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ASPECTS OF HISTORY

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A PAGEANT OF HISTORY
A SHORT HISTORY OF RELIGIONS
THE STORY OF DICTATORSHIP
AS I REMEMBER
ETC .

ASPECTS OF HISTORY

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E. E. KELLETT



'Our Story is so exhausted, that to make it
new they *make it new*' — HORACE WALPOLE
to GEORGE MONTAGU, *December 8th*, 1761

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ASPECTS OF HISTORY

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

HISTORY, as Freeman was never tired of telling us, is *one*. The words Ancient, Medieval, and Modern, as applied to it, have no distinct meaning; at the best, they denote, mere convenient halting-places. Men, amid all changes, remain essentially the same, and you can no more mark off one age from another than you can say of the individual man, 'Here youth ends and maturity begins'.

This may be so, though it is certain that some periods seem to show far more rapid and even catastrophic changes than others, and that the interval between 1780 and 1796, for instance, was really wider than that between 1720 and 1780. To most of us now living, 1914 marks an epoch. But, be Freeman right or wrong, and let history be as single as you please, it remains undeniable that historians are many, and that their ideas of the art they practise are almost as numerous as the practitioners. Some of them, indeed, do not regard it as an art at all; it is a science. Others, to all appearance, have formulated no definition of it whatever; like the Bourgeois Gentleman, they have written historical prose without knowing what they were doing. It would seem that some have regarded it as a kind of poetry, and have permitted themselves a more than poetic licence. To many it has been a branch of ethics,

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and to many others a series of illustrations of lessons in politics. There have been histories trying to show that the hand of God has guided the destinies of nations; and there have been histories the whole tendency of which is to suggest that, from the day when God saw all his work that it was good, he has left it severely alone. Certain writers, with a pathetic belief that truth lies somewhere, and can be found if the search is patient enough, seek it in public archives, and painfully extract it by comparison of documents: if it eludes us in print, it can be detected in manuscript, and still more probably in cipher. Certain others, agreeing with Sir Robert Walpole that history must be false, say, 'At any rate we can make the falsehood picturesque'. The past may be a phantom, and their representation of it still more visionary; but they will make their readers say, 'Verweile doch, du bist so schon'.

All these conceptions, and many others, often confusedly mingled together, sometimes more or less clearly held, sometimes only vaguely perceived, have been harboured by historians since history began; and there has been no steady and consistent progress, no gradual but visible emergence of a distinct idea. There is still little agreement among historians as to what they should aim at, and probably even less among their readers and critics. As is so often the case, the movement of thought has been rather circular or at best spiral than straightforward: the 'latest views' of one moment give way to later, which bear a remarkable similarity to some which had been discarded as out

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of date fifty or sixty years before. 'The rough road',
like that in Dr. Johnson's Popian parody,

'returning in a round,
Mocks our enchanted steps, for all is
fairy ground'.

In certain cases, even individual historians have wavered in their conception of the nature of their task, or of the character of their predecessors. Macaulay, for instance, in early days felt a special aversion from the 'school of Plutarch'. In later years he altered his opinion entirely. Nay, there was a mood in which, musing over the graves in a churchyard, he caught himself wondering whether, after all, science might not be 'a blind man's guess, and history a nurse's tale'. He certainly did not always feel thus. The dozen years he spent over the work which was 'the business and the pleasure of his life' had their moments of depression, but he never gave way to the fancy that he was writing mere old wives' fables.

It might seem, then, a waste of energy to spend time in disentangling so confused a web of thought; the work of analysing history might turn out to resemble some of those actual histories of countries or periods in which there is nothing to record but an aimless series of palace-revolutions or rebellions, the actors being guided by no discoverable principle, and over them, 'high arbiter', chance governing all; such a period, in fact, as the year of anarchy which succeeded the death of Nero, in which three Emperors arose and perished, in which armies fought without knowing why,

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and which Tacitus would probably have thought not worth recording if it had not, by a happy concurrence of events, been succeeded by a time of comparative order under Vespasian.

But there is this difference, that we shall be dealing with *ideas*, which, however confused and contradictory they may seem, are always worth studying, unlike *actions*, which may often be all but purposeless. Men may think wrongly, hastily, or inconsistently, but the inspection of their thoughts throws light upon their minds. Nor is it impossible that, as men are the creatures of their times, we may discover, by investigating how historians have viewed ages preceding their own, something of what their own age was like. A Macaulay, for example, could not have written as he did about the seventeenth century if he had not been a child of the nineteenth; and thus, in reading of the reign of William III, we learn incidentally a good deal about the reign of Victoria. As we study Froude on Henry VIII, we see, in a mirror, and not too darkly, the effect, on minds cast in certain moulds, of the reaction against the Oxford Movement of the 1830's. Behind Herodotus's narrative of the Persian War, lie the hope, the glow, and the indomitable spirit of the Athenian people, born of the God-aided victory in that tremendous struggle, and impelling the historian to dare the startling utterance, a paradox to many of his hearers, that 'democracy is a good thing'. We need not go back to Greek times for illustrations. Chateaubriand, De Maistre, Schlegel, in their different ways, viewed history in the light of the Revolution and the Napo-

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leonic Wars through which they had recently passed; Hegel, in the shadows of the rising Prussian State. A history written in, or just after, the War of 1914 has a peculiar tone, which surprises us as we listen to it to-day: and a life of Julius Caesar has lately been written, every page of which shows that the Italian author is thinking of Mussolini.

If, then, this rapid sketch may seem to begin anywhere and to lead nowhere, if it ends, or rather stops, in uncertainty with scarcely a hint as to a final decision in any future that can reasonably be forecast, it yet may have its utility, as what is called a human document. It was said long ago that perhaps the best way of observing mankind is to study great men, in whom the qualities of us all are seen, as it were, on an enlarged scale. If this is so, the study of historians and their theories has a double advantage. Among them are some of the greatest of men, and their business has been to consider and appraise other great men; to analyse their motives, weigh their successes, and explain their failures. Such a study as ours, if not, as some have thought, the only one worth pursuing, is at any rate one of the highest open to the searcher after truth.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY AS THEOLOGY

APART from genealogies, and brief chronicles which may be compared to a Delarue's Pocket Diary, prose is later, and probably immensely later, than verse: and if we are in search of anything in primitive ages at all approaching history in our sense of the word, we must seek it in poetry, which, of course, may be, in one sense, truer than plain prose, but certainly allows itself considerable licence in dealing with fact. A court-bard, having to relate the deeds of the chief on whom he depended for a livelihood, or those of the chief's ancestors, would indulge himself in exaggeration when the deeds were insignificant, and in invention when they were altogether lacking. Thus, to take but one example, Pentaur's account of the exploits of Ramses at the battle of Kadesh can hardly be taken *au pied de la lettre*. Deserted by every prince and captain, the Pharaoh was left alone in the midst of two thousand five hundred Hittite chariots. He called his warriors, but they came not; and then he cried to his father Amon, lord of Egypt; and his prayer was heard. 'I hurled the dart with my right hand, I fought with my left hand: I was like Baal in his hour. The thousands of chariots were dashed in pieces, the earth was covered with the slain, and the king of the vile Hittites fled in terror. Six times did they renew the charge, and six times did I break them to pieces.'

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It is plain then, that to this 'historian' history is poetry, and poetry is flattery. So far as can be judged from the treaty which followed the battle, Ramses had at best avoided defeat. But a mere draw is not sufficiently exciting for a poet who has to earn his daily bread. Out of the simple fact that there had been a desperate struggle between Egyptians and Hittites, he manufactures an epic. This early historian's conception of history, then, is that, while it must contain a kernel of truth, it admits, or rather demands, all the embroidery appropriate to literature. In this respect the man of 1300 B.a resembles those writers of three thousand years later who, if the details of a certain battle were lacking, filled up the outline with the description of another. But notice also that the poem is not only a glorification of Pharaoh; it is a hymn of praise to Amon, and by implication a belittling of the Hittite deities.

Here it shows affinity with the chronicles of the Assyrian monarchy, whose accounts, generally written in the first person, never fail to give honour to Asshur or some other tutelary Ninevite god. Although the inscriptions of Shalmaneser or Sennacherib are but so many boastful paragraphs, they somehow contrive, at the same time as they proclaim the glory of the king, to preach a kind of theological doctrine; one not very exalted, it is true, but sufficient to make the document something more than a mere register of bare facts. Adad-nirari's throne is made firm by Asshur, and the King walketh in the service of Asshur his Lord, who hath caused the princes of the four regions to bow

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before his name. 'I went against Syria, and shut up the king thereof within the walls of Damascus; the fear and terror of Asshur seized upon him, and he took my feet and did homage/ Not dissimilar is the famous inscription of Mesha the King of Moab: he has reconquered cities and annexed territories, but it is Chemosh his god who has urged him on and given him the victory. Wherever, in fact, we find a mention of war in ancient times, the lesson, implied or overt, is that a triumph is due to the favour of the national god, a defeat to his righteous anger with his people, and by no means to any superiority in the hostile divinity, or in the valour of the foe. Apart from the peculiar Semitism of the language, we might be reading a history of the Crusades — no matter whether Christian or Moslem. Nay, the underlying tone reminds one strangely of Treitschke, pointing out how a Teutonic Providence has assisted the arms of Moltke against the godless Gauls. The early English histories of Napoleon, like Southey's 'Ode of 1814', are a sermon on the text that 'God had given deliverance to the oppressed, and, to the injured, power'.

In such a mood, it was of course inevitable that the truth had occasionally to be manipulated. Even Asshur was not always triumphant, and Chemosh at times refrained from going forth with his armies; and, as Pentaur was fain to make a drawn battle into a magnificent triumph, so the Assyrian annalists, in one way or another, saved the faces of their gods. There is a long list of the cities conquered by Sennacherib—'Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad, of Sepharvaim,

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Henah, and Ivvah?' — but there is no mention of the disaster of Pelusium. *That* catastrophe is left to the Hebrew historian, who, exactly as we might expect, ascribed it to the direct agency of the Hebrew God: 'the Angel of Yahweh went forth in the night, and smote an hundred and fourscore and five thousand of them'.

The Hebrew chronicles, in fact, are all, in varying measure, sermons of this kind: the truth is always subordinate to the lesson to be drawn from it; occasionally, it is to be feared, the truth is deliberately ignored, or even somewhat perverted to suit the prepossessions of the historian. Let the reader, for example, take a glance at the Book of Judges. Here he will find a number of traditions, not unlike those collected by Blind Harry on William Wallace. Doubtless they floated about, and were passed from mouth to mouth for centuries: stories of the marvellous deeds of tribal heroes, who, at the head of a few hundreds, had scattered thousands of oppressors, or who, by craft rather than by force, had slipped into the tyrants sleeping-chamber, had slain him, and had miraculously escaped. At length some penman, in order that these tales should not die, wrote them down; sometimes, in fact, he wrote down two or more versions of a tale as he heard them in different places. Then comes, how much later we do not know, the man we may call the 'historian'. He is a philosopher of a kind, imbued with what is known as 'Deuteronomism', the theory that national disasters are due to national apostasy. Obey the Law and victory will be yours; desert Yahweh, and defeat will follow,

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If the children of Israel will but keep the statutes written in the Book, then five of their warriors will chase a hundred, and ten will put thousands to flight: if the Chosen People neglect the commandments and the statutes and the judgments, they will go up against the enemy in one way, and flee from him in many ways. Nor will this be all; they will be smitten with the plagues of Egypt; their bodies will be racked with disease, and their fields will be devastated by myriads on myriads of locusts. They will go down prematurely to the land of darkness and the shadow of death, where the very light is an almost impenetrable gloom. The converse is also true: if you are unfortunate, you have abandoned Yahweh, and if you die young, you are one of the wicked, who shall not live out half their days. This was the doctrine which roused the flaming indignation of Job, and to which his three friends clung until they were rebuked by Yahweh himself. It was also the doctrine of the editor of the Book of Judges as we have it.

Fortunately, he did not distort the old tales. He simply copied them out; but he added a commentary instructing his readers as to the principles by which they were to interpret them. At the head of the separate sections he placed a prefatory note: 'And the children of Israel did evil in the eyes of Yahweh, and he sold them into the hands of this oppressor or that, who for three or twenty years mightily crushed them. Then they cried unto him, and he raised up a deliverer — Othniel, Ehud, Gideon; and they served Yahweh while the deliverer lived. When he died, they fell away

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again, and were sold once more. Not only is the motif thus repeatedly stated in brief, but it is laid down for us in full before the illustrative stories are told. 'They forsook Yahweh, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, and bowed themselves down unto them, and provoked him to anger. Therefore he delivered them into the hands of spoilers, and sold them into the hands of enemies, so that they could not stand before them. Whithersoever they went, the hand of Yahweh was against them for evil and not for good, and they were sore distressed. And Yahweh raised up judges, which saved them out of the hand of the spoilers. And he saved them all the days of the judge, for it repented him because of their groaning by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them. But it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they turned back and corrupted themselves worse than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them; they ceased not from their doings, nor from their stubborn way. And the anger of Yahweh was kindled against Israel, and he said, "Because this nation have transgressed my covenant, and have not hearkened to my voice, I also will not henceforth drive out any of the nations which are left, that I may prove Israel, whether they will keep my way to walk therein, or not"/'

As I said, the author of Judges, though thus interpreting the narratives, has not altered the text; and for this we owe him thanks. He has thus left us some most valuable specimens of legend and folk-lore. Other Old Testament writers, however, have been less scrupulous or perhaps less simple-minded. There is every

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reason to believe that the authors of the Books of Samuel and Kings, honest in purpose as we may well imagine them to have been, could not help giving a theological twist to their materials, and doing a certain amount of injustice to some of the actors. Thus Saul, who had failed in his attempt to save Israel from Philistia, was by that very failure shown to have incurred the anger of the national God. Why else should Yahweh, the deity of the mountains, have permitted his people to suffer a frightful disaster on Mount Gilboa? The historian therefore searches for some sin, committed long before, which justifies the God in sending an evil spirit to trouble his anointed, and finds it in his clemency to a conquered Amalekite. Thenceforward the unhappy man is a 'limed soul, which, struggling to be free, is more engaged*'; until finally he and his dynasty are overwhelmed in a common ruin.

In the subsequent history, too, we find clear traces of a similar bias. Writing under the influence of the belief of centuries later, the historians judge the character of the kings according to their observance or non-observance of a law of which they had never heard. Even 'good* rulers are censured for not removing the 'high places' — which is as if an Akbar or a Haroun-al-Raschid should be condemned for his ignorance of Christianity. No energy, no ability, counts as a make-weight for the 'idolatry*' of those who set up altars at Dan or Bethel. Of Omri, for instance, we hear little more than that he did evil in the eyes of Yahweh, according to the ways of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. As far as we can gather, Omri

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was a most capable and sagacious ruler, so famous indeed that on the Assyrian monuments even Jehu, the ruthless destroyer of his house, is called his son; and the 'evil he did in the eyes of Yahweh' consisted simply in maintaining an old-established worship at two independent shrines. Not till long afterwards was it part of the orthodox creed that 'in Jerusalem ought men to worship'. The writer has transferred the ideas of his own time to previous ages in which those ideas had no place; and hence every single king of the Northern tribes receives a censure which, whatever may have been his faults, he did not deserve. The Chronicler shows the same tendency in an exaggerated form. Not merely does he omit or alter what does not suit his peculiar religious beliefs; a Levite himself, he ascribes to the priests and Levites a position which, in the times of which he treats, they certainly did not hold; and he invents a number of 'Midrashim,' or stories with a purpose, the lessons of which are intended to exalt the priesthood, and to proclaim that, when the hierarchy is duly honoured, victory abroad is assured, and tranquillity at home is maintained. He goes still further than the Deuteronomist. Uzziah's leprosy is due to his intrusion on the Temple-services, which in the Chronicler's view were the affair of the priests alone, but which certainly in Uzziah's time were not thus regarded. The sins of David and Solomon are skilfully disguised; and even Yahweh is relieved of an awkward scandal. In the Book of Samuel it was the God himself who stirred up David to number the people. This did not harmonize with the theological views of the Chron-

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icler's time. The growth of religion, aided by contact with Persian influences, has provided him with a convenient scapegoat. It is now, therefore, Satan that stands up against Israel, and provokes the King to the sacrilegious census. The character of a deity who could first tempt David to a sin, and then punish him and his whole people for it, is thus rehabilitated. After this, it is easy for us to swallow stories about the discomfiture of an arrryj of eight hundred thousand by the agency of a band of priests blowing their trumpets.

We smile at this naive 'pragmatism'; but it has its parallel in much more modern times, and indeed is hardly dead yet. Bossuet's *Histoire Universelle* is an attempt to read history in the light or shadow of the Roman Church. The world has prospered when it has submitted to the Papacy, and has suffered Providential misery when it has rebelled. Those countries which have accepted the Catholic religion have been visibly, and materially, favoured by God; those which have rejected it, even if ignorantly, have been manifestly punished, not only in the next world, but in this, for their contumacy. 'The anger of the Lord has been kindled against them, and he has sold them into the hands of spoilers who have oppressed and vexed them/ With slight differences, due to a wider knowledge, the tone of the Gallican Bishop is that of the Hebrew prophet, and not rarely approaches that of the Temple official. Much later, the chief objection of Acton and Richard Simpson to the method of Buckle was that it 'degraded the history of mankind, and of the dealings of God with man, to the level of one of the natural

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sciences'; and these two Catholic writers refused to see any merit, or even any truly historical character, in a so-called history which could not be made, in some way or other, to serve the cause of religion — that is, of Romanism.¹ In more recent days, Mr. Belloc's histories have almost uniformly been devoted to proving that the world has prospered or otherwise in proportion to its attachment or hostility to the Roman faith. On the Protestant side there have been many books fashioned on a similar principle, though dedicated to a different end. There are passages in Dr. Arnold's books which show that he read even Roman history with a side-glance at Christianity.² Baron Bunsen wrote a book called *The Hand of God in History* in which divine judgments were sought out and paraded in a style not unlike that of Deuteronomist, and an English book was written, about 1860, with the same title, the same intent, but less knowledge and ability. And this idea has been announced by professors of the philosophy of history as the principle which ought to guide practical historians in the conduct of their work. Thus Friedrich Schlegel, who at one time enjoyed a high reputation, lays it down that, 'the providence of God extends to all events and circumstances in the world. Every permission, therefore, of evil,

¹ I incline to think this sentence is rather Simpson's than Acton's; for no author, Catholic, Protestant, or of no religion, is fairer than Acton, or less inclined to pervert facts in the interest of his creed.

² See, for example, his 'Life of Trajan', contributed to the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana*: and especially the chapter on the philosophers. 'The sophists were without that discipline which in the Christian church checked the excesses of individual teachers.'

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every misfortune or calamity which happens to us, must be regarded either as a well-merited punishment or as a severe trial; as a wholesome pang or as a painful transition to a higher degree of perfection. Accordingly throughout the sacred history of the old world, and in all times when religion is not dead, such calamities are looked upon as the deserved visitation of God's wrath.' And he proceeds from these premisses to argue that 'the Christian principle of the State is more favourable to hereditary monarchy than to a Republican constitution'. He cannot, of course, deny that God has permitted the existence of Republics; such forms of government must therefore be in some measure in accordance with his will; but it is plain, from the fate of the English Commonwealth, of Holland, of Poland, that he prefers Kings to Presidents and Stadholders. Even despotisms may be justified as necessary evils, or as remedies for more fearful disorders. The republics of Greece fell a prey to Macedon; the Emperors of Rome failed to sustain the Empire because, though they were monarchs, they were not hereditary. 'Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht'; God, by seeing to it that these systems did not last, showed that he disapproved of them.

Now it is plain that the historian to whom views like these appeal will be under the strongest temptation to play tricks with the facts which appear to discredit them. He may slur them over, omit to mention them, or explain them away. He may, if they are too stubborn to yield to such treatment, transform himself into a prophet, and proclaim that the obnoxious constitu-

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tions, though successful, by Divine permission, for the time, will not last. It was thus that many monarchical theorists dealt with the phenomenon of the American Republic, which was a standing contradiction of all their favourite dogmas. It might seem imposing, but 'the triumphing of the wicked was short'. The States would give themselves up to a single ruler; they would break up into a score of independent despotisms; they would dissolve in anarchy. How long America had to survive if it was to prove that God could put up with her Republicanism, these soothsayers did not venture to predict. Even when she had lasted a hundred and sixty years, they had their explanation. True, they would answer; but a millennium is with God as a day.

There is, in fact, something at once pathetic and ridiculous in the confidence with which such people profess to detect the great purposes of God. Hegel, for instance, who proved, just before Ceres was discovered, that God could never be so illogical as to create more than seven planets, was certain that he had been born in the last epoch of the world, that no further advance was possible, that he himself had said the final word as to the Absolute, and that the whole creation, from the beginning, had been groaning and travailing in pain together in order to produce the Prussian monarchy. Nature had tried her prentice hand in Egypt, in Assyria, in Greece, in Rome; and then she made the Hohenzollerns, in whom the elements were so mixed that she might stand up and say to all the world, 'Here is the heir of all the ages, the ultimate

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perfection'. As a cause, and also as a consequent, of this theory, Hegel's knowledge of history is, by the unanimous consent of historians, inexact and incomplete.

Religion is a good thing, but it is an unsafe guide for the historical generalizer. The human story is like Nature; it half reveals and half conceals the soul within: and which half of it is the revelation and which the concealment it is probably impossible for the keenest eye to decide. Long since, it was proclaimed by the wisest of religious teachers that we have no right to assume that the victims of a certain massacre were sinners above their contemporaries; and it is clear therefore that the losers in a battle or in a war are not necessarily more villainous than the victors. When a rainstorm made the chariots of Sisera, which were his chief strength, useless against Barak's light infantry, it was natural that the Hebrew writer should see in it the hand of Yahweh punishing the iniquity of the Canaanite; nor was it surprising that the Elizabethan English should ascribe the defeat of the Armada to him who blew with his winds and discomfited his adversaries; but there are too many instances in which the rightful cause has found the rain or the wind against it for us to imagine that Yahweh always intervenes to help the innocent against the guilty. He moves in a mysterious way, and he seems, usually, to be on the side of the big battalions. Nor even in the long run, whatever that may mean, does he seem invariably to declare for the righteous cause. No war was ever more wantonly unjust than the Third Punic War. Yet it resulted in

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the complete triumph of the aggressor; and the world has waited two thousand years, and still waits, for the injustice to be rectified. We must seek somewhere else for an explanation of the curiously wavering march of world-events: and we may or may not be able to find it.

