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*The Master of Trinity*



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G. M. TREVELYAN, O.M.

*Master of Trinity College, Cambridge*

*An*  
*Autobiography*  
& OTHER ESSAYS



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## FRONTISPIECE

from the portrait by Edmund H. Nelson  
in the possession of Trinity College, Cambridge





## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN HISTORIAN

HISTORIANS, scholars and literary men who have led uneventful and happy lives seldom afford good subjects for biography, except such of them as have left letters or journals of excellence or of interest. I never kept a journal, and I never wrote a private letter worth printing. Perhaps because I have always taken a good deal of pains with the writing of my books, transcribing each paragraph four times on the average before the typing stage, and because I am by nature lazy about everything except the labour necessary for the production of historical works, I never devoted serious attention to any other kind of composition, and I have always preferred conversation to correspondence as a method of human intercourse. May my malison alight on anyone who attempts to publish any of the scrawls that were once my letters; I trust they have all long ago passed through the waste-paper basket. For the rest, this brief record of my life, written by the man who knows most about it, will satisfy beforehand any possible curiosity on the subject.

In a brief autobiography, I must adopt some principle of selection, so I will choose out, from the throng of things remembered, the influences which led me to write my books, the only part of my activities and opinions which concern the public. Except for this purpose I make no attempt to describe the many interesting people whom I have known; I am writing not Memoirs but an Autobiography, an egotistic affair, but confined to those aspects of my life which were directly or indirectly connected with my work as an historian.

I have been not an original but a traditional kind of historian. The best that can be said of me is that I tried to keep up to date a family tradition as to the relation of history to literature, in a period when the current was running strongly in the other direction towards history exclusively 'scientific,' a period therefore when my old-fashioned ideas and practice have had, perhaps, a certain value as counterpoise. When one of my first books was reviewed (as all my twenty books have been) in most friendly



fashion by *The Times* or its famous Supplement, the kind old Victorian reviewer quoted about me a French proverb which struck my youthful mind forcibly, and has been my secret motto ever since—'Bon chien chasse de race.'

But the home influences of the kennel were modified and modernized in the case of this puppy by the teaching of Townsend Warner in my last year at Harrow, and by a rich academic experience in the Cambridge of Maitland, Cunningham and Acton. Thus chastened, I already knew, at the turn of the century, exactly the sort of thing I wanted to do, and I spent the next forty years (barring war-time) in doing it. Not an exciting story! But such as it is, it must be the *motif* of this autobiography.

My father was Sir George Otto Trevelyan, the nephew and biographer of Macaulay, and my mother was Caroline, *née* Philips. I was the third of three sisterless brothers.<sup>1</sup> On February 16, 1876 (a fortnight before the publication of my father's *Life of Macaulay*), I was born at Welcombe, near Stratford-on-Avon, the home of my mother's father, Robert Needham Philips. It was one of those enormous country mansions with which the wealthy Victorian bourgeois loved to burden their newly purchased estates. Welcombe house was, indeed, only a very few years older than I was, though it was long ere I grasped that disillusioning fact. My childish imagination was entranced by its Elizabethan appearance, before I realized that plate glass windows and fat red bricks were not in the real Tudor tradition. But there are worse houses than Welcombe, for the detail of the external stonework and internal wood carving had been carefully copied out of Nash's *Mansions of England*, a work I once adored and still enjoy. It has since become a week-end and residential hotel, a purpose for which it is admirably suited by its size (better indeed than for a private house), and by its situation within two miles of the Shakespeare birthplace and theatre.

We used to go for our Christmas and sometimes our Easter holidays to Welcombe, so long as my hospitable grandfather, Robert Philips, lived. After his death in 1889 it passed to my mother, and she and my father used to spend the winter months

<sup>1</sup> My eldest brother is Sir Charles Philips Trevelyan, Bart. (born 1870, sometime Labour Minister for Education). My second brother is Robert Calverley Trevelyan (born 1875), poet and scholar.





in a comfortable wing of it, closing up the larger rooms. The rest of the year they lived at my father's house at Wallington in Northumberland, of which more anon.

And so, as child, boy and young man I lived and walked much in Shakespeare's Warwickshire. The house is pleasantly hidden away among trees and bushes full of birds' nests in a bottom of the Welcombe dingles, to which he must often have walked out from Stratford by the footpath way, still in use. He invested part of his theatrical earnings in the purchase of the tithes of Welcombe, and he is said to have said, 'I will not have Welcombe enclosed.' At the top of the dingles stands the little old country house of Clopton, which served as a resort of the Gunpowder Plot conspirators. The large stretches of woodland to north and west, where I used to roam among primroses, I imagined to be wrecks of the Forest of Arden, as perhaps some of them were. Close at hand, Avon wound under high wooded banks or through green water meadows. Edgehill bounded the eastern horizon; and on clear days Malvern was seen, standing sentinel at the gate of the magic West. Altogether it was a goodly heritage for a boy who soon came to think that poetry, history and solitary walking across country were the three best things in life.

I saw my first play (apart from London pantomimes) in the old Stratford theatre; it was Frank Benson in *Richard III*. Small as I was, historical imagination was already the keenest pleasure of my life. I knew the *Lays of Ancient Rome* by heart (and have never forgotten them, turn me on where you like); and my father was my playmate, with his entrancing talk and familiar jokes about historical scenes and persons, somewhat in the style of Harry Richmond's father with his boy, though otherwise the parents had less than no resemblance to one another. And now, for two blissful hours in Stratford theatre, I actually lived in the past, seeing real people walking about in gorgeous Fifteenth Century clothes. I remember the rapture with which I watched the scenes in the court of Edward IV, and the murder of Clarence in the Tower (the butt of Malmsey was duly prominent on the left of the stage, awaiting its victim).

So well do I remember that play that I recall my sense of disillusionment over the battle at the end. I knew too much about war! My father and elder brothers were always playing, with the help of regiments of small lead soldiers made in Germany, a



realistic war-game (Napoleonic period) by elaborate rules which the Trevelyan family evolved for itself and perfected over a number of years. 'Soldiers,' as we called the game, made wet days welcome, and united us three brothers, till well after we were all grown men, in the freemasonry of our own peculiar game, in spite of occasional quarrels over its conduct, which was decided, not by mechanically applicable rules, but by our opinion as to what was militarily probable. When I saw Bosworth Field enacted on the Stratford boards, I had already been initiated as a looker-on at these family mysteries enough to feel that an old-world battle was not properly represented by a few people running about the stage with speeches and swords. To judge by the Prologue of *Henry V*, the author thought so too.

This imaginative and scientific game of 'soldiers,' to which I devoted so many delightful hours during some twenty years of my life, was, I expect, one reason why I afterwards enjoyed studying and describing the campaigns and battles, in my histories of Garibaldi and Marlborough.

Before I leave the subject of Welcombe and the Philipsses, I will tell the story of my parents' marriage.<sup>1</sup> In the General Election of 1865 my father, having been elected for Tynemouth, his first seat, went down to Lancashire to aid the Liberal battle there, for in those days General Elections were long drawn out. There he first came across the Philipsses of Manchester, and laid the foundation of something better than his political fortunes.

Robert Needham Philips was a merchant and politician of the old Manchester school, a strenuous supporter of Free Trade and the further extension of the Franchise, a Unitarian but not at all a precisian. I recollect him well, and he gave me the impression of a hearty squire of the old world rather than of a follower of Cobden and Bright, as he actually was. He was a born electioneerer, and my father's first sight of him in 1865 was sitting in his shirt sleeves at the table of Gladstone's Committee Rooms, ordering the Lancashire politicians about like a Captain on the quarter-deck in action. He was at once captivated by my father's youthful gifts and by his prowess as an orator. He smiled on the prospect of

<sup>1</sup> I have already told it, much in these words, in my Memoir of my father, *George Otto Trevelyan*, 1932, now out of print. I there tell his Garibaldian adventure at greater length.





having him for a son-in-law, when a mutual attachment arose between his daughter Caroline and the young member for Tyne-mouth. They were speedily engaged, but obstacles no less speedily arose. Robert Philips, important as he was in Lancashire trade and politics, was not then independent. His elder brother Mark Philips, one of the first two members for Manchester after its enfranchisement in 1832, still held his younger brother in leading strings as regards this world's goods and prospects. Mark was a strong and in many respects an admirable man, but he had not generous and enlightened feelings on all subjects. Himself a bachelor, he looked to see his niece Caroline allied to a lord. He caused her father to dismiss her fiancé with scant courtesy. My mother would certainly never have married anyone else, whether peer or commoner. Her firm and silent gentleness was sorely tried for two years, but not by any weakening on my father's part.

It was in these circumstances, immediately after his dismissal by the Philips brothers, that my father's Garibaldian adventure took place. He tried to join the Redshirts for their attack on Rome in 1867, but came just too late for Mentana, only in time to witness the famous arrest of Garibaldi by the Bersaglieri in the railway station at Figline.

Two years followed during which my father and mother, kept apart, were not happy, though my father could distract himself with exciting and successful political work, the active throb of the great London world and hosts of friends. At length, in July 1869, the formidable Mark Philips suddenly surrendered to the mild obstinacy of the lovers and wrote to my father:—

The days of Clarissa Harlowe are fortunately known no more, and Carry declares she can expect happiness only as your wife. I fear you will not felicitate yourself upon becoming connected with a gouty old uncle, but I will try to behave well and not be cross.<sup>1</sup>

In September 1869 they were married, the happiest event of two long and happy lives.

In this business my mother had shown quiet but effective powers of resistance. But she had not the active force of character that imposes its will on others. In years to come, her husband

<sup>1</sup> Mark Philips then built Welcombe, and died, leaving it to his brother Robert, a year or two before I was born.



and her three sons all represented the active principle, working in various directions, and she the passive. But the beauty of a quiet character and of a wisdom that seldom speaks and never loudly, was deeply felt by all who knew her. Her fullest self-expression was in the admirable water-colour landscapes which she painted wherever she went, in Switzerland, in Italy, and at home. Her reading in modern literature was almost as wide as my father's, but he had the field of classics to himself. How many hours in the course of sixty years he spent in reading to her aloud! It seemed as if all that was best in English prose and poetry had been composed for their joint delight. They were very seldom apart. During one of these brief separations, in 1908, he wrote to my wife, 'I never am unhappy for a few days with work and solitude; for that amount of solitude, brief, and at long intervals, introduces an element of contemplation and recognition into one's feeling about the person whose presence makes one's life.' They grew into one another by mind and habit so that I used to wonder how one could survive alone. And that impossible experiment only lasted from her death in January to his in August 1928.

During the General Election of 1880, when I was four years old, we were staying at Buxton for Easter, and my brothers were taken to a Liberal meeting in the town. I remember my excitement about it, but I was too young to be allowed to go. My brothers came back and reported that a Tory at the back of the hall, acting after his kind, had cried 'bool!' I was much impressed, and it became a joke of the elders to ask me 'what do Tories say?' To this question I would reply with a prolonged 'boo-o-o.' But I was instructed that there were 'good Tories,' a select class to be highly respected, for it included my charming uncle, Harry Holland, afterwards Lord Knutsford, Salisbury's Colonial Minister; also my governess Miss Martin.

That excellent lady, though English of the English, gave me a good French accent, which I only partially lost at Harrow in my endeavour not to be peculiar in all things, and not to appear to be currying favour with the French master, Monsieur Duhamel ('Dammy'). Miss Martin taught me English history out of *Little Arthur* and Mrs. Markham to follow. I remember also the day when she introduced me to a blue-bound History of France, and





my wonder and joy at discovering another country besides our own that had kings with battles and dates to them. I was made to learn dates and poetry by heart, as all children ought to be while their memory is still good and retentive, instead of being stuffed with generalizations about history and criticisms of literature which mean nothing to their empty young minds.

In 1882 my father became Chief Secretary for Ireland, in succession to his friend Lord Frederick Cavendish who had been murdered in the Phoenix Park. My brothers were in Ireland only for their school holidays, but I, being just six years old, was still at home. I spent much of my time wandering round the wooded circle of the Chief Secretary's grounds, playing chestnuts, marbles and hide-and-seek with a mild, gigantic Irish plain-clothes detective, named Mr. Dunne, whom I regarded as my playmate, and who was incidentally responsible for the safety of my small person in those troubled times. It was startling to discover that he took the opposite side about the battle of the Boyne. There were frequent reviews of real red and blue soldiers,—cavalry, infantry and artillery,—who fired at each other and advanced and retreated with entrancing rattle and jangle across the open Phoenix beyond our boundary ditch; our grounds were like a private box for viewing these delights.

Unconsciously a sense of the drama of English and Irish history was purveyed to me through daily sights and experiences, with my father as commentator and bard. On a great beech tree on the lawn was carved an ancient caricature of the Duke of Wellington, who, as his successor loved to recall, had at one time been Chief Secretary. How a General could be a Chief Secretary remained to me one of the insoluble mysteries that childhood learns to accept. The love of history was deeply and affectionately planted in me while living thus, a queer, happy little boy, almost alone with my parents in this oasis in the surrounding prairie of the Phoenix. Like my father and great-uncle before me, I always hated mathematics. One scene comes back to me, a clear vision out of the mists of the forgotten past. A little boy of six, seated at a table in the dining-room of the Chief Secretary's Lodge, crying over a long division sum (I remember it was long division) and an angel in human shape coming to comfort me and show me how to work out the abstruse problem. It was dear Dolly Tennant, afterwards wife of Stanley the great explorer. She was a frequent and



favourite guest at my parents' house, and used to draw for us lovely and lifelike sepia sketches of street Arabs, one of which I keep framed to this day.

After my father's return to England in 1884 my people were kept much in London, not a good place for a boy, so I was sent off at the age of eight to a private school at Wixenford, on the borders of Berkshire and Hampshire, amid pinewoods and heaths, with Bramshill House a feature in our walks and rides, and Charles Kingsley's parish church of Eversley as our place of weekly worship. It was much like other boarding schools of small boys, I imagine. I was happy enough. My two best friends were Will Finlay, afterwards the Judge, and Hugh Law, the dear impulsive Irishman, afterwards a Nationalist member. Finlay and I used to argue for the Roundheads and Law for the Cavaliers, till the debate grew as heated as it was ill-informed. Sometimes the school football sides were chosen on the principle of Cavalier against Roundhead; I fear the Cavaliers had the best of it, although the gaps in the Roundhead ranks were made good by neutrals!

The teaching at Wixenford was good, and the masters were a very nice lot of men. They had a hard time under the Head Master, E. P. Arnold, a great teacher, who would have been a great schoolmaster but for his overbearing and sometimes ungovernable temper. But he always treated me well, and I owe him a debt for a year or more of instruction in Latin Prose under his close personal supervision, shared with only one other boy. Thanks to that rigid mental discipline I learnt to work, and I learnt to dissect and compare Latin and English prose with an analytical thoroughness which had, I am sure, a beneficial effect on my English prose composition in after life.

Arnold also provided me, as his favourite, with another bracing discipline, sending me out perched on his big mare Sheila, without stirrups, to ride over the sandy tracks of the heaths. I was a child straddled on Sheila's great back, and she sometimes ran away with me, an alarming but thrilling experience.

Perhaps at this stage the reader will exclaim, 'What a dreadful little prig you must have been!' I was, and I suffered for it when I went to Harrow in 1889. I began by getting the Fifth Form Latin Prose Prize in my first year, a success which had two unfortunate effects. It was an offence to the boys, marking me out as a 'swot'





of the worst kind; and it made the masters think I was going to be a great classical scholar. I knew better. I was always at sea in Greek, and I was aware that my transient success in Latin Prose was only the aftermath of my drilling in that art by Arnold. I wanted to be not a classic but an historian. I never remember desiring to be anything else, except for a year when, after winning the school prize poem twice running, I thought I might possibly be a poet! I never had dreams of being a general, or a statesman or an engine-driver, like other aspiring children.

Socially I was a misfit at Harrow; perhaps I should have been so anywhere, at that period of my puppyhood. Wrapped in literary and historical imaginings which were a bore to my school-fellows, I refused to make any effort to care for anything that interested them. I was utterly lacking in tact and adaptability to human surroundings. I remember a boy asking me, with a sneer, whether I knew the name of the Derby favourite; I did know, for it was a subject of general conversation that week, but I said I didn't, because I resented the tone of the question; my interrogator went away marvelling, to spread the news. I was a complete muff at cricket, and clumsy at football though I liked it. My two brothers had been in the School football eleven, but I only got what I may call a 'charity fez' for my house, the Grove; but that gave me intense pleasure. The slow, heavy Harrow game, in the slushy clay of the ill-drained playing-field below the hill, gave a chance to a duffer if he 'followed up' and had a good wind. It was therefore, as I still think, a very good game for a school.

At any rate I didn't haul down my colours. At the General Election of 1892, I was told that I was the only boy in the school who openly said he was a Liberal. And I wouldn't be confirmed, —another eccentricity for which I was taken to task by some of the boys, though not by my adorable house-master, Edward Bowen, who only said 'quite right, boy,' without offering to discuss the subject.

My friends, who sympathized not with all my views but with my literary interests, were Philip Wilbraham Baker (now Baker-Wilbraham) and Charles Roden Buxton. But as they were not in my house, it was not easy for us to see much of each other until we got high in the school. My last year (1892-3) when I turned seventeen, was the happiest I spent at Harrow. The head of my house, James Sandilands, a king among boys, whom I greatly and



justly admired, treated me sensibly and kindly, and made my position possible. I shall never cease to be grateful to him. He knew how gauche I was, but I think he approved of me for taking my own line. (By way of giving me a leg up, he even put me into the School Singing Twelve, though I could only shout in unison!) His brother Harold Sandilands, also at the Grove, was more exactly my contemporary. They were a fine pair of brothers, both at school and afterwards as officers in the army. There were a number of other very nice boys in the House, but, as I say, my intimate friends were in other Houses.

I was pushed up the school very fast by the surviving impulse of my grounding in Latin at Wixenford, and I soon became a monitor. As such I fear I was little use, for I had no moral authority over the boys who regarded me as a muff; but I enjoyed the possession of the monitor's key, which enabled me to slip into the quiet haven of the Vaughan Library, not merely when it was open but whenever I had half an hour to spare. Every school ought to have an attractive and comfortable library, where a boy can delve for himself among good, old books, free from his mates and his masters. It is a great help to self-education, especially as very few boys nowadays enjoy this privilege in their own homes, as I did in abundant measure. Equally in the holidays and in term time I had the free run of the shelves of a good library. I shall never forget the happy and profitable hours I spent in the Vaughan, presided over by Mr. Lascelles, the kindly, humorous giant, always ready to help but never to bother a boy.

