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POLITICS AND HISTORY



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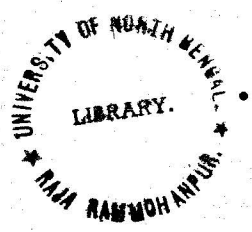
POLITICS AND HISTORY

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POLITICS AND HISTORY.¹

I.

UNIVERSITIES have been boldly ranked by competent historians with trial by jury and parliaments, among leading institutions of the Middle Ages. At any rate in England the power of universities and the public schools that feed them, has been immeasurable in the working of other institutions. They have been main agents in moulding both our secular and ecclesiastical politics. They have worked too often for darkness as well as light. Too often and too long have they been the mirror of stolid prejudice and childish convention; the appendages of old social form and institution, rather than great luminaries dispensing knowledge, and kindling that ardent love of new truth for which youth is the irrevocable season. Power of this high dimension is not likely to be missing in our new universities, though its forms are undergoing rapid revolution. Well was it said, "*C'est toujours le beau monde qui gouverne le monde.*"

¹ A version, amplified and recast, of an address delivered by the writer as Chancellor of the University of Manchester in the summer of 1912.

That is still a great deal more true than people think, even in countries like our own where aristocratic polity has in large degree gone down. But the privileges of the fine world of social class must yield henceforth to the forces that shape temper, judgment, and range of public interest, in educational centres such as yours.

The infusion of their thought and temper is what will impart its colour to the general discussion. It will reduce the number of those who think they have opinions, when in truth they have not. Universities, besides imparting special knowledge, are meant for reason's refuge and its fortress. The standing enemies of reason, in spite of new weapons, altered symbols, changing masks, are what they have always been everywhere. I will spare you the catalogue of man's infirmities. It is both pleasanter and sounder to turn our eyes the other way, to man's strength, and not his weakness—towards equity, candour, diligence, application, charity, disinterestedness for public ends, courage without presumption, and all the other rare things that are inscribed in epitaphs on men of whom kind friends thought well. Wide and stirring is the field.

There is no unkindness, and there is useful truth, especially under popular governments, in pressing people to realise the whole bearings of the commonplace that time and mutations of political atmosphere are incessantly attaching a different significance to the same ideas and the same words. We are so apt

to go on with our manful battles as if the flags and banners and vehement catchwords all stood for old causes. This is only one side of all the changing aspects of the time. I ventured to speak of narrowness of vision. The vision would indeed be narrow, that overlooked the reaction on our own affairs of circumstances outside—the new map of Europe, the shifting balances of fighting strength, Hague tribunals, tariffs, the Panama Canal, strange currents racing in full blast through the rolling worlds of white men, black men, brown men, yellow men.

The most dogmatic agree that truth is prodigiously hard to find. Yet what rouses intenser anger than balanced opinion? It would be the ruin of the morning paper. It takes fire out of conversation. It may destroy the chance of a seat in the Cabinet, and, if you are not adroit, may weary constituents. The reason is simple. For action, for getting things done, the balanced opinion is of little avail or no avail at all. "He that leaveth nothing to chance," said the shrewd Halifax, "will do few things ill, but he will do very few things." As King Solomon put it, "He that considereth the wind shall not sow, and he that looketh to the clouds shall not reap." Moderation is sometimes only a fine name for indecision. The partisan temperament is no gift in a judge, and it is well for everybody to see that most questions have two sides, though it is a pity in a practical world never to be sure which side is right, and to remain as "a cake that is not turned." You even need the

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men of heroic stamp with whom "a hundred thousand facts do not prevail against one idea." Nations are lucky when the victorious idea happens to have at its back three or four facts that weigh more than the hundred thousand put together. Some well-trained observers find history abounding in volcanic outbreaks of fire and flame, seeming to leave behind nothing but hardened lava and frozen mud. Only too true. Only too familiar is the exaggerated and mis-shapen rationalism that shuts out imagination, distrusts sentiment, despises tradition, makes short work alike of the past and of anything like collective or united faith and belief in the present. But to be over-impatient with what may prove by and by to be fertilising Nile floods, is foolishness. They will subside, and a harvest well worth saving remain for the hand of the reaper.

Ardent spirits have common faults in an expectant age. They are so apt to begin where they should end. Pierced by thought of the ills in the world around them, they are overwhelmed by a noble impatience to remove, to lessen, to abate. Before they have set sail, they insist that they already see some new planet swimming into their ken, they already touch the promised land. An abstract *a priori* notion, formed independently of experience and evidence, is straightway clothed with all the sanctity of absolute principle. Generous aspiration, exalted enthusiasm, are made to do duty for reasoned scrutiny. They seize every fact or circumstance

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that makes their way, they are blind to every other. Inflexible preconceptions hold the helm. Their sense of proportion is bad.

Nobody in any camp will quarrel with the view that one of the urgent needs of to-day is a constant attempt to systematise political thoughts, and to bring ideals into closer touch with fact. There can be no reason why that should turn brave and hopeful men into narrow, dry, or cold-hearted. The French Revolution has not realised its ideals. Nor has the Reformation. Even as to Christianity itself, one of the most famous sayings of the eighteenth century—that “Christianity has been tried and failed, the religion of Christ remains to be tried,”—is not even now quite out of date. In a thousand forms, the Manichæan struggle between Good and Evil, between Good and Better, persists. About one-third of the inhabitants of our planet are Christian,—the adherents of the Roman Communion being put at 240 millions, the Protestant Communions at 150, the Greek Church at 100 millions. The Jews, only 10 millions,—lowest in number, but possessing a vast effective power of various kinds in the politics of Europe. The relation of creeds to new phases of social idealism must break into cardinal issues, and light may be thrown upon the interesting question what proportion of the ideas that men live with and live upon, are held open to discussion in their minds, and how many of them are inexorable and sacrosanct. There is good promise that the common temper of willingness to try all

things, and hold fast that which is good, will prevail.¹

It will do us no harm to digest a sobering thought from Locke: "If any one shall well consider the errors and obscurity, the mistakes and confusion, that are spread in the world by an ill use of words, he will find some reason to doubt whether language, as it has been employed, has contributed more to the improvement or hindrance of knowledge among mankind." Dismal as this may be at any time, how especially perturbing to people with such questions before them, as we are called upon to face to-day. Now, if ever, what mistakes and confusion are likely to follow an ill use of political words, and of the ideas that words stand for. What would become of a lawyer in the Courts who argued his cases with the looseness in point and language, the disregard of apt precedents, the slack concatenation of premiss and conclusion, the readiness to take one authority for as good as another,—which even the best of us so often find good enough for politics? Is there any other field where Bacon's hoary idols of Theatre, Tribe, Market-Place, and Cave, keep such contented house together? Five-and-twenty centuries have passed since one great Greek historian, perhaps casting a stone at another, rebuked in famous words the ignorant carelessness of mankind. "People do

¹ For a remarkable consideration of Religion in respect of Politics, see Lord Hugh Cecil's little volume, *Conservatism* (Williams & Norgate, 1912).

not distinguish ; without a test they take things from one another : even on things of their own day, not dulled in memory by time, Hellenes are apt to be all wrong. *So little pains will most men take in search for truth : so much more readily they turn to what comes first.*"¹

To these hints of mine an American newspaper supplied an apt illustration. The number of questions, says the writer, now before the American people, on which it is urgent that they should have an intelligent opinion, is staggering. Take one of the most intricate of them all, what to do with Trusts. How are the masses going to know the precise legal and financial effect of the decree of the court dissolving the Tobacco Trust ? They see eminent lawyers radically differing. They hear politicians railing. Nobody can seriously argue that the intricacies of Trust repression and regulation can be mastered by "the wisdom of the people." What the people can do is to form clear and strong convictions upon the fundamental conceptions that underlie the whole question. A sound public opinion can be formed on the main questions, whether we should try to maintain in trade and industry the possibility of effective competition, or whether combination and monopoly should be undertaken, controlled, and supervised by the State. Get these essentials settled, then legislative, executive, and tribunals can find proper and

¹ Thuc. i. 20 οὕτως ἀταλαίπωρος τοῖς πολλοῖς ἡ διήγησις τῆς ἀληθείας, καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἐποῖμα μᾶλλον τρέπονται.

effective form. Such is an American case. It would be easy, though more delicate, for us to find illustrations quite as apt in the United Kingdom as in the United States.

The ideas and words that seem simplest turn out most complex. If anybody doubts, ask him to try his hand, say on Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.¹ He will be very lucky if, besides being complex, he does not find their contents and applications directly self-contradictory. Of liberty, we have been told on the best authority, there are two hundred definitions. Yet, said Lincoln in their war, "the world has never had a good definition of the word liberty, and the American people, just now, are much in want of one. We all declare for liberty; but in using the same word we do not all mean the same thing. We assume the word liberty may mean for each man to do as he pleases with himself, and the product of his labour; while with others the same word may mean for some men to do as they please with other men, and the product of other men's labour."

Then men will not soon forget Cavour's memorable formula, "A free Church in a free State." What could be simpler, what more direct, what more pleasant and easy jingle to the politician's ear? Yet of what harsh and intractable discords was that

¹ Any one who seeks to explore this all-important field, should not miss F. W. Maitland, *Collected Papers*, i. 1-161; nor Sir James Stephen's three little volumes, *Hours Sabbaticæ* (1892), full of hard close thinking, needing answer and capable of answer.

theme the prelude? The erection of a kingdom of Italy with Rome for its capital was too momentous an event to be comprised in one political formula. It is no hallucination to describe it as the most important fact in European history for two centuries,¹ that is to say since the Peace of Westphalia. One aspect of commanding significance these two supreme landmarks present in common. Each sets the seal upon a transmutation as memorable for States as Churches: from each of them, the system and relations between political and spiritual authority emerge with changed foundations and renovated ordering. The system of the Middle Age is over, though ponderous links of the broken chain still hang round the emancipated ruler's neck.

The most living and familiar of all the phrases in the controversy of our times is Religious Liberty: in France and Italy a burning question; in Ireland, Scotland, and even England, by no means a mere handful of dead historic ashes. Familiar as it is, the designation covers entirely diverse meanings. Leo XIII. found two of them in liberty of conscience: one, liberty of the individual to follow God's commands; the other, freedom to prescribe the divine precepts at his own discretion. Sometimes religious liberty stands for unfettered freedom in uttering and advocating opinion on issues of theology,—its foundations as recorded truth, its interpretations of binding

¹ *Le Droit public et l'Europe moderne*, De la Guéronnière, i. 332.

doctrine, its consistency, or its complete and wholesale incompatibility, with accepted standards and methods in the ever-extending area of positive knowledge and intrepid criticism. Sometimes it designates the claim of a religious body to impose upon faithful and voluntary members, what rules as to marriage, education, congregation, and the rest, its commanding ecclesiastics may choose, with no regard either to surrounding social prepossessions, or to the convenience of the State. Is the principle of religious liberty violated when the police forbid a Catholic procession through the streets of Westminster? Or when a congregation of French monks or nuns is sent packing? Or when an English court of law, as happened only a few years ago, pronounces null and void a bequest to a society holding opinions contrary to Christianity? What of all the strenuous laws and unflinching executive acts in both hemispheres, for a century and a half, against the dreaded Society of Jesus? Greeks and other people in the seventh and eighth centuries, in their struggle with imperial authority, were fond of using religious watchwords that were really inspired by political and racial resentments. And such malpractice has not even yet quitted highly civilised communities not so remote from us as is Stamboul. Still, we may fairly say that in our State at least, within a single generation, a law of tolerance—not indifference, not scepticism, not disbelief, but one of those deep, silent transformations that make history endurable—has really worked its way not

merely into our statutes and courts of justice, but into manners, usage, and the common habits of men's minds.

In the vast field of questions connected with Forms of Government, terms in the commonest employment abound in confusion. Sir George Lewis, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1857, wrote a little book on what he styled the use and abuse of political terms. He does not really carry things much further than the primitive debate of the seven Persian noblemen five centuries before Christ.¹ The book has little sap, but it puts useful posers as to the exact classification, for instance, of the varieties of republic and monarchy. It is democracy where a majority of adult males have direct legal influence in the formation of the sovereign body. It is aristocracy where this majority have no direct legal influence. Is democracy a system in which the many govern or, as Aristotle supposed, a system in which the poor govern? Is it enough to despatch democracy as a system where the career is open to the talents? And so forth, with a general suggestion of loose and inapplicable terms being the links that chain men to unreasonable practices. As if in fact, our incurable trick of taking a word for a thing were not the root of half the mischiefs of the world. A new term has gained strong hold since Lewis's time, but Sociocracy, the hybrid name sometimes given to our still dubious accommodation between democratic expansion and

¹ Herodotus, iii.

plutocracy, is not yet acclimatised. Our own famous ruling assembly has been called the mother of parliaments, and the congenial image justly stirs our national pride. Yet differences in power and the source of power between parent and progeny, almost surpass resemblances. Take the House of Commons itself. Even writers of the first rank speak of its doings, and temper, and prerogative during the war with the American Colonies, or the long war against Napoleon, as if the House of Commons during either of those two momentous episodes was the same as the House of Commons that rules over us to-day—that is to say, was chosen by the popular voice and national acclamation, instead of being, as it was, the nominee of a handful of a privileged order.

In all the vocabularies and catechisms of government, no idea has fired such energy and devotion in the human breast as the idolised name of Republic, unless, to be sure, it may be the name and the idea of Monarchy. In passionate enthusiasm, as well as in cogent force of practical reason, Legitimist and Republican have been many a time well matched. Yet how profoundly diverse in essence, record, and mechanism, the multiple systems that are labelled by the common name of Republic. Cromwell was dictator rather than republican. Venice was of radically different type from Florence. The republic that emerged after the Swiss cantons had thrown off the yoke of Austria, was in form and foundation different from the Dutch system after the overthrow

of Spain. The first French Republic was a very different structure from the second, and the second from the third, and so are they both from the United States of America. I need not speak of the republics where in South America Latin and Catholic civilisation follows a strange and devious course, and where republic means hardly more as a form of government than is meant by monarchy in the distracted Balkans.

Take the Legitimist,—a name invented for the Bourbon line when the first Republic and first Empire were swept away at Vienna in 1815. If we are to understand by legitimate a government that has acquired possession and authority on the ground of acknowledged title through regular succession, treaties, or conquest recognised as legitimate,—which of the European monarchies of to-day satisfy legitimist standards? In England, as we all know, succession to the throne rests upon a revolution,—the result of one of those political expedencies that amount to a necessity—though masters of reasoned eloquence, from Burke to Macaulay, have put upon it a saving face of continuous law and order. In Italy, Belgium, Sweden, Norway, the sovereign wears a revolutionary crown.

Even the consecrated name of Public Opinion,—queen of the world, as it has been so chivalrously called—has many values. One constitutional writer in whom learning has been by no means fatal to wit puts it that the opinion of Parliament is the opinion of yesterday, and the opinion of judges is that of

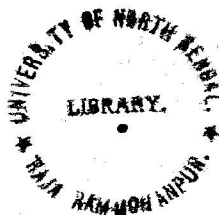
the day before yesterday. That is, the judges go by precedent and old canons of interpretation, while Parliament makes laws, imposes taxes, regulates foreign relations, in response to movements outside.

In arguing for or against an institution, who draws due distinctions between its formal and legal character, and its actual work in practice? Or makes allowance for the spirit of those who carry it on? Or for the weight of its traditional associations? In politics, is it the voice of the electorate? Are there any better grounds for regarding either a majority or a plurality of votes, than that it is a good working political rule? Does the rule work well enough in general practice, to make new expedients—Plébiscites, Referendums, and the rest—pieces of supererogation, calculated to shred away the concentrated force of a governing representative assembly? A very interesting writer of our own time emphasises the non-rational element in politics,—impulses, instinct, reaction. He insists that the empirical art of politics consists largely in the creation of opinion by the deliberate exploitation of non-conscious non-rational inference. This at least is true, that empirical practitioners find it hard to forecast the decisive elements. The press is no safe barometer. In at least three remarkable parliamentary elections since 1874, the result has been an immense surprise to those who had regarded only the line of the most widely read journals in the most important areas: the journals went on one side, the great majority of electors voted the other. Lord

Beaconsfield did not expect his sweeping repulse in 1880. Of Palmerston it was said by Clarendon that he mistook popular applause for real opinion. Nothing is so hard either to reckon or to identify. The idealist is angry or despondent when he finds the public deaf. Literary satire likens popular indifference towards new ideas to the dog barking at a stranger. Or the satirist bethinks himself of the ass who prefers a bundle of hay to a dozen gold pieces. It would be easy to make a good case both for the two honest animals and for the public, and in truth the satire is idle. No doubt ripe judgments and sensibly trained minds are not always received with open arms. The hard and strenuous preoccupations of life naturally first bespeak the common eye. But the ripe temper, if apt and patient, slowly soaks its way, and well-stamped coins find their currency. Representative government exists to-day in a hundred different forms, depending on a hundred differences in social state and history, and nobody claims for public opinion in all or any of them either sanctity or infallibility. But to make a mock of it, is merely to quarrel with human life. We all know the shortcomings in political opinion and character—the fatal contentment with simple answers to complex questions; the readiness, as Hobbes put it, to turn against reason, if reason is against you; violent over-estimate of petty things; vehement agitation one day, reaction as vehement the other way the next; money freely laid on a flashing favourite this week, deep curses on

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what has proved the wrong horse the week after; haste; moral cowardice; futility. But if anybody supposes that these mischiefs are peculiar to parliaments or democracy, he must be strangely ill-read in the annals of military despotism, absolute personal power, centralised bureaucracy, exalted ceremonial courts.

II.

To-day,¹ as it happens, is the anniversary of the birth of Rousseau a couple of hundred years ago. In the French Chamber, on a proposal last week to vote public money for its celebration, one side argued that it was absurd to magnify the father of anarchist theories, at a moment when police were shooting down anarchist bandits in the suburbs of Paris. The other side insisted that Rousseau was the precursor of modern conceptions of social justice, and achieved for all time decisive and persistent influence over French, German, Russian literature. A dozen books in political literature—Grotius, *On the Rights of War and Peace* (1625), for instance, and Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776),—rank in history as wide-spreading acts, not books. Whether a dozen or a hundred, the *Social Contract* assuredly was one. The *Institutions of the Christian Religion*, launched in Geneva two centuries before Rousseau, was another. But Calvin, the Protestant pontiff from France, was no theorist as Rousseau was. The rock on which he

¹ July 12, 1912.

built his Church was his own unconquerable will and unflinching power to meet occasion. This it was, and not merely doctrines and forms of theologic faith, that have made him one of the commanding forces in the annals of the world. Let us note in passing that our fashionable idolatry of great States cannot blind us to the cardinal fact that self-government, threatened with death when Protestantism appeared upon the stage, was saved by three small communities so little imperial in scope and in ideals as Holland, Switzerland, and Scotland. Taking Rousseau and Calvin together, Geneva stands first of the three.

Burke scourged Rousseau's name and his work with an energy only less savage than his onslaught in the same page upon Charles II. He rejoiced that Rousseau had none of the popularity here that followed him over the continent of Europe. Burke went on, as Wordsworth saw him, forewarning, denouncing, launching forth keen ridicule against all systems built on abstract right, proclaiming the majesty of Institutes and Laws hallowed by time, "with high disdain exploding upstart theory." Yet Maine, the most eminent English member of the Burkian school—I do not forget Sir James Mackintosh—tells us that Rousseau, without learning, with few virtues, and with no strength of character, has nevertheless stamped himself ineffaceably on history by the force of a vivid imagination and a genuine love for his fellow-men, for which much will always have to be forgiven him. It was Bentham who so well put

it, that if you want to win mankind, you must make them think you love them, and the best way to make them think you love them is to love them in reality. Rousseau's idyll of the Savoyard Vicar that fascinated the sensibilities of Europe, and struck a new note in imagination and romance, came from the same brain and heart as the political projectiles that served the turn of Robespierre and a host of greater and better men. So the storm of a fresh world-battle opened. In essence it was not new : it was a re-adjustment to new occasion of thoughts and schemes that were very old. The names of Hobbes, Filmer, Sidney, Milton, Harrington, are enough to recall the controversies upon the roots of government and law, *jus naturæ*, *jus gentium*, and so forth, all over Europe, a century before. The historian of political philosophy takes us back to centuries earlier still. Tradition, custom, usage, convention, established institutions—History on one side, Law of Nature and Rights of Man on the other. The feud reached not politics only ; it penetrated philosophy, art, letters, churches, education, in countless forms ; for, we may be sure, the same aspects and influences that strike deep on politics, strike deep all round. Here is the stamp of one of the great ages, whose alternation and succession in history mark its lodestars, and signalise its title to men's praise.

You know the electrifying sentence of Rousseau's *Social Contract* : " Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains. One supposes himself the master

of others, who is none the less for that more of a slave than they are." We need take no pains in our later days of Heredity as one of the established laws of animal existence, to analyse the description of man as born free; and for that matter the idea was older and played its part in writers older and more respectable than Rousseau. It is nearer the mark, so far at any rate as the civilised European of to-day is concerned, to say that he is born two thousand years old. That is what history would mean to our plain man, if he had time and patience to meditate beyond the hour. And it is worth observing as we pass the point of freedom, that Rousseau himself insisted that everybody should pledge himself to belief in the existence of an omnipotent and beneficent divinity, in a life to come where the just should be very happy, and the wicked very miserable. To these and other articles, he said, every citizen should adhere, not as dogmas of religion, but as sentiments of sociability. If he broke away from them, a man should be punished by exile or death, and rationalistic heads were actually struck off in 1794, strictly and avowedly on Rousseau's principle, just as Servetus perished in flames that Calvin kindled, and Sir Thomas More's head was cut off by King Henry VIII., the Protestant Reformer. If, however, the critic lets inconsistency detain him, he is lost. Only let us add as a pendant to Rousseau's dictum, a no less bold and much truer dictum, that man is born intolerant, and of all ideas toleration would seem to be in the general mind the very latest.

It is easy for the judicious observer of a later day to riddle a book like the *Social Contract* with shot and shell of logic, doctrine, figures, history ; just as it was easy for Dr. Johnson to scold Gray's *Elegy*, but none the less the poem remained an eternal delight and solace for the hearts of wearied men. More than one distinguished master of political and legal philosophy in our own day and generation has subjected it to searching analysis, of weight and significance.¹ But what matters more than logic, or dialectic cut-and-thrust, is history,—relations of present to past, leading antecedents, continuous external forces, incidents, and the long tale of consummating circumstance. How often do miscalculations in the statesman, like narrowness and blunder in the historian, spring from neglect of the pregnant and illuminating truth that deeper than men's opinions are the sentiment and circumstances by which opinion is predetermined. "What it is important for us to know with respect to our own age, or every age, is *not its peculiar opinions, but the complex elements of that moral feeling and character, in which as in their congenial soil opinions grow.*"² Here you have a truth, abounding in enrichment, power, insight, and self-collection, for every patient student of mankind,—such a student as in our better hours of the diviner mind it is the business of us all to try to be.

The power of a political book, then, depends on

¹ E.g. Bosanquet's *Philosophical Theory of the State*, 1899.

² Mark Pattison's *Essays*, i. 264.

aptness for occasion as occasions emerge. "What wonderful things are events," cries somebody in one of Disraeli's novels; "the least are of greater importance than the most sublime and comprehensive speculations!" Too widely and fantastically said for cool philosophy, no doubt; yet a fertile truth for critics. Crop depends on soil as well as seed. It is not abstract or absolute strength in argument or conclusion, but the fact, half-accident, of its happening to supply an exciting, impressive, persuasive attack or defence, or some set of formulæ that the passion, need, or curiosity of the hour supposes itself to demand. Books, doctrines, ideas have been compared to the flowers in a garden. 'Tis not always the best argument that prevails, and the gardener wins the prize who chooses his season right. How much of their time do even good writers pass in minting coin that has no currency. And in passing from our glorious dome of printed books in the British Museum to the sepulchral monuments in another department, we may sometimes think that in vitality there is not much to choose between books that once shook the world, and the mortuary figures of Egyptian kings. No piece of literature ever had more instant and wide-reaching power than Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme* (1802). As an argumentative apology it is now counted worthless even by those who most welcome its effect. A friend told him that a picturesque stroke of memory from his travels, a passionate phrase, a fine thought, would win him more readers

than a mountain of Benedictine erudition. He took the hint, and his historic knowledge is little better than decoration. The Frenchmen who thought seriously about the genius of Christianity would have found more of what they wanted in half a dozen sermons of Bossuet or half a dozen pages of Pascal, not to name Augustine or the *Imitatio*, than in all that was to be found in Chateaubriand. But then, as it happened, Bonaparte had just made his Concordat with Pope Pius; he had played his part in solemn pomp at Notre Dame, once more formally associating religion with the State; he had signed the peace with England at Amiens; a rainbow for the moment shone on storm-driven skies and the dark tribulations of men. No book was ever happier in its time, but to neither book nor influence could there be allotted length of days.

As with books, so with principles. Men, whether as bodies or individuals, pick out as much from a principle and its plainer corollaries as convenience and their purpose need. The possible limitations of logical inference are widened or narrowed or thrust aside point-blank, just as actual necessity dictates. The best syllogism is swept down by trumpet-blasts of Public Safety, Social Order, and other fair names for a Reign of Force. A learned American judge found three great instruments in human history—the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, and the Declaration of American Independence. This was perhaps no more than a flash of *obiter*

dictum, and undoubtedly the bench exposed surface to a telling cross-examination. Yet after all Mount Sinai, the Mount of Olives, and State-House Yard in Philadelphia hold commanding stations in the courses of the sun. What we have to realise is the effulgence with which hopeful words, glittering ideas, fervid exhortations, and reforming instruments burst upon communities oppressed by wrong, sunk and sodden in care, fired by passions of religion, race, liberty, property—those eternal fields of mortal struggle. Nothing is easier than to expose fallacies in the Declaration of Independence. The point is that, as an American historian records with truth, it was “the genuine effusion of the soul of the country at the time.”

Yet what a sound instinct for politics addressed to Englishmen of the stamp of the American Colonists, inspired Thomas Paine when he fired the revolutionary train by the most influential political piece that ever was composed, and called it by the wholesome, persuasive, and well-justified name of *Common Sense*. Quarrels about the best form of government, the balance of orders in the State, even natural rights, were comparatively old stories. Men are wont to use so much of such large oracular deliverances as the moment asks. Moral issues, as if almost by accident, suddenly take fire and set a community in a blaze. Four score and seven years passed before a nobler President than Jefferson was able to bring his country round to his faith that, if slavery is not wrong, nothing

is wrong. Thus it is not abstract books that thrive in the day of trouble on either side of the Atlantic Ocean. Who cares to criticise the words in the famous Gettysburg speech about a nation "conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal"? It was, as Burke said, not on abstract politics, but on the point of taxes, that the ablest pens and most eloquent tongues have been exercised, the stoutest spirits have acted and suffered. They took infinite pains to set up as a fundamental principle that in all monarchies the people must in effect themselves mediate or immediately possess the power of granting their own money, or no shadow of liberty could subsist.¹ Not that rates and taxes are everything, or the tax-gatherer the worst of our enemies. Of this, the most powerful example was Burke himself. After his splendid pieces on the contest with the American colonies, the storm that the colonial victory had helped to gather, broke violently over monarchical France. Burke, with marvellous prescience, divined in detail the havoc that would follow; he became an oracle of the emigrant French nobles on the Rhine, and inspirer of the cogent pamphleteers like Gentz, who served or led Metternich at Vienna. Not unjust rates and taxes, but the overthrow of all the high historic commonplaces, were what fired the *Reflections* and the *Regicide Peace*. All the reactionary forces of Europe found the voice they needed. Only, in

¹ *Speech on Conciliation*, March 22, 1775.

seeking cause and effect, let us not confuse the voice with the force. Lamartine's story of the Girondins on the eve of 1848, Thiers' story of the First Empire on the eve of the Second, Mrs. Stowe's picture of slavery, are all books that suffused reason with passion, and turned passion into tumult, but already in each case the train was laid.

III.

Especially easy is it, in the present state of our own country and the world, for the most rudimentary of political observers to realise how possible it is,—nay, how inevitable,—for tremendous political consequences to flow from books and speculations that seem to have nothing to do with politics. Who can measure the influence on our contemporary policies of Darwin and the other literature of *Survival of the Fittest*; and not only on practical politics, but its decisive contributory influence upon active and powerful schools of written history? It is no mere literary whim to count Darwin and the prestige of Prince Bismarck as twin factors in the change of public temper from the nineteenth century to the twentieth. On the other hand, it is blind error to forget how this passing change on the great theatre of states and government from a silver to a bronze age has been accompanied by the spread, on a less resounding stage, of an intenser humanity towards children, animals, victims of cruel disease, men in prisons,

black men slaving in African jungles, and all else in need of pity, succour, and common human-heartedness. It has not all been blood and iron, nor has the rigour of political or social logic prevailed unqualified. So complex, subtle, and impenetrable are the filaments that secretly bind men's thoughts and moods together.

As with books and principles, so with famous actors on the historic stage. When Victor Hugo returned from exile some forty years ago, even competent men who did not much admire either him or his art, felt and admitted that one whose person was circled by the enthusiasm of three generations must be possessed of qualities worthy of honour and exaltation. Him, they said, who knows how to awaken the noblest feelings and impulses in men's breasts, whatever he may be besides,—it is well that we should honour; he is the hearth at which the soul of the country is kindled and kept alive. This diffusion of warm, lofty, and stimulating interests may be better worth the critic's attention than his book's specific contents. Hugo's glory was due as much to the politician as to the poet, and that was the secret of an immense renown, almost to be compared with Voltaire's: with both, the pen was sword.

It was said to a great English statesman of our day, "You have so lived and wrought as to keep the soul alive in England." This is something, after all, apart from the clauses of his Bills. It is a something that may be almost as good as anything. To leave out or lessen personality would be to turn the

record of social development into a void. The genius of Comte produced a reasoned list of the heroes and benefactors of mankind, of which it has been justly said by the most eminent opponent of Comte's constructive system, that a more comprehensive and catholic sympathy and reverence towards every kind of service to mankind is not to be met with in any other thinker. A calendar without Luther, Calvin, or Napoleon needs explanation, but this was founded on his own elaborated and peculiar estimate of positive contribution to the well-being of human society. Each is connected in place and work with the other. That is a very different thing from the adoration of cloud-compelling giants. It is very different, too, from that attachment to the name and person of a teacher and inspirer that is one of the most beautiful of all traits in human character. Select them as you will, in whatever realm of thought, action, or creation, whether from five hundred or five, the first question, and in one sense the last is, What does your hero personify? Nothing, we may be sure, is more fatal than turning history into idolatry. The hero-worship that Carlyle's wayward genius made so popular in our generation, too easily alike in history and in politics, falsifies perspective. Unity of ideas and interests, it is true, in a great man of lofty plan and power of action, affects our imagination with something of the symmetry and attraction of the grandest art—drama, epic, symphony, the figures in the Medicean chapel, the Sistine frescoes. But the

standards of art are bad guides in choosing political heroes. Of Napoleon it was said by one who knew, that he was all imagination : he created an imaginary Spain, an imaginary England, an imaginary Catholicism, imaginary finance, an imaginary France. And Carlyle in time created an imaginary Napoleon for hero-worship.

Unwelcome as it must be to many a deep prepossession, we may as well realise that the doctrine of "fortuitous variation," in which speculation finds the key to new species, has bearings beyond biology. The commanding man in a momentous day seems only to be the last accident in a series ; the unaccountable possessor of skill, talent, genius, will, vision, fitted to create or to control emergencies, or to make revolutions in both the machinery and commodities of life. "After all," said Alexander I. of Russia to Madame de Staël, "I am only a happy accident." "He speaks of me," once said Napoleon, "as if I were a person : I am a thing." Military history shows in a hundred cases some odd turn of chance, fortune, wind and weather, unforeseen and unforeseeable, on a given day deciding battle or campaign. The greatest generals have been the first to own the blind jeopardies of their game, the hazards when men play with the iron dice of war. Last accident or first,—statesman, captain, thinker, inventor,—the precipitating agent appears fortuitous ; comet, not great fixed star—the accident of a peculiar individuality coinciding with opportunity or demand.

If any one should be scandalised by the proposition that the course of history can be deflected by an accident, or should find in it an impious flavour, we should remember that both devout churchmen and deep statesmen, the loftiest champions of adherence to the profoundest pieties of life and time, have been the first and most constant to enlarge upon the impenetrable mysteriousness that hangs about the origin, the course, the working of human societies and their governing institutions. When the Russian Czar, a mystic of the purest water, called himself an accident, he meant no more than a mystery, a power of inscrutable source. Why should we be more shocked at the fortuitous in affairs of government, than in the appearance of the Bachs and Beethovens in music, or Newton, or Watt, or any other of the originating luminaries in art, or science, or productive invention? Of this great question of Progress as spontaneous force or fixed historic law, I will say more before I close.

Truly has it been said of the historic method, that among other of its vast influences, it reduces the element of individual accident to its due proportions; it conceives of national character and national circumstances as the creative forces that they are. An ironical lawyer assures us that it would be better to be convicted of petty larceny than to be found wanting in "historic-mindedness." What is the historic method? Its sway is now universal in the field of social judgment and investigation. It warns us

that we cannot explain or understand without allowing for origins and the genetical side of the agents and conditions with which we have all to deal. It substitutes for dogmas deduced from abstract regions, search for two things. The first, the correlation of leading facts and social ideas with one another, in a given community, at a given time. The second, the evolution of order succeeding to order in common beliefs, tastes, customs, diffusion of wealth, laws, and all the arts of life. Stripped of formality, this only expands the familiar truth that laws and institutions are not made but grow, and what is true of them is true of ideas, language, manners, which are in effect their source and touchstone.

It is easy to see that the ascendancy of the historic method has its drawbacks. Study of all the successive stages in beliefs, institutions, laws, forms of art, only too soon grows into a substitute for direct criticism of all these things upon their merits and in themselves. Inquiry what the event actually was, vital and indispensable as that of course must be, and what its significance and interpretation, becomes secondary to inquiry how it came about. Too exclusive attention to dynamic aspects weakens the energetic duties of the static. More than one school thus deem the predominance of historic-mindedness excessive. It means, they truly say, in its very essence, veto of the absolute, persistent substitution of the relative. Your method is non-moral, like any other scientific instrument. So is Nature in one sense, red in tooth and

claw, only careful for survival of the strongest. There is no more conscience in your comparative history than there is in comparative anatomy. You arrange ideals in classes and series, but a classified ideal loses its vital spark and halo. Every page abounds in ironies. Even figures of high mark turn out political somnambulists. Talk of "eternal political truths," or "first principles of government," has no meaning. Truths become relative errors, and errors to-day were truths yesterday. Stated summarily, is not your history one prolonged "becoming" (*fieri, werden*), an endless sequence of action, reaction, generation, destruction, renovation, "a tale full of sound and fury, signifying nothing"? All is flux, said Heraclitus long centuries ago; no man goes twice down the same stream; new waters are in constant flow; they run down, they gather again; all is overflow and fall. Well, such argument as this, I know, may be hard pressed, and it is in truth a protest for the absolute that cannot be spared to many active causes. But that relative tests and standards are the keys both to real knowledge of history and to fair measure of its actors, is a doctrine not likely to lose its hold.

To-night is not the time for discussing whether there is such a thing as political science. I need not try, for the work has been incomparably well done for our purposes in Sir Frederick Pollock's short volume on the *History of the Science of Politics*. Is there any true analogy between the body politic and the body natural; are the methods and processes of

politics to be brought within sight of the methods and processes of biology? The politician may borrow phrases from the biologist, and talk of embryos, germs, organisms, but surely those are right who insist that we have not come near to the definite creation of an inductive political science.¹ That is certainly no reason why the politician should not reason, nor why the historian should not explore, with the methodical energy, caution, conscience, candour, and determined love of truth that marked Darwin and the heroes of the natural sciences.

Political science suffers from the same defect as political economy in the earlier part of the nineteenth century. There is a strange rarefaction in its atmosphere. The abstract political man wears the same artificial character as the abstract man of the economist. He was usually supposed by the French thinker of Voltaire's day to dwell in China or Persia, or any other chosen land of which, as it actually was, they knew next to nothing; any more than they knew of Canada when they ridiculed the war between England and France as a struggle for thousands of square miles of perpetual snow. We know better now, but the standards of human motive are still applied in arbitrary fashion to what is distant in time or place. Ethical considerations pass for so much ornament. Matters are too much confined to description of political mechanics, without regard to all the varieties of social fuel on which the driving

¹ Maitland, *Collected Papers*, iii. 288.

force depends. The changing growth of new opinion, the effectiveness of political institutions in giving expression to new opinion, are treated as secondary, or not treated at all. The lines laid down by Professor Dicey, in his book on the relation between law and opinion in the nineteenth century, deserve to be followed, and they are sure to be. The science so conceived will realise that the value of political forms is to be measured by what they do. They must express and answer the mind and purposes of a State, in their amplest bearings. I hope all this is not ungrateful to a group of writers in this country, who in the last few years have filled a really important bookshelf in any library pretending to be on the highest level in this truly important sphere—with Green, Pollock, Dicey, Hobhouse, Bosanquet, Wallas, among them. Let nobody suppose that speculations as to the State and its various relations to the Individual are immaterial. It is held that the attempts of certain French teachers to present German theories of the State in French dress, are directly responsible for Syndicalism in France.

Politics, in the sense that I am suggesting, are different from law, because law tends to stereotype thought by forcing it into fixed categories, but political science, rightly handled, is for ever reopening these categories, to examine how they answer to contemporary facts. Political science is wider than law, because its work may be said to begin where law ends. It is less wide than sociology, because it

starts from the assumption of the State with all its rights, powers, and duties.

IV.

Germans have in *Weltanschauung* a word for which I know of no English equivalent. The French find it no easier than do we, to convey it in a single word or even in a free circumlocution. It comes of the questions that haunt all ages, that survive all philosophies, that defy continuous generations of chartered soothsayers, that mock rising and sinking schools alike. Our literature possesses at least one poetic presentation of its spirit, in the two or three pages of inspiring prose that are the proem to George Eliot's *Romola*. Technically meaning a conception of the universe, *Weltanschauung* covers a man's outlook upon the world and time and human destinies; the mental summary of experience, knowledge, duty, affections to his fellows; relations to mysterious Force and Will, invisible but supreme, call it Providence, Moira, Fate, or by what name we choose. Such an outlook on the world and its meanings varies with each historic age, and marks it for what it is. This is what, if we seek the roots of social existence, distinguishes one period of civilisation from another. Men in general are but vaguely conscious of *Weltanschauung*. For them, the World, in this wide comprehension of that commonest and most fluid of all our daily words, is no object of their thoughts. Yet

all the time in some established creed, consecrated form, or iron chain of silent habit, this is what fixes vision, moulds judgment, inspires purpose, limits acts, gives its shades, colour, and texture to common language. Even for superior natures, narrow are the windows of the mind; no wide champaign, but narrow and restricted are the confines of our landscape.

History, in the great conception of it, has often been compared to a mountain chain seen far off in a clear sky, where the peaks seem linked to one another towards the higher crest of the group. An ingenious and learned writer the other day amplified this famous image by speaking of a set of volcanic islands heaving themselves out of the sea, at such angles and distances that only to the eye of a bird, and not to a sailor cruising among them, would they appear as the heights of one and the same submerged range. The sailor is the politician. The historian, without prejudice to monographic exploration in intervening valleys and ascending slopes, will covet the vision of the bird.

According to an instructive scholar, here we come upon the great contrast between ancient history and modern. For right comprehension of Thucydides, he says, "the fundamental conception which all our thought about the world implies, must be banished—the conception, namely, that the whole course of events of every kind, human or non-human, is one enormous concatenation of causes and effects stretching forward and back into infinite time, and spreading outwards

over immeasurable space. The world on which the Greek looked out, presented no such spectacle as this. Human affairs—the subject-matter of history—were not to him a single strand in the illimitable web of natural evolution; their course was shaped solely by one or both of two factors: immediate human motives, and the will of gods and spirits, of Fortune or of Fate.”¹ All this is just as true of great political historians like Machiavelli and Guicciardini; they looked out upon the Europe of the fifteenth century from the walls of Florence with Livy, Tacitus, Sallust, for their only models. They had the experience of intelligent travel, no doubt, and that is the best of substitutes for patterns of written history. Still the mighty commander of a later age, himself Italian in stock, declared that Machiavelli wrote about battles as a blind man might write about colours.

So we might proceed through the “enormous concatenation” of historical names and sweeping change that was never conceived nor comprehensible until it came to pass. Think, for example, of the strange new spectacle of world and life that opened to men’s minds and shaped their days, after the spiritual struggle between Catholic and Protestant confessions. Heresies had been abundant during the Ages of Faith, but wide disturbance of simple unquestioning acceptance had been rare and superficial. The protracted battle over the authority of Rome,

¹ *Thucydides Mythistoricus*, by F. M. Cornford (1907), pp. 66-68.

over toleration, over church government by bishops, over rite and symbol, had been fought out. The rival creeds identified themselves with political forces, and had become definite and commanding ingredients in organised States. Only then did the purple vision of human societies in Western Europe, united by a universal faith, begin to fade. The standing conflict that henceforth divided Christianity, and divided and subdivided Protestantism itself, by the mere fact of its existence as a conflict, apart from its merits and contents, extended, diverted, transformed the outlook. Old worlds and systems disappear, new arise, still men live but in a corner of their own.

The temper of our present time is adverse to generalisation. Harnack says that in 1700 the most universal or encyclopædic mind was Leibnitz, and in 1800 it was Goethe. I suppose Leonardo da Vinci for 1500, and nobody would dispute that in 1600 it was Bacon—the greatest intellect that ever combined power in thought with responsible practice in affairs of state. Court affairs at Weimar were little more than playground politics. To whom would competent authorities give the palm in 1900? If we are slow to answer, without disrespect to Herbert Spencer, the reason is that advance of specialisation over the whole field of knowledge has made the encyclopædic mind an anachronism. The day of the circumnavigator is over—of men who strive to round the whole sphere of mind, to complete the circuit of thought and knowledge, and to touch at all the ports.

We may find comfort in the truth that though excess of specialisation is bad, to make sciolism into a system is worse. In reading history it is our common fault to take too short measure of the event, to mistake some early scene in the play as if it were the fifth act, and so conceive the plot all amiss. The event is only comprehended in its fullest dimensions, and for that the historic recorder, like or unlike the actor before him, needs insight and imagination. French Revolution from Fall of the Bastille to Waterloo; English Revolution from Eliot, Pym, Hampden, Oliver, to Naseby, and from Naseby to William and Mary; American Union from the Philadelphia State House in 1776, to the Appomattox Court House in 1865; Democratic Ordering in England from the Reform Act of 1832 to the Parliament Act in 1911; Ireland from the enfranchisement of the Roman Catholics in 1793—to some date still lamentably and ruinously uncertain. How desperately chimerical would the end of all those immense transactions have seemed to men who across long tracts of time had started them. They are all political; but the same observation would be just as true of the world's march in the sphere of ideas, methods, moral standards, religious creeds.

All agree that we have no business to seek more from the past than the very past itself. Nobody disputes with Cicero when he asks, "Who does not know that it is the first law of history, not to dare a word that is false? Next not to shrink from a word

that is true. No partiality, no grudge."¹ Though nobody disputes the obvious answers, have a majority of historical practitioners complied? To-day taste and fashion have for a season turned away from the imposing tapestries of the literary historian, in favour of the drab serge of research among diplomatic archives, parish registers, private muniments, and anything else, so long as it is not print. As Acton put it, the great historian now takes his meals in the kitchen. Even here we are not quite at our ease. Bismarck, reading a book of superior calibre, once came upon a portrait of an eminent personage whom he had known well. "Such a man as is described here," he cried, "never existed"; and he went on in graphic strokes to paint the sitter as he had actually found him. "It is not in diplomatic materials, but in their life of every day that you come to know men." So does a singularly good judge warn us of the perils of archival research. Nor can we forget the lament of the most learned and laborious of all English historians of our time. "I am beginning to think," said Freeman, "that there is not, and never was any such thing as truth in the world. At least I don't believe that any two people ever give exactly the same account of anything, even when they have seen it with their own eyes, except when they copy from one another."² This is to bring some support for Goethe, "that the only form of truth is poetry." •

The unity of history is now orthodox doctrine,

¹ *De Orat.* ii. 15.

² *Life and Letters*, i. 238.

though accepted, as orthodox doctrines are apt to be, in various senses. Freeman protested with almost tiresome iteration against division between ancient history and modern, and summed up in the heroic assurance that history deals not with the rivalry, "but the brotherhood of all periods and all subjects, of all nations and languages, at least within the pale of Aryan Europe." Acton put it that "History derives its best virtue from regions beyond the sphere of State." Mr. Gooch, a younger student, says more fully: "No presentation of history can be adequate which neglects the growths of the religious consciousness, of literature, of the moral and physical sciences, of art, of scholarship, of social life." Another view is that profitable knowledge of history consists less in remembering events or characters of statesmen, than in knowing what men were like in bygone days, their aims, hopes, pleasures, beliefs, and how they thought and felt. There can be little doubt that this would best hit the common taste. Treitschke will not have it so. The farther a man places himself away from the State, as he maintains, the farther he goes from historic life. To bring descriptions of the soul of a people into history, is to deal with last year's snow. Who, he asks, does not feel *Kulturgeschichte* imperfect and unsatisfying, even when handled by a master? Even in Burckhardt's famous book on the Italian Renaissance, who does not feel a want, the want of active personalities? History, as Treitschke contends, is first of all the presentation of

res gestæ, and of active statesmen. The essential things in the statesman are strength of will, courage, massive ambition, passionate joy in the result.