CHAPTER III

HISTORY AS LITERATURE

THAT history when once it has left behind mere statistics, dates, inscriptions, and the other bare bones of fact, can become a branch of literature, is obvious: for such it has become. Not for nothing is Herodotus called the Father of History; if we can judge from the little we know of his predecessor Hecataeus, that writer's work consisted of nothing, or hardly anything, but a series of more or less disconnected records. Herodotus, on the other hand, conceived his task as a kind of prose epic, and Aristotle would have recognized in it the main virtues of an epic, unity of plan, a beginning, a middle and an end. Starting with the idea of an age-long contention between Europe and Asia, he goes on to show how this contention finally — at least as far as it was possible for the keenest eye to see in his time — culminated in the great struggle which was decided by Salamis and Plataea. Amid all his digressions, this central idea is ever kept in mind. He tells how Croesus was the first Oriental to enslave Greek cities; how Croesus fell in turn before Cyrus, and how the whole East, as then known, was subjugated by Cambyses and Darius. When Persia attacks a country, he pauses to tell that country's story, as for instance he devotes a whole book to an account of Egypt, because Persian expansion has brought Egypt into the purview of his scheme; but he does not allow either himself or

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his readers to lose themselves, like an invading army, in that Serbonian morass. The relations of Greece with Egypt are carefully noted — for Greece is one half of his main theme — and, at the end of his digression, he returns simply and naturally to the height of his great argument. In the exact centre of his work comes the crucial point — the help given by Athens to her Milesian kinsmen in their revolt against Darius, and the burning of Sardis, which leads directly to the first Persian invasion of the Hellenic homeland; and from that point he carries us on, with constant intensification of the tone, to the great assault of Xerxes, and its failure through Athenian courage and the divine help. This is as much an artistic literary whole as the Iliad on which it is clearly modelled.

But there is more in it than this. Herodotus knows that, to be literary, a history must appeal to its public, whether the public be listeners or hearers; it must be *interesting*. The object of poetry is to give pleasure, and therefore the historian must give pleasure also. That Herodotus has succeeded in this aim is attested by the unanimous consent of seventy generations and scores of peoples. And this effect was not accidental; it was as strenuously worked for as the purpose of Macaulay to write the history of England in such a manner as to eclipse the popular novel of the day in the opinion of young ladies. This is the reason why so many episodes are introduced, so many little anecdotes, and, in part perhaps, so many omens or prophecies. A quotation from the poets, Aristotle tells us, was a necessary ingredient in professional lectures in Athens, to rouse the

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flagging attention of the students and prevent slumber: and many of Aristotle's own lectures show that he took the hint to himself. Herodotus was not dealing with so abstruse a subject as metaphysics, and the dose of verse was not so frequently required with his readings as with those of a Protagoras or a Hippias; but he gives it when required, in the shape of an oracle or a proverbial saying from some dramatist or egoist.

None the less, this literary gift has its perils, and Herodotus did not always escape them. We need not class him, as he has been classed, with Fernan Mendez Pinto or Sir John Mandeville, among the greatest of all purveyors of 'travellers' tales'. Nor need we, like the author of the tract *De Malignitate Herodoti*, charge him with worse than mendacity. But the fact remains that, like Sir Walter Scott and other raconteurs, he could not resist a good story, and, when he had found one, could not help 'giving it a new hat and stick'. He listened sympathetically to his informants, some of whom, it is more than likely, saw his sympathy and played on it with tall stories, to see how far they could go without overburdening his credulity. Who told him the exact words whispered by Artabanus to Xerxes in the royal bedchamber? one would like to know; and still more willingly would we learn who was listening to the debate of the Seven Conspirators as to the relative merits of forms of government. Occasionally his informants were not human, and therefore presumably could not lie; but he interpreted their accounts into falsehood nevertheless. Thus, in the story of the battle of Plataea, he tells how the harem of a Persian prince

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was captured by the victorious Greeks. Among the ladies taken was one from the island of Cos. When brought before the Spartan king, she proved to be the daughter of one of his close friends; and Pausanias had the happiness of restoring her to her father. This is a tale which even Grote accepted without hesitation; and it is certainly one which we all feel ought to be true. But Verrall has made it extremely probable that it is simply Herodotus's conjectural explanation of an inscription on a group of statuary. Still, we must all own that, if invented, it was better than a good many fully authenticated tales; and it might, as a picture of what must often have happened in ancient times, be chosen as an illustration of Browning's saying that 'fiction which makes fact alive is fact too*.

On the other hand, like so many credulous people, Herodotus was often sceptical, and sometimes doubted in the wrong place. Like Marryat's Pasha of Many Tales, who could listen without turning a hair to the most impossible stories poured into his ear by a sailor, but jibbed when Jack at last told him about a duckbill, so Herodotus could swallow many falsehoods, but refused to believe a truth. The famous circumnavigation of Africa by the Phoenician sailors of Pharaoh Necho, he accepted, and rightly, as a whole, but the one point which convinces modern historians he could not away with. The sailors declared that, as they passed the Cape of Good Hope, they had the sun on their right, though they were sailing west: and this, excusably enough in a man who had never conceived the idea of the Equator, Herodotus would not believe.

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We may further detect in him a tendency, less clearly marked than in the Hebrew historians, to what we may call theologizing; and in a certain measure it leads him astray. To Greeks, two ideas, more strongly than any others, dominated their conception of the world-order. These were Hybris and Nemesis — overweening arrogance in man, and the divine retributive judgment which attends it. The gods are watchful and jealous; they will not suffer a man to be too fortunate. It becomes the lucky man, therefore, to be humble and always to keep before his mind the chance, or rather the certainty, that fortune will change. Croesus, too haughty in his riches and prosperity, is bidden 'to call no man happy till his death'; and the warning of Solon, disregarded at first, is remembered later. Polycrates, crowned with too invariable success, tries in vain to propitiate Nemesis by throwing his precious ring into the sea. The ring is miraculously recovered, and his ally, Amasis of Egypt, breaks off relations with him lest he should be entangled in the certain doom he sees to be coming. Xerxes, when his bridge of boats is shattered by a tempest, scourges the Hellespont; this is Hybris, and the answer of Nemesis is the defeat of his navy. A division of his forces attacks Delphi and his army does not spare even the temples of the Grecian gods. The gods do not forget.

It is probable that there were not a hundred men in all Greece who would not have agreed with Herodotus in this: and fewer still who would have dared to express their disagreement. Possibly Anaxagoras may have whispered his doubts to Pericles, and — if the story is

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true that Thucydides listened to Herodotus as he recited the History—there will have been on that stern face a grim sceptical smile as he heard these moralizings. But Aeschylus, had he lived to hear, would have gravely approved, and the throng of lesser men must have clapped their hands. Yet we ought not to fail to see that this pious and natural belief has betrayed the historian into welcoming too effusively stories which seemed to bear out the theory. The conversation between Solon and Croesus cannot have taken place; it is demolished by the irrefragable evidence of chronology. It is in fact a sophistical 'Midrash' like Prodicus's Choice of Hercules; and Herodotus has taken it literally as, till lately, Biblical students took the Midrash of Jonah. It is possible, again, as Grote believed, that Amasis deserted Polycrates not because he was moved by the story of the ring, but by the more solid conviction that the tyrant was so utterly faithless as to make an alliance with him rather a danger than a safeguard.

The 'Hybris*' of Xerxes was no more likely to be understood by a Greek than the arrogance of King Herod, in accepting the flatteries of the Tyrians, was likely to meet with sympathy from the orthodox Pharisee: and Nemesis was sure to overtake the one as the Angel of the Lord was sure to smite the other. But, without denying either the pride of the Persian or the vainglorious accommodation of the Jew, we can to-day see extenuating circumstances. The Tyrians had for centuries been accustomed to regard kings as gods, and the crime of Herod consisted simply in not reject-

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ing a form of adulation, more or less empty, which he had himself employed in dealing with the Emperor in Rome. Xerxes, on the other hand, not only was held by his subjects to be divine, but was convinced of the fact himself. When, then, the Hellespont, an inferior divinity, a mere river-demon, had the insolence, the 'Hybris', to destroy his ships, he was acting quite in accordance with Persian sentiment in treating it, or rather him, as he would have treated a rebellious slave. It was in a similar spirit that his grandfather Cyrus had dealt with the Gyndes. When that impertinent river drowned one of his sacred white horses, he split it into three hundred and sixty rills, saying that it should thenceforth be no obstacle even to a woman. This, then, was not, in Persian eyes, an arrogant act on the part of Xerxes; it was what, as a divinity, he had every right to do and what would be expected from him by his subjects. Similarly, those attacks on the temples and shrines, so terribly shocking to the Greeks, would seem to the Persians as the destruction of the Canaanite altars seemed to the Israelites, or St. Boniface's felling of the heathen oaks to Christian missionaries. A Persian history, had there been one, would have spoken of these acts of their King and his army in a very different style; and the storms of Artemisium or the disasters of Salamis would either have been omitted altogether, or interpreted so as to suit Persian ideas. Patriotism always knows how to confuse itself with religion; and to the man who wishes to make history a form of literature, one of the obvious motifs for lending unity to his scheme is the religious one.

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Even better examples of the literary conception of history are provided by the Roman writers and their critics. A close and rigid study of authorities, a determination to unearth the truth as far as possible, impartiality in the judgment of men, these were not even secondary virtues. 'The *style* of an historian', says Dr. Arnold, 'was the point on which his character mainly depended. Quintilian, when bringing forward Livy as a rival to Herodotus, extols him merely for the unaffected beauty of his narrative, and the inconceivable eloquence of his speeches — with the same discernment of the real excellences of an historian as he has shown in another passage, where he selects the simple sweetness of Herodotus, and the pithy conciseness of Thucydides, as the merits which have entitled them to the highest place among writers of History.' This panegyric of Livy will now be generally regarded as a severe censure. For, though he posed during a thousand years as a model of accuracy, in so much that Dante speaks of 'Livio che non erra', it is certain that to him the picturesque was far more important than the actual. Did previous writers present him with varying accounts of the same event, then he selected without scruple the one which lent itself the most easily to rhetoric and poetical colouring. He must have known, for instance, that there were narratives of the capture of Rome by the Gauls which spoke of the ransom as actually paid. It was, however, more romantic to represent Camillus as breaking in just after Brennus had thrown his sword into the scale, and driving the barbarians out of the city. He dealt in similar fashion with practically every

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incident in which romance and fact might conflict, regardless of the maxim which even then must, in other words, have been current, 'le romantisme, c'est le faux.'

He had a magnificent subject — the gradual rise of Rome from a petty city on a tiny stream to the empire of the Mediterranean world, from Romulus to Augustus, from barbarism to a civilization which is not yet dead. 'His ego nee metas rerum nee tempora pono.' It was a theme to arouse the keenest patriotism, and to stir in the historian's mind feelings akin to those which moved Milton to write his epic. Unluckily it urged Livy to justify the ways of Rome to man, to palliate her crimes, to gloss over her blunders, and to ascribe to merit what was often the work of chance. Sometimes, to modern minds, this habit becomes ridiculous. The excuses for Roman perfidy after the Caudine Forks are worthy of a pettifogging barrister; and the claim that Alexander, had he invaded Italy, would have met his match in Papirius Cursor is, to use an Oriental expression, enough to excite laughter in the angry, and to dispel anxiety and grief. Still worse is this spirit when it leads to unfairness towards the enemy. The story of the torture and death of Regulus at the hands of the Carthaginians is well enough as the climax of an Ode of Horace; but an honest historian, if he told it at all (and Polybius never mentions it) would at least have hinted a doubt, and hesitated as to his dislike of Carthage.

As the Livian idea of history was that of an epic poem, like that of Virgil, showing 'quantae molis erat

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Romanam condere gentem', it was desirable not only that the whole should be balanced and duly constructed, but that there should be the usual poetic contrasts and make-weights. Men should act as foils to each other, and a victory should be shown as a neat reversal of a disaster. As in the famous character which Livy draws of Hannibal, great virtues must be matched by equal defects, Roman honesty by 'perfidia plusquam Punica.' Even the losses at Cannae must be almost exactly compensated by the Carthaginian losses at the Metaurus. It is as if the Jove of Rome always had a pair of scales in his hand, to mete out a kind of indifferent justice.

That such a writer should be careless of geography is only what is to be expected. He does not seem ever to have consulted a map; and hence his account of Hannibal's marches has been the despair and bewilderment of modern students. 'Never', says Arnold, 'was the history of a great war more uninstrucively written than that of the Second Punic War by Livy/ But Arnold is, I think, mistaken. Livy's narrative of the Second Samnite War is still more uninstrucive: it is an utterly unintelligible account of battles never fought and victories never won, of marches without purpose and treaties without result.

Nevertheless, rhetoric and literary charm being his aim, Livy has achieved it. So long as one does not trouble about inaccuracy or inconsistency, and reads the work as one reads *Kenilworth* or *The Cloister and the Hearth*^ one's enjoyment is without alloy. The speeches, which Livy would appear to have composed first as school-exercises, and then carefully revised, are

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models of oratory — effective to us in the study, however unfit for the occasion or the auditors with which they are associated; and the epigrammatic sarcasms of the Roman private soldiers are often as pointed as the dicta of La Rochefoucauld or the paradoxes of Gilbert Chesterton; and the charm of the style, maintained unflinching through so vast a work, soothes the reader like an opiate. If, in fact, we accept the definition of history which, consciously or unconsciously, Livy had set before him, then his work is probably the greatest of its kind in the world. What difference does it make whether an event happened in this way or in that? We shall never learn *exactly* how it happened, and meanwhile this is a very pretty story. Only let us not, like Machiavelli, generalize on the basis of the stories; for they may not be true.

If even the Roman soldier could use the resources of the Latin language for the purposes of epigram, it may be imagined how effectively those resources might be utilized by one of the greatest masters of the art. Hardly anywhere is such brevity and point to be found as in the pages of Tacitus: and the sensations of the reader as he constantly lights on 'the soul of wit' in many and varied forms, are those of ever-increasing wonder and bewilderment. Something like it may be found in Gibbon's veiled innuendos, and a distant resemblance in that work which Gibbon read through once a year to keep his powers of irony in repair, Pascal's Provincial Letters. But Tacitus is all but unique. It is true that the *blase* society of the Empire, feeling the necessity of strong stimulants, cultivated

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the art of epigram to stir its jaded literary palate, as it sought everywhere new and more powerful condiments for its Apician banquets. I might instance Seneca. His plays are one long series of short, pungent maxims, retorts, neat turns of the rapier — everything is for point: and lesser men followed his example. Crushed by despotism, the nobles found consolation in 'touching off' their rulers in short and telling sentences. Here they would perceive the one superiority of their own language to the Greek; for Latin, more easily than almost any other dialect, lends itself to this kind of speech. A Greek epigram, said Gladstone with truth, has a sort of point, but not too much point. No one could say this of the epigrams of Martial, or of the peculiar sudden turns of Juvenal. Where in Greek is there anything to compare with the deliberate anti-climax of Juvenal's contrast between Orestes and Nero? Orestes, it is true, killed his mother by divine command, but he did not strangle his sister, murder his wife, poison his relatives, sing on the stage, or perpetrate an epic on the Trojan War — a crime justly punished when the proconsul of Gaul rebelled against the imperial poetaster.

Tacitus, then, was in the fashion when he wrote like this, precisely as Shakespeare was in the fashion when he wrote *Venus and Adonis* or the *Sonnets*. He only did the thing, as Shakespeare did, better than anybody else. Unlike Seneca, he shunned the too much. To read the philosopher-playwright, says Macaulay, is like dining profusely on nothing but anchovy sauce; and Seneca's nephew Lucan is like a violinist who gives us hardly anything but bravura passages to display his virtuosity.

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Tacitus keeps the stimulants in due subordination, and heightens their force by contrast. He seems to say, 'I could do that for ever if I chose; but you shall be soothed as well as excited'.

None the less, there can be no doubt that he too was led astray by his literary gift. He was a Republican noble, who regarded the Empire as an unmitigated calamity; and he intensified the shadows of his portraits, dulled the brighter aspects, sacrificed the plain truth to the more lively hyperbole, and often, for the sake of a keen and penetrating brevity, omitted the qualifications which impartiality demanded. Nothing could be more striking than his summary of the gradual degeneration of Tiberius — lofty in life and glory while subordinate to Augustus; crafty in the mimicry of virtue during the lifetime of Germanicus; a blending of good and bad while his mother lived; concealing his vices so long as he loved Sejanus — or feared him; finally rushing into all villainies and debaucheries when he had nothing but his native impulses to follow. It is splendid, but is it true, or even probable?

The speeches, which, like all ancient historians, Tacitus thought it a literary duty to include, we might borrow his own language to characterize. His ordinary narrative might be a blend of good and bad, but the orations allowed him to follow his native impulses, and to rush into the extremes of rhetoric. He has assigned a very remarkable harangue to Claudius, speaking at Lyons. Unluckily, the actual speech survives, and is not at all like the one the historian has put in the Emperor's mouth. No speech of the Caledonian chief

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Galgacus remains; it is uncertain even whether he ever made one; but it *is* certain that, with all his natural hatred of the Romans, he never accused them of 'making a solitude and calling it peace'.

It is the part of a poet or a dramatist to work by contrast; and he may, if writing on an historical basis, so modify history as to bring the contrast out in full relief. This Shakespeare has done repeatedly; Schiller did it in *Wallenstein*; and Aeschylus lends force and meaning to the *Persae* by setting the greatness of Darius against the littleness of his son. So too when the changes in the character of a single man are to be exhibited: the slow decline of a Macbeth, the rapid 'scholarship*' of a Henry V, are clearly marked. Tacitus, a master in character-drawing, knew this, and, I think, somewhat perverted the history in order to bring such contrasts to the fore. Not to refer again to his treatment of Tiberius, we may take one other example, hardly less striking. There are few things in literature more impressive than the story of Otho — spendthrift, voluptuary, flatterer for many years, Roman Emperor for three months. He gains the rule by ruthless bloodshed and by degrading subservience to the passions of the soldiers and the mob. The time comes when he has to defend his conquest. The first battle goes against him; but he has still every chance of prolonging, or even of winning, the war. His men are eager to keep up the struggle; they urge him with tears to lead them against the enemy. But his mind is made up. He will not be guilty of more bloodshed; Roman lives shall not be sacrificed to the ambition of a Roman. Rejecting all entreaties, he bids his attendants

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to withdraw, and by the first noble act of an ignoble life, saves — or rather hopes to save — his country from devastation at the hands of her own sons. 'Strange to say', says Byron, casting a side-glance at this famous scene,

'Strange to say, the sons of pleasure,
They who have revelled beyond measure
In beauty, wassail, wine, and treasure,
Die calm, and calmer oft than he
Whose heritage was misery.'

And now let us see how this admirable piece of stage-craft appears to a modern historian. I quote from Mr. Godley's edition of the *Histories*. 'The rhetorical writers of the early empire (and, I may add, not they only) prefer the charm of striking contrasts and pathetic situations to sober historical truths; and Mommsen holds that Tacitus has, in accordance with this tendency, altered the picture of Otho's catastrophe without altogether abandoning the positive tradition. Plutarch, who is, according to Mommsen, guided by the authority which Tacitus himself follows, asserts that the officers of the beaten army held a council under the presidency of Marius Celsus. Celsus declares that fortune has decided against them, and that a continuance of useless bloodshed cannot be permitted. In this the rest agree, among them Otho's own brother, the commander-in-chief Titianus. Thereupon the generals conclude the capitulation, and the hostile commander is admitted to the camp. This capitulation then was decisive; for even had the conflict been protracted,

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Otho could not expect it to terminate favourably for himself, now that he was abandoned by his main army and could only rely on a few legions and the troops forming his own guard. His sole choice lay between death by his own hand and the sword of the executioner. But Tacitus has preferred to represent him as a voluntary martyr to his own unselfish wish to save his people. We should admire the tragedian, remarks Mommsen, whose skilful colouring and grouping of facts should enable him to raise and ennoble his hero, without at the same time contradicting tradition. But what would be a merit in the poet is a fault in the historian.'

It is these characteristics which have led some modern scholars to deny to Tacitus the very name of an historian. Ferrero, for instance, dubs the *Annals* a mere romance with a purpose; and Mommsen not only scents drama in the account of Otho, but, right in the face of six successive books of increasing sombreness, declares that Tiberius, the terrible monster of Capri, was the greatest and best Emperor Rome ever had. Such is the Nemesis of a Rembrandt-like gift of light and shade.

As Tacitus was not the first, so he was far from the last, to subordinate prosaic fact to literary effect. Even in Thucydides, who took almost superhuman pains to search out and sift the materials of his history, there are, I think, signs that he allowed himself liberties in choosing the way in which he should dress up those materials for his public. No one can say with certainty how many of the speeches he reports were actually delivered, or how far, if delivered, they retain even their substance

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in his pages. His generals, before a battle, have mysterious means of knowing what the opposing generals are saying, and dexterously answer the arguments they cannot have heard. What is still more remarkable, they all speak in the Thucydidean dialect, one so involved and crabbed that no mere auditor could possibly have understood it. On one occasion we are even presented with a long dialogue between Athenian captains and the envoys of a city they have wantonly attacked. It is a most impressive and prophetic scene; for it forebodes the time, soon to arrive, when the aggressors will meet their deserved penalty; and it is easy to see why Thucydides inserted it; but it is about as historical as the dialogue between Jason and Medea in the drama of Euripides. It heightens the coming tragedy; and that is enough.