During Welldon's head-mastership, partly on account of his appointments, the Harrow masters included a number of remarkable men, from whom I gained much both in and out of school. Of the older men, Bosworth Smith, Stogdon (father of 'Edgar'), Hallam (of Tivoli) and 'Vanity' Watson were all, in different ways, excellent form masters of the Fifths and Lower Sixth. Among the younger masters, Gilson, afterwards Head Master of the Birmingham Grammar School, and Sir Arthur Hort, who looked like a Viking, befriended me, encouraged my literary tastes and pruned my exuberant English prose. Particularly in my last year I had, thanks largely to them, no lack of literary talk and discussion for which I craved.

My own house master was Edward Bowen himself, my father's old Trinity friend, author of the first and most famous group of





Harrow songs, an eccentric genius with a gift for stirring up the latent spark of intellect in a boy by his own welling eagerness and fun. He was a great walker and battle-field hunter, and I owed my love of walking and of battle-fields, partly at least, to emulation of him. I remember his saying to me, 'O boy, you can never walk less than 25 miles on an off day!' He was the first of the very few who have walked the eighty miles from Cambridge to Oxford in the twenty-four hours. He was a bachelor of somewhat ascetic habits: he once said to me, some years after I had left the school, 'O boy, you oughtn't to have a hot bath twice a week; you'll get like the later Romans, boy.'

Last, but not least for my purposes, there were two history masters of rare quality—Robert Somervell and George Townsend Warner. I think I had at Harrow a better historical education than any other schoolboy in England. Mr. Winston Churchill has gratefully recorded that Somervell taught him the mastery of English,—surely a priceless service to our nation as things have turned out. Somervell took the Sixth in history. We did Charles II's reign one term, and his teaching of it revealed to me the complexity and interest of the many-sided political past of our country, for I had been brought up at home on a somewhat exuberantly Whig tradition.

I owed even more to Townsend Warner, who had lately come to Harrow from Cambridge, an early product of its small but already excellent history school. After reposing lazily in the Upper Sixth for a long time, I at last persuaded Welldon that I was not going to be a Classic, in spite of my rapid rush up the school in that character. There was then no History Side,—only Bowen's Modern Side chiefly for boys going into the army. But Welldon most wisely handed me over to Warner as his private pupil during my last year. I suppose I was the earliest 'history specialist' at Harrow. Theoretically I remained a member of the strictly classical Upper Sixth; nothing was said about my being excused classical work. But there was a tacit understanding between Welldon and me, that I need not prepare the Construes. At least I ceased altogether to prepare them, and I was never put on; if I had been, there would have been disaster. Welldon was a gentleman.

I was therefore free to work really hard for Warner. I used to go to him in his house (now replaced by the War Memorial), a



pleasant bachelors' ménage where he and Teddy Butler lived together. I was treated there as a friend and pupil, in a way that helped forward my very gradual exodus from puppyhood in manners and in mind.

The mental food of which I was most in need at that time was a strict regimen of the modern type of scientific history at its best, to supplement the sweet cake of Gibbon, Macaulay, Carlyle, etc., on which I was gorging myself. Warner gave me that in the form of Stubbs' *Constitutional History*, without discouraging my love-reading of brighter authors. Stubbs, moreover, was an invaluable introduction to the Middle Ages, hitherto almost a blank spot in my knowledge. I wrote out a full analysis of the three volumes in three massive notebooks. And Warner's comments were those of a full and active mind laid alongside mine to help it on its way through uncharted seas. And so my last year at Harrow supplied a foundation for my future historical studies, and in particular a preparation for the Cambridge History School, then based on Stubbs and on Economic History. The latter was a new field to me at the University, but I had already broken the back of Stubbs at school, and therefore was the more free to expatiate in the wide fields of the Tripos.

At Easter 1892 we paid a family visit to Holland, and saw William the Silent's house at Delft and the little dark passage where the fatal shot was fired, and Haarlem and Leyden and other sacred places celebrated by Motley. Another year we went to Paris, where we were chiefly interested in the scenes of the French Revolution with Carlyle's history for guide and my father for showman. There was no one like him to make history vivid to boys.

All the time I was at Harrow I was reading poetry with passionate delight. Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley, Keats and Tennyson meant to me quite as much as Gibbon, Macaulay, Carlyle and Ruskin. With advancing years I can no longer read Shelley's works from cover to cover, but I am as much moved as ever by the best parts of those same poets. And at Cambridge I came under the spell of Swinburne and Browning, and made the rarer discovery of George Meredith's poems for myself. In fact the English poets have supplied me throughout my life with the sacred books of my eclectic philosophy and religion. Love of





poetry has affected the character, and in places the style of my historical writings, and in part dictated my choice of subjects: for instance Garibaldi attracted me because his life seemed to me the most poetical of all true stories, and I tried to preserve a little of this quality in telling the tale in prose. And as a much older man I was drawn to my Northumbrian neighbour, Edward Grey of Falldon, by a common devotion to Wordsworth and by my appreciation of the prose-poetry of Grey's own personality, character and fate. That was why I was very glad to be invited to write his Life.

More generally, I take delight in history, even its most prosaic details, because they become poetical as they recede into the past. The poetry of history lies in the quasi-miraculous fact that once, on this earth, once, on this familiar spot of ground, walked other men and women, as actual as we are to-day, thinking their own thoughts, swayed by their own passions, but now all gone, one generation vanishing after another, gone as utterly as we ourselves shall shortly be gone like ghost at cock-crow. This is the most familiar and certain fact about life, but it is also the most poetical, and the knowledge of it has never ceased to entrance me, and to throw a halo of poetry round the dustiest record that Dryasdust can bring to light. Hail to Dryasdust, the true purveyor of poetry! Carlyle's expression of this feeling for the poetic value of all historical facts has drawn me to him ever since as a freshman at Cambridge I read *Sartor* and the *French Revolution* again and again.

I went up to Cambridge, in October 1893, at the early age of seventeen. I went with a great eagerness of expectation. As a boy I had always been hearing about Trinity from my father, who in like manner, when he was a boy, had heard about it from his uncle Macaulay. And more recently I had learnt something about modern Trinity from my two brothers. Robert was still there when I went up; I succeeded to his rooms on the first floor of the south-west angle of the Great Court when he went down in the following year. I kept those rooms for eight years, till I myself went down early in 1903.

Cambridge proved all, and a great deal more than all, that I had ever imagined. Much as I had learnt at Harrow, I learnt more at Trinity, and in more completely congenial surroundings. Here was friendship, here was freedom, in fullest abundance.



I was a year younger than most freshmen, and so gained a year's start in my studies and in my later career. But, of course, I did some foolish things, and said many more, which it now makes me hot to remember. But, although I was not yet wholly out of my puppyhood, I made no bad mistake in the major articles of life; I chose and made my friends well, and I read and worked in the right way. And, for all my young foolishness, I was capable of taking an impression. I could digest and assimilate rebuke. I was not impervious to argument. And though far from humble, I had a respect for my intellectual superiors. Fortunately there were plenty of them, both young and old, at Cambridge. And so, although I had come to a place where historical ability and literary enthusiasm were a social asset, I did not have my head turned. The critical atmosphere for which Cambridge is celebrated was an astringent that served me well. My natural tendency to be hasty and superficial was kept constantly under correction. I often think that young men who are in danger of being flashy should go to Cambridge, and those who are in danger of being dull should go to Oxford: too often the opposite principle is adopted.

The men with whom I lived as an undergraduate were most of them two or three years older than I was, and of high powers of mind. My crude ideas had to run the gauntlet of their frank conversation. They talked on literature in a way that helped me forward (I remember how a few words from Bertrand Russell opened to me the glory of Shakespeare's sonnets, and how Ralph Wedgwood put me on the track of Meredith's poems, then very little known, a trail that I followed up far and eagerly for myself). They listened to me talking about history, and interjected pregnant critical remarks. But they talked most of all on philosophy, and a little on economics, when I could only sit and listen to what I very slightly understood. I have spent hours listening (or sleeping) while Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore and Wedgwood tackled each other, or the somewhat older McTaggart, and on occasions the venerable Henry Sidgwick. I felt privileged to be mere audience to such talk, for I knew that these were the men and that I was hearing new schools of philosophy made and unmade, as indeed was the case. So I learnt to hold my tongue. 'How charming is divine philosophy,' I said to myself, like the stupid brother in *Comus*. 'I can always leave off talking when I hear a master play.'





My three particular friends in this early time were Ralph Wedgwood, afterwards the railway chief; his cousin Ralph Vaughan Williams the musician, and Maurice Amos, afterwards Judicial Adviser to the Egyptian Government. They were friends to whom I was deeply devoted, whether on reading parties in Skye or at Seatoller in Borrowdale, on long walks or sprawled out in College rooms.

Those three were slightly senior to me, and when they went down there was George Moore staying on, Desmond MacCarthy coming up and Geoffrey Winthrop Young, poet and climber, who has been my greatest friend through life. His younger brother Hilton Young, now Lord Kennet, became scarcely less so, but he was my junior by four years at Trinity. Geoffrey Young as an undergraduate became the centre of a mountaineering group at College. I was socially on the fringe of it, but I was never a climber. Sometimes they dragged me up places, but left to myself I was only a walker and runner on the hills. Geoffrey and I invented and initiated the Man-hunt in the Lake District, a game which enabled me to exploit my only athletic accomplishment of running and leaping downhill over very broken ground: my ankles are untwistable. Geoffrey and I also walked to London together, from Trinity to the Marble Arch, in twelve-and-three-quarter hours, a little better than four miles an hour.

In my second year I had become a member of the 'Apostles,' the private debating society described in section 87 of Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. In my day, it was the battle-ground of the young philosophers whom I have mentioned above. Its meetings were a more formal prolongation of the discussions I have described. But the special advantage to me of belonging to the Apostles was that I was thereby enabled to know more intimately certain of the older brethren: Verrall, who was also my tutor, the most original exponent of classical and modern literature, his voice rising into a crow of delight at the end of some outburst of his wit; Lowes Dickinson of King's, with whose sad and sympathetic personality the world has been made familiar in his *Life* by E. M. Forster, also of King's and also an Apostle<sup>1</sup>; the vigorous and sardonic Radical, Wedd, of the same College, with his droll stories about parsons

<sup>1</sup> When I first knew Dickinson he was not 'left wing,' but a Conservative Unionist, writing in defence of the House of Lords,—to my sorrow. But we young men bothered little about politics at Cambridge in the 'nineties.



experience. What he said was always interesting, but sometimes strange. I remember, for instance, his saying to me that States based on the unity of a single race, like modern Italy and Germany would prove a danger to liberty; I did not see what he meant at the time, but I do now!

He became a member of Trinity College, and at first lived in his rooms in Nevile's Court. There he was to be found at all hours, accessible to any Cambridge historian from Maitland or Cunningham to the humblest undergraduate, ready to help anyone from the profound stores of his knowledge. He sat at his desk, hidden away behind a labyrinth of tall shelves which he had put up to hold his history books, each volume with slips of paper sticking out from its pages to mark passages of importance.

He was very kind to me. I remember a walk we had together, and the place on the Madingley road where he told me never to believe people when they depreciated my great-uncle, because for all his faults he was on the whole the greatest of all historians. (So much for Seeley's 'charlatan,' thought I!)

A scholar entirely after his heart was G. P. Gooch, my academic senior by two years. Acton was very angry when Trinity failed to elect him to a Fellowship. Certainly when our College held Acton and Gooch within its walls, they contained the two Englishmen who knew most about modern European history and its sources. And both were always equally ready to put their knowledge at the disposal of others.

Humour was not his strong point. I remember once Henry Jackson telling us how Charles Kingsley had said in one of his Professorial lectures, 'The Goths came over the Alps, each with a battle-axe and a pair of white duck trousers and an immortal soul.' Jackson and I laughed, but Acton was merely indignant that anything so frivolous should have been said from the Chair.

Acton was not a mediaevalist. Liberty of thought and conscience was what he cared about, and therefore, as he once told me, history for him began to be interesting with Luther. Though he was not a Protestant, he valued everyone's right to protest. Modern history was to him a record of the slow evolution of freedom and the rights of conscience, through a balance of rival forces.

In those days lectures were not meant to cover every corner of the field of the Tripos, and undergraduates depended less than





now on lectures and more upon their own reading. This, I expect, was bad for the weaker, and good for the better men. I attended lectures or cut them as suited me. But I read hard, taking notes from the books which I did not possess, and scoring those I did possess with a useful but pitiless profusion of pencil marks, which saved me much time in the work of revision; I am, I fear, no bibliophil, much as I love books. The Tripos served me as an excuse for very wide reading. I took a pride in the number of volumes which I 'gutted' (so I named the process of getting from a book all that served my purpose without reading the whole). One of my special periods was the War of the Spanish Succession, which attracted me so much that I formed the determination some day to write the Reign of Queen Anne.

In those days the Tripos had not yet been divided into two parts, so that a man had in his third year to revise all he had read in the other two. In my third year I was reading hard eight hours a day, without counting the relative idleness of lectures. Taken with my other activities it was too much for me, and I broke down in health from overwork, for the first and last time in my life. So in February 1896 I was packed off alone on a trip to Madeira.

All the voyage out, I thought I was finished. I walked in the strange and glorious scenery of the Madeira hills but could get no joy of them. I felt like one of Homer's ghosts, without flesh or substance. Half the voyage back, I still thought I was in a decline that would be the end of me. Then suddenly I felt all right, and landed in the highest spirits, restored to a world I loved.

I got home just in time to join an Easter reading party in Cornwall with Wedgwood, Vaughan Williams, Amos and Moore, a joyous time, especially when Verrall joined us for a few days. We bathed, and I remember his coming up out of the sea looking like a bearded Greek god; that was before his terrible illness, which he bore heroically for many years, illustrating the triumph of mind over matter. And the same sad praise must be given to his friend Maitland, so like him in character, in brilliance and in fate.

I soon picked up the threads of my Tripos reading, but I did not again overstrain myself, and I took a whole week off immediately before the Tripos, as I believe most hard-working candidates should do, in order to be in perfect training for the battle with the papers. I spent the week by myself bicycling among the Yorkshire



or the O. B.; Henry Sidgwick, the most conscientious of thinkers, stroking his long white beard as he stammered out nice distinctions, favourite passages from Shakespeare or one of his own telling epigrams. I saw much of Sidgwick, not only at Cambridge but at my father's house in the vacations, for my father and he were lifelong friends since their Trinity days together. Last but not least there was Frederick Maitland, once of Trinity but at that time Downing Professor of the Laws of England. Maitland and Verrall, who were great friends with one another, were the most brilliant of all the sons of Alma Mater; their talk was like the play of lightning, rendered innocuous by their kindliness and good sense. As to Verrall, Eddie Marsh has well written of 'the kind of augustness which remained with him in all his wildest nonsense. He seemed always to be a priest of fun, pouring it out with the same power and authority with which he recited the most magnificent poetry.' Before I left Cambridge in 1903 I had also become great friends with Alfred Whitehead and his wife in their charming house by the mill dam at Grantchester. Another Trinity man slightly senior to myself, whom I knew and loved, was Theodore Llewelyn Davies, of the Treasury. The men among whom I lived all looked up to him as to an elder brother. He was the best of us all, and died in a bathing accident in 1905. Intimacy with such seniors I have always regarded as one of the chief blessings of my life, and I am glad to think I made the most of the chance.

The name of Maitland brings me back to my historical studies. When I came up in 1893 there was no Entrance Scholarship in History offered at Trinity, but I won a Major Scholarship in my second year of residence. The Cambridge History School was still small, though it was on the eve of sudden numerical expansion. But it was already a great school in the sense that it was the workshop where two remarkable men were making enlargements in the scope of historical study, which have since proved of national and even of world-wide importance. Archdeacon Cunningham of Trinity was founding economic history as an academic subject; and Maitland was using mediaeval law as the tool to prise open to our view the mind of mediaeval man and to reveal the nature and growth of his institutions.

In my first year Seeley was still alive, as Regius Professor. He was dying, but stuck manfully to his work. In the small history





school of the day it was possible for the Professor to see personally the score of history freshmen who came up each year. I was sent to see him in his house, and the old man gave me, in a stern voice, a lecture on the theme that history was a science and had nothing to do with literature; he told me that Carlyle and Macaulay were charlatans. Though I had not much sense in those days, I had just enough not to reply; but I went away boiling with rage. And I still resent his words, because he himself had not won his position in life by writing scientific history, but precisely by writing literary history, on subjects about which he knew far less than Carlyle knew about Cromwell, or Macaulay about the English Revolution. Seeley's *Ecce Homo*, whatever its merits and its use, was one of the least 'scientific' books ever written on an historical subject, and his *Expansion of England*, however important, was merely a clever and timely essay. It was on those works that his fame rested, not on his *Stein*, which may have been a 'scientific' history for all I know.

Possibly, indeed, his attack did me good, not by altering my opinions, but by making me think out more carefully my views on the relation of history to science and to literature, and prepare myself for a controversy on which ten years later I took the field in public. Peace be to Seeley's ashes: he was a fine old Victorian of a fighting, dogmatic breed, and he had done much to nourish the infancy of the Cambridge History School.

After his death in January 1895 he was succeeded by Lord Acton. The Regius Professorship is a Crown appointment, and by good chance Lord Rosebery was Prime Minister that year. Acton was little known in England then, even to the learned world, and I doubt whether any Board or Committee of English historians would at that time have thought of choosing him as Professor. But Rosebery conferred that great benefit upon us.

With Acton, 'Learning like a stranger came from far.' His knowledge, his experience and his outlook were European of the Continent, though English Liberalism was an important part of his philosophy. He at once created a deep impression in our somewhat provincial society. Dons of all subjects crowded to his oracular lectures, which were sometimes puzzling but always impressive. He had the brow of Plato, and the bearing of a sage who was also a man of the great world. His ideas included many of our own, but were drawn from other sources and from wider



castles and abbeys. In those days a ruined castle 'haunted me like a passion.'

In the History Tripos of the previous year, 1895, John Clapham of King's had been the only man placed in the First Class. I knew him then, as I did many other members of his great College, but not nearly as well as I did thirty years later when we were both back at Cambridge as Professors; then he became one of my best friends. (There is a memoir of him at the end of this volume.)

