolutions, not one revolution; it was a revolt of a nation against a despotism and an aristocracy become inept. No phase of it is attributable to any man, or group of men; and those who became prominent in the course of it owe their celebrity to the opportunities afforded by it, less than to the impress of their own character upon it. The habit of regarding a prominent man as summing up the characteristics of an age is apt to throw the true bearing of events out of perspective,<sup>1</sup> and to obscure the working of the forces which hoisted the man to his eminence. The swimmer is mistaken for the wave.

The feeling that the hero theory has led to false views of history has produced a reaction which runs too strongly in the contrary direction. An expression of it occurs in a work of value, where it is submitted that :

' One must beware of personalities. Even now something lingers of the Carlyle tradition that the history of the

<sup>1</sup> ' The hero-worship that Carlyle's wayward genius made so popular in one generation, too easily alike in history and in politics, falsifies perspective.'—Morley, *Notes on Politics and History*, p. 38.

Revolution is a gallery of personalities : that the revolution was the work of great men. Great men are a myth : there are none. . . . Men we have called great in history are men who summed up or stood for the soul of a people or an age. Cromwell was great in so far as he stood for the Puritan idea, the younger Pitt for England unconquerable. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

We may note in passing that our iconoclast, in assaulting one misleading idea, sets up another one. What is 'the soul of a people or an age'? The phrase is passable as rhetoric, but what does it mean? Some men in history seem to embody more of the characteristics of their time than other men do, and Cromwell and the younger Pitt may be accepted as instances ; but is not the presentation of them as thuswise typical, or epitomising, itself an effect of the hero conception? Cromwell was the most prominent, the most successful, personal outcome of the Puritan revolution, because he proved himself to be its best soldier. Since he was the favourite of the victorious army, he was elevated to the supreme place in the state. But in what sense otherwise did he sum up or stand for the soul of a people or of an age? His letters and speeches exhibit the Puritan Bibliolatry as emphatically as do the writings of Bunyan or Baxter, but except for this quality, which entered into the texture of his written and spoken language, and betokened a thorough familiarity with scripture, due to the frequent reading of it, Cromwell cannot be taken as an exponent of Puritan tenets. He was out of harmony with the saints to a greater extent than it was expedient to acknowledge. He summoned the Barebones Parlia-

<sup>1</sup> Godfrey Elton, *The Revolutionary Idea in France*, p. 26.

ment of 1653 as a select junta of guaranteed Puritan advisers, but frowned at their zeal and dismissed them unblessed when their excessive sanctity endangered the more conservative designs of his government. Cromwell was great not merely 'in so far as' he stood for the Puritan idea, but because the successful military assertion of the Puritan idea enabled him to be great despite his Puritanism. 'His greatness at home,' Clarendon reminds us, 'was but a shadow of the glory he had abroad,' and he is rightly esteemed as the first English imperial statesman.

'Great men,' said Burke, 'are the guide posts and landmarks in the state.' But Burke was referring, in the passage from which the sentence is taken, to eminent men, eminent by reason of their leadership in public affairs. His remark had particular application to Charles Townshend, the evil genius of British politics during the quarrel with the American colonies. Few would use the word 'great' in regard to Townshend now. Macaulay, in a lively passage of his essay on Dryden, supports the view that 'it is the age that forms the man, not the man that forms the age.'<sup>1</sup> 'Those who have read history with discrimination,' he avers, 'know the fallacy of those panegyrics and invectives which represent individuals as effecting great intellectual and moral revolutions, subverting established systems, and imprinting a new character on their age. The difference between one man and another is by no means so great as the superstitious

<sup>1</sup> Cf. La Bruyère: "La vie des héros a enrichi l'histoire, et l'histoire a embelli les actions des héros: ainsi je ne sais qui sont plus redevables, ou ceux qui ont écrit l'histoire à ceux qui leur en ont fourni une si noble matière, ou ces grands hommes à leurs historiens."—*Les Caractères*, i. 12.

crowd supposes.' 'The sun,' he concludes, 'illuminates the hills while it is still below the horizon, and truth is discovered by the highest minds a little before it becomes manifest to the multitude. This is the extent of their superiority. They are the first to catch and reflect a light which, without their assistance, must, in a short time, be visible to those who lie far beneath them.' John Stuart Mill, rejecting this view, argued that 'eminent men do not merely see the coming light from the hill-top; they mount on the hill-top and evoke it; and if no one had ever ascended thither, the light, in many cases, might never have risen upon the plain at all.'<sup>1</sup> It is dangerous to play with imagery; and a treatise on logic is a strange place wherein to meet the assertion that the sun might not have risen if no great man had ascended a hill-top to invoke it. Not even the Positivist Calendar of Great Men contains an example of a personage who by virtue of his greatness made any difference to astronomical phenomena.

If we are to speak of 'great men,' we ought to be clear as to what we mean by the term, and equally clear as to what we do not mean. If we examine examples of the use of the title 'the Great,' for some eminent men in history, we shall have little difficulty in concluding that it has often been applied unworthily. The Emperor Charlemagne bears the most grandiose name of all the rulers who stand out from the ruck of crowned men. The blending of 'Magnus' with 'Carolus' in the peculiar hybrid form which popular misconception created for him, gives to his fame a more resonant ring than is the case with any other man who is known as 'the Great.' But when we examine

<sup>1</sup> Mill, *System of Logic*, p. 612.

his career in detail, we wonder whether he has not been over-estimated. Certainly he was marvellously successful. The chivalry of the Frankish Empire which he commanded was better military material than any with which he came into conflict, and through it he succeeded in nearly every campaign which he undertook. Yet critical biographers are unable to claim for him that he was a great soldier—unless, of course, we are content to think that ‘success’ and ‘greatness’ mean the same thing. His laws are a jumble of well-meaning but generally futile edicts superimposed upon the customary law of the Franks and Germans, and he had none of the codifying genius of Justinian or the legislative courage of Edward I. His administrative system failed to check the growing abuses of feudalism. His whole empire was a bubble, since he made no adequate provision for maintaining its integrity. It went to pieces because he had not the prevision, the will, or the strength to break through the Frankish principle of the division of an inheritance among all the sons of a sovereign or landowner. When he died, therefore, his turbulent children snarled around the spoil, and rent it like jackals rending a carcase.

Yet not only does he bear the stately name of Charlemagne, but the Church canonised him, disregarding the circumstances that this Saint had divorced one wife, married three others, and sported a bevy of concubines. He is figured in ancient pictures as aureoled among the holiest, and the epic poets and chanson writers sang the praises of him and his knights in verses which have perpetuated a host of unveracious legends. To deny a large measure of capacity, force of character and moral merit to Charles would be



wrong. Making full allowance for the courtiership that permeates the biography by his dependent Einhard, and for the superstitious veneration which colours the sketch of him by 'the Monk of Gaul,' Charles stands out as a man of energy, political acumen, and large aspirations. But the events of his time fought for him no less vigorously than did his large and well-captured armies. His ancestors, Pippin of Landin, Pippin of Heristal, Charles Martel and the crowned king Pippin the Short, built up a sovereignty for him. The low water into which the Byzantine Empire—the true heir to the ancient Roman Empire—fell under the Empress Irene, made way for a new Empire of the West ; and the necessities of the Papacy placed Charles in a position to render the Pope a service great enough to justify the placing of an imperial diadem on his brow. Added to these favourable conditions, Charles's Frankish chivalry was a sharp and ready weapon for achieving his purposes. Ancestry, therefore, combined with military fitness and extremely favourable political circumstances to make the Charlemagne of history. His greatness was certainly less personal than a gift of fortune.

Frederick II of Prussia was the most capable soldier of his age, and equal to any contemporary in statecraft. Macaulay esteemed him 'the greatest king that has, in modern time, succeeded by right of birth to a throne.' Strangely enough, almost the identical terms of the eulogy are used by Lord Acton to describe Louis XIV, who was, he said, 'by far the ablest man who was born in modern times on the steps of a throne.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Macaulay, essay on Frederic the Great ; Acton, *Lectures on Modern History*, p. 234.

In each instance we could have spared the superlatives. Allowing, in the case of Frederick, for that absence of moral restraint which induced his wanton attacks upon neighbour states with whom he had no sort of quarrel ; allowing also for that characteristic which warranted Voltaire in writing to him, ' You have one odious vice, you delight in the abasement of your fellow creatures ' ; allowing for his faithlessness, his incorrigible disposition towards the spectacular, his low standard of personal morals and his egoism, there may be conceded a remainder of qualities which may be esteemed unusual. But the designation ' Great ' pitches his note too high. He was a clever man born to splendid opportunities, and unhampered by scruples such as would have restrained a man of finer type.

Charlemagne and Frederick II are the two principal instances in which ' Great,' as a titular appellation, has been affixed to sovereigns. The argument that it is doubtfully used concerning them need not be further elaborated. It is the function of history to estimate events and persons justly, not to exaggerate, nor to repeat conventional and traditional views which do not sustain examination.

But another question needs to be met. Allowing that no man, however powerful, can do more than the circumstances of his time will permit, is it not also true that men have taken advantage of their opportunities to impress their personality upon their age ? It is clear that there could not have been the Napoleon of history without the French Revolution, the weakness of the Directory Government, and the victorious campaign in Northern Italy. A chain of events, a catalogue of failures, furnished Napoleon with the

opportunity which he took at the latter end of 1799. But after he grasped that opportunity, and became the head of the French Government, he was less the creature of circumstance than the maker. The instance of Napoleon is so familiar that more need not be said about it. No one can measure the extent to which personality shapes events and events mould personality ; the action and reaction are too intricate to be disentangled. The seal can only leave its impress on the wax when the wax is softened by heat ; and human capacity needs a yielding medium if its stamp is to make an impression.

‘Great men are a myth,’ if we mean that they have towered above their times like mountains, or strode over a prostrate world Colossus-fashion, as the hero worshippers like to make them appear to have done. The memorable things have not been achieved in lofty aloofness from common mortality but in co-operation with it, and by means of it. But still, it is true that some men have shown capacity for doing important things while others have not ; that some have been fertile in initiative while others have not ; that some have exhibited courage, resolution, independence of judgment, in crucial conditions, while others have not ; that some have earned the right to lead their fellows by proving their judgment, their resource, their reliableness, while others have failed in all the essentials of leadership. When a man acquits himself excellently in the performance of some supremely important work, like rescuing a nation from anarchy, as Napoleon rescued France from the slough into which ten years of revolution had cast her ; or planning and executing a campaign ; or remaining steadfast in the sternest of

ordeals, as Luther did ; or leading a cause to victory against desperate odds—why should we not call him a great man ? It is not merely a matter of a name. We ought to make the most of our best. Mankind needs the stimulus of example, the inspiration of sterling character subjected to strain and proving its quality. Nations would be robbed of their richest traditions if the memory of the men who made them grew dim. Character and achievement are not lessened by the recognition that what we admire most in them was made possible by events which were beyond control by any individual. The great thing was in being fit for the task of the crucial hour.

If we permit our minds to be obsessed with regard for the leading personages of history, we run the risk of missing the importance of the movements in which they acted ; but if we think of the movements as something like forces of nature we rob them of the animation which rightly pertains to them. We may argue that the Reformation would have come without Luther, the American Revolution without Washington, the making of the United States without Alexander Hamilton, the English Commonwealth and Protectorate without Cromwell. But they are immeasurably more interesting, even as movements, when humanised by the personalities of these whom we call great men. In some instances it seems impossible to think of historical turning points without the men who were the pivots. Can anyone visualise the Norman Conquest of England without William I ? Is the entire history of France between 1848 and 1870 conceivable without Napoleon III ? Who would have built Constantinople if Constantine had not ? It is possible to cite many

instances where a large personality was the efficient instrument of forces which must have worked out very much as they did under his direction if another had been fated to direct them. Lincoln was not the only possible man for America in 1860-6, nor George Monk the inevitable engineer of the English Restoration in 1660. But in many phases of history personality has been the creative force, that which gave direction and impetus. Hence Treitschke's claim, in surveying Prussian history, that 'Men make history.' It is possible, he holds, 'to conceive English history without William III, French history without Richelieu, but Prussia is the work of her princes'; and that theme he makes good in the brilliant first volume of his *German History*.<sup>1</sup>

'To leave out or to lessen personality, would be to turn the record of social development into a void,' wrote Lord Morley. It would also dehumanise history. The sane attitude, recognising history as in the main the record of the deeds of men, is in this as in most other matters of importance, the discriminating one. Ranke, who regarded history more widely, perhaps, than did any other eminent writer of it, said :

'It is not merely the business of history to point out how far great personages have attained the ideals which float before the mind of man, or how far they have remained

<sup>1</sup> 'Dem Historiker ist nicht gestattet, nach der Weise der Naturforscher das Spätere aus dem Früheren einfach abzuleiten. Männer machen die Geschichte. Die Gunst der Weltlage wird im Völkerleben wirksam erst durch den bewussten Menschenwillen, der sie zu benutzen weiss. . . . Man kann sich die englische Geschichte vorstellen ohne Wilhelm III, die Geschichte Frankreichs ohne Richelieu; der preussische Staat ist das Werk seiner Fürsten.'—Treitschke, *Deutsche Geschichte*, i. 28.

below them. It is almost more important for it to ascertain how far the universal interests, in the midst of which eminent characters appear, have been advanced by them, whether their inborn force was a match for the opposing elements, whether it allowed itself to be conquered by them or not.<sup>1</sup>

In some instances, a real service needs to be done to the fame of certain characters eminent in history, by stripping them of their insignia of stage divinity and contemplating them as men, 'warts and all.' The most notorious example of the vice of hero worship is afforded by Napoleon's case. The Napoleonic legend was invented to further the designs of the Bonaparte family after the downfall of the creator of the First Empire;<sup>2</sup> but it has been perpetuated and pandered to by sentimentalists, distortionists, the whole tribe of callow *gobe-mouches* who are hypnotised by glitter, and the frivolous collectors of the buttons and shoe-strings of eminent persons. If it be true that no man in modern history was worthier to be called 'great' than Napoleon, it is also true that he was often unspeakably small. One has but to read the fascinating records of his conversations at St. Helena, when he was Boswellised by O'Meara, Las Cases, Gourgaud and Montholon, and the narratives of his working life by Bourienne, Méneval and Thibaudeau, to be satisfied of his exceptional powers of mind. Pare away the adulation as much as we will, there remains a man of incomparable force, penetration and rapidity. But he

<sup>1</sup> Ranke, *History of England* (English translation), i. p. 355.

<sup>2</sup> 'Bonapartism stands to Napoleon in the somewhat peculiar relation in which most religions stand to their founder. . . . Napoleon (it is a singular fact) was a Bonapartist. But he did not become one until he had ceased to be an Emperor.'—Philip Guedalla, *The Second Empire*, p. 3.

needs to be taken critically, for he committed great crimes under cover of statecraft, and with all his general disposition to magnanimity often exhibited the failings of the meanest of mankind. Excessive adulation produces naturally the reactionary disposition to under-rating, which is as false as the contrary tendency. An example is afforded by Mr. H. G. Wells's violently perverse judgment on Napoleon :

' France was in his hand his instrument, to do with as he pleased, willing for peace, but tempered for war like an exquisite sword. There lacked nothing to this great occasion but a noble imagination. And failing that, Napoleon could do no more than strut upon the crest of this great mountain of opportunity like a cockerel on a dunghill. The figure he makes in history is one of almost incredible self-conceit, of vanity, greed, and cunning, of callous contempt and disregard of all who trusted him, and of a grandiose aping of Caesar, Alexander, and Charlemagne which would be purely comic if it were not caked over with human blood. Until, as Victor Hugo said in his tremendous way, " God was bored by him," and he was kicked aside into a corner to end his days, explaining and explaining how very clever his worst blunders had been, prowling about his dismal hot island shooting birds and squabbling meanly with an underbred gaoler who failed to show him proper " respect." ' ' <sup>1</sup>

The book in which this slap-dash verdict appears contains no adequate estimate of Napoleon's most memorable work for France, his restoration of stable government after the disruptive frenzy of the Revolution. Yet it was in that work, so well described in Vandal's *L'Avènement de Bonaparte*, that his brilliant

<sup>1</sup> H. G. Wells, *The Outline of History*, p. 490.

capacities were most strikingly exhibited. To attempt to judge Napoleon without full and fair consideration of his best period of work, is as absurd as it would be to judge Shakespeare without regard to *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and *Twelfth Night*. The business of history consists neither in eulogising nor depreciating what are regarded as 'great men,' but it does consist in understanding them and their work.

When so much has been maintained, however, it may still be urged that much that is of greatest value in historical study is impersonal. Men were the instruments, sometimes the initiators, of particular movements, but all the past prepared the present, and the large tendencies of history, however they may be informed and humanised by personality, were ultra-personal in genesis and development.

'However highly we may be disposed to rate the gift of personal portraiture,' says Mr. Fisher, 'it is not the principal treasure of the historical mind. A series of cameos, be they as delicate and true as you will, does not, of itself, constitute a history. We ask for more—for nothing less than the intelligent interpretation of a vanished age, so that we may understand not only the motives of the leading actors on the stage, but the general tendencies of the time, the essential springs of change, the elements of strength and weakness, of progress, recuperation or decay, which may be inferred from the recital of political transactions or from the analysis of the social and economic fabric, and above all so that we may form a just view of the political and social problems of the age.'<sup>1</sup>

Herbert Spencer, who was not very well disposed towards historical study, and whose own writings

<sup>1</sup> H. A. L. Fisher, in *Quarterly Review*, July, 1918, p. 54.



suffer severely from the lack of it, in his essays *On Education*, urged that 'the only history that is of practical value is what may be called descriptive sociology.' In that work he allowed no merit to the personal aspect of history. But a more humane view is advanced in his later philosophy; and the passage embodying it is a well-balanced judgment on the subject under consideration.

'Beyond the impersonal elements of history which chiefly demand attention, a certain attention may rightly be given to its personal elements. Commonly these occupy the entire attention. The great-man-theory of history, tacitly held by the ignorant in all ages, and in recent times definitely enunciated by Mr. Carlyle, implies that knowledge of history is constituted by knowledge of rulers and their doings; and by this theory there is fostered in the mass of minds a love of gossip about dead individuals, not much more respectable than the love of gossip among individuals now living. But while no information concerning kings and popes, and ministers and generals, even when joined to exhaustive acquaintance with intrigues and treaties, battles and sieges, gives any insight into the laws of social evolution, —while the single fact that division of labour has been progressing in all advancing nations regardless of the wills of law makers, and unobserved by them, suffices to show that the forces which mould societies work out their results apart from, and often in spite of, the aims of leading men; yet a certain moderate number of leading men and their actions may properly be contemplated. The past stages in human progress, which everyone should know something about, would be conceived in too shadowy a form if wholly divested of ideas of the persons and events associated with them. Moreover, some amount of such knowledge is requisite to enlarge adequately the conception of human

nature in general—to show the extremes, occasionally good but mostly bad, which it is capable of reaching.’<sup>1</sup>

That passage suggests but does not sufficiently discuss, the value of the study of character, of which history is a great school. It is at this point that it has its closest association with biography, autobiography, and collections of letters. Disraeli, who put so many of his personal sentiments into the mouths of his characters, made the father of Contarini Fleming advise his son: ‘Read the Memoirs of Cardinal de Retz, the Life of Richelieu, everything about Napoleon; read works of that kind. Read no history, nothing but biography, for that is life without theory.’<sup>2</sup> But biography is not a substitute for history, and its chief value historically is that it exhibits life with theory. It is from biography that we may learn why historical characters acted as they did—the theory of their action—at least as far as their motives are disclosed by their written or spoken words, or may be fairly inferred. Biography explains the theory of action from the individual aspect. A large part of the evidence upon which history is founded is contained in political biographies, a department of literature in which the English language is especially rich. In some instances the whole history of a movement concentrated round a man. While no one would say that the inauguration of free trade in Great Britain was due to Cobden alone, since it is clear that the whole tendency of instructed thought was in that direction, still it is true that Cobden was the concentration point of the movement, and that the history of it cannot be rightly understood

<sup>1</sup> Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Ethics*, i. 518.

<sup>2</sup> Disraeli, *Contarini Fleming*, cap. xxiii.

without his biography. But biographies need to be compared to avoid slipping into the error of attributing more to an individual than can correctly be credited to one.

There is no positive right or wrong about many of the problems of conduct with which history is concerned. Rulers, statesmen, military leaders, and all who were prominent in the shaping of policies, acted for reasons which seemed good to them, in those instances where honesty of purpose may fairly be assumed; and in other instances they acted upon impulses which it is fascinating to discover when discovery is possible. It is in the main biographical material which makes these phases of history luminous. But it is never safe to form conclusions on a case as it presented itself to any one subject of biographical treatment. The whole value of biography lies in its presentation of the individual point of view, and that must always be checked by other points of view. As good an example of what is meant as can be given is afforded by the two elaborate biographies of the outstanding political figures of the Victorian age, Morley's *Life of Gladstone* and Monypeny and Buckle's *Life of Disraeli*. It is quite safe to say that no formal history covering that teeming period gives anything like so vivid an impression of its characteristics as do those two books; and it may be doubted whether posterity will be able to know any other age so well as it may know the Victorian age from them.

We do not exaggerate in maintaining the especial excellence of English biography in comparison with that of any other people. Foreign critics admit

the advantage cordially.<sup>1</sup> It arises from the deeply-rooted individualism of the British people. They are intensely interested in the purely personal aspects of their history. Character is eagerly discussed by them, and they have probably esteemed it as of more account than principle. Admittedly, the fact that a people maintain so deep an interest in the personal elements of their history does not justify the conclusion that in so doing they take a sound view of history. They may exaggerate the importance of personality. But if they do it is a pardonable fault, and one that is not devoid of advantage. A people who can recognise the valuable qualities in such strongly contrasted types of character as have contributed to the making of British history, and is accustomed to estimate them for the measure of good which they have done, is likely to maintain that reputation for toleration, open-mindedness, and fair dealing, which have marked the British race in their foreign and domestic relations. If we choose to think of history as a vast field in which forces have shaped the destinies of nations—forces often unperceived by the peoples who have been influenced by them, and working like a mighty will superior to human impulses—if we choose to think that the springs of change percolated through distant strata, and that the winds of doctrine blew from the back of far-flung horizons, we can make out a very strong case for the belief. But the whole story is not then told. Calvin learnt his gospel at Geneva, but

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* Remy de Gourmont, *Pendant l'orage*, p. 159: " Il n'est pas un genre littéraire où les Anglais soient davantage nos maîtres que celui de la biographie. Eux seuls savent faire le bon portrait, celui qui marche, qui parle, que l'on entend. C'est merveilleux."

it was Scottish character that ground the cutting edge on the formidable weapon that Presbyterianism became. Pitt truly predicted that 'America can be conquered in Germany,' but it was the stubborn valour of Wolfe's regiments and the brilliancy of their leader that achieved the conquest. The British people have contributed very much to the welfare of the world, in political development, mechanical invention and every kind of enterprise ; but what they have contributed in character has not been the least of their gifts. Perhaps when we sum up the best of British accomplishment, we shall find it epitomised less in the Statute Book, the constitutional system, and the statistical registers, than in *The Dictionary of National Biography*.

We are, then, prompted to suggest that the reaction from the great man theory of history, which Carlyle and his disciples pushed to the limits of distortion, would, if persisted in too rigorously, not only rob history of its humanity, but also create another form of misconception. For what, after all, are the forces which shape history ? In so far as they are not the forces of nature, which are only partially controllable, they are purely human forces. They are the ideas of men gathering volume and momentum from the number of people who entertain them. They are human impulses impelled to political action. They are the mass of human wills directed to certain ends more or less accurately defined. We may say that no man made the French Revolution, or the Reformation, or the American Revolution. That is true. But men made them ; and amongst the men are some whose individual attitude is particularly well worth examina-

tion. The mass is composed of units ; and some of the units are peculiarly typical.<sup>1</sup> Biography singles out these individuals, and enriches history by discovering the things in them which make them what Emerson called ' far-shining men.' If this point requires further strengthening, it may receive it from this paragraph by the editor and exponent of Erasmus :

' The importance of biography for the study of history can hardly be over-rated. In a sense it is true that history should be like the law and ' care not about very small things ' ; concerning itself not so much with individual personality as with fundamental causes involving the rise and fall of nations or the development of mental outlook from one age to another. But even if this be conceded, we still must not forget that the course of history is worked out by individuals, who, in spite of the accidental condensation that the needs of human life thrust upon them, are isolated at the last and alone—for no man may deliver his brother. In consequence, it is only in periods when the stream of personal record flows wide and deep that history begins to live, and that we have a chance to view it through the eyes of the actors instead of projecting upon it our own fancies and conceptions.' <sup>2</sup>

Our conclusion, then, is that, while we pay respectful deference to the *Zeit-geist*, and acknowledge the importance of mass-movements, social forces, irresistible tendencies, and all such impersonal abstractions, we insist that the fabric of which history is composed, to the extent that it is human, is woven by men in a world of men. It is for that reason that history is

<sup>1</sup> ' Pour acquérir une valeur typique, il faut être le plus individuel qu'il est possible.'