It would be easy to name scores of historians who, usually with less skill than Thucydides, have practised this literary heightening. Voltaire, Robertson, Hume, have all been blamed by some and praised by others for indulging in it; and certainly they owed their circulation rather to their style than to their accuracy. Carlyle is a notable sinner. As Lowell said, he is always calling down fire from heaven when he cannot lay his hand on the match-box; he prefers lurid lightning to the humble gaslamp, and describes everybody and everything in tremendous terms. A man is useful to him as an opportunity for a crashing phrase, and an event, however small, is given a portentous meaning. Even Mommsen, the censurer of Tacitus, being that rare phenomenon, a German stylist and a skilful literary architect, reveals at

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times the Tacitean faults. He must have his contrasts. He depresses Cicero to exalt Caesar, and in his fervid Imperialism darkens the colours of Republicanism. As for Macaulay, he is the very type of over-colouring. Not merely in his Essays, in which he owned that he deliberately laid it on with a trowel to gain the suffrages of the readers of what he expected to be merely ephemeral articles, but in his carefully-elaborated History, his most anxious revisions seem to have been aimed not at qualifying the tone but at strengthening it. Who does not know how the English people heard some very ordinary and unexciting news with transports of joy, or how to the seared consciences of Buckingham and Shaftesbury (certainly not very tender) the death of an innocent man caused no more uneasiness than the death of a partridge? Hyperbole was Macaulay's natural literary figure of speech, as it is that of the school-boy, and it carried his schoolboy public with him. Similarly with his contrasts. William is thrown into relief by James, England by France. Individual men are pictured, in vigorous and antithetical sentences, as antitheses themselves: Penn is a mingling of honesty and sycophancy, Marlborough a man of the highest genius and the deepest turpitude; Bacon, by an enlargement of Pope's paradox, is shown in detail to have been the wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind. The contradiction between the spiritual pretensions of the clergy and their actual position 'below the salt' is brought out in some lively and vigorous paragraphs. Even the towns are treated in like manner. In that admirable Third Chapter, the first important example of a kind of

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history which has since shown such a marvellous growth, not only is the England of 1685 as a whole set over against that of 1848 in Hogarthian fashion as two companion pictures of the Idle and the Industrious Apprentices, but the Leeds, the Manchester, the Norwich, and even the watering-places of Charles's reign are first described as they were and then, for the self-satisfaction of the Victorians, as they had become. See what we have made of them! They have multiplied in population and their factories are innumerable. By this means statistics are metamorphosed into literature, and tables of hearth-money put on a stylistic charm.

We shall see later that all this was not only Macaulay's practice but his theory. He had sketched out his conception, in his youth, twenty years before.

CHAPTER IV

HISTORY AS PROPAGANDA

As I have already hinted, these chapters must continually cross one another; for few historians have been able, in their practice, to remain consistent with their theory; and few have formed in their minds a single theory on which to work. Human nature has been too strong for them. They may, for example, set out with the determination to be strictly impartial. After a time the glamour of their subject seizes upon them; they are captivated by the voice of some man who being dead yet speaketh, or by the imposing greatness of some system which, though in ruins, still retains the power to awe or to charm, and they insensibly tend to ignore the faults of the one or the wickednesses of the other. As we have seen, they may often, in their natural enthusiasm, become eloquent or rhetorical; and rhetoric and eloquence are rarely the attendants of strict veracity. On the other hand, those qualifications and caveats which truth usually demands can hardly be indulged in without causing dullness in the writer and weariness in the reader. The 'judicial' historian, who is always trying to put the case for both sides, not without a caution that there may be a third, a fourth, or a fifth side well worth consideration, is the historian without a public. Like the judge in Dryden's play, men are annoyed when the defending counsel upsets

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the opinion so admirably insinuated by the prosecution. The judge would have been still more greatly bewildered if the two sides had been presented, with equal signs of conviction, by the same man. There was, not long ago, a theological professor who was determined not to impose his own views on his students. Accordingly, when dealing with ancient dogmas, he never failed to give the Arian or Eutychian theories with absolute fairness, adding 'If there's anything in that.' He then gave the orthodox replies with the same exactitude, adding to them also the same impartial formula. The students, it is perhaps unnecessary to say, would now and then have preferred a touch of human bias.

This is why some critics, and they men of undoubted honesty, have not been ashamed to recommend a certain degree of bias as a necessary ingredient in genuine history. You can have 'objective' annals or chronicles; only 'subjective' records are really worth reading. There are distinguished names among the advocates of this belief. No more learned historian than J. B. Bury has been seen since Acton, and none has thrown a brighter light on the special period he has chosen. He has, it is hardly an exaggeration to say, doubled the worth even of Gibbon. He maintained that, within due limits, historical method should be as scientific as biological. He would, I am sure, be pronounced by all competent judges one of the most scrupulous investigators ever known. Yet what is his considered opinion? 'I do not think freedom from bias is possible, and I do not think it desirable. Whoever writes completely free from bias will produce a colour-

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less and dull work.' He then quotes, confessedly from memory, a saying of that most accurate and open-minded of writers on the English constitution — Bishop Stubbs — 'It seems as if history could not be written without a certain spite', and adds, 'The most effective histories have usually been partial, like those of Tacitus, Gibbon, Macaulay, and Mommsen. Is there any event worth writing about on which the writer can fail to have a definite bias if the subject really engages his interest? Otherwise he cannot hope to produce anything that will engage the attention of the world. No history can be instructive if the personality of the writer is entirely suppressed, however faultless it may be in detail, however carefully the rules of historical method may be applied/

This, I think, is true; but it is one of those awkward truths, of which we meet so many in life, which it is terribly difficult to apply. Bias is good up to a point, and *some* spite lends a tang to history as to social intercourse. But in neither case must it go too far; and it is precisely the 'too far' that arouses dispute. No one would like Tacitus, Macaulay and Gibbon entirely without their prejudices; but there are people whom those prejudices exasperate beyond measure. Slips are ascribed to deliberate malignity, and hyperboles are distorted into sheer falsehoods. How often, recently, have we seen Macaulay called a 'bad' historian because of his treatment of Dundee, a liar because he made a mistake about Marlborough, or no historian at all because his point of view does not appeal to his critic! Nor did the attacks on Gibbon cease with those of

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Davis, Chelsum, or Watson; Coleridge declared that his style was one in which it was impossible to tell the truth; Arnold 'did not dare to use him' at Rugby; and to-day there are many sporadic mutterings. If Momm-sen became a textbook, said Freeman, 'the result would be full of evil not only for historical truth but for political morality also'. The 'spite* which Bury desiderated may spring from the most various causes, and lead to the most various, results. Biographies of a statesman have been not infrequently inspired less by admiration of their hero than by hatred of the hero's rival; there are Lives of Disraeli which are really slanders on Gladstone, and lives of Robespierre which are in effect denunciations of Danton. There was even, as readers of Sydney Smith know, a memoir of Sir Patrick Hume dug out of obscurity and edited by a Tory for the sole purpose of destroying the repute of Fox's *History*. Occasionally a desire of this kind may lead in a most unexpected direction. J. H. Round, for example, would have dearly liked to catch Stubbs out. He was vexed when he found this impossible; Stubbs was too cautious. He therefore devoted himself not so much to tracking the episcopal errors, as to discovering points which the Bishop had failed to find, or to scarifying Stubbs's pupils, who were often less careful than their master.

There are cases in which the spite was so mild that we wonder at the enormous effect it produced. A mighty conflagration is kindled by a very little matter, and a dozen volumes are written because of a slight annoyance. The little one, as the prophet observed,

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becomes a thousand. Again and again the detection of a small error in history has induced the detective to produce, not a pamphlet exposing the mistake, but another history of at least equal size. An instance may be found in the most famous English *History of Greece* — though here the provocative errors were not small but large, not few but many. The point is that great as they were, they caught the attention of a particularly calm man.

Every passion in Grote, except his zeal for the ballot, was rigidly controlled; but one can discover in him a certain indignation at the gross partiality and inaccuracy of Mitford, and we would suspect, even if he had not told us, that the main impulse which led him to compose his twelve volumes was this righteous but tepid wrath. For Mitford is one of the best examples we could choose of the degree of bias which no historian should allow himself. Like Sir Archibald Alison, a less flagrant example, he was convinced that Toryism was the political creed of heaven, and Liberalism the dogma which had driven Satan to his rebellion and caused the expulsion of our first parents from Paradise.¹ This theory, though open to certain objections, would not have mattered so much if it had not led him to distort some facts, to suppress others, and in general to present the whole story in a deceptive light. The force of this spite certainly made his book very popular; like Alison's, it fell in with the prevailing tune of the time, which was, in its terror of Jacobinism, ready to believe any evil of democracy. Mitford was a soldier and a

¹ 'The devil was the first Whig', said Dr. Johnson; and Mitford agreed.

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Member of Parliament; it was not for him to disobey the party whip, or to neglect the Nelsonian precepts, to stick to his gun and hate a Frenchman as he hated the devil. Seeing then in an Athenian nothing but an ancient Parisian, and in Demosthenes at best a Greek Girondin, he let himself go, and let the facts go also. Hence what Grote calls, very kindly, his 'erroneous statements'. What these 'errors' are the reader will find more vigorously characterized in Macaulay's youthful essay. Choosing a single page, Macaulay counts a dozen cases of monstrous inaccuracy, and concludes with the crushing sentence — for once not too 'heightened and telling' — that this historian, when dealing with his pet aversion, the democratic statesman, violates all the laws of candour and even of decency; weighs no authorities, makes no allowances, forgets the best authenticated facts in the history of the times, and the most generally recognized principles of human nature.

One might, then, from the concrete example of Mitford, draw up a code of rules which even the most spiteful historian ought not to disobey. Perhaps we might compare such a writer to an advocate at the Bar, who is, in theory, bound to seek the truth, but is also expected to put the truth in the light most favourable to his client. It is admitted that such an advocate is rarely found: the practice of the Bar shows us rather a man who, knowing that his learned friend will put the opposing case with vigour, omits everything that can possibly speak in favour of the enemy, and occasionally even, to do a great right, does more than a little wrong.

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But the historian, who cannot expect his reader always to have the opportunity of seeing the evidence and arguments of the other side, ought to imitate the ideal barrister rather than the King's Counsel of the courts as he exists in our imperfect world. And this is the more necessary as, not seldom, the historian aims at saying the last word on his subject, and to produce so standard a work as to deter all subsequent writers from dreaming of covering the same ground. But it is to be feared that such conscientiousness will not often be seen. Dr. Johnson was a religious man; but in his Parliamentary reports he could not bear to let the Whig dogs have the best of it; and there are many Dr. Johnsons, not only among Tories, but among Whigs, Liberals, Radicals, Socialists and Communists.

And now let us turn for a moment to the man who was inspired to write his *History of Greece* by his sense of Mitford's inadequacy. Bury's quotation from Stubbs was not verbal.¹ According to his editor, Professor Temperley, for 'spite' we must substitute 'the desire of ventilating some party view or destroying the character of some partisan opposed to you'. This exactly expresses Grote's attitude. He desired to destroy the repute of Mitford, and he wished to show not only Greek democracy but democracy as a whole in a favourable light. He was in fact, as enthusiastic in his calm way for the Athenian people as Mitford, in his furious fashion, for the Spartan oligarchy. But how did he proceed? So far from distorting facts, there is probably not a single case in which he can be shown even to have

¹ See page 50.

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blinked them. He always, when his own interpretation of the facts may be contested, gives the reader the opportunity of judging for himself; and he is diligent, even too diligent, in producing and sifting his authorities. Such materials as were available in his time he studies, compares, chooses, rejects, and it is open to a sympathizer with Lacedaemon to defend his position on the same basis as that on which Grote assails it. The crimes of Demos he does not conceal; he merely points out that those of tyranny or oligarchy were worse. The illegal condemnation of the generals after Arginusae was bad; but it does not follow that the accused were innocent; and the transaction compares favourably with the wholesale murders perpetrated by the Thirty Tyrants, who did not allow their victims even an illegal trial. To ostracize a man for being too influential was a strange procedure; but it was better than either to kill him or to allow him to make himself a despot.

All these virtues would be enough to rank Grote as one of the very greatest of historians, but for a single defect. He has no brilliance of style — to put things plainly, he is prolix and dull. Were it not for the underlying enthusiasm for liberty, which, in spite of his still stronger love of truth, is always perceptible, it would indeed be difficult for any but professed students to read the work from beginning to end. 'In point of style', says Freeman, 'Mr. Grote is not specially pleasing. It is diffuse and heavy; it often lacks both dignity and simplicity. In his anxiety to make his meaning plain from all points of view, he is like Macaulay. But nothing can be more unlike than the means

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by which the two historians go about to compass this praiseworthy end. Instead of epigrammatic sentences and brilliant antitheses, it is by dint of ponderous and parenthetical repetitions that Mr. Grote seeks to hinder any scrap of his meaning from escaping the reader. He never condemns a previous writer, he hardly even dissents, without telling us at full length why he condemns or dissents. Even at Mitford he stops to wonder: he argues with him, he tries to prove, as well as to assert, that he is in the wrong. His desire to be full and accurate in every point, and to give his reasons for everything, has sometimes led him astray. To his office as historian of Greece he very needlessly adds the quite distinct functions of a commentator on the text of Thucydides. He is always filling up his pages with notes of frightful length and tediousness, proposing and elaborately defending new translations of particular passages; and most of these digressions are by no means called for by his subject. It follows from all this that he is greater in comment than in narrative.*

This was written in 1856; and I think the succeeding eighty years have confirmed the judgment. It will probably be generally agreed that however excellent an historian's comments may be, his narrative should be better. It is his prime business to tell a tale; and here Grote is not distinguished, and his weakness is the more apparent because so much of his work is based on that of Herodotus, who, whatever else he is not, is a tale-teller of the highest order. One often feels in reading Grote's renderings of the old stories, as one feels when one reads certain modern versions

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of the stories of Joseph or the revolt of Absalom.¹ Add to this that he is either totally destitute of a sense of humour, or deliberately keeps it in abeyance. Of all the gifts which lend liveliness to writing and stir the interest of the reader, that of humour is far from the least, and the history must be very grave indeed which cannot find a place for an occasional flash of Voltairean wit or Gibbonian innuendo. It is said, by minute students of Grote, that there are two jests in his twelve volumes. Be this so or not, the discoverers doubt whether they are there on purpose or by inadvertence; whether in fact, like Liddell and Scott when a joke was pointed out in their *Lexicon*, Grote would not have removed them if he had been informed of their existence. He is a judge, and the rare case of a judge who never indulges in Old Bailey witticisms. We see then that for history to gain the highest rank it is not sufficient that it should be honest, learned, accurate, or a piece of propaganda all the more effective for being scrupulously moderate. All these things are necessary; but one thing is lacking — a lively, forcible, and pleasing style. Had Grote been able to command the smooth and easy flow of a Froude, the vigour and picturesqueness of a Macaulay, or the brevity and piquancy of a Tacitus, in addition to his solid qualities, it would have been hard indeed to find his equal. But to enjoy the sight of an athlete, we must see in him grace of movement as well as strength and speed. Yet, and here we reach the point on which Bury insisted so

¹ Or Harwood's version of the Prodigal Son: 'A gentleman of easy and almost opulent circumstances had two sons'.

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strongly, though Grote's style is so flat and though he is so diffuse, I think it will be admitted that he captures our interest more forcibly than Thirlwall, who is briefer and whose style is better. And the reason is that Thirlwall is so impartial as to be colourless. He sees all sides so clearly that he cannot make his readers see any side distinctly. He is definite, and therefore attractive, only when his contempt for Mitford's ignorance and prejudice breaks bounds. Accuracy in detail was Thirlwall's foible; and Mitford's inaccuracy stirs him to eloquence as a schoolboy's carelessness rouses a headmaster. But otherwise he proceeds on his equable way, correct, calm, as 'judicious' as Hooker, but avoiding Hooker's eloquence, moving neither to the right hand nor to the left, a Laodicean magistrate, neither cold nor hot. Grote, as Freeman says, is an avowed partisan; and partisanship, if honestly avowed and if it does not lead to distortion of the truth, is the spice of history.

There are historians whose style is vigorous enough hardly to require the spice of partiality, but who have plenty of it. Such a writer is Napier, whose *Peninsular War*, despite the corrections and additions of later scholars, is, and will probably long remain, a classic. Its battle-pieces, in particular, are marvels of vigorous description, and from anthologies of English prose his Albuera can never be omitted. But Napier, though he dedicated his work to Wellington, as a token of what a soldier of the Tenth Legion might have felt toward Caesar, is a partisan — and a partisan of Napoleon. The whole work is a glorification of the Corsican, and

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endeavours to show how, by a strange freak of fate, the greatest of generals failed in his gigantic enterprise. In other words the *Peninsular War* is a piece of Whig propaganda, a manifesto against the British Tory Party.

So too with Motley, whose *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, though perhaps too flamboyant and flowery in style, is always pleasing, and in fact often carries the reader off his feet. But Motley, as a patriotic American, had the Revolution of 1776 constantly in mind, and writes always with a side-glance at the Fathers of the Union. William the Silent is an earlier Washington, and the Beggars anticipate the men of the Boston Tea-party. Hence, though it is true that there have been few great conflicts in which the balance of right was more decidedly on one side, Motley does too much honour to William, and less than justice to Philip. It is this very partiality, indeed, this touch of 'spite', which is a main element in the charm of one of the most charming of histories.

Charming also is Cardinal Gasquet's work on the Dissolution of the Monasteries; even a Protestant can read it with pleasure. But it too is unblushingly partisan. Where facts are unfavourable to his thesis he omits them; those that support it he throws into bold relief. No one for whom Gasquet is the sole authority could imagine that the suppression was anything but the wanton destruction of good by jealous evil, an example of greed unchecked by scruple: Cromwell is an Iago who has made wickedness his aim, the Commissioners were suborned liars, and the only excuse for

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Henry is that he allows himself to be convinced by falsehoods and yields to State necessity, 'the tyrant's plea*'. Of the compensations paid to the dispossessed monks, of the willingness with which many abandoned a distasteful calling, of the real character of many of the monasteries, we hear little or nothing. As well go to Longfellow's 'Evangeline' for a realistic picture of Acadia, or for a fair account of the expulsion of the colonists, as go to Gasquet for a full and impartial history of the Dissolution. The book is a Catholic pamphlet.

I should like to pass over other propagandists or partisan historians; but I cannot forbear to mention Kinglake, who, despite the too great length of his work, is certainly lively and brilliant in the highest degree, but whose underlying motive, not always kept below the surface, is to depreciate his personal enemy Louis Napoleon. Such a writer, I think, is Sallust, whose purpose was less to tell the truth than to depreciate the Roman aristocracy and incidentally to produce a pamphlet in favour of the Caesarean party. Such a writer, also, is Treitschke, who, no Prussian by birth, yet shows all the more than native patriotism which naturalized citizens so often show for the land of their adoption, and which sometimes degenerates into contempt and hatred of other countries. Treitschke's whole and sole aim was the glorification of Prussia in general and the Hohenzollerns in particular; and in the wild burst of national pride which followed the successful wars of 1864, 1866, and 1870, he obtained an enthusiastic following, comparable with that which

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Hitler gains to-day. The exaltation of Prussia meant of course the depression of France, and Treitschke set about the depression with a will. Nor did he spare England, the political ideas of which were the anti-thesis of the Prussian; and the English reader of certain passages will be astonished at the number and turpitude of the crimes he imputes to our country, crimes due to a subhuman brutishness of nature and at the same time to a superhuman craft and subtlety. We are at once clever and stupid, simple and profound. A curious feeling arises as we go on. Can it be that the plain, ordinary, matter-of-fact Briton is really such a miraculous monster? that so clumsy a diplomat can lead all the chancelleries of Europe by the nose, and that one whose selfishness is so patent to all the world can contrive, through century after century, to set other nations by the ears for his sole benefit, and when they have exhausted themselves in the strife, appear cynically as the *tertius gaudens*? Treitschke would not have approved the quotation, but 'credat Judaeus Apella'.

Strangely enough, though so contemptuous of England, Treitschke was more or less indebted to a man who, if not an Englishman was certainly a Scotsman, and who wrote in a dialect which can, after some inspection, be recognized as English. Carlyle, according to his admirer Ruskin, was the greatest historian since Tacitus; and he had some qualities which remind us of Tacitus: a forceful and unforgettable way of putting things, and an extraordinary gift for dressing up prejudice so as to look like moral indignation. The Roman, it is true, was an aristocrat,

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the Scot a plebeian; the Roman was the devotee of a dead system which it pleased him to think a Republic, the Scot professed to desire the establishment of the despotism of some strong man who would rule us for our good and do away with our Senates and Assemblies for ever. Tacitus gave vent to his feelings in the brief sharp epigrams we have described, Carlyle in thirty-seven volumes, largely repetitive, the essential ideas of which could be set down in a few sheets of note-paper. But there is an underlying likeness between the two writers: both mistook passion for principle, and declamation for reasoning.

Ceaselessly crying out to us to choose our hero and give him the reins of power, Carlyle never tells us how we are to discover him. In the case of the two over whom he has spent most verbiage, Oliver Cromwell and Frederick the Great, it is certain that the people had very little voice in choosing them. Oliver was chosen by a party as the soldier who could win a war; he won it, and found himself, to his own surprise and perhaps against his will, the ruler of the State. He was assuredly never the voluntary choice of more than a fraction of the population; in Scotland and Ireland he ruled overtly as a conqueror, and in England he was accepted grudgingly and *jaute de mieux*. That he was unquestionably a great man is not in point; nor is it relevant that, in the chaos of the times, he was probably the best ruler that could be found. But that is no reason why, in other and more regular periods, we should look out for another Oliver; and still less is his stammering and confused speaking an argument for at once

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dismissing all clear and fluent speakers as *ipso facto* incompetent statesmen.