In the History Tripos of 1896, out of 23 placed men, there were four in the First Class, and one woman out of ten. The four men were Geikie, Goffin, Head and myself. Freddie Head of Emmanuel, afterwards Archbishop of Melbourne, had so saintlike a character and such abnormal modesty that people did not always realize his very considerable powers of mind. His volume on the *Fallen Stuarts* is excellent. Roderick Geikie of King's was one of the most charming of men, and could have been either a great actor or a very good historian. I shall never forget him as the Frenchman in *Our Bitterest Foe* at the A.D.C., with Reggie Balfour and Lord Lytton, both good actors but far surpassed by him; nor, in the Greek Play of 1894, his 'tender, grave, Hellenic speech' as Iphigenia in Tauris. But tragic ill fortune cut him off. A generation later, when I was writing the reign of Queen Anne, I found that his unprinted dissertation on *The Dutch Barrier 1705-1719*, with which he had won a King's Fellowship, was a work of historical importance. At my instance the University Press published it in 1930. It may seem strange by some standards that a man so modest and tenderly considerate of others should have been so great an artist on the stage; and more remarkable still that so great an artist should have been so fine and patient a scholar as his posthumously published work shows him to have been.

So my Tripos went off all right, and I began at once to think of a dissertation for a Fellowship. I chose a mediaeval subject; but in fact I had no intention of becoming a mediaevalist. Indeed I was attracted to the period of Wycliffe and the Peasants' Rising of 1381 precisely by the birth of modern religious and social ideas which I saw in the story. I remember Acton's regretful surprise at my not taking a modern subject, in which no doubt he would have helped me much. But I went my own way, and the dissertation won me a Trinity Fellowship in 1898. The two other suc-





successful candidates that October were my friend G. E. Moore, the philosopher, and E. W. Barnes, the mathematician, afterwards Bishop of Birmingham.

Next year I published my dissertation under the title of *England in the age of Wycliffe*. In a modest way it has kept the favour of a section of the public for half a century, and real mediaeval scholars like Tout and Professor Little and Mr. Steel, the later authority on the reign of Richard II, have been very tolerant of the work of an author who was not properly equipped to deal with the Middle Ages. Fortunately I escaped, perhaps I was beneath, the attentions of the terrible J. H. Round. The fact that I had studied in the Fourteenth Century history of England long afterwards enabled me to begin my Social History at that point.

My 'Wycliffe' was the first of sixteen books that have been brought out for me by Longmans, who also published for Macaulay and for my father. I like to be personal friends with my publisher, and not to change him. I have never had any reason to dream of changing mine, except on half a dozen occasions when special circumstances bound some book that I wanted to write to some other firm, as for instance my second book, *England under the Stuarts*, which was one in the series of Methuen's History of England.

It was while I was preparing to write that book that I decided to leave Cambridge. I was already lecturing and teaching there a little, but not very well. And I wanted more ample time, all my working time in fact, to write history. And so, as I could afford to be out of a paid job, I left Cambridge after the Lent term of 1903,—to return a quarter of a century later as Regius Professor. I think I was partly moved by a desire for change of scene, and by a young man's longing to be at least on the fringes of the great world of London, which in those days had many attractions that it has since lost. I had also a feeling that if I wanted to write literary history I should do so in more spiritual freedom away from the critical atmosphere of Cambridge scholarship. Since Seeley's death, every historian at Cambridge had been very kind to me. And yet—and yet—I feared the impalpable restrictions of the Cambridge ethos, to which, as I have already shown, I was not insensible. The wise Henry Sidgwick said to me that if I wanted to write books as my chief work in life I had better not stay too long in academic circles.



Before leaving the subject of the Cambridge of that day, I must say a word about William Cunningham. When his heavy, bearded figure moved majestically across the Great Court under the shadow of his huge Archdeacon's hat, he seemed to have walked into our world out of Trollope's Barchester. He could have met Archdeacon Grantly on equal terms. But he was not 'of the stiff, the dry, cursing the not understood': very far from it. He conceived and carried out a new idea of the place that Economic History should occupy in academic studies. And although he was as great a controversialist as his friend Professor Ridgeway, the archaeologist, he could better put up with differences of opinion and even with the impertinences of the young. His kindness to me was most marked, although I was an obstreperous Radical and Anticlerical and he was a pillar of Church and State.

Some of us youth were in those days more aggressively anti-clerical than it is worth the while of anyone to be to-day. The state of things at Cambridge in the 'nineties was a 'leave over' from the hard fought struggle of the 'seventies and 'eighties, which had resulted in the abolition of religious tests and had effectively opened the University and its Colleges to new ways of thought: it was what we may call a 'post-war period.' In those days I failed to realise that, while one should be very careful about the truth of what one believes oneself, there is no particular fun or glory in denial for its own sake.

In this matter, as in others, my exuberance was usefully, though not quite sufficiently, checked by the warnings of elders whom I revered. Henry Sidgwick, who had really suffered in the cause of freedom of thought, tried to make me see that there was loss as well as gain in the decline of religious faith. And Sir Frederick Pollock, looking at me askance in his dry way,<sup>1</sup> said he did not see what reason our generation had to be anti-clerical, as the battle of freedom had been won by his own contemporaries, and we were making a fuss about nothing. This word also remained with me. But the more intransigent attitude of Leslie Stephen's and John Morley's writings on compromise in these matters, still

<sup>1</sup> George Meredith, a great friend of Pollock's, once said to me, describing his peculiar sideways expression—'Whenever you say anything to Fred Pollock, whether he agrees with it or not, he puts on a look as if he had just received the whole stench of the infernal pit into his nostrils.'





had charms. I took a spiritual pride in not going to chapel. If I had then had a prophetic vision of myself in the Master's stall o' Sundays, I should have been deeply scandalized. But years have brought the philosophic mind!

It was a fact, which no doubt always affected my historical outlook and sympathies, that as a child I had been more religious than most little boys, under the influence of my dear old evangelical nurse Mary Prestwich, whom we called 'Booa.' Her absolute goodness, natural to her but fostered by her religion, gave her a beauty of character I have never seen surpassed in any other man or woman. My own childish character was neither good nor beautiful, but I loved Booa, and her religion was mine until, at the age of thirteen just before I went to Harrow, I learnt that Darwin had disproved the early chapters of the Bible; at that dire discovery, all the rest, I fear, fell away from me at once. It was the only violent religious crisis I ever passed through, and I remember the agony of it well. But I retained a love of the Bible and an understanding of the beauty and tenderness of religious feelings, at any rate in their Protestant manifestations, even when I was most emphatic in my unbelief. Otherwise I could not in my early years have written *England in the Age of Wycliffe* or *England under the Stuarts*. I have always thought that some knowledge of the Bible is necessary to an understanding of English history. Certainly the intensive private study of that book by many hundreds of thousands of persons otherwise unlearned had more to do with the character, the mind and the imaginative power of our ancestors than we moderns can always understand.

One of the things that helped to draw me up from Cambridge to London was the Working Men's College, then in Great Ormond Street, now in Crowndale Road. It had been founded in 1854 by Frederick Denison Maurice of Trinity, and was still pervaded by an atmosphere of the liberal Victorian culture of men like Tom Hughes, Ruskin, Westlake and Ludlow, who had helped Maurice in its early days. One of those veterans was still left, that amazing old bird F. J. Furnivall, the Shakespeare scholar, with a smile half benevolent half Mephistophelean permanently fixed on a red face framed in shaggy white hair; he was revered but not approved by the more responsible chiefs of the College. Among them were two men by whose friendship I profited, Sir Charles



Lucas and Professor A. V. Dicey himself, who introduced me to Oxford and in particular to All Souls, where at the turn of the Century I spent many memorable weekends in company as good as was to be got in all England.

Evening classes were the staple of the Working Men's College, and I taught in some of them, at first going up once a week from Cambridge for the purpose. I don't think I taught well, but I made friends and liked the men, excellent samples of London folk, an interesting change from Cambridge undergraduates. They were not in fact all 'working men,' but the name of the College helped to keep away snobs. The common room was even better than the class rooms, for the 'College spirit' of friendship, as Maurice had conceived it, pervaded all social contacts. Men were not merely taught in the classes but came to regard the College as a club and a home.

Before leaving Cambridge in 1903, I had introduced my Trinity friend, Francis Cornford, the Platonist, to the Working Men's College, where he became deservedly popular, as also did G. P. Gooch. Cornford was devoted to the men he met there, more I think than to the average of his pupils at Cambridge. In return, he did me the service of teaching me the value of Wordsworth's *Prelude*, in walks on the high Westmorland fells. And together we tracked out the meanings and merits of Meredith.

It is time for me to say something about Wallington, my father's country house. I have already described Welcombe in Warwickshire, belonging to my mother, where my parents lived in the winter. But our real home was Wallington in Northumberland;<sup>1</sup> the long summer holidays there formed the best part of our lives as boys and young men.

The death of my grandfather Sir Charles Trevelyan (a public servant who made his mark both on the Indian and English Civil Service, in particular on the Treasury) left my father to be Baronet and squire of Wallington for no less than forty-two years. On his death, in 1928, the house and estate passed to my brother

<sup>1</sup> The Trevelyans, as their name implies, were an old Cornish family from Trevelyan, near Fowey (see three vols. of Trevelyan papers in the Camden Society). They had been seated at Nettlecombe in Somerset since the Sixteenth Century, but in 1777 they inherited Sir Walter Blackett's Northumbrian estates. The Northumbrian and Somerset properties were afterwards divided between two branches of the family.





Charles, who has made them over to the National Trust, but retains a life interest.

The present house was built in William III's reign by the Newcastle merchant and M.P., Sir William Blackett; he had bought the estate and the old castle of Wallington from Sir John Fenwick, who had run through his money at the Whitehall of the Merry Monarch, before ever he took to the paths of Jacobite conspiracy which led him to the block. Sir William Blackett began to build the new Wallington in 1688, the year of the Revolution, and its outward appearance is of that date. But the much admired Italian stucco decorations of the interior of the house, the giant beech woods, the terraced garden designed by 'Capability' Brown (a native of the district), the farm houses, roads and enclosures that turned a region of rough moorland fields into a centre of rural civilization, were due to Sir Walter Blackett, one of the greatest of the improving landlords of the mid Eighteenth Century. Rural Northumberland owes much of its charm and prosperity to the money which the Tyneside magnates of that fortunate era made in mines and commerce, and lavished with equal taste and magnificence on the countryside they adored.

As a boy I was less interested in the Eighteenth Century stucco work than in the Nineteenth Century hall in the middle of the house, designed by Ruskin, and adorned by William Bell Scott's pre-Raphaelite pictures of Northumbrian history and ballad, which have real archaeological and imaginative merit, though they may not be first rate as art. Also I took great joy in the library, furnished with books formerly belonging to the Fenwicks, Blacketts, Trevelyans and Macaulay, selected and put together by my father. Another place of delight was the floor of the somewhat derelict 'Museum,' which was given over to us brothers, to be the permanent battleground of our 'soldiers' described above.<sup>1</sup>

The moors were a few miles away to the north, where we used to shoot grouse and blackcock, more plentiful then than now. But I was not a good shot, and I soon developed a stronger passion for walking across country, alone, at something over four miles an hour, often doing forty miles a day. In that fashion I traversed again and again the Cheviot country on both sides of the Border,

<sup>1</sup> My brother, R. C. T., has written well about the Wallington of our boyhood in his *Windfalls*.



a land of solitude and old romance that captivated my soul and enhanced my historical interests and imaginings. I also got to know in this fashion the South West of Scotland, the land of Dirk Hatterick and Redgauntlet, of Carlyle's Ecclefechan, and the more distant fastnesses of Loch Trool; I more than once found solitary moorland graves of the martyrs of the Covenant, that Old Mortality had helped to preserve, and heard tales of the 'dragoons,' handed down by word of mouth in remote cottages. One day at the close of the Century, Geoffrey Young and I took part in a farmer's fox hunt on the top of the Great Cheviot, carried out on foot with guns and dogs of all kinds and sizes, in the manner described in the 25th chapter of *Guy Mannerling*. I often stayed the night with the Shiells of Sourhope, at the head of Bowmont Water, a family of Scottish Cheviot farmers of the true breed. But the Lake District, both the outer and inner part, was my favourite ground of all.<sup>1</sup>

This physical and spiritual need for long, rapid and usually solitary walks across country took me to other parts of Britain; I have walked round the whole coast of Cornwall, Devon and Dorset, most of it twice or more. I followed Offa's Dyke on foot over the moors and learnt the Welsh border almost as well as the Scottish; the Black Mountain and the 'Shropshire lad' country were in those days the most remote and beautiful region, 'the quietest places under the sun.' Perhaps they still are, though the standard of 'remoteness' and 'quiet' has fallen far in the last fifty years.

I soon carried this form of activity into other lands, often in connection with some historical interest. Having taken Louis XI as my second special subject in the Tripos, I walked over the battle-grounds of Charles the Bold in lower Switzerland. And, after the Cambridge year ended, it became my custom in June to traverse some roadless Swiss pass into Italy. The long, laborious pull up past the wooden chalets, through the deep snow and fir trees, and then on the other side the joyous run down through pastures of melting snow and opening crocus to forests of chestnut, and down through woodland paths to the ancient Alpine cities of Italy, was a game I loved to play. It was a real game with its chances, for sometimes the steep Swiss snow near the pass-top

<sup>1</sup> My essays on 'Walking' and on 'The Middle Marches' in *Clio: a Muse* express my feeling and experience on these subjects.





turned me back, and I had to try another valley-head. One summer I walked in the Carpathians of Transylvania, where paths and human habitations were scarcer than in the Alps.

It was in 1895 that I first visited Italy, coming down out of Tirol with Charlie Buxton, my Harrow and Trinity friend. We emerged at Verona. There it all was,—the streets and walls of the Capulets and Montagus, the bell-towers and war-towers, the church-porches with the pillars resting on the Lombard griffins praised by Ruskin, and all the smells and sounds of Italy, then smelt and heard by me for the first time! I fell in love with Italy then and there, though I did not foresee that I should ever write books about her liberation, and live to witness her great misfortunes.

On our way to Tirol, Charlie Buxton and I had turned aside to visit Blenheim. Fortunately for me a question was set on Blenheim in the Tripos papers next year: one of Marlborough's four great battles was sure to be set in our Special Period, and poor Geikie visited Ramillies, Oudenarde and Malplaquet in vain. It was just like his luck—and mine. I went again to Blenheim with my wife in 1930, when I was writing the story of the battle in my *Reign of Queen Anne*. It was absolutely unchanged since 1895, and for that matter since 1704, except for the canalizing of the Danube and the draining of the Nebel marsh.

Christmas 1897 was a memorable season for me, when my father and mother took me to Rome. Again what a showman he was, especially of everything classical! Cicero's letters were his favourite reading; he lived in that long vanished society as familiarly as he lived among the somewhat similar English aristocrats of the Eighteenth Century. And Lanciani was there to help us, a better *cicerone*, though perhaps not a greater archaeologist, than his rival Boni, the silent genius, who also in later years befriended me in Rome. To see the Forum and Palatine with my father was not a thing to forget, while my mother painted amid the ruins, or inside St. Praxed's,—her favourite church 'for peace.'

One day I walked to Veii and back, to see the deserted site of Rome's former rival, a bare promontory between two brushwood gorges, akin to the scene of Browning's *Love among the Ruins*. Hard by I discovered a large pile of votive offerings and Etruscan pots collected in a barn, and bought a life-size terracotta head of a



goddess from the *contadino* for a *lira*. I walked back to Rome, carrying it in the poacher's pocket of my Norfolk jacket, and have it still.

Another day my father took me up the Janiculum, to see all the roofs of Rome shining below in the winter sun. Standing there, he told a story that was quite unknown to me and little known then to English tourists in general,—the story of Garibaldi's defence of Rome on that spot in 1849. That morning we visited the Vascello and the Porta San Pancrazio. Something new had been planted in my mind and heart.

But eight years went by before I ever thought of writing on any Italian theme, although during those years my chief walking-grounds were the Tuscan and Umbrian hills, and the Alban and Sabine heights that look down on the Campagna of Rome. I kept the high ground as much as I could, with the help of ordnance map and compass. I used to prolong my walks till late into the charmed Italian night, under those brilliant stars, known and named so long ago; at the right time of year I could walk after dark, mile after mile, to the continuous song of innumerable nightingales. There was also the prosaic inducement to walk on till one reached a sizable town, like Gubbio or Urbino or San Marino, where the inn was always awake at any midnight hour, and a good part of the population in the streets for that matter; at such centres one was sure of excellent Italian food and local wine of the best, and other comforts welcome to the tired traveller.

Usually I was alone, but I remember toiling up, with Robin Mayor of King's, late one night to the old Etruscan acropolis of 'lordly Volaterrae,' and the revelation next morning whither and how high we had come in the darkness, when at dawn the trumpet of the Bersaglieri (it might have been of Lars Porsena) roused us from sleep, and flinging open the wooden shutters ('magic case-ments' indeed) we saw the vast expanse of distant sea, and Elba and Corsica beyond. But, fond as I was of the olive-sandalled Apennines of Tuscany, I preferred as a walking-ground the wilder mountains and steeper gorges of Umbria, amid the head-waters of Tiber and Metaurus and Rubicon.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I also bicycled a good deal in Italy with my wife, between 1904 and 1914. The road surfaces in those days were bad, but there were very few motor cars. My wife's knowledge of Italian mediaeval history was greater than mine.





On these tours I got to love the unadulterated Italian people of all time, a lovable folk whom that wretch tried to drill and bully into second-rate Germans,—and failed.

During the first years of the new Century, while I was thus familiarizing myself with Italy on holidays, a good deal happened to me at home. I was writing *England under the Stuarts* (1904). My brother Robert, poet and scholar, helped me much by reading that book and other later works of mine, and inducing me to prune somewhat the exuberance of my early style, and generally speaking, in the words of old Dr. Parr, 'to chastise my faulty phraseology.'

I also acquired at this period another family proof-reader to whom all my subsequent writings owe much. On March 19, 1904, I married Janet Penrose, second daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Humphry Ward. This was the most important and fortunate event of my life. Our only domestic misfortune, among many blessings spread over many years, was the death in 1911 of our elder son, Theodore Macaulay Trevelyan, at the age of five. He was a child of singular promise and charm, of a power in mind and character extraordinary in a little boy. His death was the greatest sorrow of my life. It ended five years of unbroken joy, never to be repeated in such fulness.<sup>1</sup>

Till the War of 1914 we lived in Chelsea making many new friends in London. But we spent the happy summer months at Robin Ghyll, the cottage looking up Langdale to the Pikes and Bow Fell; and at Stocks Cottage in Hertfordshire, at the foot of the Ashridge hill, close to Stocks House the country home of the Humphry Wards. My mother-in-law was one of the greatest women of her time, taking into account both her literary and her social work. It was a privilege to know her. She loved conversational controversy and conducted it in a most fair and friendly spirit, which I had to learn to imitate. We agreed and disagreed

<sup>1</sup> Our two other children were (1) Mary Caroline, afterwards wife of the ecclesiastical historian, Canon John Moorman, and herself authoress, in 1930, of *William the Third and the Defence of Holland 1672-4*; and (2) Humphry, now Fellow of King's, Cambridge, author of *Goths and the Greeks* (Camb. Univ. Press, 1941), married to Molly Trumbull, daughter of Winchester Bennett of New Haven, Connecticut.