<sup>2</sup> P. S. Allen, *The Age of Erasmus*, p. 7.

the most humane of studies. And amongst the mass of men, though we are sceptical about heroes, some were large enough in themselves, and sufficiently like forces, to command estimation as such when we consider the processes which have shaped civilisation.

## V

### HISTORY AND PHYSICAL SCIENCE

THE relation between history and physical science has two aspects: the influence of science upon human affairs, the matter with which history is concerned, and secondly the influence of science and the scientific spirit upon history as a branch of knowledge. In other terms, our subject embraces both the material of history and the theory and method of history, what history handles and how history handles it.

Man as a home-building and tool-using animal can be traced back to a period which has been estimated at 10,000 or 12,000 years ago. We may fairly say that civilisation began when pre-historic man learnt to increase his energies by the use of implements made by himself from wood and stone, and to increase his comfort by making for himself a dwelling, however rude. Lewis Morgan, the American anthropologist, in his *Ancient Society*, distinguished between savagery and barbarism by indicating the making of pottery as marking off man the fellow of the apes from man on the way towards the ripening of his faculties. We are not looking for hard and fast dividing lines, and whether we regard the tool or the pot as the sign of the emergence of *homo sapiens* is of little consequence for present purposes. One or the other, or both,



together with the home-building habit, signalled the beginning of primitive man's advance on his long road.

Man developed his intelligence through making improvements in his tools. Their shape, which meant their adaptation to the work they had to do, called forth his inventive powers. Very many centuries ago, before the Romans crossed the Strait of Dover, man in Britain had made for himself tools which were perfectly suited for their purposes.<sup>1</sup> Hundreds of years passed before he took another important step, in harnessing to his service the dynamic elements of nature.

Two forces were readily available to him, wind and water. Primitive man converted his corn into flour either by beating it, or by grinding it between querns, or mill-stones, which were turned by hand. Under Levitical law, it was forbidden to take a man's mill-stones as a pledge, because the food of the household depended upon them. 'No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge; for he taketh a man's life to pledge' (Deuteronomy xxiv. 6). Querns have been found in such numbers in England as to justify the belief that each household ground its own corn; and among some Indian tribes in America to this day, the women are to be seen breaking down the corn into flour by beating it.

We do not know what bright mind first hit upon the brilliant idea that by putting up sails to catch the wind, and making them turn a rod connected with the upper mill-stone, or by making the water of a stream turn a wheel connected with the mill-stones by means

<sup>1</sup> See the figures of primitive tools in Auld, *Life in Ancient Britain*, pp. 187, 190 and 191.

of a wooden shaft, the labour of grinding could be saved, and nature could be induced to do the work. It is doubtful whether the wind mill was known to the Romans, but Strabo and Vitruvius describe water mills as existing more than half a century B.C. The water of swiftly flowing streams and that of aqueducts was used for this purpose. It would appear from two passages in Doomsday Book that both wind and water mills were used in the eleventh century. We read there of a wind mill which had been erected in King Edward's days, and of a water mill which would only work in winter owing to the shortage of water in the stream in summer.<sup>1</sup> In the twelfth century instances of permission being granted to erect both wind and water mills are fairly common, and cases began to occur involving the right to use flowing water for this purpose. A case is also recorded of the prior of a monastery in Holland who wished to erect a wind mill but was forbidden by the lord of the land on the ground that the wind belonged to him ; but we are relieved to learn that when appeal was made to the bishop of the diocese he ruled that the wind was under the control of the church, so that the monastery got its mill.

To make use of wind to assist in propelling a boat was an idea which occurred to the human mind early in the development of civilisation. The Viking ships were each fitted with a mast which carried a single sail. But this was to assist the thirty or more rowers, who provided the real 'engine-power' of the vessel.<sup>2</sup> It was not till the dawn of modern history that sails and tackle had been so far improved that ships were

<sup>1</sup> Freeman, *Norman Conquest*, v. p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> Mawer, *The Vikings*, p. 99 ; Larson, *Canute the Great*, pp. 305-6.

entirely moved by wind. There were no better vessels afloat in the Middle Ages than those plying east of Suez, and Marco Polo supplies a very interesting description of them. Vessels employed in the trade of the East Indian islands were sometimes 'of great size,' requiring 200 or 300 mariners to work them. 'And aboard these ships,' our Venetian traveller informs us, 'you must know, when there is no wind they use sweeps, and these sweeps are so big that to pull them requires four mariners to each.'<sup>1</sup> In European shipping, the oared vessel did not give place to the self-sufficient sailing ship till the fifteenth century. The trade of the Mediterranean was carried in vessels which were dependent upon oars and sails together. But when ocean voyages were undertaken by the Portuguese in their West African explorations, and by the English, Spaniards, French and Dutch, improvements in shipbuilding and rig were necessitated, and wind alone moved the vessels which discovered the Cape route to the East and the continent of America.

The employment of wind and water in the service of man came, then, rather late in the history of civilisation; but not until the eighteenth century did the movement set in strongly towards utilising natural forces for making things which are humanly valuable. When by turning water into steam and applying it to mechanical contrivances production was accelerated, a new force was brought into being; whilst in the first quarter of the nineteenth century an entirely fresh realm of nature was disclosed, as an agent for performing work of unimaginable magnitude and

<sup>1</sup> Yule's *Marco Polo*, ii. 250.

subtlety, when Oersted and Ampère discovered electromagnetism. With electricity a new era dawned. If we were to group historical periods not according to the great political events—the Reformation, the Thirty Years' War, the French Revolution, and so forth—but according to those things which have even more profoundly influenced human life, we should have to speak of a long age when man was a purely tool-using being ; a period of say a thousand years when he had learnt to make wind and water do some of his work for him ; a short period of about a century and a half when steam was his most powerful inanimate servant ; and a new era radiant and throbbing with electric energy.

The history of science dates back many centuries if we look for the beginnings of research into phenomena. Aristotle is the father of scientific thinking. Bacon analysed the processes of scientific reasoning. The Arabs evolved the mathematical mode of enquiry. Newton applied mathematics to physics. Copernicus founded modern astronomy. Lavoisier classified the chemical elements, or such of them as were known in the seventeenth century. Harvey made clear the primary important fact in physiology. Lamarck set biology on its feet as a science, and invented the name for it. It is fascinating to trace the infancy of all the sciences, and good to honour the memory of the pioneers who laid their foundations, often amid obloquy or positive persecution. But intellectual curiosity and interesting tentatives do not make history. Science did not enter into the life of mankind as a vital part of its substance earlier than 150 years ago. It is still new. Indeed, we can fairly say

that it is only just beginning to make mankind in the mass realise that the entire conception of the universe has been subverted by its discoveries. The proudest of all man's achievements has been attained within the domain of science, and at the same time the most humiliating and the most salutary fact that has ever dawned upon his consciousness is one of its leading themes: that he himself is not a special pet of omnipotence, created to be the lord of the earth, but is a creature evolved like all other creatures, and subject like them to the laws of physical being. That science has put man in his biological place at last is a quite considerable historical fact.

Science has revolutionised man's conception of the universe, of himself, of the meaning of life. It has revolutionised his mode of thinking. It has revolutionised his work. It has given him new energies, immensely multiplying his facility of motion, his dynamic capacity, his command over materials. It has placed within his reach a range of comforts and pleasures which have enriched his span of existence. The world we live in is not the same world as was inhabited by the people who lived a couple of centuries or more ago. What has made the changes? Our art is not better, our literature is not superior, though there is more of it. Our moral standards are not higher. Our political systems, though different, are not substantially improved. Science has made the most substantial changes. Science has recast life in a new mould. It is this immense achievement which justifies the claim that 'science rightly understood is the key to history.'<sup>1</sup>

It may be objected that science has also invented the

<sup>1</sup> F. S. Marvin, in *Progress and History*, p. 271.

most terrific devices for destruction, and has made war more devastating by their means. High explosives, poison gases of various degrees of devilishness, and weapons of monstrous size, are just as much the gifts of science as are wireless telegraphy and anaesthetics. But while that is obviously true, certain things have to be remembered.

(a) Wars are not the results of science. They are the results of unscientific and blundering politics, national egoism, perverted morals, ineffectual religion, and many other causes, none of which is connected with science in any way. But when a nation becomes involved in war, its scientific ability is necessarily directed to the waging of it, as is every other kind of ability at command; and if scientific skill has performed its task with greater competency than have other kinds of ability, it must be credited with what it has done capably, without being debited with a moral responsibility which does not pertain to it.

(b) The acceleration of inventive energy by war has been of substantial advantage to civilisation. The science of aero-dynamics was advanced immeasurably by the pressure of necessity during the Great European War of 1914-18. Before the war, the aeroplane was but slowly becoming a vehicle of practical utility; the war made it a real addition to the facilities at the disposal of mankind.

(c) Whilst the destructiveness of war has been increased by science, at the same time the advances made by medicine and surgery have enabled it to be waged under more hygienic conditions, and with less suffering to the injured than ever before. It may be said that modern war is one of the healthiest and

most dangerous of occupations, if the paradox can be excused. In the wars of former times, it is probable that more were killed by disease than by the enemy. At the beginning of 1812, out of 30,000 British infantry on service in the Peninsula, 11,400 were in hospital. In the battle of Corunna, Sir John Moore lost 800 men, but he had 4000 in hospital. In the Walcheren expedition of 1809, an army of 39,000 lost 217 from fighting and 23,000 from disease. Modern war—that is, war as waged since the Russo-Japanese war of 1904, when the results of improved medical supervision were first exhibited in striking form—is more humane than war was in former times, in respect to care for the health of the soldier, the prevention of disease, the treatment of wounds, curative medicine, and skilled nursing.

The whole series of mechanical inventions which have revolutionised modern life, has sprung from the operation of the general law that every improvement induces, often necessitates, another. When a machine is invented for performing an operation faster or more efficiently than it was performed before, not only the machine itself is very soon improved, but also the improvement in the process sets up a demand for, perhaps, a larger supply of raw material, or material of higher quality. Fresh inventions are therefore brought about.

The history of the steam engine illustrates the point adequately. When coal was first burnt as household fuel, it was obtained near the surface. The supplies so procured were soon exhausted, and deeper mining became necessary. Water flowed into the workings, and had to be pumped out. At first hand pumps were

used, but these rapidly became inadequate. In 1669 Thomas Savery devised a steam pump. He was not the first man to use steam for lifting water. Six years before, the Marquis of Worcester had invented a simple steam pump, of only two horse power, for lifting water from the Thames and supplying it to Vauxhall. Savery's steam pump would lift water 25 feet from a mine. All the earliest steam engines were built for pumping water. James Watt applied to the engine the theory of heat which he had learnt from Professor Black at the University of Glasgow, and devised methods of reducing the loss of heat which had occurred with the older and simpler engines. Continually improving his mechanism, Watt at last, in 1785, applied the steam engine to driving the machinery of a cotton mill. The faster production of cotton thus brought about gave an incentive to invention for the speedier production of cotton yarn, and the manufacture of the yarn into fabric. Here again, invention had been at work preparing the way. The spinning-jenny of Hargreaves (1770), the water frame of Arkwright (1771), and the mule of Crompton (1779), were inventions for the production of yarn by quicker methods than that of the domestic spinning-wheel. (It is not necessary for present purposes to consider the truth of the charge that Arkwright, the Preston barber, stole the ideas of another.)

These devices were at first worked by water power. But more power was wanted to get the full value out of them. The application of steam to spinning did that. But then, the manufacture of yarn being so enormously accelerated, it was necessary to weave it into fabric at a greater rate. It was useless to turn



out large quantities of yarn, if the hand-weaving implements could not utilise it as it was produced. Cartwright in 1784 invented the power-loom required. Then, this increase in the use of steam necessitated speedier methods of conveying coal from the pits to the factories. More power meant more coal, more coal meant quicker transport. George Stephenson's first locomotive was not made for carrying passengers but for hauling coal ; and the Stockton and Darlington railway sanctioned by Parliament in 1821 was projected by its original promoter, Edward Pease, not for passenger traffic, but for the transport of coal from his collieries to the factories and furnaces which were calling for larger and larger supplies. The greater use of machinery meant a larger consumption of iron. Improvements in iron and steel production were thus necessitated. Not one invention stands alone. Every inventor used the ideas of predecessors, and was impelled to invent less from a desire to exercise ingenuity, than from the realisation of the need for improvement caused by previous improvements. There has rarely been an invention which would not have been shorn of its full usefulness unless some later invention had been made to give full effect to it ; and that fresh invention, in turn, assisted to supersede the invention which it was devised to make effective.

It has been argued that the mechanical revolution, the result of the application of science to industry, was not the same thing as the industrial revolution, by which we mean factory organisation and the use of large blocks of capital in industry.<sup>1</sup> ' There would have been an industrial revolution of sorts if there had

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Wells makes this point in his *The Outline of History*, p. 509.

been no coal, no steam, no machinery.' But while it is true that the two sets of changes, scientific and industrial, can be considered separately, they were in fact so closely interlinked that neither could have proceeded as it did without the other. We cannot say what scientific discoveries would have been made, what inventions would have been achieved, if there had not been industries to utilise many of them, and to encourage research ; nor can we say what industrial changes would have occurred if invention had not compelled manufacture in places where power could be employed in the processes. The distinction between the two series is theoretical ; essentially, the changes which we know by the name of the industrial revolution were brought about by mechanical and scientific changes. Dean Inge has spoken of the industrial revolution as ' the triumph of applied science,' and the phrase has the ring of truth.

The two great methods of science, the method of mathematical reasoning and the method of experiment, have been the principal instruments by which these changes have been effected. The determination of the strength and elasticity of materials, the pressure of gases, the measurement of masses, and the whole range of problems relating to dynamics, depend upon mathematics. Experiment, pursued with infinite patience and ingenuity, is the very life of the physical and biological sciences. Both mathematics and experiment were practised by the Greeks, it is true, but if we wish to watch the beginnings of the employment of both methods in the solution of problems of practical importance, we have to look to the seventeenth century, when Newton, Harvey and Boyle were

searching infinity for truth and revealing the intrinsic nature of things.

The entry of the mathematical spirit into politics, commerce and daily life, is a striking development which is quite modern. Insurance and banking are based on mathematical reasoning. Price indexes help to determine the cost of living, by marking down the relation between the purchasing medium, money, and commodities. Graphs and statistical abstracts are used to introduce a measure of certainty into political and commercial affairs. The slide rule of the statistician is the stethoscope of modern society. Measurement, based upon accurate data, is the scientific alternative to slipshod methods, and the statistical presentation of the facts is a salutary antidote to the rhetorical generalities with which exponents of public policy have been wont to envelop their platitudes and banalities. We laugh at the English Chancellor of the Exchequer who, confronted with calculations worked out to decimals, asked what 'those damned dots' meant, and can imagine the paralysis of mind that would have seemed to smite him if he had been confronted with a price index, and assured that the British sovereign, the very bed-rock of stability, had been declining in value for many years.

'Statistics,' wrote L. A. Schlozer, 'are history standing still, and history is statistics put in motion.' There is much in history that can never be statistically rendered, but there is also much overhauling to do in order to make clear the meaning of statistics that are of some historical importance. All statements affecting money in history are substantially worthless, because the value of money in different periods has fluctuated

enormously. In the Middle Ages, a baron could maintain an entire army from the proceeds of an estate. To calculate approximately the value of money in Tudor times, Professor Pollard supplies the formula of multiplication by 10 ;<sup>1</sup> but that was in 1910, and all money values have been disorganised by the currency juggling of the war period. Ludlow in 1660 stayed with a friend who, possessed of an estate worth £100 a year, was 'esteemed above contempt and below envy.' In the eighteenth century a country gentleman could keep a carriage on an income of £300 a year. Old Robert Pitt in 1727 wrote to his son Tom a stiff lecture on his extravagance while travelling on the Continent. 'Do you, young gentleman,' he said, 'tell me what will maintain such a one as you abroad? I know better than you, and that one hundred pounds there, in diet, lodging and clothes, will go as far as two hundred here; and if it were not now and then for some extraordinary charges, and that of your exercises, £200 per annum would be more than you and your footman need spend.'<sup>2</sup> Instances of this kind, which could easily be multiplied, illustrate the worthlessness of figures recording money-quantity, unless we have some key to them revealing money-values. At present history is without dependable aids of the kind. The most careless of readers must realise that if the ordinary revenue of the Crown at the end of the reign of Queen Elizabeth was only £315,000 a year, the sovereign must have been worth very much more then than it was worth three centuries later. Without a means of estimating the difference the figures are wildly misleading.

<sup>1</sup> *Political History of England*, vi. p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> *Dropmore Papers*, i. 84.

To the changes effected by scientific improvement must be attributed the rapid increase of the population of most European countries during the past century and a half. The three things which have made large populations possible have been, the opening up of territory into which immigrants have flowed, the increased production of food and materials, and the conservation of life by improved hygiene and medical science. The population of England in the eleventh century has been calculated, from Domesday Book data, to have been about a million and a half.<sup>1</sup> At the accession of James I, 1603, the population is estimated to have been below 5,000,000.<sup>2</sup> In 1780 the population of England and Wales was computed at a little over 7,800,000.<sup>3</sup> It took more than five centuries to bring the population up to the extent of three and a half millions, and two centuries more to increase it by another three millions. By 1901 the population of England and Wales was 32,500,000. The population began to increase on a striking scale concurrently with the coming of the scientific age. With a population in the neighbourhood of five millions in the reign of James I, England was considered overcrowded. The advocates of colonising schemes referred to the country as being 'pestered with people,' and few there were who did not entertain this view. The population grew with the capacity of the country to feed the people, either from its own produce or by food bought with English manufactured goods.

This increase of population is the greatest fact in

<sup>1</sup> Sir James Ramsay, *The Foundations of England*, i. pp. 511-2.

<sup>2</sup> Trevelyan, *England under the Stuarts*, p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Holland Rose, *William Pitt and National Revival*, p. 4.

modern history, far more important than all the wars which have been fought, all the Acts passed by all the parliaments, and all the policies propounded for the betterment or confusion of mankind. This is not the place to discuss it in its many social bearings; we simply mark it down now as the dominating fact, and indicate that scientific discovery and invention facilitated the growth. The application of science to agriculture has of course to be reckoned as one of the important elements contributing to make the feeding of larger populations possible. Such patient work as that of Wheeler of Saskatchewan, who by cross-fertilising selected grains produced a variety of wheat which would ripen a fortnight earlier than any wheat previously grown, and thus escape the frosts of the Canadian autumn, and that of William Farrer, who developed a wheat adapted to the heat of an Australian summer, has helped to keep these teeming millions fed.

The fluidity of the modern world is the result of science applied to means of motion and communication. A journey of ten thousand miles is a matter of less concern than one of a hundred miles was before the era of railways and steam-boats; and the poles can now converse with the equator by wireless. Changes of such magnitude, affecting all the relations of life, have had their influence upon the mind of man. The entire outlook has changed. The differences between man and man, between race and race, have been worn down. They must tend more and more to disappear. Backward races have come forward, and will approximate to the higher types in greater numbers as time runs. Forty years ago the question was being strenuously argued in Great Britain whether the

agricultural labourer was a fit person to entrust with a vote. To-day the same question is asked with regard to Bantus, felaheen, ryots and coolies ; and as democracy has invaded Japan, China and India, with all its imperfections and advantages, we cannot presume that its conquests will stop at the present lines of assumed capacity.<sup>1</sup>

The aid which history receives from physical science is often shattering to ideas of traditional respectability. We thought that perhaps we knew what a race was, and what a nation was, until anthropology and biology evoked a sceptical vein of criticism. We used to think that Aryans, Teutons, Celts, Mongols, Semites, were fundamental groups of humanity, radical types out of which national blends were formed. Germans were taught that they sprang from a perfectly pure stock, and that all those perfections which they recognised in themselves, and which it was the duty of the rest of the world to recognise also, and to admire, were due to their racial purity. The English, with Daniel Defoe's *True Born Englishman* to laugh the nonsense out of them, could not boast anything so immaculate :

' The Pict and painted Briton, treacherous Scot,  
By hunger, theft, and rapine hither brought,  
Norwegian pirates, buccaneering Danes,  
Whose red-haired offspring everywhere remains ;  
Who joined with Norman French compound the breed  
From whence your true-born Englishmen proceed.'

<sup>1</sup> Even the Radical Lord Morley, Secretary of State for India in 1906, did not ' think it desirable, or possible, or even conceivable to adapt English political institutions to the nations who inhabit India ' (*Recollections*, ii. p. 172). Yet the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms have proceeded to do precisely that.

But the English parried the German race-purity superstition, by setting up the pretension that theirs was the most perfect blend that an omniscient providence had ever permitted to happen, and their poets incited them to believe, almost as an item of their religion, that they were especially designed to show other two-legged creatures what a very fine thing a man might be if only he were born of the right race—

‘ For the Lord our God Most High  
He hath made the deep as dry,  
He hath smote for us a pathway to the ends of all the Earth.’

The French also had their special endowment of grace and genius. Theirs was the Latin soul *par excellence*—

‘ Ma France, quand on a nourri son cœur latin  
Du lait de votre Gaule ’ ;

and their blend, which could not be denied, was also the most felicitous of all possible blends. In the United States, where the mixture baffles analysis, those who claim descent from old colonial families pride themselves on the length of their pedigrees.<sup>1</sup>

There is a sound instinct underlying these aspirations after quality in breeding. We cannot give weight to the arguments of the advocates of Eugenics without

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Münsterberg, *The Americans*, pp. 598-600 : “ A European has only the barest impression of the great social significance of American genealogies, and would be surprised to see in the large libraries whole walls of bookshelves that contain nothing but works on the lineage of American families. The family tree of the single family of Whitney of Connecticut takes up three thick volumes amounting to 2700 pages ; and there even exists a thick and handsome volume with the genealogies of American families of royal extraction.’



admitting that what they wish to do on scientific lines is commendable as a selective principle among families and nations with a view to maintaining a good stock. The owner of a flock of merino sheep or Jersey cattle is careful to preserve them from contamination by inferior types, and if a people believe that they are a superior strain they are surely right in trying to maintain it. But anthropology has demolished older notions of racial separateness, and enquiry along such lines leaves us in doubt as to what claim any nation has to be considered pure in type, or possessed of characteristics which entitle it to give itself airs. Men of genius confer lustre upon nations, but no nation exhibits in the mass the qualities of its men of genius. Shakespeare, Dante, Goethe and all the supreme men, in so far as they are supreme, belong to no nation. The only valid test of superiority is capacity for doing superior things. The owner of a flock of merino sheep does not segregate them from inferior sheep to flatter their family pride, but because they yield superior wool. At that point pride in human pedigrees, families, nations, races, if it wishes to avail itself of the biological analogy, has to submit to a disconcerting test: what kind of wool has your flock produced?

The scientific age has affected historical studies chiefly in two ways: by imparting the scientific spirit to historical investigation, and through the influence of certain lines of scientific thought on the work of historians. There is no one absolutely right way of writing history. There is room for historians who are not much influenced by the scientific spirit. But most assuredly there is also room for the historians who aim at being scientific, and much work of high value and

interest for them to do. The testing of evidence, in the same way as a man of science tests his materials and checks his experiments, the criticism of authorities, synthesis, analysis, are processes which need to be performed in the spirit in which the physicist or the biologist works.

The idea of evolution, which has entered into all scientific work, has likewise influenced that of the historian. The development of institutions cannot be studied in the same mode now as was considered satisfactory in Hallam's day. Our consciousness is attuned to the conception of evolution, and we trace the stages of growth with the conviction that we have in this theory the key without which the facts lack coherency. We view the events of history as phenomena of social development. History is an aspect of Sociology. 'The essence of the scientific spirit is criticism,' wrote Huxley, and the more this spirit permeates historical study, the more it will purge itself of futilities and assert its value as a study essential to human welfare.