Frederick is of even less use for the guidance of people in search of a Moses to lead them to the Promised Land. He came to the throne by hereditary right, as the heir of a despotic tradition established by centuries of growth. It is not unlikely that if the people could have foreseen the devastations and impoverishment into which his ambition would plunge them, they might have felt that Providence had given them a very dubious blessing in this 'hero'. In any case, whatever benefits or disasters he may have brought upon his country, it is not possible for a people to contrive that such a man shall be born as the eldest son of a series of eldest sons. As Carlyle reaches the conclusion of his herculean task, he remarks, 'To me Frederick seems the last of the Kings'. There must have been many of Frederick's subjects who, could they have heard the words, would have murmured, 'So much the better'.

No man, however great, is the sole maker of his age. His age, in part, makes him; and unless there is in it already some readiness to receive his message, he will speak in vain. If he does it good, there exists in it answering goodness; if evil, it harbours an evil which welcomes what he brings. Nevertheless, it is impossible to relieve Carlyle of some responsibilities for the mischief which has afflicted the world since his day. His cult of the superman, followed as it was by Nietzsche's still deeper adoration, and supported by a complete misunderstanding of the Darwinian doctrine of the Survival of the Fittest, has had its practical

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outcome in the emergence of the many would-be Napoleons of our day. Carlyle, surveying his Fredericks and his Francias, like Mommsen surveying his Caesars, simply ignores, as of no account, their monstrous crimes, and his pupil Froude does the same. After a savage massacre done by Caesar's orders, Froude calmly remarks, 'Cruel, but war is cruel'. You pause and reflect that the war itself, in which this slaughter occurred, was one of the most wanton and unprovoked of all wars. But Caesar was a great man; and crimes therefore do not count.

To meet possible objections, neither Carlyle nor his imitator condescends to reason. In Carlyle's so-called defence of that somewhat tawdry hero, Governor Eyre, the reader will look in vain for any logical deduction from the facts, or indeed for any facts worth mentioning at all. There is merely wild declamation about the duty of Quashee to submit to his white superior, and about his insolence in presuming to think he had any rights at all. The European is his superman, and he must kow-tow to his master's whims as to a divine law. Exactly as it was an impertinence of Sir Harry Vane to show resentment when Oliver expelled the Parliament, for he ought to have recognized the God-sent ruler, so the Jamaican negro ought to accept the tyranny of the Governor as he accepts the alternation of day and night. We are here not far from the modern Fascist or Nazi theory.

But not only is the negro to admit his God-ordained inferiority; there are white races which must look up tremblingly to other whites. This is the theory

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stated by Gobineau and adopted, with a vast parade of learning, by Houston Stewart Chamberlain. We must, I suppose, give the name of 'history' to Chamberlain's astonishing performance; for, if it does not collect facts, it makes a multitude of assertions which are meant to look like statements of fact. Conjectures, if suiting the theory, are certainties; and fallacies are arguments for a similar reason. The syllogistic method is simple. Everything great is Teutonic; So and so was a great man; therefore So and so was a Teuton. We are sometimes given the obverse fallacy — So and so was not great, therefore he was not Teutonic, as well as the equally surprising 'He was not Teutonic, therefore not great'. A long list of distinguished names is provided, many of which are not usually associated with Teutonism, but which on this system of logic, can be brought into the line; and a great deal of more general 'history' accompanies these genealogies, tending to prove that the 'Nordic' race is obviously superior to all others, and that all the others must humbly and patiently admit the fact.

That there is no such thing as a 'pure' race, and that the German has been strengthened or contaminated by almost more foreign elements than any other, that it has had large infusions of Wendish, Slav, Celtic, Mongol and Ugrian blood even in comparatively recent times; that even if the race were pure, there is in it no marked superiority to other races; or that many other agglomerations of human beings have claimed to be each a chosen people; all this matters nothing. The 'blond beast' is, and must be, the leader

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in the menagerie; and if facts contradict the theory, so much the worse for the facts.

Few books have been more popular or influential than this strange farrago. The Kaiser perused it with admiration, and the German public followed suit. The Prussians, who are less Germanic than any other section of the people, drank in its flatteries as if specially posted to their address; and the populace, already convinced by their emotions that they were indeed the Chosen, welcomed with avidity this historical and philosophical confirmation of their nationalistic prejudices. 'We always felt thus,' they could say to themselves; 'but now we *know*'?

Not that we must condemn Germany alone for indulging such fantasies. Almost every nation, at one time or another, has imagined itself the elect of God; and it is a noteworthy fact that, whenever a small fraction of the nation has won a victory in war, the least martial of the citizens feels a glow of pride, imagines he has had something to do with the triumph, and swaggers about as if he were a superior being. After Wolfe's victory at Quebec, the London grocers and drapers put on an aristocratic air, and, as Goldsmith remarked, showed pride in their port, defiance in their eye, as the recognized lords of human kind. Much greater men have fostered the delusion. 'When God', said Milton, 'is decreeing to begin some* great period, he reveals himself to his servants, and, as his manner is, first to his Englishmen/ There have certainly been occasions when he might have selected more fitting instruments; but nothing can shake so

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rooted a conviction. And when something distantly resembling ratiocination is brought to confirm it, it is like a trifle to the jealous. No countervailing evidence is allowed for a moment to disturb the placid certainty of the mind. 'Doubtless', we say to ourselves, 'we are the people, and wisdom shall die with us': and the man who comes along to assure us of our wisdom is taken at once as supremely wise.

It is obvious that the Chamberlain method of propaganda, when falling on favourable ground, is likely to be even dangerously effective. Every statement seems to be confirmed by fact; or rather the writer makes no statement—he lets the facts speak for themselves, and the reader draws his own conclusions. Thus the appearance of impartiality is secured, and the public, unable to check the facts for itself, is betrayed, quietly and unsuspectingly, into accepting the opinions of the writer. It is not always necessary to indulge in direct falsehood—though that has been done. Skilful omission may do the work better; or, where certain things obstinately refuse to be omitted, a dexterous twist, or a mere turn of phrase, may accomplish the desired purpose. There have been many works, less crude than Chamberlain's *Grundlagen*, which may deserve still severer censure for that very reason. The more subtle the devices, the worse the man who employs them.

It is on this principle that the majority of school-books have been, or too often are, written. The object is not so much to tell the truth as to inculcate patriotism. The man always draws the picture,

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and the lion is always the vanquished; nor are the spectators likely to be in a position to view the leonine National Gallery. Thus not only did the Kaiser insist that the history in the Imperial schools should be devoted to the glorification of the Hohenzollern family, but even in democratic America, for a long series of years, the school histories were grossly partisan. Mr. Owen Wister tells us that never, till as a grown man he visited Europe, did he know that any Englishman had taken the Colonial side during the Revolutionary dispute, that there was more than a negligible number of Loyalists in the Colonies, or that such Loyalists as existed were treated by their neighbours in anything but a noble and conciliatory spirit. As for the point of view of King George and his friends, it was disgracefully and wantonly travestied. Only recently has the work of certain first-rate American scholars permeated downwards and been absorbed into the textbooks, with good results in improving the feeling between England and the States. Nor can our own country claim a much cleaner record. To read an ordinary English school-history and then take up a corresponding French one dealing with the same period will usually stir bewilderment in the reader, and so if you take up German or Dutch. I well recall how, having been brought up on the story of Sir Philip Sidney, which the books had told without the slightest sign of doubt, I happened to read almost exactly the same tale told of a Prussian soldier at the battle of Fehrbellin, narrated in a similar undoubting fashion for the benefit of Prussian children.

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At times of crisis this tendency is naturally seen in an exaggerated form. At the beginning of the War all the good deeds of the French were brought out in full relief, in a way strikingly contrasting with what had been the habit during the Fashoda quarrel. If the historians were telling the truth in 1914 they ought not to have told a different tale in 1898. It is at once painful and amusing to compare the tone of our histories of Germany during the War with that of what was written before. In 1815 it was safe to give the Rhine Provinces to Prussia; for she, unlike France, had never been aggressive. A century later she had never been anything else. Which opinion was right is not here in point; what I wish to emphasize is that a change of political attitude had led to a different conception of the facts. Even more remarkable is the phenomenon of 1870. When the Franco-Prussian War began, the sympathies of England were all with 'religious' Prussia against 'godless' France. The first stage of the War was hardly over before feeling had veered round: Prussia was becoming too dangerous; and we began to find there was more to be said for her enemy than had been supposed. Which view, again, was the right one I am not concerned here to discuss. What is certain is that the truth, apart from a few details, was almost as visible at the one time as at the other, and that a genuine historian would have been unmoved by the circumstances of the time, and would have written independently of them, on a fair and comprehensive view. The facts were as they had been, but the writer's attitude towards them had altered,

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and he desired to create in his readers a different state of mind. A change of tone here, of emphasis there, and the incident comes out a 'new creature'.

Of all distorting influences, as what I have just been saying clearly indicates, the one the true historian will endeavour most carefully to hold in check, if he neither can nor should rid himself of it entirely, is his patriotism — a virtue which has probably done more harm in the world than any vice, or even than most perversions of virtue. If Satan is the father of lies, patriotism is its mother.

'The demure Muse of history,' says De Quincey, 'when once she has allowed herself to tell a lie, never retracts it.' I think De Quincey exaggerates here; but he is correct when he adds, 'Many are the falsehoods in our own history, which our children read traditionally for truths, merely because our uncritical grandfathers believed them to be such/ And, in nine cases out of ten, the impulse that started the lie was the patriotic feeling and it is the same patriotic feeling that forbids us to explode the myth. Such falsehoods, told in the so-called histories of various peoples, have been the fruitful parents of international dissensions, wars, and rumours of wars.

As a pendant to this chapter I can scarcely do better than quote a few words from an article in Mr. Spender's *Men and Things*: 'All over Europe to-day there is a persistent demand by different sects and schools that history shall be turned into propaganda for the theories that they favour. In Germany it has to be re-written to support the idea of the totalitarian State

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and its doctrine of blood and race; in Russia and in Italy it must be subdued to the official creed. Communist or Fascist as the case may be. In this country Socialist critics dismiss as shallow and superficial all historical writing which fails to confirm their interpretations of events. This tends to set a fashion which ought to be resisted. For if we let it go far, history, or what passes for it, will be cluttered up with a mass of speculation, much of it pretentious and premature, and colouring and distorting the statement of fact which must be the basis of any sober and useful speculation/

If this passage impels the reader to study the rest of that article, I feel I shall have done him a service.

CHAPTER V

HISTORY AS A SCIENCE

THE tendency to regard man as, like Nature, subject to the operation of fixed laws, is an inevitable result of the growth of physical science. It is true that often, before the advance of that science in its modern form, free-will had been denied to man by many religions and many philosophies. Augustine, with reservations and inconsistencies, maintained the doctrine of predestination, which logically rejects freedom. The success of Mohammedanism was largely due to the immense energy which a belief in fatalism can give to minds of a certain kind. Calvinism, which derives much from Augustine, shows similar features. But these are based less on a naturalistic theory than on the doctrine of the direct and unalterable decisions of the Divine Will. The potter has power over the clay, and makes one vessel to honour and another to dishonour. Spinoza went so far as to declare that a full knowledge of a man and of his circumstances would make his conduct as much a matter of safe prediction as, to a geometer, is the deduction of the properties of a triangle from its definition. But this view arose from Spinoza's conception of God as Substance, and thus as in effect the All — a conception in many ways different from the modern scientific idea of Nature.

With the growth of physical science the conception

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of order in the world deepened, and the idea of a universal causal sequence took hold more and more strongly of the general mind. As Newton had shown that the law of gravitation held not only in the narrow space of an orchard, but also in every part of the universe which could be brought under scrutiny, so it was felt that the life of man, not merely as an individual but in societies, ought to admit of being brought under law. It is true that there was some laxity in the use of this term. All that Newton had shown was that planets and stars move in a certain regular manner; there was nothing to prove that, like men in a State, they obeyed actual commands. But the analogy between the celestial order and human law was too strong; and thinkers argued as if the 'laws' had been laid down in a kind of code, which the material world followed with more than Pharisaic precision. By careful study of the stellar behaviour astronomers had discovered the Decalogue to which the stars accommodated their motions. Might it not be that, by a still more careful study of human behaviour, the 'laws' which regulate the progress of man were also capable of being discovered? Complicated as the planetary wheelings were, they had at last been reduced to rule and mapped out; the human peregrinations were still more complicated, but that ought merely to spur on investigators to yet more intensive exertions, and in time the *mecanique humaine* would reveal itself as the *mecanique celeste* had already done.

With this hope, the historians started on a new path. There had already, of course, been historians who had

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perceived that, if men are treated in a certain manner they will react in a manner which can be more or less accurately predicted. Thucydides, who knew that a total eclipse of the moon cannot happen except when she is at the full, knew also that if men are tickled they will laugh, and if wronged they will revenge, and that the tendency of a tyrant is to degenerate in character as his power grows. But these later historians went farther; and, working on a very hasty induction, proceeded to prove that the life of mankind followed a fixed and determinate line. Knowing nothing of primitive conditions, they made a huge assumption as to the earliest state of the race, and imagined a process of development along which it had moved. While fancying themselves scientific students, they were really romancers and guessers; and not unnaturally they guessed differently according to their predilections. Some, like Rousseau (whom for our present purpose we may call an historian), pictured a primitive society of happiness and freedom, deteriorating through the ages into misery and slavery. Others conceived that history, like the planet which is its stage, takes circular or elliptic tours: yet others, that, with constant setbacks, the general trend is toward improvement.

When the French Revolution, with its sanguine expectations, broke out, it was natural that the 'law' of progress should be emphasized, and that mankind should be viewed as on the path to ultimate perfection. Of this idea the most famous exponent is the illustrious Condorcet. There is nothing more astonishing than the tenacity with which, amid the destruction of all his

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ideals, the slaughter of his friends, and his own imminent danger of death, he sat down to write his sketch of the Progress of the Human Mind — one of the most remarkable books in the whole of sociological literature. He begins, as we might expect, with the assertion that our reliance on the natural sciences is based on the belief in universal law; and he follows up this dictum with the statement of his great historical principle. Neither man's mind nor his spirit can escape the operation of similar laws. As the whole world shows a process of slow but steady development, so does man, who in the beginning was hardly to be distinguished from the so-called 'lower' animals. These 'also know, and reason not contemptibly', and man simply knows a little more and reasons with a trifle more accuracy. Man is an animal still, though the highest of animals: and there has been no sudden rush in his advance from the brute-stage to that which he now occupies. And if, as Condorcet held, he has advanced so far, there is no reason why he should not advance indefinitely farther and farther. From counting with his fingers he has risen to the mathematics of a Newton or an Euler; and the time will come when a Newton's discoveries may seem but infantile. Nor need we fear that the advance of knowledge will mean diminution of sympathy or a depravation of morality. On the contrary, it will reveal to man his true interests, which are bound up with those of others: it will correct that selfishness by which, fancying he is seeking his personal good, he really brings harm to himself. Liberty, equality and fraternity, the watchwords of the

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Revolution, are the true watchwords for the army of the march of universal progress.

There are many errors in Condorcet's book; in particular his ideas as to the origin and growth of religion have had to be corrected by later scholars. But what I wish to mark here is that, if not precisely a history itself, it plans out a line which subsequent writers have tried to follow — that of the scientific treatment of history, and of the march of mankind as a progress from a starting-point towards a goal. His theory of development, if not an exact anticipation of the Darwinian theory, is not unworthy to be compared with it; and the idea of progress, never attaining, sometimes wavering, but on the whole more nearly and yet more nearly approximating to perfection, is like that of the man of science, who does not expect ever to solve the mystery of the world, but ceases not to make his own contributions to the solution of the problem. Nor least of all Condorcet's merits is his insistence on this infinitude, inherent in the task. Immense as were the hopes aroused by the Revolution, he did not for a moment imagine that its work was final: it might be labour in the right direction, but a thousand generations would follow, each building on the foundations laid by its predecessor. This is not the view of Dr. Arnold, who appears to have imagined that the modern age represented the fullness of times. To us, who have seen the sudden rise of Japan to a commanding position in the world, Arnold's fancy that the Teuton, the Latin, and the Slav were the only three races with a future, seems ridiculous; and equally

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rash seems the dogma of Hegel, to which I have already alluded, that, as Hegelianism was the last word in philosophy, so the Prussian monarchy was the last word in politics. To Condorcet even the new world opened by the Revolution was far from the ultimate; Nature was but testing her prentice hand in forming the National Assembly, and would have many other experiments to make before she could even begin to descry an end, and even if the 'end' were reached it would be but a Pisgah from which new Lands of Promise might be seen.

Condorcet was handicapped by the immaturity of the science on which he had to base his ideas. Even Lamarck had not yet arisen, and Bichat had not published his theories of the bodily tissues. It was clear, however, that as science advanced, historical method would advance with it; for Condorcet was not the only man to perceive the unity of knowledge, or to claim that history should take its place as one of the sciences. It needed no prophet to foresee that there would soon be a vast growth of scientific knowledge, and therefore an advance in historical ideas.

No sooner in fact had the epoch-marking scientific discoveries of the middle nineteenth century stamped their impression on the world, than the attempt was made to transfer the scientific method still more decisively than before to history. And the first step was to recognize the importance of *truth*. Men of science like Faraday were seen to be never content with what Bacon had called a *mera palpatio*, with just a touch; nor were their inductions *per enumerationem*

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simplicem. Their hypotheses were tried in the balance again and again, sifted, and if not satisfactory were rejected and others were tried. It is true that what Bacon had wished away was found necessary — imagination, even intuition, were needed for the formation of the hypotheses; and genius could no more be dispensed with in the construction of a scientific theory than in the building of a great epic poem. But the essence of science was the search, unceasing, unceasing, undeviating, for the objective truth. From this scientific ideal, it is hardly too much to say, was born a new conception of historic veracity. The difference between this conception and the old is simply astounding. Records were to be searched, authorities to be appraised according to their means of knowing the facts and their capacity or willingness to record them, testimonies were to be weighed, and the assistance of other sciences, wherever possible, was to be called in to check or confirm the written witness. Men must ask, 'How did So-and-so know this? Do we find that he is careful to put down accurately what he has heard? Is what the soldier said any better evidence at the bar of history than in the courts of law? Are those documents genuine or spurious? And what conclusion as to the actual truth do we arrive at by comparing them with the others?' These are but a few of the questions historians have to ask and answer; and it will be clear that the labour involved in a history written on such lines is immense.

Not always, it is to be feared, was the labour faced. Human nature was too strong, and the temptation to

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take short cuts — which was sometimes confused with taking wide views — was not always resisted. It was easier to enumerate a general theory than to collect and compare the details on which alone the theory could be based; and even if the details *were* collected, it was simpler to collect them after the theory had been formed than before. With the theory in mind, facts which did not square with it would fall into their proper place — out of mind; and those which lent it plausibility would stand out in bold relief.

Of all the writers of this class by far the most influential was Auguste Comte; and it is significant that Comte was a professor of mathematics. The distinguishing mark of mathematics is that it is always generalizing. For example it extends the idea of number from integers to fractions, from positives to negatives, from commensurables to incommensurables, from 'reals' to the so-called 'imaginaries', and shows how the laws of operations applicable to the simplest apply also to the most complex. Comte had made his name by works on mathematical analysis before he started to apply similar methods to the much less malleable science of sociology; and he applied them with astonishing boldness. Number is continuous — there is no break in the series from one to infinity; and curves show the same character. This principle of continuity is therefore assumed to hold in the historical process; and, as a curve can be traced when we have once determined its algebraical formula, so the course of mankind can be traced when we have found the law by which it is directed. We can, in

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fact, show with precision the stages of the route, from empiricism to theology, and finally to what Comte calls 'positive' philosophy — another phrase for scientific thought, from which supernaturalism is totally excluded. To use a simple illustration, as an ellipse can be traced by tying a string to its two foci, and marking with a pencil the line drawn when the string is stretched to the limit, so the course of men's thought may be traced by marking their mental path as constrained by their natural limitations at various times.

The results of Comte's theories, and of his example, were, as I have said, great, especially in France and England. As, in Germany, a whole school of historical writers followed the path blazed by Hegel — as, for instance, Strauss's famous *Life of Christ* was but the application to the Gospel narrative of the Hegelian philosophy, and the 'Tubingen School' used the same tools in its criticism of the Acts and Epistles — so in Western Europe the Comtian system inspired a number of authors to similar generalizations; and, to aid them in their work came, almost simultaneously, the mathematical science of statistics. Just before the publication of Comte's *Cours de Philosophie Positive* appeared Quetelet's *Sur l'Homme*, in which the law of averages was for the first time fully and clearly expounded. In this epoch-marking work it was shown that the number of murders in particular nations remains remarkably constant in proportion to the population, and can be predicted with something approaching exactness on the first of January in every year, to be

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verified, within a few decimal points on the following thirty-first of December. Should the prediction prove false, one turns to another statistical table — say that of the weather. If the fogs and mists have been above the average, the murders will have been correspondingly frequent; if the sun has shone pleasantly, the assassins will have been more merciful. And yet every individual murderer has fancied that he was acting on his own initiative.

Upon all this certain historians seized with avidity. Among British writers the most uncompromising adherent of the average-theory was Henry Thomas Buckle, who carried it perhaps as far as anyone has ever ventured to carry it. He is the actuary among historians, who will tell you not that you will die within a year, but that the chances of your doing so are one in twenty; and he almost ventures to assert that if you refrain from dying someone else will have to die to keep the accounts balanced. The number of people, he declares, who post letters in a year without addressing them is practically constant. Few do this more than once or twice in a lifetime, but when A becomes careful B makes a slip; and among thirty millions the average comes out obediently right. It matters not if some exceptional people never do it at all, or if other exceptional people do it twenty times; the inexorable law asserts itself, and the post-offices over the whole country have almost exactly the same amount of annoyance, in proportion to the number of the letters, every year.