My wife wrote the *Short History of the Italian People* and, in 1923, the *Life* of her mother, whose work for the London children and their Play Centres she afterwards carried on.



enough to have much good talk on many subjects over a number of years.

Joseph Chamberlain's Protectionist campaign aroused my Cambridge and London friends to an active interest in political affairs which they had not previously felt. They were nearly all of them Free Traders. Under this stimulus some of them, starting from moderate Conservatism or complete indifferentism, passed on to advanced Liberal and Socialist views.

Until the war of 1914 I was a keen Liberal politician. But I never dreamt of standing for Parliament, and I was a poor speaker. I became connected, however, with the starting of the *Independent Review*, an intellectual Liberal monthly, that had not a long life but elicited some good articles. I published in it a discourse since reprinted as the eponymous essay in the volume *Clio : a Muse*. It was a defence of literary history, and attracted some notice from its opposition to theories then current. It took the form of an attack on the pronouncement which had just been made by Bury, Acton's successor in the Regius Professorship at Cambridge, in his Inaugural Lecture 1903, to the effect that history was 'simply a science, no less and no more.' When I reprinted the essay in book form I cut out all references to Bury, against whom I never had any personal feeling. Unlike Seeley, he was a real scientific historian, and had therefore a perfect right to say, like the cobbler, that 'there was nothing like leather.'

At the turn of the Century, I had for several years been making a special study of George Meredith's poetry. I remember in the Easter of 1900 spending a week alone in the remote valley of Wigmore, Herefordshire; I stayed at the old 'Hundred House' Inn as its only guest, walking in the ancient Derefold Forest where Lollards had hidden, and spending many hours of each day in the ruins of Wigmore Castle and the Abbey down below, in an intensive struggle with the meanings of the obscure magic of the *Woods of Westermain*. I visited Meredith many times in his Flint Cottage at the foot of Box Hill (which was then less like Hampstead Heath than it is to-day). The old poet's deafness made conversation a monologue on his part, but a wonderful monologue, in language very similar to his writings. Desmond MacCarthy has described one of our visits better than I can do.<sup>1</sup> In April 1906 I brought out

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 247-9 of Siegfried Sassoon's excellent work entitled *Meredith* (Constable, 1948), which at last gives us a satisfactory biography and appreciation.





with his son's firm, Constable, a volume on *The Poetry and Philosophy of George Meredith*; because it was a 'timely' volume on a great subject, it had a success beyond its intrinsic merits. In 1912 I brought out the complete edition of his poems, with some explanatory notes on difficult passages, some of which he himself had interpreted to me before he died in 1909.

Bernard Pares had given me as a wedding present Garibaldi's Memoirs and other books on that period of Italian history, including Belluzzi's detailed and scholarly work on the *Ritirata di Garibaldi nel 1849*. Merely because Pares had given me the books, I began one day to turn over their pages, and was suddenly enthralled by the story of the retreat from Rome to the Adriatic, over mountains which I had traversed in my solitary walks: the scene and spirit of that desperate venture, led by that unique man, flashed upon my mind's eye. Here was a subject made to my hand: if ever I could write 'literary history,' this was the golden chance.

At first I intended only to write the story of the retreat, but I soon came to see that it could not be separated from his defence of Rome on the Janiculum, the scenes of which I had visited with my father eight years before. But I had as yet no intention of writing later volumes on the Sicilian expedition and the decisive events of 1860. As I had nothing else on hand, I gave the year 1906 to the task. I did all the writing in England, and I got most of the printed material in the British Museum, or from the London Library, or by purchase; but I spent some joyous months in Rome and other Italian towns, in pursuit of manuscripts, local *opuscoli* and Garibaldian veterans. I was aided by many kind helpers, Italian and English, such as my dear friend Count Ugo Balzani and the artist George Howard, Lord Carlisle, with his Garibaldian reminiscences of Costa and others of that time. But the best part was my walk from Rome to Cesenatico on the route of Garibaldi's retreat, which to a large extent avoided roads. Hilton Young joined me at Arezzo for the last half of the march over the wild Umbrian Apennines, the Bocca Trabaria and the pathless uplands round San Marino.

I can't conceive how I managed to do so much in the time, for that first volume, *Garibaldi's Defence of the Roman Republic* was the work of barely more than the twelve months of 1906. The two



later volumes took me a couple of years each. But that first year I worked like one possessed and driven by a fierce imaginative excitement. The book bears the mark of something nearer to inspiration than I ever reached again; it bears also the marks of haste, and a certain want of understanding if not of the Papal certainly of the French policy, which Mr. Simpson's book on Louis Napoleon has so well made good.

In March 1907 Longmans brought out the volume with excellent maps which Emery Walker had made under my directions. It took the public fancy as much as I had hoped, and more. I was already working at *Garibaldi and the Thousand*, a volume which, as I have said, took me twice as long, for the story moved in a much wider political field, and this time I think I understood better the complexities of the diplomatic situation,—the supreme art of Cavour, and the changing policies of France and England in the decisive years 1859-60. Indeed the new task was larger in every way; there were many more surviving veterans, Italian and English, to be seen; many more personal accounts, written, printed and spoken, to be found and collated; and a wealth of local *opuscoli* scattered throughout the towns of Italy.

The materials for the history of the *Risorgimento* were not congregated in any one library, answering to the British Museum. So I saw a good deal of Italian provincial life in the course of my researches. Everyone befriended and no one was jealous of the Englishman who was writing about their Garibaldi. I came to recognize the conditions of life for an Italian Professor of History,—such as that fine scholar Alessandro Luzio at Mantua, practically confined by poverty to the study of the local archives and the local library of which he was in charge. My English gold enabled me to scour the land in search of materials, from Venice and Genoa to Palermo.

This time it was Sicily that I traversed on foot in pursuit of Garibaldi's campaign of 1860, partly alone and partly with a troop of friends. It is indeed a magic island, another historian's paradise, but very different from Italy proper. Landscape, buildings and people have had Spanish-Italian manners superimposed, but more ancient strains burn through, brought from the melancholy deserts of Carthaginian and Arab Africa, and from authentic Hellas whose temples still stand solitary and supreme; here and there is a touch of the Norman church builder. The net outcome





is something unique, Sicilian, whether people, buildings or landscape, not of this age, hardly of this upper world,—‘an Enna of fields beyond sun.’ The little ramshackle peasant’s donkey-carts, painted in bright colours with scenes of Charlemagne’s knights and Garibaldi’s redshirts indifferently, betokened a world far removed from ours.

These were the strange folk who in 1860 rose like the moon-stirred Atlantic to welcome that still stranger hero, so different from themselves. In their thought, Garibaldi came to deliver them from the Italians of the Neapolitan mainland, while his thought was to ‘unite Italy.’ But the Sicilians and their deliverer, though they did not understand each other’s mind, shared a certain primitive simplicity of soul. Sympathy passed between him and them, as it did not between them and the Northern followers he brought with him. More than a generation before that, the good English Liberal, Lord William Bentinck, had tried to interest the Sicilians in the holding of general elections. And similar efforts were made, as a matter of course, after Garibaldi had delivered them. But I don’t think Parliamentary elections have ever been much in their line. Still less was Fascism!

*Garibaldi and the Thousand* came out in September 1909, and during the next two years I was at work completing the story of 1860, in *Garibaldi and the Making of Italy*, the last volume of three. The pleasant conditions of my task remained the same as before,—much out-of-door exploration, more and more searching of libraries and making of friends all over Italy, from Sicily to the Alps. I noticed that many of the veterans of 1860 greeted me with the masonic grip and were astonished at my inability to give the countersign.

I did not follow on foot the unopposed march of Garibaldi from the Straits of Messina to Naples. It was all an affair of the high-road, so I bicycled it with Thomas Ashby, the red-bearded Director of the British School at Rome, indefatigable in help and kindness. The Volturno battlefields north of Naples, where the serious fighting took place, I perambulated in company with my wife and our two life-long friends and fellow historians, Barbara and Lawrence Hammond. It would have been a rude shock to us to be told that, a generation later, British and Germans would be fighting each other over the same ground. The worst public



catastrophe we then feared was that the Lords would succeed in throwing out the Parliament Bill. Italian freedom was a thing won and settled. Torture, wholesale executions and massacres in Europe, and wars that imperilled England's independence seemed far away, 'portions and parcels of the dreadful past.'

I have always had a liking for those bits of history that have clear-cut happy endings,—1860 following on 1849 and completing the tale,—partly because such sections have more artistic unity than history as a whole, which is a shapeless affair; and partly no doubt because they are more cheerful to contemplate. I used to look askance at Gibbon's dreadful saying that history is 'little more than the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind.' (*Decline and Fall*, chapter III). Nor do I even now wholly subscribe to it. But the war of 1914-18 enlarged and saddened my mind, and prepared me to write English history with a more realistic and a less partisan outlook. Yet, even after that war, the Reign of Queen Anne and the History of England up to the end of Victoria's reign, still seemed to me, when I came to write them, to be stories with happy endings.

But I am running ahead of 1911, when I finished with Garibaldi, and began on the *Life of John Bright*. If I had to write it now, I should have more appreciation of the point of view of Bright's opponents and critics, but even so the book was not all eulogy, and I think I drew the real features of the man, his tender and selfless motives and his rugged fearless strength, a combination that made him a rare example of the hero as politician. Someone like him on the flank of all our parties to-day, would raise our public life.

After *Bright*, I wrote the life of *Lord Grey of the Reform Bill*. The task was interrupted for four years by the First World War, and only appeared in 1920. It proved one of the less popular of my works, but, like other authors in such a case, I think it was not so bad. I certainly enjoyed writing it. The theme of glorious summer (in this case the summer of Reform) coming after a long winter of discontent and repression, is, as I have said, congenial to my artistic sense. And then the background of Grey's life was my own,—Northumberland. His descendants at Howick were in every way most kind to me. Howick House, its happy family life, its beech woods and sea-coves, seemed much the same in 1920 as in 1820.





In 1932, a dozen years after the book had come out, we celebrated the centenary of the great Reform Bill, by a public meeting in Newcastle-on-Tyne, the city dominated by the column and statue of the Northumbrian Earl who had passed it. The scene inside the City Hall bore witness to the persistent historical traditions of England. The body of the hall was filled by the men and women of Newcastle, and the platform was crowded by the Grey family from Howick and their friends and relations, male and female. And from Fallodon had come Sir Edward Grey, whose *Life* I was soon afterwards to write. He had lost his eyesight in the service of his country, but he gave us one of his admirable, quiet speeches, like a man talking in a room to his friends. But the most unexpected and the most applauded of the orations came from another of the 'Grey connection,' old Lord Halifax, whose father Charles Wood had been one of the junior chiefs of the Reform Bill party, and had married Mary Grey. The orator was over eighty, but his mental vigour was out of all proportion to his bodily strength. For that night the fires of the Reform Bill came to life again in the veteran High Church leader. Charles, Earl Grey, held on to his coat-tails as he perorated and gesticulated, lest he should fall forward off the platform. Altogether it was a memorable occasion.

But I must get back to the First World War of 1914-18. It stopped my historical work for four years, and threw me into the actual and active world which I had so long avoided. In that way it did me good, even as an historian. I was close on forty, and I was ploughed for the army on account of my eyesight, about which in that war they were very particular. But I managed to see something of the front as Commandant of a B.R.C. Ambulance Unit working for and under the Italian army on the Isonzo and Piave front from 1915 till the end. A large proportion of the unit were Quakers who had seen very real service in the Friends Ambulance Unit in Flanders in the first months of the war. They were a most efficient, interesting and pleasant set of comrades. My two principal officers were my old and dear friend Geoffrey Young, and Philip Noel Baker, afterwards Labour M.P. and Cabinet Minister. They and the other officers managed the real administration of the Unit, which I should have been incompetent to conduct; my principal business, apart from smoothing out the



personal difficulties that sometimes occurred in our very individualistic crew, consisted of making friends with the Italian Corps and regimental officers under whose orders we worked, and inducing them to let us send our ambulances wherever we wished to go. We got to know the business of evacuating the wounded on our section of the front pretty well, and the military soon learnt to trust us and let us do almost everything we wished. In the first part of the war we were the only allied uniforms to be seen on the Italian front and they made favourites of us. And when an Italian likes you there is no one more obliging and pleasant.

We had our ambulances well forward at Plava under Monte Sabotino, and afterwards in Gorizia, and on the Bainsizza plateau. On the Sella di Dol road above Gorizia, Geoffrey Young lost his leg,—a severe blow to the mountaineering world. Our base was twenty miles back at Villa Trento, in a pleasant country house, where also we established a B.R.C. hospital, with English Sisters and V.A.D.'s, presided over by Dr. George Brock, helped for a time by Sir Alexander Ogston. Our hospital set a useful standard of nursing to the Italian hospitals around. For want of proper nurses our allies lost many men whose lives might have been saved, though they had good doctors and surgeons.

In the difficulties incidental to our somewhat anomalous position, we were protected and aided from Rome by the Ambassador, my friend Sir Rennell Rodd, the flower of the old diplomacy and of English, Italian and Greek culture. There will never be anyone like him again.

The Italian infantry fought hard and patiently and endured great sufferings and heavy losses for the two years preceding Caporetto. They were the attacking party, and I was much impressed by what I saw as to the difficulty of storming mountain positions. It did not therefore surprise me when in 1943-44 even our splendid army found the business of forcing an indefinite series of Apennine strongholds more formidable than some people expected. But in the war of 1915-17 the Italian staff work and commissariat was not worthy of the courage of the 'povero fante,' often left for weeks at a time unrelieved in the trenches and fed on chestnuts. So when the Caporetto break-through took place the patience of the long-suffering infantry on the Bainsizza plateau gave way. Our Unit was swept along in the





centre of that great tide of retreat, in which we lost half our ambulances.<sup>1</sup>

After Caporetto we resumed work in the line re-formed on the Piave front. The character of the war was now changed for us. It was in the plains instead of the hills, and it was defensive on the part of the Italians until their final attack a year later. And now for the first time I saw something of the British army. In 1917 there had been some British batteries on the Carso to the south of us, but not in our sector; another B.R.C. Ambulance Unit under F. W. Sargant the sculptor was there. But after Caporetto, when our Unit was serving the Italians on the middle Piave, a small British army was operating in our neighbourhood, first under Plumer and then under Cavan; consequently I saw something of their excellent staff officers, who used to ask me things about the Italians.

There was no longer continual fighting as there had been on the Isonzo in the two previous years. In 1918 there were only two battles on the Piave, the defensive battle in June when the Italians repelled the Austrian effort to cross the river; and the less hard-fought finale of Vittorio Veneto in October, when our side attacked and the Austrian army disbanded, because its component parts regarded the war as lost and wanted to go home and liquidate their Austro-Hungarian Empire. So our Unit ended up in Trieste after all.

I returned to England with no thought but to get on with writing history books again. I had no other ambition in life. The delightful delusion that we had done with total war at least for a generation, perhaps for ever, gave a zest to domestic and personal happiness. I shall never forget the exhilaration of a Cornish holiday with my wife and girl and boy at Easter 1919, when all the world seemed young again, and the sands and rocky headlands rejoiced. Even when joy is based in part on ignorance of the future, as in part it nearly always is, it is none the less joy, the breath of life that carries the poor human race forward along its chequered path.

<sup>1</sup> I wrote a short account of our Italian experiences in a book called *Scenes from Italy's war*, which was published for me by Jack, in 1919. It sold out and was not reprinted. The best thing in it is an analysis of the causes and character of the Caporetto disaster.



I had had a much 'better time' during the war than nine people out of ten. The break in my work had been all to the good, because it had given me a touch of practical life and affairs and a glimpse of history in the making. I had been too bookish an historian. Moreover, the war had helped to free me from some party prejudices and from too easy an historical optimism.

After completing *Grey of the Reform Bill* I wrote *British History in the Nineteenth Century*, which came out in 1922 and had some success as a text book; this encouraged my publishers and me to consider a project for a one-volume *History of England*. But before I took that larger task in hand I gave myself another Italian holiday, writing, rather for my own pleasure than anything else, *Manin and the Venetian Republic of 1848*, as a kind of Appendix to my Garibaldi books. During the War I had seen a good deal of Venice and the Venetians, and had made friends with Count Pietro Orsi and other leading men in that peculiar community. Venice had its own strongly marked character and traditions, which in 1922-23 were yielding more slowly than those of mainland Italy to the obliterating steam-roller of Fascism. In later years I visited Italy very little, for Fascism was abhorrent to me, partly because it set itself to abolish the easy, kindly temperament of the Italian people that I loved. But in 1922 I spent some delightful months in Venice, walking its old, wheelless streets<sup>1</sup> and studying in its homely, welcoming libraries. The book came out in 1923, and was not popular, but as I had written it to please myself I felt no disappointment. And I had a letter of approval from the true historian of Venice, Horatio Brown, who wrote to me

Venezia is something apart from Italy (up to Manin's day and perhaps even now) and he had the true insight and instinct when he proclaimed the Republic *di San Marco*: you spot this and bring it out.

Before I leave the subject of Italy, I must mention the dearest to me of all my Italian friends, Cav. Filippo dei Filippi, doctor, mountaineer, explorer and friend of England. He united a most warm and affectionate nature with a mind rendered sceptical almost to

<sup>1</sup> Pietro Orsi used to say to me that the reason why social equality was a characteristic of all Venetians, was because for many centuries past no one had ever driven or ridden in its streets, but all had walked side by side. The only wheeled vehicle I ever saw in Venice was a perambulator, pushed by a mother who turned out to be an Englishwoman married to an Italian.





the point of cynicism by his experience of mankind. I think another twenty per cent. of scepticism would be a very good admixture in our English sentimentality and optimism. A little more cynical realization of what mankind are really like would have saved us from fatal mistakes between the two wars. Thank God, Filippo died before 1940, though he foresaw what was coming; he said to me, 'if our countries go to war with one another, it will make no difference to my feeling for you or yours for me.'

I had been away from Cambridge for nearly twenty years when my interest in its affairs was renewed by my appointment as a member of the Royal Commission on Oxford and Cambridge. In 1922 we issued our report, which led to certain statutory changes in the two Universities, as a condition of government grants. Work on the Commission put me in touch with a number of interesting colleagues, besides my old friends Albert Mansbridge and Walter Morley Fletcher. In particular I got to know and admire Hugh Anderson, the Master of Caius, a man in whom excessive modesty was a fault, counteracted by a zeal to be up and doing in the public interest which inevitably brought him to the front among colleagues. He worked at the finances of both Universities and acquired a mastery of them to which no other member of the Commission could pretend. Though a man of science, he devised and worked out in detail the new scheme for substituting University (Faculty) lecturing for College lecturing in the Arts subjects at Cambridge, which has stood the test of practice. I went down frequently to the Lodge at Caius and to the house he occupied officially as Master at Hunstanton, to work with him at the Report, and we became great friends. His death six years later was a severe loss to the University he served so well.