The question whether history itself is a science has been frequently discussed, and is one of those questions which will never be definitely answered; nor is it desirable that it should be. There is a defiant note in the claim of the brilliant historian who will have it that 'history is a science, no less and no more.'<sup>1</sup> Not less emphatic is M. Seignobos, whose little book on the study of history—written in collaboration with M. Langlois—is a forceful plea for regarding history as a science pure and simple. On the other hand, both Stubbs and Creighton denied that history could be

<sup>1</sup> Bury, *An Inaugural Lecture* (1903), p. 7.

classified with the sciences. An intermediate view is that it is both a science and an art, 'that it has in view action which touches the earth, and the Idea which touches the skies.'<sup>1</sup> Yet another view accepts history as a science, but understands by the term in this relation not the physical but the moral sciences.<sup>2</sup>

But these views are not so discordant as they appear on the surface to be, if we look beneath the words to the things. First, what do we mean by science? Two definitions may be cited: (1) that of Huxley, that 'By science I understand all knowledge which rests upon evidence and reasoning of a like character to that which claims our assent to ordinary scientific propositions';<sup>3</sup> and (2) that of Herbert Spencer—'Knowledge of the lowest kind is un-unified knowledge, Science is partially-unified knowledge, Philosophy is completely-unified knowledge.'<sup>4</sup> To the extent, then, that history presents evidence, and reasoning upon evidence, that is, criticism of evidence, and to the extent that it is partially-unified knowledge, it is science. But there is other history that presents pictures of the past, analyses character, probes motives, and is distinguishable by skill in narrative. To the extent that it consists of these qualities, it is art. The difference is largely one of point of view towards historical material. It is also a question of literary accomplishment. There is historical writing by modern authors which is as precisely accurate and as carefully wrought in its arrangement of evidence as the most fastidious scientific mind could desire, and is at the

<sup>1</sup> Hanotaux, in *Revue Historique*, cxiv. 423.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. Driault, in *Revue des Études Napoléoniennes*, Jan. 1915. p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Huxley, *Darwiniana*, p. 148. <sup>4</sup> Spencer, *First Principles*, p. 119.

same time touched with the magic of style, and aglow with imagination. The high accomplishment of the historian who excels in both the scientific and the artistic attributes is, however, not frequently attained. Perfect achievement in this vocation is not to be expected to be more common than in poetry, mathematics, philosophy, or any other study in which soundness of matter combined with imagination is desirable.

There is no need now to discuss the relation of history to the various branches of science—to show the contributions made by each towards the modification of civilisation, by which their work has been brought within the range of historical review ; and to indicate how the sciences in turn have benefited from the application of historical method to their researches. Anthropology has changed the viewpoint of the student of ancient history in many important respects. A Polish botanist has shown that the original home of the Slav race was probably within a zone in which hornbeams thrive, but where the beech, the larch and the yew do not grow, from the existence of a word for the hornbeam in their language, and the absence of words for the three other trees mentioned, concluding from that interesting fact that the Slavs emanated from the basin of the middle Dnieper.<sup>1</sup> Extremely interesting attempts have been made to apply medical diagnosis to historical facts relating to the diseases from which eminent characters suffered, and to determine the nature of such plagues as the black death.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Peisker, in *Cambridge Mediaeval History*, ii. p. 418.

<sup>2</sup> 'L'esprit scientifique, sous ses formes multiples, et par ses méthodes diverses, étend son domaine dans tous les ordres : en

The far-reaching effects of the discoveries of Physics, the telegraph, the telephone, radio-activity, need not be stressed.

We think of these inventions chiefly as having added to the convenience of life, but they have also affected some of its aspects much more deeply. Take one interesting result. In the Middle Ages, and far into modern times, brigandage and piracy were rife in many lands and nearly all the seas. The trade routes were rendered unsafe from this cause. The steamship has killed piracy, and the electric telegraph has put an end to brigandage in all those countries which are sufficiently far advanced to utilise this invention. It is stated that in the kingdom of Naples alone, during the last years of Bourbon rule, brigands committed 7000 murders per annum. One brigand named Caruso was known to have murdered 200 persons with his own hands in one month (September 1863).<sup>1</sup> The Mediterranean was infested with pirates, and the flourishing French colony of Algiers had its beginning in a determined attempt by the French Government in 1830 to stamp out the piracy that had its lair in Algerian ports. The piracy of the Pacific and the West Indies

histoire, notamment, il fournit des controles et introduit des intelligences inattendues. Les moins intéressantes ne sont pas celles qu'apportent les sciences médicales. Ce n'est pas d'aujourd'hui, d'ailleurs, que l'on a imaginé de rechercher dans la physiologie et la pathologie l'interprétation des événements historiques et les mobiles des hommes qui les ont accomplis. Déjà Pascal parlait du grain de sable qui arrêta les entreprises de Cromwell, et il est certain que de nos jours la pierre de Napoleon III a été l'une des causes de son affaiblissement physique et moral et a joué un rôle essentiel dans les désastres de 1870.—M. Berthelot, *Science et libre pensée*, p. 199.

<sup>1</sup> Norman Douglas, *Old Calabria*, p. 215.

in a previous century is chronicled in the fascinating pages of Esquemelin's *Buccaneers of America*. The commissions to governors of British colonies and dominions still contain the behest that they shall be diligent in suppressing piracy, though it is no longer a source of perplexity in any part of the empire. As for brigandage, it has not been suppressed in Europe by severity of punishment, or moral inculcation, but, as a well-informed writer says, 'a scientific invention, the electric telegraph, is the guarantee of peace against the rascals.'

All knowledge is interrelated. We have to divide up fields of research for the sake of good organisation and convenience, but the universe is one, the telescope and the microscope do the same sort of thing in different ways, and no department of research stands alone. 'From the philosophical point of view,' it has been well said, 'the science of life includes all other, for man is a living animal, and science is the work of his co-operating mind, one of the functions of his living activity.'<sup>1</sup> History is that department of human knowledge which collates the phenomena of the past in the same spirit of desiring to elicit the truth as is manifested by the physical sciences. It differs from them in many respects, but has close affinities with them likewise. The reproach has often been made that history concerns itself over-much with past politics. It cannot avoid paying close attention to politics, because policy directs power, and power shapes the social organism. The Thirty Years' War made central Europe a desert, and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars hurled the nations into a chaos for a quarter of a

<sup>1</sup> F. S. Marvin, in *Progress and History*, p. 261.

century. But we may agree that scientific work, by the accumulated discoveries of trained minds, has effected revolutions more beneficent and enduring than any which the stumbling, myopic methods of nervously empirical politics were ever capable of achieving.

## VI

### HISTORY IN EDUCATION

THERE never has been a period when so much thought was given to the place of history in education, and methods of teaching history, as is the present. Teachers of the subject are keen to learn from each other, to overhaul their systems, to provide themselves and their scholars with good text-books, maps, illustrative pictures, diagrams and libraries for additional reading. The catalogues of publishers of educational literature offer an enormous range of choice, and many cheap books written for schools are so entertaining that when an adult person by happy chance begins to dip into one of them, his usual comment is to regret that there were not such books when he went to school. The publication of periodicals like *History*, the journal of the English Historical Association, with its wealth of matter of first-class interest, and the *History Teachers' Magazine*; innumerable pamphlets devoted to general history teaching, or to particular aspects of it, such as the fine series of *Helps for Students of History*; many volumes of carefully selected 'sources,' which enable the scholar to form a first-hand acquaintance with historical evidence—all these implements of education enable history to be taught both more efficiently and in a much more interesting way that was formerly



possible. There is also a small class of books devoted to the teaching of history. Amongst them may be mentioned three which are especially worthy of the study of teachers: J. W. Allen's *The Place of History in Education* (1909), M. W. Keatinge's *Studies in the Teaching of History* (1910), and J. J. Findlay's *History and its Place in Education* (1923).

These activities denote a quickening of interest in historical studies which is quite modern. Clearer aims and improved apparatus for the teaching of history in schools have concurred with the more efficient study of the subject in the Universities. Lord Morley, discussing his own Oxford experiences, relates that 'history as a serious study was not formally recognised in either University until the middle of the century or a little later,'<sup>1</sup> and a century earlier Gibbon went through Oxford without obtaining any history teaching whatever. Though, to be sure, there were professors of history at the Universities, they were not chosen because of their proficiency as historical scholars, and it was not till about the beginning of the nineteenth century that 'it became usual to appoint to the chairs of modern history men who would take their duties seriously.'<sup>2</sup> At Cambridge, it was not till 1858 that a place was found for history in the Law Tripos, and not till 1870 that a Law and History Tripos was founded, with Law, of course, as 'the predominant partner.' History did not become a separate subject for a degree course till as late as 1872 at Oxford and 1875 at Cambridge.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Morley, *Recollections*, i. p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> F. W. Maitland, in *The Teaching of History*, p. xv.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. xvi.

Between those dates, in 1874, was published John Richard Green's *Short History of the English People*. There is more than coincidence in those facts. The recognition of the importance of history as a subject of study was the result of the same currents of thought as induced Freeman's brilliant pupil and friend to write a history of England on a fresh theory of the relative importance of events.

'The aim of the following work,' wrote Green in his preface, 'is defined by its title; it is a history, not of English kings or English conquests, but of the English People. . . . It is with this purpose that I have devoted more space to Chaucer than to Crecy, to Caxton than to the petty strife of Yorkist and Lancastrian, to the Poor Law of Elizabeth than to her victory at Cadiz, to the Methodist revival than to the escape of the Young Pretender. Whatever the worth of the present work may be, I have striven throughout that it should never sink into a "drum and trumpet history."' '

The recognition of history as a vital subject of school study followed naturally upon the setting of it in its rightful independent place in the Universities, beside the subjects which had long been regarded as of major consequence there. Since then there has been much experiment and discussion as to what history should be taught, and how it should be taught. What amount of attention should be given to local history, to national history, to European history, to universal history? Is not too much deference paid to political history? Is not insufficient attention given to economic history? Does not the teaching of national history, without some corrective, produce a narrow and fallacious form of patriotism? Should we not give more attention

to the international spirit? Is it not necessary to stress more than has hitherto been done, the idea of moral development as exhibited in history? Which is the more important, to study the origins and development of nations, or to study the living problems of the day historically, tracing them back to their roots in the past? The practical teacher, who has to face the problems of making room for all the subjects which he has to teach, and wishes to teach, may well cry 'Mercy!' as he listens to all the demands made upon him, and reflects that time and the absorbent capacity of his scholars are limited.

There is, too, a danger, from these demands, and from the desire to make the teaching of history more interesting, of neglecting the things in history which it is necessary to teach, and without which history is shorn of much of its value. You can make history teaching so interesting that no history is left, but only a soothing syrup compounded of romance, imagination, poetry, coloured pictures, legends, fairy stories, anecdotes, Harrison Ainsworth's novels, plasticine models and notes of exclamation. The intellectual discipline that should be imparted by the study of it may be smothered by frills and frivolities.

A better statement of the legitimate aims of history teaching could hardly be desired than that which was adopted by the English Historical Association in 1916. The two following resolutions deserve to be known to all who are engaged in the teaching of history in schools, and I quote them in their entirety in order to give further publicity to them:

1. That the value of historical training consists only in part in the information conveyed; it lies chiefly in the

training of the pupil to see through the details the main lines of historical development, and to understand something of the conditions—social, political, moral, intellectual and economic—that have moulded the present. The study of history, moreover, provides valuable training in accurate reasoning, in the formation of thoughtful judgment and in the expression of results in a clear and attractive form. Throughout the curriculum these aims should be kept in view by the teachers, due regard being paid to the stage the pupils have reached.

2. That the study of history should be approached through that of the political community in which the pupils live. It should be treated in relation to the history of the British Empire as a whole, the growth of which should form a more important part of the whole curriculum than it has done hitherto. The outlines of general history should be explained so as to make intelligible the development of civilisation and our relations with other peoples. It is advisable that in every grade of education—primary, secondary and university—there should be increased study of recent history, care being taken to deal with events in an impartial and sober spirit.'

The outstanding merit of this pronouncement is that it emphasises the value of history teaching as one of the methods of forming the mind. The facts upon which any branch of study has to be founded have to be mastered, but there is little worth in a study which consists only in packing the memory with facts. To learn a language in order to accumulate an additional stock of words and grammatical rules, and without regard to the fresh literature to be enjoyed as the reward for the effort, would be as innutritious as consuming sawdust. There is still history teaching, though much less of it than formerly, that is equally

devoid of sustenance. Sound teaching needs to keep a course between the desert where no flowers bloom and the swamps of romanticism where amphibious creatures wriggle about. It is worth while to devote a little time to the examination of the modes of mental training which may be derived from historical study, and to the ways in which they may be utilised by teachers. We start with the assumption that the object in view is education, not merely preparing for examinations; though it is inconceivable that any student who had been taught to use his mind freely in the exercise of these processes would not be a better examination candidate than one who had simply absorbed masses of fact.

(a) Good history teaching should include some constructive work. The art of narrative can be taught through the study of history more effectively than by any other means. It can be illustrated more vividly from historical writings than from any other kind of literature. The study of some excellent models is the first essential. Let us choose half-a-dozen examples. Take first Froude's description of the murder of David Riccio,<sup>1</sup> with its thrilling dramatic realism; second, Gibbon's account of the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453;<sup>2</sup> third, Carlyle's vivid narrative of the storming of the Bastille;<sup>3</sup> fourth, Macaulay's brilliant description of the trial of Warren Hastings;<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the Everyman edition of Froude's *Reign of Elizabeth*, ii. pp. 56-62.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter lxxviii. of the *Decline and Fall*; vol. vii. pp. 177-193 in Bury's edition of Gibbon.

<sup>3</sup> Carlyle's *French Revolution*, Bk. v. cap. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Essay on 'Hastings,' Everyman edition of Macaulay's essays, i. pp. 632-645.

fifth, Motley's picture of the image-breakers of Antwerp ;<sup>1</sup> sixth, Gardiner's sober and restrained story of the defeat and death of Montrose.<sup>2</sup> These passages, each excellent in its own manner, have been selected to illustrate different styles of narrative. There is the widest possible difference in tone and colour between the picturesqueness of Froude, who painted with a rich palette, and that of Gardiner, who worked almost in monotone. Yet all these pieces have vitality, motion, strength of outline and firm management of detail. All are composed with literary mastery and consummate knowledge. Their particular merits the student should be encouraged to discover for himself ; but there is one point which it may be worth while to indicate, to make it clear that there is often a nicer art in narrative than a careless ear would be likely to observe. The paragraph in which Gibbon describes the final, victorious assault of the Sultan Mahomet II on Constantinople consists of fifteen sentences. All of these but one are characteristic Gibbon sentences, rolling wave-like with the regular rhythm which satisfied his fastidious ear. But the one exception, which contains the climax, is a short sentence—' In that fatal moment the Janissaries arose, fresh, vigorous and invincible.' There are only 11 words in that. The other sentences of the paragraph consist of 49, 55, 58, 41, 45, 34, 42, 61, 51, 35, 52, 47, 33, 58 words. This one short sentence flashes the climax upon the mind of the reader with a calculated and artful rapidity, all the more striking as it occurs almost in the middle

<sup>1</sup> Motley's *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, Everyman edition, i. pp. 462-474.

<sup>2</sup> Gardiner, *Commonwealth and Protectorate*, i. pp. 214-228.

of the paragraph, where it has the effect of a sudden blow. These specimens can be added to by teachers from their own knowledge of the auriferous areas of English historical literature; it is suggested that the widest variety of examples of good historical narrative should be brought under the notice of students, and that they should be encouraged to study them closely, with the view of acquiring skill in narration, which is one of the valuable things that historical literature has to teach.

(b) There is a second feature of narrative which it is necessary to observe. A well-written page is constructed from evidence acquired from a variety of sources. The skill of the historian consists in selecting what is relevant and interesting from his sources, and blending it. There can be nothing more valuable in historical teaching than to inculcate the practice of this kind of composition. To be taught to pick out of a mass of material those things which are germane to a chosen subject, to arrange them in logical order, to give weight to those which are most important, and to subordinate those of less concern, to build a proportioned and well-knit story out of them, means being educated in a real sense. Material adequate for exercises of the kind can be found in such source books as all school libraries ought to contain. A few examples of what might be done may be given. A lively and picturesque account of life in colonial America could be written from the material printed in the first volume of Hart's *American History Told by Contemporaries*. A good study of English towns and guilds could be made from the documents printed in *English Economic History, Select Documents*, edited by Bland, Brown and Tawney.

The so-called Clarendon code could be described from the documents in Miss T. G. Stone's *England under the Restoration*. The development of Parliament could be studied from Miss J. H. Fleming's *England under the Lancastrians*. The manners and customs of Elizabethan England could be described in a most fascinating way from J. Dover Wilson's *Life in Shakespeare's England*. The struggle between the Danes and the Anglo-Saxons could be illustrated from the 'Everyman' edition of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Many other studies of the utmost value and interest could be suggested, based upon the volumes cited, which have been instanced because they are easily accessible. Constructive work, it is desired to urge, is more valuable than memorising. It brings out the originality of the student, taxes his ingenuity, imparts a sense of relevancy, sharpens his discernment.

(c) The study of character is always fascinating, and perhaps nothing in historical work evokes the interest of young students more than does this aspect of it. But the perception of what character means is apt to be vague unless direction is given to the study. It is the crudest misconception to divide the outstanding persons in history into sheep and goats, some very good, others very bad, black contrasted with white in an atmosphere which is devoid of half-tones. Whenever a historian patiently examines the circumstances in which a much-condemned man or woman had to operate, and shows that there was more to be said for him than popular belief has allowed, the process is always described as 'white-washing.' Professor Paul Van Dyke, for example, has lately published two important volumes on Catherine de Medici, strengthening



the view which well-informed historians have for many years known to be the truth about that much-maligned stateswoman, and setting forth from abundant evidence a statement of the situations which she had to meet, and the reasons why she met them as she did. Catherine de Medici being one of the black personages of popular historical misunderstanding, Professor Van Dyke is said to have sought to white-wash her. But we do not want to have portraits painted either with the white-wash brush or the tar brush: we want to understand. The past is not divided into two huge compartments, Valhalla and Gehenna, wherein float the wraiths of beings chanting in beatitude or bewailing their misdeeds for all eternity. Human character is much too complex, and circumstances are far too baffling, to permit of such a simple and crude classification. The valuable thing in the study of character is to get to understand why men and women acted as they did, how they were bent by storms, diverted from the path of intention by stress of events, how they were deflected by the invitation of expediency, how inherent weakness, with subversive force or subtle insinuation, determined them. To study Strafford, Cromwell, Danton, in the crises of their public lives; to know why Pitt resigned office in 1801 and returned to it in 1803, why Monk consented to communicate with Charles II before the Convention Parliament had met, why Fairfax dropped out of the leadership of the Parliamentary army in 1650, why John Churchill wheeled over to the side of William of Orange in 1688, why Disraeli fathered the Reform Bill of 1867, why Brougham subsided as a popular leader after 1832;—to weigh the concurrence of character and circumstance

in such crucial instances as these, is to get down to the essential links between character and history. Historical literature is so rich in portraiture that to give instances of exceptionally noteworthy pieces seems hardly necessary; yet there may be some advantage in directing attention to half-a-dozen examples. It would not be easy, one thinks, to find better portraits than these: 1. Stubbs's picture of Henry II, based mainly upon the writings of three chroniclers;<sup>1</sup> 2. Lord Halifax's *Character of King Charles the Second*;<sup>2</sup> 3. Clarendon's final summary of Cromwell,<sup>3</sup> which needs, however, to be checked by comparison with Firth's masterly portrait of him in his biography; 4. Macaulay's little gallery of miniatures of the Whig and Tory leaders under William III;<sup>4</sup> 5. Morley's vivid account of Walpole;<sup>5</sup> 6. Lecky's carefully wrought analysis of the character of the younger Pitt.<sup>6</sup> These six are selected for variety of treatment as well as for their essential excellence. It is always understanding that should be the aim in this branch of historical study. Praising and blaming are easy, but not very profitable even as exercises in moral superiority. But to try to view a historical situation as it presented itself to those who had to face it and to do something in regard to it—to consider what the

<sup>1</sup> See Stubbs, *Historical Introductions to the Rolls Series*, pp. 103-110.

<sup>2</sup> Reprinted in Raleigh's *Works of George Savile, Marquis of Halifax*, p. 187, and in Miss Foxcroft's *Life and Letters of Halifax*, ii. p. 343.

<sup>3</sup> In the Oxford 1819 edition of Clarendon, vol. vi. pp. 863-869.

<sup>4</sup> In chapter xx. of the *History of England*, Everyman edition, vol. iii. pp. 250-271.

<sup>5</sup> Morley's *Walpole*, cap. vi.

<sup>6</sup> Lecky's *History of England*, v. pp. 265-282.

alternatives were and why a particular decision was preferred—is a valuable effort of imagination, conducing to sound and tolerant judgment.

(d) The weighing of evidence is a fourth direction in which the study of history may be educationally valuable apart from the information imparted. Source books, such as those mentioned previously, contain sufficient evidence on selected topics to enable something of this kind to be done even in schools where access to larger quantities of historical material is out of the question. Such questions as the following, set before a student to be answered, should lead to the kind of enquiry and exercise of judgment as is desired : What justification is there for Macaulay's censure of Charles I, that he was ' perfidious not only from constitution and from habit, but also on principle ' ? Was Sir Thomas More guilty of treason ? Was Francis Drake a pirate ? What was Cromwell's attitude towards monarchy ? To what extent did the Bill of Rights limit the power of the Crown ? Why were the English Navigation Acts repealed ? These are simple questions, the like of which could be suggested in large numbers. The purpose of them should be to force the student to examine evidence and form his judgment upon it ; and he should be provided with the means of exercising his intelligence upon such issues, explaining what he thinks about them, and giving reasons for his conclusions.

Historical knowledge is good, and one would not wish to depreciate the teaching that sets store by learning even such matter as strings of dates and names. Most of us have had to load our memories with facts of the kind, and are none the worse for it ; we may, indeed,

have often been glad that we had to do it. But what it is desired to impress is that history in education means more than this. It means inculcating certain intellectual virtues and habits, which are valuable for all educated people. It means discipline as well as learning. As has been well said by a practical educationist :

‘ We want to make it easy and even habitual to suspend judgment. We want to make it absolutely impossible to hold opinions based upon grossly insufficient knowledge of the facts. We want a habit of thinking of conclusions as more or less probable rather than as true or untrue. We want to develop a realistic imagination of the number of different views that may be held on almost any really complex question.’<sup>1</sup>

Two further objects in history teaching must not be overlooked. It should awaken curiosity as to the origin and development of things as they exist in the world to-day, and should endeavour to satisfy that curiosity. Enquiry is the beginning of wisdom. The nations amongst whom the earth is divided, their modes of government, the influences which have shaped them, the religions which exist among them, their political divisions, the schools of thought which have created their ideals, and a thousand other things, are proper subjects of curiosity among young students. They may ask more questions than a teacher can answer, but it is good that they should ask them, and good for the teacher to try to answer them, or to discover that he cannot, and be thereby incited to find out. The nearest institutions and ferments are those about which such curiosity is most likely to be aroused,

<sup>1</sup> J. W. Allen, *The Place of History in Education*.

and it is all to the good that there should be enquiry as to those matters which are of most immediate and vital interest. Curiosity, let us never forget, betokens an alert mind.<sup>1</sup> Teaching that does not evoke curiosity is a failure, and that which endeavours to suppress it is an offence.

The second point arises out of the last. Curiosity to know should be encouraged to rise to a desire to read how history has been handled by the greatest historians. Nothing is better calculated to develop a taste for continued historical study than an introduction to the great classics of the subject. A student who reads Gibbon's wonderful chapters on Mahomet and the Crusades (the 50th and 58th-61st), Macaulay's description of England at the end of the seventeenth century (Chapter III of his *History of England*), or Froude's on the Spanish Armada (the last chapter of his work on the reign of Elizabeth), will not be likely to wish to stop reading there.<sup>2</sup> Good taste and a feeling for beauty of style are to be acquired most readily from the study of masterpieces, but are most easily damped by rigid application to text-books which are massive in their ferro-concrete structure.

It ought not to be necessary to urge that history should be taught as the most human of all subjects of study, because it is concerned with humanity throughout the ages. This is a theme upon which Lord Bryce

<sup>1</sup> 'L'art d'enseigner n'est que l'art d'éveiller la curiosité des jeunes âmes pour la satisfaire ensuite, et la curiosité n'est vive et saine que dans les esprits heureux.'—Anatole France, *Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard*.

<sup>2</sup> Frederic Harrison's book, *The Meaning of History*, contains a paper on some great books of history which usefully indicates the particular chapters which may most profitably be read.

constantly dilated, and which, to compare what has been said by the most experienced historical scholar of our time with the view of an attractive writer of the younger brigade, has also been emphasised by Mr. G. M. Trevelyan. Bryce said : <sup>1</sup>

‘ History has for its subject human nature. It is the record of what man has thought, said and done. It is the lamp by whose light we see human nature in action, and we can understand the causes, the significance, the results of events in proportion to our comprehension of the characters of the men or the nations concerned.’