It needs no wizard to see how such doctrine as this lends a hand to the sinister school of political historians who insist that the event is its own justification ; that Force and Right are one. Fact and reason, they contend, are and must be one and the same : the real and the rational are identic, and it is waste of time to labour differences between them. The disciples are thus led on to that exaltation of the State, which stands for Force, into supreme pre-eminence as master-conception in men's minds and habits. Of this strong meat, you will let me say a word later.

I have just quoted words about religious consciousness, and regions beyond the sphere of State. How constantly have the immense phenomena of churches, Catholic and Protestant, so imposing and so penetrating, made the gravest chapter in the history of States.¹ As if Churches were not political realities. As if the Council of Constance in the fifteenth century, the Council of Trent in the sixteenth, the Assembly of Divines in the Jerusalem Chamber at Westminster during the civil wars, the Four Declarations of the French clergy in 1682,—with all the array of pontiffs, church princes, saints, doctors, congregations, presbyteries, preachers, friars, inquisitors, missionaries, creeds, symbols, bulls, canon laws, catechisms,—were not in truth the very essence and mainspring of the

¹ See Ranke's *Hist. of Servia*.

vast and subtle political commotions that for age after age followed in their perpetual train. Is it mere distortion to say that "hardly a more momentous resolution can be found in history" than the decision at Nicæa in the fourth century?¹ If it be right to judge that no false system ever struck more directly at the very life of Christianity than Arianism, then the proscription of Arius and the triumph of Athanasius was an infinitely more potent thing in the history of Western mankind, than the fall of the Bastille and all the principles of either French or American Revolution.

It may, if anybody likes to have it so, be a good distinction that Force is the principle of the State, while the life and principle of a Church is Belief. For that matter both Church and State rest alike upon a shifting *Tertium Quid* of Authority,—say, an infallible Pope or an impregnable Book. The political affinities of religious and ecclesiastic creeds offer to the historic student some of his standing puzzles. How comes it, for example, that the fatalism implied in Calvinistic Protestantism has been the nurse of some of the most strenuous, active, energetic, and independent natures in political history? It was a caustic but a wise reminder to historians of France that Jansenism was no trivial or transitory piece upon the great theologic theatre, and that two Jansenist sisters, Angélique and Euphémie, were more considerable persons in the

¹ Gwatkin's *Studies of Arianism*, 43.

annals of their country than Madame de Montespan and the other chosen and conspicuous companions of Louis XIV.¹ There is many another case of national temper and outward circumstance bearing down the most stringent of logical arguments.²

Our own day offers a singular kaleidoscope. Men thought it a crushing scandal in the sixteenth century when Francis I. was suspected of making terms for himself with the arch-enemy of Christian mankind, the Khalif of Turkey. Richelieu, one of the half-dozen sovereign names in the European record, systematically worked with English and Dutch against popish Spain for the same reason that made him relentless against his own Huguenots, namely, that they were the foes of monarchical unity in France. The paradox is not absent in our own time. We see Roman Catholic Austro-Hungary the pledged confederate of what we are assured by her own oracles is Protestant Prussia. One third of Prussia, to be sure, is Catholic, but Catholicism in standing contact with Protestant culture and liberalised institutions, as the American Union and our own Quebec are enough to show, is not like the same communion in Latin systems. Then the Sovereign who is head of the Church of England, is the ally of non-Christian

¹ Lavissee, *Hist. de France*, vii. i. 87.

² For many centuries, says Ranke, Islam and Christianity have been in conflict, developing themselves in opposition to each other; what is the main political distinction of the institutions that have arisen under their influence? (Ranke's *Hist. of Servia*, Trans. p. 38).

Japan. The King-Emperor of India—the first European ruler who has ever put on the crown in Asia—is neutral and indifferent to the faiths and nearly all the old consecrated practices of the myriads of Hindus, Mahommedans, Parsees. Politics are admittedly as if from the necessity of the thing, or privately for the sake of decency, supreme; and, it may be, whether men wish the process well or ill, such events do more to dissolve dogma and sap its hold, than any number of infidel books.

Sympathy, again, in principles of government and forms of government, is treated as no more to the point in settling the friendship of States, than sympathy in theology. The balance of power is supposed just now in the diplomatic chanceries to be maintained in Europe, by firm co-operation between a secularised Republic in France, and an absolutist Monarchy that is half theocracy in Russia. Ecclesiastical historians themselves have taught us how constantly church machinery has been used as a source of power for the statesman's objects. They point to the war against the Albigensians as having for its real purpose the strengthening of French monarchy; the persecutions in Bohemia, as designed to fortify German dominion over the Czechs; the Spanish Inquisition, as set up and worked to overcome the disunion of race and history, for the sake of the Spanish monarchy. In these and an untold host of other cases the State was Force, and Belief was not the only point. If we must quantify, it has been

said of the long religious wars in France, that, in one-fifth of them religion was the cause, in four-fifths it was only the pretext. To search for the secular politician behind an army of spiritual crusaders is no cynicism. The enthusiasm, no doubt, is the more attractive and exciting to reflective minds. Yet policy, hidden or avowed, may be a master-key.

According to some scientific historians¹ with a right to speak, history does not solve questions; it teaches us to examine. We often hear that our understanding of history is spoiled by knowledge of the event. A great event, they say, is seldom fully understood by those who worked for it. Our vision is surer about the past; there we have the whole; we see the beginning and the end; we distinguish essential from accessory; time foreshortens. To contemporaries events are confused, obscured by passing accidents, mixed with all sorts of foreign elements. Even men of the compass of Cæsar, William the Silent, Cromwell, Chatham, pursued resolute general aims, subject only like all men's aims to the uncounted traverses of fortune, and to "leadings" that were half out of sight. Both contemporaries and historians, more often than they suppose, miss a vital point because they do not know the intuitive instinct that often goes farther in the statesman's mind than deliberate analysis or argument. A visitor of Bismarck's once reminded him

¹ For instance, Fustel de Coulanges, *Questions historiques*, Preface (1893).

that Schopenhauer used to sit with him at dinner every day in the hotel at Frankfurt. "No, I had no business with him, I had neither time nor inclination for philosophy," said Bismarck, "and I know nothing of Schopenhauer's system." It was summarily explained to him as vesting the primacy of the will in self-consciousness. "I daresay that may be all right," he said; "for myself at least, I have often noticed that my will had decided, before my thinking was finished."¹ Improvisation has far more to do in politics than historians or other people think.

History's direct lessons are few, its specific morals rare. To say this, is not to disparage the grand inspiration that present may draw from past, or the priceless value of old examples of lofty public deeds and high-hearted men. Plutarch's *Lives*, parallels and all, are the master proof, one of the too few books that can never be out of date. Heine said that when he read Plutarch, he felt a vehement impulse instantly to take post-horses for Berlin, and turn hero. This, however, is a very different question. It is to working statesmen that parallels may easily be a snare, and ludicrous misapplications from Greece and Rome inspired some of the worst aberrations both of the French Revolution and of the Empire. The Old Testament was often made to play the same part in our own Rebellion. • They are convenient to the politician. A plausible parallel

¹ *Lebenserinnerungen von Julius v. Eckhardt*, ii. 122-3.

makes him feel surer of his ground. It is as refreshing as a broad reflective digression in a close narrative. The French Revolution is to this day a favourite armoury for parallels, predictions, warnings, even nicknames, and a harmless English politician finds himself labelled Jacobin or Girondin, though he really has no more in common with the Frenchman than he has with Adam or Noah. We may often think of Napoleon's dictum, that "there will be no real peace in history, till the whole generation contemporary with the French Revolution is extinct to the very last man," and even later. Lord Bryce holds that, though usually interesting, and often illuminating, what are called historian's parallels are often misleading. He tells how, during the great dispute in 1876 after the Bulgarian massacres, between those who thought we ought to back the Sultan, and those who were equally convinced the other way, he met one day in the street an eminent historical professor, who was fond of descanting on the value of history as a guide to politics. They talked of the crisis in the East. "I said, 'Here is a fine opportunity for applying your doctrines. Party politicians may be divided, but no student of history can doubt which is the right course for the Government to follow towards Russia and the Turks.' 'Certainly,' he replied, 'the teachings of history are plain.' 'You mean, of course,' I said, scenting some signs of disagreement, 'that we ought to warn the Sultan that he is wholly in the wrong, and can have no support

from us.' 'No, indeed,' rejoined my friend, 'I mean just the opposite.' "

A good-natured international smile may be forgiven at the ingenious parallel discovered by a learned historian of Hellenism,¹ between Macedonia in the days of Alexander the Great, and Prussia in the time of Prince Bismarck. The Greeks, it seems, mastered by the spirit of the canton and the city-state, thought nothing of their land as a whole, until a barbarian from the north perceived it, made "the synthesis of their civilisation," and spread it over the world; whereas if Demosthenes had won the battle, a desperate state of things would have survived. So if Sadowa and Sedan had gone amiss, the resplendent orb of German radiance and intellectual power would never have broken through the nebulous skies of a disunited fatherland, and diffused its beams over the civilised world. The same singular parallel finds still more emphatic expression in that admirable man and historic thinker, Döllinger. For once forgetting the serene truth that sovereign gifts of thought, imagination, discovery have not been quite unequally distributed among the modern nations of the Western world, Döllinger, with strange excess of emphasis, insists that Germany is the intellectual centre from which proceed the great ideas that sway the world. She attracts all thought within her scope, shapes it, and sends it forth into the

¹ Droysen, as cited in Guillard's *L'Allemagne nouvelle et ses historiens*, p. 191.

universe clothed with a power that is her own. No other nation, he proceeds, can approach the German people in many-sidedness; no other possesses in so great a measure, side by side with this power of adaptation, the qualities of untiring research and original creative genius. Out of all the nations of the modern world, the German people are most "like the Greeks of old." They "have been called to an intellectual priesthood, and to this high vocation they have done no dishonour."¹ Greeks or not, nobody will deny the magnificence of German contribution, though much of that grand contribution in Germany, as in Greece, is due to small States. And can we escape an ironic start after all this, on encountering the proposition that "vanity is the accepted characteristic of the French nation"? The force of the Macedonian parallel, whatever it amounts to, is weakened, if it is not shattered, by Mill's broad declaration that the ascendancy of a ruder civilisation, and the subjection by brute strength of a superior civilisation, is sheer mischief to the human race, and one that civilised humanity with one accord should rise in arms to prevent. The absorption of Greece by Macedonia, he says, was one of the greatest misfortunes that ever happened to the world.² So harshly may illustrious philosophic oracles fall out of tune.

Leaving ancient history aside, I cannot but recall

¹ *Conversations of Dr. Dollinger*, Eng. Trans. (1892), p. 205.

² *Representative Government*, chap. xvi.

the Macedonian Goethe's generous recognition of his debt to the supposed Græculi of France; how he delighted in Diderot, and even translated one of his famous dialogues, usually found far too broad and tatterdemalion for English taste; how he admired the tone of good manners in French translation of his own books, due, as he supposes, to their habit of thinking and speaking for a great public, whereas in Germany, he says, "the writer speaks as if he were alone, and you only hear a single voice." In other words, French literature is so essentially sociable. We know its masters in the seventeenth century—Pascal, La Fontaine, Molière, Bossuet, Fénelon, de Sévigné, La Bruyère, Saint-Simon. We know the writers who stand for main currents in the eighteenth—Bayle, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Encyclopædists, Rousseau. In the nineteenth, without ignoring the fame of Goethe, Schiller, Heine, the French are not without some reason for the vanity that is imputed to them. French writers conspicuously engaged the attention of mankind. They turned thought and interest and curiosity and search for intellectual pleasure into new channels. They led the great changes in mood, standard, and point of view during the three generations after Napoleon Bonaparte, and typified ideals of an active and aspiring age. De Maistre, Proudhon, Saint-Simon (not the famous diarist of Versailles, but the earliest name in the socialistic ferment a hundred years ago), and Comte, unapproached by any of them

in the power, originality, and intellectual resource with which he wove together the strands of knowledge into the web of social duty—were all effective writers as well as fresh thinkers. There was Guizot, founder of new historic schools, and one of those who by force of personality, apart from literary contribution, exercise a potent influence on their time. Renan brought wide learning and infinite fascination of form to a theological dissolution that science, and the widening of men's minds by the widening of the known world, made so inevitable. Victor Hugo, amid a thousand colossal extravagances, sounded to an enormous public all over the world a rolling thunder-blast against the barbarities of recorded time, and was inspired by a glorious muse, the genius of Pity. It would be easy to vindicate a claim for other names, mirrors of the strong movements or strange phantasies of their age—and of human nature in all ages—Michelet, Lamartine, George Sand, Balzac, Taine.

The last of these shining names prompts a word of digression on a point in what I have already said on the fortunes of books. Taine was a strenuous worker and magnanimous man if ever man was. His six volumes on the French Revolution, its antecedents, and its sequel, are admirably attractive as literature. But literary splendour did not prevent it from being a marked case of the fluctuations of men's verdicts on the causes and significance of events, and the authority of their interpreters. The book has enjoyed immense vogue in Europe. It fell

in with the reactionary mood that followed the overthrow of the Second Empire, and that desperate catastrophe, political and moral, the Commune. Its claim to be history has been almost painfully exposed by the more authentic writer of another school. "The document does not speak to Taine," says his critic; "it is he who all the time is speaking to the document."¹

Every method has its own perils, and the perils of Taine's method are plain. He tells us, Whether the man be actor on the great stage of our world's affairs, or an inspirer, creator, discoverer in the realms of knowledge, truth, and beauty, character and work flow from some master faculty within him, in limits set by race, by surroundings, by the hour. But then, alas, such unity is for art, and not for history. As an achievement of literary ingenuity, Taine's hundred pages upon Napoleon Bonaparte² are consummate. The elements are skilfully compounded, the fusion in the furnace is perfect, the molten stream runs truly into all the channels of the mould, and a form of superhuman might is reared upon its pedestal. This is not the way in which things really happen. For that, it is no wonder that the critic takes down a volume of Cardinal de Retz, with the stir and spirit of affairs in full circulation, and the actors, as Retz says, "hot and smoking"

¹ Taine, *Historien de la Rév. Franç.* par M. Aulard, p. 326.
Faguet's *Questions politiques* (1903), pp. 2, 19.

² *Origines de la France contemporaine*, Régime Moderne, vol. i. chap. i.

with violence and faction. Or he might take some strong pages of Clarendon, Burnet, Bolingbroke, Bacon, Halifax, Swift.

Let me repeat: sovereign gifts of brain and heart have not been so unequally distributed over the Western world as fits of national vanity incline men to suppose. One of the drawbacks to the great uprising of the spirit of Nationality for a century past, has been the changed hold of the cosmopolitan sense of human relations that sounded a silver trumpet amid all the international piracies of Silesia, Poland, and the rest. To this practical declension of what has been called allegiance to humanity, or the service of man, or over-ruling altruism, one at any rate of the correctives is the thought how in the glories of our common civilisation, each nation has its own particular share, how marked the debt of all to each. How disastrous would have been the gap if European history had missed the cosmopolitan radiation of ideas from France; or the poetry, art, science of Italy; or the science, philosophy, music of Germany; or the grave heroic types, the humour, the literary force of Spain; the creation of grand worlds in thought, wisdom, knowledge,—the poetic beauty, civil life, humane pity,—immortally associated with the part of England in the Western world's illuminated scroll. It is not one tributary, but the co-operation of all, that has fed the waters and guided the currents of the main stream. We may ponder some national trilogies or quartettes. Descartes,

Voltaire, Montaigne : Dante, Michelangelo, Galileo : Kant, Goethe, Beethoven : Cervantes, Columbus,¹ Las Casas : Hume, Scott, Adam Smith, Burns : Erasmus, Grotius, Rembrandt : Franklin, Hamilton, Washington, Lincoln : Shakespeare, Newton, Gibbon, Darwin. Choose, vary, amplify the catalogue as we will and as we must, no nation nor nationality counts alone or paramount among the forces that have shaped the world's elect, and shared in diffusing central light and warmth among the children of mankind. To deride patriotism marks impoverished blood, but to extol it as an impulse above truth and justice, at the cost of the general interests of humanity, is far worse. Even where men admit as much as this, it is wonderful how easily a little angry shouting makes them oblivious of its sanctity. In spite of fair words and noble and strenuous endeavour for peace by rulers, statesmen, and most of those who have the public ear in Europe, the scale of armament reveals the unwelcome fact that we live in a military age. [1913.]

Evolution, for reasons easily understood, is the

¹ Elaborate attempts are made to show that the discoverer of America was no Genoese, but a Jew from Spanish Galicia ; and President Grévy even did so unfriendly an act as to grant a decree authorising a statue to him at Calvi in Corsica. Be all this as it may, it was in Spain that the valiant adventurer produced his designs, and found the means of executing them. Whether born at Pontevedra or Genoa, he struck such root in Spain that he lost the Italian tongue, if it was ever his. The controversies are exhaustively handled in *Revue Critique*, May 3, 1913.

most overworked word in all the languages of the hour. But we cannot do without it, and those are right who say that in the evolution of politics nothing has been more important than the successive emergence into the practical life of States and institutions, of such moral entities as Justice, Freedom, Right. Of these glorious and sacred aspirations in substantial form, history made the English tongue the vernacular. Whether Burke in his best pieces, or Aristotle in his *Politics*, shows the wider knowledge of human nature, learned men do not decide. At least the philosopher of small city-states, even with the brain of an Aristotle, could not be expected to have any idea of that representative government which at home here is the governing political fact of to-day, and in other lands is the political ideal. It was Locke in the seventeenth century who, in connection with the settlement of the monarchy that we are decorously adjured to call a revolution and not a rebellion, first set out constitutional government in terms of thought, and furnished the mainspring of political philosophy for long ages after.¹ Frederick the Great says that his illumination and emancipation came from Locke, though we cannot be sure that our careful and candid sage would have found the career of his Prussian disciple a pattern for princes. From him both Montesquieu and Rousseau, the famous heads of two opposed schools and rival methods, drew their inspiration. Countless are the governing systems

¹ Prof. Sorley in *Comb. Hist. of Eng. Lit.* viii.

all over the globe that have found their model here, and we may record with no ignoble pride that the tongue of our English masters of political wisdom is spoken by 160 millions, as against 130 of German, 100 of Russian, 70 of French,¹ and 50 of Spanish. Mark the change from Bacon, who sent his *Advancement of Learning* to Prince Charles in a new Latin dress, because a book could only live in the "general language," and English books cannot be "citizens of the world." Cromwell as Protector could only talk to ambassadors in dog-Latin. I do not forget that among 90 or 100 millions of our triumphant figure, the King's writ does not run; for these expanding millions live, not under our bluff Union Jack, but under Stars and Stripes. Still less can we forget that French is the most œcumenical of all living tongues; so sociable, so exact, so refined, copious, and subtle in its diversity of shades in every field, grave and gay; so apt alike for what is trivial, and for high affairs of thought or business.

¹ Here is the estimate of a competent authority as to the English-speaking population of the globe—over forty-five millions in the United Kingdom; about twelve millions in Canada and Australia; at least five millions in various parts of British Africa; in India 1,672,000 literate in English, and rather less than half a million whose English is vernacular, and it is the official language of the annual Congress; say a million in other British possessions. If we take into account the various forms of pigeon English spoken in British possessions and elsewhere, we might make the total sixty-five millions. Finally, the modest addition of something under 100 millions in the United States.

The only parallel to the boundless area of the habitable globe, conquered by our tongue, is held by some to be Arabic. They tell us that though Arabic in Islamic lands for some three or four centuries became the medium for an active propagation of ideas, and though it retains by the Koran its hold in its own area, and keeps in its literary, as distinct from its spoken form the stamp of thirteen centuries ago, yet there is no real analogy or comparison with the diffusion of English. Latin is a better analogy. It was spoken pretty early in the towns of Spain, Gaul, Britain, and somewhat later in the provinces on the Danube. In the East it spread more slowly, but by the Antonines and onwards the use of Latin was pretty complete, even in northern Africa. Greek was common throughout the Empire as the language of commerce in the fourth century. St. Augustine says, "Pains were taken that the Imperial State should impose not only its political yoke, but its own tongue, upon the conquered peoples, *per pacem societatis*." This is what is slowly coming to pass in India. Though to-day only a handful, a million or so, of the population use our language, yet English must tend to spread from being the official tongue to be a general unifying agent. Any Englishman who adds to the glory of our language and letters, will deserve Cæsar's grand compliment to Cicero, declaring it a better claim to a laurel crown to have advanced the boundaries of Roman genius, than the boundaries of Roman rule. Whether Cæsar was

sincere or insincere, it is a noble truth for us as well as for old Rome.

V.

From reflections on the contributions of great nations to various aspects and phases of general civilisation, it is no abrupt transfer of thought to turn to what is perhaps the most marked of all the agitations of the nineteenth century, the political movement for national autonomy. In the sentiment of Nationality there is nothing new. It was one of the main keys of Luther's Reformation. What is new is the transformation of the sentiment into a political idea. Old history and fresh politics worked a union that has grown into an urgent and dominating force. Oppression, intolerable economic disorder, governmental failure, senseless wars, senseless ambitions, and the misery that was their baleful fruit, quickened the instinct of Nationality. First it inflamed visionaries, then it grew potent with the multitudes, who thought the foreigner the author of their wretchedness. Thus Nationality went through all the stages. From instinct it became idea; from idea abstract principle; then fervid prepossession; ending where it is to-day, in dogma, whether accepted or evaded.

A man who wishes to trace perplexities to their source will not forget the history of the claims, ambitions, and pretensions of Prussia, Austria, Russia, when they partitioned Poland 140 years ago.

Well did Burke in 1772 warn Europe that Poland was only a breakfast for the great armed powers, but where would they dine? "After all our love of tranquillity," he exclaimed, "and all our expedients to preserve it, alas! poor Peace!" And well does the historian to-day¹ declare, in a poignant sentence, the partition of Poland might have been a statesmanlike performance if it could have stopped in 1772. "But *history never does stop short*," and in twenty years Europe found itself in the whirlpool of the French revolutionary wars that came to what was taken for a close at Waterloo. We have spoken of senseless wars. It must be confessed that the passion of Nationality has an ample share in most of them for the last hundred and twenty years, sometimes as cause, sometimes as pretext.

Among the glowing spirits who have been pillars of cloud by day and pillars of fire by night—agents in transforming abstract social idealism into violent political demand,—after Rousseau in date, Mazzini came. What the first was from the fall of the Bastille in 1789 until Napoleon's rise in 1800, this was Mazzini in the era after Waterloo. Each was main inspirer of the commanding impulse of an epoch, each the fervid apostle of a driving principle. We need not overlook Fichte's *Addresses* to Germany, or the splendid utterances of all the passion and all the reason that broke forth in the ever-memorable uprising against Napoleon in 1813. Spain had been

¹ Sorel, *La Question d'Orient au XVIII^e Siècle* (1878), p. 306.

earlier in the same protest, and in a struggle no less victorious. Poland was destined to bear the banner of Nationality for desperate generation after generation, and Hungary shook Western Europe with her story. But the Congress of Vienna achieved a European settlement that set Nationality at defiance, and the despots whom the national spirit had enabled to overthrow the great French captain, instantly took in hand the extinction of all the light and sacred fire of that very spirit. It was this systematised defiance that outraged his whole nature in Mazzini.

Without forgetting the splendid elevation of Channing, most eloquent of American divines, in the struggles for human freedom in northern America, the Italian was in wider range than politics the most fervid moral genius of his time. No other man of his century ever united intense political activity with such affluence of moral thought and social feeling. Prophets have a right to be unreasonable, and in many a page, as in acts not a few, Mazzini goes beyond unreason into the flagrantly irrational. The genius of Cavour, more characteristically positive, practical, and supple than Mazzini's, was needed for Italian objects. Yet it was fortunate for them that his rare spirit had its ascendancy. He was loud and over-loud against those whom he chose to deride as the busy race of jugglers, petty Machiavels of the antechamber, trading politicians, ready in all countries to swear and to forswear, to launch out boldly or creep ashore according to the wind. It is not such

men as these, he cried, with their crooked ways, court intrigues, and false doctrines of expediency, that will create a people. Do not think that men of that sort will ever rise to such a spiritual heat for the nation, as shall carry forward a cause like this ; as will meet all the oppositions that the devil and wicked men can make. "Machiavelli," he cried, "has for long ages prevailed over Dante. To save Italy and awaken the soul in Europe, you must return to that immortal spring of a people's noblest aspirations." With penetrating eye he was alive to the saving truth of "Italy a Nation." His argument was inexorable. In other countries impatience of inequality and suffering had in 1848 driven men in search of a new order. In Italy twenty-five millions of men were rising for an idea ; what they sought was a country. When they had conquered the foreigner, freedom as well as independence would be won. No aim but the creation of Italy, and Mazzini put on his pamphlets an epigraph from Euclid, "The right line is the shortest that can be drawn between two points." No fallacy has ever wrought more disastrous ravages. Euclid lived a good many hundred years ago, but he must at any rate have had far too clear a head not to be aware that geometry is not politics. "The papacy," again, "now no more than a symbol for absolutist government, must be dethroned. • While the idol stands, its shadow will cast darkness around ; priests, Jesuits, and fanatics will shelter themselves beneath its shade to disturb

the world ; while it stands, discord will exist between moral and material society, between right and fact, between the present and the imminent future." It is at least certain that Mazzini's teaching was not merely the most direct attempt to dethrone the temporal Pope and with him dogmatic and secularised Churches, but to set up a new spiritual gospel in their place, and to light up human life and public duty with new and exalted meaning.

As men with instinct or reasoned feeling for emancipation even now turn over Mazzini's burning pages, in spite of pungent reflections that cannot be suppressed on what would have come of it all but for "political jugglers" like Cavour and Napoleon III., and the guilty errors of expediency, they may still find the passion of it irresistible. How much more can we imagine the flame it kindled in the breast of generations to whom the hideous dungeons of Naples, and all the other abominations and degradations of foreign rule in Italy, were cruel haunting spectres of their own days. Nationality became the deepest and most powerful of revolutionary secrets. Of the Empire and the Papacy, the two mighty forces of cohesion through the Middle Age, it is truly said that they were neither national nor international, but supranational. "Austria," said Gortchakov, "is not a Nation ; she is not even a State : she is only a Government." On their decline, and for other causes, Nationality grew to be an unsuspected sequel. Happily for the prophet, the time brought

a statesman. Four Italians played high parts in modern history, and Cavour, endowed with the union of force and brains that is named *virtù*, is called as supple as Mazarin, as ingenious as Alberoni, as swift and intrepid as Napoleon.

Though no term in politics is of more frequent use than Nation, it is not easy to define. There are almost as many accounts of it, as we have found in other terms of the political dialect. John Bright was thinking of kinder and humaner things than definition when he spoke his famous sentence of such moving simplicity—the polar star of civilised statesmen—that the nation in every country dwells in the cottage. What constitutes a nation; what marks it from a Nationality, from a Society, from a State? The question is not idle or academic. It generates active heat in senates and on platforms, for example, at this moment, whether a particular portion of our United Kingdom is either nation or nationality. When the idea was mooted of France seeking compensation after the Prussian victory at Sadowa, important men denounced it as blasphemy against the principle of nationalities. Let us theorise for a moment. Here is what the dictionary has to tell us of a Nation: “An extensive aggregate of persons, so closely associated with each other by common descent, language, or history, as to form a distinct race or people, usually organised as a separate political state, and occupying a definite territory.” This is adequate enough, and consonant

with usage. But, then, Belgium is a political State and yet its Walloon and Flemish provinces are not common in descent, tongue, or history, and their dissidence is at this very day something of an active issue. Austria-Hungary is a great State, though they speak twenty-four languages in the Austrian army. Another authority finds in usage,—*quem penes arbitrium est et ius et norma loquendi*,—that “wherever a community has both political independence and a distinctive character recognisable in its members, as well as in the whole body, we call it a nation.” For a test to be applied all over the world, this is perhaps too vague. Freeman lays it down in his own imperative way, that the question what language they speak, goes further than any other one question towards giving us an idea of what we call the nationality of a people. We may say, again, that the feeling of Nationality is due to identity of descent, common language, common religion, common pride in past incidents. But no single element in the list makes a decisive test. Language will not answer the purpose; for Switzerland has three languages, yet is one nation. In South America there are two kindred languages; mostly common descent, common pride in their wresting of independence from Europe, common religious faith. Yet there are sixteen communities more or less entitled to the rank of nations, and the traveller tells us there is no sense of a common Spanish-American nationality. Is Nationality to be decided

by the political character of territory, or by the people who inhabit it? In older days the first was the prevailing theory. The second prevails to-day and is one of the marks of modern system, as we may discern in Balkan perplexities. Devotion to a dynasty has made nations. So has passion for a creed. So, perhaps, most of all, that *ingenita erga patriam caritas*, the natural fondness for the land where we are born.

The lineal descent of national stocks, through dim ages with no sure or intelligible chronicle, offers a boundless opening for ethnologic disputation. Learned men maintain, for instance, and men no less learned deny, that the Hellenic race in Europe has been exterminated, and that the modern Greeks are a mixture of the descendants of Roman slaves and Slavonian colonists. Yet, however this may be, the Greek name and all its glittering associations, over the whole field of politics, ethics, poetry, and art, seem enough to inspire Nationality in its most evident sense. The absorption by a population of new modifying elements appears an obscure and mysterious process. The problem is at this day presenting itself on a truly colossal scale in the United States, where the old floods of immigration from Ireland and Germany are now replenished by swelling hosts from Southern and Central Europe, Italians, Hungarians, Poles, Russian Jews, and the rest, changing both racial and religious proportions, while the negro contingent, imported in the old slave-

holding days, though increasing at a slower rate than the white, is still some 10 or 11 per cent of the whole. Yet the political nationality of the United States, their high and strong self-consciousness as a nation, is one of the supreme factors in the modern world's affairs.

The resistance of Spain to Napoleon from 1808 to 1813 has been called the greatest European event since the French Revolution; it showed Europe that a conqueror may shake a State to pieces, and yet the nation hold together. The machinery of the Spanish State was violently overthrown, but common religious passion, the inheritance of common language, ferocious common pride in triumphant warfare for ten long centuries against hated faith and blood, all awoke and maintained in full blaze, on Napoleon's uncalculating provocation, those intense elements of national vitality in relation to which the organised State is but secondary. Tyrol, Moscow, Leipzig are names for immortal chapters in the story of national uprisings, that lent their new and overwhelming force to the soldiers and rulers who worked the political systems of the hour. Sicily has found a dwelling-place for many nations, but as the most learned of our historians truly assures us, a Sicilian nation there has never been. Europe, Asia, Africa have all met in the great central island of the Mediterranean. Greek, Punic, Roman, Mussulman, Christian, Saracen, Arab, Norman, Spaniard have all in strange turns been ruling and

subject inhabitants. Of the unity of historical antecedents, supposed to be essential to a nationality, there is little trace for a single decade of Sicilian annals until 1859. Yet Sicily has played a part of its own in the records of Nationality, from the Sicilian Vespers in the thirteenth century down to Garibaldi and Crispi in the nineteenth.

Let me venture on a parting observation as to Nationality. It has been on the whole a commanding and accepted impulse for our era. Yet it has been contemporary with a current tendency of equal strength, but directly opposite. One chief mark of the same time has been the advance of Science in all its branches and forms. But Science works not at all for Nationality or its spirit. It makes entirely for Cosmopolitanism. In multifarious congresses in every capital of the world Nationality is effaced. Parthians, Medes, Elamites meet on common terms, and liberty, equality, and fraternity all prevail, without intermixture from diplomatic sophistries. Science, besides all else that it is and does, is the strongest unifying agent of the time, especially if we include the inventions that science makes possible, and the commerce that inventions stimulate and nourish. Even those who are least disposed to share the common exultation over the throng of new inventions due to new scientific knowledge, may perceive that the respect for scientific rules and methods bringing these fresh conveniences to our doors, tends to spread itself in the popular

mind through the whole circle of men's opinion, even in matters of daily talk and life far remote from the atmosphere of science. This respect marks the general advent and common diffusion of a new intellectual force and spirit.

VI.

To turn back to note the question of Progress and its course. It has long had irresistible interest for powerful minds. It could not be otherwise. Is the track all upward? That is not all. The question strikes far deeper than merely social and political interest. It goes to the very quick of modern interpretation of the working of past history and our present universe. There are, we may suppose, three explanations, theories, or hypotheses of the course of human things, and the power that guides them, shapes them, and controls them. One assigns this supreme mysterious control to Providence; a second to laws of Evolution; a third to a beneficent and steadfast necessity, in which we confidently trust under the name of Progress. Such is the modern aspect of an eternal riddle,—far too momentous for us to confront here. But you will let me offer one or two remarks upon the divinity of Progress, in its ordinary mundane acceptation. Progress, like Toleration, or Equality, is one of the reigning words most familiar in common use, yet having significance extremely diverse. It stands

for a hundred different things. Whether we mean advance in material civilisation during historic time; or advance in the strength and wealth of human nature; or advance in ideals of human society—and these are evidently neither identical nor always contemporary—causes are assumed to be constantly at work, tending both to raise the high-water mark of civilisation and to spread its various successive gains over a wider level. Do you mean progress in talents and strength of mind? Clear thinkers have declared that they find no reason to expect it, and that there is as much of these in an ignorant as in a cultivated age, and often more. But there is, they go on to say, great progress, and great reason to expect progress, in feelings and opinions.¹ Close examination forces us to be content with something far short of this assumption. A universal law, for all times, all States, all Societies, Progress is not. There is no more interesting problem, for instance, in the region of modern historic speculation, than the decline of the Latin race in the southern half of the American hemisphere, contrasted with the boundless advance both in material prosperity and mental vigour of the English, Scotch, Irish, and French stocks among their northern neighbours. Progress, says one grave thinker, not over-stating a plain historic truth, “is the rare exception; races may remain in the lowest barbarism, or their development be arrested at some

¹ Mill's *Letters*, ii. 359.

more advanced stage: actual decay may alternate with progress, and even true progress implies some admixture of decay."¹ An extraordinarily copious elaboration of such a line of thought is to be found in a work of twenty years ago on *National Life and Character*, of which, whatever we may decide about its central thesis as a forecast, we may say that it opens, collects, expounds, and illustrates vast issues in the evolution of States and races, better worth examining and thinking about, than can be found in any other book of the same period.²

From vast tracts and periods of literature, it is almost startling to think that the idea of Progress, which is the animating force of so much of the thought, writing, and action of the civilised world to-day, is wholly absent. You only find glimpses of it here and there among Greeks and Romans.³ Early Christians could care little for a world which they regarded as doomed to extinction at a near date. The thought of retrogression is constant. Sages and poets in every age have warned States and their rulers of the inevitable decay that awaits them, as it awaits each mortal man himself. In some who were most alive to the decline in standards of life and government, there burned a fervid hope that somehow declension would be arrested, though the conditions that produced it were to be essentially

¹ Leslie Stephen, *English Thought in the 18th Century*, i. 17.

² *National Life and Character: a Forecast*, by Charles H. Pearson, 1893.

³ See Martha's *Lucretius*, 322-4.

unaltered. If the past had been all wrong, what certainty of the same agencies that had governed the past, being either dispersed, or forced to prepare a future that should be all right? Bishop Berkeley, for example, the most ardent philanthropist of his day, despaired of the distempered civilisation of his country, and showed in practice, by missionary emigration to Rhode Island, his faith in a golden age after the decay of Europe, and a new Fifth Empire in the American West—

The seat of innocence,
Where Nature guides and virtue rules,
Where men shall not impose for truth and sense,
The pedantry of courts and schools.

He did not realise how many of the pedantic elements would inevitably be transplanted, and how many of the impediments to virtue, truth, and sense would survive change of scene and clime. Even for ourselves, authority is not all one way. Angles and distances make all the difference to the eagles and falcons who survey history. We know more and more of Nature in the world of matter; we have more power over its energies; men have increased and multiplied and spread out over the globe; life is longer; vigour and endurance have waxed, not waned. International law, though important chapters are still to come, has made much way since Grotius wrote one of the cardinal books in European history. Forgive me for mentioning what is at the moment a word of wrath. The curse

of industrial life is insecurity. The principle of insurance, applied to risks of every kind, has extended and ramified in a truly extraordinary way during the last fifty years, until it is now one of the subtlest international agencies, uniting distant interests and creating perforce a thousand mutual obligations. A portion of mankind has access to higher standards of comfort and well-being. For a thousand years, Michelet says, Europe was unwashed. That at least is no longer absolutely true. While these happy forward motions please our eye and amuse thought, they demonstrate no determined law of social history. Towering States have vanished, like shooting stars. Rome is not, in Byron's plangent line, the only lone mother of dead empires. The desolation of history at Paestum or Segesta, at Ephesus, Olympia, Syracuse, is more awful than the sublime desolation of Nature in tracts of Alpine ice.

You remember Gibbon's declaration that if a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would without hesitation name the period between the death of Domitian and the accession of Commodus. It is nearly a century and a half since Gibbon wrote. The trenchant historian of Rome of our own day and generation, with characteristic daring, puts and answers the same question. "If an angel of the Lord," says Mommsen, "were to strike the balance

whether the domain ruled by Severus Antoninus was governed with the greater intelligence and the greater humanity then or now, whether civilisation and general prosperity have since then advanced or retrograded, it is very doubtful whether the decision would favour the present." That there is another side, we all know. Slavery was the horrid base. Pagan satirists and Christian apologists alike have drawn dark pictures of the imperial world. From opposing points, exaggeration of its wickedness was their common cue. Long after the old stern and triumphant Rome had sunk, after the storm of barbaric invasion had abated, after literature had been recovered, take an ensuing span of Italian history, what and where was the progress? Taine drew a vivid picture of the memorable sixteenth century in Italy, after reading Benvenuto Cellini, Boccaccio, Machiavelli, Vasari. "This Italian society of the sixteenth century," he says, in the literary undress of a private letter, "is an assemblage of ferocious brutes with passionate imagination. The footmen of to-day would not endure the company of the Duke and Duchess of Ferrari, of Paul III., Julius II., Borgia, etc. No wit nor grace nor ease nor amiability, no gentleness, no ideas, no philosophy. Pedantry, gross superstition, risk of death at every instant, the necessity of fighting at every street corner for life or purse, harlotry and worse than harlotry—all with a crudity and a brutality beyond belief." And learned modern inquirers,

competent in wide range of knowledge, insist that, difficult as it must be to gauge the average morality of any age, "it is questionable whether the average morality of civilised ages has largely varied." Evidence enough remains that there was in ancient Rome, as in London or Manchester to-day, "a preponderating mass of those who loved their children and their homes, who were good neighbours and faithful friends, who conscientiously discharged their civil duties."¹ Even the Eastern Roman Empire, that not many years ago was usually dismissed with sharp contempt, is now recovered to history, and many centuries in its fluctuating phases are shown to have been epochs of an established State, with well-devised laws well administered, with commerce prosperously managed, and social order conveniently worked and maintained.

Mill puzzled us many years ago (1857) by what seemed an audacious doubt. "Hitherto it is questionable," he said, "if all the mechanical inventions yet made have lightened the day's toil of any human being. They have enabled a greater population to live the same life of drudgery and imprisonment, and an increased number to make fortunes. But they have not yet begun to effect those great changes in human destiny, which it is in their nature and in their futurity to accomplish."²

¹ Hatch, *Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, p. 138.

Who can forget the tender lines in stern Lucretius, iii. 894?

Polit. Econ. ii. 326.

This doubt, when quickened into fervid activity of mixed pity and anger, by its clash with new ideals of the human lot, has bred a fresh Socialism, the immense perplexity of ruling men to-day. Whether Socialism in any of its multitudinous forms can be the assured key to progress, is still a secret. Meanwhile, it is unjust to history to overlook the strenuous efforts that have softened the hardships incident to spread of mechanical invention. The drudgery and imprisonment is not what it was. Child labour has been abolished. The labour of women is guarded. The hours of men are reduced. I need not tell over again all that beneficent tale; it saved the nation. Its full effects are still uncounted. Mill was not afraid of an economically "stationary state," but then he appended the emphatic proviso that the question of population should always be held in due regard. He did not live to see a Europe where the military rivalry of divided nations has for the moment violently shifted that vital question into unexpected bearings, because ratio of population is one of the main elements in all computations of fighting strength. The recruiting sergeant now holds the international scales.

The decrepitude that ended in the Latin conquest of Constantinople at the beginning of the thirteenth century, and the Mahometan conquest in the middle of the fifteenth, is an awkward reproof to the optimist superstition that civilised communities are universally bound somehow or another to be progressive.

Whether that decrepitude was due to Byzantine incompetence for working government on the vast imperial scale, or to the misuse of intellectual energy in futile and exasperating polemics, or to the gross and crushing subjection of spiritual power to temporal, —these are questions of the first interest to all who seek philosophic history. They are neighbours, too, to a wider question that has no little actuality to-day. For some observers, who know and have thought much about it, pronounce it not clear that Western contact with Eastern races will increase the sum of human happiness. And what of evolution among Eastern races themselves? From time to time attempts are made by reforming Moslems to discover a basis for "liberalism" in the Koran itself. Only a few years ago, for example, was published an address from Moslems in Tunis to a French official, earnestly assuring him by an ingenious assortment of texts that there was nothing in the Koran incompatible in spirit, if not exactly in letter, with the immortal principles of '89. Thence they argue that just as Christianity has passed through slavery, intolerance, and degrading incidents connected with the seclusion of women, so the religion of Mahomet may like Christianity make its way into a higher and purer air. That Islamism is a marked advance for backward races is generally admitted, and that it is not incompatible with solid intelligence and all manly virtues we know. We hardly find instances to-day on any marked scale of its capacity

to adapt itself to all the modern requirements of a civilised State. Some observers, however, hold a more sanguine view. Whether Nationality is likely to take the bond of religion in Moslem countries, is another question not easy to answer. There may be a tendency in that direction, and it may be stimulated by the decline of Turkish power.¹

After all, it is well to measure against the procession of changes that have swept through culture, civilisation, and the modern world, some stupendous fixities of human things. If we think, for example, of all that Language means; of the unplumbed depths of mortal thought, mood, aim, appetite, right, duty, kindness, savagery; and yet how stable language is, and how immutably the tongues of leading stocks in the world seem to have struck their roots. Then consider three great faiths—Christendom, Judaism, Islam,—in spite of endless reformation, counter-reformation, internecine conflict within, displacements by fire and sword from without. Yet if we survey the far-stretching cosmorama of religions in their vast history, how steadfastly the name, the rites, the practices and traditions, and intense attachment to them all, persist even after reasoning and comparative methods seem to have plucked up or worn away the dogmatic roots.

On one thing, at any rate, optimist and pessimist

¹ On these points, see Lord Cromer's *Modern Egypt*, i. 136. 140; Bryce's *Studies in History and Jurisprudence*, ii. Essay 13.

agree, that Progress is no automaton, spontaneous and self-propelling. It depends on the play of forces within the community and external to it. It depends on the room left by the State for the enterprise, energy, and initiative of the individual. It depends on the absence from the general mind at a given time, of the sombre feeling, *Quota pars omnium sumus*, how small a fraction is a man's share in the huge universe of unfathomable things. It depends on no single element in social being, but on the confluence of many tributaries in a great tidal stream of history; and those tides, like the ocean itself, ebbing and flowing in obedience to the motions of an inconstant moon. Though Greek is not compulsory with you here, we may go back for the last poetic word on all this, to the ode in the Greek play where the chorus recounts with glorious enumeration how of all the many wonders of the world, the most wondrous is Man; he makes a path across the white sea, works the land, captures or tames animals and birds for his day's use; he has devised language and from language thought, and all the moods that mould a State; he finds a help against every evil of his lot, save only death; against death and the grave he has no power. No progress, at any rate, in harmony of words or strength of imagination in the four-and-twenty centuries since Sophocles, dims the force and beauty of these ancient lines.¹

¹ *Antigone*, 332-364: Jebb, p. 76.

VII.

The Italian Machiavel of the fifteenth century is applauded by a German Machiavel of the nineteenth, for disclosing and impressing the mighty fundamental that "*the State is Force.*" We call Treitschke and Machiavelli by a common name without offence, because both writers have the signal courage and rare merit to proclaim what each of them takes for rigid and relentless truth. Rulers, they say, may be shy of owning that the State is Force, and the more respectable or the weaker among them do their best to find a decent veil. Still things are what they are, and the politic augur does not deceive himself. Political right and wrong depends on the practice of your age, and on what is done by other people. Machiavelli did not go beyond common sense when he "saw no reason for fighting with foils against men who fight with poniards."