Our Report formed the basis of the Statutory Commission and the legislation that followed. In the retrospect I think that our recommendations have worked well. Only I regret that we fixed the retiring age for Professors at sixty-five instead of sixty-eight, in view of the prolongation of life and activity under modern conditions.

I now got to work on the *History of England*, as my friend Robert Longman wished; it was my sole task for the three years



1923-26. I had to garner and epitomize all I had read and thought about English history during my life. The part about which I knew least was the long stretch of time before the Fourteenth Century, for which I was wholly dependent on the knowledge and views of the real Anglo-Saxon and mediaeval scholars. But the fact that much in those early periods was new ground to me gave a zest to my study and a freshness to my treatment of them which partly compensated for the inadequacy of my mediaeval scholarship, at least in the eyes of readers even more ignorant than myself. Anyone who undertakes to write a history of England down the ages must needs be out of his depth in one part or another of the course, and must make good as best he may by lusty swimming.

During these years of hard and ultimately successful work, we were living in the pleasant country town of Berkhamsted, amid neighbours we liked. Our house was within a few minutes' walk of unspoilt country, the downs, heaths and woods of Ashridge, which we knew and loved since old days at Stocks. But I was within easy reach by train of the British Museum, and my wife was equally near to the London Play Centres of which she became Chairman after her mother's death in 1920. It was therefore an ideal workshop for us both. And the excellent boys' school and girls' school at Berkhamsted solved our educational problem; Mary and Humphry lived with us and went to the schools as home boarders.

Our local habitation on the edge of Ashridge chanced also to draw me into that connection with the National Trust which became an important part of my later life. Shortly after the death of Earl Brownlow in 1921, it was decided that the Ashridge estate should be sold by the trustees. The park, the beechwoods, the heaths and the downs that we so much loved were in imminent danger of falling into the hands of those who wished to exploit them as building land. Could they be purchased, instead, for preservation? My dear friend John Bailey, one of the best literary critics this country has produced, was Chairman of the National Trust. He and I and others set on foot a public appeal, by which we raised over £50,000, largely owing to the generous example of Miss Renée Courtauld, who then lived by the side of Berkhamsted Common, where my wife and I had got to know her well. It was an agonizing business, and negotiations dragged on from





crisis to crisis, for the trustees were not all of them on our side. But it ended well, and by 1926-27 Ashridge was saved.

In this way I became interested in the affairs of the National Trust. After my father's death in 1928 I inherited enough money to become something of a 'benefactor' myself, and bought for the Trust a number of farms, at the head of Langdale in the Lake District, and elsewhere in England. I became an officer of the Trust, and one of my chief interests and pleasures in later life has been to co-operate in the good work with such friends as John Bailey our chief, Hamer the secretary and their successors. We were a band of brothers, and the work prospered in our hands. Yet I fear that the importance of the Trust is a measure of the constant diminution of all that is lovely and solitary in England. The area it protects (between one and two hundred thousand acres) is tiny compared to the country as a whole. There was no need for such a body in old days, before the destruction of beauty became a normal accompaniment of 'progress.' And there will be less need for the Trust again, if ever the nation learns to plan development so as to preserve beauty.<sup>1</sup>

As beauty-preserving landlords are taxed out of control of their properties, the only force at all capable of defending 'amenity' against the Philistines is the democratic movement for holidays in unspoilt country, of which the vigour of the Youth Hostels Association is a symptom. I have been President of that Association since it was founded in 1931. But I have only been its figure-head, and the credit for the success of the Youth Hostels lies not at all with me but entirely with Catchpool and the democracy of his fellow workers.

While I was writing the *History of England* I visited America to give the Lowell Lectures at Harvard for 1924; they consisted of some earlier parts of the work on which I was then engaged. I also gave separate lectures in a number of other Universities, and made or renewed friendships with many American historians and scholars. It was not my first or last visit to the States, but it was my longest. Throughout a hard, bright, exhilarating winter such as we never get in this damp old country, I lived at Harvard, part

<sup>1</sup> In 1929 I wrote for the National Trust a pamphlet entitled *Must England's Beauty perish?* It had a measure of success that was useful at the time for calling attention to what was (and still is) going on.



of the time in President Lowell's own house, making expeditions thence to M'Gill, Toronto, Princeton, Yale, Cornell, Ann Arbor, Chicago, Columbia, and other Universities. Academic hospitality has been carried to perfection by American scholars; and it would have been hard to find in the world better society than was to be found in Cambridge, Boston, in 1924, when Sargent the artist, Rhodes the historian, and President Lowell were all there together.

I visited America again with my wife in the summer of 1936, on the occasion of our son Humphry's marriage to Molly Bennett, daughter of the Winchester Bennetts of New Haven, a delightful occasion which brought us into close touch with Yale, as well as giving the opportunity of seeing old friends at Harvard Commencement, Roger Merriman not least. Harvard and Yale both made me honorary doctor. I regret that I have only visited the U.S. and Canada three times, although I have so many American friends, and have seen so much of Americans over here especially during the Second World War. I am afraid my natural laziness about everything except writing history prevented me from making arrangements to cross the Atlantic as often as I ought to have done.

In April 1926 my *History of England* came out. It has been, as regards sales, the most successful of my books, except the *Social History*, because it treated so necessary a subject as the history of England at the length, and to some extent in the manner, which suited a large public, including schools and Universities. Some day, very soon perhaps, it will be replaced, but it will have served its generation.

In 1928 a variety of circumstances dictated a change in our mode of life. We gave up our little house in Berkhamsted, and set up two larger establishments in Northumberland and in Cambridge.

Our move to Northumberland was due to the fact that my father and mother both died that year (see p. 6 above). I found myself with enough inherited wealth to be able to move into the country house of Hallington, which had been left to me years before by a distant relative, Mrs. Cacciola Trevelyan. The lease of the sitting tenants fell in very conveniently that same year 1928. Hallington, ten miles north of Hexham, is within eight miles of my





boyhood's home Wallington (see pp. 24-25 above), which passed to my brother Charles on our father's death.

Hallington is a tall stone house, of very Northumbrian aspect, built partly in 1760 and partly a hundred years later. It has, like so many of the stone country houses of Northumberland, a brick-walled garden of the eighteenth century hard by, and it is surrounded by a rookery of tall beech and sycamore. In front of the house lies a 'dene' or wooded gorge with a burn and a lakelet at the bottom, affording seclusion and shelter in pleasant contrast to the free, wind-swept spaces of the open Northumbrian landscape around.<sup>1</sup>

In 1928 we did up the old house, and made it a comfortable holiday home for receipt of visitors from Cambridge and elsewhere. I collected a library of old books, historical and literary, separate from my working library of history books at Cambridge. We were very happy indeed at Hallington for the holiday seasons of twelve years (1928-39).

I was now too old to take those walks of thirty or forty miles a day, which had been my great delight, so I took up shooting again in my old age and became a keen though not a good shot. And I still did a certain amount of hill walking with the help of a car and chauffeur whom one could send round from point to point. The car eliminated the great Northumbrian distances, so that we saw much of Sir Edward (Viscount) Grey up at Fallodon, and of that remarkable man, Fred Oliver, who spent the last years of his life improving the Cheviot estate that he had bought for himself at Edgerston, on the Scottish side of Carter Bar. He was also engaged in writing his study of Sir Robert Walpole (entitled *The Endless Adventure*) which I much admired. His conversation and personality were unique; he seemed a cross between a Cheviot shepherd and Matthew Arnold. I always think of him in connection with another very dear Scottish friend of mine of the same breed, John Buchan, later Lord Tweedsmuir, Governor-General of Canada. John is most famous for his romances, but to my

<sup>1</sup> The name Hallington is a modernization of the old name Halidene—holydene—though why the dene became holy, whether first to Christian or to older pagan—no man knoweth. The Tudor antiquary, Leland, recorded a local tradition of his day that it was the scene of St. Oswald's victory,—an ancient and honourable legend even if not correct. A yet older tradition than Leland's placed the battlefield on the line of the Roman wall, at 'St. Oswald's,' a spot on the long ridge visible from Hallington four miles away to the south.



thinking his very best work lay in his historical biographies—*Augustus*, *Oliver Cromwell* and above all *Walter Scott*.

Soon after we had settled into Hallington, the Clayton estate, which had for more than two generations preserved the integrity of long stretches of Hadrian's Roman Wall, came up for sale. Housesteads (Borcovicium), the best preserved and most finely situated of the forts on the Wall, together with the neighbouring mile-castle and a long stretch of the Wall itself, were given by Mr. J. H. Clayton to the National Trust. To save the surrounding land from exploitation I bought from him the farm in which they stand, and put its moorland fields under covenant with the National Trust, while reserving their ownership.

This purchase procured me not only some first-rate rabbit-shooting, but the right to dig up my new property immediately outside the Roman fort; this land had been occupied by the civilian village that supplied the needs of the garrison of Borcovicium. My old Trinity friend, Robert Carr Bosanquet, the antiquarian who had dug across and mapped the fort itself in 1897, was spending the last years of his life as a Northumbrian land-owner and improving farmer. He initiated these new diggings for me, and helped the National Trust to erect a suitable museum on the site where the finds are stored and exhibited. After his death the work was most ably carried out by an antiquarian of a younger generation, Eric Birley. What fun it all was! Nothing could be more delightful than to watch the progress of diggings on your own land, conducted by competent and friendly persons. It was a great moment when the spade revealed the secret of third-century tragedy, by exposing a skeleton with a knife in its ribs buried under the floor of a house. Murder will out, even after sixteen centuries! We also found the apparatus of a coiner of false money. They must have been a lively lot at Borcovicium in the brave days of old.

So, with one thing and another, these Northumbrian holidays were full of interest and happiness. The pity was that, owing to my return to Cambridge as Professor, we could only be in the north some three months of each year. I felt that Hallington Hall ought to be more used, and Hitler managed that for us in the end. After the outbreak of the Second World War it was for six months an R.A.F. establishment, and then for a number of years a British Red Cross hospital for convalescent soldiers. I was glad that at





last so many people were able to enjoy the house and the dene all the year round, as the soldiers certainly did, for the hospital was excellently run by very capable ladies. My wife and I used to spend our war-time holidays in the gardener's cottage, the gardener being at the war. When peace returned, we got back into the Hall.

In my enthusiasm for my Northumbrian home, I have perhaps been trespassing too far beyond the limits set for this Autobiography, which I said should be concerned only with matters related to my historical pursuits. But my life-long affection for Northumberland is an historian's love. The past is written far more clearly on the face of the Borderland than on the landscape of less moorish and more modernized regions.<sup>1</sup> If, for example, Housesteads is the Roman fort best worth visiting in England, it is so because the vast moorland view that it commands is much the same as it was when the Roman stood there and stared at Cross Fell. All the same, it is time to return to the subject of my historical work.

In 1927 Acton's successor, Bury, died, and the Regius Professorship of Modern History at Cambridge, a Crown appointment, was offered to me by the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin. So after an absence of a quarter of a century I moved back to my Alma Mater in January 1928, at the beginning of the year that was also destined to see us move to Hallington. We took a long lease from Caius College of a house and garden in the Backs, at the corner of West Road and Grange Road, which we rechristened 'Garden Corner.' And so in one year my wife used her taste and ability in doing up and furnishing two fair-sized houses, one in Cambridge and one in Northumberland, our working home and our holiday house, where we lived with great satisfaction to ourselves for a dozen years.

As Regius Professor I lectured; helped post-graduate students with whose subjects I was acquainted; and took my share of the work of the History Board. But the teaching and administrative duties of a Professor in a Cambridge Arts Faculty leave him plenty of time for his own work, and these were the years when I wrote my three-volumed history of *England under Queen Anne*, my best work, except perhaps the *Garibaldis*.

<sup>1</sup> I have expressed this in an Essay called 'The Middle Marches' in the volume *Clio: a Muse*.



Ever since, thirty years before, I had taken the War of the Spanish Succession as a special subject in the *Tripes*, I had dreamed of telling the story of Queen Anne's reign. The idea of taking up the tale where my great-uncle's history had broken off, was perhaps a fancy at the back of my consciousness. But I was more seriously attracted by the dramatic unity and separateness of the period from 1702-14, lying between the Stuart and Hanoverian eras with a special ethos of its own; the interplay and mutual dependence of foreign and domestic, religious and political, English and Scottish, civil and military affairs; the economic background and the social scene and their political outcome; the series of dramatic changes of issue, like a five-act drama, leading up to the climax of the trumpets proclaiming King George. I always liked military history, and the Marlborough wars are one of its greatest themes; I always liked Scottish history, and the Union of 1707 was its turning point. In Anne's reign, it seemed to me, Britain attained by sea and land to her modern place in the world, having settled her free constitution and composed by compromise and toleration the feuds that had torn her in Stuart times.

I am still glad that I chose Queen Anne's reign for the chief historical work of my life, because I so greatly enjoyed writing it and I did what I set out to do. As regards its reception, the first volume, *Blenheim* (1931) had a large sale, the two later volumes a fair sale. The appearance of Winston Churchill's *Marlborough* (1933-38) no doubt competed, for people can't always be reading about the Marlborough wars, and of course everyone wanted to read Winston.

I may here say that Winston Churchill did me no injury by reserving to himself access to the papers in Blenheim. The Venerable (and by me ever blessed) Archdeacon Coxe, Marlborough's early biographer, more than a hundred years ago caused some fifty large volumes of those Blenheim papers to be copied out and placed in the British Museum, free for all folk to see. These transcripts contained everything from the Blenheim archives that was necessary for a student of the period. Careful reading of Winston Churchill's volumes when they appeared, proved to me that I had been debarred from nothing essential for an historian of the reign of Queen Anne, though the biographer of Marlborough had reserved for himself some family history, concerning the personal relations of Sarah and her lord; to the monopoly of





that kind of information he was entitled by the nature of his task and by his relationship to the family.

It was, however, a rare delight to study ancestral papers in the hospitable and ancient homes of the Duke of Buccleuch, Earls Spencer, Stanhope, Dartmouth and others. The sense of the continuity of English history comes over you like a charm when turning over the old letters in their original homes, with the descendant as your kind helper and host.

But the man who gave me the greatest help of all was Sir Charles Firth, then in the last years of his life of great studies. I visited him in his Oxford house, and he lent me scarce pamphlets from his library, of which I had the run under his guidance. He knew more than anyone living about the history of Britain between the Restoration and the death of Queen Anne, but he felt too little impulse to write, after he had completed Gardiner's unfinished work and liquidated the Cromwellian era. One day, as we stood turning over volumes taken down from his shelves, he said to me with a laugh—'You are always wanting to write about these old fellows. I only want to read about them!'

In 1930 I was awarded the Order of Merit, an honour that gave me great pleasure, the more so as my father had held it before me. In 1936 my wife was made a Companion of Honour, on account of her work for the London Play Centres and her arduous but successful campaign to save the Foundling Site (now Coram's Fields) as an open space for children.

The last volume of my Queen Anne came out in 1934.<sup>1</sup> During the next three years I was chiefly engaged on the Life of Lord Grey of Fallodon, who had died in 1933. It was a labour of love. As a Northumbrian neighbour I had often visited him after his retirement, alone among his bird friends, and had conceived a strong admiration and affection for him. In his grand simplicity, he was the finest human being I ever came across. He bore his blindness and the heavy weight of his other misfortunes with the patient strength of a giant. With the world again going mad and again drifting to ruin, one felt in his presence

Central peace, subsisting at the heart  
Of endless agitation.

<sup>1</sup> I also published for the Home University Library a small book on *The English Revolution of 1688*, a final clearance of my studies in that region of history.



His talk was of birds and of Wordsworth, but into a limited range of subject-matter he put a quiet, vital force that illumined all life for me. Another friend of his once said: 'The first time I met Edward Grey and heard him talk, I thought he was elementary. But I soon found he was elemental.'

I came also to think that, under circumstances of appalling difficulty, he had proved a very great Foreign Minister. He had applied his strong simplicity to the world's affairs and held the course he charted for himself. His constant endeavour was to keep the peace of Europe, for which he was ready to make great concessions to Germany, but not to allow her to bully us or France; and, with the help of his friend Haldane, he did his best to see that if, in spite of all his efforts, war came, we should not be without arms or without allies. In keeping this course he withstood unwise political clamour in his own and other parties, and adhered to his fine and foreseeing purpose better than the statesmen who took his place between the two world wars.

Be this as it may, my *Life* of him was an attempt to combine a study of our diplomacy in his hands between 1906 and 1916, with an intimate picture of a most rare human being. His friends were, I am glad to say, satisfied with my effort.

*Grey of Fallodon* came out in 1937, and during the last three years of peace I was engaged on a Social History of England. Robert Longman first suggested the task. For a while I hesitated, but then fell in love with his notion. The first idea was that I should write a companion volume to the *History of England* which I had already published; the new volume was to treat only of economic and social development, with the politics left out. As in the case of the earlier book, the parts of English history about which I knew least were the Centuries before the Age of Wycliffe, so I determined to tackle them last of all. I began writing about the Fourteenth Century, and went forward through successive periods, intending to go back afterwards to the Saxon and early mediaeval times. But as the war interrupted the task I abandoned the idea of writing the early periods at all, and determined to publish the incomplete work as *Six Centuries of Social History*. I finished the book thus shortened during the first months of the war, but owing to the paper shortage several years elapsed before Longmans, in 1944, were able to bring it out on this side of the Atlantic. This attempt to write a stretch of social history, inade-





quate and faulty as it was, represented the interest I had all my life felt in those aspects of the past and had therefore a certain vigour. I was delighted and touched to find that so many of my fellow-countrymen read my account of their ancestors with interest and sympathy. I was indeed astonished at its success. The *History of England* has sold 200,000 and *British History in the Nineteenth Century* about 68,000. But they were used as text books in schools and colleges, and I did not therefore expect so large a sale for the *Social History*, which is less adapted to the examination system. But actually it has sold well over 392,000 and of these by far the greater number were disposed of in this island, the American sales not being particularly large.

When the Second World War began, my Professorship was drawing to an end, under the age-limit of sixty-five. Just before it actually ran out, I was given another post at Cambridge, as Master of Trinity.