Again Bryce wrote : <sup>2</sup>

‘ There is certainly in England a tendency, perhaps due to German influences, to hold that history ought, in order that it may be thoroughly scientific, to welcome dulness and dryness. The ethical side and the romantic side may have been overdone in the past, but it must never be forgotten that one of the chief aims of history is to illustrate human nature. We need throughout life to have all the light thrown upon human nature that history and philosophy can throw.’

In the same spirit, Mr. Trevelyan enlarges upon ‘ the humanising power ’ of history, and shows how ‘ the study of past controversies of which the final outcome is known, destroys the spirit of prejudice, and brings home to the mind the evils that are likely to spring from violent policy, based on want of understanding of opponents.’

‘ And so, too, in a larger sphere than politics, a review of the process of historical evolution teaches a man to see his

<sup>1</sup> Bryce, *The Study of American History*, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Bryce, *University and Historical Addresses*, p. 30.

own age, with its peculiar ideals and interests, in proper perspective as among other ages. If he can learn to understand that other ages had not only a different social and economic structure, but correspondingly different ideals and interests from those of his own age, his mind will have veritably enlarged. . . . History does most to cure a man of political prejudice, when it enables him, by reading about men or movements in the past, to understand points of view which he never saw before, and to respect ideals which he had formerly despised.' <sup>1</sup>

With this humanistic view is associated the moral efficacy that should spring from historical study. It is somewhat remarkable that at the International Moral Congress, held at Geneva in 1922, where a section was devoted to 'The International Spirit and the Teaching of History,' 'all the contributors,' according to the official *Summary of Papers*, 'indicated dissatisfaction with the types of history text-books chiefly in vogue.' <sup>2</sup> This is surely rather sweeping, and smacks of the criticism that would like to capture education to make it conform to the ideas of particular schools of thought. The scent of the brush of the doctrinaire is likely to warn practical educationists from the vicinity of the tar-baby. The moral value of history, like the moral value of art, works best indirectly. The only really moral history is true history, and the search for truth is itself a moral act. At Geneva the International Moral Education Congress passed a resolution, known as 'the Vœu de Geneva,' advocating 'the moral reform of history teaching, conceived in an

<sup>1</sup> Trevelyan, *Clio, a Muse*, pp. 20-1.

<sup>2</sup> *Summary of Papers*, International Moral Education Congress, 1922, p. 20.

international spirit.' This means, according to an official interpreter, the framing of history teaching,

'treated from the point of view of world-wide humanity, such as would picture to young minds, in a spirit of justice and sympathy, the part taken by each nationality and race in the unfolding of civilisation. Civilisation is the development of habits of order, co-operation, and mutual respect ; it is the development of humanity through nature-conquest, industry, art, literature, science, politics and ideals, and through gradual release from slavery, poverty, disease, ignorance and war.'

The purpose thus described is unexceptionally good, but to teach the history of civilisation is no more to effect a moral reform than to teach national history. Any such implication as that the teaching of history on national lines is not moral is totally unjustifiable. National history is only immoral if it is not true history ; and international history might be very immoral indeed, if untrue. Those who are engaged in the teaching of history would not be likely to deny that there is a real need for paying more attention than has hitherto been done to the history of civilisation, viewed comprehensively and as a whole. The nation should be regarded as a part of the international system, just as the town is viewed as a part of the nation. But the history of civilisation is so large a subject that any treatment of it in a work of moderate compass runs the risk of consisting of general statements which, however carefully framed, can be no more than sweeping summaries. Such a history may be valuable ; and, indeed, some remarkably successful works of this nature have been produced. An exemplary one is the *Histoire de la Civilisation* of M. Edouard Driault, in



two volumes, the first devoted to 'histoire ancienne et moyen-âge,' the second to 'histoire moderne et contemporaine.' The latest edition of it shows that it has been revised and re-issued several times, a fact which proves that general history is studied more frequently in France than is the case in Great Britain and the British Dominions. But that defect has not seldom been emphatically pointed out by British historians. Thus, Professor Hearnshaw has written :

'Insularity is the besetting sin of the Briton, and the history of his country has almost always been presented to him without any indication of the countless links that connect it with the history of the larger world beyond his narrow seas. It comes as a revelation to him—an immeasurably salutary and indeed indispensably necessary revelation—that the currents that have moved in his domestic affairs have been but local manifestations of the mighty tides that have ebbed and flowed in the wider waters of the Continent, and in the ocean of humanity.'<sup>1</sup>

The widening of the range of historical knowledge is, then, we must agree, much to be desired, but it would be disastrous to attempt to achieve this purpose at the expense of a weakening of the teaching of national history. For the good of the world the cultivation of an international sentiment is desirable, but 'international' does not mean 'non-national,' as some

<sup>1</sup> Hearnshaw, *Main Currents of European History*, p. 14. See also Creighton, as cited in his *Life and Letters*, ii. p. 467: 'Examination in a text-book is of no value. The pupil must get a sense of social development before he understands history at all. This can only be done by comparison. French history is excellent for that purpose. Its process is more logical than ours. We progress by muddling and waiting. The French were always solving questions and solving them wrong.'

cosmopolitans seem to suppose. The development of nations is the backbone of sound history. For this thing of substance, inspiration and strength, we cannot substitute a gelatinous compound containing a little from everywhere.

The whole subject relates to the question of what it is valuable to teach. The idea of development is the thread without which history is a chaos ; and development has been impelled forward by influences from outside the nation as often, perhaps, as by forces within it. That is why some general history is necessary even to explain national history.

Herbert Spencer, in his essays *On Education*, has some valuable observations on social development as exhibited in history :

‘ The liking felt for certain classes of historical facts is no proof of their worth ; and we must test their worth, as we test the worth of other facts, by asking to what uses they are applicable. Were someone to tell you that your neighbour’s cat kittened yesterday, you would say the information was valueless. Fact though it might be, you would call it an utterly useless fact—a fact that could in no way influence your actions in life—a fact that would not help you in learning how to live completely. Well, apply the same test to the great mass of historical facts, and you will get the same result. They are facts from which no conclusions can be drawn—*unorganisable* facts ; and therefore facts of no service in establishing rules of conduct, which is the chief use of facts. Read them, if you like, for amusement ; but do not flatter yourself they are instructive. That which constitutes History, properly so called, is in great part omitted from works on the subject. Only of late years have historians commenced giving us, in any considerable quantity, the truly valuable information. As

in past ages, the king was everything and the people nothing ; so, in past histories the doings of the king fill the entire picture, to which the national life forms but an obscure background. While only now, when the welfare of nations rather than of rulers is becoming the dominant idea, are historians beginning to occupy themselves with the phenomena of social progress. The thing it really concerns us to know is the natural history of society. We want all facts which help us to understand how a nation has grown and organised itself.' <sup>1</sup>

The trend of that passage is salutary, and perhaps it required to be said in 1861, when Spencer's essays on education were collected in a volume, more than is the case to-day. An examination of a dozen good modern text-books does not justify the conclusion that those which modern teachers most favour suffer from neglect as to the way in which nations have grown and organised themselves. On the contrary, the authors of these works seem to have kept that aim steadily in view. But we must give a liberal interpretation to 'the phenomena of social progress.' Spencer himself wrote an eminently entertaining essay on 'Manners and Fashion,' and his paper on 'The Origin and Function of Music' is one of his best known writings.<sup>2</sup> In both of those pieces of philosophy he showed that manners, fashions, music and dancing have a close relation to social progress. His pages on titles, indeed, in the first-cited essay, contain an acute piece of historical interpretation. Whether facts are 'useless' or otherwise, depends largely on the employment of

<sup>1</sup> Herbert Spencer, *On Education*, p. 27 (Everyman edition).

<sup>2</sup> The former is in vol. iii., the latter in vol. ii. of Spencer's *Essays, Scientific, Political and Speculative*.

them. Facts about the clothes worn by people in the past might be quite useless, and not even amusing, but they might illustrate quite important phases of development. The Sumptuary Laws embody much history of high interest, and the repeal of those laws in England (1604) was closely connected with the beginning of the struggle between Parliament and the Crown<sup>1</sup> which was the dominating issue of the seventeenth century. Facts about social customs can be not only extremely interesting in themselves, but they can vividly illustrate general history. Taken by itself, the fact that a party of fashionable people in London in 1805 dined at 4.30 in the afternoon does not mean much; but as a fact to illustrate the way in which the dinner hour has been thrust further and further back through improvements in lighting, as oil and candles gave place to gas, and gas was supplanted by electricity, it is interesting.

A few words may be said as to the use of historical novels in awakening a sense of atmosphere. There surely is no more reason why teachers of history should need the aid of fiction to create interest in their subject, than there is for requiring such an aid for the teaching of algebra, geography or any other subject. If properly taught it should create its own interest, by its own material and the method of its presentation. Historical novels, like other varieties of fiction, are written to amuse, and the best of them achieve this purpose admirably. But fiction and history are two clean different things. The historical novelist does not bind himself to verities if it suits his artistic purpose to

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Wilfrid Hooper's art. on 'The Tudor Sumptuary Laws,' in *English Historical Review*, xxx. 433.

depart from them. The greatest of all writers of historical novels, Sir Walter Scott, in a note to *Ivanhoe* defends himself from the charge of having departed from the truth by the plea: 'Neither will I allow that the author of a modern antique romance is obliged to confine himself to the introduction of those manners only which can be proved to have absolutely existed in the times he is depicting, so that he restrain himself to such as are plausible and natural, and contain no obvious anachronism.' Ranke, according to Lord Acton, was induced to become a historian by reading Sir Walter's *Quentin Durward*, but not because he was stimulated thereto by the veracity of the story. The impulse to historical criticism came to him from 'the shock of the discovery that Scott's Louis XI was inconsistent with the original of Commines.' This 'made him resolve that his object henceforth should be above all things, to follow without swerving and in stern subordination and surrender, the lead of his authorities.' That instance suggests that a good use of historical fiction might be to encourage the critical faculty by the discovery of improbabilities, impossibilities, anachronisms and departures from historical truth, in such historical novels as could be brought to the test. But otherwise, they are likely to be causes of misleading rather than guides to understanding. Flaubert, defending his *Salambo*, like Sir Walter with *Ivanhoe*, gave the proper answer: 'I have not pretended to write history'; and he declared that if he had limited himself to historical truth, 'I must have cut out all the vital scenes of my book.' Historical fiction, in short, is to be read like any other fiction. Its merit is that it is fiction, and does not pretend to be

anything else. The novelist, or the dramatist, may visualise scenes with great vividness, if he be a man of imagination, as for example Mr. John Drinkwater in his *Oliver Cromwell* has with singular dramatic power visualised the deceit of Charles I in 1647. (See scene vi. of the play.) Such a scene is to be enjoyed as art. But history has no need of fiction as an auxiliary.

## VII

### HISTORY AND PATRIOTISM

A COMMON idea concerning history is that the main purpose in teaching it is to inculcate patriotism. That it probably will have this effect is not to be denied. Love of country is stimulated in many ways ; by attachment to familiar scenes, by the sense of common interests arising from common activities, associations and memories, by the manly feeling of pride in what has been done by one's forefathers to make one's country good to live in. But by no agency is this emotion of patriotism more powerfully aroused than by history. By this study, and this alone, can be acquired that feeling of the continuity of human affairs without which society would be without relations with the past and with little well-defined hope for the future. We are what we are not merely because of things which we have done, but much more because of things done by the long generations of men who preceded us. The memory of their struggles, their defeats and their victories, is precious to us not as a series of tales told for our amusement, but as the record of what they did for us, and for the endless tally of generations who will follow us. We glory in their character, our gratitude is warm with affection, we are stimulated by their example and warned by their mistakes. We see

around us on every side the evidences that the foundations of society are dug deep. Our law, habits, speech, are inheritances from an ancestry of more than a thousand years, overlaid with contributions from all the intervening centuries. If we did not experience some glow of satisfaction in the recollection that so much has been borne down to us on the red stream that ran in the veins of our forbears, we should be dense to one of the most ennobling of feelings; and it is through history that we derive the knowledge which gives us certainty that patriotism is a just national pride.

Yet it is necessary to insist that the nourishing of patriotism is not the primary object of history, and that, indeed, the pressing of it into a patriotic mould has been one of the most fruitful causes of the manufacture of much pestilently bad history.<sup>1</sup> We have to beware of mistaking an incidental effect for a purpose. Patriotism is a political virtue sometimes; sometimes it has been so manipulated as to be almost a political vice. History has been requisitioned to be the servant of the strumpet as well as to be the champion of the heroine in distress.

It is of course a praiseworthy thing to be able to serve a good cause, but the serving of causes entails some penalties. Loss of credit may be not the least of these. It is the principal object of history to ascertain the truth and tell it, and this it can do in the full confidence that no good cause will ever be weakened by the setting forth of the truth about it, and is not,

<sup>1</sup>So a reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement*, July 2, 1925, chides the German author of a history of *Der Krieg zur See*, because: 'he would have written it better had he remembered that patriotism is a virtue, history a science, and that they should be kept apart.



in fact, a good cause to the extent that truth can damage it. But the effect, good or ill, is not the business of history; truth-telling is its business, first and foremost. Perhaps, as Newman said, 'some truths are inexpedient,' but that only means that some interests may not desire that some truths should be told. History is not to be clogged with obligations of convenient reticence. There is much truth worthy to be told that cannot be ascertained, some for which the evidence is imperfect. But there never can be any question in the mind of a historical student to whom the subject has any depth of meaning, that any kind of interest, any establishment of tradition, any convenience of creed or party, any pretence of patriotic expediency, can stand against the obligation of veracity. If there should be anything in the history of a country of which its people are ashamed, they should not wish to add another cause of shame to the sum by concealing the truth or perverting it.

It was reported during the Great European War, while the Germans were in occupation of Belgium, that a Belgian gentleman one day asked a German officer whether he and his countrymen did not think of what the verdict of history would be upon their conduct there. 'History?' exclaimed the German; 'what do we care for that? We shall write it!' That was a somewhat arrogant and crude way of saying that Germany, having imposed her will upon her opponents, would impose upon the world her own interpretation. That calamitous experiment in mendacity failed with many other plans. But the attitude of the officer is by no means rare. One would not desire to be understood as implying that it is characteristically German.

No people, perhaps, have a surer grasp of history in its broadest implications than the Germans. Their textbooks are unexcelled for lucidity, logical orderliness of arrangement, and fairness of presentation. Doubtless books exhibiting quite contrary features could be cited, but there are bad books in all languages. The determination of the German republican government, also, to publish in many volumes the full documentary history of German foreign relations since 1871, is the action of a people of honest historical intent ; and this great collection, when completed, will be the largest mass of evidence affecting modern diplomacy to which historians have had access up to date.<sup>1</sup>

All other purposes of history must be subsidiary to its veracity. We do not speak here of such errors as may be committed in all good faith by the most honest of writers. Some of the worst of errors, indeed, may be found in cyclopaedias and works of reference which are as innocent in respect to bias as the multiplication table. The kind of mistakes into which even careful workers may fall are in a different category from suppressions or perversions due to partisan spirit. In another class also are frank presentations of the case for a side, a party, a church ; and there are, indeed, many works of that kind which, while maintaining a distinctive point of view, are written with admirable fairness and truth. There is every advantage in having a case presented by an honest advocate. It is easy to forgive Johnson for his honest avowal of his Tory sentiments in the compilation of the Parliamentary debates for Cave the publisher. It will be

<sup>1</sup> *Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette, 1871-1914*, 12 vols. published to date.

remembered that when one of his friends commended a report of a speech by the elder Pitt as being superior to any speech of Demosthenes, Johnson admitted that 'I wrote that speech in a garret in Exeter Street'; and when commendation was voiced as to his impartiality in so representing a Whig utterance, Johnson replied, 'That is not quite true; I saved appearances tolerably well, but I took care that the Whig dogs should not have the best of it.'

It was not that blunt partisanship which made Johnson ashamed of this episode of his career in after life. It was that the Parliamentary speeches which he wrote, or elaborated from scraps of notes furnished to him, came to be accepted as genuine reports.

'Johnson told me,' Boswell reports, 'that as soon as he found that the speeches were thought genuine, he determined that he would write no more of them, "for he would not be accessory to the propagation of falsehood." And such was the tenderness of his conscience, that a short time before his death he expressed his regret for his having been the author of fictions which had passed for realities.'<sup>1</sup>

He allowed, however, that the debates had some value as discussions on public issues, and they need not be despised from that point of view. But some things which have passed into history as genuine were in fact derived from these reports of Johnson, and were his work entirely. It is very doubtful whether one of the most famous sayings attributed to the elder Pitt was not a Johnsonian epigram. It occurred in a speech in reply to Walpole, delivered on March 10, 1741.

'The atrocious crime of being a young man, which the right honourable gentleman has with much spirit and

<sup>1</sup> Boswell's Johnson, under date 1741.

decency charged upon me, I shall neither attempt to palliate nor deny, but content myself with wishing that I may be one of those whose follies may cease with their youth and not of that number who are ignorant in spite of experience.'

The best modern biographer of Pitt allows that 'the actual words of Pitt's retort may have been adjusted by Johnson, but the dignity of his self-defence rings true, and the sarcastic invective is in keeping with all his well-known speeches.'<sup>1</sup> But a critic of Johnson has to claim that 'there is more of Johnson than of Pitt in the famous speech,'<sup>2</sup> and it is surely sufficient to read Johnson's prose and gain familiarity with his cadence, to be convinced that if there is anything of Pitt whatever in the speech, it was but a hint.

Much of the material of history consists of partisan writings, things written to deceive, to put a gloss upon truth, to suppress inconvenient facts; and it is the business of historical criticism to probe, compare, sift truth from falsehood. Honest partisanship is never so difficult to deal with as the subtler kind that twists the truth, suppresses half of it while stressing the remainder, and tints the whole presentation with sophisticated dye. But the wholly admirable historian is neither a Macaulay with his Whig bias, nor a Froude with his passionate hatred of Romanism, but one who, like Ranke, represses 'the poet, the patriot, the religious or political partisan, to sustain no cause and write nothing that would gratify

<sup>1</sup> Basil Williams, *Life of William Pitt*, i. p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> D. Nichol Smith, 'Johnson and Boswell,' in *Cambridge History of English Literature*, x. p. 164.

his own feelings or disclose his private convictions.' Ranke, relates Acton (taking the tale from Cherbuliez), met in Berlin a divine who like himself had written about Luther and the Reformation in Germany. The fellow-author wished to greet him as a confrère, and approached him with effusion. 'Pardon me,' said Ranke, 'there is a great difference between us; you are in the first place a Christian, I am in the first place a historian.' If the attitude seems aloof, it is at all events significant of the detachment that wishes to preserve a balance of mind, not of lack of sympathy with contrasted points of view. To be detached is not necessarily to be remote.

A variety of history which need not be condemned is that which, though not biased in any sense in which that term would be employed in warning, is nevertheless frankly explanatory of a particular point of view. Such an instance is the *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, whose editors, Sir Augustus Ward and Mr. G. P. Gooch, state in their preface that their aim has been 'to combine with a strict adherence to historical truth, wherever ascertainable, an avowed regard for the interests, and above all for the honour, of Great Britain.' A little warmer in tone, but meaning the same thing, is the declaration of an eminent French historian that there is no occasion to be modest in teaching the history of his country to its children, especially as that country is the finest known to history.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Il faudrait enseigner tout cela a nos enfants; il ne faut pas être modeste pour la patrie, surtout quand on sait qu'elle est la plus belle patrie de l'histoire.'—E. Driault, in *Revue des Études Napoléoniennes*, May, 1915, p. 374.

On the whole, one would say that history written in this spirit would be more likely to be true history than that written with a desire to carp, to pry after faults, to exhibit the defects of men and policies. Unless a subject be studied sympathetically it will never be understood. M. Aulard has insisted that to understand the French Revolution it is first of all necessary to love it ; and not only is a deep feeling of love for a country a qualification for writing its history, but the absence of this affection would be a defect. Coldness towards a subject is no merit in a historian. It is also a satisfaction to have the assurance from trustworthy authorities that in the department of British history where some political critics have been prone to sniff for wrongs, full knowledge supports the belief that they have rarely existed. Dr. Holland Rose relates this incident in which his view was corroborated by an elder historian of stern integrity :

‘ Rarely do documents leap to light that shame the memory of British ministers, at any rate since the time of the younger Pitt. I remember on one occasion making a remark of this nature to the late Dr. Samuel Rawson Gardiner. I said to him that the more thoroughly British foreign policy was examined, the better it came out. He at once replied, “ It always does, it always does.” ’<sup>1</sup>

Patriotism has not always been exalted as a virtue, even by some men of pre-eminent quality. The most famous instance is that of Johnson, as reported by Boswell (under date April 7, 1775). ‘ Patriotism having become one of our topicks,’ says the biographer, ‘ Johnson suddenly uttered, in a strong determined tone, an apophthegm, at which many will start :

<sup>1</sup> Holland Rose, *The Origins of the War*, p. 2.

“ Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.”’ But, Boswell is prompt to add, ‘ let it be considered that he did not mean a real and generous love of our country, but that pretended patriotism which so many, in all ages and countries, have made a cloak for self-interest.’ That is, Johnson was referring to the kind of patriotism that Walpole derided in a celebrated tirade: ‘ A patriot, sir? Why, patriots spring up like mushrooms. I could raise fifty of them within the twenty-four hours. I have raised many of them in one night. It is but refusing to gratify an unreasonable or insolent demand, and up starts a patriot.’ In an essay published some years ago, Dean Inge collected a few observations on patriotism which may be borrowed from him. ‘ Patriotism,’ said Ruskin, ‘ is an absurd prejudice founded on an extensive selfishness.’ Grant Allen called it ‘ a vulgar vice, the national or collective form of the monopolistic instinct.’ Mr. Havelock Ellis allows it to be ‘ a virtue—among barbarians.’ Herbert Spencer regarded it as ‘ reflex egoism, extended selfishness.’ These are hard sayings, and it is fair to suppose that the writers all had in view the kind of patriotism that Boswell was sure that Johnson meant to condemn. Otherwise one would be warranted in answering them with Lord Morley’s dictum, that ‘ to deride patriotism marks impoverished blood.’ It would mark that, and something much worse. No falsehood could be more cynical than that which would attribute ‘ extended selfishness’ to such a splendour of sacrifice, pure in patriotic fervour as any which history can show, as was exhibited in many thousands of instances during the Great War, and has been exhibited whenever the call came in scores of previous crises.

Sacrifice is the supreme test, but service is a steadier one ; and it is true that patriotism of a noble kind does stimulate some of the best of mankind to tasks consciously rendered in the belief that their country needs them. If we are to belittle patriotism because the baser sort use it for unworthy ends, we should have to look equally askance on other virtues. There are many who make a business of faith, who exploit hope for their advantage, and who degrade charity by living on it. The patriotism that glows in the historical plays of Shakespeare, that irradiates the sonnets of Wordsworth, and that gives splendour to a thousand deeds which men remember with pride and gratitude, is too exalted a merit to be referred to in terms other than those of the deepest respect.

But, perhaps because it is a political virtue, it is peculiarly liable to be used for sectional ends. The Emperor Francis II of Austria, when a man was recommended for service on the ground that he was a patriot, replied, ' They call him a patriot for Austria, but is he a patriot for Me ? ' <sup>1</sup> There is also the patriotism which is simply a form of class consciousness ; it is probably what Professor Cramb was referring to when he spoke of the existence in England of ' a pretentiousness, an overweening middle-class self-satisfaction, which is not really patriotism, but an insular, narrow conceit.' <sup>2</sup> There is the patriotism which is something like a disagreeable effluvium, such as one has read about as breaking out in the United States on the fourth of July, and such as swept over Great Britain like a wave of poison gas at the time when the

<sup>1</sup> H. Wickham Steed, *The Hapsburg Monarchy*, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> J. A. Cramb, *Germany and England*, p. 93.



word 'Jingo' first bellowed its way into the dictionary. Lord Salisbury himself, it is interesting to observe, though Foreign Secretary at the time, and the Minister whose policy Jingoism was supposed to further, hated the word and the spurious quart-pot emotion which it signified. So also did Lord Beaconsfield, who was popularly supposed to be the head and front of Jingoism. We therefore find Lord Salisbury writing to Lady Salisbury from Berlin in June 1878, 'He is of course much disgusted at the Jingo outbreak in England.'<sup>1</sup> Politicians who are faced with opposition inconvenient in its force or menacing to their designs, are apt to apply 'unpatriotic' labels or nicknames to their critics, and thereby place them in a category of unfriendliness to national interests.