Now the aim of science is to be able to predict the

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future. An astronomer, master of the least imperfect of the sciences, will predict, with practical certainty and within a margin of a few seconds, the occurrence of an eclipse thirty thousand years hence. A chemist can tell you, with great precision, what *will* happen when two elements are combined. Even a meteorologist can foretell, with a slight approach to exactitude, what *will* be the weather to-morrow in a certain area. It ought therefore to be possible for historians to predict what human beings, in given circumstances, *will* do. That historians have so far failed in this aim, or rather have never contemplated it, is due to their having fixed their minds on individual men rather than on masses, and having considered isolated incidents rather than averages. For, at least in the present state of knowledge, the actions of the individual are unpredictable; you can never tell whether So-and-so, the particular Englishman, will murder his wife or post an unaddressed letter. But you *can* tell, or will in time be able to tell, what the English people as a whole will do, or what fraction of them will abstain from doing it.

Thus the great men ought to disappear from history. They are only parts of one stupendous whole, mere accidents, exceptions in one direction counterbalanced by exceptionally little men in another. Had there been no Newton, some other man, or possibly some set of men, would have done Newton's work. If Napoleon had been killed at Lodi, another Napoleon would have won another Austerlitz or failed at another Waterloo. If Cleopatra's nose had been shorter, some

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other woman, with the requisitely provocative facial feature, would have arisen somewhere to beguile some other Antony. At most, these exceptional people are the singular points in curves, unique but involved in the equation of the curve; or they are like those eccentricities which Babbage said he could produce in his mathematical machine. 'I will', said Babbage, 'construct a machine which will go regularly from one to a thousand, and then suddenly produce a number quite out of the series, after which it will give you a thousand and one and live regularly ever after.' A Newton or Napoleon, then, is in the series, and can be explained by the original equation exactly like the rest: when you know the full law you can predict him.

To explain the character of a mass of men, then, you look at their circumstances — their geographical position, their climate, their general physical environment. If their country is volcanic or subject to earthquakes they will tend to be superstitious and believe in miracles. If they are comparatively free from such disturbances, they will be less prone to submit to priestcraft and religious influences. Civilization, as in Egypt and Babylonia, arises when the land is fertile and great rivers make communication easy. Let the country be barren, and the nation will seek expansion abroad. If the climate be hot and enervating, the people will be lazy and effeminate. All this on the *average*: we are not concerned with the cases which seem to contradict our generalizations; they but prove the rule.

There were many rash statements in Buckle's work;

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and it roused no little antagonism in many quarters. Not unnaturally, it did not please those who, like the Roman Catholics, see evidence of divine interference in human affairs, and regard man as differentiated from other sentient creatures by his possession of free-will: and many thinkers of a different cast of mind from the theological were repelled by the average 'foot-rule' on which Buckle based so much of his thought. There were, however, many who held with him that the so-called 'great man' was of little importance. The task of the historian was, they maintained, to study tendencies rather than individuals, and the spirit of an age rather than the men who, for accidental reasons, had become prominent in it. History was not a glorified *Who's Who* or a series of biographies: it is the time that makes the man and not the man the time. How far it is possible to hold this view consistently and uncompromisingly is hard to tell. It is noteworthy that Buckle himself pays a great deal of attention to individual men of genius; and indeed if one is writing a history of thought it is not easy to avoid writing about thinkers, however profoundly convinced one may be that if these particular thinkers had never lived their thoughts would have been thought by someone else. It is probable that in later years the tendency of historians has been in the opposite direction. Bury, for example, regarded the great man as 'an accident, but a very disturbing one'. You cannot predict his rise, nor, when he has arisen, can you predict what will be the effect of his impact on his age. The whole history of Germany since 1740 has been

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conditioned by the accident that Frederick the Great was his father's eldest son, and was a man of a very remarkable character and ability. Without St. Paul, the history of Christianity would have been altogether different; there is no reason to believe either that there was another man of comparable power alive in his time, or that a syndicate of secondary men could possibly have done what he did. As well believe that *Hamlet* would have been written if Shakespeare had never been born, as that our Revolution would have taken the course it did take without the incalculable military and political talent of Oliver Cromwell. 'The heel of Achilles', said Bury, in all historical speculations of this deterministic class, 'has been the role of the individual.'

I know no better criticism of Buckle and Comte — sympathetic but antagonistic — than Froude's lecture on the Science of History delivered in 1864, and now to be read in the first volume of his *Short Studies on Great Subjects*. As the 'heel of Achilles' in the speculations of political economists who based their science on the love of gain in men, is the unselfishness and indifference to money of certain men, whose actions cannot be calculated by any foot-rule, so, says Froude, there may always arise men in other than the economic sphere who will act from motives not to be predicted on the basis of any generalization about human nature; and these men may so greatly disturb the historical equation that no answer can be given beforehand, and even afterwards no satisfying explanation can be assigned. Of the past we know hardly anything; a

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certain number of facts may remain for us to investigate, and from these each investigator will select those that suit his theory. Of the future we know nothing at all; nor is there any reason to believe that at any time men shall be able to predict what will happen ten years later. Gibbon believed that the age of conquerors was over in 1794. Had he lived three years longer, he would have seen a new Genghis Khan starting on a career of victory. In 1851 men thought that war was out of date; within three years there was war in the Crimea, and within twenty-five or six, wars almost as terrible as those of the Avars and Huns. The sole lesson taught by history is that somehow, and somewhere, the moral law asserts itself; for every unrighteous deed the price has to be paid; but the vengeance falls uncertainly, not always on the guilty fathers, but perhaps on the innocent children. You can draw no horoscopes — what you expect will not happen. Even improvements improve the world in a way the reformer did not anticipate. Thus the boasted science, which was to turn history into a sort of astronomy or mathematics, turns out to be the merest guesswork — feeble as to yesterday, empty as to-day, futile for to-morrow.

Buckle's first volume was published in 1857. In 1859 appeared the *Origin of Species*, and in 1871 the *Descent of Man*. The effect of these two portentous works on historians was unprecedented and profound. They at once strengthened and corrected the conclusions of men like Buckle and his predecessors and followers. There were some, indeed, who endeavoured to apply the principles of Natural Selection, Conformity

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to Environment, or Survival of the Fittest, to the most obscure problems of civilized history: there is for example a German work on the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire which attempts to explain that catastrophe on these lines — a work contrasting very remarkably with the theory of others, that the real secret of the overthrow is the accident that the Emperor Valens was a rash and incompetent general, and that the decisive disaster, the defeat of Hadrianople, would never have happened had the Emperor been either honest or capable. There is no need here to point out the fatal effect of a crude misreading of the theory in recent politics. Whole nations have claimed that by the Survival of the Fittest is meant the *right* of stronger peoples to conquer or even enslave those which are inferior in armaments; the possession of more destructive weapons of war is held to constitute a just claim to dominate peoples less murderously equipped. This claim was repeatedly advanced by Prussian writers before the War; it lies at the root of the Italian aggressions in Abyssinia and the Japanese attacks on China. Peoples which build their faith upon the holy text of pike and gun have made Darwin's works their Bible, and, like the Chaldaeans of old, 'that bitter and hasty nation', make their might their god.

A more careful reading of Darwin — largely inspired by the terrible results of this superficial study — has tended to modify this view. No one, of course, can deny that physical forces have had an enormous influence on human development; and this was perceived even by the ancients. Had Greece been a

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naturally wealthy and self-sustaining country, instead of a barren and mountainous one, incapable of feeding its own population, its history, as Aristotle saw, would inevitably have been other than it is. The geographical position of the British Isles has been a factor of vast importance in determining their career. When Venice was practically the centre of the known world, 'the trade and profit of the city consisted of all nations'; no sooner had Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope than the trade and profit fell to the countries on the Atlantic seaboard; and the merchants on the Rialto foresaw the decline at once. But Darwin was far from proclaiming that his theory solved all the problems of human or racial change. He was, above almost all men of science, tentative and cautious; and, while giving due weight to the influence of environment, allowed room for personal, national, and racial character as powerful agents in progress. To certain peoples, difficulties have proved a stimulus. A nation other than the Egyptians would have been cowed by the inundations of the Nile; that wonderful people — aided it is true by a geographical situation which rendered it almost immune from invasion — 'turned its necessity to glorious gain': and the mountainous character of Greece worked very differently on its inhabitants from the way in which the rugged crags of Kurdistan worked upon the Kurds. The one tribe was a congeries of robbers; to the other we owe — what do we not owe to the Hellenic cities?

Of late, therefore, while there has been wide recognition of the part played by physical causes in

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the historic scheme, there has on the whole been a return to the older principles. Apart from a few specially religious, and mainly Catholic writers, there has been little attempt to discover a Providential interference in human affairs. Historians feel too acutely that the ways in which God moves are too mysterious for them to interpret. But they are more and more inclined to give credit to the work of individuals, whose appearance they admit to be inexplicable, but whose influence is undeniable. Despite all the study that has been spent on heredity and sociology, there is as yet no way of predicting that a genius will be born; a William Pitt may be the father of an Earl of Chatham as well as of a Pitt the Younger; a Lucretia may be the mother of a Joseph or a Jerome as well as of a Napoleon; and throughout history the sons of Samuel may be unworthy of their parent; but when the genius does arise he makes himself felt. Thus, in a sense, our historians are tending once more to become biographers. They point out that but for Castlereagh the Alliance would probably have been dissolved; that Wellington was right when he said, 'If I had not been there Waterloo would have been lost'; that but for Luther the Reformation would have taken a very different course. Wesley might say, 'God buries his workmen, but carries on his work'; yet it is seen that unless he had chosen Wesley as his workman, things would not have been the same.

History may be a science, but it has not yet done what Buckle said was the distinguishing task of science. It has not learned to predict the future, and there is

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small sign that it will ever do so. There have been some lucky guesses. Arthur Young and Chesterfield foresaw there would be *a* French Revolution, and Burke that it would end in *a* military despotism: but *the* Revolution, and *the* despot, were not what they had expected. And against these fortunate predictions one can set thousands that have been utterly falsified. A *man* appears, the course of history is altered, and men rub their eyes with amazement.

CHAPTER VI

HISTORY AS BOTH ART AND SCIENCE

THE absolutely consistent man is not to be found. There is some soul of goodness in things evil, and a modicum of evil in things good. However we may strive to make our theory self-harmonious, our practice will belie it; nor are many, even of our theories, perfectly free of discordancies. This is visible, to a marked degree, in the subject of our study. It is impossible to lay down laws for the historian which he will not break, or to form a definition to which we shall not have to admit exceptions. We have already seen, for example, that even those to whom as to Bury, history is a science, 'no more and no less', are compelled to recognize that it must be something more. How they reconcile this obvious contradiction is hard to see; it may be by an application of the metaphysical principle that all high truth is a union of two opposites. By the admission that a little prejudice is an agreeable spice in the historical dish they modify, at once, the absolute character of their dogma, and implicitly allow the possibility of compromise. For science, successfully or otherwise, endeavours to eliminate prejudice, and to base its conclusions on facts alone. Even when acknowledging that something human must enter into its researches, it provides a calculus for error itself, and takes note of the 'personal equation'.

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Be history, then, as scientific as it can contrive to make itself, it is also an art, and Clio, as Professor Trevelyan put it in a famous essay, is a Muse. This is what is meant when critics declare of a work in which statistics, dispatches, protocols, and the like, occupy too prominent a place, that it is rather the materials for a history than a history itself; and often the compiler, to blunt the edge of the criticism, confesses as much on the title-page or in his preface. Brewer's great *Calendar of State Papers of the Reign of Henry VIII* is a storehouse of information for future students of that difficult time; but even with its admirable Introductions it is not history; and Acton, who read dispatches as other men read novels, regretted that Brewer had not used these materials to write a Life of Wolsey, which would have endowed *literature* with a popular masterpiece. Similarly, Mommsen's *Corpus of Latin Inscriptions* needed to be analysed, digested and sifted before it could be made the basis of the so-called Fifth Volume of his *Roman History*, which itself was so deeply laden with statistical facts as to disappoint those who had expected a continuation of the brilliant and provocative four volumes which they had enjoyed so keenly. Nor do the indefatigable editors of *Documents on the Origins of the War* profess that, while they have made the work of the coming historian easier, they have made it unnecessary. Their science, they perceive, will have to be supplemented by art. There are, also, some works to which the name of history cannot be denied, but parts of which are undigested 'materials'. Thus, Clarendon, whose general merits

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are indubitable, and whose gallery of portraits is of unsurpassed merit, has been censured for the multitude of State papers with which he has encumbered his pages and wearied his readers. There are writers who have imitated Clarendon's faults without rivalling his virtues, and are, in consequence, damned with the faint praise that they have produced 'admirable works of reference' — a hint to the public not to buy. Yet if history is a science, and purely a science, these works must be history.

For the metaphor in the word 'materials' begs the question — as, in fact, it is the habit of metaphors to do. It seems to imply that collections of documents and the like are but bricks, timber and mortar, and that the historian is the architect or builder who makes out of them a palace, a church or a house. It would be fairer to call them the foundations, and the foundations are as much a part of the building as the walls or roof. In any case, if such works are not history, it would pass the wit of man to say to what class they do belong. We may perhaps compare them to maps and charts, which, if not exactly geography, are its necessary attendants, and cannot be assigned to any other branch of knowledge.

The whole question, then, resolves itself, like so many other questions, into an affair of words. You can, if you like, call Rymer's *Foedera* a history, or honour Stubbs's *Select Charters* with the same title. But you must be careful to announce your intention beforehand, with the same precision with which Euclid announces his intention to use the word 'Line' or

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'Point' in a particular sense. And the public will continue to limit the word to books with a certain degree of stylistic merit, or at least with an attempt to achieve that virtue. The *Documents* they will neither buy nor read. Though the *Select Charters* has gone through eight or nine editions, this result is due rather to the stringent orders of University professors to their pupils than to an insistent demand on the part of the British people. It is a tribute to the power of the examination system, which, as is well-known, secures a wide circulation for many works which otherwise would fall still-born from the press.

History, then, will continue to be regarded, in ordinary opinion, and apart from special considerations, as, like logic, a mingling of science and art; and historians will be appraised according to the degree in which they subordinate the one to the other. If they neglect research in order to make their books popular and pleasing, they will, sooner or later, be found out; if they forget style in the interests of rigid accuracy, they will not be found out, for they will in all likelihood not be read at all.

Examples in illustration can easily be adduced. Who, save a special Biblical student, ever reads the lists of Levites in the Books of Chronicles, or the interminable catalogues in the Book of Ezra; and has not Mr. Bates omitted them in his edition of the Bible as a *literary* achievement? For a thousand who can tell you the story of Joseph or Absalom, it would be hard to find one who can explain 'For Parbar westward, four at the causeway and two at Parbar'. The

least interesting of the eight books of Thucydides is the last, in which his favourite *literary* device, the speech, is totally absent, and in which, significantly enough, a treaty is given us copied out in full, as if Thucydides had not had time to reduce it to his own language.¹ We feel much the same when, in one of the most delightful books ever written, we stumble on the 'materials of history'; when, in place of his own simple prose, Bede gives us the exact words of Augustine's correspondence with Gregory the Great. But both Thucydides and Bede have an excuse not open to modern writers. They lacked that apparatus of footnotes and appendices which would have enabled them to give us their authorities in the margin or at the end of the book, while reserving for the text their own narrative.

There is no doubt that many otherwise admirable books have suffered through the too great desire of their writers to provide their readers with the opportunity of seeing the dry bones around which the completed museum-specimen has been fashioned. We have already seen that this has been the case with such men as Grote; and there have been others who, by devotees of literature, have been dubbed 'horny-handed sons of toil'.

Most of these have been Germans, who, by some infusion of stubborn diligence in their 'Aryan' veins, have been content to provide the materials of history, and indeed of practically every branch of learning,

¹ This, of course, he does also in Book V; but that too is a comparatively uninteresting part of his work.

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for less tough and single-minded labourers to work upon. Their works are thorough, sound and honest, but usually, as those who have read them tell us, unreadable. They are long, but they have fewer sentences than French or English books of a quarter of the size: each sentence containing a portentous number of clauses, and each clause a portentous number of words. The words themselves are generally abstract, and for an insular reader, require to be translated first into English abstracts, and then into the concrete. Yet the books are invaluable — to a man who desires to treat the same subject. He has but to take a standard German work, and render it into English — though he often has to abridge it and simplify it. Even Maitland, perhaps the greatest of all recent historians, found it convenient to translate a book of Gierke's.

To compare a German work with a French one on the same subject is to see this contrast more clearly. That Gallic sense of style — which is so universal and so strong that even a Locke might be tempted to call it innate — here shows itself to the full. Boissier, Fustel de Coulanges, Michelet, are all delightful and easy to read; and, to go back a hundred years, Guizot is no less smooth and pleasant as a lecturer on Civilization than he was maladroit and harsh as a statesman. It was the exquisite style of Renan's *Vie de Jesus* which gave that somewhat superficial book its enormous vogue; while Strauss's work, for all its great ability, overreached itself by its prolixity, and as the reader will remember, was nearly the death of George Eliot as she ploughed wearily through the task of translating it,

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But there is no doubt, I think, that if—by some evil chance—the choice had to be made, it would be in favour of the bare truth rather than the dressed-up fiction. No one wants the French love of adornment to go so far as it did in the case of that author who, fretting over the delay of those he had asked for an account of a battle, wrote to bid them not to trouble, for he had already completed his—purely fanciful—description. It was not possible for Renan not to be a stylist, but even he, in his later books, took care to put some check on his imagination, with the result that they are far more permanently valuable than the first. Others, during a long period, never learnt the lesson. They did not altogether neglect the truth, but they preferred a good story to a poor one, and a vigorous and telling phrase to one more exact but less lively.

We have seen that Tacitus, not once nor twice, disregarded accuracy for the sake of a short sharp epigram. Those who have compared Macaulay with his authorities tell us that, in scores of cases, dull flat sentences have become bright and sparkling, but exaggerated; and there are stories of people who sent him old letters and papers, but did not recognize them when they appeared after passing through Macaulay's mind. A score became a hundred, a dwarf a giant. Not dissimilar, in this respect, was Macaulay's contemporary De Quincey—different as the two were in every other. It was once my business to study that most eloquent of papers, 'The Revolt of the Tartars'. No one who has ever read that story can forget the

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magnificent description of the final rush of the starving horde into the lake, where, amid arrows, scimitars, and wounds, they drank unheeding the bloodstained waters; a description not inferior to Thucydides' account of the last agony at Syracuse. And what is the original from which this 'scene of memorable and hellish fury' is derived? It is dreadful enough, but, as the reader will agree, considerably less poetical.

'The Fugitives', says Bergmann, 'arrived at last on Lake Tengis. As soon as they reached its shores, they flung themselves into it with their animals, without taking off their clothes, and rushed into the middle of the Lake to appease the thirst which tormented them so cruelly. Several were the victims of their own imprudence; a greater number succumbed under the sword of the Kirghises, in a new and bloody combat; without means of defending themselves, the slower Kalmucks could scarcely cross the water and so put themselves beyond the reach of their enemies.' On this De Quincey built seven or eight pages of thrilling terror; the opium-eater had his chance of a Dream-Vision, and took it. 'Le style c'est l'homme.'

Some may object that De Quincey is hardly to be classed as an historian. He was certainly much besides; and he has suffered, in popular estimation, the fate of those who are supreme in one genre, and are therefore denied a place in any other. But, though he confined his historical researches within narrow limits, and wrote historial essays rather than histories, he certainly claimed to be treated seriously as an historical student; and, though some of his ideas are

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capricious or fantastic — as in his paper on the Essenes — and some of his writing rhapsodical — as in his *Joan of Arc* — many of his essays are highly suggestive, and draw attention to points which are too often overlooked. Let the reader, however, have his way with De Quincey. Can it be denied that many others have looked upon history as a kind of romance, in which they could expatiate as they pleased — much as Pope roamed over the mazy field of Man? Sometimes they could laugh, sometimes, though more rarely, be candid, and sometimes Vindicate the ways of God to man'. Here they could find their materials provided by others; they need not, as in making a novel, strain their imaginations; no profound or laborious research was required; all they had to do was to give their readers a smooth and easy-running narrative. To bind that narrative into a kind of unity an initial prejudice was desirable, the soundness of which could be insinuated from time to time. They thus found for themselves a pleasant and not too exacting occupation during some months or years, and for their readers a soothing diversion to fleet a few leisure hours.

In a previous chapter I referred to Livy as perhaps the typical example of this class of writer. To him, his readers were what the Ionian chiefs were to Homer — patrons to be pleased by the recitation of the great deeds of their ancestors, and to be titillated, in the patriotic portion of their minds, by laudations of the virtues of the Roman people. Had you told Livy that he was to compare his authorities as Archimedes compared his mathematical results, or

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as Eratosthenes tested his calculations of latitude, he would have smiled pleasantly, and would have said that the Roman public did not want precision of that kind.

I mentioned Hume also, of whom something of a like kind might be said — with one very important difference. He too wrote history with a prejudice, and wrote it rather as an exercise in style than as a search for truth. But here he was to find that at least half his hearers did not share his prejudices; only keen Scotsmen or devotees of the Stuarts could follow him with undiluted pleasure. Others contented themselves with a tepid admiration of the art with which a bad cause was presented. At most, they were like Warren Hastings when listening to Burke's denunciations. For the time being they might be convinced that their cause was as bad as it was made out to be; but reason soon reasserted itself; they began to notice omissions, suppressions and distortions; and Hume himself gloomily observed that their convictions — which of course were to him rooted prejudices — were unshakable. In one year only forty-five copies were sold; and among men of competence only two — and those, astonishingly enough, archbishops — wrote to tell him they approved of the book. He met, in fact, more appreciation in France than in England, where his Scottish predilections worked against him, or than in Scotland, where his Jacobitism and anti-Presbyterianism were disliked. Yet I think he would have been satisfied could he have lived to see how his literary skill, in time, conquered antagonism, and how even

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a man like Buckle, the champion of the scientific history, noting in the book a ruling principle, a beginning, a middle, and an end, called it 'a great work of art'. He would have said, 'That was my intention'; and, like Livy, he would have disclaimed all idea of making a work of science.