Sir Joseph Thomson, the great and well-loved 'J. J.', had succeeded Montagu Butler as Master after his death in February 1918. 'J. J.' lived to a good old age and died in the Lodge in the August when the Battle of Britain was raging overhead. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, beside his successor in the Cavendish Laboratory, Lord Rutherford. Thomson was the last Master of Trinity to hold the post by a life-tenure; an age limit for future Masters has been imposed on the recommendation of the University Commission referred to above, but fortunately for me an age limit less strict than that prescribed for Professors. The Mastership of Henry VIII's foundation is still the one headship of a Cambridge College to which the Crown appoints, and in the late autumn of 1940, Winston Churchill as Prime Minister advised that I should be Master of Trinity, and the King send down Royal Letters Patent accordingly; armed with these, I formally demanded and obtained entry at the closed portals of the Great Gate, where I was received by the Vice-Master and Fellows with the usual antiquarian ceremony.

That day the kindness of Trinity men towards the new Master began and has never since failed. It has made my life as happy as anyone's can be during the fall of European civilization.

The call-up of young men soon reduced the College to little more than a third of its peace-time numbers, and an equal



proportion of Fellows went away on one kind of war service or another. The older Fellows who remained included the Vice-Master, Winstanley, of whom I have placed an obituary notice at the end of this volume. In the difficult times of the war the College was admirably served by its Tutors and Bursars and A.R.P. Officers. The arduous part of the administration, therefore, did not fall on me, and to preside over such a body of friends as these and the other resident Fellows was easy and pleasant.

The Master's Lodge, which was in considerable disrepair, was fitted up both inside and out by wisely generous expenditure on the part of College. A great deal was done to it in the winter of 1940-41, the last months during which it would have been possible to obtain either labour or material for the purpose. The most marked and successful alteration was the removal of the dark and ugly paint from the fine oak panels with which Bentley had adorned the dining-room of the Lodge.

In this grand old house, brightened up by these repairs, it would have been our duty to entertain in a manner worthy of the College, but war and post-war restrictions on food rendered that impossible. We did what we could, and my wife was energetic and skilled in raiding London shops for cakes and other items of unrationed food, and in retaining and obtaining servants when few indeed were to be got. With a small staff we managed to keep the thirty-one rooms of the house clean, and we maintained an intermittent trickle of overnight visitors from America and elsewhere. We used the State Rooms for concerts, tea parties, 'at homes' and meetings, and I spent much of my time in showing parties of American, Dominion, Allied and British troops over the College and over the Lodge.

Cambridge during the war was a great centre for American troops on leave and for courses and visits of officers and civilians from all over the world. The Fellows of the College, and especially the hospitable Vice-Master, did much to entertain them. Many, I think, went away with a feeling that Cambridge, England, was as friendly as well as a beautiful place. I also had parties for freshmen in the Lodge, when I talked to them about the history of the College.

These activities as verger led me to consider closely the buildings of the College in connection with its history, and in 1943 I published with the Cambridge Press a small book on the subject





called *Trinity College*, which received a kindly welcome from Trinity men, old and young.

Those undergraduates who were directed to come up to the University to pursue their science courses before joining the fighting services, and the service cadets who came up for special short courses, worked hard and made the most of their fleeting opportunities at Cambridge in an admirable spirit. When the war ended, the returning warriors came up in crowds, as freshmen or to complete their broken courses, while the full tale of Fellows was again complete. Never had Trinity, never had Cambridge been so full of strong and splendid life, though the College shares to the full the austerities and stringencies of the country at large. Such was the condition of things when on June 3, 1947, we celebrated the Fourth Centenary of our Foundation by Henry VIII, under royal auspices and on a perfect summer day; when George VI and Queen Elizabeth drove across the Great Court up to the Lodge in their open motor car, as Victoria and Prince Albert had driven in their horsed carriage a hundred years before, and when the twelve trumpeters on the roof of the Great Gate proclaimed their entry, it was clear to all the world that England and Trinity had survived the war.

Here I bring my autobiography to a close. Its object has been to record those circumstances that affected the production of my books. That production has now to all intents and purposes come to an end: I am too old to write another serious history book, which involves the double labour of collecting and collating material and translating it into literary form, a prolonged effort beyond my remaining powers.

I make no apology to the reader for having written so much about myself: I set out to do it and now it is done.



## HISTORY AND THE READER\*

AFTER the high standard set by Mr. Masfield's beautiful address last year, I fear that you will find my remarks this evening somewhat pedestrian. But at any rate the subject I have chosen, 'History and the Reader,' raises a real question, or rather a number of real questions, on which opposite opinions have been held by people of wide and deep learning and high cultivation.

The fundamental question is whether history has any important relation to the reading public at all, or whether it is 'a science, no more and no less,' as was said in 1903 by Professor Bury, my predecessor in the Chair of History at Cambridge.

Bury was a scholar of very high distinction, and anything he said deserved most respectful consideration. But in 1903, as a rash young man, I ventured to controvert his definition of history as being a science and no more. I argued that it was both a science and an art: that the discovery of historical facts should be scientific in method, but that the exposition of them for the reader partook of the nature of art, the art of written words commonly called literature. More than forty years have passed since I entered upon that controversy, and I hold the same opinion still, as to the dual nature of history.

To-day it is no longer necessary to talk on this subject in a controversial tone, for historians are more eclectic and tolerant of diversities in historical methods than some of their predecessors of fifty years ago. There are many living historians, finer and more truly scientific scholars than I can claim to be, who have been most generous in their attitude towards my own historical endeavours. And there are a number of historical scholars who throw the results of their research into a literary form, and thereby secure the attention of a very wide public. History is no longer, as it was at the opening of this century, in the trammels of a theory that tended to make it dull. It is once more a part of the current literature of the day, often eagerly sought for by the public, though of course some historical works appeal more to the specialists, and

\*Being the Third Annual Lecture of the National Book League, 1945.





others more to the general reader. But there is no hard and fast line between these two kinds of history.

Please, therefore, do not regard this address as part of a controversy, but only as an attempt at definition, and an enquiry into the value, or rather the values, of history to the reader.

Before approaching the question of the value of history to the general reader, I will make a few remarks on the history of history. For us Europeans, the Greek and Roman historians stand as the great originals. Herodotus and Thucydides regarded history both as a science and an art, although they may not have used that phraseology. They took great pains in collecting facts, though travel and conversation were their sources, rather than documents of which there were not many in those days. They then threw the results of what they had collected into the form of literature. Speaking under correction from classical scholars, I should imagine that we do not know how far Herodotus and Thucydides were able to arrive at all the true facts, or how far their deductions were correct. But we feel, I think, that they both sincerely sought the truth. Professor Cornford indeed argued that even Thucydides allowed his conclusions to be to some extent affected by his artistic or dramatic instincts, but this is denied by others. With Tacitus, I suppose, we feel less sure as to the impartiality of his statements, though he was pre-eminent among Roman historians in literary power. Be that as it may, the tradition which Greece and Rome bequeathed to the Europe of the Renaissance was the tradition of history both as a science of facts, and as an art appealing to the general reader.

In the Middle Ages there had been some good historical work done by English monks like Matthew Paris, chiefly chronicles of contemporary events. With the Renaissance, the study of the ancient historians made modern historians more ambitious. In early Stuart times Sir Walter Raleigh solaced his captivity in the Tower by writing his monumental *History of the World*. To our generation it is unreadable, in spite of some magnificent and famous passages, but in its own day it was very widely read and exercised a great influence on the public mind. After that, Clarendon and Burnet carried the art of writing contemporary history to a high point. In the same era, that is in the later Seventeenth Century and early Eighteenth Century, a school of English antiquarians of great ability and zeal laid the foundation of the



scientific study of the documents of the Middle Ages, in publications like those of Dugdale, Hearne, Rymer, Wake and Anthony Wood. In their work we have early examples of the scientific study of the documents of the past, which is the principal method of modern historical research.

In the middle of the Eighteenth Century, history in England fully developed its modern form, which has since been little changed. Three men stand out as the creators of the norm of modern historiography: Hume, Robertson and Gibbon. Gibbon is the greatest, but Hume and Robertson were his predecessors, and those two Scots have a very high place in the history of history in these islands. They made the history-reading public in Britain, which Gibbon inherited from them. In Gibbon the perfection both of the science and of the art of history were reached, and has never since been surpassed.

During the first three-quarters of the Nineteenth Century, History was regarded in England as a specialized branch of literature; history books were extensively bought and read by the large educated public of that day. Macaulay and Carlyle thought of their work as a part of the literature of their country, and their books sold as well, I believe, as those of any novelist except Dickens. But Carlyle and Macaulay were not superficial, any more than Gibbon had been superficial; they had great faults but they had not the fault of want of learning. They set a fine example by their zeal in the collection of evidence from original sources. In his *Cromwell* and his *Frederic*, Carlyle was his own Dryasdust. Macaulay's reading was stupendous. But the interpretation they put on the evidence they collected was often faulty. No doubt they lacked something of the scientific spirit in the method of collating of evidence on which so great stress was laid in the academic reaction that took place in the closing years of the century.

That reaction against 'literary history,' as it was scornfully called, was rampant fifty years ago, when I commenced historian. It began in the Universities and was meekly accepted by the general public as a pronouncement made *ex cathedra*. History, it was agreed, was no longer to be written for the general reader and his likes; history books were henceforth to contain only the learned talk of historians with one another. If the public sometimes overheard that talk, so much the better, but that was a matter of secondary importance. History was to have nothing to do with





literature. It was a science, no less and no more. Two of my predecessors in the Chair at Cambridge loudly proclaimed this doctrine, but the two greatest Cambridge historians, Acton and Maitland, never went these doctrinal lengths, and both of them were most friendly to me and to my young hopes of writing literary history. To-day professional historians are tolerant of the diversities of historical aim in their brotherhood, and not a few of them successfully practise the art of writing literary history. And the public appears to welcome their efforts.

But the anti-literary or scientific reaction among the historians of fifty years ago, though it has now spent its force, or at least lost its intolerance, had at the time its uses and its *raison d'être*. I think it did both good and harm. I should like to summarize its principal causes.

First of all, history was at that time—half a century ago—becoming a very important subject of teaching and examination at the Universities, to some extent rivalling or even displacing Classics, as the most popular 'Arts' subject of general education. Now if history is to be learned and taught at the Universities, it cannot be taught as a 'soft option,' a branch of literature. Something rigorous like Stubbs' *Constitutional History*, and some study of the laws of historical evidence is desirable. This aspect (the scientific aspect if you like to call it so) of history was necessarily, and on the whole rightly stressed, in University teaching and study. I think Macaulay and Carlyle themselves would have been even better historians than they were, if they had been through an academic course of history such as they could have got if they had lived at the end of the nineteenth century instead of at the beginning. What was wrong with the historical reaction at the end of Victoria's reign, was not the positive stress it laid on the need for scientific method in weighing evidence, but its negative repudiation of the literary art, which was declared to have nothing whatever to do with the historian's task.

A second, and less respectable cause of the reaction, was the influence of Germany. In the last years of Victoria, Bismarck's Germany was the admired of all admirers, not least in academic circles. The American Universities, then rapidly rising in size and importance, modelled themselves not on the English but on the German example. And, even in British Universities, Germany was for a while regarded as the fount whence dons and men should



draw *lucem et pocula sacra*. We are always throwing over our national traditions, in every thing except politics. We have seen that happen again and again in art and in music. And so in History, fifty years ago, the English tradition of history written for the general reader, was thrown aside for the crabbed German ideal of the learned man who has nothing to do with literature.

A third cause of the 'scientific' reaction in history was the pre-dominance, prestige and success which had been attained by the physical sciences in the later years of the Nineteenth Century. Science had transmuted the economic and social life of mankind, and had revolutionized the religious and cosmological outlook of the educated world. These astonishing achievements of physical science led many historians, fifty years ago, to suppose that the importance and the value of history would be enhanced if history was called a science, and if it adopted scientific methods and ideals and none others. I believe that this analogy was inexact. For the study of mankind does not resemble the study of the physical properties of atoms, or the life-history of animals. If you find out about one atom you have found out about all atoms, and what is true of the habits of one robin is roughly true of the habits of all robins. But the life history of one man, or even of many individual men, will not tell you the life history of other men. Moreover you cannot make a full scientific analysis of the life history of any one man. Men are too complicated, too spiritual, too various, for scientific analysis; and the life history of millions cannot be inferred from the history of single men. History, in fact, is a matter of rough guessing from all the available facts. And it deals with intellectual and spiritual forces which cannot be subjected to any analysis that can properly be called scientific.

As Carlyle wrote long ago (*Fr. Rev.* iii. ii. 1), 'Every reunion of men, is it not, as we often say, a reunion of incalculable influences; every unit of it a microcosm of influences; of which how shall science calculate or prophecy?'

Moreover the value and object of history is to a very large extent—I should say mainly—to educate the public mind. But physical science has its own uses and applications quite apart from the popularizing of its results. No doubt it is desirable to popularize its results as Eddington and Jeans and more than one Huxley have done; but the main end of science is the accumula-





tion of specialized knowledge by specialists, which can be applied to the material needs of the world.

But the chief value of history is educative, its effect on the mind of the historical student, and on the mind of the public, and therefore the business of conveying the best work and the best thought of historians to the general reader is of prime importance. That can only be done by the art of writing, so that literary skill is a part of the equipment desirable at least in some historians, though not in all. There are diversities of gifts and diversities of tasks in Clio's temple.

This brings me to the heart of my subject this evening, the question what is the value of history to the ordinary reader who is not a professional historian. Why should historians consider it a part of their business to convey their old and their new knowledge, their traditions and their discoveries, to the man in the street?

The older I get and the more I observe the tendencies and conditions of our latter day, the more certain I become that history must be the basis of humane (that is non-scientific) education in the future. Without some knowledge of history other doors will remain closed, or at best ajar. For example, the reading of poetry and prose literature, other than current books, must rest on some knowledge of the times past when the older books were written. Some understanding of the social and political scene of Chaucer's, Shakespeare's, Milton's, Swift's world, of the world of Boswell, of Wordsworth and Shelley and Byron, of Dickens and of Trollope, of Carlyle and Ruskin is necessary in order fully to appreciate the works in question, or even in some cases to understand what they are about. Music needs no such historical introduction to be fully appreciated, for it is not allusive, or only slightly. But literature is allusive; each book is rooted in the soil of the time when it was written. Unless our great English literature is to become a sealed book to the English people (as indeed I fear it is to many), our countrymen must know something of times past.

Literature and history are twin sisters, inseparable. In the days of our own grandfathers, and for many generations before them, the basis of education was the Greek and Roman classics for the educated, and the Bible for all. In the classical authors and in the Bible, history and literature were closely interwoven, and it is



that circumstance which made the old form of education so stimulating to the thought and imagination of our ancestors. To read the classical authors and to read the Bible was to read at once the history and the literature of the three greatest races of the ancient world. No doubt the Classics and the Bible were read in a manner we now consider uncritical, but they were read according to the best lights of the time and formed a great humanistic education. To-day the study both of the Classics and of the Bible has dwindled to small proportions. What has taken their place? To some extent the vacuum has been filled by a more correct knowledge of history and a wider range of literature. But I fear that the greater part of it has been filled up with rubbish.

Similarly, and only in a lesser degree than in the case of literature, the enjoyment and understanding of architecture and of painting and of all the domestic arts, are enhanced by knowledge of history. The man who knows no history can travel through Italy thinking it very pretty and picturesque and queer, but understanding very little of what he sees. Foreign travel is enjoyable and instructive largely in proportion to the amount of historical knowledge which we take with us across the Channel. But I am glad to observe that the power of enjoying old buildings by means of historical knowledge and imagination is very widely spread to-day. That is something to build on, educationally and culturally. Some 15,000 people every year visit Housesteads, to see its Fort on the Roman Wall, a property of the National Trust. That is to say, vast numbers of people, speeding along the Carlisle-Newcastle road, get out of their motor-cars or buses, or leave their bicycles, and walk half a mile uphill to inspect the ruins of some old Roman buildings on that wild moor. There is no beauty in the ruins, which are little more than foundations, but the historical imagination of the visitors is touched. Some know, more go away desiring to know, something of the history of the Romans in Britain.

The visitors to ruined abbeys and castles, to country houses and parish churches, enjoy themselves in proportion as they are equipped with historical knowledge, and with the historical imagination and curiosity that leads them to desire such knowledge. Disinterested intellectual curiosity is the life blood of real civilization.

The Anglo-Saxons, though more important than the Romans





in the History of England, have left fewer monuments, for the Saxons' buildings were of wood, not of stone, except only their churches, and most of their churches were replaced by lordlier structures after the Norman Conquest. So there is a tendency for the Anglo-Saxons to drop out of the popular picture of our island history. Out of sight, out of mind. Yet, even so, there is a considerable curiosity about those remote ancestors of ours, a desire to know the results of the very fine work, by which the Anglo-Saxon scholars and archaeologists of the last thirty years have done so much to reveal the truth about that long and vital period in the making of England. Mr. R. H. Hodgkin's *History of the Anglo-Saxons* is an admirable example of the way in which the results of the latest scholarship, difficult and abstruse in their nature, can be made understandable and attractive to the general reader. Professor Stenton's great work on *Anglo-Saxon History*, recently published in the Oxford History of England, will appeal, perhaps, to somewhat fewer readers, but those who apply themselves to read it will have the fascinating privilege of seeing the very pulse of the machine of scientific historical discovery at work. Mr. Hodgkin's and Professor Stenton's Anglo-Saxon histories are excellent examples of two different kinds of scholarly history, somewhat differently related to the needs of the reading public.

But the interest and value of history is very much more than the key it affords to the literature, art and monuments of the past. In itself history raises and attempts to answer two great questions—(1) what was the life of men and women in the past ages? and (2) how did the present state of things evolve out of the past? The reader can be interested in the past for its own sake, for the value or instruction he finds in former states of society, and former habits of thought which have passed away and left little or nothing behind. Or else the reader may be interested chiefly in the explanation which history alone can afford of the origin of the institutions, beliefs, habits and prejudices of the various peoples of the world at the present day. In other words, he can be interested in the past, either for its own sake, or as the parent of the present. Similarly, he may be interested in static views of various past scenes and happenings, or he may be interested principally in the moving stream of events, the causal and evolutionary aspect of the history of mankind.



I will say a little about these two aspects of history separately. First, the value to the reader of discovering what life was like in various ages and countries of old: this kind of intellectual curiosity can in our day be satisfied more fully and more correctly than in any previous age, because of the wonderful work of modern scholarship. It is a relief to escape from our own mechanical age into a world when the craftsman was more and the machine less, when imagination was more and science was less. Nor is this mere hedonistic escapism. It enlarges the mind and imagination, otherwise imprisoned in the present. We get glimpses of other worlds, human and faulty like ours, but different from our own, and suggesting many things, some of great value, that man has thought, experienced and forgotten. Indeed, I know of no greater triumph of the modern intellect than the truthful reconstruction of past states of society that have been long forgotten or misunderstood, recovered now by the patient work of archaeologists, antiquarians and historians. To discover in detail what the life of man on earth was like a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand years ago is just as great an achievement as to make ships sail under the sea or through the air.