These examples suffice to show that patriotism, though it may be loudly professed, is not always the pure and unselfish feeling that we should like it to be. They likewise illustrate the danger to which history is exposed if it sets out to make its interpretations patriotic. Patriotism is, like other virtues, better practised than professed, and the profession of it by no means implies that it is practised. Nothing is more calculated to discredit history than that it should be made to furnish analogies to feed the furnaces of propaganda, or that it should be taught so as to subserve partisan purposes. Its matter is of course available to whomsoever chooses to employ it, and it would be shorn of much of its utility if it were not used to illustrate present problems, and to aid in the solution of them. But the point is that it must be safeguarded

<sup>1</sup> Lady Gwendolen Cecil's *Life of Robert Marquis of Salisbury*, ii. p. 287.

against perversion. Its integrity is its most precious possession.

The rational, and therefore the true, relation of history to patriotism, has perhaps never been better expressed than by Dr. Stubbs, who was both a great historian and an exemplary public man. Every word of the passage is deserving of careful consideration :

‘ True patriotism is like that true self-love which builds its happiness on a good conscience ; it is not like that base self-conceit which can never see or own itself to be in the wrong. It does not require of any man to believe that his own country is in the right always ; it does not require him to go with public opinion against his better judgment ; but it does require that he shall himself do his best to make and keep his country in the right. Whether he succeeds or is obliged to yield, he can still do his duty, and this duty is in a soldier obedience, in a citizen submission to government in all things lawful. So neither does a patriotic view of history, of the history of our own country, at all require us to take always the side of the victorious cause : “ *Victrix causa Diis placuit sed victa Catoni* ” ; nor does it at all when we have taken a side require us to see no faults or weakness in that side or truth in the other. History has been written very much in this style, but it is not history that the matured conscience of a people can ever approve as true. In particular, in viewing the struggle by which our forefathers won their liberty, we ought to be careful in this respect. They were our countrymen on both sides. Honour and truth, and perhaps also dishonour and falsehood, were peculiar to neither : it may be that the object in present dispute did not, to their minds, fall incontrovertibly into one of two classes, right or wrong ; perhaps at times both sides were seeking only private ends ; rather, we may

gladly believe, both were fighting for what they believed sincerely to be the right cause.'<sup>1</sup>

That wise and judicious utterance may be left to carry its own weight of conviction. It leads to the next point which needs to be submitted: that it is one of the functions of history to warn as well as to exalt. Burke maintained that 'to make us love our country, our country ought to be lovely,' and Burke's writings contain abundant passages which show that in his view his country was often far otherwise. In no other political pieces, indeed, are to be found so much scorn, denunciation, and sorrow, about things in his day which called for amendment. His contemporary Cowper, too, in one of those letters which are amongst the best writings of their kind in the English language, wrote: 'Though I love my country, I hate its folly and its sins, and had rather see it scourged in mercy than hardened by prosperity.' Neither Burke nor Cowper wrote from caprice or petulance. They said what they passionately felt to be true, and they were patriotic men of the purest type. The calamities to which nations are subject are not to be avoided by much brooding on historical analogies, for the reason, above all others, that analogies are never complete: circumstances differ, times differ, and events work out differently. But there are stern warnings nevertheless, which it is the business of history to hold up to mankind; and the kind of history referred to by Stubbs, which sees no faults or weakness in the records of a nation, not only falls short of the truth but fails to discharge one of its valuable functions.

It should also be one of the uses of history to train

<sup>1</sup> Stubbs, *Lectures on Early English History*, p. 335.

minds which will maintain a temperate and candid attitude towards unpopular causes, and the actions of men who advocate them. It does not follow that because a cause is unpopular it is a good cause, but it does not follow, either, that it is a bad one. There has rarely been a cause, however righteous, which has not had to pass through periods when it was ridiculed, reviled and misrepresented, and its advocates exposed to the displeasure of mobs, of various social grades. Mobs have their counterpart in the 'stunt' press, with its stunted mentality and its truculent vulgarity and its instinct for shouting with the largest crowd. Any man with a knowledge of modern history, who contemplates the number of things realised as part of the normal routine of life, which on their way to realisation had to encounter the kind of resistance just described, should be warned against judgments founded on prejudice and passion. But the contrary mode of warning is equally necessary. French history between 1789 and 1871 is rich in examples illustrative of the mischiefs that may assail a country from the gulping of unripe notions by masses of people and the violent intestinal disturbances that ensued. No people are more fervently patriotic than the French, but no country's history presents more acute issues in which patriotic Frenchmen had to determine what was for the good of their country and what was not.<sup>1</sup> Thousands of them paid the penalties of death and exile because at one time they were monarchists, at another time republicans, again opponents of despotism, or upholders of it in one or other of its thin disguises.

<sup>1</sup> See the interesting articles by M. Aulard on 'Patrie, patriotism, avant 1789,' in *La Révolution Française*, April and June, 1915.

Danton, Robespierre, Talleyrand, Napoleon I, Louis Blanc, Lamartine, Napoleon III and Gambetta were all patriots after their kind, but each of them after a different kind. Legitimists, Bonapartists, Girondins, Jacobins, Socialists of 1848 and Socialists of 1870, Communists and Ultramontanes, were patriots, all with imperishable conviction; but their patriotism was mutually destructive and in its fratricidal fervour never wholesome for France.

The poet-statesman Lamartine, in a fine-tempered little book on Nelson which he wrote, makes the necessary distinction that while the historian has patriotism, universal history has none.<sup>1</sup> That is one reason for insisting upon the educational value of ancient history. The nearer history approaches our own times, the more its atmosphere is loaded with the dust of controversy. You can easily inculcate detachment when dealing with Pericles, with Caesar, with Charlemagne, but when you deal with Henry VIII, Cromwell and Walpole, and still more with Disraeli, Gladstone and Bismarck, living issues mingle with the historical apparatus. When the theme is handled by a master the treatment of a modern period does not differ from that of one more remote, and these observations are not made with a view of setting forth modern history as less desirable for study than the history of more distant periods. But speaking strictly from the point of view of historical training, and of the acquisition of the frame of mind in which historical

<sup>1</sup> 'L'historien a du patriotisme, l'histoire universelle n'en a pas. Précisément parce qu'elle est universelle, elle doit être impartiale dans la rétribution de mérite et de gloire que les hommes célèbres de toutes les nations se sont conquise à travers les siècles.'—Lamartine, *Nelson*, p. 1.

study should be approached, there can be no doubt about the pre-eminent value of ancient history. Apart from its fascination, there is the important fact that substantially all the evidence upon which conclusions are based is available, whilst in modern history there are always possibilities of fresh evidence coming to light which will affect our views on salient questions.

There is also great value in studying the history of a country through the eyes of foreign historians. They bring to bear a fresh point of view, a distinctive kind of detachment, and a certain untraditional mode of selecting and estimating facts, which is quite different from the work of native historians. The three volumes of M. Élie Halévy's *Histoire du Peuple Anglais aux XIX siècle* are for that reason much more illuminating than any history of the same period yet written by an Englishman. Dr. Wolfgang Michael's *Englische Geschichte im achtzehnten Jahrhundert* may be very respectfully commended for the same reason. Ranke's *History of England*, in its translated form, is of course well known as indispensable to students of the Stuart period. English contributions to the history of continental countries have never approached these great works in luminous depth, if we except the four brilliant volumes which Mr. G. M. Trevelyan has devoted to the Italian Risorgimento—*Garibaldi's Defence of the Roman Republic*, *Garibaldi and the Thousand*, *Garibaldi and the Making of Italy*, and *Manin and the Revolution in Venice*.

Herbert Spencer made it a complaint against historians that they were not often to be trusted. The greater part of what they write, he said, 'comes through channels which colour, and obscure, and distort ; while everywhere party feeling, religious bigotry and the

sentiment of patriotism, cause exaggerations and suppressions.”<sup>1</sup> As a general statement, this verdict is certainly unjust in regard to modern historians, and Herbert Spencer’s acquaintance with historical writings of any period was not so extensive as to warrant him in venturing so general a condemnation. His works even in the domain of Sociology are conspicuously weak in historical information. But the defect alleged as a fact may be admitted as a danger of historical writing, and a plea for the sound historical attitude can never be out of place.

A Russian grand duke once complained that his objection to war was that it spoiled the uniforms of his soldiers. We need not fall into a similar ineptitude by saying that a historical objection to war is that it gives rise to the manufacture of mendacities. For one thing, an obvious answer might be, ‘So also does peace.’ But it is the case that the hysteria generated by war, war propaganda, and the floods of rumour liberated by war, do produce an enormous quantity of unvarnished allegations, many of which die down after a temporary currency, whilst others pass into the common stock of beliefs which are difficult to dislodge. A French author, M. Albert Douzat, has published a remarkably interesting book on *Légendes, Prophéties et Superstitions de la Guerre*, and two volumes have likewise been devoted to *Les Fausses Nouvelles de la Guerre*. One has a strange sensation, in reading these works, of there being wrenched out of the mind ideas which were rooted there during the war, and of resentment that they should have been promulgated. Those flighty fabrications, the angels of Mons, have paled

<sup>1</sup> Spencer, *Principles of Ethics*, i. p. 464.

back into the company of other ghosts of fiction, and the celebrated German corpse factory, for boiling down the bodies of dead soldiers and preserving the fat, proves to be due to a piece of bad translation.

There is a case not mentioned by M. Dauzat which may be related in detail, because it is one of those legends of the war which appears to have endured, requiring to be either confirmed or eradicated. In September 1914 it was alleged by several English newspapers that the Kaiser had issued an insulting army order directing his troops to 'walk over General French's contemptible little army.' The text of the alleged army order was published in the *Times* of October 1, 1914, where it was said to have been received 'from a trustworthy source.' It was reprinted in the *Mail*, then published as a colonial and Indian edition of the *Times* news service on October 2. It was considered to be so important that the three headlines to it occupied nearly two inches of space. The alleged army order read as follows :

'It is my Royal and Imperial command that you concentrate your energies, for the immediate present, upon one single purpose, and that is that you address all your skill and all the valour of my soldiers, to exterminate first the treacherous English and walk over General French's contemptible little army. Headquarters, Aix-la-Chapelle, Aug. 19th.'

As is well known, the survivors of that splendid first army who fought under General French, have been proud to be called 'the old Contemptibles,' and as recently as July, 1923, the Hon. J. W. Fortescue, the learned author of *The History of the British Army*, in an article in *The Edinburgh Review* (p. 174), wrote :



' It was from the sons of country gentlemen that the officers of "The Old Contemptibles" were chiefly drawn.'<sup>1</sup> Now, if the Kaiser issued such an army order, and a copy of it was seen by the 'trustworthy source' from which it was procured by the *Times*, it ought to have been easy to prove the authenticity of the news when it was challenged. On October 26, the *Times* published without any two-inch headlines, but amongst its wireless news from Berlin, a five-line paragraph which read as follows :

' It has been reported that at Aix-la-Chapelle on August 19, the Kaiser referred in an army order to the contemptible little army of General French. The Kaiser has not been to Aix-la-Chapelle since the outbreak of the war, and he has never issued such an army order.'

A careful search of the file of the *Times* and an examination of the *Times Index* for the remaining months of 1914 does not reveal that any attempt was made to prove that the Kaiser was at Aix-la-Chapelle on the date alleged, or that he did, there or anywhere else, refer to French's army as 'contemptible'; nor is any corroboration to be found in any of the histories of the war which have been consulted. I do not think there can be any reasonable doubt that the story was an invention. But it was telegraphed all over the world, it evoked great indignation, and it has been believed by large numbers of people ever since.

Perhaps it may be urged that stories of the kind serve some propaganda purpose at the time of their manufacture, though one hesitates to accept the suggestion that they do. In the long run, truth is

<sup>1</sup> More than a score of later references to 'the old Contemptibles,' in various journals, have been noted.

more convincing than fiction as well as being more interesting ; and it may be doubted whether all the falsehoods manufactured during the war for propaganda purposes helped a good cause a single day nearer to victory.

The subject of war and patriotism is a large one, not free from perplexities, which has only indirect relation to our present theme. Mr. Hugh Elliot in his striking book on *Human Character*, treated from a biological point of view, maintains that 'Patriotism in time of war is the expression of highly concentrated social feeling with enormous motive strength. It arises in response to a true social need : for upon its hold on mankind depends the very existence of the social community.' That is the essence of the matter. The patriotism evoked by war is of the fiercest kind, because war of necessity appeals to the fiercest instincts of mankind. It may also be of a noble kind, because it entails the supreme surrender of self for the common safety. But it is not of the noblest kind, and is often more blatant than blessed. In contemplating some of its manifestations, one perceives the depth of Dean Inge's observation that 'It is the subtle blend of noble and ignoble sentiment which makes patriotism such a difficult problem for the moralist.'

Perhaps it will not be far from the mark if we say that the sound relation between History and Patriotism should be akin to that between art and morals. Art may be entirely moral in its effect, but it is bad art that obtrudes the moral and is obsessed by it. History should be wholly patriotic in its uplift ; but it is bad history that sets patriotism before truth, and bad patriotism that desires such a disservice. History serves patriotism most fully when it discharges its

function fairly, and leaves the truth to do its own work. The grandeur of the theme consists in its accumulated mass of experience and toil and suffering, its record of the creative energies which have worked through the centuries, its impetus of direction transmitted to the present from all the effort of the past, its articulate expression of the common ancestry that lives in all of us.

How foolish is that oft-quoted saying, 'Happy is the nation that has no history!' It is meaningless, for there is not and there cannot be a nation with no history. It is history that makes nations. But if we could imagine a nation without a history, why and how would it be the happier therefor? Is a man who has lost his memory happier than he was before he lost it? Is he happier than those who have memories? We are not ants living in a heap of earth, but men and women gladly conscious of the possession of a national inheritance that links us in kinship with a procession of makers of history, and that enables us to hand on what we have received bettered, we hope, from our handling. These makers of our history were not saints, and we need not wish that they had been. They made mistakes, and we shall not escape making others. Sometimes they took the wrong turning, or, as Lord Salisbury once said concerning a policy of his own, 'backed the wrong horse.' But we may as well summon up enough modesty to admit that in their place we probably should not have done better; and in any case they have left us their errors to learn from. The history that they made for us it is our business to study as far as we can as it truly is, and if we are not the better patriots for that, there must be something wrong in ourselves.

## VIII

### VARIETIES OF HISTORY

THERE are schools of history, as there are schools in every other variety of study. What is good history to one school may appear to be quite bad history to others. An instance can be cited in which a historian of the highest eminence, who has been extolled by masters as the greatest historian who ever lived, has been declared by an eminent critic to be no historian at all. It makes a good beginning for the consideration of our present theme to take this case.

Lord Acton, at a dinner given by the Historical Society which he founded at Trinity College, Cambridge, told the following story : <sup>1</sup>

‘ I was once with two eminent men, the late Bishop of Oxford (Stubbs) and the present Bishop of London (Creighton). On another occasion I was with two even more eminent men, the two most learned men in the world—I need hardly tell you their names—they were Mommsen and Harnack. On each occasion the question arose, who was the greatest historian the world ever produced. On each occasion the name first mentioned, and on each occasion the name finally agreed upon, was that of Macaulay.’

<sup>1</sup> The story is related by Mr. John Pollock in an article in the *Independent Review*, ii. p. 373.

That is an unequivocal verdict, backed by the opinion of five of the most distinguished historians of their time. We contrast it with the opinion of a critic who, while admiring the liveliness and picturesqueness of Macaulay's literary style, denies that he wrote true history. He put forth 'a historical novel drawn from authentic sources,' but 'it is not history.' It is Frederic Harrison who perpetrates this assault :<sup>1</sup>

'Macaulay, who was no braggart, has put it on record that his conception of history was more just than that of Hume, Robertson, Voltaire and Gibbon. It is perfectly true that his conception was different from theirs, his execution was different, and he does not address the same class of readers. But his conception of history was not just ; it was a mistake. His leading idea was to make history a true romance. He has accomplished this ; and he has given us a historical novel drawn from authentic documents. This is, no doubt, a very useful thing to do, a most interesting book to read ; it is very pleasant literature, and has a certain teaching of its own to a certain order of readers. But it is not history. It sacrifices the breadth of view, the organic life, the philosophy, the grand continuity of human society. It must be a sectional picture of a very limited period in a selected area ; it can give us only the external ; it inevitably tends to trivial detail and to amusing personalities ; it necessarily blinds us to the slow sequence of the ages. Besides this, it explains none of the deeper causes of movement ; for, to make a picture, the artist must give us the visible and the obvious. History, in its highest sense, is the record of the evolution of humanity in whole or in part. To compose a historical novel from documents is to put this object aside. History, said Macaulay in his *Hallam*, is a compound of poetry and

<sup>1</sup> F. Harrison, *Early Victorian Literature*, p. 84.

philosophy. But in practice, he substituted word-painting for poetry, and anecdote for philosophy. His own delightful and popular *History of England* is a compound of historical romance and biographical memoir.'

Carlyle was frequently acrid in his disparagement of other historians, though he was not consistent in his verdicts. At one time he wrote of Gibbon that 'With all his swagger and bombast, no man ever gave a more futile account of human things than he has done of the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire."' A more inept judgment was never penned than that. At a later period of his life Carlyle had learnt to speak more respectfully of Gibbon. Of Macaulay's *History of England* Carlyle's view was that it was 'a book to which four hundred editions could not lend any permanent value, there being no depth of sense in it at all, and a very great quantity of rhetorical wind and other ingredients, which are the reverse of sense.' Hallam's *Literature of Europe* appeared to him to be no better than 'a valley of dry bones.' On the other hand, Hallam vowed that he found Carlyle's *French Revolution* unreadable because of its 'detestable style'; Prescott regarded the book as 'perfectly contemptible'; and Lord Acton, writing to Mary Gladstone on the death of Carlyle, observed that, 'excepting Froude, I think him the most detestable of historians.'<sup>1</sup> But Acton allowed that

'he had historic grasp, which is a rare quality, some sympathy with things that are not evident, and a vague

<sup>1</sup> 'Hallam the historian said (to Tennyson) "I have tried to read Carlyle's 'French Revolution,' but cannot get on, the style is so abominable." Carlyle groaned about Hallam's "Constitutional History," "Eh! it's a miserable skeleton of a book."—Hallam, Lord Tennyson, *Tennyson, a Memoir*, ii. 355.

fluctuating notion of the work of impersonal forces. There is a flash of genius in *Past and Present*, and in the *French Revolution*, though it is a wretched history. And he invented Oliver Cromwell. That is the positive result of him—that, and his personal influence over many considerable minds.’<sup>1</sup>

This bouquet of forget-me-nots, to which additions might be made from living as well as dead historians—not forgetting Mr. Hilaire Belloc’s urbane reflection upon the ‘characteristic stupidity’ of E. A. Freeman<sup>2</sup>—serves to illustrate the lengths to which a rigid view of what history ought to be may drive good men when they read a work that does not conform to their standards. The errors of Carlyle and Macaulay are serious enough, but there are errors in the writings of Ranke, Stubbs and Mommsen, and there are many in the valuable volumes of the *Cambridge Modern History*. Mistakes of fact, misreadings of authorities, and caprices in judgment, are not the cause of the dislikes expressed by these historical scholars concerning the works of others. They spring from totally different conceptions as to what historical writing should aim at achieving. One must have a theory of work before any work can get itself done, and the theories that informed the historical efforts of Carlyle and of Macaulay did not commend themselves to their critics any more than the theory of Hallam commended itself to Carlyle.

But notwithstanding what has been previously said, there was nothing essentially wrong in what Carlyle set out to do in *The French Revolution*, or in what Macaulay attempted in *The History of England*.

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Lord Acton to Mary Gladstone*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>2</sup> Belloc, *Warfare in England*, p. 24.

Both had unusual imaginative gifts, and used them to present vivid pictures of men and events. Carlyle took pains to familiarise himself with the appearance and traits of the men of the Revolution. It was at least as valuable a thing to try to present a series of storm-pictures of a shattering course of events in modern history, as to labour to trace out the thread of a single movement in the Revolution, or to examine minutely a phase of it like the storming of the Bastille or the march of the women to Versailles. For the Revolution was in fact (upon the surface at any rate) a very lurid and a very noisy business; and though we can appreciate the work of a patient historian who moves through it quietly and slowly in feather mocassins that make no footfall on the pavements, it is good to be made to feel the rush and flare of it also, and that service Carlyle performs for us. As for Macaulay, let his critics belabour him as they will, he remains unrivalled for vividness and vitality, and for that power of etching pictures upon the memory of his readers which only a few of the greatest of writers—Tacitus, Livy, and Clarendon among them—have possessed.<sup>1</sup>

It will be interesting to set down a few of the things which eminent historians and others have written about History, by way of definition of its purport. The

<sup>1</sup> 'Macaulay's peculiar faults are emphasised in his Essays, and much of the harsh criticism which he has received comes from the glaring defects of these earlier productions. His History, however, is a great book, and shows extensive research, a sane method, and an excellent power of narration; and when he is a partizan, he is so honest and transparent that the effect of his partiality is neither enduring nor mischievous.'—James Ford Rhodes, *Historical Essays*, p. 62.



following are but specimens, but they will serve the purpose of illustrating a wide difference of conception :

True history is the art of rapprochement—bridging distances of time and circumstance.—Morley, *Recollections*, ii. 67.

History is not over, and in politics we are making it ; and even if all history is only a tragedy of good intentions, the fifth act still remains unwritten. . . . It will then be recognised to be what it really is—the biography of ideals.—C. Delisle Burns, *Political Ideals*.

History is not an objective thing, a list of events ; it is the historian's way of envisaging and correlating these events. And two historians of different politics or nationality may string the events together in very various patterns and produce two pieces of work which the unlearned can hardly perceive to be constructed out of the same materials. Who, on a first reading, would guess that Thiers' and Lanfrey's accounts of the career of Napoleon were constructed from the same set of original documents?—C. Oman, *Colonel Despard and other Studies*, p. 206.

History has for its subject human nature. It is the record of what man has thought, said, and done. It is the lamp by whose light we see human nature in action.—Bryce, *The Study of American History*, p. 38.

History is little more than the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind.—Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Bury's edition, i. 77.

I am determined to apply myself to a study that is hateful and disgusting to my very soul, but which is, above all other studies, necessary for him who would be listened to as a mender of antiquated abuses. I mean that record of crimes and miseries, History.—Shelley, letter to Thomas Hookham, December 17, 1812.

History consists, for the greater part, of the miseries

brought upon the world by pride, ambition, avarice, revenge, lust, sedition, hypocrisy, ungoverned zeal, and all the train of disorderly appetites which shake the public with the same

‘troublous storms that toss

The private state, and render life unsweet.’

These vices are the causes of those storms. Religion, morals, laws, prerogatives, privileges, liberties, rights of men, are the pretexts. The pretexts are always found in some specious appearance of a real good.—Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution*, p. 208, edition of 1790.

History is living chronicle, chronicle is dead history ; history is contemporary history, chronicle is past history ; history is principally an act of thought, chronicle an act of will.—Croce, *On History*, Douglas Ainslie’s translation, p. 19.

Montaigne once uttered a protest against those historians who ‘chew the mouthfuls for us,’ and spoil all in the process. He coupled with it, however, another vice which is really far more serious, namely, their habit of laying down rules for judging, and for ‘bending history to their fancy.’ As for the presenting history in mouthfuls, it is probably the only way of making it digestible except for those mighty intellects which seize facts and figures with avidity and assimilate them as if by magic. . . . In short, history can no longer be a detailed panorama of life, but it can and ought to be a series of companion pictures, informed by the personality of the artist and devoid of conscious prejudice.—J. Holland Rose, *William Pitt and National Revival*, p. 216.

Written history consists necessarily of a selection from the facts available to the historian. No piece of history can give all the facts : first, because every fact about an important event cannot be ascertained, and secondly, because a narrative intended to be read should

not be loaded with an insufferable mass of detail. Samuel Rawson Gardiner required eighteen volumes to relate the history of the Stuart period from 1603 down to 1656, and if he had lived to complete his work, carrying it down to the Restoration in 1660, he would, working to the scale which he had adopted for the later part of it, have required four more volumes. That works out at a little more than two and a half years for each volume. No other writer of English history has studied a period with equally minute and painstaking thoroughness, and his temperateness is such that it might have been thought that little fault could be found with his judgments. Yet Gardiner has been attacked for sins of commission and omission, for misunderstandings of authorities, and on some points for bias.<sup>1</sup> Even though a study of these criticisms convinces one that the subject of them was as sound, careful and conscientious a writer as any man who has ever written history, they serve to show that it is not only the 'brilliant' historian, with his startling antitheses, his glowing colour, and his elaborate artistry in picture and portraiture, who is liable to give dissatisfaction. The gleaner can always sneer at the harvester for leaving some grains of corn on the ground ; and there are so many ways of describing a series of events that, whichever way be chosen, there will be churlish critics who will insist that it was the wrong way.