We all know, to be sure, that in one vital sense the State is Force. Yet as a bare primordial law of social existence, experience shows how easily it falls into frightfully misleading disproportion. Carlyle brought it to a startling point, when he declared that after all the fundamental question between any two human beings is, "Can I kill thee, or canst thou kill me?" But is the main truth actually this, that brutality, whether naked or in uniform and peruke, is the fundamental postulate between rulers and ruled, or between governments and

nations on the two sides of a frontier? The judge, the constable, the sheriff, as we know well enough, are indispensable against foes within, and the soldier with his rifle for foes across the frontier. Still the principle is no beacon-fire, until we have vigilantly explored it. What sort of State, what sort of Force? What is to be the place of the Minister of Police in internal government? Is there to be a jury of twelve honest men in a box, and a writ of habeas corpus, and no privilege conceded to an official of the State against the civil rights of ordinary citizens? The formula of Force would not have been rejected, so far as it goes, by William the Silent, Cromwell, Turgot, Washington, Lincoln, or any other of the small host who pass for mankind's political deliverers. It would have been silently accepted, if they had stooped to theorise, by the most barbarous tyrants in modern history, from Ezzelino in the thirteenth century, down to King Bomba in the nineteenth. There is no more revolting chapter in the annals of Christendom than the Spanish Inquisition. Yet it was in fact a definite branch of the State, and at an *auto-da-fé* any Familiar with a conscience might have murmured, as he heaped the faggots round his firm-souled victim, that after all the State is Force. So, too, the Jacobin with his guillotine.

Manifold are the types of State and the conditions of the Force,—by whom, for instance, and on what terms it is wielded. The maxim does not harden into a doctrine fit for use, until in a given

case we know of the Force, what are its instruments and origins, the nature of its energies. What is the power of its action for social stability on the one hand, and social motion, whether forward or backward, on the other? How stands it towards opinion and law, the two great agencies of government? Above all, let us know what price it costs, when the full and final balance has been struck. Cavour, to whom a foremost place is not denied by any of the writers of this school of Force, used to talk of "people like me who have more faith in ideas than in cannon for mending the lot of humanity."¹ The ideas in which he had faith, were ideas with practical aims tested by open discussion. Bureaucracy has not to persuade, to compromise, to give and take, to prove and win its case in the course of free personal debate in face of rival ideas and antagonistic interests. Relieved from these wholesome exigencies, it may carry and enforce measures efficiently, but with too little security that time will prove them right.

Bismarck was a giant of the older well-known type, working through imposed authority and armed force. Before he made war, first on Austria, next on France, he declared war upon his parliament. That the maxim of the State being Force does not carry us magisterially through the more subtle and delicate branches of national business, this powerful man was rapidly to learn from his rude encounter with the Church from 1875 to 1878. The famous *Kultur-*

¹ *Scritti*, ii. 225.

kampf, or fight for modern civilisation, for obvious reasons is no favourite topic in Germany, but it is one of the most striking episodes in the deepest conflict of our time. The motives of its author are obscure,—whether, like France and Belgium, he meant it for a counter to the Vatican Council; or a stroke against the Poles and Catholic particularism in southern Germany; or a searching test of imperial unity; or an iron-handed sequel to Luther and Germanism against the Tiara beyond the mountains. Be this as it may, after a grand parliamentary drama the repulse was severe. “To Canossa,” he said, recalling the mighty struggle between the Emperor and Hildebrand, “I will not go either in flesh or spirit.” Yet in five years to Canossa Bismarck figuratively went, though without the three penitential days under falling snows in the Canossa courtyard, where a German prince eight hundred years before had bent before an ecclesiastic as daring, immovable, and potent as Prince Bismarck himself.

Though the Middle Age is over, though no Hildebrand nor Innocent can now survive, yet Influence retains a share of the power so long upheld by the bolder pretensions of Authority. Well may the Roman Church be described as the most wonderful structure that “the powers of human mind and soul, and all the elemental forces at mankind’s disposal have yet reared” (Acton). Here we meet a branch of politics that only too plainly deserves attention from those who care in the fullest sense to comprehend

the problems of their time. History has brought the relation of spiritual power and temporal into many aspects and bearings all over Europe. It touches vivid controversies on schools, religious congregations, endowments, churches, "exalting their mitred front in court and parliament," and is not likely soon to disappear. It is not for me here to do more than glance at it. I will not linger on Erastus, the Heidelberg doctor of ill-omened name, who in the sixteenth century propounded (or did not propound) the doctrine of the supremacy of the civil magistrate in things ecclesiastical, that raises many violent disputations in relation to English and Scotch establishment.¹ The Erastian principle has been greatly transformed in the United Kingdom in the last sixty years, and further transformations await it. The internal temper and spirit of the Church of England has undergone immense changes within the same period, and to what extent these internal changes have altered the value set upon secular privilege, either by her members or in external opinion, remains an active issue.

However that may stand, the Roman Church, for good or for evil, has in itself qualities of a State that do not belong even to the most vigorous and exclusive of Protestant communions. A famous French writer, a Piedmontese statesman of the Napoleonic age, wrote a book in 1817 upon the Pope, defining and

¹ See *The Thesis of Erastus touching Excommunication*, by the Rev. Robert Lee, Edinburgh, 1844.

vindicating the papal sovereignty, in the same temper and on the same lines as the Machiavellian school in the area of State. Treitschke's doctrine provoked plenty of antagonism in the temporal world, and the corresponding way of dealing with spiritual sovereignty has not been approved by all who find repose or shelter within the Roman fold. Nothing, say eminent men among them, can be more remote from the political notions of monarchy than pontifical authority. That authority is not the will of the rulers, but the law of the Church, binding those who have to administer it as strictly as those who have to obey. Arbitrary power is made impossible by that prodigious system of canon law, which is the ripe fruit of the experience and inspiration of eighteen hundred years.¹ So be it. Yet the attempt by theocratic partisans, from the majestic Bossuet down to the meagre Pobedonostzeff in our own day, to insist upon a difference, whether the government be legitimate or revolutionary, Prince, Pope, or Demos, between absolute and arbitrary, tested by demands of practice is little more than sophistry. You will be glad to escape to safer and more secular ground, but these topics are by no means out of date, and they deserve the interest of intelligent readers of the newspapers.

"How vague and cloudy," we are told by good readers, "were many of the German treatises of the last 60 years on the theory of the State." Even

¹ Acton, *History of Freedom and other Essays*, 1907, p. 192.

those who insist most strongly that the abstract paves the way for the concrete, that the transcendental is the only secure basis for order by government, and that evolution of the Absolute is the right precursor of Sadowa and Sedan, cannot but admit that in Germany at least it was the dynasty of historians, and not the abstract men, who supplied the final clencher for public opinion and national resolution. Treitschke, the most brilliant of the dynasty, one day fell upon a volume of the letters of Cavour. Admiring Cavour's clearness of mind, cheerful simplicity, common sense and measure, he goes on : " Nothing for a long time has chained my attention so fast. This intensely practical genius is of course different by a whole heaven's-breadth from the great poets and thinkers that are so trusted by us Germans. Yet he stands in his own way before the riddles of the world as great as Goethe or Kant." After Sadowa Treitschke pronounced any dragoon who struck down a Croat to have done more at that moment for the German cause than the subtlest political head with the best cut quill. To such lengths do brilliant men push things in their humour for *Real-Politik* and hurrying to be quit of the abstract. With this writer, reaction went far.¹ In an iron age, he urges,—and our age is iron,—to make peace your steadfast aim, is not only a dream, but a blind resistance to the supreme law of life that the strong must overcome the weak. It is a futile

¹ *Politik* : Vorlesungen, 2 vols. (1899).

attempt to evade stern facts, it nurses selfishness, intrigue, material greed, coarse egotism. War is the greatest school of duty, and to preach against it is not only foolish, but immoral. Frederick the Great is right, that war opens the most fruitful field for all the virtues; for steadfastness, compassion, for the lofty soul, the noble heart, for charity; every moment in war is an opportunity for one or other of these virtues. Even duelling is manly discipline in courage, self-respect, and the principle of honour.

These sanguinary sophistries find resounding echoes. One recent writer of the school inscribes for motto on his title-page—"War and brave spirit have done more great things than love of your neighbour. Not your sympathies, but your stout-hearted prowess, is what saves the unfortunate."¹ All this glorification of war, although shining poets of our own lent to it the genius of their music not so many years ago, is surely as disastrous an outcome for the school that presents it, as was Machiavelli's choice of Caesar Borgia to be the grand example of his Prince.

Let us refresh ourselves by recalling the plea for perpetual peace that came from the pen of Kant, the great German, who died at the beginning of the nineteenth century, leaving behind him a fame and influence both as metaphysician and moralist, that place him among the foremost of all his countrymen. Outside of philosophy, he owed much to Bayle, Rousseau, St.-Pierre, above all to Montesquieu. But

¹ Bernhardi, *Deutschland und der nächste Krieg*.

he watched the two great affairs of his time, the revolt of the American Colonies, and the overthrow of the French monarchy, with an interest hardly less keen than that of Burke himself, with whose later views he warmly sympathised. Though supreme in the region of the abstract, he had mind left for man as a political creature in the concrete. His tracts on *Cosmopolitical History*, inspired from French sources, in their own day missed fire, nor is his setting of good ideas attractive in its form. It is too dogmatic, abstract, geometric. That notwithstanding, the principles of common sense applied to his ideal of permanent peace in a European federation, are stated with admirable effect. He points to the immoderate exhaustion of incessant and long preparation for war. He presses the evil consequence at last entailed by war, even through the midst of peace, driving nations to all manner of costly expedients and experiments. When war ends, after infinite devastation, ruin, and universal exhaustion of energy, comes a peace on terms that plain reason would have suggested from the first. The remedy is a federal league of nations in which even the weakest member looks for protection to the united power, and the adjudication of the collective will. States, Kant predicts, must of necessity be driven at last to the very same resolution to which the savage man of Nature was driven with equal reluctance; namely, to sacrifice brutish liberty, and to seek peace and security in a civil constitution founded upon law.

This civil constitution must in each State be republican,—a point that may have alienated opinion in monarchical Germany, but in fact it was not meant to go beyond some one or more of the many possible shapes of representative government. As it has unfortunately happened, neither republic nor parliament has yet found itself able to walk in Kant's way, but he marks a bright patch in dubious skies.

VIII.

Statesmen are supposed not to take a high view of their fellow-creatures. Mazzini says of the historian of the Council of Trent, "Like most statesmen, Sarpi had no great faith in human nature." Too narrow a reading of famous Italians of the age before Sarpi, like Machiavel and Guicciardini, gives them a worse reputation in this respect than they deserve. In England, save in bad periods, our most politic princes and rulers, though circumspect and shrewd, have been no cynics. They took human nature with wise leniency, though George III., himself a consummate politician by no means in the best sense, declared politics a trade for a rascal, not for a gentleman. "How goes our education business?" Frederick the Great asked of an official. "Very well," was the answer; "in old days, when the notion was that men were naturally inclined to evil, severity prevailed in schools, but now when we realise that the inclination of men is good, school-

masters are more generous." "Alas, my dear Sulzer," was Frederick's reply, "you don't know that damned race as I do." Even those who would with truth deny that they looked on great politics as no more than a game of skill, do not flatter their human material. Tocqueville, for instance, was philosopher, member of parliament, and foreign secretary. His experience was ample; he saw public business and its agents at first hand. His autobiographic pages are liberally strewn with allusions to the volatility of men, and to the emptiness of the great words with which they cover up their petty passions. Nations are like men, he said; they prefer what flatters their passions to what serves their interests. "I do not despise the mediocre, but I keep out of their way, I treat them like commonplaces: I honour commonplaces, for they lead the world, but they weary me profoundly." Of Napoleon III.: "It was his flightiness, rather than his reason, that, thanks to circumstance, made his success and his power; for the world is a curious theatre, and *there are occasions where the worst pieces succeed best.*" "I found that it is with the vanity of men you do most good business, for you often gain very substantial things from their vanity, while giving little substance back. You will not do half so well with their ambition or their cupidity. But then it is true that to make the best of the vanity of other people, you must take care to lay aside all your own."

Tocqueville, however, we must remember, though

in his earlier day he was the approving critic and skilful analyst of certain forms of democracy, was well described as an aristocrat who accepted his defeat. And far less conscientious, careful, and well-trained thinkers than he, can with very little trouble lay their hands on weaknesses of human nature, and therefore of democratic systems, since they depend for their success on human nature's strength. As if autocracy, which had twice ruined the French State in his own life-time, was free from the duperies that democracy, still less either landed or plutocrat oligarchy, is not able wholly to escape. In any system, is not what Burke said the real truth? "The true lawgiver ought to have a heart full of sensibility. He ought to love and respect mankind, and to fear himself. . . . Political arrangement, as it is a work for social ends, is only to be wrought by social means. Mind must combine with mind. Time is required to produce that union of minds which alone can produce all the good we aim at." This was in keeping with the same great man's dictum, that in any large public connection of men love of virtue and detestation of vice always prevail. To the general truth so broadly stated, history may demand some qualification, but the manful proclamation that the true lawgiver ought to love and respect mankind and fear himself, sets a cardinal mark of division between two schools of modern government. Men like Rousseau, Fichte, Mazzini, Burke, whose eloquence has wielded supreme in-

fluence in the political sphere within the last 150 years ; or men like Byron, Shelley, Burns, and the poets of freedom in continental Europe, had not much in common with the sword-bearer of English Puritanism, though what they had in common was the root of the matter. Cromwell set the case in famous words : " What liberty and prosperity depend upon are the souls of men and the spirits—which are the men. The mind is the man." Yes, and the historic epochs that men are most eager to keep in living and inspiring memory, are the epochs where the mind that is the man approved itself unconquerable by force.

What a withering mistake it is if we let indolence of mood tempt us into regarding all ecclesiastical or theological dispute as barren wrangles, all political dispute as egotistic intrigues. Even the common shades and subdivisions of party—Right, Left, Right Centre, Left Centre and the rest—are more than jargon of political faction. They have their roots, sometimes deep, sometimes very shallow, in varying sorts of character. In forms hard and narrow, still if we have candour and patience to dig deep enough, they mark broad eternal elements in human nature ; sides taken in the standing quarrels of the world ; persistent types of sympathy, passion, faith, and principle, that constitute the fascination, instruction, and power of command in history.

Everybody who knows anything knows that it is waste of our short lives to insist on ideal perfection.

Popular government, or any other for that matter, is no super-exact chronometer, with delicate apparatus of springs, wheels, balances, and escapements. It is a rough heavy bulk of machinery, that we must get to work as we best can. It goes by rude force and weight of needs, greedy interests and stubborn prejudice; it cannot be adjusted in an instant, or it may be a generation, to spin and weave new material into a well-finished cloth. There is a virtuous and not uninfluential school, and Mill leaned in their direction, who think that there exists in every community a grand reserve of wise, thoughtful, unselfish, long-sighted men and women, who, if you could only devise electoral machinery ingenious enough, if they had only parliamentary chance and power enough, would save the State. That such a reserve should exist, should acquire and exert its influence, should spread the light, is felicity indeed. More than felicity, it is an essential. It must be the main text of every exhortation to a university. But this is not to say that the State will be fortified in its tasks by special electoral artifices, with a scent of algebra and decimal fractions about them.

Bismarck was fond of an iron ring from St. Petersburg, with a favourite Russian word inscribed upon it, *nitchevo*,—like the corresponding Irish word that pleased Sir Walter Scott, *nabochlish*,—"What does it matter?" His table-talk, like Luther's, or Lincoln's, or Cavour's, was coloured by a satiric humour that it would be foolish to count for cynicism,

scepticism, pessimism, or any other of that ill-omened family. It was only one of the cheerful tricks of fortitude. Such moods have nothing in common with Leopardi's poetic gloom over the hypocrisies of destiny; or the dare-devil wit of *Don Juan*; or the mockeries of Heine; least of all with Swift,—a born politician, if ever there was one, but one who had no political chance, and avenged himself by letting irony blacken into savage and impious misanthropy. Without making the mistake of measuring the stature of rulers and leaders of men by the magnitude of transactions in which they found themselves engaged, none at least of those who bear foremost names in the history of nations, ever worked and lived, we may be sure, in the idea that it was no better than solemn comedy for which a sovereign demiurgus in the stars had cast their parts.

There are points of view from which, if you will, you may liken history to an exhibition of wax-work, or a picture gallery with few originals and many copies. But history without portraits in it is both meagre and misleading. At least to turn history into idolatry is worse.

A NEW CALENDAR OF GREAT MEN.¹

EVEN those competent students who thought most ill of Comte's attempt to transform his philosophy into a religion, have agreed to praise the *Positivist Calendar*. This remarkable list of between five and six hundred worthies of all ages and nations, classified under thirteen main heads, from Theocratic Civilisation down to Modern Science and Modern Industry, was drawn up with the design of substituting for the saints of the Catholic Calendar the men whose work marks them out in history as leaders and benefactors in the gradual development of the human race. On Comte's effort to erect a new polity and a new religion, with himself as its high priest and pontiff, nobody has brought to bear, I will not say merely so much hostile criticism, but such downright indignation, as John Stuart Mill. His pages on the later speculations of Comte are the only instance in all his works in which he treats a philosopher from whom he differs with the bitterness felt by the ordinary carnal man for the perversities of an opponent, or, what are

¹ *The New Calendar of Great Men.* Edited by Frederic Harrison. London: Macmillan & Co.

more provoking still, the aberrations of a friend. Yet Mill has little but praise for the profound and comprehensive survey of the past progress of human society which is the basis of the Calendar, and guides its author's choice of the names to which we are to dedicate the days of the secular year.

"While Comte sets forth," says Mill, "the historical succession of systems of belief and forms of political society, and places in the strongest light those imperfections in each which make it impossible that any of them should be final, this does not make him for a moment unjust to the men or to the opinions of the past. He accords with generous recognition the gratitude due to all who, with whatever imperfections of doctrine or even of conduct, contributed materially to the work of human improvement. . . . His list of heroes and benefactors of mankind includes not only every important name in the scientific movement, from Thales of Miletus to Fourier the mathematician and Blainville the biologist, and, in the æsthetic, from Homer to Manzoni, but the most illustrious names in the annals of the various religions and philosophies, and the really great politicians in all states of society. Above all, he has the most profound admiration for the services rendered by Christianity and by the Church of the Middle Ages. . . . A more comprehensive, and, in the primitive sense of the term, more catholic sympathy and reverence towards real worth and every kind of service to humanity, we have not met with in any thinker.

Men who would have torn each other to pieces, who even tried to do so, if each usefully served in his own way the interests of mankind, are all hallowed to Comte.

“Neither is his a cramped and contracted notion of human excellence, which cares only for certain forms of development. He not only personally appreciates, but rates high in moral value, the creations of poets and artists in all departments, deeming them, by their mixed appeal to the sentiments and the understanding, admirably fitted to educate the feelings of abstract thinkers, and enlarge the intellectual horizon of the people of the world.”

An even weightier judgment than Mill's upon such a question is that of Littré. For Littré, while inferior to Mill in speculative power, as well as in taste and aptitude for actual affairs as they go past us, both travelled more widely over vast fields of human knowledge, and possessed in important departments of it a closer and more special acquaintance with detail. Littré, like Mill, at a critical moment in the growth of his opinions, and about the same time of life, conceived an ardent admiration for Comte's exposition of the positive philosophy, and he became, and remained to the end, its firm adherent. “Employed,” he says, “upon very different subjects—history, language, physiology, medicine, erudition—I constantly used it as a sort of instrument to trace out for me the lineaments, the origin, and the outcome of each question. It

suffices for all, it never misleads, it always enlightens." Like Mill—though less provoked than Mill by Comte's arrogance, his pontifical airs, and his hatred of Liberty—Littre rejected utterly and without qualification the later speculations, in which he held Comte to have thrown overboard the method and the principles on which he had built up the system of positive philosophy. Yet Littre declares that the Positivist Calendar deserves a place in the library of everybody who studies history; though we may discuss this admission or that exclusion, yet we must admire the sureness of judgment applied to so many men and over such diversity of matter; finally, it is a powerful means of developing the historic spirit and the sentiment of continuity; it is a luminous manual of meditation and instruction.

The English disciples of Comte have rendered good service to literature and to knowledge by introducing to public attention a performance so commended by such authorities. They have taken their teacher's elaborate list of those who have played an effective part in Western civilisation, and they have clothed each of these five hundred and fifty-eight names with an apparel of biographical and historical fact, which informs the reader who they were, and what is their title to a place in a great concrete picture of human evolution. If the Calendar itself be worth anything, this illustration of the Calendar was well worth supplying. If, as Littre promises, the picture itself is to quicken

meditation and to serve for instruction, then this explanation of each figure in the picture is an indispensable guide, commentary, and handbook. Mr. Harrison tells us with lucidity and precision in his preface what it is that he and his companions have done. The book is not a dictionary, for the names are placed, not in alphabetical order, but in historic sequence. They are selected again not with a view to the space they fill in common fame or in literary discussion, but in relation to a definite principle of grouping—namely, the contribution made by the given individual to the progress of mankind. These little biographies constitute, like the skeleton Calendar on which they are built up, “a balanced whole, constructed, with immense care, to mark the relative importance of different movements, races, and ages.”

How much diligent and conscientious trouble must have been taken, can only be realised by those who are practised in literary workmanship. Condensation is the hardest of all the requirements of composition of this kind; and these lives are marvels of condensation. Let anybody try to write about Fénelon or the Architects of the Middle Ages in a single small page; or Mozart, or Roger Bacon, or Bossuet, or Saint Louis in two; or Descartes in three; or Julius Cæsar or Pope Hildebrand in four; or Aristotle in five: he will then be able to measure the industry, perspicacity, discrimination, and let us not forget also the self-denial and self-control, which have gone

to the production of these vignettes. The writers make no attempt at literary display, though at least three of them are masters of the arts of style and expression. Some of them may seem to share the just regret expressed by a great historian, that history cannot be treated apart from literature and style, like geometry or chemistry; still as a whole the writing is excellent. The merit could not be expected to be absolutely equal in a team of fifteen; but one can only admire the skill and success with which the unity of the central idea has been preserved, and a real, not a mechanical, harmony attained in bringing into a single fabric under one roof the shrines of the great servants of mankind in science and in philosophy; in painting, sculpture, music, romance, history; lyric, elegiac, and dramatic poetry; in government and religion. The field is enormous; so is the number of individual facts, names, dates, in all languages and all branches; so is the quantity of separate estimates, appreciations, verdicts, and judgments. It is not too much to say—so far as a critic like myself can judge—that a high level of general competency has been attained, though, of course, in a survey of this encyclopædic magnitude, there are a thousand points for remark, deduction, and objection. In one respect everybody will concur. Even those who are most ready to find Positivism as a creed hard, frigid, repulsive, and untrue, will still recognise and admire the genuine and devoted enthusiasm for purity, nobility, beauty,

in art, literature, character, life, and service, that has inspired the present enterprise and marks every page of it.

Nobody must suppose that the book is to be skimmed, or merely dipped into, or even once read through and then dismissed. It is extremely readable, for that matter, but it demands and is intended for digestion and rumination. Two of the most important principles that are now established in all contemporary minds with any pretence to call themselves educated, are, first, the unity of history and the ordered continuity of European civilisation and science; second, that the place and quality of a contribution to thought, feeling, or art is relative to the social conditions of time and place, of country and generation. Unless guided and illuminated by these two ideas, the study of anything like general history is impossible, and for purposes of that popular education which is every day all over the world becoming more and more a leading circumstance of our time, general history is seen to be of growing value and importance, both for its own sake as knowledge, and as a corrective to the crude and narrow tendencies incident to the ever-waxing rule of numbers.

Hardly any collected view of the history of the world is so bad as not to be better than ~~to~~ have no view at all. Decisively as we may object to much in Comte's spirit and teaching—to the stifling predominance, for instance, which he allowed Order

to obtain in his mind over Progress, though he incessantly professed to value Progress and Order alike—still, even his chart, imperfect and avowedly provisional as it is and must be, is better than drifting in a boat over the sea of history without a helmsman or a course. Great minds have felt this. Bossuet, in his famous *Discourse on Universal History*, insists on “the concatenation of the universe,” and urges that the true object of history is to observe in connection with each epoch the secret dispositions of events that prepared the way for great changes, as well as the momentous conjunctures which more immediately brought them to pass; and, though Bossuet’s history is arbitrary and one-sided enough, he launched effectually a fertile idea. Montesquieu, Voltaire, Kant, Turgot, Condorcet, Hegel, and many others all felt the same intellectual necessity, and made more philosophic attempts to meet it. Comte went far more elaborately and systematically to work than any of them, in uniting concrete to abstract examination of the long movement that ends in the modern world.

Among the competing theories of human history, men will choose their own, or rather in most cases they will let accident choose for them. There is less difference between them for this particular object, than controversial passion might suppose. Bossuet found the key to events in a Divine Providence, controlling and overruling the course of human destinies by a constant exercise of super-

human will. Comte ascribed a hardly less resistible power to a Providence of his own construction, directing present events along a groove cut ever more and more deeply for them by the past, and even pushing the influence of past over present to the singular and soul-destroying paradox that the living are ruled by the dead. Whether you accept Bossuet's theory or Comte's theory of the law and governance of the world, of the social union, of change, progress, and the ebb and flow of civilisation, in either case, whether men be their own Providence, or no more than instruments and secondary agents in the hands and for the purposes of *die unbekannten höheren Wesen, die wir ahnen*,¹ "the unknown higher beings that we yearn for," this classification of the operations of either Providence equally deserves study and meditation. Earthly fame, says the poet, is nothing else but a breath of wind; and, as the wind is called Scirocco, Tramontana, Libeccio, Greco, according as it blows from one point or another, so Fame picks out her diverse names to celebrate, and the same wind has different power and is differently known in diverse lands. The merit of such an attempt as this is that it supplies principles by which to bring order into the Æolian confusion, to measure famous names, to restrain random incontinence of praise and blame, and at

¹ Heil den unbekannten
Höhem Wesen,
Die wir ahnen.

GOETHE'S *Das Göttliche*.

the same time in a systematic scheme "to impress on the mind of our age the characteristic qualities of various types of civilisation and of human energy and thought."

Its writers will not expect, and do not intend, the present volume to fill the space in men's minds that was once for so many ages occupied by the Menologies and Hagiologies of the Christian Church. Saints crowded into the ecclesiastical calendar with dangerous profusion, and the legends of their lives were worked up into a gigantic system of popular mythology, which, as Gibbon says, so obscured the simple theology of primitive believers as visibly to tend to a restoration of the old reign of polytheism. Yet these legendary biographies, calculated as they were to impair the sublime austerity of monotheism, still had a good side. "In contrast with the rudeness and selfishness which generally prevailed, they presented examples which taught a spirit of gentleness and self-sacrifice, of purity, of patience, of love to God and man, of disinterested toil, of forgiveness of enemies, of kindness to the poor and the oppressed. The concluding part of the legend exhibited the saint triumphant after his earthly troubles, yet still interested in his brethren, who were engaged in the struggle of life, and manifesting his interest by interpositions in their behalf."¹

We may doubt whether any such place will ever be taken by these new heroes. Nor can one wish

¹ Robertson's *History of the Christian Church*, bk. iv. chap. ix.

the book to be so effective as to induce the general public to date its letters, for example, 38 *Descartes* (*Hume*) 103, instead of November 4, 1891. Life is too short for these innovations. Then the competition of the secular romance, as has been caustically remarked, which came in with the seventeenth century, threw hagiography and martyrology into the shade; and we cannot suppose that the rationalised and scientific hagiography of the present volume will compete on equal terms with the vast and exuberant growth of modern fiction. Yet the wonderful spectacle offered by such a narrative, of all the toil, wisdom, love, faith, illumination of intellect and of soul, that have gone to building the social home of the most forward portions of our race, will not be found without an edification and inspiration of its own.

It is not to be expected that everybody will be satisfied with the distribution of the honours of canonisation. Mr. Harrison thinks that, as to at least five hundred names in the whole list, competent authorities would probably agree; and as to the remainder, critics and objectors would differ as much from one another as from Comte. It may be so. The opening division, Theocratic Civilisation, will strike some as being what Cromwell is supposed to have called the law of England—a tortuous and ungodly jumble; but the field is in its nature obscure, and has been opened mainly since Comte's time. This is not the place for discussing the large question

whether Comte was right or wrong in excluding the Protestant reformers from his list. To many of us it has always appeared a disastrous omission that the form of faith which has directed, and to this day, in spite of the change in the ancient theological spirit, still directs the lives of so many communities all over the world, should be passed by as a mere solvent and an aberration. "Protestant theologians, such as Luther and Calvin," we are told (p. 247), "are not in this Calendar; since the positive and even the negative results of the Intellectual Revolution in Protestant countries are best exhibited by systematic thinkers like Bacon and Hobbes, and practical statesmen like William the Silent and Cromwell." We may notice in passing that William Penn and George Fox have a place, and nobody will grudge to either of them his canonisation, or deny the principle on which they are admitted — namely, that the Quaker faith has "rendered eminent temporary service in England and America." Even Voltaire, after his memorable visit to England in 1725, did handsome justice to the graces and virtues of Quakerism. But taking the Positivist point of view, can we hold that the Quakers are the only Protestants who have rendered eminent temporary service to society and mankind in Great Britain and in America? If George Fox has a good title, why not John Wesley? A principal claim made for Catholicism throughout this volume is that over many ages, even amid the decline of

theology, it has had charge of morals. Perhaps, in any such claim, Catholicism is used in its larger sense for Christianity as a whole; still, in any case, the assertion that the Protestant form of Christianity has had charge of morals, is just as true in the same sense as the same assertion about the Romish form. If that task, whatever it may amount to, has fallen to one church in Catholic countries, it has fallen in the same sense to other churches in Protestant countries. The precise value of the service may be different, and the exact degree of success may be unequal, if anybody chooses to say so; but the service is in aim and quality the same. Whatever may be the relations of such a doctrine as Justification by Faith to the intellectual revolution of modern times, what is not to be denied is that, with all its divisions and all its defects, the evangelical movement, in which Wesley is the greatest name, unquestionably effected a great moral revolution in England.¹ Surely to wage war against the slave-trade was to render a pretty "eminent service to England and America." Wesley was one of its earliest and strongest opponents, and the historian must record that both the onslaught upon the slave-trade, and the other remarkable philanthropic efforts towards the last quarter of the last century, arose in, and owed their importance to, the great evangelical movement, of which this Calendar fatally omits to take any account. If Catholicism is to

¹ Lecky, *Eighteenth Century*, vol. ii. ch. ix.

be judged, not as a body of doctrines but as a social force, why not Protestantism also ?

To omit Calvin from the forces of Western evolution is to read history with one eye shut. To say that Hobbes and Cromwell stand for the positive results of the intellectual revolution in Protestant countries, and that Calvin does not, is to ignore what the Calvinistic churches were, and what they have done for moral and social causes in the old world and in the new. Hobbes and Cromwell were giants in their several ways, but if we consider their powers of binding men together by stable association and organisation, their permanent influence over the moral convictions and conduct of vast masses of men for generation after generation, the marks that they have set on social and political institutions wherever the Protestant faith prevails, from the country of John Knox to the country of Jonathan Edwards, can we fail to see that, compared with Calvin, not in capacity of intellect, but in power of giving formal shape to a world, Hobbes and Cromwell are hardly more than names writ in water ? As a learned man with a right to be heard has put it : " The Protestant movement was saved from being sunk in the quicksands of doctrinal dispute chiefly by the new moral direction given to it in Geneva. The religious instinct of Calvin discerned the crying need of human nature to be a social discipline rather than a metaphysical correctness. The scheme of polity which he contrived,

however mixed with the erroneous notions of his day, enforced at least the two cardinal laws of human society—viz. self-control as the foundation of virtue, self-sacrifice as the condition of the common weal. . . . It was a rude attempt, indeed, but then it was the first which the modern times had seen, to combine individual and equal freedom with strict self-imposed law ; to found society on the common endeavour after moral perfection. The Christianity of the Middle Ages had preached the base and demoralising surrender of the individual ; the surrender of his understanding to the Church ; of his conscience to the priest ; of his will to the prince. Protestantism, as an insurrection against this subjugation, laboured under the same weakness as all other revolutions. It threw off a yoke and got rid of an exterior control, but it was destitute of any basis of interior life. The policy of Calvin was a vigorous effort to supply that which the revolutionary movement wanted—a *positive education of the individual soul*. The power thus generated was too expansive to be confined to Geneva. It went forth into all countries. From every part of Protestant Europe eager hearts flocked hither to catch something of the inspiration. The Reformed Communions, which doctrinal discussion was fast splitting up into ever-multiplying sects, began to feel in this moral sympathy a new centre of union. This, and this alone, enabled the Reformation to make head against the terrible repressive forces brought to bear by

Spain, the Inquisition, and the Jesuits. Sparta against Persia was not such odds as Geneva against Spain. *Calvinism saved Europe.*"¹

Yet Loyola and Dominic, forsooth, are to count among the great saving forces of the Western world, and Calvin is to be banished into limbo. Surely this is too hard for any canon of historic equity. For my own part, if I may not date my letters *Luther*, I positively decline to date them *Innocent the Third*.

The same deliberate limitation of vision—for it would be altogether unjust to ascribe it to constitutional narrowness of mind—that thrusts out even the social services of Protestant heretics in the West, excludes all mention of the services rendered to civilisation by the heretical heirs of the Roman Empire in the East. Mr. Harrison, for instance, describes it as the great glory of Charles Martel that he saved Europe from Islam, and stemmed the torrent of invasion both in North and South from Mussulman and heathen. But this is to leave out of sight what was the real and effective bulwark for many ages against Mussulman invasion. What says a profound and learned historian whose authority our author will be the first to recognise? "The vanity of Gallic writers has magnified the success of Charles Martel over a plundering expedition of the Spanish Arabs (A.D. 732) into a marvellous victory, and attributed the deliverance of Europe from the Saracen yoke to the valour of the Franks.

¹ Pattison's *Essays*, ii. 31.

But it was the defeat of the great army of the Saracens before Constantinople by Leo the Third (718) which first arrested the torrent of Mohammedan conquest, although Europe refuses her gratitude to the iconoclast hero who averted the greatest religious, political, and ethnological revolution with which she has ever been threatened.”¹

Nothing but a settled prejudice against the Orthodox Church can explain the exclusion of all reference to the share of the Eastern Empire in saving Western civilisation. Hannibal is admitted, on what principle I do not profess to understand, for the victory of Carthage over Rome would have transformed the face of the world, and ruined that process of civilising incorporation which in Comte's eyes makes the name of Rome blessed for ever in the history of mankind. Why should Hannibal, who would have destroyed this great work, have his day in the Calendar, and Leo and Basil, who sheltered and saved the work, be left to perish from commemoration, like the shadow of smoke? “Without the history of the Eastern Empire of Rome,” says Freeman, to whom the doctrine of the unity of history as a living truth of daily application owes so much more than to anybody else in England, “without the Eastern Empire, the main story of the world becomes an insoluble riddle. If there had been Turks at Constantinople in the ninth and tenth centuries, the names Europe and Christen-

¹ Finlay's *History of Greece*, ii. 19.

dom could never have had so nearly the same meaning as they have had for ages.”¹

It may be said that Comte expressly designed his scheme for Western Europe. But then, why insert Haroun-al-Raschid, the immortal caliph of Baghdad, and Abd-al-Rahman, the greatest of the caliphs of Cordova? Because, we are told, the Arabian culture that flourished in their reigns excited a powerful reaction in the whole progress of Western thought, and because much of the learning, the arts, and the mechanical knowledge of the ancient world was preserved in the Arab university of Cordova. That is quite true, but nobody knows better than some of the writers of this volume how much more was preserved at Constantinople. The mighty Gibbon did less than justice to the part played by the Byzantine Emperors in saving Christian civilisation for so long from the arms of the Turks, yet he “trembles at the thought that Greece might have been overwhelmed, with her schools and libraries, before Europe had emerged from the deluge of barbarism, and that the seeds of science might have been scattered on the winds before the Italian soil was prepared for their cultivation” (*Decline and Fall*, chap. lxvi.). The Byzantine system of government may have been essentially retrograde, and it may have been so from the cause that it had the fundamental vice of uniting temporal and spiritual power in the same hands. That is no reason, how-

¹ Freeman, *Methods of Historical Study*, p. 111.

ever, why the services of the Byzantines should be left out, nor would they have been left out, as one must suspect, if they had not been schismatic in the eyes of the Pope of Rome, and if the founder of Positivism had not felt bound to take up the Pope's quarrels along with the rest of his pontifical attributes.

Among the names which Englishmen will be prompt to miss are Elizabeth and Chatham. Yet Elizabeth, by the practice of a patient and long-headed sagacity in which she has not many rivals among statesmen, saved the independence of England, and Englishmen at least may be excused for thinking that such achievement ought to count for something in an œcumenical survey like the book before us. Beesly's volume on Elizabeth¹ is a masterly vindication—and vindication cannot really be needed in the eyes of his associates—of her claim to as high a place as Blanche of Castile, and to one considerably higher than her namesake, Saint Elizabeth of Hungary. Then, as to Chatham, it seems hard measure to exalt Frederick the Great to the lofty pinnacle of the presiding genius over a whole month, and yet to grudge even a day of a week to the English minister who prevented Frederick from being cut into mincemeat—not to mention sundry other performances that in their ultimate effects have decided “the general course of civilisation,” of which our Calendar here is the biographical manual, over the

¹ *Twelve English Statesmen.*

greater part of the habitable globe. Without Chatham the appearance of Washington, Jefferson, and Franklin in the Calendar is robbed of half its meaning; and it may be worth adding that Jefferson would have been very much surprised to find himself admitted to Paradise, while the unlucky French philosophers who inspired him with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and all the rest of his principles, are cast without name, without fame, down into the Inferno as negatives, destructives, and revolutionaries.

Few selections are so hard to swallow as that of Frederick the Great as patron saint of Modern Statesmanship. Comte extols Frederick as a practical genius who in capacity comes nearest to Cæsar and Charlemagne. This in itself will seem a gross exaggeration to anybody who, with Napoleon's exploits in his mind and the volumes of Napoleon's correspondence before him, has ever realised the incomparable magnitude and strength of practical genius in that colossal man. Baleful as were the purposes to which he put it, who will place Napoleon's practical genius on a level with Frederick's? The best modern opinion of Frederick on this side of his career is that, though a great soldier and an intrepid and skilful diplomatist, he possessed little originality in the fields of administration and organisation. Mirabeau said of Frederick that he was a great character in a great position, rather than a great genius raised by Nature high above the common level. To take this measure of him is not to deny

that Frederick carried out with heroic courage, persistency, insight, resource, and labour, the work that was then appointed by circumstances for the ruler of the Prussian State. "He maintained with invincible tenacity his father's idea of defending Prussia by the sustained energy of its people, called out and stimulated by the unsparing rigour of the government" (Seeley's *Stein*, i. 175). All that is true enough. But admire this performance as we may, high as we may place the qualities exhibited in the course of it, yet it was but a small task compared with the stupendous and world-embracing achievements, alike of statesmanlike conception and of execution, which justify the writers of the present volume in saying of Cæsar that Shakespeare was not wrong in calling him the foremost man of all the world; and of Charlemagne, that he formed the course of human civilisation, recast a world shattered by barbarian incursion, and founded Europe as an organic whole. Frederick had not been twenty years in his grave before the work of his life was in ruins. Arbitrary energy is always superficially attractive; men overlook the confusion that it mostly leaves behind it. Frederick's duty was to preserve the independence of a very poor country without a frontier, and he succeeded. But it was Frederick's bad civil administration, and the abuses and defects of his military system, that left Prussia open to the humiliation and overthrow of Jena and Tilsit.

Apart from the question of Frederick's practical genius, which assuredly was not second-rate, Comte gives him his prominent place in the Calendar as a dictator who furnishes the best model of modern statesmanship, and who, in accordance with the ideal of Hobbes—a very bad ideal it was from any liberal point of view—"reconciled power and liberty." If we turn from these rose-coloured abstractions to the actualities of Frederick's government, we can find no proof of any such reconciliation. His rigours may have been justified by the exigencies of his kingdom, but it is idle to cover with fair words the harshness of a government that was in the strictest sense military and despotic. I cannot see how Napoleon was not as good an illustration of the bad ideal of Hobbes as Frederick, nor why Napoleon is to be excluded if Frederick is to be admitted, and not only admitted, but raised to the same high and special eminence as Aristotle, Charlemagne, Descartes, and St. Paul. Dictators have their place in the universal scheme, no doubt; but one can only hold up one's hands in amazement when Frederick, who is more responsible than any one other European ruler of the eighteenth century for the spread of those principles of violence, fraud, and robbery which were only carried farther by Napoleon, and were not begun by him, is held up as "a precious and shining example of what purely human motives can effect when they are not weighted and warped by the rival claims of an imaginary object of love

and adoration." The more highly we appreciate Beesly's remarkably acute and masculine historic judgment, the harder is this particular eulogy to comprehend.

A very different figure from Frederick is Francia, the dictator of Paraguay, whom Carlyle, carrying his idolatry of force and brute-will to its most perverse height, made the hero of an only too well-known essay. Even the defenders of this execrable personage have, I believe, been obliged to plead insanity in extenuation of some of his most atrocious doings; and, sane or insane, it would be hard to find a man known to history less worthy of admiration, and he is least worthy of all, exactly from the Positivist point of view. Yet Francia, one of the cruellest of despots, figures in the week of Cromwell along with Algernon Sidney and George Washington! Rather than dedicate a day of the week to Francia, I shall decidedly stick to my old friends the Sun and the Moon, to Wodin and to Thor.

One of the most admirable of these little biographies is that of Byron. Mr. Harrison deals with a justice, courage, generosity, eloquence, and judgment that are more common in foreign than in English critics of this powerful man:

To judge Byron truly, we must look at him with European and not with insular eyesight. His power, his directness, his social enthusiasm, fill the imagination of Europe, which is less troubled than we are to-day about his metrical poverty and conventional phrase. To Italians he is almost more an Italian than an English

poet; to Greeks he is the true author and prophet of their patriotic sentiments; and in France and in Germany he is now more valued and studied than by his countrymen, in a generation when subtle involution of idea and artful cadence of metre are the sole qualifications for the laurel crown. When this literary purism is over, Byron will be seen as the poet of the revolutionary movement which, early in the nineteenth century, awoke a new Renaissance. (Page 362.)

I have not a word to say against this estimate, nor a word to add. Yet it makes one wonder why, if Byron is to be admitted to our pantheon, Rousseau should be excluded. Comte has used some bad language about Rousseau, and some of it is thoroughly deserved. But when you have exposed his sophistries, his delusions, his sentimentalism, his mischievous rhetoric, it still remains at least as true of him as it ever was of Byron, that his glow, his fervour, his power of effective inspiration, his feeling for nature, his sense of the true dignity of man, awoke new aspirations and kindled a purer flame in the life of the affections and the heart. To treat Rousseau as all negative or destructive is to leave out one-half of the sources, and one-half of the results, of his social and popular influence. It is true that he was a revolutionary in Comte's sense, but then nobody could dream of denying, and Mr. Harrison does not deny, that the new element of lyric emotion represented by Byron is "revolutionary in its origin and in its sympathies." If Byron then is to have a day of the week to himself, why not Rousseau?

It is curious that, as Rousseau is shut out, the great man who despised Rousseau so intensely, and combated his theories with such persistency and power, should not be allowed to come in. One can see possible grounds in framing a calendar for the exclusion of either Rousseau or Burke, but not of both. We can well suppose that Burke would never have found a day in the terrible months of Ventôse, Nivôse, and Pluviôse. But why not in a Calendar for Positivists? The headless shades of Danton, Robespierre, and the rest of them may find some solace in knowing that their exclusion is shared by the author of the *Reflections on the French Revolution*; but that Comte, of all men, should have neglected the greatest conservative force in the literature of the revolutionary crisis, is indeed a surprise and a puzzle.

The equally striking omission of Wordsworth is, I suppose, to be explained by the decision to include no contemporaries. Comte framed his Calendar between 1845 and 1849, and Wordsworth did not die until 1850. Exception, however, was made in favour of Rossini, who died in 1868, and Manzoni, who did not die until 1873; and Wordsworth is certainly a more indispensable name than either. No modern poet has more of the ideas that are in the Comtist scheme religious, and Comte, though his admiration for Dante shows him to have known fine poetry when he could get it, was tolerant even of mediocrity when it expressed his own thought—

witness his admiration for the unmelodious oracle of Eliza Mercœur, "*L'oubli c'est le néant ; la gloire est l'autre vie*," which, being interpreted, is that "to be forgotten is the true annihilation ; man's future life lies in being remembered with honour."

The treatment of Ancient Poetry leaves something to be desired ; and the days of the month of Homer are not nearly so genial as the days and weeks of Dante and Shakespeare. If there is a man in all the world who deserves a gracious, gentle, and affectionate hand, it is Horace. One is shocked to find this true-hearted and delightful poet sniffed at and scolded almost as if he were one of the impostors of letters. "Having smothered his republican zeal with a hollow enthusiasm for the triumphant empire, his purely Roman work was reduced to opening the doors of the Pantheon to the cults and philosophies of all the world. He emphasised the eclecticism which was the groundwork of the imperial sociocracy." This is surely no way of writing about a lyric poet. He is "the polished poet of expediency for all ages" ; smooth and shallow is his poetry of love ; his code is one of harmless selfishness ; his love, "like the rest of his faculties, lacked the fire of a devotion welding the fragments of morality into religion." All this sermonising makes but a stale and weedy chaplet to adorn a poet's bust, and such a poet as Horace too—the very genius of friendship, of gaiety, of pleasant dalliance, of those social delights which

Milton declared to be not unwise if we but spare to interpose them oft; and who, besides these infinitely graceful effusions of a lighter muse, yet could strike a grave and thrilling note when he praised Regulus or the just and tenacious man, and who, in his Satires and Epistles, takes a place among the first of those who have set forth the wisdom of life, including that vitally important part of wisdom which consists in not expecting too much either from life or from your fellow-creatures. How could it ever be the business of such a poet as this to "weld the fragments of morality into religion"?