How wonderful a thing it is to look back into the past as it actually was, to get a glimpse through the curtain of old night into some brilliantly lighted scene of living men and women, not mere creatures of fiction and imagination, but warm-blooded realities even as we are. In the matter of reality, there is no difference between past and present; every moment a portion of our prosaic present drops off and is swallowed up into the poetic past.

The motive of history is at bottom poetic. The patient scholar, wearing out his life in scientific historical research, and the reader more idly turning the pages of history, are both enthralled by the mystery of time, by the mutability of all things, by the succession of the ages and generations.

The best expression of the sense of poetry in the annals of the past was given by Carlyle, in his *French Revolution*, his *Past and Present* and his *Essay of Boswell's Johnson*.

History after all [he writes] is the true poetry; Reality, if rightly interpreted, is grander than Fiction; nay even, in the right interpretation of Reality and History, does genuine Poetry lie.

Thus for *Boswell's Life of Johnson* has Time done, is Time doing still,





what no ornament of Art or Artifice could have done for it. Rough Samuel and sleek wheedling James *were*, and *are not*. Their Life and whole personal Environment has melted into air. The Mitre Tavern still stands in Fleet Street; but where now is its scot-and-lot paying, beef-and-ale loving, cocked-hatted, pot-bellied Landlord; its rosy-faced assiduous Landlady, with all her shining brass-pans, waxed tables, well-filled larder-shelves; her cooks and bootjacks, and errand boys and watery-mouthed hangers-on? Gone! Gone! The becking Waiter, who, with wreathed smiles, was wont to spread for Samuel and Bozzy their supper of the gods, has long since pocketed his last sixpence; and vanished, sixpences and all, like a ghost at cock-crowing. The Bottles they drank out of are all broken, the Chairs they sat on all rotted and burnt; the very Knives and Forks they ate with have rusted to the heart, and become brown oxide of iron, and mingled with the indiscriminate clay. All, all has vanished; in very deed and truth, like that baseless fabric of Prospero's air-vision. Of the Mitre Tavern nothing but the bare walls remain there; of London, of England, of the World, nothing but the bare walls remain; and these also decaying (were they of adamant), only slower. The mysterious River of Existence rushes on; a new Billow thereof has arrived, and lashes wildly as ever round the old embankments; but the former Billow with its loud, mad eddyings, where is it?—Where?—

Now this *Book* of Boswell's, this is precisely a revocation of the edict of Destiny; so that Time shall not utterly, not so soon by several centuries, have dominion over us. A little row of Naphtha-lamps, with its line of Naphtha-light, burns clear and holy through the dead Night of the Past: they who are gone are still here; though hidden they are revealed, though dead they yet speak. There it shines, that little miraculously lamplit Pathway; shedding its feebler and feebler twilight into the boundless dark Oblivion, for all that our Johnson *touched* has become illuminated for us: on which miraculous little Pathway we can still travel and see wonders. (*Critical Essays*, 4.)

Such is the value of biography and of all history.

So, too, the finest thing ever said about the French Revolution was also said by Carlyle.

The Fireship is old France, the old French Form of Life; her crew a Generation of men. Wild are their cries and their ragings there, like spirits tormented in that flame. But, on the whole, are they not *gone*, O Reader? Their Fireship and they, frightening the world, have sailed away; its flames and its thunders quite away, into the Deep of Time. One thing therefore History will do: pity them all; for it went hard with them all (*French Revolution*, iii. iii. 1).



We, I think, can appreciate that figure, sailing away as we are, on our own burning fireship, into the Deep of Time.

Besides the contemplation and study of the Past for its own sake, there remains the second great value of History, namely the light it throws on the present. You cannot understand your own country, still less any other, unless you know something of its history. You cannot even understand your own personal opinions, prejudices and emotional reactions unless you know what is your heritage as an Englishman, and how it has come down to you. Why does an Englishman react one way to a public or private situation, a German another way, a Frenchman in a third way? History alone can tell you.

In this stage of the world, when many nations are brought into close and vital contact for good and evil, it is essential, as never before, that their gross ignorance of one another should be diminished, that they should begin to understand a little of one another's historical experience and resulting mentality. It is a fault of the English to expect the people of other countries to react as they do themselves to political and international situations. Our genuine good will and good intentions are often brought to nothing, because we expect other people to be like ourselves. This would be corrected if we knew their history, not necessarily in detail but in broad outlines of the social and political conditions which have given to each nation its present character.

You cannot understand the French unless you know something of the French Revolution, its causes and effects; or the Germans, without knowing something of the historical relation of the German to his government, and of the German government to the Army, and of the whole nation to military ideals, which became in Bismarck's day as potent and precious to them as Parliamentary institutions (and freedom to do what we like) have, in the long course of history, become to us English. You cannot understand the Russians, unless you have some conception of the long centuries during which they were hammered into the sense of community and of absolutism by the continual blows of Tartar and Teuton invasion sweeping over the unbroken Steppes. We are always expecting other countries to 'play the game' as we play it, to see life as we see it, but they insist on following their own harsher traditions. The





present is always taking us by surprise (as it did in 1914 and in 1938-39) because we do not sufficiently know and consider the past.

Mr. Ford, it is commonly reported, once declared that history was 'bunk.' This remarkable utterance of his, if indeed he made it, was in itself an outcome of history: such contempt for all things past, and such engaging frankness in avowing it, were themselves the outcome of certain aspects of the social history of the United States in the nineteenth century. Yet the American, generally speaking, is by no means ignorant of history or uninfluenced by his knowledge of it. The Americans know more about our history than we know about theirs, though I hope that will soon be remedied. And the American's conception of his own country, his pride in the star-spangled banner, and in the constitution, and in America as the representative of freedom and of democracy, are products of history as popularly taught and conceived over there. His attitude towards Britain, both in its favourable and in its unfavourable aspect, is largely an outcome of historical reading and teaching.

There is, indeed, another political danger that arises out of imperfect historical knowledge. I mean the danger that comes, not from deliberate propaganda or falsification, but from learning bits of past history without bringing the story up to recent and present times. The Americans, for example, tend to think of England as she was long ago, as a monarchical and aristocratic country. Their knowledge of our past is greater than their knowledge of our present. A short while ago, a friendly and intelligent American officer said to me that when he first came over to England for this war he expected to find a land of castles with serfs tilling the soil for the benefit of a feudal aristocracy. I told him that his historical knowledge of England would have been suitable if he had come over to lend a hand in the *earlier* part of the Hundred Years War.

Some nations, like the Irish, are *too* historically minded, in the sense that they cannot get out of the past at all. And many of the countries of Eastern Europe, and above all the Germans themselves, have been brought up on one-sided, ultra-patriotic versions of things past. The harm that one-sided history has done in the modern world is immense. When history is used as a branch of



propaganda it is a very deadly weapon. On the whole, that is not a fault of history as it is now taught and written in England. It is rather the ignorance of history than the misuse of it, from which we suffer in this island now.

Professor Butterfield, in his inaugural lecture for the Chair of Modern History at Cambridge, said :

Nations do remember one thing and another in the past. And so terrible are the evils of a little history that we must have more history as quickly as we can. And since one of the most dangerous devices of propaganda at the present day—by far the neatest trick of the year—is to narrate what the foreigner once did, while withholding everything in the nature of historical explanation, we must have more of the kind of history which is not mere narrative but exposition—the history which takes account of the differences between the centuries, between stages of intellectual development, even between types of social structure. The study of history matters, not because it turns men into statesmen—that at least is a thing which it palpably does not do (valuable though it may be when added to the other qualifications of a political leader)—but because in every genuine victory that it gains, it is contributing to the growth of human understanding.

These words of Professor Butterfield lead us on from consideration of history as a means of acquiring positive knowledge, to history as an education of the mind of the reader. We become wiser—less foolish at any rate—if we study the problems of humanity in past ages, because we can read without violent *parti-pris* about the things of long ago, and with knowledge of their outcome and consequence. It is still too early to form a final judgment on the French Revolution, and opinion about it (my opinion certainly) is constantly oscillating. On such great and complex issues there can never be a final “verdict of history.” But at least it is more possible to have an opinion of some value about the French Revolution now than it was in 1789, 1794 or 1815. And the attempt to form such an opinion in all the historical light now available, is an education to the mind, the sort of education we all most terribly need.

Our own daily affairs, political and social, we approach with strong prejudices, with ignorance or onesided knowledge of the issues, and with no knowledge at all of what is going to be the outcome. To remedy this, the reading of history instils into us the habit of surveying broad-mindedly and calmly the pageant and





process of human affairs. I do not mean that we should be 'impartial' in the sense of thinking that all sides in the past were equally in the right. We may, and we often should, feel that one side was on the balance much more in the right than the other. And we shall not all of us come to the same conclusions on these past problems. But if we calmly study the past from as many angles as possible, we shall all of us gain in wisdom and understanding. We shall acquire a mentality which, when we return to our own problems, will be less at the mercy of newspapers and films, trying to make us take short cuts to truth, and to oversimplify the tangled skein of human affairs.

I hope I have begun to make out to your satisfaction my case for the twin propositions, (1) that it is part of the duty of historians to present history in a readable form, or rather, in a variety of forms readable by various sections of the public. And (2) that the general reader ought to study history. If he knows no history he is not properly educated either as a citizen or as an intellectual and imaginative being. But few readers will study history because they think it a patriotic duty to do so, or even because they want to improve their minds. Readers read because they like reading, and the books they choose will be those that interest or delight them. People will read history if it fascinates them. It is therefore the duty of historians to make it as fascinating as possible, or at any rate not to conceal its fascination under the heap of learning which ought to underlie but not overwhelm written history.

And how fascinating history is—the long, variegated pageant of man's still continuing evolution on this strange planet, so much the most interesting of all the myriads of spinners through space. Man's evolution is far more extraordinary than the first chapter of Genesis used to lead people to suppose. Man's history,—prehistoric, ancient, mediaeval and modern,—is by far the most wonderful thing in the Universe of which any news has come through to us. It contains religion; it contains science; at least it contains their history. It contains art and literature. The story of man is far more wonderful than the wonders of physical science. It is a mystery unsolved, yet it is solid fact. It is divine, diabolic—in short, human. 'The proper study of mankind is man,' more proper to him than even the study of beetles, of gases, and of



atoms. And this wonderful pageant can be viewed both in rapidly revolving films of large expanse of time and space, and in 'close-ups' of single people and single scenes.

What then is the likelihood that history will in fact fill the place it should fill in the national literature of to-day and to-morrow? In some respects the prospects are good. Historians often make a conscious effort to present their work to the general public in a readable form. And correspondingly a considerable interest in history is shown by large sections of the community at large. There is a demand for history books.

But I am bound to add that there is a less favourable side to the picture. The study of history depends more than any other branch of science or literature on the availability of a large number of books. And the book shortage which to-day debars the ordinary reader to a large extent from the study of history, is I fear, not going to come to an end in a night now that the enemy have surrendered. The present acute stage, due to the paper shortage may gradually be remedied, though very gradually, I fear. But even when paper is again plentiful, modern conditions will not be favourable to the supply of history books. This was already so before the war, and will be still more so in the future. The production of books, owing to the rising cost of printing and binding, gets more and more expensive, with the result that publishers cannot reprint old books of standard value, such for example as Lecky's works—I could give fifty other cases of good history books that are thus suffered to die. There is always a certain demand for them, but not enough to repay the costs of re-publication. Now the study of history depends on the reading of good old books, both primary sources and secondary narratives. If the reading public can in future buy nothing but the books of the day, its historical reading and knowledge will be a very poor affair.

The demand for standard histories and historical sources of ten, thirty or a hundred years ago is not great enough to pay for their re-publication. One reason why the demand is not great enough to encourage publishers to re-publish, is the disappearance of the private library. Private libraries of many different kinds and sizes were among the best things in the Victorian civilization. I fear they are disappearing and not being replaced. It is





partly a result of reduced incomes, partly of reduced size of houses. In the brave new world of the near future, our one-class society will be housed in small houses where there is little room for bookshelves. And when the motor car and its petrol are paid for there will be little money left over for books. Of course, the increase of public libraries and circulating libraries will be some compensation. But it will not fill the gap.

But I do not wish to end on a note of pessimism. The new civilization will no doubt find means of meeting its own problems, if it can succeed in avoiding world wars. And in so far as the higher civilization can manage to survive, I have no doubt that history will play a greater part than ever before in the humanistic or non-scientific aspects of culture. History is not the rival of Classics or of modern literature, or of the political sciences. It is rather the house in which they all dwell. It is the cement that holds together all the studies relating to the nature and achievements of man.



## BIAS IN HISTORY \*

THE problem of bias in history is fundamental and all-pervading. No one can write or teach history for ten minutes without coming in contact with the question, whether he is aware of it or not.

Because history is not an exact science but an interpretation of human affairs, opinion and varieties of opinion intrude as inevitable factors. We cannot get rid of the element of opinion (or bias); we can, however, endeavour to make it the right kind of opinion,—broad, all-embracing, philosophic—not a narrow kind that excludes half or more of reality.

Above all, we must see that our prepossessions (or bias), never invade the sphere of scientific investigation of evidence, the collection and collation of the facts of history. The discovery of the facts ought to be the truly scientific element in the historian's task. And the field of facts thus impartially discovered, ought to be common ground for all historians, although they will differ in the interpretations they put on it. But in so far as there is such a common area of agreed facts, the disagreement in the various interpretations will be less wide. And that, I think, we see to some extent realised in the study of history in this island to-day. It is, I fear, less true of those parts of the world where history is the hand-maid of propaganda, or the instrument of Government.

Human knowledge is circumscribed, and each of us has his own limited vision. It is the duty of each to make his vision wider, approximating more nearly to the large truth of things. And the study of all the facts within the historian's reach will help him in this endeavour. I have been told that while Samuel Rawson Gardiner worked on the materials for his great history, his original opinions, which had a strong Roundhead bias, were modified, though not reversed, by what he read. A man's bias on an historical problem may coincide with truth, but is more likely to be partly right and partly wrong. He must endeavour to

Throw away the worser half of it  
And live the purer with the other part.

\* Presidential Address to the Historical Association, January 1947.





So I am going to define 'bias in history,' for the purposes of my argument to-day, as a thing not necessarily good or necessarily bad. I define it as 'any personal interpretation of historical events which is not acceptable to the whole human race.' In this sense of the word, it is 'bias' to think that the Allies in the late war were more in the right than the Germans and Japanese. We have no doubt about it, but the opinion is not universal, so by my definition it is 'bias,' although it is true. In this sense I do not think bias can be or ought to be avoided by any historian.

To say, 'John was a bad King,' is bias, for it is the utterance of an opinion not universally held. I see that Professor Galbraith has questioned it in our own magazine, *History* (September 1945), by analysing and discounting the undoubted bias of those of John's contemporaries who first wrote down the story which later ages have accepted. So, too, it is bias to say, 'James II was not a good King,' for that is to utter an opinion which has been disputed by Mr. Belloc.

Nor do I think we can get out of the difficulty by refusing to express any opinion at all about the actions of those two monarchs and by confining ourselves to the bare record of their actions. I think, indeed, now that I am old and prudent, that it is best not to throw about adjectives and epithets, and not to impute motives to such an extent, for instance, as Macaulay did about James II or Stubbs about King John. Let the facts speak for themselves, so far as is possible. But how far is it possible? Facts seldom speak for themselves clearly, if there is no comment.

Moreover, a selection of the facts has in any case to be made by the historian. No historian can record all that is credibly reported about James II, or even about John; and if he did, no publisher would accept, no reader would read such massy volumes. The more important and significant actions have got to be chosen out for narration. And such choice can only be made on some principle of personal interpretation.

To record facts without explanation or comment is to write chronicles or annals, not history. And mere chronicles have but slight general interest or educational value. For instance, if we wish to make intelligible the nature of the actions of John or James II, it is necessary to set them against the background of the social, religious, political and constitutional conditions of their respective eras. And to paint such a background



implies a process of selection conducted on personally chosen standards.

So I will not ask the question, 'Is bias in history permissible?' because clearly it is inevitable. I will ask the more fruitful questions, 'What sort of bias is permissible?' and 'What are its limits?'

One question may first be asked—are there some kinds of history which can legitimately be more biased than other kinds? For example, a biography, setting out to explain the actions and the point of view of a single man, should it be more biased than a general history? A general history, it is agreed, ought to be written in as broad a spirit as possible, and to be as fair as possible to all parties concerned. But is it not enough for a biographer to be fair to his hero?

In answering this question, I will begin by making a distinction between two kinds of biography, the Life of a person recently dead, written from papers supplied by sorrowing relatives, and an historical biography of someone who lived well back in the past. In the first case, that of the almost contemporary biography, truth of facts ought never to be altered, and if possible, ought not to be concealed when the facts are significant; but critical comment on the hero must be used with discretion, or it cannot fail to be indecent. *De mortuis nil nisi bonum* refers to the recently dead, especially if the widow has entrusted you with the letters.

The chief function of such official *Lives*, is then, to supply material for judgment rather than to pronounce judgment. Yet, even so, it is sometimes the function of such a biographer to point out the fallacies of unjust contemporary criticism of his hero still prevalent in some quarters after his death. I endeavoured to do this for Edward Grey's foreign policy when I wrote his *Life* immediately after he died. I also pointed out what I thought had been his mistakes, in carefully chosen language. I should have refused to write the *Life* of a statesman recently dead of whose general policy or character I felt strongly critical. I would never undertake to write against my own bias.

In the case of biographies of people dead for a generation or more, there need be no restriction at all on the author's freedom of utterance. An historical biography ought not to be more biased than a general history. It will, indeed, be more one-sided





in its effect, because of the nature and limits of its subject. The best and frankest biography cannot fulfil the function of a general history. Even if it is impartial, it is by its scope and nature a study of one side of things. But it ought to be perfectly free and full in its criticism of the hero's policy and character.

These remarks about the duty of biographers seem to me to apply in equal degree to historians of some particular institution or movement. Their subject is limited, but they have to place it in the full light of history.

I will say no more on the special conditions of biography as such. But I will raise a kindred question: are there circumstances under which a book, whether a biography or not, may legitimately have more bias than we should ordinarily approve? For example, where historical knowledge and opinion have for a long time been prejudiced and unsound on some subject, is there room in such a case for a book heavily biased in the opposite direction, in order to redress the balance? When, for example, Cromwell had been for two centuries vilified as a mere hypocrite and vulgar tyrant, and no one had dared, from motives of political prudence, to speak up for him, was there not something to be said for Carlyle's one-sided panegyric?