The historian is compelled to put into a page or a paragraph material which he has gathered from a wide range of sources, and this involves the simultaneous

<sup>1</sup> See R. G. Usher's *Critical Study of the Historical Method of Samuel Rawson Gardiner* (1915), and the correspondence in the *Literary Supplement of the Times*, Sept. 25, Oct. 2, 16, Nov. 13, 20, 27, Dec. 4, 18, 1919.

exercise of several mental processes. His statements must be true to fact, they must convey the essential purport of his evidence, and they must be related in good narrative form. He must seize the salient things, disregard the details which seem to him to be unimportant, and blend the whole in a piece of writing which carries forward his story. To find a form of words which shall be true, loaded with information, essential, and at the same time readable, requires a command of art more complex than that involved in any other form of literature. Frequently there are gaps in the evidence, and the historian has to wrestle with probability ; or he may be confronted with discrepancies which he has to resolve ; or he may find a piece of testimony concerning a point which, if true, is important, but he may doubt its truth, and be unable to find corroboration of it. There is hardly a subject on which a historian can write, as to which he will not be compelled to make up his mind on some points of extreme nicety.

Take a case. Probably every British school-child learnt in his lessons about the history of the Middle Ages, that the army of Edward III used cannon at the battle of Crécy. Not only school books, but also works of high authority written by expert scholars, contain the statement. Thus, Tout in his account of Crécy pictures the French as being 'terrified by the fearful booming of three small cannon that the English had dragged about during their wanderings.'<sup>1</sup> But Vickers, while allowing that the guns were there, submits that 'the cannon of the English must have been negligible in deciding the fate of the battle, for their only reported

<sup>1</sup> Tout, *Political History of England*, iii. p. 364.

success was the startling of the Genoese bowmen and the terrifying of a few French horses.' <sup>1</sup>

The evidence upon which the assertion rests that there were cannon at Crécy at all, however, is so slender, that doubt has been thrown upon the story. A sceptical critic writes :

' According to a contemporary Italian historian whose general reputation stands high, the English had cannon at Crecy, and this was the first occasion on which they were used in war. The statement is not in itself incredible, and the Italian Villani could have had no conceivable motive for misrepresenting the truth ; but no other contemporary authority says a word to the same effect. If it were a trifling detail, one might suppose that while one authority mentioned it, the others passed it over as insignificant. But when we examine the most detailed of the original narratives we find more than silence. Froissart, who took very great pains in collecting materials for his chronicle, and Baker of Swinbrook, who was more strictly contemporary and shows exceptional knowledge of the tactics of his time, describe the battle in a manner which leaves no room for cannon. The whole tenour of their narratives is to the effect that the battle was won entirely through the inherent superiority of the longbow over all other missile weapons of the age, utilised to the full by the skilful tactics of Edward III. The conclusion is irresistible that the "argument from silence" must prevail, and that Villani must have been misinformed.' <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Vickers, *England in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 178.

<sup>2</sup> H. B. George, *Historical Evidence*, p. 176. Mr. Belloc, in a little book on the battle of Crécy, in a series of 'British Battles,' observes that the story of the cannon 'has of course been denied by our modern academic authorities, but without evidence.' But surely that misses the point. It is the lack of evidence for the cannon of which the authorities referred to complain.

The evidence for the cannon, it will be seen, is so weak as to induce this writer to reject the story ; and it is singular that a fact so interesting as the introduction of a fresh engine of war was not known to the English chroniclers, and is not mentioned in any contemporary English document. Yet there is a suggestion of corroboration in the fact that there was expenditure on gunpowder for this campaign.<sup>1</sup> The case is cited, however, not for the purpose of arguing it one way or the other, but to illustrate the very elusive nature of the material upon which history often has to rely. Not merely sound scholarship but a fine discrimination in the use of words is requisite in order that the doubtful things and the tolerably certain things in a considerable period of history may be distinguished, and that the facts may be stated carefully while paying heed to the literary quality of the writing.

One has often heard the charge brought against certain works of history that they neglect features which the critic thinks ought to have been stressed. Any work of general history must suffer from this defect to some extent. The criticism, for example, that the first volume of the *Cambridge Modern History*, devoted to the Renaissance, pays no attention to the art which was so distinctive a feature of the period, and does not even mention Raphael, Michael Angelo and Leonardo da Vinci, is legitimate enough ; and the complaint that other authoritative works make only the most cursory allusions to literary development is justified. But the question is one of scope and choice. Every writer and editor has to recognise that there are limits to the

<sup>1</sup> Sir James Ramsay, *The Genesis of Lancaster*, i. p. 331, brings out this point.

space which he may occupy, and is compelled to make up his mind not only what he will include, but also what he must exclude. A work which accomplishes what it purports to do, disarms reasonable criticism concerning what it has not seemed to the author to be possible to do within the prescribed scope. Works on special aspects of history, like histories of literature, of science, of philosophy, of religion, and monographs on particular topics, like the Crusades, Chartism and Doomsday Book, can be expected to satisfy the enquirer upon the subjects with which they deal, where the general history of a period has to select and reject material on much more rigorous principles.

Nothing can be more misleading than an attempt to interpret history by formulae. Several schools have arisen which, by selecting certain facts and concentrating attention upon them, profess that they have found the key to all history. There is a small Psycho-analyst school which would read a sex motive in nearly all the important occurrences of history. A more moderate school stresses the dominance of physical causes. But the most insistent are the apostles of 'economic determinism,' who derive their gospel from Marx. A convenient statement of the theory may be quoted from the pen of Friedrich Engels :

'The materialist conception of history starts from the principle that production, and next to production the exchange of its products, is the basis of every social system ; that in every society arising in history the allotment of products, and with it the division of society into classes or ranks, depends upon what is produced, and how when produced it is exchanged. Accordingly the ultimate causes of all social changes and political revolutions are not to be

looked for in the heads of men, in their growing insight into eternal truth and justice, but in changes of the methods of production and exchange ; they are to be looked for, not in the philosophy, but in the economy of the epoch in question.’<sup>1</sup>

In the same book, Engels claims that ‘ these two great discoveries, the materialistic conception of history and the revelation of the secret of capitalistic production, through surplus value, we owe to Marx. With these discoveries Socialism became a science.’<sup>2</sup> It is proper to point out that since the theory of ‘ economic determinism ’ has been subjected to criticism, later Socialists have abandoned it. Thus, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald sweeps it aside as ‘ one-sided and inadequate.’ ‘ Socialism to-day,’ he says, ‘ suffers because it has received an inheritance of scientific materialism from the middle of the nineteenth century.’

‘ This gave rise to the shibboleth of the materialist conception of history, which a section of Socialist thought still tries to impose on the Socialist movement. The materialist conception of history is the view that the motive for historical change has been primarily economic. . . . The theory was so very simple, so very sweeping and comprehensive, explained so much, and was so very new, that the Socialist was bound to adopt it because the existing order which produced the ugly social features of which he was the sworn enemy was generally defended on theological and metaphysical grounds, or was presented as the fruit of the work of great men, with the result that it seemed to be

<sup>1</sup> The passage occurs in the third part of Engels’ *Herrn Eugen Duhrings Umwälzung der Wissenschaft*, published 1878. Three chapters of the larger work have been translated into English under the title ‘ Socialism Utopian and Scientific.’ The passage cited occurs on p. 94 of the translation.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 93.



outside the realm of reason altogether and not subject to a law of evolution. . . . But the materialist conception of history is after all one sided and inadequate. The service it rendered was the establishment of the science of history by the setting up of a deductive method as well as an inductive one. Having rendered that service the toy began to show signs of wear. It did not satisfy every need. Its assumptions can never be displaced from the motives in history, but they cannot explain events when considered absolutely and alone.'<sup>1</sup>

That is a valuable passage, despite the erroneous assertion that the promulgation of 'the shibboleth of the materialist conception of history' rendered the service of 'the establishment of the science of history.' The work of Niebuhr and Ranke, and the impetus and direction given to historical criticism by the publication of F. A. Wolf's *Prolegomena to Homer* had done that before Marx and Engels published a line.<sup>2</sup> The attempt to separate one motive, one cause, the economic, from all the other motives and causes for human action, and to attribute all historical change to that single motive and cause, as fundamental and determining, was not 'scientific.' It was a fallacy which broke down as soon as it was confronted with a long series of historical phenomena in which religious, psychological, physical, personal, and other elements had to be considered. The victims of this Marxian error were like the light-house keeper who 'saw streaks,' in Mr. Rudyard Kipling's story. Brooding upon one category of facts,

<sup>1</sup> Ramsay MacDonald, *The Socialist Movement*, pp. 142-144.

<sup>2</sup> See G. P. Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century*, caps. 1, 2 and 6; and J. B. Bury's *Cambridge Inaugural Lecture* (1903), p. 10.

they became unable to realise that men have ever been moved by any other. It might have occurred to them that men did not go to the stake during the Marian persecutions for 'economic motives,' that John Bunyan and the Restoration dissenters did not endure imprisonment for any reason connected with production and exchange, and that in all the great movements which have profoundly changed the course of history, whether by revolutionary methods or otherwise, there has been a vein of idealism which was indifferent to advantage or the 'economy' of the principles at stake.

Yet the over-insistence upon the economic factors in history had a salutary effect. Economic history had been too little regarded, or had been ignored. That there is an economic side to every period, and every important event in history, was scarcely appreciated. The Marxians hit upon a great and neglected phase of truth and mistook it for the whole truth, or the key to all the truth. It is not possible to maintain that without Marx and Engels economic history would have continued to be neglected, since it is highly probable that a school of historical economists would have arisen if they had never promulgated the theory of economic determinism; because the causes of historical phenomena were always the quarry of students, and the pursuit of the economic motive was a natural line of development. But it remains true that the Marxian insistence on the supreme importance of the economic aspects of history did give an impulsion to this line of investigation, and thereby widened and illuminated the scope of research in a manner for which due appreciation must be accorded to the pioneers of what is inappropriately called 'scientific socialism.'

Complaint is still heard occasionally against the importance attached to military history, though there is much less ground for it now than was formerly the case. Yet an English teacher of history has lately written that 'J. R. Green, while devoting several pages to the battle of Waterloo, has practically nothing to say about enclosures, the Combination Acts, the unreformed Poor Law, Malthus and Utilitarianism.' That is a hard saying of Green, above all other writers, since he was the declared foe of 'drum and trumpet history,' and his 'several pages' about Waterloo in fact amount to less than two (pp. 810-11 of the *Short History of the English People*). Whilst it is true that he did not adequately appreciate the causes of the agrarian discontent of the sixteenth century, it must be remembered that the Combination Acts, the reformation of the Poor Law, and Utilitarianism lay outside the scope of his book, which, except for the brief epilogue professing to be no more than a summary of 'the most noteworthy events,' ended with 1815. It is not desired now to put in any plea for military history; and, indeed, it may be allowed that unless a campaign be studied in detail, with ample maps, it is a subject from which little profit is to be gained. But the attitude of mind of some of those who find fault with the attention given to wars, is worth a little attention.

War has been one of the great shaping forces of history. Few are the nations, whether they be ancient or new, that have not been created by wars. War rescued Italy from the thralldom of centuries, dissolved the congeries of petty states into which her peninsula was long divided, ended the temporal sovereignty of

the Papacy, and set forth the Italian people on a career of unity and power. War brought into being the United States of America, and war consolidated the Union when the peril of secession threatened its integrity. War broke the supremacy of Spain in Central and South America, and brought into being the cluster of republics which stretch from the Mexican border to Cape Horn. War shattered absolute sovereignty and divine right in Great Britain, and cleared the way for development under a free and liberal constitution. These and a crowd of other examples which might be cited do not show that war has been a benevolent thing, but they surely demonstrate that it is supremely important as a historical process. The argument that because war has wrought much mischief in the world it does not deserve to be considered, that because we do not like war, therefore we should say as little about it as possible, betrays an insecure attitude towards historical proportion. We are not at liberty to minimise a series of causes because we do not like them. The Black Death was a most repugnant occurrence, but its effect upon the history of England in the later Middle Ages is not to be denied. The stronger the case that may be made out for the taking of all possible precautions to prevent war, on the ground that it has wrought so much harm to mankind, the clearer the necessity for paying heed to it as a factor in history. It is not the glorification of war, or the extolling of the military virtues, nor, on the other hand, is it the denunciation of war as a scourge, that is the business of the historian. He is concerned with estimating the influences that have been exerted on human affairs, and among these, to

omit war, or to refuse to give to it a place proportionate to its consequence, is to inculcate false views of things. In some periods war was of predominant importance. The whole feudal structure of society from the eighth century to the fourteenth was based on war ; and the history of culture is very largely the history of improvements made in weapons, methods of defence, and modes of warfare. 'From the remotest age in which we find evidence of organized beings, war has been ordained to an important function in the creative process.'<sup>1</sup>

No general principle attributing priority of importance to any one factor in history can hold good. Analysis is requisite to determine the elements, and their proportions, of which the history of a period or phase was composed. The historian cannot settle the proportions of his work by the adoption of an artificial measuring-rod, but must determine by virtue of a trained habit of estimating relevancy. English history as usually written seems to foreign readers to be too much weighted on the political side, devoting excessive attention to the vagaries of politicians, changes in ministries, and the ups and downs of parties. To one of the most revered of English historical scholars, the historian was 'the politician with his face turned backwards.'<sup>2</sup> But political obsession leads to queer results when it causes a historian of 'England since

<sup>1</sup> Pitt-Rivers, *The Evolution of Culture*, p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> 'The want of an energetic understanding of the sequence and real significance of events, which would be fatal to a practical politician, is ruin to a student of history, who is the politician with his face turned backwards.'—Acton, *The Study of History*, p. 58.

'Damit, dass man nach den Anfängen sucht, wird man Krebs. Der Historiker sieht rückwärts ; endlich bleibt er auch rückwärts.'—Nietzsche, *Sprüche und Pfeile*, in Werke, Kröner edition, viii. p. 90.

Waterloo' to omit all reference to the invention of railways, gas, electricity and steam navigation—which really did exert some influence on English life during the period—and to overlook Darwin, Dickens, Herbert Spencer, Marx and Bentham, who profoundly influenced English thinking and feeling. The trouble with the politician with his face turned backwards is that he seems to behold nothing but an eternal procession of politicians on the road, a vista of portentous persons in frock-coats and pince-nez, tirelessly perorating. The importance of politics has been stressed in a previous page; but it is a mistake to take a narrow view of what is comprehended within politics. Great inventions, great books, great poems, scientific discoveries and spiritual movements, are not less political than are Acts of Parliament, speeches and the alternate recurrence of Liberal and Conservative administrations. The opening of the Manchester and Liverpool Railway in 1830 was at least as great a political event as the passing of the Reform Act of 1832.

'Regarded from one standpoint,' it has been well said, 'the art of politics may appear to be nothing but the "scuffling of kites and crows." Regarded from another, it is an effort to realise that deep-seated instinct of humanity which bids Man turn for help and guidance to his fellow Man. It is an affirmation, on unmistakable lines, of that social side of our nature which may fairly be regarded as one of the fundamental facts of the universe.'<sup>1</sup>

History has its own standards, and is not to be judged absolutely by comparison with writing that is not historical. History may not be first-class literature, though it is all the better for having

<sup>1</sup> Jenks, *Short History of Politics*, p. 156.

literary quality. It is, admittedly, all to advantage that there should be works of history which can be read with pleasure, not only because the pleasure which comes from the reading of entertaining books is commendable, but also because it is much to be desired that there should be a wide diffusion of knowledge about the history of nations and the great spiritual and cultural movements which have fashioned the world. Inasmuch as there is little probability of such literature not being produced in a field of knowledge so attractive to writers who have the secret of charm, there is no need to indulge apprehensions that 'the man in the street' will go short of books on history which will gratify and stimulate him. Assuredly he will be the better citizen for reading them. But suitability for entertainment is not the test of sound history. There is, indeed, a large amount of history of high quality which makes no pretension to be literature in the popular sense. It aims at exhibiting evidence derived from fresh sources, enabling former conclusions to be revised and new conclusions to be enforced. If the writers succeed in achieving these results in clear language, that is all that can be asked from them. The purpose is not to amuse but to perfect knowledge. The approbation sought is not that of the reader who wishes to be provided with agreeable reading matter, but of him who wishes to know. When we are told that history should be 'interesting,' of course we agree; but 'interesting' to whom? The interest that arises from the description of exciting events, from the delineation of great characters, from tracing out the way battles were fought and revolutions engineered, is not the only kind of interest. There is

also the interest which springs from the subject-matter of history, from the discovery of fresh material, and from the skilful handling of a subject.

Macaulay held that 'to be a really great historian is perhaps the rarest of intellectual distinctions.'

'A perfect historian,' he said, 'must possess an imagination sufficiently powerful to make his narrative affecting and picturesque. Yet he must control it so absolutely as to content himself with the materials which he finds and to refrain from supplying deficiencies by additions of his own. He must be a profound and ingenious reasoner. Yet he must possess sufficient self-command to abstain from casting his facts in the mould of his hypothesis. Those who can justly estimate these almost insuperable difficulties will not think it strange that every writer should have failed, either in the narrative or in the speculative department of history.'<sup>1</sup>

It is in this use of the disciplined imagination that history calls for the gifts of the artist as well as for the orderly and analytical qualities of the scientific mind, the keenness and industry of the investigator, and the reflective insight of the philosopher. If we meet with a few pages in the work of masters of history which display all these merits we are fortunate. They are united in Gibbon more frequently than in any other writer, in Mommsen sometimes. Without imagination it is impossible for a writer to reconstruct the past, to cast about his facts an atmosphere of reality, so that they are not cold, hard statements about dead things, but have a feeling of vitality in them. This power of imagination, as John Stuart Mill says, is that by which

<sup>1</sup> From Macaulay's article on the 'Greek, Roman and Modern Historians,' in the *Edinburgh Review*, May 1828.



one human being enters into the mind and circumstances of another.

' It is one of the constituents of the historian ; by it we understand other times ; by it Guizot interprets to us the middle ages ; Nizard, in his beautiful studies on the later Latin poets, places us in the Rome of the Caesars ; Michelet disengages the distinctive characters of the different races and generations of mankind from the facts of their history. Without it nobody knows even his own nature, further than circumstances have actually tried it and called it out ; nor the nature of his fellow creatures, beyond such generalisations as he may have been enabled to make from his observation of their outward conduct.'<sup>1</sup>

Imagination is the highest of historical endowments because it enables the breath of life to animate the dry bones, but it is a peril and a delusion without the discipline of scientific training. Every historian must to some extent, it has been properly urged, be his own Dryasdust, must do his own delving, because only thus can he see the facts in the crude ore, recognise their essential relevancy, and be aware of the nature of the material wherein they were embedded. But they need to be spiritualised, touched with the genius of the artist-scholar, to make the best kind of history.

<sup>1</sup> Mill's essay on ' Bentham ' in his *Dissertations and Discussions*.

## IX

### HISTORICAL PROBLEMS

WRITTEN history consists of a series of connected statements about the past, which may be descriptions of events, delineations of character, analyses of evidence, philosophical reflections, or speculations upon probabilities. Some of these statements are extremely simple, and so certain that there can be no dispute about them. I open the second volume of the *Political History of England*, and read: 'The battle of the 14th of October, 1066, was decisive of the struggle for the throne of England, but William of Normandy was in no haste to gather in the results of the victory which he had won.' That is a plain, short statement of verified fact. Argument about it would be waste of time. But there are thousands of statements which a historian might make that cannot be granted pratique with so little doubt; and there are thousands more which have to be made with such extreme care that a slight variation by another person of the language used by a scholar who knows the pitfalls, may make errors of them.

There is also a large field of history about which contrary views may be expressed by scholars of equal competence. It is not the facts that are in dispute in such instances, as a rule, but the facts are regarded

from different points of view. There is hardly a question of right or wrong ; the question is one of interpretation. We may take an example. The *History of England* in seven volumes, edited by Sir Charles Oman, is well known. The writers are scholars of eminence, to whom we pay proper deference. But let anyone read the last four pages of Volume I, and then proceed forthwith to the first page of Volume II, and he will find that the two authors, Professor Oman himself and Professor H. W. C. Davis, take opposing views of the same set of facts. The first-named writer says :

‘ Let anyone who believes that the Norman Conquest led in every sphere of civilisation to a rapid and satisfactory development, compare the neat silver pennies of the later issues of Edward the Confessor and the short reign of Harold Godwinson, with the shapeless ill-struck issues of Henry I, Stephen, and the early years of Henry II. A relapse into barbarism might rather be deduced from the comparison. For good or ill the Conquest was accomplished—but the more that we study it, the less easy is it to acquiesce in the easy and comforting conclusion that all was for the best—that the survival of an English England must necessarily have been a disaster. We are told that the insular Church and State were alike decadent, and the failings of Archbishop Stigand are held up for disapproval, along with the misdeeds of Earl Tostig. But Stigand is a less hateful figure than Odo of Bayeux or Ralf Flambard, on whose characters as typical Norman prelates anyone might dilate who wished to set forth the opposite theory. . . . The optimist may hold that the future development of this realm under continental influences was so infinitely superior to what that development would have been under purely national influences, as to compensate England in the end

for all that she suffered in and after 1066. But the breaking up of the old governing class, the general confiscation of estates, the trampling of the nation beneath the feet of an alien aristocracy, were a heavy price to pay for that problematical gain. Episodes like William's ravaging of Northumbria in 1069, whose after effects endured for whole centuries, and surpassed anything that the Dane ever wrought, cause us to doubt the theory that paints the Norman as the spreader of civilisation. Were the tyranny of Rufus, the grinding oppression of Henry I, the anarchy of Stephen, necessary stages in the evolution of a nation? Can the introduction of Wager of Battle be considered a happy juristic reform? May it not be said that William the Bastard turned England from her true line of development towards the sea—she was a great naval power when he found her—and involved her in that unholy game of gambling for French provinces which was not to end till the Hundred Years' War was over, after four centuries of wasted effort? <sup>1</sup>

We turn to the second volume in the same series, and read :

' The Norman Conquest of England was the outcome of a struggle, short and spasmodic in its character, between a handful of adventurers and a decadent nation lying on the outer fringe of European politics ; and though it nearly affected the interests of several powers it occasioned no general disturbance of international relations. In fact, if the importance of an event were to be measured by the commotion which it makes among contemporaries, the Norman Conquest might be regarded as of little moment in European history. None the less it is one of those events which stands as a boundary mark between two stages of civilisation ; and there is something more than accident in

<sup>1</sup> Oman, *England before the Norman Conquest*, pp. 649-51.

the rapidity with which, after the victory of Senlac, Europe emerges from the Dark Age into that splendid twilight which a large proportion of civilised humanity still prize more highly than the morning light of the Renaissance or the mingled storm and sunshine of the Reformation. . . . When Harold fell beneath the Dragon Standard, the last stronghold of Teutonic law and institutions, of a liberty which had degenerated into license, of an aristocracy who had outlived their function and their virtues, was opened wide for the entry of the Italian priest and Gallic legislator.' <sup>1</sup>

Which of these two presentations of the same piece of history is preferable, is not germane to the present discussion. The case is cited to illustrate the point that much written history which does not consist in the statement of facts but in their interpretation, depends upon the historian's intellectual constitution, his inclination to set more store by some features than others, his philosophical outlook. If two such verdicts had been pronounced about any phase of history as to which there is partisan feeling, such as the Reformation or the Puritan Revolution, the word bias might have been imparted into the review of them; but quite unjustifiably, for they are both tenable views, as they are also, it hardly needs to be remarked, finely expressed.