The same writer, one must add, who is so ungenial in raising Horace to his pedestal, does excellently by Ovid and Tibullus. But why did Comte make no room for Catullus in this most agreeable week? He is a far finer poet than Tibullus. Half a dozen pieces of Catullus are the very gems of the lyric muse in the ancient world, if we may not add the modern world as well. The omission may have been a slip, and after all, I am much more inclined to wonder at the completeness and comprehensiveness of Comte's lists than to complain of an exclusion.

Virgil receives a fine and glowing tribute, alike for his merits as a master of the poet's art and instrument, and for his vast influence over the mind and imagination of Europe during the whole of the Catholic period. But Lucretius, on the other hand, gets in comparison a somewhat curt and frigid portion; though, in sublimity, in boldness, in

strength and sweep of imagination, and, I must even say, notwithstanding Mr. Harrison's talk of Virgil's "matchless hexameters" — and matchless they are in finish, grace, and elaboration—yet in grand and solemn majesty of verse, and, above all, in penetrating insight into the awful realities of things through all time and all creation, Lucretius seems in many a passage to be as far above Virgil as Milton is above Spenser.

Some will be struck by the large number of names in the three months dedicated to poetry; but under the general head of "Poetry" are included all modes in which the creative faculty of man expresses imaginative thought. Poetry covers epic, lyric, and romantic poetry; romances, chronicles, or meditations; even painting and sculpture. This wide comprehension explains the fact that the Calendar contains no fewer than 127 names in the sphere of creative art, or very little short of one-quarter of the whole 559. "Such is the large part which Comte assigned to the imagination in the evolution of human society." This shows a far wiser appreciation of the true proportion among the shaping influences of the world, than the ordinary political historian, or even the actual politician, is wont to dream of. Comte himself, as it happens, was not conspicuously endowed with imagination, though in this we cannot expect all his disciples to agree.

On this head, by the way, it is not easy to see why Froissart and Joinville should be placed under

Modern Poetry, while Herodotus goes not into Ancient Poetry, but into Ancient Philosophy. Nor do I understand why Saint-Simon is left out, while Guicciardini is put in. Voltaire is admitted, but only to a subordinate place, as the author of plays like *Zaire* and *Mahomet*. Nothing is said of his *Essai sur les Mœurs*, though it was not merely negative, but a truly positive contribution to the conception of history, and nothing is said of his sleepless humanity, or of his strenuous, lifelong protest against intolerance. So, in the case of Locke, surely we should have heard more about his writings on civil government and toleration. Locke's political or social liberalism was a more important factor in "the concrete evolution of humanity" than his Essay. Hallam truly says, whatever we may think of Locke's doctrine on government, it opened a new era of political opinion in Europe. "While silently spreading the fibres from its root over Europe and America, it prepared the way for theories of political society from which the great revolutions of the past and present age have sprung" (*Literary History*, pt. iv. ch. 4). Of course Comte had a right to frame his Calendar in his own way; still it is perplexing to find the principles of tolerance and freedom on which the modern world, and in an extending degree, subsists, coolly despatched as mere solvents, just as if they had made no positive difference, and no difference for good, in the elements of moral and social life.

It was almost inevitable, considering the purpose and inspiration of the work, that it should often have a note sounding rather like a note of excess. The object is naturally to magnify and to exalt, not to be balanced, measured, or merely judicious. The *Divine Comedy*, for instance, is hailed as "the foundation of the Bible that is to be," and we have no right to wonder, therefore, that Comte should extol it as "the incomparable epic, *which still forms the highest glory of human art.*" In the region of Taste wise men should not waste time in quarrelling with other people's superlatives. But to those who know Homer, Æschylus, Sophocles, Shakespeare, the sentence just quoted will prove a terribly hard saying. When Mr. Harrison pronounces Dante to be the peer of all poets in profound insight into character and life; to stand supreme in the "sublime range of his theme, the sum-total of humanity and nature, the past, the present, and the future—in the profound synthesis of all knowledge, and the ideal co-ordination of human society as a whole"—I cannot but remember that even so admiring and competent a student of Dante as Mr. Symonds finds it necessary to admit the presence of "an irreducible element of prose in the very essence of the poem," and to say, in irreverent language, that the great poet was terribly limited by "the exigencies of his frostbitten allegory and his rigid methodistical theology." Why not be content to love Dante for his exquisite observation of the most beautiful things in Nature;

for the incomparable directness and intensity that enables him to make "his verse hold itself aright by mere force of noun and verb without an epithet"; for the sort of geometric reality with which, as Sainte-Beuve says, he renders the invisible, and by which he recalls some of the austere genius of Pascal; for his sublimity; his mixture of tenderness and pity, with a rhadamanthine severity, not seldom deserving to be called by a harsher name; for his ethical integrity? For all this mankind, who may be said in this century to have rediscovered Dante, will take care not to lose him again from among the objects of their perpetual gratitude and affection. But if we praise him above all other men and poets for his insight "into the sum-total of humanity," what is there left for us to say about Shakespeare? This demurrer to an æsthetic over-estimate is not presumptuously to disparage Dante's supreme place as the noblest monument of the Middle Age. Shelley puts Homer as the first, Dante as the second, of epic poets; "that is, the second poet the series of whose creations have a defined and intelligible relation to the knowledge and sentiment and religion of the age in which he lived and of the ages which followed it." This defined and intelligible relation undoubtedly exists in the work of Dante, and amply warrants Mr. Harrison's description of the "Vision" as summing up the spirit, the knowledge, the religion of the mediæval epoch, and bringing the whole range of Catholic Feudalism before our eyes.

In connection with Dante's "Vision" a remark may be made on another work of fame as wide, and of far more nearly universal popularity and acceptance, the *Imitatio Christi*. This memorable product of the piety of some devout, strong, and sincere soul in the fifteenth century is one of the sacred books of the Positivist library. "The conclusive test of experience," said Comte, "induces us to recommend above all the daily reading of the sublime, if incomplete, effort of à Kempis, and the incomparable epic of Dante. More than seven years have passed since I have read each morning a chapter of the one, each evening a canto of the other, never ceasing to find new beauties previously unseen, never ceasing to gather new fruits, intellectual or moral."

It is true, as is said here, that the *Imitatio* is a book available for all men ; but does the reason given quite accurately hit the mark ? It partly depends on our definition of Religion. Mr. Harrison has said somewhere that "the substance and crown of religion is to answer the question, What is my duty in the world ? Duty, moral purpose, moral improvement is the last word and deepest word of Religion. Religion is summed up in Duty." One could not undertake to examine this overwhelming little sentence in less than a volume. Meanwhile Goethe appears to come nearer the truth. "All religions have one aim : to make man accept the inevitable." Resignation and Renunciation—not sullen nor frigid, nor idle nor apathetic, but open, benign, firm, patient,

very pitiful and of tender mercy—is not this what we mean by piety? Duty does not cover nor comprehend it. Duty is more, and it is less. We are told that, historically considered, the *Imitatio* is to be viewed as a final summary of the moral wisdom of Catholicism; that it is a picture of man's moral nature; that it continually presents personal moral improvement as the first and constant aim for every individual. I do not say that any of this is untrue, but is moral the right word? Is not the sphere of these famous meditations the spiritual rather than the moral life, and their aim the attainment of holiness rather than moral excellence? As, indeed, another writer under the same head better expresses it, is not their inspiration "the yearning for perfection—the consolation of the life out of self"? By Holiness do we not mean something different from virtue? It is not the same as duty; still less is it the same as religious belief. It is a name for an inner grace of nature, an instinct of the soul, by which, though knowing of earthly appetites and worldly passions, the spirit, purifying itself of these, and independent of all reason, argument, and the fierce struggles of the will, dwells in living, patient, and confident communion with the seen and the unseen Good. In this region, not in ethics, moves the *Imitatio*. But we are being drawn into matters that are too high for a mere *causerie* like this, and far too high for the present writer either here or anywhere.

MACHIAVELLI.*

1467-1

I.

THE greatest of the Florentines has likened worldly fame to the breath of the wind that blows now one way and now another, and changes name as it changes quarter. From every quarter and all the points of the historical compass, veering gusts of public judgment have carried incessantly along from country to country and from generation to generation, with countless mutations of aspect and of innuendo, the sinister renown of Machiavelli. Before he had been dead fifty years, his name had become a byword and a proverb. From Thomas Cromwell and Elizabeth; from the massacre of St. Bartholomew, through League and Fronde, through Louis XIV., Revolution, and Empire, down to the third Napoleon and the days of December; from the Lutheran Reformation down to the blood and iron of Prince Bismarck;

* THE ROMANES LECTURE, DELIVERED IN THE SHELDONIAN THEATRE AT OXFORD, JUNE 2, 1897. Some notes to this lecture will be found in the Appendix. The references to them in the text are given in small Arabic numerals.

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The Romanes Lecture
Thomas Huxley: Evolution
Ethics

from Ferdinand the Catholic down to Don Carlos; from the Sack of Rome down to Gioberti, Mazzini, and Cavour: in all the great countries all over the West, this strange shade is seen haunting men's minds; exciting, frightening, provoking, perplexing, like some unholy necromancer bewildering reason and conscience by paradox and riddle. So far from withering or fading, his repute and his writing seem to attract deeper consideration as time goes on, and they have never been objects of more copious attention throughout Europe than in the half-century that is now closing.¹

In the long and fierce struggle from the fifteenth century onwards, among rival faiths and between contending forces in civil government, Machiavelli was hated and attacked from every side. In the great rising up of new types of life in the Church, and of life in the State, his name stood for something that partisans of old and new alike abhorred. The Church at first tolerated, if it did not even patronise, his writings; but soon, under the double stress of the Reformation in Germany on the one hand, and the pagan Renaissance in Italy on the other, it placed him in that Index of forbidden books which now first (1557), in dread of the new art of printing, crept into formal existence. Speedily he came to be denounced as schismatical, heretical, perverse, the impious foe of faith and truth. He was burnt in effigy. His book was denounced as written with the very fingers of Satan himself. The vituperation

of the sixteenth century in the whole range of its controversies has never been surpassed in any age either among learned or unlearned men, and the dead Machiavelli came in for his full share of unmeasured words. As Voltaire has said of Dante that his fame is secure because nobody reads him, so in an inverse sense the bad name of Machiavelli grew worse, because men reproached, confuted, and cursed, but seldom read. Catholics attacked him as the enemy of the Holy See, and Protestants attacked him because he looked to a restoration of the spirit of ancient Rome, instead of a restoration of the faith and discipline of the primitive Church. While both of them railed against him, Catholic and Protestant each reviled the other as Machiavellist. In France national prejudice against the famous Italian queen-mother hit Machiavelli too, for his book was declared to be the oracle of Catherine dei Medici, to whose father it was dedicated; it was held responsible for the Huguenot wars and the Bartholomew massacre. In Spain opposite ground was taken, and he who elsewhere was blamed as the advocate of persecution, was abominated here as the enemy of wars of religion, and the advocate of that monstrous thing, civil toleration. In England, royalists called him an atheist, and roundheads called him a Jesuit. A recent German writer has noted three hundred and ninety-five references to him in our Elizabethan literature, all fixing him with the craft, malice, and hypocrisy of the Evil One.² Everybody knows how

Hadibras finds in his Christian name the origin of our domestic title for the devil, though scholars have long taught us to refer it to Nyke, the water-goblin of Norse mythology.³

Some divines scented mischief in the comparative method, and held up their hands at the impudent wickedness that dared to find a parallel between people in the Bible and people in profane history, between King David and Philip of Macedon. Whenever a bad name floated into currency, it was flung at Machiavelli, and his own name was counted among the worst that could be flung at a bad man. Averroes for a couple of centuries became a conventional label for a scoffer and an atheist; and Machiavelli, though he cared no more for the abstract problems that exercised the Moslem thinker, than he would have cared for the inward sanctities of Thomas à Kempis, was held up to odium as an Averroist. The Annals of Tacitus were discovered: his dark ironies on Tiberius and the rest did not prevent one school of politicians from treating his book as a manual for tyrants, while another school applied it against the Holy Roman Empire; his name was caught up in the storms of the hour, and Machiavellism and Tacitism became convertible terms.

It is not possible here to follow the varying fates of Machiavelli's name and books.* The tale of

*The edition of the *Prince*, published by the Clarendon Press, with Mr. Burd's most competent and copious critical apparatus, and Lord Acton's closely packed introduction, supplies all that is wanted. The same Press has republished

Machiavellian criticism in our own century is a long one. That criticism has followed the main stream of political events in continental Europe; for it is events, after all, that make the fortune of books. Revolution in France, unification in Italy, unification in Germany, the disappearance of the Temporal Power, the principle of Nationality, the idea of the Armed People, have all in turn raised the questions to which Machiavelli gave such daring point. On the medallion that commemorates him in the church of Santa Croce at Florence, are the words, *Tanto nomini nullum par elogium*, "So great a name no praise can match." We only need to think of Michelangelo and Galileo reposing near him, in order to realise the extravagance of such a phrase, and to understand that reaction in his favour has gone almost as intolerably far as the old diatribes against him.⁴

It may be doubted whether in this country Machiavelli has ever been widely read, though echoes have been incessant. Thomas Cromwell, the powerful minister of Henry VIII., the *malleus monachorum*, told Cardinal Pole that he had better fling aside dreamers like Plato, and read a new book by an ingenious Italian who treated the arts of government practically. Cromwell in his early wanderings had been more than once in Italy, and he was probably

the English translation of the *Prince* by N. H. Thomson, who has also executed a translation of the *Discourses* (1883), and now (1906) of the *Florentine History*.

at Florence at the very time when Machiavelli was writing his books at his country farm.⁵ But a more shining figure in English history than Cromwell was even more profoundly attracted by the genius of Machiavelli; this was Bacon. It was natural for that vast and comprehensive mind to admire the extension to the sphere of civil government of the same method that he was advocating in the investigation of external nature. "We are much beholden," Bacon said, "to Machiavel and others that wrote what men do, and not what they ought to do." The rejection of *a priori* and abstract principles, and of authority as the test of truth; the substitution of chains of observed fact for syllogism with major premiss unproved—such a revolution in method could not be reserved for one department of thought. Bacon's references are mainly to the *Discourses* and not to the *Prince*, but he had well digested both.⁶ The *Essays* bear the impress of Machiavelli's positive spirit, and Bacon's ideal of history is his. "Its true office is to represent the events themselves, together with the counsels, and to leave the observations and conclusions thereupon to the liberty and faculty of every man's judgment." His own history of Henry VII. is a good example of such a life as Machiavelli would have written of such a hero.⁷

The most powerful English thinker of Machiavelli's political school is Hobbes. He drew similar lessons from a similar experience—the distractions of civil

war at home, and the growth, which he watched during many years of exile, of centralised monarchy abroad. Less important is Harrington, whose *Oceana* or model of a commonwealth was once so famous, and is in truth one of the most sensible productions of that kind of literature. Harrington travelled in Italy, was much at home with Italian politics and books on politics, and perhaps studied Machiavelli more faithfully than any other of his countrymen. He tells us, writing after the Restoration, that Machiavelli's works had then fallen into neglect.⁸ Clarendon has a remarkable passage (*Hist.* bk. x. § 169) vindicating Machiavelli against the ill name that he had got from people who did not well consider his words and his drift, and applying judiciously enough the Italian's view of Borgia to our great Oliver and his counsellors. Scattered through the *Patriot King* and other writings of Bolingbroke are half a dozen references to Machiavelli,* but they have the air, to use a phrase of Bacon's, of being but cloves stuck in to spice the dish; the Italian's pregnant thinking has no serious place in an author whose performances are little more than splendid beating of the wind. Hume had evidently read the *Discourses*, the *Prince*, and the *History of Florence*, with attention; and with his usual faculty for hitting the nail on the head, he avows a suspicion that the world is still too young to fix many general truths in

* E.g. *Patriot King*, pp. 106, 118. *On the Policy of the Athenians*, p. 243.

politics. We have not as yet had experience of three thousand years. We do not know, says Hume, of what great changes human nature may show itself susceptible, nor what great revolutions may come about in men's customs and principles.⁹

Benjamin Constant said there were only two books that he had read with pleasure since the Revolution, the *Memoirs of Cardinal de Retz* and Machiavelli's *History of Florence*. It would take a long chapter to draw a full comparison between Machiavelli and Montesquieu, who was undoubtedly set by him on some trains of thinking both in his short book on the Romans and his more memorable one on Laws. It may be too much to say, as some critics have said, that all the great modern ideas have their beginning in Montesquieu. But this at least is true among other marked claims to be made for him, that in spite of much looseness of definition and a thousand imperfections in detail, he launched effectually on European thought the conception of social phenomena as being no less subject to general laws than all other phenomena. Of a fundamental extension of this kind Machiavelli was in every way incapable, nor did the state of any of the sciences at that date permit it. As for secondary differences, it is enough to say that Machiavelli put the level of human character low, and Montesquieu put it high; that one was always looking to fact, the other to idea; that one was sombre, the other buoyant, cheerful, and an optimist; Montesquieu confident in the

moral forces of mankind, Machiavelli leaving moral forces vague, nor knowing where to look for them. Finally, "Montesquieu's book is a study, Machiavelli's is a political act, an attempt at political resurrection." 10

II. (1469-1527)

R Machiavelli was born in 1469 (two years later than Erasmus), and when he turned to serious writing he was five-and-forty. His life had been interesting and important. For fifteen years he held the post of secretary of one of the departments in the government of Florence, where he was brought into close relations with some of the most remarkable personages and events of his time. He went four times on a mission to the King of France; he was with Caesar Borgia in the ruthless campaign of 1502; he did the business of his republic with Pope Julius II. at Rome, and with the Emperor Maximilian at Innsbruck. The modern practice of resident ambassadors had not yet established itself in the European system, and Machiavelli was never more than an envoy of secondary rank.¹¹ But he was in personal communication with sovereigns and ministers, and he was a watchful observer of all their ways and motives. We need not here concern ourselves with the thousand chances and changes of Italian policies in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In the long struggle between freedom and tyranny in his native Florence,

Mathiavelli belonged to the popular party. When they fell in 1512, and the Medici came back, he was turned out of his post, thrown into prison, put to the question with ropes and pulleys, according to the hard fashion of the time, shared the benefit of the amnesty accorded when Leo X. ascended the papal throne, and then withdrew to San Casciano. This was the time when he composed most of the writings that have made him famous. Here is his picture of himself, in a letter to a friend (December 10, 1513) :

I am at my farm ; and, since my last misfortunes, have not been in Florence twenty days. I rise with the sun, and go into a wood of mine that is being cut, where I remain two hours inspecting the work of the previous day and conversing with the woodcutters, who have always some trouble on hand among themselves or with their neighbours. When I leave the wood, I proceed to a well, and thence to the place which I use for snaring birds, with a book under my arm—Dante, or Petrarch, or one of the minor poets, like Tibullus or Ovid. I read the story of their passions, and let their loves remind me of my own, which is a pleasant pastime for a while. Next I take the road, enter the inn door, talk with the passers-by, inquire the news of the neighbourhood, listen to a variety of matters, and make note of the different tastes and humours of men. This brings me to dinner-time, when I join my family and eat the poor produce of my farm. After dinner I go back to the inn, where I generally find the host and a butcher, a miller, and a pair of bakers. With these companions I play the fool all day at cards or backgammon : a thousand squabbles, a thousand insults and abusive dialogues take place, while we haggle over a farthing, and shout loud enough to be

heard from San Casciano. But when evening falls, I go home and enter my writing-room. On the threshold I put off my country habit, filthy with mud and mire, and array myself in royal courtly garments; thus worthily attired, I make my entrance into the ancient courts of the men of old, where they receive me with love, and where I feed upon that food which only is my own, and for which I was born. I feel no shame in conversing with them and asking them the reason of their actions. They, moved by their humanity, make answer; for four hours' space I feel no annoyance, I forget all care; poverty cannot frighten, nor death appal me. I am carried away to their society. And since Dante says "that there is no science unless we retain what we have learned," I have set down what I have gained from their discourse, and composed a treatise, *De Principatibus*, in which I enter as deeply as I can into the science of the subject, with reasonings on the nature of principality, its several species, and how they are acquired, how maintained, how lost. If you ever liked any of my scribblings, this ought to suit your taste. To a prince, and especially to a new prince, it ought to prove acceptable. Therefore I am dedicating it to the Magnificence of Giuliano.*

Machiavelli was not meant either by temperament or principle to be a willing martyr. Not for him was the stern virtue of Dante, who accepted lifelong exile rather than restoration with dishonour, content from any corner of the earth to wonder at the sun and the stars, and under any sky to meditate all sweetest truths (*le dolcissime verità*). Not for the ambitious and practical politician was the choice of Saxonarola, who at the moment when Machiavelli

* Symonds's translation, *Age of the Despots*, 244-246.

was crossing the threshold of public life, had taken death by its savage hand, rather than cease from his warnings that no good could come to Florence, were it not from the fear of God and the reform of manners. Nobody had in him less of the Stoic than Machiavelli; his character was no more austere than the Italian morality of his day; his purse was painfully lean; his active and restless mind suffered from that "malady of lost power" which is apt to afflict members of Opposition, and he longed to be back in the business of the State. So he dedicated his book to Lorenzo, in the hope that such speaking proof of experience and capacity would induce those who had destroyed the freedom of his city to give him public employment. His suppleness did not pay. Nothing came of the dedication for several years. Then some trivial duties were found for Machiavelli, and one important literary task was entrusted to him, the history of Florence. This he completed and dedicated to Clement VII. in 1525. To the same period belongs a comedy, which some have described as worthy of Aristophanes and hardly second to Molière's *Tartuffe*. Like Bacon and some others who have written the shrewdest things on human conduct and the arts of success, he had made but a sorry mess of his own chances and gifts. It must always interest us to watch how men take ill usage from the world, and sad ironical miscarriages of life. Machiavelli's was one of those grave intellects, apt for serious thought, yet that easily turn to levity;

console themselves for failure by mockery of themselves, and repay Fortune with her own banter. This is the vein of the brilliant burlesque and satire, with which this versatile genius diversified his closing days. Still, with indomitable perseverance he clung to public things, and he now composed the dialogues on the Art of War, to induce his countrymen to substitute for mercenary armies a national militia—to-day one of the organic ideas of the European system. *Amo la patria mia più dell' anima*, he wrote to a friend just before his death, and one view of Machiavelli is that he was ever the lion masquerading in the fox's skin, an impassioned patriot, under all his craft and all his bitter mockery. Even Mazzini—so little a disciple of his that he explained the ruin of Italy by the disastrous fact of Machiavelli having prevailed over Dante—admits that he had “a profoundly Italian heart.” In 1527 he died. *The Prince* was not printed and published until five years later.

Machiavelli's active life, then, was passed in council-chambers, camps, courts. He pondered over all that he had seen in the light of such antique books as he had read,—Livy, Polybius, Tacitus, some portion of Aristotle's *Politics*, Dante, Petrarch, Cicero's *Offices*, *Cæsar*, Latin Poets, extracts from Thucydides (probably in Latin versions). He owes his debt to ancient writers, and in a sense nobody borrowed more, yet few are more original. If he

had mastered Thucydides, he would have recalled that first great chapter in European literature, still indeed the greatest in its kind, of reflections on a revolution, where with incomparable insight and fidelity the historian analyses the demoralisation of the Hellenic world as it lay, like the Italian world long ages after, a prey to intestine faction and the ruinous invocation of foreign aid.* These terrible calamities, says Thucydides (iii. 82-84), always have been and always will be, so long as human nature remains the same. Words cease to have the same relations to things, and their meanings are changed to suit the ingenuities of enterprise and the atrocities of revenge. Frantic energy is the quality most valued, and the man of violence is the man who is trusted. The simplicity that is a chief ingredient of a noble nature, men laugh to scorn. Inferior intellects succeed best. Revenge becomes dearer than self-preservation, and men actually have a sweeter pleasure in the revenge that goes with perfidy, than if it were open. All this was just as true of Florence in the sixteenth century as it was of Athens, Corinth, and Corcyra in the fifth century before Christ. The postulate of Thucydides, that human nature should remain the same, still held good, as it has indeed held good at many a stormy period since, the social progress of the ages notwithstanding.

* Thucydides was translated by Laurentius Valla in 1452, and a revised version of the translation was produced thirty years later. One of the fullest of the few references to Thucydides is *Disc.* III. xvi.

Whether the moral state of Italy was intrinsically and substantially worse than that of other European nations, is a question which those who know most are least disposed to answer offhand.¹² Machiavelli was as little capable of the fine and true saying of the Greek historian about Simplicity, as he was of the Greek poet's famous lines about love of power against right.* Still Italy presents some peculiarities that shed over her civilisation at this time a curious and deadly iridescence. Passions moved in strange orbits. Private depravity and political debasement went with one of the most brilliant intellectual awakenings in the history of the Western world. Selfishness, violence, craft, and corruption darkened and defiled the administration of sacred things. If politics were divorced from morals, so was theology. Modern conscience is shocked by the resort to hired crime and stealthy assassination, especially by poison. Mariana, the famous Spanish Jesuit, tells us (*De Rege*, i. 7) that when he was teaching theology in Sicily (1567), a certain young prince asked him whether it was lawful to slay a tyrant by poison. The theologian did not find it easy to draw a distinction between poison and steel, but at last he fell upon a reason (and a most absurd reason it was) for his decision that a poniard is permitted and white powder is forbidden. What distinguishes the Italian Renaissance from such epochs of luxury and corruption as the French Regency, is this contempt of

* *Phœnissæ*, 524.

human life, the fury of private revenge, the spirit of atrocious faithlessness and crime. "Italian society admired the bravo almost as much as Imperial Rome admired the gladiator: it assumed that genius combined with force of character released men from the shackles of ordinary morality." Only a giant like Michelangelo escaped the deadly climate. We see the violence of Michelangelo's sublime despair in the immortal marbles of the Medicean chapel, executed while Machiavelli was still alive—Lorenzo, nephew of Pope Leo X., and father of Catherine dei Medici, silent, pensive, finger upon lip, seeming to meditate under the shadow of his helmet some stroke of dubious war or craft, while the sombre superhuman figures of Night and Dawn and Day proclaim "it is best to sleep and be of stone, not to see and not to feel, while such misery and shame endure."

Machiavelli's merit in the history of political literature is his method. We may smile at the uncritical simplicity with which he discusses Romulus and Remus, Moses, Cyrus, and Theseus, as if they were all astute politicians of Florentine faction. He recalls the orator in the French Constituent Assembly who proposed to send to Crete for an authentic copy of the laws of Minos. But he withdrew politics from scholasticism, and based their consideration upon observation and experience. It is quite true that he does not classify his problems; he does not place them in their proper subordination to one another;

he often brings together facts that are not of the same order and do not support the same conclusion.* Nothing, again, is easier than to find contradictions in Machiavelli. He was a man of the world reflecting over the things that he had seen in public life; more systematic than observers like Retz or Commynes—whom good critics call the French Machiavelli—but not systematic as Hobbes is. Human things have many sides and many aspects, and an observant man of the world does not confine himself to one way of looking at them, from fear of being thought inconsistent. To put on the blinkers of system was alien to his nature and his object. Contradictions were inevitable, but the general texture of his thought is close enough.¹³

Machiavelli was not the first of his countrymen to write down thoughts on the problems of the time, though it has been observed that he is the first writer, still celebrated, "who discussed grave questions in modern language" (Mackintosh). Apart from Dante and Petrarch, various less famous men had theorised about affairs of state. Guicciardini, the contemporary and friend of Machiavelli, like him a man of public business and of the world, composed observations on government, of which Cavour said that they showed a better comprehension of affairs than did the author of the *Prince* and the *Discourses*. But then the latter had the better talent of writing. One most competent Italian critic calls his prose

* Janet's *Hist. de la science politique*, i. 539 (3rd ed.).

"divine,"* and a foreigner has perhaps no right to differ; only what word is then left for the really great writers, who to intellectual strength add moral grandeur? Napoleon hated a general who made mental pictures of what he saw, instead of looking at the thing clearly as through a field-glass. Machiavelli's is the style of the field-glass. "I want to write something," he said, "that may be useful to the understanding man; it seems better for me to go behind to the real truth of things than to a fancy picture." Every sentence represents a thought or a thing. He is never open to the reproach thrown by Aristotle at Plato: "This is to talk poetic metaphor." As has been said much less truly of Montesquieu, reflection is not broken by monuments and landscapes. He has the highest of all the virtues that prose-writing can possess—save the half-dozen cases in literature of genius with unconquerable wings,—he is simple, unaffected, direct, vivid, and rational. He possesses that truest of all forms of irony, which consists in literal statement, and of which you are not sure whether it is irony or *naïveté*. He disentangles his thought from the fact so skilfully and so clean, that it looks almost obvious. Nobody has ever surpassed him in the power of throwing pregnant vigour into a single concentrated word. Of some pages it has been well said that they are written with the point of a stiletto. He uses few of our loud easy words of praise and blame, he is not

* De Sanctis, *Storia della let. ital.* ii. 82.

often sorry or glad, he does not smile and he does not scold, he is seldom indignant and he is never surprised. He has not even our mastering human infirmity of trying to persuade. His business is that of the clinical lecturer, explaining the nature of the malady, the proper treatment, the chances of recovery. He strips away the flowing garments of convention and commonplace; closes his will against sympathy and feeling; ignores pity as an irrelevance, just as the operating surgeon does. In the phrase about Fontenelle, he shows as good a heart as can be made out of brains. What concerns Machiavelli, the Italian critic truly says, "is not a thing being reasonable, or moral, or beautiful, but that it is." Yet at the bottom of all the confused clamour against him, people knew what they meant, and their instinct was not unsound. Mankind, and well they know it, are far too profoundly concerned in right and wrong, in mercy and cruelty, in justice and oppression, to favour a teacher who, even for a scientific purpose of his own, forgets the awful difference. Commonplace, after all, is exactly what contains the truths that are indispensable.

III.

Like most of those who take a pride in seeing human nature as it is, Machiavelli only saw half of it. We must remember the atmosphere of craft, suspicion, fraud, violence, in which he had moved,

with Borgias, Medici, Pope Julius, Maximilian, Louis XII., and the reckless factions of Florence. His estimate was low. Mankind, he says, are more prone to evil than to good. We may say this of them generally, that they are ungrateful, fickle, deceivers, greedy of gain, runaways before peril. While you serve them, they are all yours—lives, goods, children—so long as no danger is at hand: when the hour of need draws nigh, they turn their backs. They are readier to seek revenge for wrong, than to prove gratitude for service: as Tacitus says of people who lived in Italy long ages before, readier to pay back injury than kindness. Men never do anything good, unless they are driven; and where they have their choice, and can use what licence they will, all is filled with disorder and confusion. They are taken in by appearances. They follow the event. They easily become corrupted. Their will is weak. They know not how to be either thoroughly good or thoroughly bad; they vacillate between; they take middle paths, the worse of all. Men are a little breed.*

All this is not satire, it is not misanthropy; it is the student of the art of government, thinking over the material with which he has to deal. These judgments of Machiavelli have none of the wrath of Juvenal, none of the impious truculence of Swift. They cut deeper into simple reality than polished

* "However we brave it out, we men are a little breed."—Tennyson's *Maud*, i. 5.

oracles from the moralists of the boudoir. They have not the bitterness that hides in the laugh of Molière, nor the chagrin and disdain with which Pascal broods over unhappy man and his dark lot. Least of all are they the voice of the preacher calling sinners to repentance. The tale is only a rather grim record, from inspection, of the foundations on which the rulers of states must do their best to build.

Goethe's maxim that, if you would improve a man, it is no bad thing to let him suppose that you already think him that which you would have him to be, would have seemed to Machiavelli as foolish for his purpose as if you were to furnish an architect with clay and bid him to treat it as if it were iron. He will suffer no abstraction to interrupt positive observation.¹⁴ Man is what he is, and so he needs to be bitted and bridled with laws, and now and again to be treated to a stiff dose of "*médecine forte*," in the shape of fire, bullet, axe, halter, and dungeon. At any rate, Machiavelli does not leave human nature out, and this is one secret of his hold. It is not with pale opinion that he argues, it is passions and interests in all the flush of action. It is, in truth, in every case,—Burke, Rousseau, Tocqueville, Hobbes, Bentham, Mill, and the rest—always the moralist who interests men most within the publicist. Machiavelli was assuredly a moralist, though of a peculiar sort, and this is what makes him, as he has been well called, a contemporary of every age and a citizen of all countries.

To the question whether the world grows better or worse, Machiavelli gave an answer that startles an age like ours, subsisting on its faith in progress. The world, he says, neither grows better nor worse; it is always the same. Human fortunes are never still; they are every moment either going up or sinking down. Yet among all nations and states, the same desires, the same humours prevail; they are what they always were. Men are for travelling on the beaten track. Diligently study bygone things, and in every State you will be able to discover the things to come. All the things that have been, may be again. Just as the modern physicist tells us that neither physical nor chemical transformation changes the mass or the weight of any quantity of matter, so Machiavelli judged the good and evil in the world to be ever identical. "This bad and this good shift from land to land," he says, "as we may see from ancient empires; they rose and fell with the changes of their usage, but the world remained as it was. The only difference was that it concentrated its power (*virtù*) in Assyria, then in Media, then in Persia, until at last it came to Italy and Rome."

In our age, when we think of the chequered course of human time, of the shocks of irreconcilable civilisation, of war, trade, faction, revolution, empire, laws, creeds, sects, we look for a clue to the vast maze of historic and pre-historic fact. Machiavelli seeks no clue to his distribution of good and evil. He seeks

no moral interpretation for the mysterious scroll. We obey laws that we do not know, but cannot resist. We can only make an effort to seize events as they whirl by ; to extort from them a maxim, a precept, or a principle, that may serve our immediate turn. Fortune, he says,—that is, Providence, or else Circumstance, or the Stars,—is mistress of more than half we do. What is her deep secret, he shows no curiosity to fathom. He contents himself with a maxim for the practical man (*Prince*, xxv.),—that it is better to be adventurous than cautious, for Fortune is a woman, and to master her, she must be boldly handled.

Whatever force or law may control this shifting distribution of imperial destinies, ~~nothing~~, said Machiavelli, could prevent any native of Italy or of Greece, unless the Greek had turned Turk, or the Italian Transalpine, from blaming his own time and praising the glories of time past. “What,” he cries, “can redeem an age from the extremity of misery, shame, reproach, where there is no regard to religion, to laws, to arms, where all is tainted and tarnished with every foulness? And these vices are all the more hateful as they most abound in those who sit in the judgment-seat, are men’s masters, and seek men’s reverence. I, at all events,” he concludes, with a glow that almost recalls the moving close of the *Agricola*, “shall make bold to say how I regard old times and new, so that the minds of the young who shall read these writings

of mine, may shun the new examples and follow old. For it is the duty of a good man, at least to strive that he may teach to others those sound lessons which the spite of time or fortune hath hindered him from executing, so that many having learned them, some better loved by heaven may one day have power to apply them."

What were the lessons? They were in fact only one, that the central secret of the ruin and distraction of Italy was weakness of will, want of fortitude, force, and resolution. The abstract question of the best form of government—perhaps the most barren of all the topics that have ever occupied speculative minds—was with Machiavelli strictly secondary. He saw small despotic states harried by their petty tyrants; he saw republics worn out by faction and hate. Machiavelli himself had faith in free republics as the highest type of government; but whether you have republic or tyranny matters less, he seems to say, than that the governing power should be strong in the force of its own arms, intelligent, concentrated, resolute. We might say of him that he is for half his time engaged in examining the fitness of means to other people's ends, himself neutral. But then, as Nature used to be held to abhor a vacuum, so the impatience of man is loth to tolerate neutrality. He has been charged with inconsistency, because in the *Prince* he lays down the conditions on which an absolute ruler, rising to power by force of genius backed by circumstance, may maintain that power

with safety to himself and most advantage to his subjects; while in the *Discourses* he examines the rules that enable a self-governing State to retain its freedom. The cardinal precepts are the same. In either case, the saving principle is one: self-sufficiency, military strength, force, flexibility, address,—above all, no half-measures. In either case, the preservation of the State is equally the one end, reason of State equally the one adequate test and justification of the means. The *Prince* deals with one problem, the *Discourses* with the other, but the spring of Machiavelli's political inspirations is the same, to whatever type of rule they are applied—the secular State supreme; self-interest and self-regard avowed as the single principles of State action; material force the master-key to civil policy. Clear intelligence backed by unsparing will, unflinching energy, remorseless vigour, the brain to plan and the hand to strike—here is the salvation of States, whether monarchies or republics. The spirit of humility and resignation that Christianity had brought into the world, he contemns and repudiates. That whole scheme of the Middle Ages in which invisible powers rule all our mortal affairs, he dismisses. Calculation, courage, fit means for resolute ends, human force,—only these can rebuild a world in ruins.*

Some will deem it inconsistent that, with so few

* See Ferrari's *Hist. de la raison d'État*, p. 260; de Sanetis, *Storia della lett. italiana*, ii. 74-89; Quinet, *Révolutions d'Italie*, ii. 122.

illusions about the weaknesses of human nature, he should yet have been so firm in what figures in current democracy as trust in the people. Like Aristotle, he held the many to be in the long run the best judges; but, unlike Goethe, who said that the public is always in a state of self-delusion about details though scarcely ever about broad truths, Machiavelli declared that the public may go wrong about generalities, while as to particulars they are usually right.¹⁵ The people are less ungrateful than a prince, and where they are ungrateful, it is from less dishonourable motive. The multitude is wiser and more constant than a prince. Furious and uncontrolled multitudes go wrong, but then so do furious and uncontrolled princes. Both err when not held back by fear of consequences. The people are fickle and thankless, but so are princes. "As for prudence and stability, I say that a people is more prudent, more stable, and of better judgment than a prince." Never let a prince, he said—and perhaps we might say, never let a parliament—complain of the faults of a people under his rule, for they are due either to his own negligence, or else to his own example, and if you consider a people given to robbery and outrages against law, you will generally find that they only copy their masters. Above all and in any case the ruler, whether hereditary or an usurper, can have no safety unless he founds himself on popular favour and goodwill. This he repeats a hundred times. "Better far than any

number of fortresses, is not to be hated by your people."

It is then to the free Roman commonwealth that Machiavelli would turn his countrymen. In that strong respect for law, that devotion to country, that unquailing courage, that energy of purpose, which has been truly called the essence of free Rome, he found the pattern that he wanted. Modern Germans, for good reasons of their own, have taken to praise him, but Machiavelli has nothing to do with that most brilliant of German scholars, who idolises Julius Cæsar, then despatches Cato as a pedant and Cicero as a coxcomb. You will hardly find in Machiavelli a good word for any destroyer of a free government. Let nobody, he says, be cheated by the glory of Cæsar. Historians have been spoiled by his success, and by the duration of the empire that continued his name. If you will only follow the history of the empire, then will you soon know, with a vengeance, what is the debt of Rome, Italy, and the world, to Cæsar.

Nobody has stated the argument against the revolutionary dictator more clearly or tersely than Machiavelli. He applauded the old Romans because their policy provided by a regular ordinance for an emergency, by the institution of a constitutional dictator for a fixed term, and to meet a definite occasion. "In a republic nothing should be left to extraordinary modes of government; because though such a mode may do good for the moment, still the example does harm, seeing that a practice of breaking

the laws for good ends lends a colour to breaches of law for ends that are bad." Occasions no doubt arise when no ordinary means will produce reform, and then you must have recourse to violence and arms: a man must make himself supreme. But then, unfortunately, if he make himself supreme by violence, he is probably a bad man, for by such means a good man will not consent to climb to power. No more will a bad man who has become supreme in this way be likely to use his ill-gotten power for good ends. Here is the eternal dilemma of a State in convulsion (*Disc.* i. 34, 18, 10; ii. 2).

He forbids us in any case to call it virtue to slay fellow-citizens, to betray friends, to be without faith, without mercy, without religion; such practices may win empire, but not fair fame. A prince who clears out a population—here we may think of James I. and Cromwell in Ireland, and the authors of many a sweeping clearance since—and transplants them from province to province, as a herdsman moves his flock, does what is most cruel, most alien, not only to Christianity, but to common humanity. Far better for a man to choose a private life, than be a king on the terms of making havoc such as this with the lives of other men (*Disc.* i. 26).

IV.

It may be true, as Danton said, that 'twere better to be a poor fisherman than to meddle with the

government of men. Yet nations and men find themselves inexorably confronted by the practical question. Government they must find. Given a corrupt, a divided, a distracted community, how are you to restore it? The last chapter of the *Prince* is an eloquent appeal to the representative of the House of Medici to heal the bruises and bind up the wounds of his torn and enslaved country. The view has been taken¹⁶ that this last chapter has nothing to do with the fundamental ideas of the book; that its glow is incompatible with the iron harshness of all that has gone before; that it was an afterthought, dictated partly by Machiavelli's personal hopes, and then picked up later by his defenders as whitewashing guilty maxims by ascribing them to large and lofty purpose. The balance of argument seems on the whole to lean this way, and Machiavelli for five-and-twenty chapters was thinking of new princes generally, and not of a great Italian deliverer. Yet he was not a man cast in a single mould. It may be that on reviewing his chapters, his heart became suddenly alive to their frigidity, and that the closing words flowed from the depths of what was undoubtedly sincere and urgent feeling.

However this may be, whether the whole case of Italy, or the special case of any new prince, was in his contemplation, the quality of the man required is drawn in four chapters (xv.-xviii.) with piercing eye and a hand that does not flinch. The ruler's business is to save the State. He cannot practise

all virtues, first because he is not very likely to possess them, and next because, where so many people are bad, he would not be a match for the world if he were perfectly good. Still he should be on his guard against all vices, so far as possible; he should scrupulously abstain from every vice that might endanger his government. There are two ways of carrying on the fight—one by laws, the other by force. The first is the proper and peculiar distinction of man; the second is the mark of the brute. As the first is not always enough, you must sometimes resort to the second. You must be both lion and fox, and the man who is only lion cannot be wise. A wise prince neither can, nor ought to, keep his word, when to keep his word would injure either himself or the State, or when the reasons that made him give a promise have passed away. If men were all good, a maxim like this would be bad; but as men are inclined to evil, and would not all keep faith with you, why should you keep faith with them? *Nostra cattività, la lor*—our badness, their badness (*Mandrag.* ii. 6). There are some good qualities that the new ruler need not have; yet he should seem to have them. It is well to appear merciful, faithful, religious, and it is well to be so. Religion is the most necessary of all for a prince to seek credit for. But the new prince should know how to change to the contrary of all these things, when they are in the way of the public good. For it is frequently necessary for the upholding of the State—and here

is the sentence that has done so much to damn its writer—to go to work against faith, against charity, against humanity, against religion. It is not possible for a new prince to observe all the rules for which men are reckoned good.

The property of his subjects he will most carefully leave alone; a man will sooner forgive the slaying of his father than the confiscation of his patrimony. He should try to have a character for mercy, but this should never be allowed to prevent severity on just occasion. He must bear in mind the good saying reported in Livy, that many people know better how to keep themselves from doing wrong, than how to correct the wrong-doing of others. Never ought he to let excess of trust make him careless, nor excess of distrust to make him intolerable. He would be lucky if he could make himself both loved and feared; but if circumstance should force a choice, then of the two he had better be feared. To be feared is not the same as to be hated, and the two things to be most diligently avoided of all are hatred on the one hand, and contempt on the other.

Test there is none, save reason of State. We should never condemn a man for extraordinary acts to which he has been compelled to resort in establishing his empire or founding a republic. In a case where the safety of a country is concerned, whether it be principedom or republic, no regard is to be paid to justice or injustice, to pity or severity, to glory

or shame; every other consideration firmly thrust aside, that course alone is to be followed which may preserve to the country its existence and its freedom. Diderot pithily put the superficial impression of all this, when he said that you might head these chapters as "The circumstances under which it is right for a Prince to be a Scoundrel." A profounder commentary of a concrete kind is furnished by Mommsen's account of Sulla *—an extraordinary literary masterpiece, even in the view of those who think its politics most perverse. Such a Sulla was the real type of Machiavelli's reformer of a rotten State.

It has been a commonplace of reproachful criticism that Machiavelli should have chosen for his hero Caesar Borgia.† Not only was Borgia a monster, it is said, but he failed. For little more than four years the baleful meteor flamed across the sky, then vanished. If only success should command admiration, Borgia and his swiftly shattered fortunes might well be indifferent to Machiavelli and the world for which he was writing. What Machiavelli says is this—"I put him forward as a model for such as climb to power by good fortune and the help of others. He did everything that a long-headed and capable man could do, who desires to strike root. I will show you how broad were the foundations that he laid for the fabric of his future power. I do not know what better lessons I could teach a new prince

* *Hist. of Rome*, iv. x. vol. iii. 380-391 (Eng. Trans.).

† *E.g.* Scherer, *Études crit.* vi. 102, etc.

(i.e. an usurper) than his example. True, what he did failed in the end ; that was due to the extreme malignity of fortune." He makes no hero of him, except as a type of character well fitted for a given task.