Another instance may be found in Froude — not, I believe, in his great twelve volumes; which, in my opinion, show far more devotion to strict and rigid truth than is usually allowed. Many will remember the uncompromising judgment of Green, pronounced under the influence of Freeman: 'Mr. Froude's narrative, in his first three volumes, though of great literary value, is disfigured by a love of paradox, by hero-worship, and by a reckless defence of tyranny and crime. It possesses, during this period, little or no historical value.' Personally I should considerably modify this censure; though, if it were just, it would provide exactly the example I require, of the historian with an almost perfect style, to whom his materials gave the opportunity for constructing a very delightful romance — a romance, indeed, more delightful than almost any novel in the language. But I prefer to take Froude on other ground.

His 'Caesar' is Carlylism without Carlyle's harshness: It is Frederick the Great made easy. Full of his master's idea of the superman, Froude chose a better specimen than Frederick, or even, in some regards, than Oliver, and proceeded to transform one of the greatest men of action in history into one of the noblest. Here, indeed, he shows a 'disregard of crime'. He took Caesar's own

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account of his doings — the most skilful piece of special pleading in the world — at its face-value, and drew from it exactly the conclusion which Caesar wished his contemporaries to draw. Everything the great man did was right, or when not quite right a matter of necessity. Everybody who opposed him, was fool, knave, or both. A treacherous attack on an unsuspecting tribe was only to be expected in war, and chicanery was the appropriate method of a great reformer who had to deal with chicane. As for the conspirators, who hypocritically dubbed themselves Liberators, there was nothing to be said — they were envious of greatness, and disgusted like the Philippian charlatans, to find that 'the hope of their gains was gone'. So far does this obsession carry its victim that the book concludes with an elaborate parallel between the murder of Julius and the death of Christ. Both — 'the coincidence is striking' — were betrayed by familiar friends in whom they trusted, and Brutus, like Judas, lifted up his heel against him who had dipped the bread for him in the dish. Caesar's final meal at the house of Lepidus, on the night before the Ides of March, was a 'Last Supper'. To such a depth can hero-worship sink.

I could name many other authors — more, perhaps, French than English — of this kind, who, conscious that if art is long research is longer, and that if objectiveness is the more meritorious partiality lends itself the more easily to liveliness, have forgotten the difference between history and romance; but these will be sufficient. It must be confessed that in no branch of literature whatever has greater literary skill been shown

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than by some of these writers; and I am far from wishing to depreciate them. Nor would I desire that they should be neglected; they have their value and ought to have their reward. Those to whom reading is a graceful, leisurely, and cultured entertainment will discover that if they lay aside novels for a while, and take up histories' of this class, they will have a source of delight quite unsurpassable. Only I should recommend them, after reading, let us say, a history of the eighteenth century by a patriotic Englishman, to study an account of the same period by an equally eloquent and patriotic Frenchman. They will thus gain, not only a double literary pleasure, but also a lesson as to the amazing effect of point of view. They will see the same events and at first hardly recognize them; and they will understand how no two witnesses, after seeing the same incident, ever describe it in the same way.

CHAPTER VII

HISTORY AS POLITICS

AN interesting article might be written on the inaugural lectures of Professors of History at the Universities, in which they are expected to state their views as to the aims and character of their special study. The effect would be curious. They usually begin with appreciative remarks about their predecessors, and then proceed to show how, with great respect, they differ *toto caelo* from those predecessors' opinions; and they leave us amateurs with an intensified feeling that it is hard to decide when doctors disagree and casuists doubt.

There are, of course, exceptions. The most famous of all these professors, the poet Gray, saved himself from the charge of arrogance or carping jealousy by expressing no opinion at all; he delivered neither an inaugural lecture nor any other. It may have been as well that he thus refrained; for it would have been difficult for him to find a word of praise for the Rev. Lawrence Brockett, who owed the post to the fact that he had been tutor to Lord Bute's son-in-law, whose knowledge of history, ancient or modern, was slight or none, and who died by falling off his horse when drunk and incapable.

Occasionally, also, two scholars of the same school have been selected in succession. In 1884, for instance,

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Freeman succeeded Stubbs, who had become a Bishop; and his Inaugural, as might have been anticipated, revealed close agreement between the principles of the two historians, who had before been accused of a too strong tendency to mutual admiration. 'Ladling butter from alternate tubs', said Thorold Rogers, 'Stubbs buttered Freeman, Freeman buttered Stubbs'. But Freeman also found a word or two to say in favour of Arnold, who, like his eulogist, had held — though less decisively — the doctrine of the unity of history, and of the absurdity of marking any distinction between ancient, medieval and modern.

The rule, however, was not long in reasserting itself. Ironically enough, when Freeman died, her Majesty, or her advisers, appointed in his place James Anthony Froude, a large fraction of whose life had been spent in vigorous controversy with Freeman, and who held hardly a single opinion in common with him. Freeman was a Liberal, Froude a Tory, Freeman High Church, Froude a deadly enemy of the Oxford Movement and all its works. Freeman had accused Froude of deliberately substituting romance for truth, while Froude declared (with a side-glance at Freeman's well-known preference for printed books) that the truth had been forced upon him by the study of original manuscript documents. In the inaugural lecture, it was clear that Froude had some difficulty in being polite to his predecessor's memory.

The case has been not dissimilar at Cambridge. It is hard to conceive a greater contrast than that between the popular, superficial, and garrulous William Smyth,

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who mingled jokes on Queen Elizabeth with tears for Marie Antoinette, and the somewhat austere and legal-minded Sir James Stephen, whom the Prince Consort appointed in 1849. Stephen was followed by Kingsley, to whom history was one long argument for the truth of the Protestant religion as by law established, and specially for Kingsley's own peculiar brand of that religion — that 'muscular' Christianity to which a war like the Crimean was as clear a manifestation of divine Providence as the 'Wild North-Easter'.

Kingsley died, comparatively young, in 1875, and was followed by John Robert Seeley, whose first lecture drew from the cynical Thompson, Master of Trinity, the sad comment, 'I did not think we should have had to regret poor Kingsley so soon'. It was indeed a sudden and marked contrast, the greatness of which we shall see in a moment. There was nothing about Providence or the Protestant religion in Seeley's observations. After Seeley came Acton, a Liberal Catholic, a European rather than an Englishman in his mental attitude, the disciple of Dollinger and the intimate friend of Gladstone.

In Acton the religious feeling was very strong; and, apart from the immense range of his knowledge, and his commanding personal influence over his pupils, he was distinguished by the severity of his moral judgments and by his refusal to admit the ordinary excuses for the crimes of Kings, Popes, and statesmen generally. Creighton's mild censures of Renaissance potentates irritated him; and Mazzini's advocacy of tyrannicide seemed to him abominable. A murder, he said, had been

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a murder ever since the days of Cain, and to plead the spirit of an age to investigate one's judgment of an Elizabeth, a Philip the Second, or an Alexander the Sixth, was to play fast and loose with right and wrong. History was, to a great extent, a school of ethics. Then came Bury, who would have nothing to do with theology at all, and, as we have seen, regarded history as a science, no more and no less — yet a science curiously entangled with the laws of chance — if 'laws' of chance there be.

It is to Seeley's ideas of history that I desire to devote attention at the moment. He preached them with great eloquence and success; he had the art of attracting popular notice as well as of interesting the scholar; and his books, *The Expansion of England* and *The Growth of British Policy* (not to speak of his study of Christ in *Ecce Homo*) gained a circulation not usually accorded to the works of academic professors. History was the school of politics. One reads it in order to discover rules by which the statesman is to guide his course; and any part of history which does not encourage the formation of such rules is not worth study. This is what makes the history of Greece so valuable, and it is the absence of such lessons that justifies, or rather demands, our neglect of the history of despotic countries like Bactria or ancient Assyria. In such countries there is nothing to record but palace revolutions and purposeless wars: these can teach nothing to a subject of Queen Victoria or a fellow-countryman of President Cleveland. Nor, where an Amurath succeeds an Amurath, can we learn anything about human progress,

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or even about human movement of any kind. Stagnation has nothing to tell us about the laws of dynamics. Read then of those societies only in which there is something in common with our own, or those in which the contrasts with our own are of the kind likely to be instructive. But a mere knowledge of the facts is useless. Not until you have sat down and drawn valid political conclusions from your collection of facts can you be said to have become in the true sense an historian. Without these conclusions you are a mere Saxo Grammaticus or Simeon of Durham, a chronicler of dates and annals.

Here, strangely enough, Seeley agreed with Macaulay, who, fifty years before, in his usual emphatic manner, had laid it down that facts are the dross of history. But the application was different. Seeley looked forward to the future; Macaulay, though he 'had an eye to A.D. 2852', rested mainly in the present. And it is noteworthy that subsequent history has shown that Seeley's conclusions were wrong. So far from seeing the 'Expansion of England' which he foresaw, the last sixty years have witnessed a peculiar development which would have surprised him. The colonies are now independent nations, free to help us or refrain from helping us in war, and free even to secede if they wish. Yet, possibly Seeley was right in one respect. It is conceivable that a still more close and comprehensive study of the past *might* have predicted what has happened.

Whether sound or not, the theory was of course not new. It had already been said that history is politics teaching by examples; and it is clear that Thucydides,

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when he said that his aim was to produce, not a sort of prize-essay for a moment, but a possession for ever, meant that he wished to convey political instruction to his readers. Not merely what he put into his book but what he left out of it is an indication of his design. There is nothing but politics, and war which is the continuation of politics, in the whole of his eight books. Here are none of the personal anecdotes in which Herodotus delights, no picture of social life, nothing about Socrates talking in the agora or the citizens crowding to the plays. As for the gods, they are there, but powerless; except that the men who trust in omens are likely to be misled, and that an oracle may admit of two readings, Thucydides says nothing about Providence. When Nicias has ruined the State by reliance on soothsayers and divine warnings, Thucydides remarks that of all men he least deserved so disastrous a fate — that is, to those who can read between the lines, that if the gods had any sense of justice or gratitude they would not have permitted so pious a worshipper to fail; the hint to politicians being therefore, 'Be not pious over-much'. His history deals with human affairs, and shows how the fate of men depends on their own actions and character, though the natural cause of things may always be distorted by that mysterious 'Tyche', a chance which constantly sends the best-laid schemes agley. On the whole the wisely-guided state will succeed; if Athens had but hearkened to the counsels of her best politician Pericles she would not have fallen. And the implication is that future politicians should study the career of Pericles.

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Very rarely, in the narrative portions of the History, does Thucydides hazard a comment. He tells us — probably mistakenly — that Cleon's promise to capture the Spartans in Sphacteria was 'mad' though fulfilled; and he allows himself one word of pity for the poor school-children of Mycalessus who were massacred by the Thracian savages. 'This', he says, 'was a calamity unparalleled in horror and suddenness, and it affected the whole city.' But as a rule he allows facts to speak for themselves. Even in the terrible account of the troubles in Corcyra, and of the dissolution of morals which affected the whole Greek world, he implies, but does not exactly say, that such a dissolution is the natural result of a long war, and that something like it is to be expected whenever a war of a similar kind happens again. And there is a hint, of only too general application, when he points out that, when it was still possible to avoid the war, the older men, who had seen what war was like, were anxious for peace, while the younger men, who had not had that experience, rushed eagerly into the struggle. But it is in the speeches that we find the essence of his political wisdom, and those shrewd notes on human nature which have made his book a manual for the statesman in all subsequent ages.

Nevertheless, we miss much in Thucydides. He is largely responsible, by his example, for that limitation of the term 'history' to cover merely political and military affairs. For centuries historians hardly talked of anything else; and an exaggerated importance has therefore come to be attached to the doings of statesmen and soldiers, while the more powerful agencies

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which move the common people, and really rule the world, have been unduly neglected. To take but one example. It is said that Sallust was an imitator of Thucydides. From his monographs we learn much about the doings of generals and the speeches of senators; and there are some keen and terse summaries of the characters of the more conspicuous actors; but of the underlying causes, the feelings and daily life of the common people; the economics which have so vast an influence on events, we are told about as much as, in an inscription of Shalmaneser, we are told of the household ways of the people of Nineveh. Such things were 'beneath the dignity of history'.

It is remarkable that Macaulay, who thought Thucydides the greatest of historians, and, while he hoped to rival Hume or Gibbon, never dreamed of equalling the history of the Peloponnesian War, yet denominated that 'dignity of history', which Thucydides had done so much to establish as a convention, 'a vile phrase', which ought to be abolished. 'Such dignity,' he said, 'seems to resemble the majesty of the poor King of Spain who died a martyr to ceremony because the proper dignitaries were not at hand to render him assistance.' And Macaulay's own history, with its famous Third Chapter, its account of George Fox and the Quakers, its profusion of anecdote, and its innumerable personal portraits, is one long protest against the narrowness of which Thucydides is the great exemplar. One would think that he had taken as his model rather such a work as Voltaire's history of Louis XIV than the one he admired so much more

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highly. 'IP, says he, the historian 'attends only to public transactions, to wars, congresses, and debates, his studies will be as unprofitable as the travels of those imperial, royal and serene sovereigns who form their judgment of our island from having gone in state to a few fine sights, and from having held formal conferences with a few great officers/ Not that the perfect writer would omit the battles and sieges. But with these he would intersperse the details which are the charm of historical romances: he would describe the growth of towns, the food of the peasants, the life of the fishermen, and the changes of opinion, political, social and religious.

It is not a little remarkable, then, that after Macaulay, both by precept and by example, had endeavoured to enlarge the range of history, and — all allowances being made for his deficiencies and errors — had triumphantly succeeded in his endeavour, Seeley and his followers should have deliberately aimed at restricting the scope of the science; and at the same time narrowed the circle of the readers to whom history could beneficially appeal. The reason, I think, is twofold. They were influenced by the natural reaction which seems always to come when a great and popular writer dies: the idol of our generation is dethroned by the next. But they also sincerely felt that Macaulay had tried to do too much. What he had attempted, to cover practically the whole life of a nation during a certain period, was beyond the power of the greatest of single men. It necessarily meant hasty and superficial work in some portions, if not in all, of his vast undertaking. And, at the same

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time, paradoxically enough, this very attempt at universality necessitated the neglect of very important aspects of the subject. To give a complete survey of England implied that there was a corresponding misunderstanding of France, Spain and Germany; precisely as too close attention to William's point of view led to a misapprehension of the attitude of James. The book, in fact, was ultra-Protestant, ultra-Whiggish, and as Macaulay himself owned — quite insular in character. It would, in fact, have been better if it had at once contracted its 'extension' and increased its 'intension' within its narrower orbit. The multitude of details, which undoubtedly lend it its main charm, rather hinder than assist the reader in gaining a comprehensive view; while on the other hand they cannot be numerous enough, in a general history, to provide a sufficient and accurate idea of the separate subjects discussed. For one example, we learn *some things* but not enough, of the Non-jurors: a full account of these men had to be gained from Lathbury and Overton.

Where Seeley and his adherents were wrong, therefore, was not in maintaining that history should teach politics, but in their assumption that this was the sole duty of History. Nothing is more certain than that a knowledge of history is a necessity for statesmen, and that an ignorance of it has been the cause of horrible blunders. Had the makers of the Versailles Treaty studied carefully such a book as Alison Phillips's on the confederation formed a century before, much misery would have been saved; and Phillips wrote his book with the possibility of a Versailles Treaty in his

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mind. It is hard, also, to imagine that if George III and his advisers had been fully acquainted with the history of the dynasty to whose errors he owed his throne, they would have so much as begun the course of policy which lost America. Not impossibly the letter of the law was on their side; but over-devotion to the letter had been the ruin of the Stuarts. The famous Member of Parliament who asked why the British Fleet was not sent to Warsaw might, even if he never learnt to use a map, have learnt the reason had he pondered over Napoleon's campaigns or read a little about Catherine of Russia. It is hardly possible to exaggerate the importance of Seeley's conception of history. John Bright himself, when he declared that there was more political instruction to be gained from a number of *The Times* than from the whole of Thucydides, was only confirming Seeley without knowing he was doing so, for there are few numbers of *The Times* which do not contain a good deal of history, and a good many lessons for the statesman, lessons not always the same as those *The Times* itself draws from them in its leading articles.

But history must not be confined to this simple sphere, however closely the subjects of which it treats may be linked with politics. Seeley himself, in his *Life of Stein* had to consider sociological questions; and of late a vast number of sciences and arts have come under the historical purview. Professors of education have found it impossible to teach their subject without discussing its history, and innumerable works, on Spartan education, on Erasmus, on Vives, on Vittorino, on Locke, on Sturm, on Pestalozzi, have been produced

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in the last half-century; not to speak of histories of governmental interference with schools or patronage of them. The exaggerations of Marx and Engels, who wished to regard all history as a mere branch of economics, have compelled historians to study economic questions, and to show how far economics have, in actual fact, influenced the development of races and nations. It is possible that of all recent histories those dealing with these matters have been the most numerous and the most widely read. Thorold Rogers, Cunningham, and the Webbs are only a few of the better known names among a host. Religion, again, cannot be neglected; for even if we do not agree that the course of the world shows 'the hand of God in history', yet the importance of religious feeling, of the antagonism of creeds, of the quiet influence of saintly lives, or the more palpable power of great preachers, cannot be disregarded. Apart from all these the comparatively new sciences of numismatics, anthropology, and archaeology, have vastly altered the ruling ideas of men, and have not only added their invaluable contributions to historical study, but have claimed to be subjects of history themselves. No *complete* history of modern times can afford to neglect literature or even sport. And it is noticeable that the histories of these subjects themselves also become the themes of history, exactly like those I have just mentioned. Literature produced criticism and we have histories of criticism. Football has had its historians, who have themselves inspired biographers; and to Nyren, the historian of cricket, several books have been devoted. In a very different

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sphere, Bible history has, during the last hundred and fifty years, been subjected to very close investigation, and the investigators have been investigated in their turn. Thus we have what may be called, almost without exaggeration, in mathematical language, an infinite divergent series of histories, ever increasing in magnitude and with an incalculable remainder. It is impossible to limit such a series to one particular class.

With all this and much more to consider, it has become increasingly plain that history is no longer an affair for a single man, even if, like Macaulay, he deals, in a thousand pages, with but a dozen years, or if like Orme, he gives two pages to the events of every twenty-four hours over a very short period of British Indian history. It is for specialists, and the lessons each specialist implicitly teaches will vary with the man and his theme. With politics he will show himself political, with economics he will be a guide to economists, with religion he will instruct the religious, with education he will be educational.

Each man, it is to be hoped, will write on the subject on which he is an expert. More than a century ago, Dr. Arnold lamented the tendency of ancient Greeks and Romans to write thirty or forty books of 'universal history*' instead of limiting themselves to a manageable period. Taking Dion Cassius for an example, he points out how Dion, having written an admirable account of the reign of Commodus, of which he knew a great deal, was misled by the unfortunate desire of giving to the world an entire body of Roman history, and thus to go over ground of which he wanted an adequate

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knowledge, and to repeat, without improving, a story which had been often told before. We may hope that there will be few Dions in the future.

Thus, to quote the Introduction to a Modern History which has employed a score and more of experts, 'history, unlike other branches of knowledge, cannot prescribe limitations for itself. It is not only that men need the experience of the past to help them to practical endeavour, to enable them to understand the position of actual questions with which they and their age are engaged. For this purpose, accurate facts are needed — not opinions, however plausible, which are unsustained by facts. At the same time, the variety of matters with which history is bound to concern itself steadily increases. As more interest is taken in questions relating to social organization, researches are conducted in fields which before were neglected. It is useless for the science of history to plead established precedent for its methods, or to refuse to lend itself willingly to the demands made on its resources. The continual increase of curiosity, the widening of interest, introduces a succession of new subjects for historical research. This process goes on without a break, and it is hard to keep pace with the stock of monographs, or illustrations of particular points, which research and industry are continually producing. Before the results of the last experiments can be tabulated in relation to the whole knowledge of the subject, new experiments have been commenced which promise to carry the process still further.'

Whether, when a thousand specialists have produced

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their monographs, a specialist in generalization shall arrive to co-ordinate their results, is one of the questions which only time can decide. One thing is certain, that when he has done his work, the mass of new facts will be so immense that another generalizer will have to do the work all over again, and the first attempt will be relegated to the same shelf which now holds so many ambitious 'Philosophies of History'.

CHAPTER VIII

HISTORY AS ETHICS

NOT SO long ago it was the habit of critics to seek in the plays of Shakespeare for a 'lesson'. By dint of a certain amount of manipulation the tragedies, if not perhaps the comedies, could be turned into disguised homilies, and the proscenium became a pulpit. The text of *Lear* was the fifth commandment, the days of Goneril and Regan being short in the land which the Lord had given them; and *Macbeth* drove home the eighth 'Thou shalt not kill', with more than parsonic emphasis. Sometimes the teaching was less Scriptural, but, in a worldly sense, sagacious: *Othello* was a warning against mixed marriages, *Hamlet* against procrastination, *Romeo and Juliet* against raw haste.

Later scholars have to a great extent limited this didactic element in Shakespeare; but the tendency to moralize seems to be almost ineradicable in human nature; and if we cannot find a sermon in *As You Like It* we try to find one, like the exiled Duke, in stones. Specially, perhaps, has this tendency been strong in historians, who have been hasty to see in men and events an indication that the Deity, or the course of the world, as one may choose to call it, has held the same ethical opinions as the chroniclers. We have already seen how often men have 'dragged religion into it', and equally

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often men who care little for revealed religion have treated a nation or a statesman as George Eliot treated Lydgate or Bulstrode. A moral defect has been their ruin; a temptation not resisted at the first onslaught has had incalculable evil consequences: 'denn alle Schuld racht sich auf Erden'.