Even in the statement of plain facts, there are sometimes intricacies. I remember being asked for an opinion some years ago, as to what ought to be done about the date of celebrating Captain Cook's discovery of the eastern coast of Australia. (It is still common, by the way, to read of Cook's 'discovery of Australia,' which is absurd.) As his log-book records that he

<sup>1</sup> Davis, *England under the Normans and Angevins*, pp. 1-2.

made his landfall on April 19, 1770, the celebrations in schools had always taken place on April 19. But Cook sailed from England on this voyage westward across the South Atlantic, and *via* Cape Horn into the Pacific. He was a day behind the calendar date when he made his Australian landfall, and did not correct his time till he reached Batavia, in October, 1770, as he tells us in his Journal, where he made the entry: 'Wednesday 10th, according to our reckoning, but by the people here Thursday 11th.' By the calendar, therefore, the correct date of landfall was not April 19, but April 20; and the important event had been for years erroneously celebrated. But the case is not so serious as was that of the sailors who first circumnavigated the globe on Magellan's immortal voyage; for they discovered that, having lost a day, they had kept many fast days and saints' days wrongly, and they had to do public penance for their chronological sins in the streets of Seville.

How many text-books contain the statement that King John 'signed' Magna Carta? Green's *Short History*, on which thousands were brought up, states that 'the great Charter was discussed, agreed to and signed in a single day.' Dr. M'Kechnie's elaborate commentary on Magna Carta reveals three errors in that short statement. He has shown that five days were occupied with the discussion and preparation of the Charter, and that it was not signed at all, but sealed. Indeed, we have no reason for thinking that King John could write his name. No signature or other writing of his survives, and writing was in that age an unusual accomplishment for any but learned clerks. In any case, there are no signatures whatever

on Magna Carta. But so common is the misconception that in one delightful instance where the author of a text-book has been careful to say that the charter was 'sealed,' the artist who was allowed to embellish his work with illustrations perverted a virtuous purpose by a very pretty picture showing John with an angry countenance and a pen which was not even a quill writing his reluctant assent.

Nearly every statement which a historian may make represents a solution of a problem ; and a very large proportion of these are not settled problems. I do not know how many historical reviews there are in the world, all occupied with the publication of fresh historical material, all concerned with the solution of historical problems, all open to the reception of historical evidence which makes a difference to conclusions previously regarded as more or less satisfactory. But at least a dozen of such journals are of capital importance. No one who is accustomed to read the *English Historical Review*, *History*, the *American Historical Review*, the *Scottish Historical Review*, the *Revue Historique*, the *Historische Zeitschrift*, *La Révolution Française*, *La Revue des Questions Historiques*, the *Canadian Historical Review*, and other periodicals of a like character, can make the mistake of supposing that history consists of a series of certainties or dogmas. It would be robbed of a vast amount of its living interest if it were so. In addition to these journals, there are such publications as the *Transactions* of the Royal Historical Society, which publish new views and new material ; and throughout the world there are scores of local historical associations and institutions to promote the study of

special aspects of history, whose publications teem with material which is sometimes of great interest. *History*, the quarterly journal of the Historical Association of Great Britain, has for some years past regularly published an unusually attractive series of articles headed 'Historical Revisions,' all dealing with topics about which there is common misconception. The editors of these publications are on the look-out for contributions which will add to truth already known, clear up obscure questions, or reinterpret phases of history hitherto erroneously treated.

Problems of time, like the dates in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, those romantic A.D.'s which parade an audacious inexactitude under a delusive appearance of veracity ; problems of place, like the locale of Bannockburn, so unceremoniously shifted about by the investigations of Mr. W. M. Mackenzie ; problems of circumstance, like the alleged manifestation of electoral virtue against the Fox-North coalition in 1784, cruelly stripped of its merits by the researches of Mr. Laprade, and hardly rehabilitated by Professor Holland Rose ; problems of character, like Dr. Paul Van Dyck's overhauling of Catherine de Medici ; problems of motive, like M. Coquelle's examination of Napoleon's reasons for desiring a renewal of war after the peace of Amiens ; problems of the origin of things, like Professor Pollard's trenchant analysis of the ' Myth of the Three Estates ' of the Realm ; problems of the parentage and mutations of ideas, like Figgis's elaborate discussion of ' the Divine Right of Kings '—these, and an immense number of other problems, continually in process of investigation, save history from becoming a stagnant pond of dogmas, and keep students alert to the



reception of fresh facts and ideas. There is an infinite range of topics to which historical research may be applied. All that relates to man as a social animal—all that concerns his life in communities, his institutions, his modes of government, his wars—is open to review, and there is no imaginable period for which the whole truth has ever been told.

The ideal historian should, no doubt, detach himself from contemporary interests and confine himself to his chosen period, permitting no gale blown from resorts where controversy rages to disturb the quiet atmosphere of his study. But if every historian had obeyed that behest our literature would have been the poorer for many a brilliant page. For it is the case that many historians of great eminence have been men who were keenly alive to the urgency of the problems of the world in which they lived, and who, indeed, in some cases, were impelled to historical study by a wish to probe into the original causes of questions of their day. Few have remained altogether uninfluenced by their political environment. The Liberal Churchman joggled the elbow of John Richard Green and cast a shadow over his shoulder when he was writing many passages. Acton was a Catholic with a strong detestation of ultramontane tendencies, and he who could write in his private correspondence of 'the fiend skulking behind the Crucifix'<sup>1</sup> was not likely to spare the rod when an opportunity for using it virtuously was presented. Froude, says his biographer, was 'too earnest to be impartial.'<sup>2</sup> He wrote his *History*, says the same author, 'with a definite purpose, which he never

<sup>1</sup> Acton's *Correspondence*, i. p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> Herbert Paul, *Life of Froude*, p. 442.

concealed from himself or from others. He believed, and he thought he could prove, that the Reformation freed England from a cruel and degrading yoke, that the things which were Caesar's should be rendered to Caesar, and that the Church should be restricted within its own proper sphere.'<sup>1</sup> Mommsen wrote his glittering *History of Rome* with one eye on events in contemporary Germany, and did not deny that he was influenced by them. On the contrary, he said, 'Those who have lived through historical events as I have, begin to see that history is neither written nor made without love or hate.' Macaulay wrote the history of the Whig revolution of 1688-9 as a politician for whom that great event was the initiation of a Whiggish golden age.

But the writer who does not endeavour to guard against the imminence of environment runs the risk of producing untrustworthy history. The case is too subtle to be simply one of bias. The mind, so to speak, takes its colouring from the glow that bathes the events of the time, and reflects that glow upon the events of past time; things remote are tinged with contemporaneousness. Coke read into Magna Carta things which were not there, but which did pertain to the quarrels between James I and his Parliaments. Alluring parallels spring up in which resemblances are emphasised and important differences are overlooked; and no fallacies are so misleading as supposed historical parallels. They have been the occasion of an appalling amount of bad political argument. Mr. Trevelyan, commenting on Charles Stewart Parnell's ignorance of Irish history, relates that one day when Gladstone was

<sup>1</sup> Herbert Paul, *Life of Froude*, p. 79.

talking to him about the '41 in Ireland, 'it was clear to the onlookers that Parnell neither knew nor cared to what century his learned ally was referring.' <sup>1</sup> That is curious, because in the controversies wherein Parnell was a protagonist historical parallels figured as part of the stock in trade of nearly every participant.

That there is such a thing as impartial history has been denied by some to whom one pays respect. Thus, a writer on ancient history avers that 'We do not believe in impartial or dispassionate history. Human facts are the proper subject of moral judgments and cannot be released from them.' <sup>2</sup> Again: 'Of course there is no such thing as impartial history, and even if there could be impartial history it would be the dullest, stupidest thing on this earth of ours.' <sup>3</sup> A third writer deems it necessary to tell the 'man in the street' that 'history is a way of looking at facts,' and that 'the way depends on the bias of the individual historian.' <sup>4</sup>

All this is true enough, but it needs clarifying. There is no demerit in some kinds of bias. To manifest bias against a liar like Titus Oates whose perjuries sent innocent men to their death, or against such a disgusting publicist as Hébert of the French Revolution, whose journal, *Le Père Duchesne*, reeked with foul and ribald vituperation; or against any murderer, thief, or perpetrator of moral offences, is not culpable. It is commendable. No one is called upon to apologise for wrong, or to mitigate his indignation when he meets with it.

<sup>1</sup> G. M. Trevelyan, *British History in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 392.

<sup>2</sup> H. Mattingly, *Outlines of Ancient History*, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> J. A. Cramb, *Germany and England*, p. 95.

<sup>4</sup> Oman, *Colonel Despard and other Studies*, p. 206.

There is, also, an apologetic bias which can be understood. An example occurs in a school of students of the French Revolution who hold that Robespierre has been unjustly gibbeted as the evil genius of the Terror. Professor Albert Mathiez of Dijon is the leading spirit in the 'Société des études robespierristes,' which has been formed to promulgate what its members hold to be a truer view of the actions of their hero, and for more than a dozen years they have published a journal, *Annales Révolutionnaires*, to gather together facts and arguments in support of their object. M. Mathiez has likewise published the first two volumes of a new history of *La Révolution Française*,<sup>1</sup> wherein, having regard to his numerous other writings, we are prepared for a vigorous presentation of the Robespierist case. This is bias, frank and avowed; but without deeming it necessary either to accept or reject the interpretation put upon the actions of Robespierre by this school, it may be allowed that their emphasis on certain facts is comprehensible, because they are contending against a widely prevalent contrary opinion.

There is bias of omission as well as of commission. Cardinal Gasquet, before he bore that title, published a book on *The Eve of the Reformation*, which presents an informative and agreeable picture of the religious condition of England before the quarrel between Henry VIII and the Papacy. The facts which it exhibits may be correct, but there are several series of facts to which no allusion whatever is made throughout the volume. The facts specified by certain

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mathiez, *La Révolution Française*, vol. i. (1922); and, by the same author, *Robespierre Terroriste*, *Le Club des Cordeliers*, and other works.

pre-reformation bishops concerning the condition of some monasteries—such as have been published by the Lincoln Diocesan Records Society—the facts as to pardoners ridiculed by Chaucer in the *Canterbury Tales*, the facts disclosed by several enactments on the English statute book at the end of the fifteenth century, are ignored.

Bias in historical writing does not differ, as an intellectual phenomenon, from bias in any other kind of writing. Biographers are usually biased in favour of their subjects. Indeed, pallid impartiality in a biography is somewhat of an offence. If a writer does not like his subject, he would be better occupied if he chose another. Scientific writers are biased in favour of their theories. The essays of Huxley, powerful pieces of polemic, are biased in support of the evolutionary hypothesis. Philosophers are biased whenever they maintain a thesis. Whoever has definite opinions about anything is biased in defending them. To be altogether unbiased is to be negative. It is possible to amass a quantity of knowledge to uphold a comprehensive ignorance, but then the bias is simply shifted towards favouring a void instead of solid things. Croce relates that he once lent to a friend a hypercritical history of ancient Rome. 'When he had finished reading it he returned the book to me, remarking that he had acquired the proud conviction of being the most learned of philologists, because the latter arrive at the conclusion that they know nothing as the result of exhaustive toil, while he knew nothing without any effort at all, simply as a generous gift of nature.'<sup>1</sup>

Historians, then, are liable to the same failings, the

<sup>1</sup> Croce, *On History*, English edition, p. 34.

same disposition towards fondness for their own ideas, as are other people ; and even those who have a bias against bias do not escape errors of other kinds. The test of dependableness, indeed, is not absence of bias, but the presence of good faith. The writer of honest intent will take care that no piece of evidence known to him, or accessible to him, is neglected. He will be prompt to rectify a conclusion in the light of freshly discovered facts. He will state points of view even when he does not approve of the conduct which they explain. He will endeavour to present a case as it was seen by those who were concerned in it, so that their motives, so far as discoverable, shall be fairly disclosed. He will base his judgments upon verified facts, and will not prejudice an issue by suppressions, by twisting truth in the manner of unfair controversialists, by failing to give the ' other side ' when there is another side which ought to be heard. It is this good faith which makes sound history, not the dehumanising of the historian by making him deciduous in respect to opinions, feelings, sympathies and aversions.

It is not the historians but the public who need to grasp the fact that in this branch of knowledge, as in every other wherein fresh material is used to rectify conclusions, finality can rarely be guaranteed. The statements of historians are subject to constant revision. What is true this year—true because it squares with all the known facts—may be untrue next year, because out of harmony with freshly discovered evidence. The bibliography to a single chapter of Vol. III of the *Cambridge Mediaeval History*, that relating to the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453, cites a list, nearly a page in length, of

authorities which were unknown to Gibbon when he wrote the *Decline and Fall*. Seven of these pieces of testimony are by eye-witnesses of the great event described in the chapter, whilst three others are based upon narratives of eye-witnesses, or have claims to consideration as contemporary corroboration. The opening up of archives by nearly all civilised nations has placed at the disposal of historians an immense quantity of material which is being, or will be, incorporated in the common stock of historical knowledge. History, therefore, is not congealed but fluid. It is not stagnant: the spirit of investigation continually moves upon the face of the water and freshens it. Truth is not static; it grows. Time was when a mass of unsifted legends, stories, traditions, were accepted as the stuff of history. Writs of Quo Warranto have been served upon them, and many a picturesque fable has suffered deprivation. But in compensation there comes a new body of historical matter, disclosing the springs of action of innumerable policies, testimony of those who saw important things being done, letters of those who did them, secrets of cabinets and chancelleries, confessions of statesmen and rulers.

Usually this fresh material is introduced to the world of knowledge by writers of monographs. It is absorbed into general history when new editions of standard books are required, or by means of new treatises written by scholars who are familiar with the new work. Very few text-books which have been in use for many years remain dependable. There is nothing to lament in the submergence of books which have been useful in their day. Knowledge must press on. No true friend to science would wish it to be otherwise,

'It is, no doubt,' says a historian whose work has a better prospect of survival than most, 'a disheartening thought to remember that twenty or thirty years hence—perhaps even at an earlier date—our own books of history must go to the same limbo of forgotten things as the books of our revered predecessors. There is no finality in history any more than there is in natural science. A new recension of knowledge is required by the new generation; and our works, which we cherished so much, will disappear to the top shelf of the public library—if not to the cellar. We must think ourselves happy if they appear to our grandchildren rather as glimpses of the obvious than as expositions of exploded heresies. Nevertheless, we claim that we have not been without our use: every generation must codify and collate its own stock of knowledge; and the codifiers, if their work has been honest, have served well the men of their own time. To the man of the future they can only say *Morituri te salutamus*—our work must perish, but it had to be done.'<sup>1</sup>

We may sympathise with the hypothetical 'man in the street,' who wishes to be sure, when he looks into a history book to answer one of his questions, that he is getting the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and that when he cites the book to floor an opponent in an argument he will not be floored by another passage from another book to the contrary effect. But his case is no worse with historical questions than with questions in any other department of advancing knowledge. To the historical student the subject presents itself as an infinite range of problems, never as a settled, closed, balanced account.

Much of the charm of historical study consists in the fact that it is so difficult to arrive at certainty owing to

<sup>1</sup> Oman, *Colonel Despard and other Studies*, p. 210.



the nature of human testimony. Even eye-witnesses see little, and much of what is seen by one will be missed by others. A vast amount of what is essential to afford a complete view of many of the most important events in history was never recorded by anybody. Professor Von Ruville of Halle justifies the filling up of gaps in knowledge by guesses, which he has called 'the method of the broken coin.' If an archaeologist finds a portion of a coin, and subsequent digging brings to light another portion of what appears to be the same coin, and the edges of the two fragments fit, he assumes that he has the complete coin before him. The archaeologist may do so in such an instance with fair probability that he is right, since two metal fragments found in the same piece of ground probably would be two parts of the same coin if they matched perfectly. But human testimony is not so hard-edged as are pieces of metal, and guessing about probabilities in a complicated series of disputable events is a more treacherous business. It is much better to admit that we do not know. We do not know, for example, what became of the Casket Letters on which Mary Queen of Scots was accused in 1568. Lists have been made of the number of historians who have regarded them as genuine, of those who treated them as forgeries, and of a third class who considered them to be pieces of Mary's writing mixed with false pieces. But the question is impossible of satisfactory determination, because the originals have disappeared. The only safe course is to state the facts as to their production, why they were used against Mary, that she was never allowed to handle them, or to have them examined in her behalf, that she denied their truth, and that the

commissioners who had the documents before them as evidence against her did not venture to condemn her. What was in the sealed packet which Queen Anne always carried about with her, and which by her direction was burnt unopened after her death? Was Louis XVII worried to death in the Temple, or, as M. Lenotre suggests, was he spirited away and another dying boy put in his place? Is the *Testament Politique* ascribed to Richelieu the work of his hands? Did Cromwell ever seriously consider the assumption of the crown of England? Certainty fails us on these and a multitude of other points; we are only sure that we do not know. Where the probabilities are strong, we can say so, but probability and certainty are, after all, distinguishable things.

A great master of history, who had the art of handling large masses of fact with such a comprehensive grasp that he hardly ever wrote a dull page, said that the dullness of some works of history was attributable to four causes: 'because the leading characters are not individualised, because the salient facts are not brought into due relief, because the dramatic situations are missed, because the style does not rise or fall in sympathy with the significance of the events and the emotions they evoke.'<sup>1</sup> Another cause of dull work which may be added to these, is that to so many writers facts are just facts and nothing more. No attempt is made to reach the ideas that lay behind the facts. A book which is not liberally informed with ideas is almost always dull. A reader wants to know not merely that so many hundreds of things occurred, but why they occurred, and what ideas were at work in

<sup>1</sup> Bryce, *University and Historical Addresses*, p. 354.

the minds of those who caused them. In a word, facts require to be spiritualised. Too many books are produced in which the facts have not even been well absorbed by the minds of the writers. They are compilations. There has not been that digestion of the material without which it cannot have real meaning for the writer, and is likely to convey not much intellectual nourishment to the reader.

In other terms, it is necessary to see not merely the succession of events but their connection. 'Facts are intelligible and instructive,' it has been well said, 'or, in other words, history exhibits truths as well as facts—when they are seen not merely as they follow, but as they correspond; not merely as they have happened, but as they are paralleled.'<sup>1</sup> But this principle introduces the element of generalisation, which calls for a very rare kind of intellectual effort. Great knowledge and imagination in combination are requisite to draw from the multitude of facts those conclusions which show the coherency of them, their veritable meaning and their moral import. Generalisation is harder to achieve in this generation than it has been hitherto, because the huge quantity of fresh material which has been made available has not yet been absorbed into the common stock of historical knowledge. The minuteness of modern criticism has wormholed the panelling; there are few sound boards remaining. The process of reconstruction must go much farther than it has so far gone before we can survey the entire range of knowledge with any confidence that valuable general conclusions can be drawn. F. W. Maitland, troubled by this phenomenon, thought that

<sup>1</sup> Acton, *History of Freedom and other Essays*, p. 234.

' though history may be an art, it is falling out of the list of fine arts and will not be restored thereto for a long time to come. It must aim at producing not aesthetic satisfaction but intellectual hunger.'<sup>1</sup>

The search for new truth necessarily disturbs what has been heretofore accepted as truth, and it is quite right that it should. But the disturbance prevents that settling of ideas by means of which, out of a wide range of accepted conclusions, large generalisations can be satisfactorily established.

We are well aware that many who are not concerned with historical investigation question its value. But since we must have ideas about things, it is imperative to men who prefer truth to falsehood that they should be true ideas. The search is pursued not, indeed, to make mankind materially richer, to evoke sensational discoveries, to create new fields for exploitation, but simply and solely to add to the sum of truth. It is desirable constantly to emphasise the importance of this point of view, because there is a persistent attempt to underrate the necessity of investigation for the sake of ascertaining truth, apart from some material value which may inhere to some kinds of truth when ascertained. There are influences at work which disparage all enquiry except that which is directed towards material gain. Those influences find their way into Universities and are commonly active among those who criticise University work. The first and obvious answer to such criticism is that no one can tell what may be the material value of any truth. Half a century ago, electricity was not much more than a subject of scientific curiosity. To-day it is the greatest

<sup>1</sup> F. W. Maitland, *Collected Papers*, iii. p. 294.

physical power at the disposal of mankind. But quite apart from such material benefits as may follow from the investigation of truth, there is the morally grander object of finding truth because it is truth, and for that reason worthy of being known. One has heard argument which questioned whether it was worth while for a writer to have occupied his time investigating such a question as the landfall of Christopher Columbus in the West Indian islands, on his first voyage in 1492. The point was advanced: 'What does it matter where Columbus made his landfall? The important fact is that he made it somewhere, and thus led to the discovery of America.' (This, by the way, was a little better than what most men would have said, that Columbus 'discovered' America; but the same 'what does it matter?' might have been urged as to that—the thing for the plain man being, presumably, that America was discovered by somebody, some time, and is now a very considerable fact.) The question was put to the critic: 'Then you admit that it is important to know that Columbus did make this discovery?' 'Certainly, because that led to great things.' 'Then, as it is admitted that we must have some idea of what Columbus did, and where he did it, is it not important that we should have a true idea about it? If not, are we to admit that it does not matter whether our ideas about important things are true or false?' That is the root motive for all research—to promote the currency of true ideas. The same ideal prompted Bacon and Descartes to work out methods for the pursuit of truth. This instinct for the discovery of truth it is which makes for the intellectual salvation of mankind.

## X

### THE LIVING FORCE OF HISTORY

No nation can escape the influence of its history. Peter Schlemihl in Chamisso's story managed to sell his shadow, and was sorry for having made the bargain, but not even in imagination can a nation be pictured as getting rid of the long chain of causes which brought it into being, and continue to exert their force upon it. The Bolsheviks are accused of having destroyed tons of documents which were found in the archives of Russia, but destroying the detailed records which might be useful to historians is not destroying history. Much of the most important part of history is by no means destructible. A nation itself might disappear, but even then its history would not be blotted out. The influence of the dead nation upon others would remain. We cannot, if we would, shake off the traces of the most remote history known to us. 'The activities of the palaeolithic age,' we are assured by experts, 'have helped to build modern Europe, and its effects persist; individuals of "Aurignacian" descent, physically true to type, are among us still.'<sup>1</sup> This persistence of human forces is what gives vitality to history. The stuff of it is not dead, but eternally active. It is to nations what

<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge Ancient History*, I. vi.

heredity is to individuals. Our ancestors have transmitted to us more than a physical frame. They help to shape our impulses and affect our mode of looking at things. Nations are woven textures whose threads were spun centuries ago, and the material will not wear out. John Fiske, the American historian, studying the Puritanism of New England, was struck by the fact that a very large number of the founders of that part of his country came from the eastern and east-midland counties of old England, and that those counties were most exposed to the Viking influence seven centuries before the Puritan migration. Facts of that kind reveal the spiritual kinship of past and present.

Fresh history is continually being made, but the policies and occurrences which make it are also to a large extent determined by the past. No statesman or party ever has a free hand. Even in revolutions which have made the most emphatic breaks with the past, the slate has never been wiped clean ; there has never been a *tabula rasa* upon which to write an entirely new future. When the revolted American colonies cast off their allegiance to the crown of Great Britain, they had as good a chance of making a clean start on fresh lines as has ever been vouchsafed to a people. They were remote from European influences. They possessed public men whose minds were full of political ideas believed to be original. There was nobody to disturb them in erecting a system of government superior to anything ever seen on earth before. But there are two features of the American constitution which are just as much dominated by the history of England as if the statesmen who framed it had been

under compulsion to enshrine these characteristics in the new instrument. These are, its monarchy and its Puritanism. The President of the United States was intended to be 'a reduced and improved copy of the English king.' There had to be a head to the state, and the makers of the constitution took as their model the only kind of head of a state with which they were familiar. They provided that he should be elected, and they called him a President. But the President is 'George III shorn of a part of his prerogative by the intervention of the Senate in treaties and appointments, of another part by the restriction of his action to federal affairs, while his dignity as well as his influence are diminished by his holding office for four years instead of for life.'<sup>1</sup> Secondly, the constitution of the United States is strongly tinged with New England Puritanism. Bryce puts this point with felicity :

'Someone has said that the American Government and Constitution are based on the theology of Calvin and the philosophy of Hobbes. This at least is true, that there is a hearty Puritanism in the view of human nature which pervades the instrument of 1787. It is the work of men who believed in original sin, and were resolved to leave open for transgressors no door which they could possibly shut.'<sup>2</sup>

Repeatedly in modern British politics, the historical factors in current situations have dictated results, or at least have decidedly influenced them. Whether the arguments for Protection in Great Britain are good or otherwise is not for present consideration, but there can be no dispute that those who have advanced them within recent years have had more than Free Trade

<sup>1</sup> Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, i. p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* i. 306.



arguments to answer. They have had the 'hungry forties' to answer, they have Cobden and Bright and Peel to answer, they have been assailed with the Corn Laws and the Navigation Acts, and these things of the past have been more effective in the decision than statistics and solemn assertions of the new political economy. There could be no greater folly than to scoff at this 'resurrection of the past' as unworthy of consideration. Why should not experience enter into the consideration of living problems? Why may not a sensible man say: 'What you propose proved in the days of my forefathers to be injurious; show me that the case against it which was deemed sufficient then, is not still a good case'? Politicians who ignore the past court failure and deserve it.