Machiavelli knew him at close quarters.* He was sent on a mission to Borgia in the crisis of his fortunes, and he thought that he discerned in Cæsar those very qualities of action, force, combat, calculation, resolution, that the weakness of the age required. Machiavelli was in his train when terrible things were done. Cæsar was close, solitary, secret, quick. When any business is on foot, said Machiavelli, he knows nothing of rest or weariness or risk. He no sooner reached a place, than you heard that he had left it. He was loved by his troopers, for though he meted stern punishment for an offence against discipline, he was liberal in pay and put little restraint on freedom. Though no talker, yet when he had to make a case he was so pressing and fluent, that it was hard to find an answer. He was a great judge of occasion. Bold, crafty, resolute, deep, and above all well known never to forget or forgive an injury, he fascinated men with the terror of the basilisk. His firm maxim was to seek order by giving his new subjects a good and firm government, including a civil tribunal with a just president. Remiro

* See Tommasini, i. 242-265 ; Villari, bk. i. ch. v. i. 392. For M.'s picture of the Italian princes, see *Arte della guerra*, bk. vii.

was his first governor in the Romagna. It is uncertain how Remiro incurred his master's displeasure, but one morning Machiavelli walked out into the market-place at Cesena, and saw Remiro, as he puts it, in two pieces, his head on a lance, and his body still covered with his fine clothes, resting on a block with a blood-stained axe by the side of it. His captains, beginning to penetrate Cæsar's designs, and fearing that he would seize their petty dominions one by one—like the leaves of an artichoke, as he said—revolted. Undaunted, he gathered new forces. Fresh bands of mercenaries flocked to the banners of a chief who had money, skill, and a happy star. The conspirators were no match for him in swiftness, activity, or resource; they allowed him to sow the seeds of disunion; he duped them into making a convention with him which they had little thought of keeping. Everybody who knew his revengeful and implacable spirit was sure that the conspirators were doomed. When Machiavelli came near one of them he felt, he says, the deadly odour of a corpse. With many arts, the duke got them to meet him at Sinigaglia. He received their greetings cordially, pressed their hands, and gave them the accolade. They all rode into the town together, talking of military things. Cæsar courteously invited them to enter the palace, then he quitted them and they were forthwith seized. "I doubt if they will be alive to-morrow morning," the Florentine secretary wrote without emotion to his government. They

went through some form of trial, before daybreak two of them were strangled, and two others shared the same fate as soon as Cæsar was sure that the Pope had carried out his plans for making away by poison with the Cardinal who headed the rebellious faction at Rome.

Let us pause for a moment. One of the victims of Sinigaglia was Oliverotto da Fermo. His story is told in the eighth chapter of the *Prince*. He had been brought up from childhood by an uncle; he went out into the world to learn military service; in course of time, one day he wrote to his uncle at Fermo that he should like once more to see him and his paternal city, and, by way of showing his good compatriots that he had won some honour in his life, he proposed to bring a hundred horsemen in his company. He came, and was honourably received. He invited his uncle and the chief men of Fermo to a feast, and when the feast was over, his soldiers sprang upon the guests and slew them all, and Oliverotto became the tyrant of the place. We may at any rate forgive Cæsar for making sure work of Oliverotto a year later. When his last hour came, he struggled to drive his dagger into the man with the cord. Here indeed were lions, foxes, catamounts.

This is obviously the key to Machiavelli's admiration for Borgia's policy. The men were all bandits together. Romagna is not and never was, said Dante two hundred years before, without war in the

hearts of her tyrants (*Inf.* xxvii. 37). So it was now. It was full, says Machiavelli, of those who are called gentlemen, who live in idleness and abundance on the revenues of their estates, without any care of cultivating them, or of incurring any of the fatigue of getting a living; such men are pernicious anywhere, most of all when they are lords of castles, and have subjects under obedience to them. These lords, before the Pope and his terrible son took them in hand, were poor, yet had a mind to live as if they were rich, and so there was nothing for it but rapine, extortion, and all iniquity. Whether Cæsar and the Pope had wider designs than the reduction of these oppressors to order, we can never know. Machiavelli and most contemporaries thought that they had, but the various historians of to-day differ. Probably the contemporaries knew best, but nothing can matter less.

We may as well finish Cæsar's story, because we never know until a man's end, whether the play has been tragedy or comedy. He seemed to be lord of the ascendant, when in the summer after the transaction of Sinigaglia (1503) the Pope and he were one evening both stricken with malarious fever at Rome. There was talk of poison, but the better opinion seems to be that this is fable.¹⁷ Alexander VI. died; Cæsar, in the prime of his young man's strength, made a better fight for it, but when he at last recovered his star had set. Machiavelli saw him and felt that Fortune this time had got the

better of *virtù*. His subjects in the Romagna stood by him for a time, and then tyranny and disorder came back. The new Pope, Julius II., was not his friend; for though Cæsar had made the Spanish cardinals support his election, Julius had some old scores to pay, and as Machiavelli profoundly remarked, anybody who supposes that new services bring great people to forget old injuries, makes a dire mistake. So Cæsar found his way to Naples, with a safe-conduct from Gonsalvo, the Great Captain. He reaped as he had sown. Once he had said, "It is well to cheat those who have been masters in treachery." He now felt the force of his maxim. At Naples he was cordially received by Gonsalvo, dined often at his table, talked over all his plans, and suddenly one night as he was about to pass the postern, in spite of the safe-conduct an officer demanded his sword in the name of the King of Aragon.* To Spain he was sent. For some three years he went through strange and obscure adventures, fighting fortune with the aid of his indwelling demon to the very last. He was struck down in a fight at Viana in Navarre (1507), after a furious resistance; was stripped of his fine armour by men who did not know who he was; and his body was left naked, bloody, and riddled with wounds, on the ground. He was only thirty-one. His father, who was quite as desperate an evil-doer, died in his bed at seventy-two. So history cannot safely draw a moral.¹⁸

* Prescott, *Hist. Ferd. and Isabella*, ii. p. 493.

V.

From this digression let us return to mark some of the problems that Machiavelli raises, noting as we pass how, besides their profound effect upon active principles of statesmanship and progress, they lie at the very root of historic judgment on conspicuous men and memorable movements in bygone times. In one sense we are shocked by his maxims in proportion to our forgetfulness of history. There have been, it is said, only two perfect princes in the world—Marcus Aurelius and Louis IX. of France. If you add to princes, even presidents and prime ministers, the percentage might still be low. Among the canonised saints of the Roman Church there have only been a dozen kings in eight centuries, and no more than four popes in the same period. So hard has it been “to govern the world by paternosters.”¹⁹ It is well to take care lest in blaming Machiavelli for openly prescribing hypocrisy, men do not slip unperceived into something like hypocrisy of their own.

Take the subordination of religious creed to policy. In the age that immediately followed Machiavelli, three commanding figures stand out, and are cherished in the memories of men—William the Silent, Henry of Navarre, and Elizabeth of England. It needs no peevish or pharisaic memory to trace even in these imposing personalities some of the lineaments of Machiavelli's hated and scandalous picture. William

the Silent changed from Lutheran to Catholic, then back to Lutheran, and then again from Lutheran to Calvinist. His numerous children were sometimes baptized in one of the three communions, sometimes in another, just as political convenience served. Henry of Navarre abjured his Huguenot faith, then he returned to it, then he abjured it again. Our great Elizabeth, of famous memory, notoriously walked in tortuous and slippery paths. Again, the most dolorous chapter in all history is that which recounts how men and women were burned, hanged, shot, and cruelly tormented, for heresy; and there is a considerable body of authors, who through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries used against heretics Machiavelli's arguments for making short work with rebels, and asked with logical force why their reason of Church was not just as good as his reason of State.²⁰ What is the real difference between the practices tolerated in the *Prince* for the self-preservation of a secular State, and all the abominations perpetrated in the name and for the sake of religious unity? Again, how many of the wars of faith, from Monophysite, Arian, Iconoclast, downwards, have been at bottom far less concerned with opinion than with conflicts of race, nationality, property, and policy, and have been conducted on maxims of purely secular expediency?

Frederick the Great is the hero of the most picturesque of modern English historians. That strong ruler, as we all know, took it into his head

to write a refutation of the *Prince*. "Sir," said Voltaire, "I believe the very first advice that Machiavelli would have given to a disciple, would have been that he should begin by writing a refutation of his book." Carlyle contemptuously regrets that his hero should have taken any trouble about the Italian's "perverse little book" and its incredible sophistries; pity he was not refuted by a kick from old Frederick William's jackboot; he deserved no more. Thus Carlyle does not let us forget that nobody so quickly turns cynic as your high-flying transcendentalist, just as nobody takes wickedness so easily as the Antinomian who holds the highest doctrine about the incorruptibility of man's spiritual nature. The plain truth is that Frederick, alike on his good side and his bad side, alike as the wise law-maker, the thrifty steward, the capable soldier, and as the robber of Silesia, and a leading accomplice, if not the inspirer, of the partition of Poland, was the aptest of all modern types of the perverse book.²¹ It was reserved for the following century to see even that type depraved and distorted by the mighty descendant of a fugitive family from Tuscany, who found their way to Corsica about the time of Machiavelli's death.²²

The most imposing incarnation of the doctrine that reason of State covers all, is Napoleon. Tacitus, said Napoleon, writes romances; Gibbon is no better than a man of sounding words; Machiavelli is the only one of them worth reading. No wonder that

he thought so. All those maxims that have most scandalised mankind in the Italian writer of the sixteenth century, were the daily bread of the Italian soldier who planted his iron heel on the neck of Europe in the nineteenth. Yet Machiavelli at least sets decent limits and conditions. The ruler may under compulsion be driven to set at naught pity, humanity, faith, religion, for the sake of the State; but though he should know how to enter upon evil when compelled, he should never turn from what is good when he can avoid it. Napoleon sacrificed pity, humanity, faith, and public law, less for the sake of the State than to satisfy an exorbitant passion for personal domination. Napoleon, Charles IX., the Committee of Public Safety, would all have justified themselves by reason of State, and the Bartholomew massacre, the September massacres, and the murder of the Duc d'Enghien only show what reason of State may come to in any age, in the hands of practical logicians with a knife in their grasp.²³

Turn from the Absolutist camp to the Republican. Mazzini is in some respects the loftiest moral genius of the century, and he said that though he did not approve the theory of the dagger, nay he deplored it, yet he had not the heart to curse the fact of the dagger. "When a man," he says, "seeks by every possible artifice to betray old friends to the police of the Foreign Ruler, and then somebody arises and slays the Judas in broad daylight in the public streets—I have not the courage to cast the first stone at one

who thus takes upon himself to represent social justice and hatred of tyranny." *

Even in modern democracy, many a secret and ugly spring works under decorous mechanism, and recalls Machiavelli's precept to keep the name and take away the thing. Salvagnoli, minister for religion and public instruction in a liberal government of modern Italy, laid it down broadly to the scandal, real or affected, of reactionary opponents, *Colla verità non si governa*. What shall we say of two great rival Powers, each professing with no little sincerity its earnest desire to spread all the boons of civilisation, yet adjusting their own quarrel by solemn bargain and mutual compact that binds down some weak buffer-state in backwardness and barbarism? Yet such inconsistency between practice and profession may be detected in the newspaper telegrams any month by a reader who keeps his eye upon the right quarter. Is our general standard really so far removed at last from Sir Walter Raleigh's description, which has a Machiavellian twang about it,—“*Know ye not, said Ahab, that Ramoth Gilead is ours?*” He knew this before, and was quiet enough, till opinion of his forces made him look unto his right. Broken titles to kingdoms or provinces, maintenance of friends and partisans, pretended wrongs, and indeed whatsoever it pleaseth him to allege, that thinks his own sword sharpest.” An eminent man endowed with remarkable compass of mind, not many

* *Life and Writings of Mazzini* (ed. 1891), vi. 275-276.

years ago a professor in this university, imagined a modern writer with the unflinching perspicacity of Machiavelli, analysing the party leader as the Italian analysed the tyrant or the prince.²⁴ Such a writer, he said, would find that the party leader, though possessed of every sort of private virtue, yet is debarred by his position from the full practice of the great virtues of veracity, justice, and moral intrepidity; he can seldom tell the full truth; can never be fair to anybody but his followers and his associates; can rarely be bold except in the interests of his faction. This hint of Maine's is ingenious and may perhaps be salutary, but we must not overdo it. Party government is not the Reign of the Saints, but we should be in no hurry to let the misgivings of political valetudinarianism persuade us that there is not at least as good a stock of veracity, justice, and moral intrepidity inside the world of parliament or congress, as there is in the world without. But these three or four historic instances may serve to illustrate the *ἀπορίαι* and awkward points that Machiavelli's writings have propounded for men capable of political reflection in Europe, for many generations past.

If one were to try to put the case for the Machiavellian philosophy in a modern way, it would, I suppose, be something of this kind:—Nature does not work by moral rules. Nature, "red in tooth and claw," does by system all that good men by system avoid. Is not the whole universe of sentient

being haunted all day and all night long by the haggard shapes of Hunger, Cruelty, Force, Fear? War again is not conducted by moral rules. To declare war is to suspend not merely *habeas corpus* but the Ten Commandments, and some other good commandments besides. A military manual, by an illustrious hand of our own day, warns us: "As a nation we are brought up to feel it a disgrace even to succeed by falsehood. We keep hammering along with the conviction that honesty is the best policy, and that truth always wins in the long run. These sentiments do well for a copy-book, but a man who acts upon them had better sheathe his sword for ever." This, by the way, may be one reason among others why we should keep the sword sheathed as long as we can.

Why should the ruler of a State be bound by a moral code from which the soldier is free? Why should not he have the benefit of what has been called the evolutionary beatitude,—Blessed are the strong, for they shall prey on the weak? Right and wrong, cause and effect,—are they not two sides of one question? Has it not been well said that "morality is the nature of things"? We must include in the computation the whole sum of consequences, and consider acts of State as worked out to their furthest results. Bishop Butler tells you that we cannot give the whole account of any one single thing whatever,—not of all its causes, its ends, its necessary adjuncts. In short, means and end

are only one transaction. You must regard policy as a whole. The ruler as an individual is, like other men, no more than the generation of leaves, fleeting, a shadow, a dream. But the State lives on after he shall have vanished. He is a trustee for times to come. He is not shaping his own life only ; he guides the distant fortunes of a nation. Leaves fall, the tree stands.

Such, I take it, is the defence of reason of State, of the worship of nation and empire. Everything that policy requires, justice sanctions. Success is the test. There are no crimes in politics, only blunders. "The man of action is essentially conscienceless" (Goethe). "Praised be those," said one, in words much applauded by Machiavelli, "who love their country rather than the safety of their souls." "Let us be Venetians first," said Father Paul, "and Christians after."

We see now the deep questions that lie behind these sophistries, and all the alarming propositions in which they close. How are we to decide the constant question in national concerns, when and whether one duty overrules another that points the contrary way ? It is easy to assert that the authority of moral law is paramount, but who denies that cases may arise of disputable and conflicting moral obligations ? Do you condemn Prussia for violating in 1813 the treaties imposed by Napoleon after Jena ? Does morality apply only to end and not to means ? Is the State means or end ? What does it really exist

for? For the sake of the individual, his moral and material well-being, or is he mere cog or pinion in the vast thundering machine? How far is it true that citizenship dominates all other relations and duties, and is the most important of them? Are we to test the true civilisation of a State by anything else than the predominance of justice, right, equality, in its laws, its institutions, its relations to neighbours? Is one of the most important aspects of national policy its reaction upon the character of the nation itself, and can States enter on courses of duplicity and selfish violence, without paying the penalty in national demoralisation? What are we to think of such sayings as d'Alembert's motto for a virtuous man, "I prefer my family to myself, my country to my family, and humanity to my country"? Is this the true order of honourable attachments for a man of self-respect and conscience? To Machiavelli all these questions would have been futile. Yet the world, in spite of a thousand mischances, and at tortoise-pace, has steadily moved away from him and his Romans.

The modern conception of a State has long made it a moral person, capable of right and wrong, just as are the individuals composing it. Civilisation is taken to advance, exactly in proportion as communities leave behind them the violences of external nature, and the unspeakable brutalities of man in a state of war. The usages of war are constantly undergoing mitigation. The inviolability of treaties

received rude shocks between the first Napoleon and Prince Bismarck. "You are always talking to me of principles," said Alexander I. to Talleyrand, "as if your public law were anything to me. I do not know what it means. What do you suppose that all your parchments and your treaties signify to me?" Yet the sanctity of national faith has gained ground rather than lost, and even naked invasions of it seek the decorum of a diplomatic fig-leaf. Though it is said even now not to be wholly purged of lying, fraud, and duplicity, diplomacy still is conscious of having a character to keep up for truth and plain dealing, so far as circumstances allow. Such conferences, again, as those at Berlin and Brussels in our own day, imperfectly as they have worked, mark the recognition of duty towards inferior races. All these improvements in the character of nations were in the minds of the best men in Machiavelli's day. Reason of State has always been a plea for impeding and resisting them. Las Casas and other churchmen, Machiavelli's contemporaries, fought nobly at the Spanish court against the inhuman treatment of Indians in the New World, and they were defeated by arguments that read like maxims from the *Prince*.²⁵ Grotius had forerunners in his powerful contribution towards assuaging the abominations of war, but both letter and spirit in Machiavelli made all the other way.²⁶ Times have come and gone since Machiavelli wrote down his deep truths, but in the great cycles of human change he can have no place among the

strong thinkers, the orators, the writers, who have elevated the conception of the State, have humanised the methods and maxims of government, have raised citizenship to be "a partnership in every virtue and in all perfection." He turned to the past, just as scholars, architects, sculptors, turned to it; but the idea of reconstructing a society that had once been saturated with the great ruling conceptions of the thirteenth century—as seen and symbolised in Dante, for example—by trying to awaken the social energy of ancient Rome, was just as much of an anachronism as Julian the Apostate. "Our religion," said Machiavelli of Christianity, "has glorified men of humble and meditative life, and not men of action. It has planted the chief good in lowliness and contempt of mundane things; paganism placed it in highmindedness, in bodily force, in all the other things that make men strong. If our religion calls for strength in us, it is for strength to suffer rather than to do. This seems to have rendered the world weak." This "discarding the presuppositions of Christianity," as it has been well described, marks with exactitude the place of Machiavelli in the development of modern European thought. The *Prince*—the most direct, concentrated, and unflinching contribution ever made to the secularisation of politics—brings into a full light, never before shed upon it, the awful Manichæism of human history, the fierce and unending collision of type, ideal, standard, and endeavour.

Machiavelli has been supposed to put aside the question of right and wrong, just as the political economist or the analytical jurist used to do. Truly has it been said that the practical value of all sciences founded on abstractions, depends on the relative importance of the elements rejected and the elements retained in the process of abstraction. The view that he rejected moral elements of government for a scientific purpose and as a hypothetical postulate, seems highly doubtful. Is he not more intelligible, if we take him as following up the divorce of politics from theology, by a divorce from ethics also? He was laying down certain maxims of government as an art; the end of that art is the security and permanence of the ruling power; and the fundamental principle from which he silently started, without shadow of doubt or misgiving as to its soundness, was that the application of moral standards to this business is as little to the point as it would be in the navigation of a ship.

The effect was fatal even for his own purpose, for what he put aside, whether for the sake of argument or because he thought them in substance irrelevant, were nothing less than the living forces by which societies subsist and governments are strong. A remarkable illustration occurred in his own century. Three or four years before all this on secular and ecclesiastical principedoms was written, John Calvin was born (1509). With a union of fervid religious instinct and profound political genius, almost un-

exemplified in European history, Calvin did in fact what Machiavelli tried to do on paper; he actually created a self-governed state, ruled it, defended it, maintained it, and made that little corner of Europe the centre of a movement that shook France, England, Scotland, America, for long days to come, and at the same time he set up a bulwark against all the forces of Spanish and Roman reaction in the pressing struggles of his own immediate day. In one sense, Florence, Geneva, Holland, hold as high a place as the greatest States of Europe in the development of modern civilisation; but anybody with a turn for ingenious or idle speculation might ask himself whether, if the influence of Florence on European culture had never existed, the loss to mankind would have been as deep as if the little republic of Geneva had been wiped out by the dukes of Savoy. The unarmed prophet, said Machiavelli, thinking of Savonarola, is always sure to be destroyed, and his institutions must come to naught. If Machiavelli had been at Jerusalem two thousand years ago, he might have found nobody of any importance in his eyes, save Pontius Pilate and the Roman legionaries. He forgot the potent arms of moral force, and it was with these that, in the main, Calvin fought his victorious battle. We need not, however, forget that Calvin never scrupled to act on some of these Italian maxims that have been counted most hateful. He was as ready to resort to carnal weapons as other people. In spite of all the sophistries of sectarian

apologists, Calvin's vindictive persecution of political opponents, and his share in the crime of burning Servetus, can only be justified on principles that are much the same as, and certainly not any better than, those prescribed for the tyrant in the *Prince*. Still, the republic of Geneva was a triumph of moral force. So was the daughter system in Scotland. It is true that tyrannical theocracy does not in either case by any means escape the familiar reproaches addressed by history to Jesuits and Inquisitors.

In Italy Savonarola had attempted a similar achievement. It was the last effort to reconcile the spirit of the new age to the old faith, but Italy was for a second time in her history in the desperate case of being able to endure *nec vitia nec remedia*, neither ills nor cure. In a curious passage (*Disc. iii. 1*), Machiavelli describes how Dominic and Francis in older days kindled afresh an expiring flame. He may have perceived that for Italy in this direction all was by his time over.

The sixteenth century in Italy in some respects resembles the eighteenth in France. In both, old faiths were assailed and new lamps were kindled. But the eighteenth century was a time of belief in the better elements of mankind. An illusion, you may say. Was it a worse illusion than disbelief in mankind? Machiavelli and his school saw only cunning, jealousy, perfidy, ingratitude, duplicity; and yet on such a foundation as this they dreamed that they could build. What idealist or doctrinaire ever

fell into a stranger error? Surrounded by the ruins of Italian nationality, says a writer of genius, "Machiavelli organises the abstract theory of the country with all the energy of the Committee of Public Safety, supported on the passion of twenty-five millions of Frenchmen. He carries in him the genius of the Convention. His theories strike like acts" (Quinet). Yet after all has been said, energy as an abstract theory is no better than a bubble.

R "The age of Machiavel," it has been said, "was something like ours, in being one of religious eclipse, attended by failure of the traditional foundation of morality. A domination of self-interest without regard for moral restriction was the result" (Goldwin Smith). We may hope to escape this capital disaster. Yet it is true to say that Machiavelli represents certain living forces in our actual world; that Science, with its survival of the fittest, unconsciously lends him illegitimate aid; that "he is not a vanishing type, but a constant and contemporary influence" (Acton). This is because energy, force, will, violence, still keep alive in the world their resistance to the control of justice and conscience, humanity and right. In so far as he represents one side in that unending struggle, and suggests one set of considerations about it, he retains a place in the literature of modern political systems and of Western morals.

GUICCIARDINI. (1482-1540)

IN a short piece lately written upon Machiavelli, I mentioned how Cavour used to say that the author of the *Prince* had not so good a grasp of the realities of public things as Guicciardini, his contemporary and friend. Here was a man, said Cavour, who really knew affairs, and knew them far better than Machiavelli. To most even decently well-read persons who have had no special occasion to look into his pages, he is little more than a name, known only by the old jest of an enemy, transferred to the dazzling page of Macaulay, that a certain criminal in Italy was suffered to make his choice between Guicciardini and the galleys; he chose the *History*, but the war of Pisa was too much for him; he changed his mind, and went to the oar. Yet the writer of the history thus despatched for the inexpiable sin of dullness, just as if life and circumstance were never dull, is one of the acutest, weightiest, most vigorous and observant of European publicists in ancient times or modern.

Cavour is not the only personage of authority who

has given Guicciardini a place among great names. Bolingbroke, for instance, audaciously declares that he does not scruple to prefer him in every respect to Thucydides. Thiers calls him one of the most clear-sighted men that ever lived, and declares that his breadth of narrative, the vigour of his pencil, and his depth of judgment, rank his *History* among the finest monuments of the human mind. Macaulay, in his later days, said that he admired no historians much except Herodotus, Thucydides, and Tacitus, and perhaps in his own peculiar way Father Paul Sarpi: the historian of the Council of Trent he always placed first among the Italians; then came Davila, whose story of the battle of Ivry was worthy of Thucydides himself; next to Davila he put Guicciardini, and Machiavelli last. An accomplished critic in his own country calls their historic school one of the most original creations of the Italians of the Renaissance, and Guicciardini stands first within that school. An accomplished English critic calls him one of the most consummate historians of any nation or of any age. A German critic applauds the grasp and mastery with which he explains events, motives, plans, reasons for and against. Ranke describes his book as the foundation of all the later works upon the beginning of modern history, and as one of our great historical possessions.¹ Charles

¹ Villari, *Machiavelli*, iii. 205; Symonds, *Renaissance, Age of Despots*, 230; Gaspary, *Italian. Lit. der Renaissancezeit*, ii. 391; Ranke, *Zur Kritik neuerer Geschichtsschreiber* (1874), *Sämmtl. Werke*, xxxiv.

the Fifth knew Guicciardini well. There is a story that when courtiers remonstrated at the long hours that he spent with the Italian while they were kept waiting, Charles replied : " In a single instant I can create a hundred grandees of Spain ; not in a hundred years could I make a Guicciardini."

I.

Born in 1482, he was a little younger than Machiavelli and Michelangelo and he died in 1540. He was descended from a tolerably long line of respectable burghers, of whom he has left us a full account, including half a dozen vignettes that show in graphic style what manner of folk they were. They kept shops where they sold silk and other wares ; they owned ships and were their own skippers ; they went to the Levant and Flanders and wherever else in the narrower and simpler trade of that day money was to be picked up ; and they filled at one time or another all the various public posts of secondary rank in Florence. A sort of family likeness is to be traced among them. The men were strong, good-looking, warm in temper yet cautious in politics, weighty, of good character according to the standard of time and place, and with a sharp eye to the main chance. The Guicciardini were not great people, but they were steady, well-to-do, respectable people, and the historian was proud of his stock. Two things in the world, he told his descendants, he cared about

—one, the perpetual exaltation of the city and its freedom; the other, “the glory of our house, not only for my life, but for always.”

It has been energetically said of “the sombre and sublime Italy” of the sixteenth century, that life was a mortal combat, the house a fortress, the garment a cuirass, hospitality an ambush, the embrace a garotte, the proffered cup poison, the proffered hand a dagger-thrust.¹ This, however, was not all, and in truth this fierce melodrama never can be all. Here is Guicciardini’s vignette of his father, to whom he was to the end of his days deeply and tenderly attached :

Peter was truly a wise man, and of as great judgment and insight as any man in Florence in his time; nobody had a better or a clearer conscience; he was a lover of his city and of the poor; and he never did a human creature the smallest wrong. For these things, as well as for the qualities of his house and his forefathers, he was from his youth upwards held in high esteem, and he carried himself in such a way that in brain and in weight there was no man in Florence to equal him. If only to his goodness and his prudence had been added a little more vivacity, he would have stood still higher. But either because nature made him so, or because it was due to the times, which were in truth strong times and strange, he went about his affairs with little boldness and much wariness; taking up few ventures, working at public things slowly and with great deliberation, never willing, save when necessity or conscience constrained him, to say outright in important matters what was his real mind and judgment. Though his carefulness not to put himself at the head of a party, or of novel schemes and

¹ Saint-Victor, *Anciens et Modernes*, p. 31.

undertakings, prevented his name from being on everybody's lips, yet it had this other effect, that in the midst of all the tumult and agitation that the city went through in his day, he always kept himself and his position out of reach of hurt. That was more than happened to anybody else of his degree, when all the other considerable people ran such risks in property or life. . . . These things made the city grieve sorely over his death, and all good men felt his loss, the people and citizens of every class—everybody knowing that a wise and good citizen was gone, and one from whom both in universal and particular no mischief could ever have come, but only good fruit and well-doing.¹

Guicciardini was in important employment from 1512, when at the age of thirty he was sent to represent the republic of Florence at the court of Ferdinand of Aragon. He returned home in the following year. In 1515 he was appointed to meet Leo the Tenth on behalf of the republic, and from 1516 to 1523 he was made papal officer in the Emilia. Then he was named the Pope's viceroy in the Romagna, and lieutenant-general in the papal army. He shared some of the responsibility for the disasters that are summed up in the Sack of Rome (1527), but this did not prevent his promotion, when the time came, to be the Pope's governor at Bologna (1531). He did his work with energy, tact, and capacity, until at last the death of Clement the Seventh (1534) put an end to his employment in the papal service.

His life by this time "became a series of expedients, in which he loses personal consideration, his reputation for honour, and at last his whole credit and power."²

¹ *Op. ined.* x. 90-91.

² Benoist's *Guichardin*, p. 101.

Though always free from direct corruption, and according to his own account a believer rather in politic clemency than in rigour, yet when he was sent by the Pope in 1530 to punish the Florentines for their rising, he showed himself merciless and vindictive, and repaid the revolutionary party in their own coin for the fierce rancour with which, when they were uppermost, they had handled the friends of Clement the Seventh.¹ By conviction he was in favour of an oligarchy, and his private writings prove that he estimated the Medici and their tyranny at what they were worth. But neither fools nor wise, he said, "can in the end resist that which has to be." "All states and cities are mortal; everything, either by its nature or by accident, comes to a close. Hence a citizen who finds himself watching the dissolution of his country, need not so much groan over this disgrace, as over his own lot. His country only suffers what in any case it was bound to suffer. The true unhappiness is that of the man who chances to have been born in an age when the moment of his country's doom has struck." This has been called a sublime stoicism. It is perhaps nearer to that fatalism, not sublime, with which in times of political confusion men excuse a secret surrender to self-interest. An ancient traveller found on the Acrocorinthus a mysterious shrine dedicated to Necessity and Force. These two are potent divinities indeed, and well deserve a temple; still, sublime

¹ Varchi, *Stor. fior.* bk. xii.

stoic is hardly the name for him who bows down humbly within their walls, and seeks to propitiate them in his own favour at any price in burnt offerings.

In one of his *Reflections* Guicciardini inculcates the perilous doctrine that it is the duty of a good citizen to do his best to live on such terms with a tyrant, as to be able to counsel good courses and dissuade from bad ones. "How disastrous," he cries, "would the government of the Medici have been, if they had been surrounded only by fools and knaves." Acting on this principle, which in various applications has been the undoing of many a better man in cabinets and parties since—say from Falkland and Colepeper in the seventeenth century down to Prévost-Paradol in the nineteenth—Guicciardini became servant of the most odious of the Medici. Finally, he was the means of raising Cosimo to be head of the State. Cosimo was only eighteen, he was fond of pleasure, and Guicciardini took care that he should have a handsome income. When the sum was fixed, Guicciardini at the council table, lowering his face and raising his eyebrows, said dryly, "Twelve thousand golden florins are fine spending." But craft is not confined to greybeards, and young Cosimo was no sooner secure than he discarded his mentor. Guicciardini went off to his villa (1534); he was fifty-two; he had abundant material to his hand; he had ever been an indefatigable penman; and he now spent the six years of life that were left in the

composition of his great work on the history of Italy. Clarendon was seven years older when he too in exile and disgrace "betook himself to his books," and with indomitable activity of mind and pen completed the famous story of his own time.

Guicciardini was reasonably free from the discouragement and dejection with which satiety of life is apt to affect men's judgment and temper. He was nearing that period of his age, *dove ciascun dovrebbe Calar le vele, e raccoglièr le sarte*—when every lofty soul, like the mariner drawing near the port, should lower sails and gather in the ropes. Though men are often spoiled by success in the world, still more are spoiled by failure. Guicciardini was wise enough to look to what he had done, rather than at what he had missed. What he seeks, and what he attains, is rather a reasoned fortitude than that serenity, that "great lesson of suavity," as Dante calls it, which brings a man to face his end without grief or bitterness. He did not pretend to like the falling of the curtain, but he consoled himself by thinking for how many important parts he had been cast by Fortune, and how well he had played them all. He was without that morbid ambition, as it has been called, and a very morbid ambition it is, which pretends to treat all grief, anger, mortification, chagrin, as weaknesses to be ashamed of. He makes no foolish attempt to cure his wound either by a spurious rhetoric that places things out of perspective and proportion, or by a spurious philosophy that

pretends to turn pain into pleasure by juggling with words as if they were things. Various are the attitudes of men towards the outside unseen divinity, —Fortune, Chance, Necessity, Force of Circumstance —when it overthrows them. Some defy, some whimper, some fall stunned, some break their hearts once for all, others silently obey the grim ordering of events and with courage gather up the shattered pieces. The ancient literature of consolation contains some famous pieces, from Seneca, the friend of Nero, down to Boethius, the friend of Theodoric.¹ If we would measure the differences of times and men, it is well worth while to turn to that grave and beautiful piece in our own literature, so full of enlightenment, liberality, wisdom, tenderness, and piety, where Bishop Burnet concludes his history. "I have," he says, "considering my sphere, seen a great deal of all that is most shining and tempting in this world : the pleasures of sense I did soon nauseate ; intrigues of state and the conduct of affairs have something in them that is more specious, and I was for some years deeply immersed in these, though still with hopes of reforming the world, and of making mankind wiser and better ; but I have found that which is crooked cannot be made straight." And then he goes on his way to his devout and lofty moral. So at a moment when all his counsels had come to naught, when his patron, the Holy Father, was a prisoner in

¹ See M. Martha's *Consolations dans l'Antiquité*—a chapter in his admirable *Études morales sur l'Antiquité*.

the castle of Saint Angelo, and Rome was suffering all the violence and horror of prolonged sack at the hands of ferocious Spaniard and barbaric German, Guicciardini tried his hand at self-consolation.¹

Politely despatching with summary mention the comforting assurances of theologians and philosophers, as physic that no patient would voluntarily choose to take, "I will speak to thee," he says to himself, "in a lower key than all that, and more according to the nature of men and the world." It comes to this after all. Human enterprises are ever apt to miscarry; he knew this when he embarked upon the voyage; the wreck was no special fault of his, for popes, kings, and emperors were the principals, and he no more than an instrument; his arguments for the war against the Emperor may have been an error of judgment, but it is not fair to expect a man to carry into the Council-chamber, besides merely human reasonings, the prognosticating judgments of astrologers and soothsayers; in fine, 'tis time mends all, and men will see that he was blameless. Such is the strain of his autobiographic meditation. Then he recovers the self-respect of which he is in search, by appeal to his past: "Ask all the places where thou hast been, the peoples over whom thou hast been set to rule, the armies that have been under thy orders. They will own that thou art a man of talent, resolute in taking decisions, abundant in resource, expeditious in act." Wholly free from

¹ September 1527. *Op. ined.* x. 103-133.

the insincerities and inflations of the professing cynic, stoic, or anchorite, Guicciardini's consolation is rational and worth reading. Nevertheless at the end of it perhaps an impartial person would commend to statesmen in misfortune not all this argumentation, explanation, consolation, sophistication, but the simple concision of Thucydides—"It befell me to be an exile from my country for twenty years after my command at Amphipolis." And no more.

In every age cases meet us where experience changes the idealist and the reformer, first to doubter, then to indifferent, next to pure egotist, at last to hard cynic. The process may be gradual, but it is apt to be implacable, and the fallen man one day awakes to find his sensibility gone, his moral pulse at a stand, and a once ardent soul burnt down to ashes. When the waking hour arrives, one man may still have grace enough to go out and weep bitterly; another only mocks. There is no sign that Guicciardini ran through all these stages of the political Sceptic's Progress. He was man of the world from first to last. Dreams and visions such as make for some the charmed part of life, were never anything to him. In a series of extraordinarily suggestive considerations on Machiavelli's *Discorsi*,¹ he gravely exposes that vivid writer's excess of severity in logic, excess of colour in his ideals, excess of eloquence in description; and teaches us the lesson of which the publicist in all times seems to stand so much in need,

¹ *Op. ined.* i.

that in politics, your propositions should be guarded by temperance, reserve, common sense, and all the qualifications of practice. This prudence did not at all spring in Guicciardini from the trait noted by Aristotle in elderly men,—a fondness for only saying “I think,” never “I know”;¹ and for larding their argument with “perhaps” and “possibly.” Experience had taught him that government is the most complex of subjects, and general maxims about it the most in need of caution. He had not even ambition of the ravening sort. He was not of those who must be Premier, President, Commander-in-Chief, or Admiral of the Fleet. Yet he had much honourable public spirit. “Three things,” he said, “I would willingly see before I die: a well-ordered republic in my native Florence; the barbarian invaders driven from Italy; the world freed from the rascal priests.” These objects he honestly desired, but he did not much expect them, and he was not the man to make a fight for them. He had a passion for the transaction of public business; he wished to see it well done with a view to ends well ordered, and he had a strong capacity for it. We should in charity and sense remember that it is a natural infirmity, even of noble minds, to identify their own personality with the furtherance of the common good.

Guicciardini in fine was a grave, long-headed man of affairs, of a type well known in the public service

¹ *Rhet.* ii. 13.

of kings and peoples from his day to ours. He was sharply alive to the truth set out by Machiavelli, that the thing of importance in this world is not only to know one's self in a general way, but to have skill enough rightly to measure the forces of one's own mind and character with the forces and needs of the State. As much as that, to be sure, would have been heartily admitted by anybody in the Rogue's Camp, from Verres to Jonathan Wild. Apart from this original selfishness of the politic man in search of his career, times of great public travail tend to harden the heart; and the Florentine publicists all write like men with hardish hearts. They have none of the geniality of Commynes, none of the cheerful good humour of Bacon, none of the amiability of Montesquieu, none of that deep insight into life and character as a whole which made La Bruyère and some other Frenchmen of the seventeenth century, including more than one of their divines, so admirable and so fruitful. The same is true even of Paruta, the Venetian, who hated the Machiavellian school and all its works, and wrote some admirable things in his dialogue on the Perfection of the Political Life. Neither Venetian publicist nor Florentine, for instance, was capable of any such saying as that exquisite one of Bacon, that *the nobler a soul is, the more objects of compassion it hath*. Nothing of this kind was in their vein. They would have set down as mere monkery Pascal's celestially ordered hierarchy—Kings, captains, the rich, all the great men

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of the flesh, as lowest down in the scale of grandeur. Then the men of genius, with their empire, their conquests, and their lustre, with no need of outer carnal splendours. Third, above both these, the saints, inventing nothing, ruling no kingdom, but humble, patient, holy before God, terrible to demons. This, the grandeur of wisdom, is invisible to the eyes of carnal and of intellectual greatness.¹ Savonarola, who stood for the same unworldly scheme of human things, was put to an ignoble death in 1498, and Guicciardini, then a boy of sixteen, may have watched the flames. In his dialogues on the government of Florence,² Guicciardini makes one interlocutor say to another: "This advice may seem cruel and unconscientious, and so in truth it is. That is why thy great-grandfather Gino wrote in his *Ricordi* that the Council of Ten for War should consist of such as loved their country better than their souls, because *it is not possible to rule governments and states according to the precepts of Christian law*." It is when we compare the school of Machiavel and Guicciardini with Dante, that we discern the two widely parted currents into which the main stream of political thought and sentiment in Europe was now formally dividing itself.

II.

Guicciardini interests us somewhat as a political theorist about constitutions and the like; he interests

¹ *Pensees*, xvii. 1 (ed. Havet), vol. iii. 230 (*Grands Ecrivains*).

² *Op. ined.* ii.

us deeply as a historian ; he interests us most of all as a shrewd observer of men, and a keen explorer of the secrets of managing them. Of the first of these three aspects of him we shall say nothing, except that his discussion of the government of Florence handles with extraordinary acuteness and vigour the everlasting question whether the rule by one, by a few, or by many, is the best. It is too long, and it is all the longer for being in the form of dialogue. This was a favourite device of the century. To some of us the most tiresome dissertation is not more afflicting than the sprightliest, courtliest, demurest, or archest of all these polemical dialogues. Plato is of course the grand exception, as on a lower plane is Cicero's brilliant and skilful dialogue on the Orator. But if men could be quite honest about Olympian names, perhaps a fraction even of Plato would fall under the same remark. One critic, and a French critic, strange to say, is reminded by our Italian's *Reggimento di Firenze*, in respect of elegance and grace, of the opening of the *Phædrus*. This belongs to the disputable region of taste. A more important and less questionable point is that, in its arguments and considerations on the merits, difficulties, and dangers of popular government, and in the light it sheds on our actual problem of the choice between power concentrated and power checked and counter-balanced, Guicciardini's dialogue is as modern as if it had been written yesterday, and it has even been enthusiastically described as one of the strongest

and most vivid in the history of political writing.¹ Or why say modern? As if the insoluble theme of the respective merits of government by many, by a few, by one, had not been opened by the seven Persian conspirators in old Herodotus (iii. 80), worshipful father of history, five centuries before Christ.

Far more interesting, alike as historic document, and as a kind of literature in which the world is not any too well off, are the *Ricordi* or Civil and Political Counsels. These are a body of aphorisms or reflections on political wisdom, and the arts of the Politic Man; and it is mainly on their account that the ordinary reader of to-day will think it worth while to take a volume of Guicciardini down from his shelf. They did not appear in a full and authentic shape until the year 1857. Some of them are scattered through the *History of Italy* and other of the author's writings, and these judicious sentences were collected from the *History* and published apart before the end of the sixteenth century. Guicciardini evidently took great pains in pointing and polishing them, though it is doubtful whether he ever meant the whole of them for the public eye. He was the most circumspect of men, and very unlikely to be willing to hand over to the profane crowd all the secrets of empire and all the wisdom of the *domus Socratica* of Rome and Florence.² Many of the four hundred are

¹ Janet, *Hist. de la science politique*, i. 546.

² The *Ricordi* are in the first of the ten volumes of *Opere inedite*. They have been rendered into English by Mr.

repetitions, but when due deduction is made for these, a large body of observation and admonition is left that both instructs us about standards of judicious conduct in the sixteenth century, and suggests some sidelights for the twentieth.

We must not expect any consideration of those deeper elements and aspirations in human nature that have led some to groan over the life of mankind as a hideous tragedy of waste and wrong, and others to laugh at history as "a comedy in a hundred acts." The stress of existence in unfortunate Italy was too desperate. "In the sixteenth century, they analysed much less than they acted, in war, politics, religion. Everything was done by *coups de main* and *coups d'État*."¹ Be all this as it may, we must admit of Guicciardini's Counsels and Reflections, sage as they are on their own level and within their own limits, that they do not spring from a rich soil, do not seem as if they had grown in a nourishing air, have not the full savour of fruits ripened in the sun. He was sheer politician, and the cases are rare where politics do not rather contract than expand the range of human interest and feeling, do not check rather than promote the sap and juice of a living fecundity.

Bacon in the famous eighth book of the *De Augmentis*, that masterpiece of the secondary arts of wisdom of life, sets down some heads or passages of Thompson (Kegan Paul, 1890), the translator of Machiavelli's *Prince and Discourses*. See also Dean Church's *Occasional Papers*, vol. i.

¹ Benoist, p. 127.

what he calls the *Architect of Fortune or the Knowledge of Advancement in Life*. The things necessary for the acquisition of fortune, he says, and the formation of the truly Politic Man, are a part of human knowledge which he reports as deficient, and we may doubt whether anybody has done much to advance it since. "Not, however, that Learning admires or esteems this architecture otherwise than as an inferior work. For no man's fortune can be an end worthy of the gift of being, that has been given him by God ; and often the worthiest men abandon their fortunes willingly, that they may have leisure for higher pursuits. But, nevertheless, fortune as an instrument of virtue and merit deserves its own speculation and doctrine." This limitation would have been too hard for Guicciardini. The architecture of fortune in men meddling with government, went as high as his vision could carry.

The critic goes uncharitably far when he says that Guicciardini's *Reflections* are Italian corruption reduced to a code, and raised into a rule of life.¹ But life to him was no more than what Bacon calls an "incessant, restless, and as it were sabbathless chase of fortune"—a game to be keenly played with the world's dice-box. From the first he resolved to master all its arts, expedients, and rules, without prejudice to a little silent cozening at a pinch. For if Fortune is free to palm an ace or cog a die, why may not we try to make the match more equal ?

¹ De Sanctis, *Lett. ital.* ii. 115.

The Italian's Politic Man has none of Bacon's large and open brow, his wide horizons, his magisterial ease and bonhomie. Nor had he more than half mastered the distinction set out by Bacon in one of those pithy and sapid comments on Solomon's Proverbs, which are worth many long hours of sermon-preaching. "A wise man," said King Solomon, "looketh well to his ways, but a fool turneth to deceit." On which, Bacon :

There are two kinds of wisdom, the one true and sound, the other degenerate and false, which Solomon does not hesitate to term folly. He who applies himself to the former takes heed of his own ways, foreseeing dangers, preparing remedies, employing the assistance of the good, guarding himself against the wicked, cautious in entering upon a work, not unprepared for a retreat, watchful to seize opportunities, strenuous to remove impediments, and attending to many other things which concern the government of his own actions and proceedings. But the other kind is entirely made up of deceits and cunning tricks, laying all its hopes in the circumventing of others, and moulding them to its pleasure ; which kind the proverb denounces as being not only dishonest, but also foolish.