This is of course most commonly seen in those writers who have lived in the midst of the national disasters they have to describe. As Jeremiah, when ruin threatened his country from north and south, sought an explanation in the anger of God against those who worshipped on every high hill and under every green tree, preferring the Queen of Heaven to Jehovah, so Orosius, while the Empire he had thought eternal was crumbling about his ears, saw the cause in the backsliding and wickedness of the degenerate Romans — regardless of the fact that the Empire had been built up, to a great extent, by violence and fraud. This idea colours every page of his history, and is carried back into the legendary past to account for tribulations that never so much as happened. He tells of the Amazons. That women should overcome the greatest warriors of Europe and Asia, and hold rule over wide regions for nigh a hundred years, was due to the same shameless criminality which had provoked God to hurl Goths and Avars upon the Roman world; and nothing would save the sinful generation unless a new Hercules should arise to stir the sleeping people to courage and piety. It was the spirit of Demosthenes, who, had he written a history of the Persian War, would have outdone the Herodotean eulogies of the men of Marathon to point

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his indignation at the degeneracy of those who hesitated to face Philip of Macedon.

The same phenomenon is seen in Gildas. Born in the year of Mount Badon, one of the very few victories gained by the Britons over their English invaders, and having seen, during the forty succeeding years, little but devastation, famine and despair, he assumes the tone and often the very words of a Hebrew prophet, and lays the whole blame on the sins of his countrymen, and not least on the outrageous vices of five of the British kings. The folly of Vortigern in inviting the wolves into the fold to defend the sheep against the bears, he denounces in the language of Isaiah rebuking the counsellors of Zoan. The wrath of God is upon the Britons, and the wrath is deserved. The object of Gildas, says Hodgkin, was to denounce the sins of his people and to proclaim the vengeance of God upon them. * We go to him for history and we get a sermon; and he never proposed to give us anything else.' Even Bede, who certainly did not object to homilies, seems to have wearied of Gildas's endless lamentations. Long after Bede, when the English were suffering from the Danes what the Welsh had suffered from the English, a bishop turned to Gildas for the materials of a similar denunciatory sermon. 'In the times of the British', said Wulfstan, 'there was an historian named Gildas who wrote of their misdeeds, telling how by their sins they so grievously offended God that he allowed the host of the English to win their land, and utterly destroy the armies of the Britons. And that came to pass, to judge by his words, through the breaking of

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the Rule of the clergy, and lawbreaking of the laity, by the reiving of the powerful and the greed of unholy gain, through the anarchy of the land, and unjust dooms through the sloth and unwisdom of bishops, through the evil cowardice of God's messengers, the silencing of the truth all too commonly, for as much as men mumbled where they should have cried aloud, and through foul wantonness and gluttony. Wherefore by their sins they destroyed the land, and themselves perished with it/

Nothing, indeed, was needed to make a sermon out of Gildas's narratives; the moral was not even implicit, it was open, expressed and reiterated.

Not altogether dissimilar in aim though very different in tone, is the *History of Sacrilege* by that profound and indefatigable antiquary of Elizabeth's reign, Sir Henry Spelman. Looking around him on the wealthy and ostentatious lords, who, glutted with the spoils of abbeys and priories, were, like the profiteers of our own war-time, engaged in wasting their ill-gotten gains in senseless enterprises, Sir Henry conceived the idea of investigating the subsequent fates of the original robbers of the Church. His first results he embodied in 'the decent obscurity of a learned language', the didactics being shown in the title of his work, *De non temerandis Ecclesiis*. This he later greatly enlarged and set down in the vernacular; but the book was not published till nearly fifty years after his death. It is one of the most curious and interesting works in our language, a mine of recondite information, and a long sermon on the text that God is a jealous God,

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visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation in them that hate him. The number of the sacrilegious who came to grief, either personally or by proxy in their descendants, is really portentous: one can almost believe that, if Thomas Cromwell could have seen it in Hades, his ghost would have appeared and haunted the house of Russell and the other families which had not yet suffered the inevitable doom. It might even have prevented the banishment of the Bishops from the House of Lords. If, after reading the long list of calamities which overtook the bandits, you had pointed out that most of the criminals were ruined not by the direct act of God but by their own folly, Spelman would have answered that the folly was an evil spirit sent upon them by the Lord, to vex them as a like spirit plagued Saul; and if you had reminded him of the story of the Tower of Siloam — 'Were these men who failed sinners above those who still enjoyed their wealth?*' — he would have said, 'Take heed and repent, lest ye also perish'.

There was, however, every excuse for Spelman and even for the lachrymose Gildas: nor will those who remember the multitude of confused and contradictory voices raised during the Great War be inclined to censure either very severely. When both sides, relying on the supposed justice of their cause, were expecting divine interference in their favour, or even, like modern Elishas, seeing angelic armies fighting for them, it hardly becomes us to smile at the naivety of sixteenth-century Welshmen or sixteenth-century pietists. To

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them, the Old Testament theory was irrefragable, sin was punished in this world, and bloody and deceitful men should not live out half their days; a rapacious money-grabber might heap up riches, but knew not who should gather them. There is less excuse for men of later time, whom it would be easy to name, who have before them the results of a sounder Biblical study, and live when science has illustrated the laws of cause and *effect*. A writer who stands 'above the battle', and whose circumstances permit him to take detached views, ought to be able to form a calm judgment, and to recognize that the ways of God are not so simple as was once supposed. Did success always attend virtue, and were disaster the invariable consequence of vice, the course of true history would be much smoother than it is. The historian's task would be like that of the author of a melodrama, in which the villain is always defeated in the end, and every history would, like *Pamela*, have as its second title, *Virtue Rewarded*. One would only have to wait for the result of a battle to be sure that the righteousness on the victorious side exceeded the righteousness of the vanquished army.

At the same time, there is much to be said for the historian who, undazzled by success, endeavours faithfully to deal out moral verdicts, neglecting 'poetical justice': and this, probably, is the highest function of history, as it is the most difficult to discharge. Nor is it without its uses. It is no small matter that there should be, somewhere, a judgment-seat before which the so-called great are compelled to stand, and where a fearless

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sentence is pronounced. That the despisers of contemporary opinion, the tyrants and the reckless conquerors, though they may escape the penalty in this life, should be subjected to appraisal in the future, is no light thing, and it is likely that few, even of the worst men, have entirely disregarded it. The Belshazzars feel a tremor when they realize that they may be weighed in the balances and found wanting. Napoleon himself was careful to invent a legend which he hoped would more or less impose on posterity, and which did, in fact, impose on millions of people during a whole generation thirty years after his death; nor is he the only man who, like the dying Hamlet, has trusted that some Horatio will take care of his Vounded name'. Even the ignoble mind has a last infirmity — a desire for a fair place in the Temple of Fame. The reader will recall how, when the Prussian spirit was strong in Germany, and victorious aggression was being planned, a general was asked what would be the Verdict of history' upon such an unscrupulous policy. He answered, '*We shall write the history*'. This showed that, amid all his arrogance and contempt for foreign opinion, he yet had regard for the opinion of the future. Otherwise, he would not have thought of trying to mould it. We smile at Cicero when we see him urging a poet to celebrate in deathless verse the glories of the famous consulship; and still more keenly do we ridicule him when, finding the poet tardy, he writes the epic himself; but we sympathize also. We feel that the desire to be well spoken of centuries after one's death is natural and invincible. I sometimes think that this anxiety indicates a lurking

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doubt in Cicero's mind as to the perfect correctness of his conduct to the Catilinarian conspirators. It is of a piece with his constant boasts that he is the saviour of his country. Had he been *quite* sure that he had actually been a second Romulus, he would not have said it so often.

If then the Verdict of history', though belated and impalpable, is yet a reality, it seems to me that it is the duty of historians to give it, and to give it clearly and fearlessly. It is true that some, like hanging judges, seem occasionally to lose the duty in the joy, but this is the defect of a good quality. Macaulay, when he refused to be blinded by the splendour of Marlborough's genius, and attacked his view, was, *so far*, right. Where he went wrong was in not making sure of his facts; and for this he has paid a heavy penalty. On the facts, as they came to him, he was justified in passing a severe sentence, and, in my opinion, he would have shirked his proper task if he had omitted to do so. Similarly when — mistakenly as I believe — he came to the conclusion that the conduct of Penn in a certain crisis was unworthy of a Quaker 'professor', he was right to pass judgment, though he might have made allowances. Incorruptible himself, he was too hard on the shifty politicians of a time in which, without shifts, not even a politician with the vital capacities of a Sieyès could easily live. At times, apparently, he himself was conscious of his harshness. He felt that, in crucifying Barere, a cork on the tempestuous waters of the Terror, he had been too uncompromising — and had spoilt his essay. He had done well to break the butterfly on the

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wheel, but he need not have shown such gusto during the operation.

A less dubious example is Arnold, as upright as Macaulay and more religious. Apart from his clear and straightforward style, what has been called his 'moral grandeur' is the most striking thing about him. He cares nothing for the glamour of military glory: the triumphs of Julius weigh as nothing against the crimes by which they were achieved; and Arnold almost agreed with Pope that

More true joy Marcellus exiled feels
Than Caesar with a senate at his heels.

He has praise for Pompey, in spite of Pharsalia, and regards it as his greatest honour that, when the empire of Rome was at his feet, he refused to take it up. Like Cato in Lucan, Arnold held that Pompey was 'salva libertate potens', and that while ruling the Senate he allowed it still to rule. Similarly, the unsurpassed military genius of Hannibal stirs Arnold less than the nobility and generosity which shines through all the Roman libels.

There may be doubts as to these opinions; but since Arnold held them, it was right that he should express them. If you hold that men, in difficult times and in the face of strong temptations, have kept 'their bosom franchised and allegiance clear', you should say so; and the historian who, in sublime 'impartiality', makes no distinction between the honest man and the villain, is leaving undone that which he ought to do. Where Arnold goes wrong is in applying too strict a canon,

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He tends to judge a statesman according to the standard by which he measured his Sixth Form at Rugby; and he expected the behaviour which became a Christian gentleman from a Roman general in dealing with a German chieftain. After reading with his boys the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, with its terrible indictment of heathenism, he opened the *Satires* of Horace, and said, 'Now we shall see what that society was like'. It was in this spirit that he wrote his *Roman History*: every man and every action was to be tested in a moral alembic. Hence, as Freeman says, with more truth than is usually to be found in an epigram, Arnold was never unfair, but he was sometimes unjust.

Whether Kingsley was an historian at all has been doubted, and will be doubted. But he certainly wrote historical romances, and in them he endeavoured, within the limits prescribed by his dogmatic prejudices or convictions, to perform this historical duty. Those who read *Westward Ho!* or *Hereward* will find no lack of moral judgments, whether they agree with them or not. Kingsley's opinion of Father Parsons and his fellow-Jesuits is not concealed; and it is plain that when they came to their doom Kingsley thoroughly approved of the Providence which had brought them to it; while the fault of Amyas is appropriately punished by the same sort of lightning-stroke which avenged the impiety of Capaneus and Ajax the son of Oileus. Even *Hereward*, though a favourite of his biographer, is not spared when he swerves from the narrow way. In *Hypatia*, which keeps to actual history very closely, a

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similar path is followed: the crimes of Cyril are set in a flaming light. And, as the sub-title of the book shows — *New Foes with an Old Face* — the lesson is meant to be taken to heart by the readers of to-day; for Kingsley held as strongly as Professor Hearnshaw that a history of the past is of no value unless it bears, closely and obviously, on the present. But the lesson, for Kingsley, is less political than moral and religious.

A more genuine historian than Kingsley is Freeman; but he too never fails to emphasize the necessity of a sense of *political* morality, the total lack of which in Mommsen he cannot away with, and the comparative weakness of which in Dean Merivale he deprecates. We know what he thinks of Harold; and in spite of his admiration for the great qualities of William the Conqueror, he does not disguise the essential wickedness of his enterprise, nor palliate the cruelty with which he carried it through to the end.

I have already mentioned Acton as, in this respect if in no other, belonging to the school of Arnold and Kingsley. Confronted with the unemotional tone of Creighton's *History of the Papacy*, in which that great writer, in his anxiety to take into account times, places, tradition and circumstance, seems to make no difference between villainy and virtue, and to confound the two as mere varieties of behaviour, Acton became indignant, and the more so as Creighton was already a clergyman and was on the straight path to a bishopric. A remarkable letter which he wrote to Creighton has been preserved by his editors, and is well worth the closest study. History to Acton is a Science, but a

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Moral Science; and 'the inflexible integrity of the moral code is', to him, 'the secret of the authority, the dignity, the utility of History'. 'Judge not', he adds in a postscript, 'according to the orthodox standard of a system religious, philosophical, political, but according as things promote, or fail to promote, the delicacy and authority of Conscience, Put conscience above both system and success. In Christendom time and place do not excuse. Crimes by constituted authorities are worse than crimes by Madame Tussaud's private malefactors; and the greatest crime is homicide. The accomplice is no better than the assassin; the theorist is worse.'

These, and a dozen others of like kind, are Acton's historical canons, and he applied them to concrete cases. Inevitably he deals more freely in blame than in praise. Great men, he held, are nearly always bad men, and the more powerful a man is the worse he will probably be; for power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. If Elizabeth asked the gaoler to poison Mary, and William III ordered his minister to extirpate a clan, Acton would hang them as high as Haman, *in the interests of historical science*. And he repeats this dictum yet again; if you debase the currency, history ceases to be *a science*, the upholder of a moral standard. His list of criminals is a strange one: Luther and Zwingli, and Calvin and Cranmer and Knox, Mary Stuart and Henry VIII, Philip II and Elizabeth, Cromwell and Louis XIV, James and Charles and William, Bossuet and Ken. It would have amazed Motley had he seen Acton's summing-up of William the Silent as a 'triple hypocrite'.

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It is likely that few will go as far as Acton. He stands almost alone beside those historians who find excuses for everything and those who record the Massacre of St. Bartholomew and the Abolition of the Slave-Trade with equal calmness and indifference. He speaks as if he would treat a Highland reiver of the seventeenth century as severely as he would treat a fraudulent company-promotor or gangster of to-day. We feel instinctively that some account must be taken of time and place, even in Christian countries, and after the acceptance, in theory, of the Christian code of morals. Nevertheless, if Acton is an extremist, he is an extremist on the right side. A moral judgment *is* demanded of the true historian; and, after all, a judgment which admits extenuating circumstances is a moral judgment still. If power corrupts a man, then a fair jury, when censuring a man's corruption, will take into consideration that he has been powerful. Reviewing the career of a Cromwell or a Napoleon, the just historian will consider himself, knowing that he has never had, and never will have, to face similar temptations. There, but for the grace of God, which has kept him in a sheltered and subordinate station, he too would have gone, and perhaps further. But while weighing all the excuses, the palliations, the so-called State necessities, he will finally not shrink from setting down, without more bias than is unavoidable in human nature, the considered moral judgment of history.

It is worth noticing that the most dispassionate and 'objective' historians cannot refrain, at times, from giving utterance to something very like moral

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judgments. We have seen that even Thucydides becomes almost a Socrates when he has to describe the Corcyraean massacres and the destruction of moral feeling which accompanies a long and bitter War. He scatters a few lilies over the grave of Nicias — though it may be that these are slightly ironical; and his tribute to the character of Pericles has an ethical touch. So too Ranke, who proclaimed his desire to narrate events *as* events, and to abstain from criticism of motives, gives way to the natural impulse of us all. Thus, when Strafford dies, he remarks that he has served his King loyally, but with indiscreet zeal; and, in his account of James II, there is a strain of mingled eulogy and censure. We may mark the same tendency, however strongly he may endeavour to check it, in his *History of the Popes*. Nothing could show more clearly that history is, in essence, a series of illustrations of moral maxima. After all, man is a social animal, and society will break down when the moral bonds are broken. History, which deals with man in society, cannot therefore neglect this most important human feature.

CHAPTER IX

HISTORY AS ECONOMICS

IT is only comparatively recently that the importance of economics as a main factor in the explanation of great social and political movements has been fully recognized. There were, of course, histories in which economic *facts* were described. In dealing, for instance, with the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 there were those who saw that the upheaval was largely due to the ignorance of the landowners as to the economic law of Supply and Demand; to their inability to see that, when the Black Death had removed so many of the working population, the survivors could claim a larger wage than when the competition for work was keener. Similarly, the economic condition of England under Henry VIII was discussed by historians, and the Elizabethan Poor Law was subjected to close scrutiny. Dudley North, and Molyneux knew how to trace many events, otherwise inexplicable, to economic causes; and even before them Gresham's Law had enunciated the principle that if a sound coinage has to compete with a bad one it will be driven out of the field. There is much economical theory in Turgot; and the history of his ministry is the history of sound economics struggling with obstinate blindness. It was impossible for Adam Smith to write the *Wealth of Nations* without using historical examples to confirm his theories. For one simple

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example, he showed how the fate of the Spanish Colonies was determined by the mistaken idea that the precious metals were identical with wealth; an idea which led to the exploitation of the colonies and, in a great part, to the decline of the mother-country; and, before his time, there were men who saw the errors of the Mercantile System and explained them with more or less lucidity. But these ideas did not easily obtain admission into the ordinary history-books. Biographers of the younger Pitt might dilate on his discipleship to Adam Smith, and on his adoption in his Budgets of Smith's ideas as to the right methods of taxation. They also showed how he had taken (without acknowledgment) from Richard Price the conception of a Sinking Fund, that great financial juggle by which Pitt persuaded himself and the people that they could pay for the war without feeling the strain — or rather, leave posterity to pay for it, and still imagine they were honest debtors. A few people — a very few — perceived that in 1810 and 1811, when there was a famine in England, Napoleon could have brought us to our knees by simply keeping the European ports closed. Fortunately, entangled as he was in the meshes of the Mercantile Theory, he fancied that by allowing Europe to supply us with corn, and thus draining us of money, he would reduce us to poverty; and in this manner he contributed in no slight measure to his own ultimate ruin; 'ne quisquam Ajacem posset superare nisi Ajax'.

With the growth of economic science, however, which was aided by Adam Smith's great prestige, and by the work of Ricardo, M'Culloch, Malthus, Mill,

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and others, a tendency appeared to trace whole series of events, which in the past had been either left unexplained or accounted for on other grounds, to economic causes; and, in the case of certain writers, hardly any other causes were allowed to operate, and history, it is scarcely too much to say, became the handmaid of economic theory. Important as economics are in human affairs, they were represented as practically the sole element of importance in the march of humanity; and writers began to seek economic reasons for events which had hitherto been regarded as due to 'aventur, or sort, or cas', to the fiat of God, to the ambition of kings, or to the caprice of ministers. There were books written to show that the Trojan War itself, so far from being fought to recover the ravished Helen, was really due to the necessity of keeping open the Dardanelles for the Black Sea corn-ships on which the life of Greece depended. As the merchant in Chaucer Volde the sea were kept for anything bitwixe Middelburgh and Orewelle', so the merchants of Mycenae told Agamemnon that unless Priam were compelled to charge a reasonable toll for ships which had to be drawn over the peninsula of Hissarlik, starvation would follow; and it was this, and not a beautiful face, that launched a thousand ships. Many conjectures had been made as to the reasons why, from the seventh to the fifth centuries before Christ, so many tyrannies were established all over the Greek world. The explanation was now found in the invention of a coinage and in the rise of a mercantile class in opposition to the old landed aristocracy. Pisistratus might almost have been a banker, and

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Periander a somewhat harsh money-lender. More attention was paid to the contests of usurers and debtors in early Rome, in order to explain the internal and even the external history of the city; and the Peloponnesian War itself became a struggle about trade-barriers.

The same idea penetrated everywhere. If a Seeley maintained that the wars of the eighteenth century were tariff-wars, unlike those of the seventeenth, which were mainly wars of religion, the new school sought, and found, economic motives even in the religious wars. As the Reformation, it now appeared, was due to the daily-developing world-trade, which could not endure the limits imposed on mercantilism by the old Church Laws against usury, it was inevitable that a struggle between those who held by the ancient ways and those who followed the new should arise, but should disguise itself as a struggle of theological creeds. It was far more like the struggle between modern large-scale business and the small firms, than like a war of rival religions such as the First Crusade or the Albigensian War. Similarly, the Civil War of 1642, of which it had been usual to find the causes in the antagonism between Presbyterianism and Anglicanism, or between two political beliefs, was now discovered to arise from a more or less conscious hostility between the new trade-feeling and the old squire-archival sentiment; and it was remarked how the vague feeling emerged into the open when war was made on the Dutch in the Commonwealth time with reference to the Navigation Laws. The idea was carried back farther into the past. Economic forces were unquestionably at work much earlier, even though

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their true significance might not have been everywhere understood. They had, in fact, determined war and peace. When Henry VII took advantage of King Philip's involuntary visit to our shores by forcing on him the *Intercursus Mains*, he showed himself alive to economic considerations; indeed this sagacious monarch was much before his time in seeing the importance of such considerations, and in making them an integral part of his political schemes. There can be little doubt, also, that Thomas Cromwell, in planning the destruction of the monasteries, was strongly influenced by the feeling that those institutions were economically out of date; and More, in his description of the enclosures and other agricultural changes of his time, perceived, dimly it is true, that a new force was operating which it would take wise statesmanship to guide into safe channels.

Under the powerful influence of the Industrial Revolution and its Victorian sequels, history took more and more careful note of these and other phenomena of the past. Josiah Tucker, in the early days of that Revolution, had argued, largely on historical lines, against 'going to war for the sake of trade', and had corresponded on such points with Turgot and Necker; while, in his views of the evils of monopolies, he had anticipated Adam Smith. Smith himself, as we have seen, did not avoid history in his study of the *Wealth of Nations*; and John Stuart Mill's *Political Economy* is studded with historical illustrations. Economics, indeed, were forced on the attention of historians by the state of affairs in their time. The 'Speenhamland'

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system, the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, the Bank Charter Act of 1844, the condition of the submerged population which even Pitt had been unable not to see, the novels of Dickens, the efforts of Lord Shaftesbury, the Bolton Report, the Chartist agitation, the Anti-Corn Law movement, and a thousand other causes, drove the professional historians to look into the economics of former ages. Hence such books as Thorold Rogers's *History of Agriculture and Prices*, Cunningham's *Growth of Industry*, and the rest, for which the reader may look up the enormous list in the Bibliography attached to Sidney Webb's chapter in the twelfth volume of the *Cambridge Modern History* — a list which, as it was published in 1910, would have to be doubled were a new edition called for in 1938.