This is one of the reasons for taking care that the history which forms part of the mental constitution of the masses should be true history. Who can measure the mischief that has been done in keeping alive national animosities by the prevalence of quite false views of what has happened in the past? An eminent American historian whose special field of work is the colonial period of his country's history has written: 'It is an unhappy fact that more errors in the writing of American history have been committed in the name of Patriotism than were ever dreamed of in Horatio's philosophy.'<sup>1</sup> A history circle meeting at the City Club in New York published in 1917 a little book setting forth a somewhat startling list of text-books used in American schools wherein the facts concerning the War of Independence were misrepresented or were

<sup>1</sup> C. M'Lean Andrews, in *American Historical Review*, Oct. 1918, p. 104.

defectively stated in essential particulars, and in another book dealing with *British-American Discords and Concords*, the same circle comment on 'the fanciful tale which has thrilled American children and has coloured in later life all of their thought of England.'<sup>1</sup> Mr. Owen Wister, the eminent American novelist, observes that :

'Thousands of our American school children all over our country are still being given a version of our revolution and the political state of England then, which is as faulty as was George III's government, with its fake parliament, its rotten boroughs, its Little Sarum. . . . These books have laid the foundation from which has sprung the popular prejudice against England. It has descended from father to son. It has been further solidified by many tales for boys and girls, written by men and women who acquired their inaccurate knowledge at our schools.'<sup>2</sup>

It is proper to add that American historians of eminence have been foremost in correcting these popular errors, in books which during the past twenty years have been published about the revolution.

Irish grievances against England are based rather upon remote history than upon political facts which have been current for at least a quarter of a century. Sir Horace Plunket once said that 'Anglo-Irish history is a thing for Englishmen to remember and for Irishmen to forget'; and another writer, not native to the isle, insists that 'Irish history demands tolerance for Irish politics.' To the latter observation it might be added that events in Irish politics on several occasions require some tolerance for Irish history. But however

<sup>1</sup> *British-American Discords and Concords* (1918), p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> Owen Wister, *The Ancient Grudge*, pp. 88 and 91.

we shape the formula, Ireland is a country where historical issues are always high-power wires with defective insulation. Lord Morley related that while he was Chief Secretary for Ireland in 1893, 'One day there happened to be a considerable faction-fight in Cork. I asked at the Castle what it was about. "Oh, it was the old quarrel between the two earls in the time of Queen Elizabeth!" Here was the fatality of history indeed!' But it is legitimate to wonder how much of the Irish history that is commonly believed is any better than traditional passion. Works that really explain, like Dr. George O'Brien's *Economic History of Ireland*, and the temperate and patient writings of Mr. Robert Dunlop, probably have not enough unrectified spirit in them for patriotic consumption; they do not scorch the throat on the way down.

But whether the history be of things gracious to remembrance or otherwise, it works in the present. Bismarck acutely said: 'Mistakes committed in statesmanship are not always punished at once, but they always do harm in the end. The logic of history is a more exact and a more exacting accountant than is the strictest national auditing department.' This is what is meant by 'the Living Past.' Many survivals, fortunately, are pleasant reminders of old customs, old ways of thinking and speaking, old systems of law and government, and where they do no harm it is agreeable to let them survive to remind us of our inheritance. But many survivals are reminiscent of old antagonisms, old mistakes in policy, and settlements that settled nothing. When Frenchmen and Germans dispute as to whether the Rhinelands are properly the territory of one or the other nation, the student of the Middle

Ages remembers that when the sons of Charles the Great split up the Frankish Empire, Charles the Bald taking the French realms and Louis the German those lying to the east of the Rhine, the central belt was Lothaire's portion, and Lorraine still perpetuates with his name the centuries-old quarrels of three excessively contumacious brothers. The fires of the Reformation still smoulder and occasionally send forth some rather stifling smoke. Austria governed Bohemia for three centuries after the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War in 1618, but the battle of the White Mountain was never forgotten by the Bohemians, and, strangely enough, the regaining of the independence of their country at the conclusion of the Great European War, was accompanied by a remarkable revival of the distinctively Bohemian form of Protestantism, which derived from the heretic John Huss, who in turn derived his ideas from the English Lollards of the fifteenth century. Not all the welter of polyglot races who have poured into America during the past century have obliterated the traces of English Puritanism. Indeed, the English 'nonconformist conscience,' of which we used to hear much, is not nearly so aggressive an organ as is the Puritan conscience of the eastern states of the great American union. In innumerable instances which the historical student may watch in the political and social life of his own time, he has the fact impressed upon him that history does not die. It lives in the bones of people.

Sometimes a period is referred to as being one of transition. The phrase has little meaning. All ages are ages of transition. What is meant is that there are some periods which seem to have the character of

twilight, lying between two periods which have emphatic characteristics. The period when the decay of feudalism appears to be marked, and before the Reformation was fairly launched, has been said to have been a period of transition. That between the end of the age of Louis XIV and the Seven Years' War may be another. A third would be in English history that between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the Reform Act of 1832. But really so-called periods of transition are simply periods when the events are less startling than at other times. They are never less important; and if some think them less interesting, it all comes again to the question—what is interesting? There are probably no periods when history of great consequence was not being made. The mis-named Dark Ages are not dark, unless one chooses to be wilfully ignorant of them. They are, in fact, full of animation and immensely preparatory of great things to come. The foundations of Europe were being relaid then, and new nations being bound together. The term 'age of transition' ought to be banished from the vocabulary of historians, since every age must be a link between a past and a future, and one is just as much and as little a transition age as another. The now is always the bridge between the then that was and the then that will be, receiving impulsions and transmitting them.

The past is so much with us, and we have had to insist so much upon its imminence, that the impression sought to be conveyed may even seem to be that it is hopeless to try to escape from it. Generally speaking, that is so, but while we have no command over the forces which have shaped the world as we face it, we

have some control over the mode in which they shall shape the future. How much control we have, and how it shall be exerted, is a political question. The great lesson of history is that human things never have been and never can be static. Change is the first law of all being. We adopt many devices for giving stability to our affairs, but there is not a human institution which has not changed and is not changing under our eyes. The human body itself has changed, and human nature has changed. Nothing could be more alien to the facts than the common statement that human nature is the same in all ages. The more we study conditions of society in different periods extending over a wide range of centuries, the more it is impressed upon us that men in the past did not think and act in the same way as men do now. But among human beings the changes do not work along straight lines. Traces of the characteristics of one age linger far into later ages. Medieval men live and move in the modern world, and the instincts of primitive man burst out upon us unexpectedly from people born into an age that thought it had left the brute stage of development far behind. But that affords no adequate ground for assuming that there has not been a general movement away from the ethic of primitive man. We are, in fact, shocked and hurt by occurrences such as at one time shocked very few people, or none. If human nature had not changed, there would be little hope of achieving any widespread improvement worth having, and it is because it has changed, and is capable of further salutary change, that history encourages hopes rather than despair.

Livy, in the preface to the history of the Roman

people which he wrote in the first century B.C., said : 'There is this exceptionally beneficial and fruitful advantage to be derived from the study of the past, that you see, set in the clear light of historical truth, examples of every possible type. From these you may select for yourself and your country what to imitate, and also what, as being mischievous in its inception and disastrous in its issues, you are to avoid.' Nearly two thousand years have rolled by since that was written, and we are thereby richer in experience than mankind ever was before. 'And with the study of the past in all its forms,' as Mr. F. S. Marvin has written, 'our interest in the future has been immeasurably enhanced.' That is the encouraging feature of historical study. It should not reveal to us a past squatting like a gargoyle mocking the living generations, but should make us realise that there is no good reason why the splendours of the past should not be eclipsed and the deplorable things in the past avoided.

The living force of history consists not only in the forms of government which have been developed, the institutions which have been established and have been continually adapted to the service of society, but in the way it works in the psychology of peoples, and in the innumerable utilities which have been placed at our service by the discoveries and the labours of our forbears. It is easy to be eloquent on the theme that we are the heirs to all the ages, but how many reflect on the great quantity of little things which have been perfected by generations of users? Such humble agricultural implements as the hoe and the spade represent much experiment and adaptation. The plough is deserving of a history all to itself. Max

Müller dwelt upon the interesting fact that the word for plough in Sanskrit and kindred languages is the same word as that for a pig's snout. It was the implement for turning up the ground, and the primitive plough was a very crude wooden device for scratching the surface of the soil. There is a history of centuries of development between that simple thing and a modern three-furrow plough or a stump-jumping plough. Bone needles have been found in primitive lake-villages ; and only within the past few months an excavator in Asia Minor found the first stylus that has come to light, used for writing picture-characters on wet clay. Between those implements and modern machine needles and fountain pens, there is also an immensity of human experience, acquired slowly, and all helping man forward. The very surface of the earth as we know it to-day has been created by man, except in especially favourable areas. The drainage of swamps, the clearing of forests, the irrigation of ill-watered areas, are just as much important facts in history as are Magna Carta, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Napoleonic Wars. In all 'new countries' there are pieces of territory which were at one time declared to be valueless for purposes of settlement, but upon which there are now thriving communities. These things are part of the fabric of history. Everything that has contributed to make the earth habitable and life upon it agreeable, is part of history. The work of navigators and explorers, who opened up the ocean routes and revealed the nature of the great land surfaces, the labours of inventors, the works of imagination and art, the writings of the philosophers who have applied themselves to the essential problems



of being and of thought, are items in the sum of historic things.

Croce's proposition that 'every true history is contemporary history,' is well enough. 'Contemporaneity,' he insists, is 'an intrinsic characteristic' of history. It is, no doubt; but contemporaneity is not everything. The real meaning of events is rarely apparent to contemporaries, and they are apt to miss the things of greatest importance in the long run because they are immersed in a multiplicity of matters that do not matter. 'Consider history,' Carlyle bids us, 'with the beginnings of it stretching firmly into the remote time, emerging darkly out of the mysterious eternity, the true epic poem and universal divine scripture.' The sublimity of the survey, thus contemplated, does not need to be stressed. But we should consider it also as an influence upon living generations—educationally as a discipline with its own value for the forming of intellectual habits; scientifically as a field of knowledge of inexhaustible richness, and a method for the investigation of truth.

## INDEX

- Acton, Lord, 17, 24, 45, 78, 146, 161, 163, 190, 200.
- Alison, *History of Europe*, 32.
- Allen, Grant, 148.
- Allen, J. W., *Place of History in Education*, 118, 129.
- Allen, P. S., *Age of Erasmus*, 33, 91.
- Ampère and Oersted, 97.
- Andrews, C. M'L., 206.
- Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 11, 125, 189.
- Anne, Queen, 199.
- Aristotle, 97.
- Arkwright, 101.
- Aulard, A., 147, 153.
- Auld, *Life in Ancient Britain*, 94.
- Bacon, 97, 202.
- Balkans, 66.
- Bancroft, G., 42.
- Bannockburn, 189.
- Bassett, *American Historians*, 43.
- Batiffol, L., *La Duchesse de Chevreuse*, 26.
- Beaconsfield, Lord, 150.
- Belloc, H., *Warfare in England*, 164; on Crécy, 170.
- Berthelot, *Science et libre pensée*, 114.
- Bias, 193.
- Biography, English, 89.
- Bismarck, 208.
- Black, Professor, 101.
- Blanc, Louis, 154.
- Bland, Brown and Tawney, *English Economic History*, 124.
- Bohemia, 209.
- Bolingbroke, *Study and Use of History*, 18.
- Boswell, 147.
- Boyle, 103.
- British American Discords and Concords*, 207.
- Bruyère, *Les Caractères*, 75.
- Bryce, Lord, *American Commonwealth*, 43, 205; *Memories of Travel*, 67; *Study of American History*, 131, 166; *University and Historical Addresses*, 131, 199.
- Buckle, *History of Civilisation*, 49.
- Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution*, etc., 3, 17, 31, 75, 152, 166.
- Burns, C. Delisle, *Political Ideals*, 166.
- Bury, J. B., *Idea of Progress*, 19; *Introduction to Gibbon*, 37; *Inaugural Lecture*, 111, 174.
- Calendar, reform of, 12.
- Cambridge Ancient History*, 11, 203.
- Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, 28, 146.
- Cambridge History of English Literature*, 145.
- Cambridge History of India*, 67.

- Cambridge Mediaeval History*, 52,  
56, 58, 113, 195.  
*Cambridge Modern History*, 12,  
171.  
 Carlyle, 41, 70, 120, 163, 214.  
 Carpenter, Bishop, 3.  
 Cartwright's power loom, 102.  
 Casket letters, 198.  
 Cecil, Lady Gwendolen, *Life of  
Robert, Marquis of Salisbury*,  
150.  
 Chadwick, *Origin of the English  
Nation*, 59.  
 Chamberlain, Basil, *Things Jap-  
anese*, 61.  
 Chamberlain, H. S., *Foundations  
of the Nineteenth Century*, 38.  
 Charlemagne, 76.  
 Chaucer, 194.  
 Chesterfield, reform of calendar,  
12.  
 Chronology, 11.  
 Clarendon, *History of the Rebel-  
lion*, 127.  
 Clifford, *Further India*, 57.  
 Cobden, 55.  
 Coke, 191.  
 Columbus, 62, 202.  
 Comnena, Anna, 65.  
 Constantine, Donation of, 27.  
 Constantinople, capture of, 196.  
 Cook, James, 186.  
 Copernicus, 97.  
 Coquelle, 189.  
 Cowper, 152.  
 Cramb, *Germany and England*,  
149, 192.  
 Crécy, 170.  
 Creighton, M., 111, 134.  
 Croce, *On History*, 34, 167, 194,  
214.  
 Cromer, Lord, 14.  
 Crompton, 101.  
 Cromwell, 71, 74, 199.  
 Crusades, 65.  
  
 Danton, 154.  
 Darwin, 25.  
  
 Davis, H. W. C., *England under  
the Normans*, 185.  
 Defoe, *The True Born English-  
man*, 108.  
 Descartes, 202.  
 Deschanel, Paul, *Gambetta*, 46.  
 Disraeli, *Contarina Fleming*, 87.  
 Dorsetshire labourers, 7.  
 Douzat, A., *Légendes, Prophéties  
et Superstitions de la Guerre*,  
156.  
 Douglas, N., *Old Calabria*, 114.  
 Driault, E., 112, 146; *Histoire  
de la Civilisation*, 133.  
 Drinkwater, J., *Oliver Cromwell*,  
139.  
*Dropmore Papers*, 105.  
 Duffy, C. G., 41.  
 Dunlop, R., 208.  
  
 Economic History, 172.  
 Education and History, 117.  
 Elliot, Hugh, *Human Character*,  
159.  
 Ellis, Havelock, 148.  
 Elton, G., *The Revolutionary Idea*,  
74.  
 Engels, F., 172.  
 English Historical Association,  
120.  
 Esquemelin, *Buccaneers of Ame-  
rica*, 115.  
  
 Farrer, W., wheat breeding, 107.  
 Figgis, *Divine Right of Kings*,  
189.  
 Findlay, J. J., *History and its  
Place in Education*, 118.  
 Fisher, H. A. I., 38, 85.  
 Fiske, 204.  
 Flaubert, *Salambo*, 138.  
 Fleming, J. H., *England under  
the Lancastrians*, 125.  
 Flinders, M., 63.  
 Fortescue, J. W., 157.  
 France, Anatole, 8, 130.  
 Francis II. of Austria, 149.  
 Frederic the Great, 78.

- Freeman, E. A., 164; *Norman Conquest*, 95.  
 French, General, his 'contemptible little army,' 157.  
 Froude, J. A., 145, 190; *Reign of Elizabeth*, 122, 130.  
 Gambetta 154.  
 Gardiner, S. R., 26, 123, 147, 168.  
 Gasquet, *The Eve of the Reformation*, 193.  
 Geography, History and, 46.  
 George, H. B., *Historical Evidence*, 170.  
 Gibbon, 36, 39, 122, 123, 130, 163, 166, 181, 196.  
 Gooch, *History of English Ideas in the Seventeenth Century*, 18; *History and Historians*, 32, 174.  
 Gourmont, R. de, *Pendant l'orage*, 89.  
 Green, J. R., *Short History of the English People*, 32, 119, 176, 187, 190.  
 Gregory XIII., 12.  
 Grote, G., *History of Greece*, 32.  
 Guedalla, P., *The Second Empire*, 83.  
 Hakluyt, *Voyages*, 46, 59.  
 Halevy, *Histoire du Peuple Anglais*, 155.  
 Halifax, *Character of Charles II.*, 127.  
 Hallam, 163.  
 Hargreaves, 101.  
 Hart, *American History told by Contemporaries*, 124.  
 Hanotaux, 112.  
 Harrison, F., *The Meaning of History*, 130; *Early Victorian Literature*, 162.  
 Harvey, 97, 103.  
 Hearnshaw, *Main Currents of European History*, 134.  
 Hebert, 192.  
 Hero theory, 73.  
 Heylyn, P., *Microcosmus*, 46.  
 History, 189.  
 Hobbes, 17.  
 Huntingdon, E., *Civilisation and Climate*, 48.  
 Huss, J., 209.  
 Huxley, 111, 194; *Darwiniana*, 112.  
 Inge, Dean, 19, 103, 148, 159.  
 Innes, *England and the British Empire*, 30.  
 International Moral Congress, 132.  
 Invention, 102.  
 Jacks, L. P., 20.  
 Jenks, *History of the Australasian Colonies*, 29; *Short History of Politics*, 179.  
 'Jingo,' 150.  
 John, King, 187.  
 Johnson, Samuel, 143, 147.  
 Keatinge, M. W., *Studies in the Teaching of History*, 118.  
 Kray, *The First Crusade*, 66.  
 Lamarck, 97.  
 Lamartine, *Nelson*, 154.  
 Lapérouse, 29.  
 Laprade, 189.  
 Larson, *Canute the Great*, 95.  
 Lavoisier, 97.  
 Lecky, *History of England*, 127.  
 Lenôtre, 199.  
 Livy, 211.  
 Locke, 17.  
 Lorraine, 209.  
 Louis XVII., 199.  
 Loveless, G., 7.  
 Macaulay, 31, 40, 75, 78, 122, 127, 130, 145, 161, 162, 181, 191.  
 MacDonald, Ramsay, *The Socialist Movement*, 174.  
 M'Kechnie, *Magna Carta*, 187.  
 Mackenzie, W. M., 189.

- M'Laughlin, A., 17.  
 Magellan, 187.  
 Magna Carta, 187, 191.  
 Mahomet, 52, 58.  
 Maitland, F. W., 118; *Collected Papers*, 200.  
 Marvin, F. S., *Progress and History*, 19, 98, 115, 212.  
 Marx, 173.  
 Mary Stuart, 198.  
 Mathiez, A., *La Revolution Française*, 193.  
 Mattingley, *Outlines of Ancient History*, 192.  
 Mawer, *The Vikings*, 95.  
 Method, historical, 23.  
 Michael, W., *Englische Geschichte*, 155.  
 Mill, J. S., on Character, 6; 21, 76; on Imagination, 181.  
 Mills, R. C., *The Colonization of Australia*, 28.  
 Mitford, *History of Greece*, 31.  
 Mommsen, 181; *History of Rome*, 191.  
 Money values, 105.  
 Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, 108.  
 Monypenny and Buckle, *Life of Disraeli*, 88.  
 Morgan, L., *Ancient Society*, 93.  
 Morley, Lord, 148, 208; *Politics and History*, 3, 73, 82; *Life of Cobden*, 55; *Life of Gladstone*, 88; *Recollections*, 108, 118, 166; *Walpole*, 127.  
 Motley, *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, 123.  
 Müller, Max, 213.  
 Munsterberg, *The Americans*, 109.  
 Napoleon I., 3, 14, 79, 83, 154.  
 Napoleon III., 154.  
 Newman, 142.  
 Newton, 97, 103.  
 Niebuhr, 174.  
 Nietzsche, 178.  
 Novels, historical, 137.  
 Oates, Titus, 192.  
 O'Brien, *Economic History of Ireland*, 208.  
 Oersted and Ampère, 97.  
 Oman, *Colonel Despard and other Studies*, 66, 166, 192; *England Before the Norman Conquest*, 184.  
 Owen, R., 26.  
 Page, W., *Life and Letters*, 50.  
 Paine, *Rights of Man*, 17.  
 Parnell, 191.  
 Patriotism, history and, 140.  
 Paul, H., *Life of Froude*, 190.  
 Pease, Edward, 102.  
 Phillip, Arthur, 28.  
 Pitt (the elder), 144.  
 Pitt-Rivers, *Evolution of Culture*, 178.  
 Plunket, H., 207.  
 Pollard, A. F., 189; *Factors in Modern History*, 4; 31, 38; *Political History of England*, 105.  
 Pollock, J., 161.  
 Prescott, 163.  
 Problems, historical, 183.  
 Ramsay, *Foundations of England*, 106; *Genesis of Lancaster*, 170.  
 Ranke, 138, 145, 174; *History of England*, 82, 155.  
 Rhinelands, 208.  
 Rhodes, J. F., *Historical Essays*, 36, 165.  
 Richelieu, *Testament Politique*, 199.  
 Robertson, J. M., 20.  
 Robespierre, 154, 193.  
 Rogers, J. D., *Australasia*, 30.  
 Rose, J. Holland, 189; *William Pitt and National Revival*, 106, 167; *Origins of the War*, 147.  
 Ross, Sir R., 50.  
 Ruskin, 148; *Modern Painters*, 68.

- Salisbury, Lord, 150, 160.  
 Savery's steam pump, 101.  
 Schlozer, L. A., 104.  
 Science and history, 93.  
 Scott, Sir Walter, *Ivanhoe*,  
*Quentin Durward*, 138.  
 Seignobos, 111.  
 Semple, E. C., *Influence of*  
*Geographical Environment*,  
 47.  
 Shakespeare, 149.  
 Shelley, 166.  
 Siegfried, A., *Tableau Politique*,  
 68.  
 Smith, D. Nicol, 'Johnson and  
 Boswell,' 145.  
 Smith, Captain John, *Travels*  
*and Works*, 54.  
 Spencer, Herbert, on character,  
 6, 86; on patriotism, 148;  
 on historians, 155; *First*  
*Principles*, 112; *Education*,  
 135; *Essays*, 136.  
 Statistics, 104.  
 Steed, H. W., *The Hapsburg*  
*Monarchy*, 149.  
 Stephenson's locomotive, 102.  
 Stiles, C., 50.  
 Stone, T. G., *England under the*  
*Restoration*, 125.  
 Stubbs, W., *Introductions to the*  
*Rolls Series*, 127; *Lectures*  
*on Early English History*,  
 151.  
 Sumptuary laws, 137.  
 Sydenham, Lord, 10.
- Talleyrand, 154.  
 Teggart, F. J., *The Processes of*  
*History*, 25, 52.  
 Tennyson, H., *Tennyson, a Me-*  
*moir*, 163.  
 Thompson, B., *Victoria History*  
*of Northamptonshire*, 56.  
 Tillemont, 30.
- Tout, *Political History of England*,  
 169.  
 Transition, ages of, 209.  
 Treitschke, 21, 82.  
 Trevelyan, G. M., *British History*  
*in the Nineteenth Century*,  
 11, 192; *Clio, a Muse*, 37,  
 131-2; *England under the*  
*Stuarts*, 106; on Garibaldi,  
 155.
- Usher, R. G., *Critical Study of*  
*the Historical Method of*  
*S. R. Gardiner*, 168.
- Valla, L., 27.  
 Valmy, battle of, 55.  
 Vandal, *L'Avenement de Bona-*  
*parte*, 84.  
 Van Dyke, *Catherine de Medici*,  
 125, 189.  
 Vespucci, 62.  
 Vickers, K., *England in the*  
*Later Middle Ages*, 170.  
 Von Ruville, 198.
- Walpole, R., 148.  
 Walzmuller, 62.  
 War, 99, 176.  
 Warner and Martin, *Groundwork*  
*of British History*, 30.  
 Watt, J., 101.  
 Webb, *Industrial Democracy*, 44.  
 Wells, H. G., *Outline of History*,  
 84, 102.  
 Wheeler of Saskatchewan, 107.  
 Wilhelm II., and French's 'con-  
 temptible little army,' 157.  
 Wilson, J. D., *Life in Shake-*  
*speare's England*, 125.  
 Wister, *The Ancient Grudge*, 207.  
 Worcester, Lord, and his pump,  
 101.  
 Wordsworth, 149.  
 Yule, *Marco Polo*, 96.

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