Prudential counsels by code and system can hardly ever be in the highest sense attractive. A modern who in his studies came across the private notebooks and reflections of Mazarin (one of the two great Italians who have governed France, and deeply marked by the characteristics of Italian genius a century before his time) is driven to say of them that all this political cookery rather takes away one's appetite, and indeed would make one sick if only one

did not remember that *everything has its kitchen side*.¹ Abhor all the pretensions of the Pharisee as heartily as ever we will, there is something repulsive in the thought of a man starting every day with a dose of *Ricordi*, and coming forth from his chamber having given all the freshness of the morning hour to sharpening his rapier or charging his pistols for the daily duel with fortune and his fellow-creatures. The world has more liking for one who practises the pregnant maxim, *Seekest thou great things, seek them not*; and it often looks as if this lofty heedlessness, in spite of what Guicciardini may say, were as politic as it is certainly wise in wisdom's sense.

It may move a friendly smile to notice that nobody has so many biting things to say about the selfishness and duplicity of mankind, as one who has made it the whole business of his life to use mankind as the ladder for his own advancement. Nobody in all the world is so ready to play wounded benefactor as the self-seeker out of luck. Guicciardini is less unkind to his fellow-mortals, man for man, than observers of his stamp usually are. He is not blind to the weaknesses of our poor species as a whole; but he sees them redeemed by the worth of the elect. Like Goethe, he would say that "in their faults one recognises Mankind, in excellences the Individual; shortcomings and the chances and changes of life have we all in common, but virtues belong to each man in particular." "Do not be afraid of benefiting

¹ *Palais Mazarin*, par le Comte de Laborde, ii. 124.

men," says Guicciardini, "simply because you see ingratitude so common; for besides that a temper of kindness in itself, and without any other object, is a generous quality and in a way divine, you now and again find somebody exhibiting such gratitude as richly to make up for the ingratitude of all the rest."

The worst of maxims, aphorisms, and the like, from the sayings of Solomon and Sirach the son of Jesus downward, is that for every occasion in life, or perplexity in conduct, there is a brace of them; and of the brace, one points one way and the other down a path exactly opposite. The fingerpost of experience has many arms at every cross-road. One observer tells the disciple that in politics perseverance always wins; another that men who take the greatest trouble to succeed, are those most sure to miss. To-day, the one essential seems to be boldness of conception; to-morrow, the man of detail is master of the hour. To-day the turn of things inclines a man to say that in politics nothing matters; to-morrow some other turn teaches him that in politics everything matters. The instructor in statecraft and the guide to the Politic Man must be Janus and look more ways than one, and to this demand Guicciardini was equal.

As an aristocrat by birth, by temper, and by observation, Guicciardini did not allow his general benevolence to make him a Friend of the People in the political sense of to-day. "Who says people says in truth a foolish animal, full of a thousand

errors, a thousand confusions, without taste, without discernment, without stability. They are like the waves of the sea, driven by the winds now here, now there, without rule, without coherency (140). Their vain opinions are as far from the truth as Ptolemy makes Spain from the Indies" (345). In the following century, in his dungeon in the Castle of Saint Elmo, the valiant and unfortunate Campanella, in one of the sonnets with which he beguiled a whole weary generation of captivity, used similar figures, though on his lips such language was passionate remonstrance rather than contempt.¹ *Il popolo è una bestia*—

The people is a beast of muddy brain,
That knows not its own force, and therefore stands
Loaded with wood and stone.

The implication is the contradictory of Guicciardini's.

It is not merely the multitude on whose wisdom you cannot count. "Said Messer Antonio of Venafro, and he said well—Place seven or eight clever men together, and they become so many fools. The reason is that when they do not agree, they are keener to argue than to decide" (112). You may see it any day in the case of doctors; when several are called in, they easily come to controversy, and very often with their discords they kill the patient (ii. 86). It may be that this is the secret why, in days nearer to our own, Cabinets of all the Talents

¹ *Sonnets of Michelangelo and Campanella*, translated by J. A. Symonds, p. 143.

have sometimes been cabinets of all the blunders. Chamfort, the cynical wit of the Revolution, asked how many fools it takes to make a public ; Guicciardini, on the other hand, would have told us that it takes very few clever men to make a fool. Voltaire put the saying of Messer Antonio with more piquancy and more widely, if less reasonably, in his remark that, *Quand les hommes s'attroupent, leurs oreilles s'allongent*—"When men get into a flock their ears grow long." Cato took it differently when he used to say of the Romans, that "they were like sheep, for a man had better drive a flock of them than one of them ; for in a flock if you can but get some few to go right, the rest will follow."¹ Perhaps Burke comes nearest to the mark : "Man is a most unwise and a most wise being. The individual is foolish. The multitude for the moment is foolish, when they act without deliberation ; but the species is wise, and when time is given to it, as a species it almost always acts right."

III.

On the whole, one must repeat, Guicciardini treats his kind with wise leniency. "Men are all by nature more inclined to do good than ill ; nor is there anybody who, where he is not by some strong considera-

¹ "Contio, quæ ex imperitissimis constat, tamen iudicare solet quid intersit inter popularem, id est assentatorem et levem civem, et inter constantem et severum et gravem."—Cicero, *De amic.* xxv. 95.

tion pulled the other way, would not more willingly do good than ill. But so frail is man's nature, and so frequent in this world are the occasions that invite to ill, that men easily let themselves stray from the good." Is not this still, nearly four centuries later, the truth of the case? Not ferocity but distraction, not vileness but incoherency, mistakes about cause and effect, short sight, bad memory, wavering will, that which Bishop Butler groaned over as the "immoral thoughtlessness" of men. Then, not afraid of something like a contradiction, Guicciardini swings round in the other quarter: "It may seem a harsh and suspicious thing to say—and would to heaven it were not true: there are more bad men than good, especially where interests of property or politics (*di Stato*) are concerned. Therefore, except with those whom either by your own experience, or thoroughly trustworthy report, you know to be good, you cannot go wrong in dealing with everybody else with your eyes well open. It needs cleverness to contrive this, without getting a bad name for being distrustful. But the point is not to trust, wherever you are not sure it is safe" (201).

We can imagine Cavour on his estates at Leri, in the years before he was called to take the helm at Turin, brooding intently over such a passage as this: "No two Popes were more unlike than Julius the Second and Clement the Seventh; the one of great and even dauntless spirit, impatient, impulsive, open, frank; the other of a middling temperament, perhaps

even timid, infinitely patient, moderate, a dissembler. Yet from natures so opposed, men look for the same results in large exploits. For with great masters patience and impetuosity are alike fit to bring forth great things ; the one dashes swiftly upon men, and forces circumstance ; the other wears men and things out, and conquers by time and opportunity. Hence where one hurts, the other helps, and conversely. If a man could join both characters, and use each at the right time, he would be divine. As that is impossible, I believe that, everything considered, patience and moderation do greater things than impetuosity and hurry " (381). On the morrow of the peace of Paris in 1856, Cavour, then the little-known Minister of the Sardinian Kingdom, had a conversation with Lord Clarendon. He talked hardily of war to the death with Austria. Lord Clarendon told him, truly enough, that the moment had not yet come for saying this aloud. Cavour replied : " I have given you proofs of my moderation and prudence ; I believe that in politics you should be exceedingly reserved in words, and exceedingly decided in act. There are positions where there is less danger in taking an audacious line, than in an excess of prudence." He was himself a master example of the rare men who could join both characters, and use each at the right time.

Guicciardini is always pressing us to stick to the particular case with which we deal. "'Tis a great mistake to talk of the things of the world absolutely, without discriminating, and as it were by rule. For

in nearly everything there are distinctions and exceptions, due to variety of circumstances. These circumstances you cannot treat by one and the same standard. Such distinctions and exceptions are not to be found in books; you must learn them from your own discretion" (6). Take care, he says, how you judge by examples, for if they are not exactly on all fours, the least diversity in antecedent conditions becomes the widest diversity in conclusion. If one link in your reasoning is weak, all the rest may snap. We may write maxims in books, but exceptions in circumstance are for ever arising, and these can only find a place on the tablets of discretion. This comes to what is reported to have been said by Prince Bismarck: "Politics are less a science than an art. They cannot be taught. One must be born with a gift for them. The best advice is of no value, if you do not know how to carry it out in the right way, and with due regard to the circumstances of each case." And that again brings politics very near to the same point at which Logic was placed by an eminent head of a college at Oxford. He ended a discussion on the old question whether Logic is a science or an art, by the decision that "it is neither a science nor an art; it is a dodge."

In the same spirit Guicciardini offers wholesome counsel to such as are tempted to fashion modern policies on ancient history. "How vastly do those deceive themselves who at every word bring up the Romans! You should have a city in the conditions

under which they existed, and then you might have a government after their pattern. For those who have not the qualities to match, this is as extravagant as to expect an ass to go as fast as a horse" (110). Then, with the apparent self-contradiction that is common with all these masters of sentences: "Past throws light on Future because the world was ever of the same make; and all that is or will be in another day, has already been, and the same things return, only with different names and colours. 'Tis not everybody who knows them under the new face, but the wise know them" (336).

All this comes very much to what our excellent English Selden says, in words that have many applications, and are well worth remembering by all teachers in press and pulpit even in our own day of perfect light: "*Aye or No never answered any question.* The not distinguishing where things should be distinguished, and the not confounding where things should be confounded, is the cause of all the mistakes in the world."

Sleepless circumspection, minute, particular, patient, intense, in act and word and plan,—this is the master key. Treat everything as laden with a serious possibility. "I do not believe there is a worse thing in all the world than levity. Light men are the very instruments for anything that is bad, dangerous, and hurtful. Flee from them like fire" (147).

"Make as many friends as ever you can, for you never know in what contingency a man may be able to serve

you. Hide displeasure ; I have often had to seek the aid of those against whom I was at heart thoroughly ill-disposed ; and they, believing the contrary of me, or at any rate not being aware of this, have served me as readily as possible " (133, 266).

"Unperceived beginnings often open the way either to great mischiefs, or to great success ; therefore note everything, and weigh even trifles well. On your doing, or not doing, what seems at the moment a mere trifle, often hang things of first importance ; so be sure to consider well " (82, 247).

"Never hold a future thing so certain, however positively certain it may seem, as not, if you can possibly do it without upsetting your plan, to keep in reserve some course to follow, in case the contrary should turn up. I often see really long-headed men, when they have to make up their minds upon some weighty business, set about it by considering two or three cases that are most likely to happen, and come to a decision on the assumption that one of these cases is sure to come. This is dangerous, for often, and even usually, there arises some third or fourth case that has been overlooked, and which your decision will not fit. You had much better keep your decision strictly to what the actual necessity of the matter compels " (81, 182).

In politics nothing tragic, everything serious.—"The ruler of a State must not be frightened at dangers, however great, near, and actual they look. As the proverb goes, The devil is not so black as he is painted. Often things happen that melt the dangers away ; and even when the evils come, you find some cure or some mitigation that you had never imagined " (116).

So, then, look out for chance and surprise. Leave all doors open. Never tie your hands. Give plenty

of room for the chapter of accidents, good or bad. Yet you should never drift. Occasion is everything. The wizard is he who divines the moment that is neither too soon nor too late. History, since Guicciardini's day, abounds in cases where statesmen have made shipwreck from forgetting that time and the moment are all, and mistaking the pace at which opportunity ripens.

Here are some miscellaneous hints for any date, some sensible, some cunning, some a little odious. The Politic Man will appropriate the epithets at his choice.

False as a bulletin.—"A man who is carrying on great affairs is wont to cover up the things that are unpleasant, and to exaggerate what is favourable. 'Tis a kind of charlatanry, and entirely contrary to my nature. But as success depends more often on the opinions of people than on actual results, to spread the story that things are going well helps you, and the contrary does you harm" (86).

Character the real treasure.—"Do not place popularity before reputation, because with lost reputation popularity is lost. But he who keeps up reputation will never find friends, favour, popularity wanting" (42).

No general indictments.—"Be careful in your conversation never needlessly to say things which, if they were reported, might displease others; because such things, in times and ways you never thought of, often turn up to do you vast mischief. When occasion drives you to say what must be offensive to somebody else, at least be sure that it only offends the individual. Do not speak ill of his country, or of his family or connections; it is folly, while you only wish to strike one, to affront many" (42).

Fast bind, fast find.—"My father, when praising thrift,

used to say that one ducat in the purse brings more honour than ten ducats spent" (44).

To put to sea without constancy, a voyage that ends in nothing.—"Persistency is everything." It is not enough to set business going, to give it a direction and a start. You must follow it up, and never take your hand off until the very end" (192).

Circumspection the golden rule, only we must never let it paralyse us.—"Though we should enter upon all our undertakings with deliberation, we must not therefore conjure up so many obstacles as to make success seem desperate. Rather it concerns us to remember that as we go on, knots will often untie themselves and difficulties vanish."

A commonplace for political captains.—"In war often have I seen news come that made our business look bad; then at a stroke would come other news that looked like victory; or it would be the other way about. And these contradictions would constantly happen. So a good captain should not too easily be either cast down or lifted up" (127).

The Righteous man begging his bread, and the Wicked flourishing as the green bay-tree.—"Never say, God has helped such an one because he was good, or hindered such another because he was bad. For we often see things go just the other way. Nor for all that ought we to say that divine justice halts, God's counsels being so deep that rightly do men talk of *abyssus multa*—we cannot fathom them" (92).

*No dilettantism: nothing for "a cake that is not turned."*¹—"With him who is in his very soul bent on fame, all succeeds, for he spares no pains nor money nor risks. I have proved this in my own person, and so I can write it. Dead and empty are the doings of men that lack this pricking spur" (118).

¹ Hosea vii. 8.

Mediocrity the best.—"Too keen wits mean unhappiness and torment; they only bring on a man perplexity and trouble, from which those with heads of the positive sort are quite free. He who has sound judgment can make far more use of the man with only clever brains, than the clever man can make use of him. The man with the positive head has a better time in the world, lives longer, and in a certain fashion is happier, than the man with high intellect, for a noble intellect carries with it toil and fret. At the same time one partakes more of the brute than the man, while the other transcends humanity and approaches the divine" (60, 232, 337).

He that regards the winds does not sow, and he that regards the clouds does not reap.—"We cannot blame men for being slow to resolve. For though occasions come when it is necessary to decide quickly, yet for the most part he who decides quickly more often goes wrong than he who decides slowly. What is always thoroughly to be blamed is slowness in action after decision taken. Whatever your decision and whatever your plan, there is always a reason to the contrary. Whence it comes that so many people stand in suspense, because every small difficulty disturbs them. These are they whom we call over-scrupulous, because they stumble on a scruple at every turn. This is all wrong. We ought to weigh the drawbacks on every side, and then to make up our minds for the course where drawbacks are fewest" (191, 213).

A lottery after all.—"In human things it is fortune that has the mastery. Every hour we see mighty results due to accidents that nobody could either foresee or divert. Penetration and care may temper the force of things, still you need good fortune. A fool will sometimes come better out than a wise man; for the one will trust much to Reason, and little to Fortune, while the other trusts much to Fortune, and little to Reason" (30, 136).

IV.

Guicciardini is fond of that saying of the ancients, *Magistratus virum ostendit*, office shows the man. "Nothing reveals the quality of men like giving them authority and things to do. Place discovers a man's capacity and his character. How many people know how to talk, and do not know how to act; how many on benches and in the market-place seem excellent, yet when put into employment turn out mere phantoms (*riescono ombre*)" (163, 258).

The political path is thickly strewn with these historic humiliations, the men whom everybody would have thought *capaces imperii, nisi imperassent*. Eminent place, La Bruyère said, makes the great man greater than he is, the small man it makes less. Some hold in our own day, that if you would know the real qualities of a public man, you must find out—if you can—what is thought of him, not by his constituents, not by his fellow-members, but by the permanent officials who have served under him. The general estimate formed of him in the House of Commons is no doubt unerring, but the House does not see him at such close quarters, and in a popular assembly the plausible may go further than the substantial. Only the permanent official can tell you for certain whether his chief is quick or slow, idle or diligent; whether he allows himself to see two sides to a question; how far he is free from the vanity of supposing that he knows everything, and how far he

has the fine talent of the good learner ; whether he has the indispensable gift of making up his mind and holding to it ; what sort of a judge he is of probabilities ; whether he is sure in hand and foot, cool or flurried, considerate or selfish, straightforward or tortuous, a man of initiative and resource. It may be that not only does office, as Guicciardini says, show the man to others ; it may possibly, if he has time in which to think of such things, reveal him to himself, to his own lively surprise. Such is the modern confirmation of the ancient saying, ἀρχὴ ἀνδρα δεικνύουσι, which made so deep a mark on Guicciardini that he winds up the last page of his *History* with it.

What the critic means by saying that the *Ricordi* are Italian corruption reduced to a code, may be seen in such reflections as these : " Always deny what you do not wish to have known, and affirm what you wish to have believed ; for though there may be proofs and even certainty the other way, a bold affirmation or denial will perplex the listener." In the cynic's vein is this : " One of the greatest strokes of good fortune is for a man to have an opportunity of showing that in the things he does for his own interest, he was moved by the thought of the public good. This is what shed glory on the enterprises of the Catholic King ; what he did for his own security or aggrandisement, often looked as if it were done for the advancement of the Christian faith or the defence of the Church."

" What is sincere and free and generous is always

pleasing, but sometimes it does you harm. On the other hand, to dissemble may be useful, and on occasions even necessary, owing to the evil character of other people; but it is odious and ugly. Hence I do not know which one should choose. I should suppose that a man might use the one in an ordinary way, yet without abandoning the other; I mean in common practice, to use the first so as to earn the name of a liberal person, and yet in certain important and rare cases to use dissimulation, which in a man who generally lives as I have said, is all the more successful, because, from having the opposite character, you are the more readily believed" (26). As though character were like the fingers of a clock, to be moved at will backwards and forwards, independently of the wheels and springs, balances and escapements, that regulate its daily action and make it what it is. The grievous failings and frantic inconsistencies and dire lapses of human nature are only too familiar. But to suppose that a man shall sedulously train himself to walk in straight paths, yet with freedom deliberately reserved to run off at a tangent into crooked ways whenever convenience requires, argues an eccentric psychology indeed.

"To save yourself," says Guicciardini (101), "from a cruel and brutal tyrant, there is no rule or physic that avails, except what you advise for the plague; flee from him as fast as ever you can." Selden puts this point in the old homely apologue: "Wise men

say nothing in dangerous times. The lion, you know, called the sheep, to ask her if his breath smelt; she said Aye; he bit off her head for a fool. He called the wolf and asked him; he said No; he tore him in pieces for a flatterer. At last he called the fox and asked him: Truly he had got a cold and could not smell." Still, vulpine is yulpine, and while we do not grudge the fox his chance, the old truth remains. The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church, and the man driven by weakness of the flesh into full flight from peril, may well be stricken by a secret envy of those brave heroic hearts, that noble army of witnesses, those spirits of fire, who in all ages and for many causes that seemed forlorn, have fought the fight, run the course, and kept the faith.

Without ascending to these pure and exalted heights, we may refresh ourselves by thinking of such a man as Turgot. The contrast may help to show the Politic Man where he stands. Turgot, says his biographer, would not endure that any mixture of falseness, or the least appearance of charlatanry, should soil the purity or the conduct of a public man. He knew the means, he scorned to use them. They taxed him with ignorance of men. This is what they called *maladresse*. Few philosophers have had a better-founded knowledge of man. But he concerned himself little with the art of knowing particular men, of knowing the small details of their interests, of their passions, of the fashion in which

they hide or reveal them, of the springs of their intrigues and their quackery.¹

The Florentine or the Venetian School would have mocked at a reformer such as this. Whether France could have escaped the abyss, if instead of Turgot's her affairs at that decisive moment had fallen into the hands of some supple and vigilant Cavour nourished on Guicciardini, is a question which we may put if we like. What is certain is that the Directory, whose incompetency and rottenness opened the way for Bonaparte, were the very type that the maxims of our Florentine are fitted to produce.

V.

It remains to say something of Guicciardini as historian. Early in his career he had shown his taste in this direction. In 1509 he wrote his *History of Florence*, comprising the period between Cosmo de' Medici and the repulse of the Venetians at the Ghiaradadda (1434-1508). None of Guicciardini's writings saw the light in his lifetime, and this was not given to the world until our own day (1859). Sallust, in a good phrase, says that when he made up his mind to leave public affairs, *non fuit consilium socordia atque desidia bonum otium contere*, he had no mind to wear out his good leisure in listlessness and sloth, or in such things as farming or hunting. Whether Sallust was little better, as some illustrious

¹ Condorcet's *Vie de Turgot* (Œuv. v. 152-154)

scholars say, than an adroit pamphleteer or clever literary artificer, at least we might wish that Guicciardini had striven to imitate the terseness and compression of his countryman, who had written chapters of Roman history fifteen centuries before him. Like Voltaire and others, Guicciardini had the habit of the pen, and would rather be writing than not. He lived until 1540. It is said that he thought of composing commentaries on his own life, and this must always be the most interesting thing that any public man on his final retirement can undertake, if only he allows himself to speak the truth. A wise friend warned him how much ill-will he would be sure to stir up, and set him upon a history of Italy instead. Yet Guicciardini knew the impossibilities of every historic task. Walpole, according to a well-worn legend, begged them not to read history to him, "for that I know must be false." Our Italian said something very like it: "Do not wonder that you are ignorant of things of past ages, and of things done in distant places. For if you well consider it, there is no real information as to the present, or as to what is done from day to day in the same city. Often between palace and market-place is a cloud so thick or a wall so big that the people know as little of what is done by those who rule them, or of the reason for doing it, as they know of what they do in India. So it comes about that the world easily fills itself with wrong and empty notions" (*Ric.* 141).

In the deeper problems of political philosophy he

shows no interest. Is the key to great movements in history nothing more subtle or mysterious than the inborn restlessness of men? Had Machiavelli found this secret when he declared, "What throws empires down is that the powerful are never satisfied with their power; one rises, another dies; the ruler is for ever pining with fresh ambitions and new apprehension"? Can this be as true of democracy as of oligarchs and autocrats? Is history an unmeaning procession across a phantom scene, a fantastic cycle of strange stage-plays, where conquerors, pontiffs, law-givers, saints, jesters, march in pomp or squalor, in ephemeral triumphs and desperate reverse? Or is it, again, the record of such growth among civil communities as the naturalist traces in the succession of organisms material and palpable, and is the historian's task to find and illustrate the laws by which the long process has been moulded? Is history, as Bossuet would persuade us, the long and solemn vindication of the mysterious purposes of God to man, the ordered working of the Unseen Powers as they raise up states and empires, then cast them headlong down again in stern and measured rhythm? How far have great events sprung from small occasions, and vast public catastrophes from puny private incidents? The extraordinary individual, an Alexander or a Cæsar, how far is he the agent, how far the master, of circumstance? Is he, in the broad aspect, only the instrument of forces viewless as the winds, a strenuous helmsman on a blind and driving

tide, or is he himself the force that shapes, resists, controls, compels ? All this, Guicciardini would have said, is not history, but the interpretation of history ; I am historian, not interpreter ; my task is to narrate a given series of events, to show their connection with one another, to set out the character of political men, to describe parties and personal ambitions, to tell the story, and then leave you to draw your own moral, if you can find one.

His work embraces a period of rather less than forty years, from 1494 to 1532, from the memorable expedition of Charles the Eighth of France into Italy, down to the death of Pope Clement the Seventh. It comprises a long series of events that compose one of the most marked stages, transitions, or revolutions in the history of the Western world. If the Middle Ages bridge five hundred years from 1000 to 1500, modern history begins where Guicciardini begins ; and when he ends, a chain of forces, powers, interests, policies, nationalities, dynasties and states, territorial rights and claims, had taken on those definite forms whose conflict, relations, distribution, make up European annals down to the time of Napoleon. Statesmen strive with varying gifts of vision to penetrate and guide the immediate tasks of their own particular time and country, but even the most far-sighted of them do but dimly grope after the broad historic significance of their age as a whole. It would have been a miracle if Guicciardini had seized the full meaning of his period, easy as it may seem for us

four hundred years later. Still he was well aware that the European system was undergoing a profound change, and he comprehended how the old Italian system was overthrown within his two dates.

All over the West, dictatorship was rising on the ruins of feudalism. Great territorial unions and strong monarchies were covering Europe. It was the era of concentration. When Guicciardini went on his embassy to Ferdinand, he found what in Ferdinand's youth had been the three rival kingdoms of Castile, Aragon, and Granada practically welded into a single power. France under Louis the Eleventh had already marched a long way towards that establishment of autocratic power, which it still took a century more for Richelieu fully to complete. Henry the Seventh and Henry the Eighth between them had firmly built up the Tudor monarchy, and found for England a place in the new European scheme. The Hapsburgs had achieved the most wonderful union of all, for in their hands at last was united, besides the Austrian States, supremacy in the Netherlands, in Spain, in Sicily, in Bohemia, in Hungary. Growing intimacies sprang up between European countries. As nations became consolidated, their relations with one another spread over a more extensive field. High projects of international policy, which have filled so much space in Western history ever since, started on their chequered and shifting course. The practice of sending resident ambassadors took definite shape, and sovereigns sought to gain their ends by substituting

diplomacy for force. Now first began the long struggle between France and the House of Austria. For Guicciardini the most important thing was the opening of that invasion of Italy by foreigners—that appointment, as it has been described, by nearly all the nations of Europe of a rendezvous for a sanguinary tournament in Italy—which ended in the definite preponderance of the House of Austria in the Peninsula, and in the coronation of Charles the Fifth at Bologna (1530). Not less momentous than these vast political transformations was the discovery of the New World. Many will regard the Reformation as even more stupendous an event in the history of mankind, than either the growth of national monarchies or the discovery of new continents. For the speculative reasoner upon human progress, that is a question pregnant with issues of absorbing interest; but whatever we may think about this, it was impossible for Guicciardini to judge a drama of which in 1530 not more than the first act had yet been played. Though always a Catholic both in practice and conviction, he hated the clergy and the papal court. He says nobody can think so ill of the Roman Court as it deserves, for it is an infamy, and an example of all the shame and reproach in all the world (*Op. ined.* i. 27). “I do not know a man,” he says elsewhere, “more disgusted than I am at the ambition, the greed, the unmanliness of the priests, partly because every one of these vices is hateful in itself, partly because each by itself and all of them

together are specially unbecoming in one who professes a life dedicated to God. Yet the position that I held under more than one Pope has compelled me for my own interest to desire their aggrandisement. But for that, I should have loved Martin Luther as myself, not that I might throw off the laws laid down in the Christian religion as it is commonly interpreted and understood, but in order to see this gang of scoundrels brought within due bounds—that is, either rid of their vices or stripped of their authority” (*Ric.* 28).¹ When Guicciardini comes to the full dress of history, his voice sounds in a slightly different key, but the substance is the same.

In style, sorry as he would have been to know it, he is in truth not more than a plain, steady writer, with no large general power over the noble organ of language; and when he tries to be more, the result is not diapason but drone. He cultivates the long sentence, and constantly runs to twenty lines, without prejudice to a frequent extension to five-and-thirty. This makes hard reading, but it is not the same thing as prolixity, for he does not repeat himself, nor wander from the point, nor overload with qualifications. When we find ourselves safe and sound at the thirtieth line, we have really crossed a broad piece of ground. His phrase is heavy, and yet, as Thiers says, he moves along like a man of lively spirit, only with indifferent legs. He has little dramatic power, and the notable discourses that he puts into the mouths

¹ See a reference to this passage in *La Contre-Révolution relig.*, par Martin Philippson (Brussels, 1884).

of leading characters are not always marked by salient feature of person and occasion.

The introduction of fictitious discourses at all would be an outrage on modern standards, but for some time after the revival of learning, historians followed the example set by survivors from antique times, headed by the magisterial authority of Thucydides.¹ In his battles we do not hear the clash of arms in charge and repulse, the clatter of the guns and the horsemen, the trumpets, the shouting, the din, and the trampling. In his sieges and sacks we are not shaken by the fury of the assault, by shriek and crash, red flames, horrors of rape and murder, and all the grisly squalor of war and man turned demon. Pitiless cruelty never in history went further than the systematic ferocities of Spaniard and German in Italy in the sixteenth century. The Ottoman was not more ruthless in all the arts of violence, lust, and torture than the soldiers of the Catholic King; and the soldiers of the Most Christian King were not far behind. Guicciardini stamps these abominations as they pass, without excitement, but with a steady hand. The sack of Prato by the Spaniards (1512), the sack of Brescia by the French (1512), the more memorable sack by Spanish and German adventurers of eternal Rome itself (1527), are not, after our modern fashion, made to crowd large canvases with apocalyptic detail. But

¹ See on the practice of introducing imaginary speeches into history, an interesting collection of cases and comments in Sir George Lewis's *Methods of Observation and Reasoning in Politics*, ii. 232-243.

then the worth of political and civil history does not, like romance and melodrama, depend on stirred sensations. The historian's account of the murderous battle of Ravenna (1512) (x. 4), where the French, under the youthful Gaston de Foix, routed the hosts of Spain and the Pope, is precise and intelligible, not without impressive touches, and the reader who seeks knowledge, and not merely a horrified imagination, need ask for nothing better. Those who want more would find *Cæsar's Commentaries* bald, though some judges think them the best historical style that ever was written. The story of the memorable encounter of French and Swiss at Marignano (1515) (xii. 5), has not only Guicciardini's general merits, but is full of warmth and energy ; how the Swiss in Milan, excited by the words of their leaders, suddenly grasped their arms in fury, formed up in marching order, and though not a couple of hours of daylight were left, sallied forth with exultant cries and flung themselves against the French battery ; how the fierce battle raged till long after dark, when each side, without sound of trumpet or word of command, in silent truce ceased perforce from the struggle until the next day's sun should dawn ; how when the day broke the implacable conflict began afresh ; and how at last, when 20,000 men lay dead upon the ground, the remnant of the beaten Swiss made their way back to Milan in dogged order, unquenched ferocity still blazing in their eye and mien. The historian does not often show such glowing colour.

His reflections are sometimes trite, but they are natural and sincere. Ludovic Sforza after his defeat was sent a prisoner by the French King to the dreary castle of Loches, and there for the last thirteen years of his life was locked up with no better company than the faded shadows of his own restless and passionate ambition. "So fleeting, various, and miserable is the lot of man," says Guicciardini. Only the commonplace refrain of all the ages, it is true; yet what more is to be said? It is hardly an accident that so many of the most valued histories that have survived in literature are so deeply tinged with gloom, and labour so much upon adverse things, the spite of evil generations, the frowardness of men, and all the inscrutable ironies of dark fate. We may recall the quaint chapter in Commynes that contains his "discourse upon the miserie of man's life," by the example of those princes that lived in the author's time, and first of King Louis the Eleventh, how he considered the case of Charles the Bold of Burgundy, and Edward of England, Matthias King of Hungary, and Mahomet the Ottoman. He only chants the ancient chorus, but can the pomp of Bossuet carry the moral further?

After all, the vital question about the historian is whether he tells the truth. He ought to be statesman, reasoner, critic, drudge. His gifts are sagacity, clearness, order. These he needs, whether he be historic artist, seeking to delight great audiences, or scientific student, content to explore, to disentangle, to clear the ground. What we require, says Ranke,

is naked truth without ornament; thorough exploration of detail, no inventions, no brain-spinnings (*Hirngespinnst*). In other words, History is to descend from her place among the Muses. The illustrious German does not acquit Guicciardini. He complains that the Italian's observance of strict and minute chronological order, as in Ariosto, destroys the interest; that much of his work is compiled from other books without special investigation; that weighty facts are wholly misrepresented; that the speeches which make up no small part of the work have no claim to a place among historic monuments.¹

The secondary charge of some unavowed debt to other historians must here be left in the backwoods of antiquarian controversy. It is certain, moreover, that inasmuch as half of his work concerns events in which he was neither actor nor eye-witness, though he was a contemporary, it does not stand throughout in the very highest class of original and first-hand monuments, which must be reserved for those who are not only contemporaries but more. On this side, it may well be that Guicciardini, like others of his school, falls before that general scepticism which has been well described as undermining all narrative history, certainly not excepting history written by contemporaries, inevitably moved as they are by turbid passions of the hour. A valuable field still lies open in Guicciardini. *Motivierung*, the explora-

¹ *Sämmtl. Werke*, xxxiv. p. 24. Villari does his best to defend his countryman against the charge of borrowing (*Machiavelli*, iii. 481-496).

tion of men's motives, the opening out of what seemed inexplicable, the presentation of diverse aspects of a case as they showed themselves to those who had to choose and to act—here was Guicciardini's true art. And so it was recognised as being in the generation after his death. From the first, the competent public throughout Europe admired the acuteness and comprehension with which he tracks out a political situation in root and in branch, views it on every side, exposes all the alternatives, and hits upon deciding elements in complex transactions. This it is which explains the remarkable fact that before the end of the sixteenth century his *History* ran through ten editions in Italian, three in Latin, and three in French, and was translated into English, German, Dutch, and three times into Spanish. Nobody so aptly satisfied the vigorous curiosity of that age as to motives and characters in the age before it. Nobody offered estimates of leading actors more excellent in that uncommon quality which the French call *justesse*. There are few better portraits in written history, for instance, than his of Lorenzo (*Stor. fior.* ix.), and no subtler appreciations than those of Leo the Tenth and Clement the Seventh (*Stor. d'Ital.* xvi. 5).

Montaigne tells us that when he finished a book, he had a habit of writing in it the general idea he had formed of the author as he read it. Among these books was Guicciardini's *History of Italy*. He praises the historian's diligence; his freedom from the bias of hatred, favour, or vanity; his exactitude; the

fine strokes with which he enriches his digressions and discourses. Then he proceeds to a deeper criticism. "I have also remarked this, that of so many characters and results on which he pronounces judgment, of such divers counsels and movements, he never refers a single one to virtue, to religion, or to conscience; just as if such things were gone clean out of the world. Of all the acts that he describes, however fair they may look in themselves, he always traces back the cause to some vicious source, or to some hope of selfish advantage."¹ That was no more than the brand of Guicciardini's time and school. His abstention from definite judgments of right or wrong in the actions that he describes is systematic. A free-spoken Pope is reported to have said on the death of Richelieu, "If there is a God, the Cardinal will have to smart for what he has done; but if there is no God, he was certainly an excellent man." Our historian also leaves these delicate questions open. We feel in him the force of Gibbon's remark, that the tone of history will rise or fall with the spirit of the age. In that age nobody saw any harm or heard a cynic's voice in Guicciardini's remark upon Ferdinand of Aragon, that "no reproach attaches to him, save his lack of generosity, and faithlessness to his word." It may or may not be true in literature that "it is the mark of finesse of mind not to come to a conclusion" (Renan). It is less true in history. "In politics," one critic of our Italian has said,

¹ *Essais de Montaigne*, II. x., "Des Livres."

"compromise may often be an excellent course ; but in a history what we want are clear-cut judgments ; the human conscience insists upon it." That is not Guicciardini's view. He would never have allowed conscience, like a barbarian Brennus, to fling its heavy keen-edged sword into the scale of complex, dim, awkward, and nicely balanced facts. Of him, as of Thiers, it may be said that "he does not trouble himself to judge, but to seize." The only need of which he is conscious is to see as clearly as he can what men did, and why they did it. If we add to this the great advance that he made in historic conception when he substituted a general for merely local or provincial history, and if we consider his accurate presentation of the political and moral thought of his age, we may understand his place in literature, and the impression he has made upon important minds.

WORDS AND THEIR GLORY.¹

Religious and moral sympathy with the historical life of man is the larger half of culture.—GEORGE ELIOT.

I SHALL not attempt to take a part, though as a constant learner I cannot but take an interest, in the various controversial points connected with English teaching that figure in your Transactions. They are important, they are full of life, of experience, and of real enthusiasm. They open new problems for what is, after all, if we look at it in all its bearings, the most responsible of professions. Whether the teaching of English is over-methodised; whether grammatical terminology should be uniform; whether in English grammar gender should cease to be recognised, or, at any rate, should not be emphasised; whether a sentence containing a subordinate clause is to be called a simple sentence; whether future perfect in the past is the right name for a certain tense—of all these and many other questions I am sure that they

¹ The Presidential Address before the English Association at the Annual General Meeting on January 28, 1911. Some pieces have been taken from an Address at the Mansion House, February 26, 1887.

touch points of real significance both for scientific analysis of language, and for teaching habits of accurate distinction which mark the difference between slovenly and orderly minds.

I have heard of one singularly attractive writer of my generation, now dead, who used to teach his pupils that the true test of good writing lay in the adverbs. Adjectives, he said, usually take you little further than the expression of broad characteristics; it is the adverb that displays the delicacy of the thing, and a precise use of the adverb is the sure sign of a truth-loving mind. This, I admit, strikes me as rather a subtle flavour, but such matters are for experts, and for this afternoon you will allow me to let them be. An observation of your secretary's struck me as hitting the real mark of your proceedings. She says of a certain author that he takes us into that atmosphere of beauty, more or less frequent excursions into which are necessary to help us to endure what she calls the rush of life and the enforced ugliness of much of our surroundings. Grammar, philology, rules of rhetoric, are indispensable apparatus. They are a worthy exercise for careful, ingenious, and erudite minds. But all this technique is only a means of access to those treasures of our literature that, in the old famous words, are with us in the night, and in the hurry of the prime, stir youth and refresh age, adorn success, and to failure furnish shelter and consolation.

I was asked the other day how many members of

Parliament had ever read a page of Milton's *Areopagitica*. I wonder. I would not too confidently answer even for another place. Your object is to get both parents and teachers to shake off this indifference, whatever it amounts to, for it may be that even teachers are not always animated by delight, which among the elect falls little short of passion, for the glorious literature they have to teach. I do not mean that people do not care for books and libraries. The evidence is all decisively the other way. But the library without the school is of as little avail as schools would be without the library. A library is a labyrinthine maze without a clue to one who has never been trained, I will not say systematically, but even in the elements of English language and literature.

English is one of the most widespread of living tongues. Surely not the least stupendous fact in our British annals is the conquest of a boundless area of the habitable globe by our English language. There are those who say there are several languages in the East more widely spoken, among them Chinese, with the striking illustration that occasionally a monosyllabic word has ninety different meanings. You have been told here, I see, that Arabic is or has been our rival. This is a proposition that needs far deeper limitations and qualifications than I can either set forth or examine. Arabic scholars assure me that though Arabic in Islamic lands for some three or four centuries became the medium for an active propaga-

tion of ideas, and though by the Koran it retains its hold in its own area, and keeps in its literary as distinct from its spoken form the stamp of thirteen centuries ago, yet there is no real analogy or comparison with the diffusion of English. If I may repeat a passage from a piece of my own (p. 57), Latin is a better analogy. Latin was universally spoken pretty early in Gaul, Britain, Spain, and somewhat later in the provinces on the Danube. In the East it spread more slowly, but by the Antonines and onwards the spread of Latin was pretty complete, even in Africa. Greek was common throughout the empire as the language of commerce in the fourth century. St. Augustine tells us that pains were taken that the Imperial state should impose not only its political yoke but its own tongue upon the conquered peoples, *per pacem societatis*.

Looking at contemporary conditions, what is there to strike us? We cannot miss the leading fact that two enormous changes have come to pass within the last two generations. One is the rise of physical science and invention into reigning power through the whole field of intellectual activity and interest. The other is the huge augmentation of those who know how to read and who have come under the influence of books. Or shall we say of printed matter? For if we were to judge from the legions who travel by rail, literature means too often books that are no books and only a more or less respectable provision for wasting time. The Head Master of Eton a year ago

told you boldly that we live in an age when there is the greatest abundance of bad literature that ever was known in any country in the world, the cheapest and most accessible bad literature. On the other hand, it is quite true, and much to the point, masterpieces are now, in cheap form, finding a market in overwhelming numbers. One well-known series, now numbering 500 volumes, has in five years had a gross sale of seven million copies, with no sign of decrease. The *World's Classics* from Oxford count for many of their heroes a sale of 100,000 and an average between 50,000 and 60,000. Let us add that even in the cheapest daily journals no book of serious worth ever goes without a notice, handling it with a degree of competence that not so many years ago was only to be found in half a dozen expensive weeklies. Add on the same side the extension, popularity, and success of public libraries. Encouraging as these facts are in every way, still let us face the unpleasant reflection that if one of the main objects of education must always be to strengthen the faculty of continuous and coherent attention against the tendency to futile and ignoble dispersion which confuses the brain and enervates the will, then are we sure that the printing press, mighty blessing as it is, can be counted a blessing without alloy?

The great need in modern culture, which is scientific in method, rationalistic in spirit, and utilitarian in purpose, is to find some effective agency for cherishing

within us interest in ideals. That is the business and function of literature. Literature alone will not make a good citizen ; it will not make a good man. History affords too many proofs that scholarship and learning by no means purge men of acrimony, of vanity, of arrogance, of a murderous tenacity about trifles. Mere scholarship and learning and the knowledge of books do not by any means arrest and dissolve all the travelling acids of the human system. Nor would we pretend for a moment that literature can be any substitute for life and action. Burke said, "What is the education of the generality of the world ? Reading a parcel of books ? No ! Restraint and discipline, examples of virtue and of justice, these are what form the education of the world." It is life that is the great educator. But the parcel of books, if they are well chosen, reconcile us to this discipline ; they interpret this virtue and justice ; they awaken within us the diviner mind, and rouse us to a consciousness of what is best.

The numbers of the books that are taken out from public libraries are not all that we could wish. In one great town in the North prose fiction forms 76 per cent of all the books lent. In another great town prose fiction is 82 per cent ; in a third 84 per cent ; and in a fourth 67 per cent. I had the curiosity to see what happens in the libraries of the United States ; and there—supposing the system of cataloguing and enumeration to be the same—they are a trifle more serious in their taste than we are ;

where our average is about 70 per cent, at a place like Chicago it is only about 60 per cent. In Scotland, too, it ought to be said that they have a better average in respect to prose fiction. There is a larger demand for books called serious than in England. Do not let it be supposed that I at all underrate the value of fiction. On the contrary, when a man has done a hard day's work, what can he do better than fall to and read the novels of Walter Scott, or the Brontës, or Mrs. Gaskell, or some of our living writers?

Mark Pattison, who was a book-lover if ever there was one, complained that the bookseller's bill in the ordinary English middle-class family is shamefully small. It appeared to him to be monstrous that a man who is earning £1000 a year should spend less than £1 a week on books—that is to say, less than a shilling in the pound per annum. I know that Chancellors of the Exchequer take from us 8d. or 6d. in the pound [1886], and I am not sure that they always use it as wisely as if they left us to spend it on books. Still, a shilling in the pound to be spent on books by a clerk who earns a couple of hundred pounds a year, or by a workman who earns a quarter of that sum, is rather more than can be reasonably expected. A man does not really need to have a great many books. Pattison said that nobody who respected himself could have less than 1000 volumes. He insisted that you can stack 1000 octavo volumes in a bookcase 13 feet by 10 feet, and 6 inches deep,

and that everybody has that small amount of space at disposal. We may all agree in lamenting that there are so many houses—even some of considerable social pretension—where you will not find a decent atlas, a good dictionary, or a good cyclopædia of reference. What is still more lamentable, in a good many more houses where these books are, they are never referred to or opened.

No sensible person can suppose for a single moment that everybody is born with the ability for using books, for reading and studying literature. Certainly not everybody is born with the capacity of being a great scholar. All human beings are no more born great scholars like Gibbon and Bentley, than they are all born great musicians like Handel and Beethoven. What is much worse than that, many go through the world with the incapacity of reading, just as they go through it with the incapacity of distinguishing one tune from another. Even the morning paper is too much for them. They can only skim the surface even of that. I go further, and frankly admit that the habit and power of reading with reflection, comprehension, and memory all alert and awake, does not come at once to the natural man any more than many other sovereign virtues. What I do venture to press upon you is, that it requires no preterhuman force of will in any young man or woman—unless household circumstances are more than usually vexatious and unfavourable—to get at least half an hour out of a solid busy day for disinterested reading.

Some will say that this is too much to expect, and the first persons to say it, I venture to predict, will be those who waste their time most. At any rate, if I cannot get half an hour, I will be content with a quarter. Now, in half an hour I fancy you can read fifteen or twenty pages of Burke; or you can read one of Wordsworth's masterpieces—say the lines on Tintern; or say, one-third—if a scholar, in the original, and if not, in a translation—of a book of the Iliad or the Æneid. I do not think that I am filling the half-hour too full. But try for yourselves what you can read in half an hour. Then multiply the half-hour by 365, and consider what treasures you might have laid by at the end of the year; and what happiness, fortitude, and wisdom they might give you during all the days of your life.

The wise student will not shrink from the useful toil of making abstracts and summaries of what he is reading. Sir William Hamilton was a strong advocate for underscoring books of study. "Intelligent underlining," he said, "gives a kind of abstract of an important work, and by the use of different-coloured inks to mark a difference of contents, and discriminate the doctrinal from the historical or illustrative elements of an argument or exposition, the abstract becomes an analysis very serviceable for ready reference."¹ This assumes, as Hamilton said, that the book to be operated on is your own, and perhaps is rather too elaborate a

¹ Veitch's *Life of Hamilton*, pp. 314, 392.

counsel of perfection for most of us. Again, some great men—Gibbon was one, and Daniel Webster was another, and the great Lord Strafford was a third—always before reading a book made a short, rough analysis of the questions which they expected to be answered in it, the additions to be made to their knowledge, and whither it would take them.