Of the immense part which economics have played in the world, almost from the first time when men were formed into tribal societies, there is no need to speak. Vast migrations, leading to stupendous changes, have been caused by 'the pressure of population on the means of subsistence'. The grim medieval pun that the Huns brought hunger, might be used to another effect; the Huns came *because* of hunger; and the nations they drove before them poured into the Roman Empire, which, weakened by economic causes, was unable to withstand them. Rebellions, like those of Wat Tyler in England and the Jacquerie in France, arose out of not dissimilar conditions; the discharged soldiers of Kent and Essex, and the Free Companies in the Beauce, were urged on by famine and left famine in their wake. Whether the Trojan War was due to economic facts or

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not, many a less legendary conflict has certainly had such an origin. It is probable that, though in Biblical times 'kings went out to battle' every spring without any reason but their mere whim, the revolt of Mesha was inspired by the obvious truth that a country which lives by its sheep must perish if a hundred thousand rams and a hundred thousand lambs, with their wool, are exacted every year by an overlord. In times when society is more complicated, economics are still more important. Nevertheless, their importance has been exaggerated. Histories have been written, and are being written, the aim of which is to show that no other influence moves men to any noticeable degree, and which, under pretence of being histories, are really propaganda for the economic theories of their authors. Such, it is needless to say, are many of the books produced by disciples of Marx and Engels, the purpose of which is to show that all wars, at least in recent times, and practically all other social evils, are to be laid at the door of capitalism. Many of the accounts of the origin of the Great War, neglecting the facts which tell against this theory, ascribe its origin to the machinations of Jews, bankers, financiers and the owners of great businesses. Whether in Germany or elsewhere, these malignant plotters seem, with the blindest stupidity, to have been working indefatigably to the detriment of their own interests. While it is true that some wars, especially those waged by powerful 'civilized' nations against weak and 'barbarous' ones, have been due to the cupidity of people who wished to gain 'spheres of influence' or opportunities of exploitation of the native

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populations, the idea that all wars are due to such competitive greed is merely fantastic. Much, for instance, may be said against the Chinese Opium War; and there are not a few who hold that the bombardment of Alexandria in 1882 was a move to assist investors in Egypt from the consequences of their rashness. How far the Boer War of 1899 was due to the vigorous propaganda of mine-owners is still a matter of controversy. But — though the attempt has been made — it is hard to prove that capitalism had anything to do with the outbreak of the Crimean War; indeed, the popularity of that conflict was largely due to the fact that the 'money-grubbing' industrialists opposed it, and were accused by many, as for example by Tennyson in *Maud*, of preferring cash to honour. Partly, no doubt, from self-interest, but partly also from humanitarian motives, the Lancashire and Yorkshire manufacturers of the Victorian age were, as a general rule, lovers of peace; and the opinion, among that class, gradually gained ground that, of all gambles, war is the most uncertain. Of very few wars can it be said, as was said of the Seven Years' War, that they stimulate production and make commerce flourish; and the wealthy know it¹.

Nevertheless, the fancy is still published as if it were irrefragable truth, and it will probably continue to be published in spite of every refutation. Whatever the faults of capitalists, and they are many, this is not exclusively theirs, and they yield to the passions which provoke wars no more readily than other people. Nor

¹ This is clearly shown by Dr. Clapham in the final chapter of his monumental *Economic History of Modern Britain*.

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did it become Marx, who was always preaching the necessity of the class-war, which if it ever comes (*quod Deus avertat omen!*) will be the worst of all wars, to make it a count in his indictment of the capitalist system that it occasionally used war as a means of gain.

CHAPTER X
CONCLUSION

AFTER a sketch like this, which, short as it is, shows the inextricable confusion in the minds of historians as to the nature of their task, and which might easily have been doubled or trebled in size without exhausting the subject, the reader may ask why or how he should begin and carry on his studies. If historians are partial, deceptive, honestly mistaken, hasty, oversubtle, and in many cases everything by starts and nothing long, how is the reader to know where to trust them and where to be on his guard? By reading certain writers he may simply be confirming himself in his own erroneous views; by reading — with the hope of preserving his own impartiality — a number of works of varying tendencies he may simply be reducing his mind to a chaos of conflicting opinions. He may become one of those people denounced by Bacon, who refuse to admit the reality of truth; 'delight in giddiness, and count it a bondage to fix a belief'.

Assuredly truth is very difficult to discover, and not least so in investigations concerned with mankind, and with mankind in societies. If we know but little about men we meet every day, much less can we know about those of centuries ago. And, as the historian is a member of a particular society, it is hard for him to do justice to men who have been members of others. A

CONCLUSION

Bancroft, American through and through, cannot easily write the *History of America* with the detachment of an inhabitant of another planet; and Walter Scott's account of Bruce is necessarily different from that given us by a Freeman or a Green. Not only this. The historian may wish to be just, but he has to think of his audience. 'If, said Matthew Paris, 'I tell the truth, I offend many; if I tell falsehoods I offend God'; and many have preferred the latter choice; few indeed have contrived to offend neither.

To be just to other men, then, is the historian's almost impossible task. He can, as Burns put it, partly compute what has been done; what has been resisted, the temptations overcome, he cannot know. If, even in astronomy, there are some secret interfering forces which may disturb the calculations of the prophet, and vitiate his predictions to the extent of a second or two of time, how much more are there such in a science dealing with the most capricious of all things, the human mind!

Curiously enough, it is precisely this capriciousness which many historians are most inclined to ignore. Knowing, theoretically, that men are not consistent, that the most cautious are sometimes rash, and that even Hector may be overtaken by panic, they yet constantly tend to systematize, to trace tendencies where there are only cross-currents, and to imagine a reasoned 'policy' where in fact there may have been only whim. If one statesman dislikes another, they seek or invent profound causes for the animosity; as if the world were not crowded with Dr. Fells whom we dislike without an assignable reason. Historians of this class are subject

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to illusions of one kind; those who do not worry about motives to illusions of another: they see the world as the sport of chance or fate, and describe events as more or less isolated accidents. Others, or the same men in different moods, accept or reject the statements of their predecessors in accordance with their general conception of the probable. 'Men do not act so', says one writer. 'This is precisely what we should expect in the circumstances', says another.

The historian himself is a human being, and he is discoursing on other human beings. When therefore his reader comes to judge *him*, he is appraising a man in his capacity of appraiser of other men; and the problem is, so to speak, to be solved at a double remove, with the added difficulty that sometimes we may know little of those other men beyond what he has been willing to tell us. How, for instance, can we tell how far Freeman has been too favourable to Harold if we have to trust Freeman for our knowledge of Harold? Recently there has been issued a life of Potemkin, very laudatory of that Russian statesman. Not many of us know more about Potemkin than a few more or less scandalous anecdotes. This writer comes round with a mass of facts, some quite new, all nearly inaccessible. We are largely at his mercy. We may say, 'This *seems* impartial; the writer *seems* to have weighed conflicting authorities in a just balance; there is a tone of honesty and capacity about him; so much I can see, but how much has he hidden from me, or—what is still more important—how much has he, through his natural predilections, concealed from *himself*? Is he that most dangerous of all

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deceivers, the man who is honestly deceived?' The problem may be compared for complexity with that which confronts the astronomer when he tries to calculate the path in space of the moon moving round the earth, which itself moves round the sun; and, as the sun himself is probably a planet to another star, we soon reach a phantasmal chaos at which imagination boggles.

For the reader who comes, with but a modicum of knowledge, to the study of a history of any period, and especially of a very controversial period, the difficulty of discovering how far to trust his author is therefore great; and it is almost impossible for the most competent guide to assist him to any great extent. Long ago, one of the most able of the Victorians wrote a work *On the Influence of Authority in Matters of Opinion*. Cornwall Lewis was a learned man, and one who had had much practical acquaintance with politics. He had not only written history but helped to make it, and he had done much to overthrow the credit of certain popular historians. If anyone could have solved the problem, it was he. Nevertheless, after four hundred pages, he left it much as he found it. And yet the vast majority of us are compelled to form our opinions on some authority or other. We cannot pursue our historian into all the lurking-places from which he has drawn his conclusions; we cannot turn up all the originals to whom a Gibbon refers in his multitudinous footnotes, and see if the whole passage bears exactly the meaning his brief extract seems to convey. Even Paget, that ruthless critic of Macaulay, had to confine his investigations to

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four or five of Macaulay's thousands of possibly controversial statements; and Buckle, in approving of Macaulay, could only say he had followed him on a single line — though, it is true, the line was an important one. We are neither Pagets nor Buckles; we are as much the slaves of our historians as we are the slaves of our lawyers, our doctors, and other expert or incompetent specialist advisers.¹

This comparison may provide us with a hint — doubtful and imperfect, but the best to be found — for the removal of our difficulties. The question, in a measure, *solvitur ambulando*. We choose our doctors roughly according to the opinions of other doctors and their own patients; we give them a trial, and we retain them or dismiss them as they satisfy our requirements or pass our judgments. Nor, though we are not experts, are we entirely unable to form tolerably just opinions. Somehow, as a rule, we know a good man when we see him, and the 'average man' can often detect the charlatan. When Johnson said that a very ordinary person, after five minutes under a bridge with Edmund Burke, would say 'That is a great man', the Doctor was paying a tribute not merely to the genius of Burke, but to the sagacity of the common man, who, though not great himself, can tell greatness in others. A very amateur musician can see the sublimity of the Ninth Symphony.

A reader of intelligence, then, ought to be able to

¹ I know no better preliminary guide than the small bibliography appended to Professor Hearnshaw's article on History in *An Outline of Modern Knowledge*.

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form a fairly sound judgment as to the character of the historian he reads. As a general rule, he will detect weaknesses: partiality will rarely escape him, and carelessness will show itself not merely in errors of fact, which only experts may perceive, but in other points which the amateur is as competent to see as the professional. If a tendency to heighten the colours is present, as a mark of the literary style, the reader will rightly suspect that the writer has played with his facts as he has played with his words; that the exaggeration of light and shade in the diction betrays a tendency to blackening one side of politics and whitewashing the other. There are very few writers indeed who have been able to produce partisan histories so skilfully as to conceal their bias — to be advocates who can be mistaken for judges. Such perhaps were Caesar in his *Commentaries* and Sallust in his *Catiline* — and both have been unmasked. Ferrero, by reading between the lines of the Gallic War, has shown how dexterously essential facts have been slurred over; and, if others had been as keen-sighted as Ferrero, they could have done the same. Of Sallust, Mommsen says, 'The circumstance that the adroit author keeps the apologetic character of this writing in the background proves, not that it is not a partisan treatise, but that it is a good one'; and, if others had been equally perspicacious, they could have seen what Mommsen saw. It was not the *knowledge* of these two great modern writers that enabled them to detect the sham, but a care and watchfulness which we can exercise if we will.

And, be it remembered, we may, after all, ignorant as

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we are, *know* certain facts about the man or the period our historian is discussing. If we find these omitted, slurred over, or 'wrested' by our historian, we have solid ground to set our feet on, and we shall be right to distrust him. If a eulogy of Charles II says nothing about the execution of Sir Harry Vane, we discount the eulogy. A life of Napoleon which omits to mention the murder of the Duke of Enghien will not be reliable in its account of other incidents; and a history of the American Revolution which passes over the treatment of the Loyalists condemns itself. Here, at last, we know where we are; for beyond doubt suppression or distortion of the facts is the unpardonable crime of the historian. Not so long ago, a writer, dealing with a recently dead statesman, accused him of certain vices and practices of which he was certainly innocent. Fortunately, there were relatives of the statesman still alive, who were able triumphantly to disprove the charges in a court of law. The calumniator was shown to have made them on the flimsiest show of evidence. He defended himself by saying that he regarded the statesman's career as an affair of the past, 'a matter of history'. This was to aggravate his offence; for, in the case of the dead, who cannot defend themselves, care is more necessary in weighing evidence than in the case of the living, who can, in the last resort, bring a libel action. How many such libel actions might be brought by men of the past, could they return to life, against certain historians is an interesting speculation.

We have seen that there is no unanimity among the writers of history as to the nature of their task: in fact no

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more than there is among novelists as to the nature of a novel. And similarly with *readers* of history. As novel-readers are induced to take up novels for very various reasons, so the readers of history are moved to their study by the most heterogeneous desires; and they will choose their authors according to their expectation that those desires will be satisfied. They may be in search of *literary* enjoyment, and here their choice will be easy, for as much literary ability has gone to the writing of history as to any other kind of writing whatever. For example, the charm of North's *Plutarch* is not inferior to that of the plays which Shakespeare based on five or six of them; and incidentally the comparison of the lives with the plays is one of the most delightful of mental exercises. It may be that Froude's account of Mary Queen of Scots is a romance. If so, the chapters in which he traces the events from the death of Rizzio to the death of Darnley are a romance unsurpassed in the English language. I have said that Napier's *Peninsular War* is a glorification of Napoleon; but that does not prevent his description of the 'astonishing infantry' at Albuera from being one of the greatest battle-pieces in the world. You may be a Jacobite in your sympathies; but you will not on that account be the less able to enjoy Macaulay's 'grand purple patch' in which the siege of Londonderry lives before you as if you were one of those who cried 'No Surrender' and trembled between hope and fear till the boom was broken and relief arrived. As for the Retreat from Syracuse, which Gray thought the finest thing he ever read in his life, you, whether you know Greek or not,

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have the same chance as Gray of deciding whether there is anything finer. Or, to turn from Greek to Hebrew, where in his whole range of prose, is there anything to surpass the chapters on the revolt of Absalom, his death, David's grief and Joab's stern rebuke?

But, after all, most of us read history to satisfy what I may call a noble inquisitiveness. Realizing that the present is the daughter of the past, we wish to know what the past was like in order to understand the present. And this is not a frivolous curiosity. Just as in our daily life we inquire about the reputation or history of our doctors, our lawyers, or our grocers; as a house-master receiving a new boy wishes to learn something of the *history* of the boy from the parents, in order that his work may not be wasted; so, in taking up a history of the past, we are seeking to know what concerns *us* in the people or system of former ages. If we are decent persons, in seeking for knowledge about our customers or shopkeepers, we confine our search to what is of importance to us. A man's private affairs, we say are 'no business of ours', but by the very use of that phrase we hint that some of his affairs *are* our business.

Now, in what is commonly called history, we are inquiring in the same limited fashion, into the affairs of men dead and gone — so far as they concern *us*. It is not all their affairs into which we wish to pry; and, obviously, different people will desire to know different things about these dead celebrities. But, roughly, as we have seen, history is concerned with the relations of people in the mass, as social or political

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communities. A History of England narrates the story of England as one nation, set over against other nations: it shows, for example, not only the internal conditions of our country but its relations of friendliness, hostility, or general interdependence, with France, Germany, or other countries near and far. A Political History tells of the reactions of a particular State to its own political parties, and of those parties to one another: it *may*, of course, have to go pretty deeply into the lives and characters of the leaders of those parties, but only because those leaders excited an influence on the fortunes of the parties. Similarly a History of War must devote considerable space to Hannibal, Marlborough, or Wellington, because these great captains exerted so profound an influence on the results of the wars in which they fought, and indeed on the wars fought long after their own time.

But there are plenty of other histories. Economic History, for instance, will have comparatively little to say of individual men, and much to say about great tendencies and movements in which the individual seems submerged in the mass. Religious history, again, while it cannot neglect the leaders, will prefer to consider the doctrines, spirit, and conscious or unconscious aims of the bodies concerned. Nay, one can conceive an admirable sketch, somewhat similar to Professor Pollard's *Factors in History*, in which not a single name should be mentioned from beginning to end; though it is certain that a book of that kind could be written only by a man very familiar with the details of his story. Professor Clapham's *Economic History*

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of Modern Britain is very nearly an example of this kind. It collects a vast number of facts and statistics, but it is amazing how few proper names are to be found in its comprehensive chapters.

We begin, then, to see how our choice should be made when we contemplate the enormous library of historical works, which not even an Acton could read if he lived to the age of Methuselah. If we are politicians — and politicians we all ought to be — we shall prefer political history; and this is why Macaulay, who was a politician, thought so highly of Thucydides, whose history is political. If we are warriors, we must choose the history of war. Men of all parties, and not least those opposed to Labour, should read Mr. and Mrs. Webb's *History of Trade Unionism*, and books on Socialism, Syndicalism and the like. It is safe to say that the soundness of politics to-day will depend on our knowledge of the politics of the past; a statesman who does not know how England came to be what she is will have a very bad influence on England as she is to be. We have had Colonial Secretaries who fancied that Canada was conquered to make up for the loss of America; whereas, in fact, the removal of the French danger in Canada was one main reason why the American colonies felt they could dispense with British help — which, to their minds, was interference. We have had Irish Secretaries who did not know that Ireland had ever had a genuine grievance against England. Such men could only aggravate existing evils. And we are all statesmen in a small way. If we neglect history, we shall choose bad

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Members of Parliament, and bad Members of Parliament will choose bad Prime Ministers in bad Cabinets. As then, if Napoleon's marshals obeyed his reiterated advice, they 'read, read, read the campaigns of Hannibal', so we should read, read, read the political campaigns of our ancestors, to profit by their successes and take warning from their errors.

While the reader will naturally choose, for pleasure, those writers whose point of view is more or less his own, he will therefore obviously do well if, at the cost of a certain exasperation, he reads some with whom he is in little sympathy. The process may be bad for his temper, but it may enlarge his mind. And, whatever his brand of opinion, he will find enough to satiate his desire for this kind of broadening. If he is a Liberal, the number of Tory histories and biographies written in recent years will provide him with proofs that his opinions, soundly based as they are, do not seem so sound to everybody. A Tory, again, might do worse than read Dr. and Mrs. Hammond's three admirable works on the Village and other Labourers. He will thus learn, perhaps against his will, why Socialism is strong to-day: for it is on those horrors that it was nourished, and the blood of the 'Swing' and Tolpuddle Martyrs has been the seed of the Labour church. On the other hand, a Socialist, whose history, often learned orally from his grandfather, has been limited to tales of the Hungry Forties, or of the state of things recorded in the Bolton Report of 1842, would, if he read a Tory or Whig history, discover, possibly to his surprise but certainly to his advantage,

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that the captains of industry were not all devils in human shape, or at least that, if there is no valid excuse for the horrors, there was a *reason* for them, and that, men being what they are, it was natural that those who gained by the system should not look too closely into the means by which their gains were made.

There is, in almost all of us, a certain Fascism, which cannot easily allow our opinions to be disturbed; which prefers the mind to be totalitarian, of a single, or at least apparently harmonious party. Like the legendary judge already mentioned, it does not feel comfortable if, after hearing one side and making up its mind, it has to listen to counsel for the opposite point of view. As John Stuart Mill said, the rarest of all persons is he who really desires to learn the truth. The vast majority when professing to seek the truth, are in actual fact wishing to find their so-called 'convictions' confirmed. Strong as this tendency is, it is to be resisted at all costs, and not least in such controversial spheres as those covered by history. Nothing is worse than a stagnant mind, and its disturbance, though fretting, is necessary. Your 'conviction' may be wrong. Or, what is equally common, it may be partially wrong, and, by studying the opposing views, you may be able to modify it to the requisite extent. Or, finally, it may, by a miracle, be absolutely correct; but you will not hold it in the right way unless you see it in contrast with its opposite. To detect what it really means, in all its fullness, you must know what can be said against it. Even a true opinion is all but worthless unless it is open to criticism, and unless

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the criticism is taken into consideration, examined and after being fairly weighed, rejected. 'A man', says Milton, 'may be a heretic in the truth, and if he believe things only because his Pastor says so, or the Assembly so determine, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresy.' The whole volume of Mill on Liberty is but an elaboration of that Miltonic sentence. Thus the Tory should read Liberal books, the Liberal Tory, the Protestant Catholic histories and the Catholic, though he does not think so, Protestant. Only in this way, even if a man retains his old opinions, will he retain them in the right manner. We must impose no censorship upon ourselves, any more than we should heed a censorship imposed by others.

At the same time, for the ordinary reader of history, to whom it ought to be a refined pleasure, I should not desire the 'exasperation' of which I spoke to be too keen or too constant. I should not recommend an exclusive devotion to works which are a continual vanity and vexation of spirit. 'Est modus in rebus; sunt certi denique fines.' We have certain convictions without which we should feel we had no sound anchorage in life; and, beyond making sure they are right, by a reasonable study of those writers who uphold them and of those who oppose them, I do not see why we should increase the misery of life by continually subjecting ourselves to the abuse of those to whom they are anathema. Such, to an Englishman, is the belief in freedom of thought and speech; and a very moderate draught of Fascist or Communist history, in

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which that faith is assailed with ridicule or obloquy, seems to me sufficient. A Christian, again, though he might with advantage study a work in which the weak points of the religion and its adherents are brought out with fairness and some degree of sympathy, yet cannot be blamed if he throws aside one in which half the evils from which the world suffers are ascribed to the baneful machinations of believers. It is good to see the Continental view of British statesmanship, but at the fifth or sixth assertion that it is solely inspired by malignity and hypocrisy, the common reader, as distinct from the professed student, may be excused if he cries 'Enough'.

To the ordinary reader, then, for whom these pages are specially intended, I would say in conclusion, 'Read what you like, but continue to read what you do not like either until you like it or until you can stand it no longer'. Or, in other and better words, Trove all things, hold fast what is good\

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