“After glancing my eye,” says Gibbon, “over the design and order of a new book, I suspended the perusal until I had finished the task of self-examination; till I had revolved in a solitary walk all that I knew or believed or had thought on the subject of the whole work or of some particular chapter: I was then qualified to discern how much the author added to my original stock; and if I was sometimes satisfied by the agreement, I was sometimes armed by the opposition, of our ideas.”¹

Another practice is that of keeping a commonplace-book, and transcribing into it what is striking and interesting and suggestive. And if you keep it wisely, you will put every entry under a head, division, or subdivision. This is an excellent practice for concentrating your thought on the passage and making you alive to its real point and significance. Here, however, the high authority of Gibbon is against us. He refuses “strenuously to recommend.” “The action of the pen,” he says, “will doubtless imprint an idea on the mind as well as on the paper; but I much question whether the benefits of this laborious method are adequate to the waste of time; and I must agree with Dr. Johnson (*Idler*, No. 74)

¹ Dr. Smith's *Gibbon*, i. 64.

that 'what is twice read is commonly better remembered than what is transcribed.'"¹

Various correspondents have asked me to say something about those lists of a hundred books that have been circulating through the world. On the whole, they do not seem to me to be calculated either to create or satisfy a wise taste for literature in any very worthy sense. To fill a man with a hundred parcels of heterogeneous scraps from the *Mahabharata*, and the *She-king*, down to *Pickwick* and White's *Selborne*, may pass the time, but I cannot perceive how it would strengthen or instruct or delight. For instance, it is a mistake to think that every book that has a great name in the history of books or of thought is worth reading. Some of the most famous books are least worth reading. Their fame was due to their doing something that needed in their day to be done. The work done, the virtue of the book expires. Again, I agree with those who say that the steady working down one of these lists would end in the manufacture of that obnoxious product—the prig. A prig has been defined as an animal that is overfed for its size. I think that these bewildering miscellanies would lead to an immense quantity of that kind of overfeeding. The object of reading is not to dip into everything that even wise men have ever written. In the words of one of the most winning writers of English that ever existed—Cardinal Newman—the object of literature in education is to

¹ Dr. Smith's *Gibbon*, i. 51.

open the mind, to correct it, to refine it, to enable it to comprehend and digest its knowledge, to give it power over its own faculties, application, flexibility, method, critical exactness, sagacity, address, and expression. These are the objects of the intellectual perfection that a literary education is destined to give. I will not venture on a list of a hundred books, but will recommend you instead to one book well worthy of your attention. Those who are curious as to what they should read in the region of pure literature will do well to peruse Frederic Harrison's admirable volume, called *The Choice of Books*. You will find there as much wise thought, eloquently and brilliantly put, as in any volume of its size and on its subject, whether it be in the list of a hundred or not.

Let me pass to another topic. We are often asked whether it is best to study subjects, or authors, or books. Well, I think that is like most of the stock questions with which the perverse ingenuity of mankind torments itself. There is no universal and exclusive answer. My own answer is a very plain one. It is sometimes best to study books, sometimes authors, and sometimes subjects; but at all times it is best to study authors, subjects, and books in connection with one another. Whether you make your first approach from interest in an author or in a book, the fruit will be only half gathered if you leave off without new ideas and clearer lights both on the man and the matter. One of the noblest masterpieces in the literature of civil and political wisdom is

to be found in Burke's three performances on the American war—his speech on Taxation in 1774, on Conciliation in 1775, and his letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol in 1777. "They are an example," as I have said before now, "an example without fault of all the qualities which the critic, whether a theorist or an actor, of great political situations should strive by night and by day to possess. If their subject were as remote as the quarrel between the Corinthians and Corcyra, or the war between Rome and the Allies, instead of a conflict to which the world owes the opportunity of one of the most important of political experiments, we should still have everything to learn from the author's treatment; the vigorous grasp of masses of compressed detail, the wide illumination from great principles of human experience, the strong and masculine feeling for the two great political ends of Justice and Freedom, the large and generous interpretation of expediency, the morality, the vision, the noble temper."

Another question we are constantly asked is, whether desultory reading is among things lawful and permitted. May we browse at large in a library, as Johnson said, or is it forbidden to open a book without a definite aim and fixed expectations? I am for a compromise. If a man has once got his general point of view, if he has striven with success to place himself at the centre, what follows is of less consequence. If he has in his head a good map of the country, he may ramble at large with impunity.

If he has once well and truly laid the foundations of a methodical, systematic habit of mind, what he reads will find its way to its proper place. If his intellect is in good order, he will find in every quarter something to assimilate and something that will nourish.

What is literature? This is yet another question that has been often asked and defined. Emerson says it is a record of the best thoughts. "By literature," says another author, "we mean the written thoughts and feelings of intelligent men and women arranged in a way that shall give pleasure to the reader." A third account is that "the aim of a student of literature is to know the best that has been thought in the world." Definitions of these things are in the nature of vanity. I feel that the attempt to be compact in the definition of literature ends in something that is rather meagre, partial, starved, and unsatisfactory. I turn to the answer given by a great French writer to a question not quite the same, viz. "What is a classic?" Literature consists of a whole body of classics in the true sense of the word, and a classic, as Sainte-Beuve defines him, is an "author who has enriched the human mind, who has really added to its treasure, who has got it to take a step further; who has discovered some unequivocal moral truth, or penetrated to some eternal passion, in that heart of man where it seemed as though all were known and explored, who has produced his thought, or his observation, or his invention under some form, no matter what, so it be great, large,

acute, and reasonable, sane and beautiful in itself; who has spoken to all in a style of his own, yet a style which finds itself the style of everybody,—in a style that is at once new and antique, and is the contemporary of all the ages.”

Literature consists of all the books—and they are not so many—where moral truth and human passion are touched with a certain largeness, sanity, and attraction of form. The literary student is one who through books explores the strange voyages of man’s moral reason, the impulses of the human heart, the chances and changes that have overtaken human ideals of virtue and happiness, of conduct and manners, and the shifting fortunes of great conceptions of truth and virtue. Poets, dramatists, humorists, satirists, masters of fiction, the great preachers, the character-writers, the maxim-writers, the great political orators—they are all literature in so far as they teach us to know man and to know human nature. This is what makes literature, rightly sifted and selected and rightly studied, not the mere elegant trifling that it is so often and so erroneously supposed to be, but a proper instrument for a systematic training of imagination, sympathies, and genial and varied moral sensibility.

From this point of view let me remind you that books are not the products of accident and caprice. Goethe said, if you would understand an author, you must understand his age. The same thing is just as true of a book. If you would fully comprehend it,

you must know the age. There is an order; there are causes and relations between great compositions and the societies in which they have emerged. Just as the naturalist strives to understand and to explain the distribution of plants and animals over the surface of the globe, to connect their presence or their absence with the great geological, climatic, and oceanic changes, so the student of literature, if he be wise, undertakes an ordered and connected survey of ideas, of tastes, of sentiments, of imagination, of humour, of invention, as they affect and as they are affected by the ever-changing experiences of human nature, and the manifold variations that time and circumstances are incessantly working in human society.

Those who are possessed, and desire to see others possessed, by that conception of literary study must watch with eager sympathy and admiration the efforts of those who are striving so hard, and, I hope, so successfully, to bring the systematic and methodical study of our own literature, in connection with other literatures, among subjects for teaching and examination in the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Everybody agrees that an educated man ought to have a general notion of the course of the great outward events of European history. So, too, an educated man ought to have a general notion of the course of all those inward thoughts and moods which find their expression in literature. I think that in cultivating the study of literature, as I have perhaps too laboriously endeavoured to define it, you will be

cultivating the most important side of history. Knowledge of it gives stability and substance to character. It furnishes a view of the ground we stand on. It builds up a solid backing of precedent and experience. It teaches us where we are. It protects us against imposture and surprise.

One word upon the practice of composition. I have suffered, by the chance of life, many things from the practice of composition. It has been my lot, I suppose, to read more unpublished work than any one else in this room. There is an idea, and, I venture to think, a very mistaken idea, that you cannot have a taste for literature unless you are yourself an author. I demur to that proposition. It is practically most mischievous, and leads scores and even hundreds of people to waste their time in the most unprofitable manner that the wit of man can devise, on work in which they can no more achieve even the most moderate excellence than they can compose a Ninth Symphony or paint a Transfiguration. It is a terrible error to suppose that because one is happily able to relish "Wordsworth's solemn-thoughted idyll, or Tennyson's enchanted reverie," therefore a solemn mission calls you to run off to write bad verse at the Lakes or the Isle of Wight. I beseech you not all to turn to authorship. I will even venture, with all respect to those who are teachers of literature, to doubt the excellence and utility of the practice of over-much essay-writing and composition. I have very little faith in rules of

style, though I have an unbounded faith in the virtue of cultivating direct and precise expression. But you must carry on the operation inside the mind, and not merely by practising literary deportment on paper. It is not everybody who can command the mighty rhythm of the greatest masters of human speech. But every one can make reasonably sure that he knows what he means, and whether he has found the right word. These are internal operations, and are not forwarded by writing for writing's sake. Everybody must be urgent for attention to expression, if that attention be exercised in the right way. It has been said a million times that the foundation of right expression in speech or writing is sincerity. That is as true now as it has ever been. Right expression is a part of character. As somebody has said, by learning to speak with precision, you learn to think with correctness; and the way to firm and vigorous speech lies through the cultivation of high and noble sentiments. So far as my observation has gone, men will do better if they seek precision by studying carefully and with an open mind and a vigilant eye the great models of writing, than by excessive practice of writing on their own account.

Much might here be said on what is one of the most important of all the sides of literary study. I mean its effect as helping to preserve the dignity and the purity of the English language. That noble instrument has never been exposed to such dangers as those which beset it to-day. Domestic slang,

scientific slang, pseudo-æsthetic affectations, hideous importations from American newspapers, all bear down with horrible force upon the glorious fabric which the genius of our race has reared. I will say nothing of my own on this pressing theme, but will read to you a passage of weight and authority from the greatest master of mighty and beautiful speech.

"Whoever in a state," said Milton, "knows how wisely to form the manners of men and to rule them at home and in war with excellent institutes, him in the first place, above others, I should esteem worthy of all honour. But next to him the man who strives to establish in maxims and rules the method and habit of speaking and writing received from a good age of the nation, and, as it were, to fortify the same round with a kind of wall, the daring to overleap which let a law only short of that of Romulus be used to prevent. . . . The one, as I believe, supplies noble courage and intrepid counsels against an enemy invading the territory. The other takes to himself the task of extirpating and defeating, by means of a learned detective police of ears, and a light band of good authors, that barbarism which makes large inroads upon the minds of men, and is a destructive intestine enemy of genius. Nor is it to be considered of small consequence what language, pure or corrupt, a people has, or what is their customary degree of propriety in speaking it. . . . For, let the words of a country be in part unhandsome and offensive in themselves, in part debased by wear and wrongly uttered, and what do they declare, but, by no light indication, that the inhabitants of that country are an indolent, idly-yawning race, with minds already long prepared for any amount of servility? On the other hand, we have never heard that any empire, any state,

did not at least flourish in a middling degree as long as its own liking and care for its language lasted."¹

The probabilities are that we are now coming to an epoch of a quieter style. There have been in our generation three strong masters in the art of prose writing. There was, first of all, Carlyle, there was Macaulay, and there was Ruskin. These are all giants, and they have the rights of giants. But I do not believe that a greater misfortune can befall the students who attend classes here, than that they should strive to write like any one of these three illustrious men. They can never attain to the high mark which they have set before themselves. It is not everybody who can bend the bow of Ulysses, and most men only do themselves a mischief by trying to bend it. If we are now on our way to a quieter style, I am not sorry for it. Truth is quiet. Milton's phrase ever lingers in our minds as one of imperishable beauty—where he regrets that he is drawn by I know not what, from beholding the bright countenance of truth in the quiet and still air of delightful studies. Moderation and judgment are, for most purposes, more than the flash and the glitter even of the genius. I hope that your professors of rhetoric will teach you to cultivate that golden art—the steadfast use of a language in which truth can be told ; a speech that is strong by natural force, and not merely effective by declamation ; an utterance without trick, without affectation, without mannerisms, without any

¹ Letter to Bonmattei, from Florence, 1638.

of that excessive ambition which overleaps itself as disastrously in prose writing as in so many other things.

I hope that I have made it clear that we conceive the end of education on its literary side to be to make a man and not a cyclopædia, to make a citizen and not an album of elegant extracts. Literature does not end with knowledge of forms, with inventories of books and authors, with finding the key of rhythm, with the varying measure of the stanza, or the changes from the involved and sonorous periods of the seventeenth century down to the *staccato* of the nineteenth, or all the rest of the technicalities of scholarship. Literature is one of the instruments, and one of the most powerful instruments, for forming character, for giving us men and women armed with reason, braced by knowledge, clothed with steadfastness and courage, and inspired by that public spirit and public virtue of which it has been well said that they are the brightest ornaments of the mind of man. Bacon is right when he bids us read not to contradict and refute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and to consider. In the times before us that promise or threaten deep political, economical, and social controversy, what we need to do is to induce our people to weigh and consider. We want them to cultivate energy without impatience, activity without restlessness, inflexibility without ill-humour. I am not going to preach to you any artificial stoicism. I am not going

to preach to you any indifference to money, or to the pleasures of social intercourse, or to the esteem and good-will of our neighbours, or to any other of the consolations and necessities of life. • But, after all, the thing that matters most, both for happiness and for duty, is that we should strive habitually to live with wise thoughts and right feelings. Literature helps us more than other studies to this most blessed companionship of wise thoughts and right feelings, and so I have taken this opportunity of earnestly commending it to your interest and care.

What is to be the effect upon the great, the noble, the difficult art of writing? The writer of either prose or verse is not, and cannot be, independent of surrounding atmosphere and a responsive audience. Even the sublimest genius, whose dawn upon the world seems like an accident out of all range of knowable cause or condition—even he is carried upon the stream of time and circumstance. We all know how French was shaped into its extraordinary perfection in the social influences of the greatest of French Courts. How will our own English fare amid the swelling tides of democracy? So far, if anybody thinks that some oddities of diction, or tricks of affectation in construction, or invention of ugly words, or revival of worn-out and inappropriate old ones, show signs of creeping in, it is, unfortunately, rather from above than below—from those who ought to know better than those who have had little chance of knowing.

This wholesale admission, then, of the principle of universal franchise, male and female, into the world of letters is one mark of our new time. Now let me offer a few words on the effects of the relations of letters and science. We may obviously date a new time from 1859, when Darwin's *Origin of Species* appeared, and, along with two or three other imposing works of that date, launched into common currency a new vocabulary. We now apply in every sphere, high and low, trivial or momentous, talk about evolution, natural selection, environment, heredity, survival of the fittest, and all the rest. The most resolute and trenchant of Darwinians has warned us that new truths begin as rank heresies and end as superstitions, and if he were alive to see to-day all the effects of his victory on daily speech, perhaps he would not withdraw his words. That great controversy has died down, or at least takes new shape, leaving, after all is said, one of the master contributions to knowledge of Nature and its laws, and to man's view of life and the working of his destinies.

Scientific interest has now shifted into new areas of discovery, invention, and speculation. Still the spirit of the time remains the spirit of science, and fact, and ordered knowledge. What has been the effect of knowledge upon form, on language, on literary art? It adds boundless gifts to human conveniences. Does it make an inspiring public for the master of either prose or verse? Darwin himself made no pretensions in authorship. He once said to

Sir Charles Lyell that a naturalist's life would be a happy one if he had only to observe and never to write. Yet he is a writer of excellent form for simple and direct description, patient accumulation of persuasive arguments, and a noble and transparent candour in stating what makes against him, which, if not what is called style, is better for the reader than the finest style can be. One eminent literary critic of my acquaintance finds his little volume on earth-worms a most fascinating book, even as literature. Then, although the controversial exigencies of his day affected him with a relish for laying too lustily about him with his powerful flail, I know no more lucid, effective, and manful English than you will find in Huxley. What more delightful book of travel than the *Himalaya Journals* of the great naturalist Hooker, who carried on his botanical explorations some sixty years ago, and happily is still among us?

Buffon, as man of science, is now, I assume, little more than a shadow of a name, and probably even the most highly educated of us know little more about him than his famous pregnant saying that the style is the man—a saying, by the way, which really meant no more than that, while Nature gave the material for narrative, it is man who gives the style. Yet the French to this day count him among the greatest of their writers for order, unity, precision, method, clearness in scientific exposition of animated nature, along with majestic gifts of natural eloquence.

And anybody who as orator, preacher, professor, seeks guide and stimulus for trying the grander effects upon an audience, might do much worse than read Buffon's long-renowned and influential *Discourse on Style*. Even less ambitious people will find in it much that is useful and admirable, provided only that we are not drawn to imitate. May I note that Buffon keeps clear of the mortal sin of trying to produce with the instrument of prose effects that are by all the natural laws of language reserved for the domain of poetry, or, in other words, of asking from any art, whether words, colour, or form, effects that are beyond its resources?

Then comes the greatest of all. Whatever the decision may be as to the value of Goethe's scientific contribution, this, at least, is certain, that his is the most wondrous; the unique case of a man who united high original scientific power of mind with transcendent gifts in flight, force, and beauty of poetic imagination.

As for science and the poets, an attractive little book published by Sir Norman Lockyer shows how Tennyson, the composer of verse unsurpassed for exquisite music in our English tongue, yet followed with unflagging interest the problems of evolution and all that hangs upon them. Whether astronomy or geology—"terrible muses," as he well might call them—inspired the better elements of his beautiful work, we may doubt. An English critic has had the courage to say that there is an insoluble element of

prose in Dante, and Tennyson has hardly shown that the scientific ideas of an age are soluble in musical words. Browning, his companion poet, nearly universal in his range, was too essentially dramatic, too independent of the scientific influences of his day, too careless of expression, to be a case much in point. Tennyson said of him, he had power of intellect enough for all of them, "but he has not the glory of words." Whether he had or not, science was not responsible.

I should like to name, in passing, the English poet who, in Lowell's words, has written less and pleased more than any other. Gray was an incessant and a serious student in learned tongues; and his annotations on the *System of Nature*, by Linnæus, his contemporary, bear witness to his industry and minute observation as naturalist. On a page of the first volume he has transcribed some Greek words about our dumb friends. "We ought to feel," says Aristotle, "no childish dislike at inspecting even the humblest living creatures, for in them, too, dwells something marvellous; I bid you enter with confidence, for even here is the divine." It is pleasant to associate these humanities with the author of the poem, of which I am still bold enough, with your leave, to say that it has for a century and a half given to greater multitudes of men more of the exquisite pleasure of poetry than any other single piece in all the glorious treasury of English verse.

Now let me take a contemporary the other way.

Gabriel Rossetti, a true poet, if not a great one, very firmly declared himself not at all sure that the earth really revolved round the sun. He even aggravated this scandalous position by asking, what, after all, did it matter whether it moved or not. But then Rossetti was not like other poets, painters, or plain men. I once happened to meet him on the evening of a General Election, and was thunderstruck to find that he was not aware of the immense event shaking the world around us. He added by and by that he did not suppose it made much difference whether Whig or Tory won. A greater poet than himself was with us, and shared his Laodicean humour: I forget who won the election, nor do I recollect exactly what difference it did make, if any.

In prose fiction was one writer of commanding mind, saturated with the spirit of science. Who does not feel how George Eliot's creative and literary art was impaired, and at last worse than impaired, by her daily associations with science? Or would it be truer—I often thought it would—to say that the decline was due to her own ever-deepening sense of the pain of the world and the tragedy of sentient being? She never looked upon it all as *ludibria rerum humanarum*, the cruel sport of human things. Nor could she dismiss it in the spirit of Queen Victoria's saying to Dr. Benson, about the follies and frivolities of Vanity Fair: "Archbishop, I sometimes think they must all be mad." The theatre was too oppressive for George Eliot. The double stress of

emotion and thought, of sympathy and reason, wrought upon her too intensely for art. She could not, as virile spirits should, reconcile herself to Nature. It needed all her native and well-trained strength of soul to prevent her, science or no science, from being crushed by the thought in Keats's lines how "men sit and hear each other groan," how earth is "full of sorrow and leaden-eyed despairs."

Let us look at the invasion of another province by the spirit of the time. The eager curiosity of all these years about the facts of biology, chemistry, physics, and their laws, has inevitably quickened the spread both of the same curiosity and the same respect, quickened by German example, for ascertained facts into the province of history. We live in the documentary age. New sources emerge and new papers are daily dragged to light. In the history of Great Britain alone documents are every year brought almost in barrow-loads to the grateful student's door. Sacred archives everywhere are being unsealed. Whether all this be new truth or old falsehood not every explorer can be quite sure. But the dilemma is now fixed by fate and literary fashion, which is itself a kind of fate. A fabric of inspiring narrative built on foundations of quicksand, on the one side; on the other a fearsome jungle of minute detail, every regiment in every battle numbered, every hour accounted for, every turn of diplomatic craft tracked. Is this over-burden of recorded fact a misfortune for modern history? How hard to move with freedom

under it! Is the pure scientific impulse—to tell the exact truth with all the necessary reservations—easy to combine with regard for artistic pleasure?

I have been reminded that Renan, who possessed both scientific and artistic instinct, somewhere wishes that he could use polychromatic ink, so that he might indicate the subtle shades of doubt that belong to each adjective and adverb. How distracting to the ordinary reader, who loves firm line and bold colour! What would have become of the splendours of Carlyle's *French Revolution* if he had followed the scale and method of his *Frederick the Great*? It is an interesting guess that a good scholar, familiar with the two ancient languages and with French, could read Gibbon's authorities in five years. The actual mass of print and manuscript through which Ranke, or Gardiner, must have fought his way can hardly have been less than five or six times as bulky. This is the labour of a lifetime. Form as form is buried alive.

Some critics insist that the rarest beauty a style can have is to resemble speech. Others put it in another way, that if you are content to give exactitude to the spontaneous thought, then power and grace enough will follow. Taine says the disappearance of style is the perfection of style. If these schools are right, Gibbon's writing will hardly please, and there have been many whom as style it does not please. Be that as it may, Gibbon's unsurpassed greatness as historian lies not at all in selection of words or the fall of his sentence, but in majesty of historic conception,

in superb force of imagination, in the sustained and symmetric grandeur of his design. And here is the peril of the documentary age.

The English writer of our own immediate time, with the fullest knowledge and deepest understanding of the fact and spirit of history, would, I think, be pronounced by most critics with a right to judge to be Lord Acton. His learning has been called by learned men a marvel. Nor did it ever loosen his hold on practical life, for he was one of the fortunate beings who are all of one piece. His mind, notwithstanding a rather puzzling union, within the reserved precincts of theology, of submission to authority with his vehement passion for individual freedom, was still a complete whole. May I read to you how Mr. Bryce in 1883 once heard him late at night in his library at Cannes explain in what wise a history of liberty might be made the central thread of all history? "He spoke for six or seven minutes only; but he spoke like a man inspired, seeming as if from some mountain summit high in air he saw beneath him the far-winding path of human progress from dim Cimmerian shores of prehistoric shadow into the fuller yet broken and fitful light of the modern time. The eloquence was splendid, but greater than the eloquence was the penetrating vision that discerned through all events and in all ages the play of those moral forces, now exciting, now destroying, always transmuting, which had moulded and remoulded institutions, and had given to the human spirit its ceaselessly changing

forms of energy. It was as if the whole landscape of history had been suddenly lit up by a burst of sunlight."

Acton's was a leading case where knowledge and profundity were not matched by form. His page is overloaded, he is often over-subtle, he has the fault, or shall I call it the literary crime, of allusiveness and indirect reference—he is apt to put to his reader a riddle or a poser, and then to leave him in the lurch. But when all this is said, even in his severest chapter you will find some of the pregnant, luminous, and stimulating things that are the very heart and soul of good literature. It sometimes occurs to me that if those faithful disciples of his were to make a selection of the deep sayings of their master, they would produce an anthology of historic wisdom that might well deserve a favourite place even with the reader whose whole library does not go beyond a couple of shelves. Meanwhile, here is Acton's own account of the historian's direct debt to the methods of science: "If men of science owe anything to us," he says, "we may learn much from them that is essential. For they can show how to test proof, how to secure fulness and soundness in induction, how to restrain and employ with safety hypothesis and analogy. It is they who hold the secret of the mysterious property of the mind by which error ministers to truth, and truth irrecoverably prevails."

I find in Sir James Murray's Dictionary—a splendid triumph for any age—that I am responsible for having

once called literature the most seductive, deceiving, and dangerous of professions. That text demands a longer sermon than your time allows. If any of you reject my warning, impatient as I confess myself of overdoing precepts about style, let me urge you, besides the fundamental commonplaces about being above all things simple and direct, lucid and terse, not using two words where one will do—about keeping the standard of proof high, and so forth—let me commend two qualities—for one of which I must, against my will, use a French word—Sanity and *Justesse*. Sanity you know well, at least by name. *Justesse* is no synonym for justice; it is more like equity, balance, a fair mind, measure, reserve. Voltaire, who, whatever else we may think of him, knew how to write, said of some great lady: “I am charmed with her just and delicate mind; without *justesse* of mind there is nothing.” You must curb your ambition of glory, of writing like Carlyle, Macaulay, Ruskin. You must take your chance of being called dry, flat, tame. But one advantage of these two qualities is that they are within reach, and grandeur for most of us is not. And with this temper it is easier to see the truth, what things really are, and how they actually come to pass.

I had noted one further admonition, but opening Mr. Ker’s two little volumes of Dryden’s prefaces, for which we owe the editor a debt, I came on Johnson’s account of Dryden’s prose, far better worth your pondering than anything I could say: Dryden’s

prefaces "have not the formality of a settled style. . . . The clauses are never balanced, nor the periods modelled : every word seems to drop by chance, though it falls into its proper place. Nothing is cold or languid ; the whole is airy, animated, and vigorous ; what is little is gay ; what is great is splendid. . . . Everything is excused by the play of images and the spriteliness of expression. Though all is easy, nothing is feeble ; though all seems careless, nothing is harsh ; and though since his earlier works more than a century has passed, they have nothing yet uncouth or obsolete." This contains both true criticism and good guidance.

A graceful French description of what literature means in certain of its types is worth hearing : "The man of letters is a singular being ; he does not look at things exactly with his own eyes ; he is not the creature of his own impressions ; he is a tree on which you have grafted Horace, Virgil, Dante, Milton, Shakespeare, and the rest, and hence grow flowers not natural, yet not artificial. Of all the mixed colours he makes for himself a colour of his own ; from all the glasses through which his eyes pass to the real world, there is fused a peculiar tint, and that is the imagination of the man of letters. If he has genius, all these memories are dissipated by the energy of his personal gift."¹

You will think this too fastidious, too enervating, too dilettante. So it is, if it were taken for the whole

¹ Doudan.

story. We must add the saving counsel of Cicero—who has himself been called the greatest of all men of letters. You must always take care to end by exposing yourself to contact with men, and trying your strength in the struggles of life. Yes, that is the end of books and everything. You remember the jest in one of Goethe's verses : how a stubbornly secluded student was once induced to go to a grand evening party. They asked him how he had enjoyed himself. "If they had been books," he answered, "I would not have read one of them." Without being sworn devotees of evening parties, we are sure the gruff sage, if he ever existed, must have been so out of touch with his fellow-creatures and their action, *voluntum, timor, ira, voluptas*, that he had read his books to little purpose after all.

There were some interesting and good-natured observations in *The Times* a few days ago about the decline in the eloquence of our modern prose. It is unhappily impoverished, the writer says ; it is not rich in expressing some of the noblest experiences of the human mind and heart. Grand prose, it may be true, is not heard in debate or in the pulpits, and hardly abounds in the exercises of historian, critic, or biographer. Assuredly we cannot envy the man whom high passages of our classic prose—Sir Thomas Browne, Raleigh, Bacon, Hooker, Burke, the last of them notably in the *Address to the King*—do not affect with something of the same swell of emotion as comes from soul-inspiring verse. But grand prose

comes from supreme issues, earnest convictions, eager desire to convert and persuade, sublime events, passionate beliefs—these are what move to eloquence at its highest. Lincoln was no scholar, but the *Second Inaugural* is not to be surpassed; and I remember a passage of Cobden's about the Irish famine that is a masterpiece of eloquent feeling on that fateful tragedy.

Where the themes and issues are those of scientific truth, that prose should be unemotional is natural. Everybody knows Darwin's own account, how, as the laborious years passed, he so lost his taste for poetry that he could not endure to read a word of it, Shakespeare became so dull it nauseated him, and music set him thinking too energetically on what he had been working at, instead of giving him pleasure. If all this loss was the price of years of fruitful concentration in the master, who can wonder if the scientific and documentary age is an age of prose? Still I hope it is not too pontifical of me to say that I believe I see in the room to-night men who write prose as firm, as delicate, as easy, as pure, as the heart of man could wish.

After what has been said of its spread over the globe, we cannot be indifferent to the fate of our language across the Atlantic. Emerson, that most lovable of our teachers, once said: "We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe." But I remember an afternoon long ago at Washington with Walt Whitman, when he made particularly light

of Emerson, and was all for packing off the courtly muses, European or Bostonian, bag and baggage. America has not followed this felonious purpose. George Meredith used to say that the high-water mark of English prose in our day was to be found in some pages of Charlotte Brontë, and some of Hawthorne's *Marble Faun*. It will be no hard labour to seek out such pages for yourselves. I need not mention Lowell, and a dozen more Americans, grave and gay, who are the living delight of English readers. American novelties in the way of picturesque and unexpected diction, so piquant and effective in colloquial use, have not yet lowered the standard of writing or oratory.

There is, we must admit, to-day no monarch in any tongue upon the literary throne, no sovereign world-name in poetry or prose, in whom—as has happened before now not so many generations ago, in royal succession, to Scott, Byron, Goethe, Victor Hugo, Tolstoy—all the civilised world, Teuton, Latin, Celt, Slav, Oriental, is interested, for whose new works it looks, or where it seeks the gospel of the day. *Nabochlish*, if I may use an Irish word that became a favourite with Sir Walter Scott; it does not matter. Do not let us nurse the humour of the despondent editor, who mournfully told his readers, "No new epic this month."

Nobody can tell how the wonders of language are performed, nor how a book comes into the world. Genius is genius. The lamp that to-day some may

think burns low will be replenished. New orbs will bring light. Literature may be trusted to take care of itself, for it is the transcript of the drama of life, with all its actors, moods, and strange flashing fortunes. The curiosity that meets it is perpetual and insatiable, and the impulses that inspire it can never be extinguished.

A HISTORICAL ROMANCE.¹

I

THE last occasion when I made bold to write about a literary achievement of Mr. Harrison's, was on the appearance of that remarkable volume, the *New Calendar of Great Men*, in 1892. I ventured at some length to question the omission from the list of those heirs of the Roman Empire in the East who, on any sound estimate, must be held to have performed in more ways than one services of the first magnitude in saving civilisation in the West. The omission was Comte's fault—so far as fault it was—and not that of his distinguished adherent. Hannibal has a place in this famous calendar; so have Haroun-al-Raschid, the caliph of Baghdad, and Abd-al-Rahman, the caliph of Cordova. Charles Martel had a place for the glory of stemming the torrent of Mussulman invasion at Tours. Yet the battle of Tours (732) was only a victory over a plundering expedition of Spanish Arabs, whereas the repulse of the Saracens before

¹ *Theophano: the Crusade of the Tenth Century*. A Romantic Monograph. By Frederic Harrison. London: Chapman & Hall.

Constantinople by Leo the Third (718) was what first drove back the tide. Still Leo and the other great champions at Byzantium were held unworthy of canonisation. Of course the heroes of New Rome were schismatic in the eyes of the Popes of Old Rome, and it is not disrespectful to the great name of Comte to suppose it natural for him to take up the Pope's grievances against the Greek schism, along with some other pontifical attributes. In truth, Comte had broad reasons of his own. The dominant fact in the mediæval West was in his eyes the separation of spiritual from temporal power. In the Eastern Rome the two powers were essentially one; military concentration was a necessity of existence; and the Church was, as it is in Russia to-day (1904), and as Napoleon intended it to be in France a century ago, the instrument of the State. The other vital element, again, in Comte's view of the normal evolution of the Middle Ages, was feudalism, and feudalism was inconsistent with the military requirements of Byzantine power. In consideration, therefore, of these two ruling factors, the series of events dealt with in *Theophanes* was regarded by Comte as moving outside of the main stream of the progress of mankind.

Whatever defect there may have been in his master's appreciation of Byzantine influence on our world, Mr. Harrison has, at any rate, in his new volume as well as in other pieces, made it strenuously good. His Rede Lecture at Cambridge four years

since is a singularly comprehensive, just, and eloquent statement and vindication of the modern case. The chapters upon Constantinople in his volume on the meaning of history abound in brilliant description and in reflections at once deep and precise. The scholar, the politician, and the general reader who happens to be little of either politician or scholar, will find both pleasure and food for thought in those sixty admirable pages.¹ His present story Mr. Harrison describes as an attempt, under the form of romance, to give the history of one of the most striking episodes in the annals of what used to be called the Dark Ages. His aim is to paint a general picture of the South and East of Europe, and of the relations of that portion of Christendom to the advancing power of Islam, in the tenth century. His first design was a prose narrative, with no larger use of imagination than is as truly indispensable in history, as it is declared to be in the fields of natural science.

Some of his readers may possibly wish that to this design he had adhered, for the mixture of history with romance, of real actors and known events with avowed fiction, has not always been a successful experiment. No novelist has ever had so much of the genius of history as Scott, that famous writer and true-hearted man; and if it be unluckily true that Scott is no longer widely read, we may be quite

¹ *The Meaning of History, and other Historical Pieces* (Macmillan, 1894); *Byzantine History in the Early Middle Ages* (Macmillan, 1900).

sure that it is so much the worse for the common knowledge of history. Apart from the stimulating contribution to historic knowledge in *Ivanhoe*, it may be suspected in the palace of truth that a majority of people who would fairly pass for cultivated, owe all they know of such figures as Louis the Eleventh and Charles the Bold to *Quentin Durward*. Scott tried his hand at a Byzantine story, but he made nothing of it: he knew little of the ground, for not even Gibbon had perceived the full bearing of the stupendous events of which Constantinople was the centre between the time of Justinian and the time of Richard Cœur de Lion. When Scott wrote *Count Robert of Paris* (1830), the noble brain that had peopled the gallery of the world's imagination with so many incomparable figures, such vivid scenes, such moving interests, was at last outworn, and the gallant man could only liken himself in a mournful image to a leaking vessel out at sea in the pitch-dark.

If anybody chooses to say that *Theophano* is old-fashioned, assuredly a fashion set by *Ivanhoe* and *Quentin Durward* has something to say for itself. In *Hypatia* the genius of Kingsley, who had less of the historic sense than any other professor that ever sat in a chair of history, brought out some aspects of the fifth century with enchanting success. None, again, of Bulwer's romances stood higher in popularity than *Rienzi*, and to this day some foreign writers do justice to his admirable mixture of intrigue proper

for a story with historic narrative, his animated description—among other things of the plague of Florence—though less scrupulous in respect for his authorities than might have been expected from his severe treatment of the errors of some other writers.¹ Catherine the Second of Russia might appear a theme of grand promise, and the experiment has been in a certain fashion tried, but with indifferent result.² Lucrezia Borgia, as we all know, has been set to music, but the libretto is sadly unhistoric, for Lucrezia, it now seems, if not absolutely blameless, was still an excellent woman, and died in an entirely respectable confinement. Chateaubriand's once famous *Martyrs* (1802-9) was a romance of the persecutions of Diocletian and Galerius. Though without verse, it is poetry and not history. Its prose has the melody of plaintive song, and a fluent harmony that prose has never surpassed. The emotions with which it so deeply stirred a generation early in our last century, arose, as Aristotle said they should, not merely from scenery and spectacle, but from the inner structure of the piece. They arose, too, from the burning association, in the minds of the readers of the time, of the sufferings of the Church at the hands of Galerius, with the fresh persecution of the children of the same Church at the hands of Chaumette and the firebrands of revolution. All this gives a pathos and poetic tenderness to the tale of Eudore

¹ See Rodocanachi's *Cola di Rienzo*, p. xi., 1888.

² *Le Roman d'une Impératrice*, K. Waliszewski, 1893.

and Cymodocée that is hardly to be conceived in dealing with Theophano and Nicephorus. Here warm thoughts and free spirits must give way to

The Iron-pointed pen
That notes the Tragic Doomes of men.

In this dire conflict of faith and race and rival empires, we need a firmer and sterner chord. Mr. Harrison has naturally felt an artistic compulsion to introduce the relief of gentler episodes. Some may find these episodes less suited to his silver trumpet of a style, than pageant, landscape, battle, fervid councils, stirring scenes of high historic fate.

In the works that I have named, history is secondary to romance. In *Theophano* this is reversed. It is primarily and really history, an attempt to relate authentic facts in deep colour, not verifiable in every detail out of written documents, yet wholly true to the historic tones. No piece of dilettantism, it is the production of one, now long well known as an accomplished scholar, a traveller, a powerful writer, who has kept himself well abreast of the acquisitions of new learning and new culture, and who, in this case, has both thoroughly worked the contemporary records at first hand, and laboriously mastered the mass of elucidation and dissertation due to an army of specialists.

Most people would admit the noblest piece of tragedy in all written history to be the retreat of the beaten Athenians from Syracuse. "Is it or is it not," wrote Gray to Wharton, "the finest thing you

ever read in your life ? ” Macaulay said : “ I do assure you that there is no prose composition in the world that I place so high as the seventh book of Thucydides. . . . Tacitus was a great man, but he was not up to the Sicilian expedition.”¹ But it would be absurd to compare the original history of Thucydides, Herodotus, Cæsar, Machiavelli, Guicciardini, with the composite narrative of even the greatest of literary historians. Gibbon’s description of the capture of Constantinople is indeed magnificent, but the gorgeous art of that splendid panorama is fatal to the most searching kind of dramatic effect upon our inmost minds ; it conveys none of the tragic impression that stirs us not less deeply than even the grandest of stage-plays, and makes the reader, now more than two thousand years since those events, hold his breath in that profoundest pity which is pity without tears, as he watches the agony of the sea-fight in the great harbour, the panic and misery of the march, the horrors by the river, the death of Nicias—of all Hellenes least deserving of an end so wretched—the dreadful sufferings of the prisoners in the stone-quarries, fleet and army perishing from the face of the earth, and of the many who had gone forth few ever returning home. Here is indeed the supreme model of tragic prose.

It was inevitable that a story of Byzantium in the tenth century should take a shape not so much of tragedy as of melodrama, and the author has thrown

¹ Trevelyan, i. 440, 449.

himself into the melodramatic elements of his tale with extraordinary force and spirit. He has not always resisted the temptation to overdo these elements, and to push animation to vehemence. Still, the temper of the age was in essence barbaric, and any narrative without a sort of violence would be untrue to local and historic colour, just as it would be in a romance of Petersburg or Belgrade at certain moments of the nineteenth century. Every competent judge will admire the energy with which the high and strenuous pitch is from beginning to end swiftly and unfalteringly sustained. Mr. Harrison is a recognised master of language; not always wholly free from excess, but direct, powerful, plain, with none of our latter-day nonsense of mincing and posturing, of elliptic brevities, cryptic phrase, vapid trick, and the hundred affectations and devices of ambitious insincerity. He has the signal merit of looking his readers in the eye; his periods, even when we most dissent from their substance, are alive with the strong and manly pulse of the writer's own personality. Whether Theophano and Nicephorus and Otto and Gerbert and Luitprand and the rest will be found "convincing" or not, heaven knows; I have never been able to attach definite significance to that favourite word in our new critical vocabulary. Let this be as it may, the result of the author's industry, skill, and many talents is a book abundant at once in dramatic interest, in sound knowledge, and in historical instruction: a fine panorama of the long

secular strife between East and West, between Islam and the two rival and mutually infuriated forms of Christian faith.

II

I should like to be allowed a single moment of digression on an issue that requires hours or days. With graceful propriety, the book is dedicated to the Professor of History at Cambridge, whose studies of the Byzantine period "so greatly inspired and enlarged" our monograph. We may be sure that Professor Bury will both appreciate the compliment thus paid to him, and will enjoy the illumination diffused by these flashing pages over the sombre landscape that he has himself so diligently explored. I even permit myself for an instant to wonder whether it may not melt the learned and accomplished professor to soften a little of the severity with which, in his memorable introductory lecture at Cambridge last year, he spoke of the time-honoured association of literature with history acting "as a sort of vague cloud, half concealing from men's eyes the new position in the heavens." So long as history, he told his hearers, was regarded as an art, the sanctions of truth and accuracy would not be severe. Why? He reminded them that "history is not a branch of literature." He adjured them to observe that Ranke's famous saying that "he would only say how a thing actually was," ought to be even more widely

accepted as "a warning against transgressing the province of facts." Perhaps some of Professor Bury's more youthful listeners, with the presumption of their years, may have asked themselves whether the historian is to present all the facts of his period or his subject; if not, whether he will not be forced to select; if he must select, then how can he do it, how can he group, how can he fix the relations of facts to one another, how weigh their comparative importance, without some sort of guiding principle, conception, or preconception? In short, he will find himself outside of "the province of facts" before he knows where he is, and this is what actually happens to some of the most eminent members of the school. The lecturer himself in truth speedily abated the rigour of his limitation, and added to the collection, discovery, and classification of facts the further duty of interpreting them. But when does not the historian's interpretation govern from first to last his collection and his classification? Take what case you will. Father Paul tells the facts of the Council of Trent one way, Pallavicino tells them in another way. The annals of the Papacy—in some respects the most fascinating and important of all the chapters of modern history—are one thing in the hands of Pastor the Catholic, another thing to Creighton the Anglican, a third thing to Möller the Lutheran, and something again quite different to writers of more secular stamp like Gregorovius and Reumont. It is not merely difference in documents that makes the

history of the French Revolution one story to Thiers or Mignet, and a story wholly different to Louis Blanc or to Taine. Talk of history being a science as loudly as ever we like, the writer of it will continue to approach his chests of archives with the bunch of keys in his hand. When examined, all these adjurations really mean little more—and this is a great deal—than that sources, documents, authorities are sometimes good and sometimes bad, sometimes first-rate and sometimes second-rate; that the student should know the difference; that he should be systematic and minute and definite and precise; that he should not regard a statement as certain unless he has scrutinised the evidence. All admirable and indispensable and scientific rules, but hardly constituting a brand-new science; or banishing “the time-honoured association of history with literature,” from which the reflective or ethical writer is warned off; or reducing Clio, the Muse, to the level of the kitchen drudge who supplies her meals, and then cashiering the architect in favour of the honest bricklayer and the stonemason. A science means a good deal more than this, and even something different from this. Dumas wittily said that Lamartine’s famous book on the Girondins raised history to the dignity of romance. Lamartine doubtless exalted the arts of literature rather high, as did the illustrious Dumas himself; but after all it does a book no harm to be readable; and I believe Byzantine students, including Professor Bury—the most eminent and

thorough of them all, and (if I may say so without offence) the most readable and enjoyable—will be grateful to Mr. Harrison for attracting interest to a field whither Heyd, Kopf, Hirsch,• Schlumberger, Salzenberg, Paspates, Van Millingen, and Dr. Krumbacher have hitherto failed to allure more than the esoteric and the elect.

III

What we may call the reclamation of the low-lying lands of the Byzantine period, is in some respects the most remarkable literary (or scientific) event of our day. Voltaire called Byzantine history “a repertory of declamation and miracles, disgraceful to the human mind.” Our literary rationalist, Lecky, talks of it as the most thoroughly base and despicable form that civilisation has yet assumed. Then Hegel says “the history of the highly civilised Eastern Empire—where, as we might suppose, the Spirit of Christianity could be taken up in its truth and purity—exhibits to us a millennial series of uninterrupted crimes, weaknesses, basenesses, and want of principle; a most repulsive, and consequently a most uninteresting picture.” De Maistre, the ultra-Catholic, was as bitter as Voltaire, the ultra non-Catholic. “Byzantium,” he cries with characteristic energy, “would make us believe in the system of climates, or in exhalations peculiar to certain spots. . . . Ransack universal history, nowhere can you find a dynasty

more wretched. Either feeble or furious, or both at the same time, these insupportable princes especially turned their demented interests on the side of theology, of which their despotism took possession to overthrow it. One would say that the French language meant to do justice on their empire by styling it as *Bas Empire*. It perished as it had lived, in the thick of a disputation. Mahomet the Second burst open the gates of the capital while sophists were wrangling about the glory of Mount Tabor.”¹ On a lower level than Voltaire, Hegel, and De Maistre,—during the frenzy of the Crimean War—a writer in a patriotic periodical exulted over the time “when the last of the Byzantine historians was blown into the air by our brave allies the Turks.”

It was Finlay with whom, among serious students, the reaction began. In 1843—one of the three or four continuous decades in which the new era of intellectual life of the nineteenth century in England was most active—Finlay published the first of the works that came to an end eighteen years later, presenting twenty centuries of the life of the Greek nation “in Roman subjection, Byzantine servitude, and Turkish slavery.” He brought a great mass of new knowledge, and he lighted up new knowledge with fresh reflections and considerations that constituted one of the most striking chapters in the history of European civilisation on history’s amplest scale. Finlay’s case is interesting and significant.

¹ *Du Pape*, bk. iv. ch. ix.

He did not hunt for a literary subject. He was the purchaser of a landed estate in Attica, endeavoured to improve it, lost his money and his labour, and then in a philosophic spirit turned to study the conditions of the country and its people, tracing back link by link the long chain of political, social, ecclesiastical, racial, and above all economic events, that explained the Attic peasant of to-day and of all the ages intervening since the peasant of Alexander the Great. Of this vast operation, what the world will pretty surely persist in calling the Byzantine Empire soon became the dominating centre; he could not tell the Greek story without the Byzantine story, and it was Finlay who first unfolded what the Byzantine Empire was, and first vindicated its share in the growth of Western civilisation and the forms of the modern world.

These volumes kindled the ardent admiration of Freeman (1855). He called them the greatest work that British historical literature had produced since the days of Gibbon, and even the most thoroughly original history in our language. No work, he said, from either an ordinary scholar or an ordinary politician, could ever come near to the native strength and originality of the work of the solitary thinker, studying, musing on, and recording the events of two thousand years, in order to solve the problems that he saw at his own door. Nobody has ever grasped more effectively than Freeman the truth that is the mainspring of Mr. Harrison's monograph: "If there

had been Turks at Constantinople in the ninth and tenth centuries, the names Europe and Christendom could never have had so nearly the same meaning as they have had for ages." This truth, first derived from Finlay, corroborated and fitted in with the two cardinal principles that Freeman never wearied of preaching to the studious minority of mankind: the unity of history, and the fatal error of drawing lines between ancient and modern. The doctrine about the Byzantine Empire, which he propagated with characteristic tenacity and an iteration that was almost tiresome, became the inspiration of a new school in this country, and in that school there has been no such diligent and fruitful worker as Professor Bury.

Even those who discern most clearly the title of the more important of the many various stages of Byzantine power to a marked place in history, discern also some of the reasons why the tale of them has been found, until our last half-century, so unattractive or even repellent, so darkly tarnished, so remote from the ordinary track of literary or historic curiosity. Mr. Harrison's own vivid and energetic presentation itself helps to explain. It is hard either to produce or feel the charm, emotion, sentiment, of romance, where scene and personage are on a plane of civilisation so alien to our own. Flaubert's story of *Salammô* was thought by French critics to find comparatively few friends, for this among other good reasons, that readers in Paris or in London could have no sympathy,

and could be conscious of no affinity, with a world where the cruel abominations imputed to Carthage made the normal life of the community.¹ Christian Constantinople in the tenth century was certainly not so far off in ways of life and modes of thought as Carthage is supposed to have been. Yet, if not wholly Eastern, it certainly was not Western. A fierce controversy raged in the ninth century between Slav and German clergy, whether God could be adored in any language save Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, these being the three sacred tongues of the inscription placed upon the Cross.² Whatever we may think of the right or wrong of the trilingual heresy, it is certain that alike by the long stream of Western institutions, and by all our unbroken systems of literary education, it is with Hebrew things and notions, and Greek and Roman things and notions, in the antique world that we are most at home. If into the antique world we must be taken at the close quarters that a romance requires, the Byzantine State presented old practice and idea in such unfamiliar association as to hide any sense of affinity and to shut out either sympathy or charm. The author of *Theophano* faces this, and valiantly makes head against it. The signal peculiarities that account for the alienation of common curiosity or feeling from

¹ Francis W. Newman, with his turn for siding with minorities (see vol. i. of his *Miscellanies*, pp. 278-304), once delivered what was thought an effective lecture entitled *Punicæ Vindictæ*.

² *Cyrille et Méthode*, par Louis Leger, 1868, p. 96.

Byzantine history, which he has so boldly confronted, are pretty obvious. They have been often enumerated before now. The Eastern Empire was a conservative State, not a progressive State. It is the story of administration and law, not of letters, philosophy, or liberty; in spite of Hellenic vanities, it is the story of a government, not of a nation. The leading exercises of mind lay in fields from which all intellectual interest has long ebbed away. It was a Christian Father who said of Constantinople in the fourth century: "This city is full of handicraftsmen and slaves, who are all profound theologians, and preach in their workshops and in the streets. If you want a man to change a piece of silver, he instructs you in what consists the distinction between the Father and the Son; if you ask the price of a loaf of bread, you get for answer that the Son is inferior to the Father; and if you ask whether the bread is ready, the rejoinder is that the genesis of the Son is from Nothing." Just as the religious fanaticism inspired by the Koran put out in the twelfth century the light of intellectual development among the Spanish Arabs, so the odious disputes of superstition at Constantinople arrested all progressive movements of either Greek or Roman genius. What Professor Bury himself says¹ of the seventh century at Byzantium was not less true of many other centuries: "Men who professed to be educated believed in the most ridiculous miracles; and the law of natural cause and effect,

¹ *Later Roman Empire*, ii. 387.

which, however inadequately recognised, has generally maintained some sort of ascendancy in human reason, became at this period practically obsolete." By such periods men will never be attracted.* These futile and sanguinary wrangles, in spite of the social and political problems involved in some of them, make us wonder whether Comte, Voltaire, Hegel, and De Maistre were not in the right after all.

In one of the most brilliant of his pieces¹ Mr. Harrison has described what he truly calls the painful majesty of the first sight of Athens; has reminded us that Attica is hardly bigger than the Isle of Wight, and that the city of the violet crown itself would easily stand in the area of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens; yet what undying dramas were played upon that narrow stage! One main reason why these dramas can never die is that, as Pericles and Nicias boasted, in Athenian polity every man was free to lead his daily life, and free to think his own thoughts. In Byzantium the stream never purified itself or flowed clear. No fresh tributary of living water flowed into it from the main currents of intellectual life in Europe. The service, on the other hand, of Byzantium to Europe—without approaching the vexed questions of architecture and secondary decorative arts—was in the first place military and defensive; secondly, it was preservative of the fruits of an intellectual life supremely different from its own. Nobody has described this second service more

¹ *Meanings of History*, ch. x.

justly than our present author in a passage of his Rede Lecture :

The peculiar, indispensable service of Byzantine literature was the preservation of the language, philology, and archæology of Greece. It is impossible to see how our knowledge of ancient literature or civilisation could have been recovered if Constantinople had not nursed through the early Middle Ages the vast accumulations of Greek learning in the schools of Alexandria, Athens, and Asia Minor ; . . . if indefatigable copyists had not toiled in multiplying the texts of ancient Greece. Pedantic, dull, blundering as they are too often, they are indispensable. We pick precious truths and knowledge out of their garrulities and stupidities, for they preserve what otherwise would have been lost for ever. . . . Dunces and pedants as they were, they servilely repeated the words of the immortals. Had they not done so the immortals would have died long ago.¹

Besides this great service in the capacity of "librarian to the human race," a more important claim is made, that Byzantium was for the Slav world what Rome was for the Germanic world. It was Byzantium that out of Bulgarian, Magyar, Croat hordes made Servia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Hungary. It transmitted or imposed the Christian religion from Hungary to Armenia and Abyssinia. It initiated a literary language among Slavs and Goths. It established the first centres of literary civilisation. It gave them ideas and methods of government.² In

¹ See also Dr. Sandys' extremely interesting *History of Classical Scholarship*, 1903, p. 427.

² Rambaud's *Empire Grec au XIème siècle*, p. 10.

comparison with the more highly organised States of the Western world, the result may seem only a moderate improvement upon anarchy, but in comparison with what went before, even the South-eastern lands of Europe are cosmos.

If it be true that an epic ought to have a beginning and an end, we may say on the other hand, without paradox, that history is most interesting when it is part of a tale that is continuous and has no end. The close of the Eastern Empire, on a superficial glance, has the look of a dark, squalid, and sanguinary *cul-de-sac*. When the Latins and the Turks together brought it to its doom, Europe was indeed conscious of a tremendous shock; but it was not the shock of tragedy, for the Westerns felt little pity or sympathy for the immediate victims, though Europe was not without fear for herself, and not without some belated indignation or remorse at a catastrophe due to the bigotry, cupidity, and selfishness masked under Western Christianity. It was Rome that gave Constantinople to Mahound. Yet the overthrow of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turk in the middle of the fifteenth century was not really the end of the Byzantine system. In the tenth century the faith of the Cross passed into Russia. It came from Byzantium, not from Rome, bringing Russia over the frontier of Christendom in one sense, yet, by reason of the great Christian schism, at the same time cutting Russia off from Christendom in another. The earlier type of civilisation in Russia is Byzantine, an

autocratic State, without political rights, ruled by imperial omnipotence with the aid of a hierarchy of functionaries.¹ The huge waves of Mongol invasion did not sweep away the deep impress of Byzantine influence. From Vladimir to Peter the Great, Russia has never entirely escaped the Byzantine ascendancy exercised over it by the clergy, the schools, the laws, the literature. The Mongols gave an Asiatic colour to Czarism which grew up in their shadow, yet it was from Byzantium and from the Greeks of the Lower Empire that the Russian princes borrowed the type and the model, along with the forms, the etiquette, and even the very name, of autocracy, as after the fall of Constantinople Ivan the Third borrowed from the Palæologi the imperial eagle and arms.² When Bishop Creighton witnessed the coronation of the Russian Czar at Moscow, he describes how the stranger from the West felt that he had passed outside the circle of European experience, European ideas and influences, and entered upon a new phase of culture to be judged by canons of its own. The Bishop's vivid story of that strange barbaric scene is the counterpart of Mr. Harrison's picture of the coronation of Romanus and Theophano in the Church of the Holy Wisdom at Constantinople in 960.³ How far that peculiar prolongation of the Byzantine Empire through the Orthodox Church has been an elevating

¹ See Leroy-Beaulieu's *L'Empire des Tsars*, i. 214.

² *Ibid.*, i. 227.

³ See Creighton's *Historical Essays and Reviews*, 1902.

force, this is not the place to inquire ; any more than it is the place to inquire into the connected question how far the corresponding ascendancy of the Catholic Church elevated government or people in the Spanish Peninsula.

IV.

Having said this much on the subject of our monograph, let us rapidly sketch its outline. Theophano, the daughter of a Greek in obscure circumstances, by her singular beauty and fascinations caught the fancy of Romanus, the youthful son of Constantine (Porphyrogenitus), seventh of that name in the list of Byzantine emperors. Constantine consented to their union—a piece of kindness which, according to some chroniclers, probably mendacious, the young people repaid by a murderous palace plot. Romanus mounted the imperial throne, and with him Theophano rose to the august rank of Basilissa.

The pleasure-loving prince was no more changed by elevation to supreme power than was Louis the Fifteenth ; but from one high task of empire at least he did not shrink. Crete was in the hands of the Saracens, and Saracen corsairs harassed the islands of the Archipelago, cut off the commerce of Constantinople, and even interrupted the supply of provisions to the mighty capital. Romanus fitted a great expedition to root out so grave a mischief to his people, and to wipe off a dark disgrace from Christian fame.

A glorious July morning in the year of our Lord 960 was irradiating the shores of the Propontis and the porticoes and domes of Byzantium; and already the city and Palace of the Caesars were crowded with brilliant throngs and gala trappings of expectant triumph. All the terraces which commanded a view of the sea were full of eager sightseers. The walls that girdled the city on the seaside were covered with dense groups; and the sea itself, from the Golden Horn to the Princes Islands, was alive with thousands of vessels of every description as far as the eye could reach. The mighty expedition to recover Crete from the Infidel was at last about to sail. In the Sacred Palace itself a throng of courtiers and high officials were gathered in the *Tzykanisterion*, or polo-ground, and in the gardens, porticoes, and arcades that adjoined it, waiting for their Majesties and the great ministers of State, who were to watch the fleet at its departure and wish Godspeed to its illustrious commander. In the corridors and cloisters of the Palace all was animation and a hubbub of greetings, inquiries, and ardent anticipations. A group of gentlemen of the wardrobe, grooms of the chamber, and a silentiary were discussing the exact constitution of the vast expedition. Nicetas, the Paphlagonian, a *vestiarius*, or gentleman of the wardrobe, was loudly exclaiming that so powerful an armament had never left the Golden Horn since the age of the great Heraclius.

The conquest of Crete was both a triumphant feat of arms and a triumph of patriotic policy. A new and greater expedition (962) was mustered for a still mightier march.

Through seven different passes of the Taurus, mainly through that known as the "Cilician Gates," the various corps debouched down upon the Saracen province that had once been the Cilicia of Augustus and Trajan. The

different armies had separate objectives, but were kept in close touch with each other, and each was preceded by an outer screen of light cavalry, which pressed on in front and scoured the whole country. As the parallel forces poured down like a deluge on the rich plains, the miserable people fled before them or crowded into the forts; the Saracen troops of all arms were seized with panic, and made no effort to stem the torrent.

The plunge was irresistible; the Byzantine general forced his way into Aleppo, and, "with fierce exultation, he surveyed the annihilation of the terrible enemy who had made the Roman Empire reel to its foundations, and he saw that the frontiers of Rome were destined to extend again to the Euphrates."

At Constantinople, meanwhile, feud and intrigue within the palace had prepared the way for revolution, when the youthful emperor was removed by death. Though Nicephorus was not the man to play the part assigned to Bothwell, the reader, with a feeling that most stories have really been told before with different names and changed costumes, may perhaps bethink him of Mary Stuart, and Bothwell, and Darnley, and the explosion of the Kirk-o'-Field. That Theophano was actively concerned in the death of her first husband is not proved, and Mr. Harrison takes the other view, though either her fierce ambition or a lawless passion for the military hero of the hour, made the removal of Romanus necessary to her designs. She brought him back to Constantinople; by her craft and resolution baffled the schemes of a powerful minister fighting to retain authority; and, finally,

with the aid of the Patriarch, succeeded in making Nicephorus Autocrat and her husband. Intrigues within the palace, factions and bloody fights,—for Armenian massacres the other day were by no means the first or the worst of such scenes in Constantinople, whether Christian or Mahometan,—gorgeous pageants, conflicts between Emperor and Patriarch, the election of Theophano, the moral fall and remorse of Nicephorus, make vivid masterpieces of description, while the historic significance of it all is graphically brought out in eager debate and eloquent argument in council and in camp. One of the main historic facts is the cosmopolitan character of Constantinople in these ages ; it was, let us repeat, the seat of a government, not the central home of a nationality ; and, above all, the incessant strife within its walls and without its walls was cosmopolitan strife. A reception of foreign envoys in one of the vast courts of the imperial palace brings vividly home to the reader of to-day, as it was intended to bring home to the envoys themselves, the world-wide relations of the Empire and its claim to be the centre of universal power.

Like the actual scene, and like Gibbon's history of it, *Theophano* makes a crowded canvas. It could not be otherwise ; but one effect is partially to deprive Nicephorus of the position of isolated relief that the full interest of his moral catastrophe seems to require. The throng of incident and figure in some degree disperses our attention, and prevents its concentration on the hero, who was not only hero but saint. Still,

the author is writing history, not a modern psychological romance. In its elements the case is old enough—the crash of a stern and lofty nature before the wiles of Eve and the solicitations of appetite. Nicephorus in one stage is full of the monastic enthusiasm of the early centuries of Christian faith, despising the Christianity of the common world, regardless of the State, eager for flight from all carnal and secular things into a life of solitary communion with the unseen God. Even when he has been forced, against the loud whispers of conscience and the leanings of his inner will, into campaigns for the deliverance of the State from the inroads of Mahometan blasphemers, after he has assumed the crown of autocrat, he is still haunted by the old visions of asceticism. Under the purple robe he still wears the hair shirt of the penitent and the recluse, and at banquets of savoury meats and exquisite wines he prefers water and lentils. The struggle within the breast of Nicephorus was but a type of one of the greatest of the conflicts that perplexed and tore that Eastern world, and not the Eastern world alone.

The rule of Nicephorus marked a few years of failure and disappointment, mixed with transient military success. From armed anchorite, in spite of his sedulous performance of the ceremonial offices of his Church, he relapsed into the ordinary habits of the Byzantine autocrat. The cost of the levies of men, drawn from the Italian coasts across Greece and Asia as far as the source of the Euphrates, strained

the finances to the uttermost. Heavy taxes and debased coinage broke down his popularity, and his fulminations against weakening the military resources of the Empire by the multiplication of monasteries brought him into disfavour with the Patriarch and the ecclesiastics. What Mr. Harrison truly calls the eternal quarrel about "investitures," that well-known chapter in the Western history of Popes and Kings, led to fierce remonstrances from the Patriarch. He joined the opposition organised within the palace by Theophano. Whether from discontent at a temperament less ardent than her own, or from politic desire to separate her lot from that of a falling potentate, or from a new-born passion for Tzimiskes, a soldier as heroic as Nicephorus himself, the empress was plotting treason with formidable confederates. The long and exciting episode is told with admirable vigour, and the end arrived in the chapter headed "Clytemnestra." The author spares us none of the horrors of the murder of Nicephorus—in some details very like a similar transaction in the same quarter of Europe not long ago. Theophano took little by crimes that have given her a place, though a secondary one, among the names of evil women in high places, Theodora, Irene, and the others. The Patriarch refused to recognise Tzimiskes, her accomplice in the murder of his uncle, unless he put her away. So, with her beauty, her ambition, her passion for intrigue, she was banished to a solitary island, where our present author is content to leave her. When

her sons came to the throne, they are said to have recalled her to the imperial palace. For history the curtain of her drama and its stage had fallen.

V.

Such is the central outline of our romance, and into it the author has wrought a rich store of episodic material, well incorporated into the main tissue and design, extremely picturesque and striking, as well as true to such records as survive. We have from time to time the relief of being transported westward of Byzantium to the more familiar ground of Spain and Old Rome. The glory of Rome had departed indeed, for the tenth century was the nadir, and Mr. Harrison does not paint the scene in darker colours than really belonged to it.

In one fascinating chapter we see the Caliph of the West at Cordova, the great Caliph, the Charlemagne of Saracen Spain, now at the close of his long rule of half a century—"the greatest ruler of his age and the noblest of the Saracen race. In fifty years he had reduced the rebels and traitors within his own dominion, had made vassals of the Christian princelets of North Spain, and had driven back the Mauritanian invaders from Africa. He possessed a magnificent fleet, a powerful army, and a treasury of 20,000,000 gold pieces. The police of his realm secured perfect order and peace; the state of agriculture was in the highest degree thriving; commerce and manufactures

were equally advanced." His days come to their close in this chapter, and we read the moving words attached by him to his last testament: "Fifty years have I been on this throne. Riches, honours, pleasures have been poured on me, and I have drained them all to the dregs. The sovereigns who are my rivals respect me, or fear me—both envy me; for all that men desire has been showered on me by Allah, the Bountiful, the All-merciful. But in all these years of apparent felicity I can only count fourteen days wherein I have been truly happy. My son, meditate on this, and judge at their true value human grandeur, this world, and man's life."

It was his son, Hakem the Second, who, as Renan has described, had the glory of opening that brilliant series of studies which, by the influence that they exercised upon Christian Europe, hold so important a place in the history of civilisation. Two centuries later the brilliant Arab-Spanish era closed. Meanwhile, says Renan, the taste for knowledge and for beautiful things had established in that privileged corner of the world a tolerance of which modern times can hardly offer us an example. "Christians, Jews, Moslems spoke the same tongue, sang the same poetry, shared the same literary and scientific studies. All the barriers that separate men had fallen, all worked with one accord at the task of common civilisation."¹ Mr. Harrison has ascribed a mood

¹ *Averroès et l'Averroïsme*, p. 4.

like this to his Fatima in her home among the mountains of the Sierra Morena, north of Cordova :

"There is but one God," she said, with profound earnestness : "I know but one God, and I care not if He be named the Trinity or Allah. I have lived so long in this Andalusian Caliphate ; I have seen enough of the Romans of the Empire." She sighed as she uttered that name. "I have seen and heard enough to know that Christendom and Islam have each much that is God-like and good, and much that is of Sheitan and evil. This splendid capital of Cordova is in many things, in most things, the counterpart of Byzantium—as rich, as luxurious, as corrupt, as elegant, as turbulent. These Ommeyades here execrate the Fatimites : Abbasides from the first contend with Kharijis. There are as many sects amongst Mussulmans as there are amongst Christians—as many dynasties, as many wars. Bagdad, Damascus, Heleb, Antioch, Edessa, Fostat, Kairouan, Andalusia, war on each other as often as Byzantine, Bulgarian, Lombard, Calabrian, Frank, or Saxon. Whether it be Allah and His Prophet, or Christ and His Mother, who inspire these rivalries and combats, I know not. All that I know is that it is not the one God."

It was eight centuries after this that a like thought inspired the beautiful apologue of the Three Rings, as adopted and extended by Lessing from Boccaccio, and coming to him through the Hundred Old Novels, from some tongue in some corner of the Mediterranean that, as scholars tell us, can never now be known.¹ Everybody knows it, in or out of Lessing's noble

¹ See Burckhardt's *Renaissance in Italy*, Eng. trans., ii. 302 note. Anywhere else but in Florence this "impious thought of parallel between the three religions would have lighted the fires of the stake."—Renan, *Averroës*, p. 389.

dramatic setting, how Saladin, the great Saracen, wishing to lay a trap for Nathan, the wise and rich Jew, asked him, "Honest man, I would gladly know from thee which religion thou judgest to be the true one, Jewish, Mahometan, or Christian." Then Nathan, in answer, tells him of a certain family owning a ring of much beauty and worth, and endowed with the magical virtue of making every wearer of it beloved by God and men. The possessor of it became thereby head of the family and owner of the estate. This the father in successive generations always gave to whomsoever of his descendants he deemed the worthiest. At length a father had three sons, all of whom he loved alike. In his perplexity to whom to give the ring, he sent for a craftsman, and had two more rings made of such exact resemblance that even he himself could hardly tell the true one. Being now very old, he privately gave a ring to each of his three sons. When he was dead, each of them produced his ring, and claimed the honour and the estate. They brought the case before the judge. "I hear," said the judge, "that the true ring has the power of making its wearer pleasing in the sight of God and of man. Let each of you believe that his ring is the true one. Let each of you strive to make known the virtue of his ring, by gentleness, by hearty • peacefulness, by well-doing, by the utmost inward devotion to God. And then, if this power of the gems reveals itself with your children's children, I invite you again, thousands and thousands of years

hence, before this tribunal. Then one wiser than I will sit in the judgment-seat and will decide.”¹

VI.

The speculative bearings of the phantasmagoria that he unfolds before his readers scarcely fall within the scope of Mr. Harrison's monograph. His business here is spectacle, and not philosophising. The genius of Montesquieu early divined that the poisoned source of all the misfortunes of the Byzantines was that they never knew the nature, or the respective boundaries, of ecclesiastical and secular power. “This great distinction, that is the foundation on which reposes the tranquillity of nations, springs not only from religion, but also from nature and reason, that insists on things essentially separate never being confounded.”² Here, indeed, as in so many other relations, Montesquieu clearly came near the possession of the master-key. Of all the manifold aspects of human history, the central and most commanding of them is the spirit of man, as we see and consider it, working in creeds and institutions, working against them, piercing them, transforming them, ever striving to coerce the concrete into more and more harmony with the abstract. The military system that was rendered necessary in the Eastern Empire by the

¹ *Nathan der Weise*, III. vi., whither the wise reader will betake himself for one of the grand passages in literature.

² *Grandeur et Décadence des Romains*, ch. xxii.

pressure of enemies outside, reduced abstract Christianity, in its doctrines and its organisation, into a fatal, though often mutinous, subjection to temporal institutions. The records of the Churches, alike in East and West, have many a dismal and depressing page, but none more depressing than the forms with which abstract Christianity clothed itself in the Eastern Empire, or the feuds of policy and nationality that blazoned the mysteries of faith in letters of blood upon rival banners.

With marked power Mr. Harrison has depicted the exterior and political force and momentum of Eastern monasticism ; that wonderful ideal of contemplation and renunciation as a means of saving the soul ; the attempt to realise ideals outside of the world ; the protest in solitude against the weight of injustice that had become unbearable. "The Byzantine code of laws," says Harnack, now reputed greatest theologian of our time—"our own social and moral views, too, have not yet emancipated themselves from its bonds—is in part a strange congeries of pitiless Roman craft and of the monastic view of the world." Tolstoy, says Harnack, is in his writings a genuine Greek monk, to whom the only chance of Church reform lies in a radical breach with culture and history.¹ Here, for an instant in our day, two strangely diverse schools unexpectedly meet, for Socialism that is now so alarming to the rulers of the world, springs in its

¹ *Monasticism*. By Adolph Harnack. Pp. 55, 60-61, Eng. trans. (1901).

root from the same intolerable sense of the world's wrong, and insists on the same breach with culture and with history. In some at least of its types and its ideals, Socialism comes nearer to what is called Byzantinism than either professors or opponents seem well to know. Yet history—standing forces, institutions founded on social needs transient or abiding, forms and conventions—all hold their ground with tremendous grip. However violent the supposed breach, the old Manichæan tale will still go on.

"When you see," cried Bossuet, "the old and the new Assyrians, the Medes, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, present themselves successively before you and fall, so to say, one upon the ruin of the other; all this frightful turmoil makes you feel that there is nothing solid among mankind, and that inconstancy and agitation is the peculiar lot of human things." But then he detects or manufactures a chain. The parts of so great a whole are linked together, he says. With the reserve of "certain extraordinary strokes in which God intended that His hand alone should be manifest," no great change has ever taken place that had not its causes in ages that went before. These "extraordinary strokes," if they exist, and if he had pondered their significance, it must have puzzled Bossuet to reconcile with his theory of the chain—with what in modern language we should call the reign of law in history—which it was his express object to set forth. William of Tyre, the twelfth-century historian of the Crusades, hit this

when he wrote : " To no one should the things done by our Lord be displeasing, for all His works are right and good. But according to the judgment of men, it was marvellous how our Lord permitted the Franks (the people in the world who honour Him most) to be thus destroyed by the enemies of the faith." Mr. Harrison's book, with no deliberate intention of his, for he is here a writer of neutral history, will give people of a reflective turn of mind, whether Jew, Mahometan, Christian, or Agnostic, if they be in the humour, many deep things to ruminate upon.

APPENDIX.

NOTES TO MACHIAVELLI.

¹ The most complete account of the voluminous literature about Machiavelli up to 1858 is given in Robert Mohl's *Geschichte und Literatur der Staatswissenschaften*, iii. 521, etc.

A later list is given by Tommasini, *La Vita e gli scritti di N. M.*, i. 56-8. See also Villari; Lord Acton's learned Introduction to the *Prince*; and especially the bibliography attached to Mr. Burd's valuable chapter in vol. i. of the *Cambridge Modern History*, pp. 719-26.

Of the French contributions, Nourrisson's *Machiavel* (edition of 1883) seems much the most vigorous, in spite of occasional outbreaks of the curious feeling between Frenchmen and Italians. Among political pamphlets may be named *Dialogue aux enfers, entre Machiavel et Montesquieu; ou la politique de Machiavel au 19^e siècle: par un Contemporain* (1864)—an energetic exposure of the Second Empire.—*Machiavel, et l'influence de sa doctrine, sur les opinions, les mœurs, et la politique de la France pendant la Révolution*: par M. de Mazères; Paris, 1816—a royalist indictment of Machiavelli, as the inspirer alike of Jacobins and Bonaparte. M. Tassin's *Gianotti, sa vie, son temps, et ses doctrines* (1869), published on the eve of the overthrow of the Second Empire, and seeming to use the Italian publicist mainly as a mask for condemning the French government of the day.

Gianotti (1492-1572) was of Savonarola's school, and M. Tassin uses him as a foil for Machiavelli. Others of less quality are: *Dante*, *Michel-Ange*, *Machiavel*. Par C. Calémard de Lafayette. Paris, 1852. — *Essai sur les œuvres et la doctrine de Machiavel*. Par Paul Deltuf. Paris, 1867. — *Machiavel, Montesquieu, Rousseau*. Von Jacob Venedey. Berlin, 1850. — Written after the events of 1848 in Germany, the author's object being to show that the three writers named were the representatives of the only three possible systems of government, and of these three Machiavelli stands for all that is wicked and reactionary, Rousseau for progress and humanity. The book is composed, not from any scientific point of view, but to illustrate contemporary politics. Louis Philippe is said (p. 66) to be the greatest scholar that Machiavelli ever had, and there are a good many remarks on the death of "Machiavellismus" in France and Germany, which have hardly been borne out by history since 1850.

² *Machiavelli and the Elizabethan Drama*. Von Edward Meyer (Weimar, 1897), p. xi. Mr. Courthope, *History of English Poetry* (ii. ch. 12), has shown how much Marlowe had studied Machiavelli, and states his view of the effect of this study as follows: "What we find in Marlowe is Seneca's exaltation of the freedom of the human will, dissociated from the idea of Necessity, and joined with Machiavelli's principle of the excellence of *virtù*. This principle is represented under a great variety of aspects; sometimes in the energy of a single heroic character, as in *Tamburlaine*; sometimes in the pursuit of unlawful knowledge, as in *Faustus*: again, in *The Jew of Malta*, in the boundless hatred and revenge of Barabas; in Guise plotting the massacre of the Huguenots out of cold-blooded policy; and in Mortimer planning the murder of Edward II. from purely personal ambition. Incidentally, no doubt, in some of these

instances, the indulgence of unrestrained passion brings ruin in its train; but it is not so much for the sake of the moral that Marlowe composed his tragedies, as because his imagination delighted in the exhibition of the vast and tremendous consequences produced by the determined exercise of will in pursuit of selfish objects."—P. 405.

The reader will remember that Machiavelli speaks the prologue to *The Jew of Malta*, with these two lines:

I count religion but a childish toy,
And hold there is no sin but ignorance.

It is not denied by Herr Meyer or others, that Marlowe had studied Machiavelli in the original, and Mr. Courthope seems to make good his contention that it was Marlowe's conception of M.'s principle of *virtù* that revolutionised the English drama.

³ "Old Nick is the vulgar name for the Evil Being in the north of England, and is a name of great antiquity. We borrowed it from the title of an evil genius among the ancient Danes," etc. etc. On the line in *Hudibras*, "We may observe that he was called Old Nick many ages before the famous, or rather infamous, Nicholas Machiavel was born."—Brand's *Popular Antiquities*, ii. 364. (Ed. 1816.)

⁴ See Tommasini, i. 27-30. Our excellent Ascham declares that he honoured the old Romans as the best breeders and bringers up for well-doing in all civil affairs that ever were in the world, but the few Rome was the home of devilish opinions and unbridled sin, and one of the worst patriarchs of its impiety was Machiavelli.—*Schoolmaster* (1563-8), Mayor's Edition, 1863, p. 86. Fuller, quoted in Mayor's note, expresses a better opinion of Machiavelli, and says that "that which hath sharpened the pens of many against him is his giving so many

cleanly wipes to the foul noses of the pope and the Italian prelacy" (1642).

"At the beginning of the seventeenth century the Venetian senate was asked to permit the publication of Boccacini's *Commentaries on Tacitus*. The request was referred to five of the senators for examination. 'It is the teaching of Tacitus,' they said, 'that has produced Machiavelli, and the other bad authors who would destroy public virtue. We should replace Tacitus by Livy and Polybius — historians of the happier and more virtuous times of the Roman republic, and by Thucydides, the historian of the Greek republic, who found themselves in circumstances like those of Venice.'" — Sclopis, *Revue hist. de droit français et étranger* (1856), ii. 25.

For the literary use made of Tacitus against the Spanish domination in Italy, see Ferrari, *Hist. de la raison d'État*, p. 315.

* An interesting article appeared in the *Nineteenth Century* (December 1896), designed to show the effect of Machiavelli on the English statesmen of the Reformation. The writer admits that there is no evidence to prove that the action of Elizabeth was consciously based on a study of the *Prince*, but he finds, as he thinks, proof positive that Burleigh had studied Machiavelli in a paper of advice from the Lord Treasurer to the Queen. The proof consists in such sentences as these: "Men's natures are apt to strive not only against the present smart, but in revenging bypast injury, though they be never so well contented thereafter";—"no man loves one the better for giving him the bastinado, though with never so little a cudgel";—"the course of the most wise estates hath ever been to make an assurance of friendship, or to take away all power of enmity"; and so forth. Burleigh very likely may have read the *Prince*, but it is going too far to assume that a sage statesman must have

learned the commonplaces of political prudence out of a book.

"Cecil asked English ambassadors abroad to procure him copies, and even that harmless gossip, Sir Richard Morison, wiled away his leisure hours at the Emperor's Court in perusing it, making frequent reference to it in his correspondence (see *State Papers*, Foreign Series, Edward VI. *passim*; Sloane MSS. 1523; and Harleian MSS. 353, ff. 130-9)."—Pollard's *England under Protector Somerset*, p. 284.

⁶ Dr. Abbott, attacking Bacon with the same bitterness with which Machiavelli was attacked for three centuries (*Francis Bacon*, 1885, pp. 325 and 457-60), insists that the Florentine secretary was the chancellor's master; but such criticism seems to show as one-sided a misapprehension of one as of the other. Dr. Fowler, once President of Corpus Christi College, has dealt conclusively, as I judge, with Dr. Abbott's case, in the preface to his second edition of the *Novum Organum* (1889), pp. xii-xx, and in his excellent short monograph on Bacon (1881), pp. 41-5.

⁷ Mackintosh reproached Bacon for this way of treating history. Spedding stoutly defends it, rather oddly appealing to the narrative of the New Testament, as an example of the most wicked of all judgments, recounted four times "without a single indignant comment or a single vituperative expression."—*Works*, Spedding and Heath, vol. vi, pp. 8-16.

On this last point Pascal says: "The style of the gospel is admirable among other ways in this, that there is not a word of invective against the murderers or foes of Jesus Christ. For there is none against Judas, Pilate, or any of the Jews; and so forth."—*Pensées*, Art. xix. 2. Ed. Havet, ii. 39. See also Havet's note, p. 44.

Bacon says M. made a wise and apt choice of method for government—"namely, discourse upon histories or

examples; for knowledge drawn freshly, and in our view, out of particulars, findeth its way best to particulars again; and it hath much greater life in practice when the discourse attendeth upon the example than when the example attendeth upon the discourse."

⁸ Harrington's view is expressed in such a sentence as this: "Corruption in government is to be read and considered in Machiavel, as diseases in a man's body are to be read and considered in Hippocrates. Neither Hippocrates nor Machiavel introduced diseases into man's body, nor corruption into government, which were before their time; and seeing they do but discover them, it must be confessed that so much as they have done tends not to the increase but to the cure of them, which is the truth of these two authors."—*System of Politics*, ch. x.

Elsewhere he compares the Italian to one who exposes the tricks of a juggler.

⁹ *Essays*, i. 156; ii. 391, where he remarks that historians have been almost always friends of virtue, but that the politician is much less scrupulous as to acts of power.

¹⁰ This sentence is Treverret's, *L'Italie au 16ième siècle*, i. 179. Sainte-Beuve has a short comparison between the two in *Causeries*, vii. 67-70. "Machiavelli attached himself to particular facts, and proposed expedients. Montesquieu tried to ascend to general principles, and drew from them consequences that were capable of explaining a long series of social phenomena. The Florentine secretary was a man of action, and reproduced in his writings the impressions that he had received from his intercourse with men and business. Montesquieu is always a man of the closet; he studies men in books."—Sclopis, *Revue hist. de droit français et étranger* (1856), ii. p. 18.

Comte has worked out the place of Montesquieu and of Machiavelli, *Philos. pos.* iv. 178-85, and *Pol. pos.* iii. 539.

¹¹ *La Diplomatie au temps de Machiavel.* Par Maulde-La Clavière (1892, 3 vols.), i. 306, etc. The French gave the signal for the inevitable attack upon the ancient privileges of Latin as the language of diplomacy. At the beginning of the sixteenth century Spain strove to displace French, but did not succeed even when the Spanish power was at its meridian. In the East, the Turk would have nothing to do with Latin. A Turkish envoy to Venice in 1500, though acquainted with Latin, made it a point of honour only to speak Greek. Charles VIII. did not know Italian, and Louis XII. understood it with difficulty. Machiavelli preferred Italian to Latin.—Maulde-La Clavière, ch. ii. and ch. vi.

¹² See Jacob Burckhardt's admirable work on the *Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* (English translation by Middlemore), ii. 211. "Was Germany in the fifteenth century so much better with its godless wars against the Hussites, the crimes of Vehmgericht, the endless feuds of the temporal princes, the shameless oppression of the wretched peasant?"—Thudichum, p. 68.

¹³ The contradictions were noted very early. Bodin's *Republic* appeared in 1576, and there he says: "Machiavelli s'est bien fort méconté, de dire que l'estat populaire est le meilleur; et néanmoins ayant oublié sa première opinion, il a tenu en un autre lieu, que pour restituer l'Italie en sa liberté, il faut qu'il n'y ait qu'un prince; et de fait, il s'est efforcé de former un estat le plus tyrannique du monde; et en autre lieu il confesse que l'estat de Venise est le plus beau de tous, lequel est une pure aristocratie, s'il en fut oncques: tellement qu'il ne sçait à quoi se tenir" (vi. ch. 4).

The argument that the *Prince* and *Discourses* are really one work is best stated by Nourrisson, ch. viii. 137-44.

"The modern study of politics, however, begins with Machiavelli. Not that he made any definite or permanent

contribution to political theory which can be laid hold of as a principle fertile of new consequence. His works are more concerned with the details of statecraft than with the analysis of the state. But we find in him, for the first time since Aristotle, the pure, passionless curiosity of the man of science.”—Sir Frederick Pollock in the *History of the Science of Politics*, ch. ii.

Tocqueville says: “I have been reading Machiavelli’s *History of Florence* very attentively. The Machiavelli of the history is to me the Machiavelli of the *Prince*. I do not conceive how the reading of the first can leave the least doubt as to the author of the second. In his history he sometimes praises great and fine actions, but we see that it is with him only an affair of imagination. The bottom of his thought is that all actions are indifferent in themselves, and must be judged by the skill and the success that they exhibit. For him the world is a great arena from which God is absent, where conscience has nothing to do with it, and where everybody gets on with things as best he can.”—Tocqueville, *Correspond.* i. 326-7.

As for Tocqueville, when he came to handle public business in difficult times, some notions with a slightly Machiavellian flavour began to lodge in his mind. For instance: “As if you could ever satisfy men, by only busying yourself with their general good, without taking account of their vanity and of their private and personal interests.”—*Souvenirs*, p. 343.

“The versatility of men, and the vanity of these great words of patriotism and right, with which the small passions cover themselves.”—*Ib.* 347.

“My secret consisted in flattering their self-love [Members of Parliament and Cabinet Colleagues], while I took good care to neglect their advice. . . . I had discovered that it is with the vanity of men that you can do the best business, for you often get from it very substantial things, while giving very little substance in

return. You will never make as good a bargain with their ambition or their greed. Yet it is true that to deal profitably with the vanity of others, you must lay aside your own and look only to the success of your scheme; and this is what will always make that kind of trade very difficult."—*Ib.* 361-2.

"Nations are like men; they are still prouder of what flatters their passions, than of what serves their interests."—*Ib.* 394.

¹⁴ Sainte-Beuve has pointed out (*Port-Royal*, iii. 362-3, ed. 1860) how Machiavelli is here related to Pascal. Pascal's reason allows no sort of abstraction to mix itself up with social order. He had seen the Fronde at close quarters, for he was a man of the world at that epoch. He had meditated on Cromwell. The upshot of it was to place man at the mercy of custom, and at the same time to condemn those who shake off the yoke of custom. "Custom ought to be followed only because it is custom, and not because it is reasonable or just. People follow it because they think it is reasonable, and take antiquity for the proof that it is so," etc. etc.—*Pensées*, Art. vi. 40. Ed. Havet, i. 82.

¹⁵ *Disc.* i. 47. Aristotle, *Politics*, iii. 11; Jowett (*Notes*, p. 129) has an uneasy note upon the point. On the whole, Machiavelli seems to take broader and sounder ground than anybody else.

¹⁶ Baumgarten's view is elaborately stated in his *Geschichte Karls V.* i.; Anhang, 522-36, and Signor Villari's answer in his *Niccolò Machiavelli*, ii. 496-502.

Guido da Montefeltro says in the *Inferno* (xxvii. 75): *L' opere mie non furono leonine, ma di volpe*—"My deeds were those of the fox, and not of the lion." Bacon, in a well-known passage, uses a more common figure: "It is not possible to join serpentine wisdom with the columbine simplicity, except men know all the conditions of the serpent."—*Advancement of Learning*, ii. 21, 9.

¹⁷ Gregorovius thinks that there are too many arguments both ways, for us to form a decided opinion.—*Lucrezia Borgia* II. c. v. Pastor is confident that it was Roman fever, and goes fully into the medical question.—*Gesch. der Päpste*, iii. 471-2. Dr. Garnett argues strongly against poison, *English Historical Review*, 1894, ix. 335-9. —Creighton, iv. 43-4.

¹⁸ See *César Borgia*. Par Charles Yriarte. Paris, 1889.

The Borgia policy is set out with much reason and force in Bishop Creighton's *History of the Popes*, bk. v. ch. xi. vol. iv. pp. 44-53. Also the character of Cæsar Borgia, pp. 64-6. Dr. Pastor, writing from the Catholic point of view, does not shrink from a completely candid estimate of Alexander VI.—See *Gesch. der Päpste*, iii.

¹⁹ The saying of Cosmo de' Medici, *Ist. fior.* lib. vii., where Machiavelli reports others of his sayings, and gives a vivid account of Cosmo.

Bacon tells us in characteristic language that Henry VII. desired to bring celestial honour into the house of Lancaster, and begged Pope Julius to canonise Henry VI.; but Julius refused, as some said, because the king would not come to his rates, more probably, however, because he knew that Henry VI. was a very simple man, and he did not choose to let the world suppose that saint and simpleton were the same thing.—*History of Henry VII.*; *Works*, vi. 233 (Spedding and Heath).

²⁰ Ferrari, *Hist. de la raison d'État*, 300. "Per la fè il tutto lice," *Ger. Lib.* iv. 26.

²¹ "Frederick the Great of Prussia, in November 1760, published military instructions for the use of his generals, which were based on a wide, practical knowledge of the matter. . . . When he could not procure himself spies among the Austrians, owing to the careful guard which their light troops kept around their camp,

the idea occurred to him, and he acted on it with success, of utilising the suspension of arms that was customary after a skirmish between hussars, to make these officers the means of conducting epistolary correspondence with the officers on the other side. 'Spies of compulsion,' he explained in this way. When you wish to convey false information to an enemy, you take a trustworthy soldier and compel him to pass to the enemy's camp to represent there all that you wish the enemy to believe. You also send by him letters to excite the troops to desertion; and in the event of its being impossible to obtain information about the enemy, Frederick prescribes the following: Choose some rich citizen who has land and a wife and children, and another man disguised as his servant or coachman, who understands the enemy's language. Force the former to take the latter with him to the enemy's camp to complain of injuries sustained, threatening him that if he fails to bring the man back with him after having stayed long enough for the desired object, his wife and children shall be hanged and his house burnt. 'I was myself,' he adds, 'constrained to have recourse to this method, and it succeeded.'—Maine, *International Law*, 150-51.

²² "A monarch's promises," Alva writes to Philip II. (1753), "were not to be considered so sacred as those of humbler mortals. Not that the king should directly violate his word, but at the same time," continued the Duke, "I have thought all my life, and I have learned it from the Emperor, your Majesty's father, that the negotiations of kings depend upon different principles from those of us private gentlemen who walk the world; and in this manner I always observe that your Majesty's father, who was so great a gentleman and so powerful a prince, conducted his affairs."—Motley, *Dutch Republic*, pt. 3, ch. 9.

More than one historian has pointed out as a merit

of Louis XI. (1461-83), that it was he who substituted in government intellectual means for material means, craft for force, Italian policy for feudal policy. There was plenty of lying and of fraud, but it was a marked improvement in the tactics of power to put persuasion, address, skilful handling of men, into the place of impatient, reckless resort to naked force. Since the days of Louis XI., so it is argued, we have made a further advance; we have introduced publicity and open dealing instead of lies, and justice instead of egotism.—Guizot's *Hist. de la civilisation en Europe*, xi. p. 307.

²³ The late Lord Lytton delivered a highly interesting address, on *National and Individual Morality Compared*, when he was Lord Rector at Glasgow, and he said this about the case of the Duc d'Enghien: "The first Napoleon committed many such offences against private morality. But the language of private morality cannot be applied to his public acts without limitations. The kidnapping of the Duc d'Enghien, and his summary execution after a sham trial, was about as bad an act as well could be. But I should certainly hesitate to describe it as a murder in the ordinary sense. Morally, I think, it was worse than many murders for which men have been tried and punished by law. But I do not think that the English Government in 1815 could, with any sort of propriety, have delivered up Napoleon to Louis XVIII., to be tried for that offence like a common criminal."

²⁴ *Popular Government*. By Sir. Henry Maine. (1885), p. 99.

A recent German pamphlet (*Promachiavelli*, von Friedrich Thudichum: Stuttgart, 1897) hopes for a second Machiavelli, who will trace out for us, "with rich experiences and a genial artistic hand," the inner soul of the Jesuit and of the Demagogue.—P. 107.

²⁵ See an interesting chapter by Professor Nys of Brussels, *Les Publicistes espagnols du 16ième siècle* (1890).

²⁶ Nys, *Les Précurseurs de Grotius*, p. 128.

During the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries Machiavelli's maxims became the centre of a large body of literature, of which the reader will find a full account in Ferrari's *Hist. de la raison d'État*, part ii. Some interesting points on the Neo-Machiavellism of the nineteenth century are marked by Henry Sidgwick, in his little volume *Practical Ethics* (1898), pp. 52-83.

THE END

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