Well, I do not myself believe that either the cause of truth, or the cause of Cromwell was really advanced by the onesidedness of Carlyle's approval of all the many actions of his hero, or by the scorn he poured on all the worthy Cavaliers and Roundheads, who at one time or another stood opposed to the impetuous and zigzag torrent of Oliver's will. Carlyle's vindication had weight not because of its exaggerated bias, but in spite of it. The great and permanent effect on opinion was due to other things in the book—the publication of Oliver's letters and speeches, and the genius of Carlyle as a writer. But if that scholarship and that genius had been combined with a little more balance in his view of Cromwell, he would have won even more assent.

There are many other cases, familiar to us all, of historical reactions ushered in by more or less one-sided books of controversy. I should be inclined to say of all such books, that they are not more effective controversially because of their one-sidedness. And some introducers of new controversial truth, like F. W. Maitland for instance, managed to avoid the trap. But where



there is undue bias shown in controversy, it is in the circumstances very natural and human. Men are we. And perhaps some of these controversialists would never move in the matter at all, if they were not really angry at the delusions, as they conceive, against which they take up arms. *Ira facit versus* and sometimes wrath writes history. But wrath is not a good thing in itself, though sometimes it cannot be detached from good work.

In any case free controversy is the only road by which we poor mortals can arrive at historical truth. Our own quarterly, *History*, has so far produced one hundred and twelve 'Historical Revisions,' each trailing a coat. In the open Court of Clio, advocates must wrangle and put their evidence in the box and bully the other side's witnesses; but the analogy of a Court of justice is not exact, for every historical advocate has got to do his best to be a judge as well. So at least I firmly believe.

In the fine Presidential Address given to you at Boston by our beloved friend Professor Turberville, whose loss I still deeply deplore, and whose place I can very inadequately fill, your President then spoke 'Against a rigid, mechanical, unimaginative specialisation; against a tendency to present history to children as a body of ascertained truth, instead of as being, what it is, a series of accepted judgments.' Now of course there are difficulties in teaching children in this excellent way, because their unformed minds crave to be told what is true, not merely what is at present surmised. But I agree that we ought always ourselves to remember and within measure lead our scholars to feel, that history is a welter of opinions, various and variable, playing on a body of accepted facts that is itself always expanding.

On the other hand we must take care not to be too sceptical, and not to say that all historical judgments are guesswork or prejudice. In this country at least I am certain that the sum of sifted and ascertained historical fact has greatly increased and is rapidly increasing, and that, partly as a consequence, truthful historical judgments on many important subjects are more frequently made and more generally accepted than ever before. What we may fairly call real historical knowledge is growing fast.

Yet there are some great historical subjects on which the best we can look for is a balance of divergent opinions, because men differ from one another in mental attitude and in political and re-





ligious creed. For example, on the growth of Christianity we can never reach complete historical agreement. But even in that sphere we have, I think, won for all intelligent people a large amount of valuable common ground. And this, too, has been gained by long and painful controversies.

Gibbon was one-sided, because he was by nature insensitive to religious feeling. His early conversion to Romanism had been purely intellectual, not at all emotional. And so when the tide of that mental experience retreated, it left behind no sediment of sympathy with religion. Nevertheless Gibbon's analysis of the causes of the growth of Christianity was very valuable, because he redressed the balance against a heavy weight of pietistic flapdoodle that passed for ecclesiastical history. He improved the writing of religious history by clergymen: Dean Milman's *History of Latin Christianity* is vastly superior to the historical apologetics of Gibbon's contemporary antagonists. Moreover, he taught and encouraged sceptics to study the history of religion with scholarly method, although in his own case his studies had been handicapped by want of sympathy.

Carlyle, oddly enough, had all the merits of impartiality when he wrote his *French Revolution*, the historical embodiment of the broad philosophic humanity and contemplative humour of *Sartor Resartus*. His *French Revolution* is a saga, inspired by tender sympathy with frail human nature, very shrewd in its grasp of historical situations and characters, but very deficient in scholarship by modern standards. It was written 110 years ago from inadequate sources, before the scientific study of the causes and course of the Revolution had fairly begun. Yet it did more than any other book to teach people to think wisely and fairly about that great event, which had only happened forty years before, and about which the English for the most part had only been able to see red and shriek. Carlyle's *French Revolution* is a striking example of the use and value of history written with the least possible amount of political prejudice.

There is indeed a double contrast between Carlyle's *French Revolution* and his later historical works. His *Cromwell* had value, because he went to the original sources which other people had neglected, but it suffers from undue bias. And much the same may be said of his *Frederic the Great*. Now his earlier work, the *French Revolution*, is the opposite in both respects. It is



insufficiently informed, but it is singularly impartial. It is a story without a hero; that was fortunate, because heroes proved to be Carlyle's weakness, and led him down the primrose path of Abbot Samson and Cromwell to the everlasting bonfire of the King of Prussia. But his earlier *French Revolution* had no hero: it was the vision of the philosopher and poet of Craigenputtock, looking down from his mountain height with tears of pity on the little lot of man.

At this early period of his literary career, Carlyle had no political affiliations and had not yet developed his theoretic fondness for dictators. But he had a deep sympathy with the sufferings of the working people, among whom he had been brought up, and with whom he had himself suffered. This feeling shortly afterwards found expression in *Past and Present*, calling attention to the 'condition of the people question' in our own island during Peel's ministry. A few years before that, he had applied this sympathetic insight into the feelings of common man and woman to the case of the French Revolution. Such is the bias of the book. He did not know as much as later historians discovered about the policies of the various political parties, but he seems to me to have had more insight than any of his successors into the psychology of the mob.

Now the psychology of the mob was the governing factor at each crisis from 1789 to 1794, the period during which regular Government was in abeyance and those bore rule in France who had least scruple and most skill in the exploitation, from day to day, of the fears and passions of the man in the street.

For example, Carlyle's narrative of the Insurrection of Women, or March to Versailles of October 1789, seems to me still the most enlightening account of the affair. And does not the following bit of Carlylean humour throw a useful light on the psychology of that time, now so strange to us:—

Another thing we yet again beseech the Reader to imagine, the reign of Fraternity and Perfection. Imagine, O Reader, that the Millennium were struggling on the threshold, and yet not so much as groceries to be had—owing to traitors. With what impetus would a man strike traitors in that case. Ah! thou canst not imagine it; thou hast thy groceries safe in the shops, and little or no hope of a Millennium ever coming. (iii. iii. 8.)

I have never made a special study of the French Revolution, but I have read many scores of books about it for pleasure, in





the course of a long life. Of the books I have so read, many are very noble additions to historical knowledge and thought; but the two greatest still seem to me to be Carlyle's work and Albert Sorel's *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*, written two generations later, in the light of all the modern historical knowledge that Carlyle lacked. The two books have very different qualities, but they are alike in being works of genius, and also in being singularly free from partisan bias.

Both are impartial, but in two different ways. Carlyle has pity for all,—some pity even for the Sea-green Incorruptible, because he so completely sees through him. Carlyle scarcely passes judgment at all, viewing men and things more in sorrow than in anger. His explanation of the Revolution is the simple one that, when people have been grossly misgoverned for centuries and their institutions are thoroughly rotten, there must be a terrific, blind explosion some day. That was a truth which Burke had not taken into account, a truth to be fully confirmed by the subsequent work of de Tocqueville, Taine and others on the *Ancien Régime*.

Sorel, on the other hand, as befits a Frenchman, is, as it were, more closely and personally concerned than Carlyle. From the depths of his immense knowledge, he draws up sure and definite judgments, mostly of condemnation. He is confident that the Terror, which destroyed the brightest hopes of the Revolution, was unnecessary for its defence, and was made and maintained to keep the detestable Jacobins in power. He has a withering contempt for the *émigrés*, and for the Powers of continental Europe with their utterly selfish yet utterly feeble policies, which he has analysed and gibbeted once for all. He is enthusiastic for the national defence against such enemies, and to him the true heroes of the epoch are the soldiers of the first Revolutionary armies. To them, to them alone, his heart warms. The more strongly does he feel the tragedy of the misuse of their splendid patriotism to revive the foreign policies of Louis XIV in republican dress, and to rob and torture Europe for twenty years. You will look in vain for such Olympian impartiality in Treitschke and Mommsen.

Now this impartiality of Sorel's is not passive like Carlyle's, but active in the just distribution of blame for the foolish and wicked deeds by which men are perpetually destroying the hopes of mankind. Of course there are other great qualities in Sorel's work, but since I am now discussing 'bias,' I wish to lay stress on



this Rhadamanthine quality of his; it is like History herself speaking from the judgment seat. Sorel is the modern Thucydides.

Some people, prepossessed with Roman Catholic, Protestant, anti-clerical or other bias, are quick to see their friends in past centuries and to hail them across the gulf of time. And some Anglicans have been known to perceive Anglicans in the Middle Ages imperceptible to others. Even Stubbs was touched that way, as Maitland showed. And even Stubbs, stout old Tory though he was, was influenced in his view of the Witan and the Plantagenet Parliaments by the liberal and parliamentary faith so pleasantly universal in England during the Nineteenth Century. To-day some of our contemporaries bring Marx's head into everything and believe that our ancestors, when they thought, poor dears, that they were divided on religion or politics, were really divided on economics, because it is *a priori* impossible to be divided on anything else. But in this country the materialistic school of history is consenting, I think, to learn from Professor Tawney, who has helped to straighten the matter out.

Meanwhile, the history of our industrial revolution has been written with a balance creditable to the fair-mindedness of modern historians—Radical, Liberal, Conservative and Socialist,—by Barbara and Lawrence Hammond, by John Clapham and by Elie Halévy.

Alas, that death has taken from us Halévy and Clapham, and that bright spirit Eileen Power, who carried so lightly her heavy load of learning. They were great historians, and each of them had solved the problem of bias in history without any loss of vigour in thought and writing.

There appear to be two functions of the writer or teacher of history:

(1) First to show the ultimate consequences of actions and movements in the past, their relation to later times, haply to our own day. Napoleon and Bismarck cannot be judged in quite the same way by us as by contemporaries. For we know the end of the story, or at least its next chapters. This business of looking forward from the past to later events, or of judging the past by our knowledge of the present, clearly introduces the element of bias or personal opinion on a large scale.

(2) But the second and more specifically historical function of





the historian, with which his daily task is more constantly connected, is to find out what people of the past themselves thought and felt and intended. To do this, the historian has from time to time to strip himself, as it were, of his knowledge of what came after: to think of the men and problems of the first session of the Long Parliament in ignorance of the Grand Remonstrance and the Civil War. He must get inside the minds of the people of the Middle Ages and of Tudor times and of the Eighteenth Century, and see their problems as they saw them, not as we see them now. He must understand their lives as they appeared to the men who lived them.

Now this, the specifically historical task of history, is equally difficult and fascinating. It is, I think the chief and the peculiar fascination of historical study. What is its relation to the problem of 'bias' in history?

Clearly we are hampered and misled in our attempt to find out what our ancestors really thought and felt, if we try to fit them into some modern category which did not exist in their time. In that way bias hinders the search for truth.

On the other hand, the historian's bias may sometimes help him to sympathize with the actual passions of people in the past whose actions it is his business to describe. Clio should not always be cold, aloof, impartial. Sometimes the maid should come down from yonder mountain height, the Judge descend from the judgment seat, and the historian share the passions of the past, provided they are the real passions of the past and not a false reflection of some modern dogma or prejudice.

I once wrote three volumes on Garibaldi. They are reeking with bias. Without bias I should never have written them at all. For I was moved to write them by poetical sympathy with the passions of the Italian patriots of that period, which I retrospectively shared. Such merit as the work has, largely derives from that. And some of its demerits also derive from the same cause. Even I can now see that I was not quite fair to the French, or to the Papalist or to the Italian Conservative points of view in 1849. If I had to write the first volume of that Trilogy again I should alter this somewhat, though not enough to satisfy everyone. But in fact I could not possibly write the book again. What is good in it derived from the passions and powers of my youth, now irrecoverable. *'Si jeunesse savait, si vieillesse pouvait!'*



Guided therefore by my own experience, I submit that the element of emotion, of imaginative sympathy with the actual passions of the past, may on some occasions enter into the historian's narrative, because there is no other way of making those feelings live again for the modern reader. The past was full of passion, the motive of great doings, great virtues, great crimes. Can those past passions, now long cold and dead, be fully understood and realized without occasional sympathetic warmth in the modern historian? I don't deny the dangers of such warmth, but is there not also a danger to truth in a perpetual aloofness that never permits the historian to go down among the men and women of the past as one of themselves?

The ideal history, never yet written by any man, would so tell the tale of the Civil War that the reader would not only grasp with his mind but would warmly feel in his heart what Cavaliers and Roundheads respectively felt, and would also understand what they none of them understood. The ideal history requires indeed a more various combination of qualities of heart and of head, of science and of art than any other study undertaken by man. No wonder there has never yet been the perfect historian. His functions have to be put into commission. There have to be various kinds of history.

Before concluding, I will raise one more very important question. Should the historian feel a bias in favour of morality? And if so, should he express it by recording disapproval of treachery, oppression, murder, massacre, torture and aggressive war? The *locus classicus* on this subject is the famous controversy between Creighton and Acton. Acton thought that great harm was done to political and public morality by historians' glossing over the crimes they recorded. 'The strong man with the dagger,' he said, 'is followed by the weak man with the sponge.'

In principle I agree with Acton, but subject to certain qualifications. In the first place the expression to be given to such condemnation is a nice matter of artistic discretion. If the historian stops to exclaim over every wrong deed that he records, his history will become too like that of Gildas, a book of lamentations, a commination service, in short a bore. Moral disapproval should, I think, be part of the historian's bias, indeed it is a part of his duty, but its expression requires art and judgment to do it well.





I have already spoken of Sorel, as a master of grave, dignified and impartial condemnation, not often obtruded, but always implicit in the narrative, and on occasion defined in a few pregnant sentences.

The most odious form of moral bias is found in the history that loudly condemns the crimes and persecutions of one side, and conceals or defends those of the other. It is these histories that do the harm and make misunderstanding, hatred, fanaticism and war. The kind of history preferred by Creighton, which passes no moral judgments at all, is far less harmful. But Acton was for smiting all sides impartially, and he did it.

As I have said I agree with Acton in principle, but I make yet another distinction. I am more inclined than he was to make some allowance for the standards of an age and country in judging the culpability of individuals, who for the most part do as they see others doing. On the other hand, if the moral standards of an age were wrong, in theory as well as in practice, it is the business of the historian to point it out. For example, I think it would be absurd to condemn everyone who caused heretics to be burned in the Middle Ages, as severely as we should now condemn anyone who proposed such action to-day. Many who burnt heretics in the ordinary way of their business were otherwise excellent people. But it is quite another matter for history to approve or condone the gross moral error of all Christendom in approving and systematizing persecution. It was only the prevalence of the wicked theory that excuses the error of the mistaken men.

This infamous doctrine, after being accepted in Europe without demur for a thousand years, inevitably led to the Wars of Religion, the mutual persecutions of Catholic and Protestant, Alva and the Smithfield fires, Titus Oates and the English conduct in Ireland, Louis XIV's dragonnades and the resulting anti-clerical persecutions during the French and other later Revolutions. European feeling and thought had been poisoned at the source fifteen hundred years ago, when European religion became connected with the totalitarian doctrine of exterminating the unbeliever.

But, provided we condemn the error itself, we need not condemn equally everyone who was its dupe, any more than we should condone every atrocity committed in its name. But if it is a matter of putting the blame where it should chiefly rest, must we not look back to those Christians who, in the times of the Emperor



Theodosius, St. Augustine and Cyril of Alexandria, first promulgated and practised the duty of persecuting pagan and heretic? And must we not also look even further back to those Pagan Emperors who broke their own good rule of tolerance for all religions, to persecute the Christian sect? We are told that several of these persecuting Emperors were excellent men, and that they did all for the best in the supposed interest of the State. And the Christians who first persecuted did all for the best in the interest of the Church and in the desire to save souls from the sin of error. Yet I doubt if it was ever given to frail human beings to set going so long and terrible a chain of evil. The origins of evil lie far back in time and it is one of the functions of history to trace them out.

In Europe to-day fanaticism of race and of political creed is more dangerous than that of religion. Here, too, historians have their duty, in which they have often failed. If all historians, for example, had condemned aggressive wars, including those begun by their own kings and countrymen, we should not be where we are to-day. If French historians of the era of Thiers had criticized instead of glorifying Napoleon, there might have been no 1870. Later French histories, like those of Lanfrey and Sorel, have been very different. If German historians had condemned Frederic the Great's aggressions, they might have taught the teachable German folk the things pertaining to their peace. Bias in history, in the bad sense of the word, has been and still is a most potent instrument for evil. And so, with the reservations I have stated, I agree with Lord Acton that it is the duty of the historian to display a bias for the moral law, impartially applied.

The object of history is to know and understand the past on all its sides. History in this sense is the basis of modern education in the humanities, and the best school of citizenship. Only when it is false and lopsided can history be used amiss. True history can only do good. It cannot, like true physical science, be employed to do harm. True physical science, conducted for fifty years by the united efforts of a succession of great and right-minded men, produces the atom bomb. Nor was that the first evil that true physical science has brought to mankind, together indeed with many blessings. But true history can only do good. It is false history, distorted by propagandists, that makes fanaticism and war.





This thought may encourage us in our wholly beneficent enterprise of discovering, as far as possible, the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth about the past. It cannot be accomplished by any rule of thumb method; it requires more kinds of method than one, and various kinds of talents. It is sometimes helped, sometimes hindered, by bias, that is by personal opinion and feeling. Since history is our interpretation of human affairs in the past, it could not exist without bias. But with a wrong bias, it can be gravely distorted. God give us each a true bias.

It is a common opinion, which I myself share, that the historian's work is partly scientific, partly artistic—the proportions of science and art differing with different historians and different kinds of history books. But if you agree at all with the address which I am now bringing to a conclusion, you will perhaps think that a third qualification is necessary for the historian,—that of a philosopher, or wise man. John Buchan, who himself had rare gifts as an historical biographer, used to say that the historian must be scientist, artist and philosopher in one. Of course the truth of this depends on our definition of the terms. But I think it is true, if by philosopher we mean, not a person trained in logic or metaphysics, but one who can of things distinguish, who can see into the causes of events and rightly appraise the multitudinous values of the human scene. In other words the philosopher is one who has the right kind of bias. Each of us, when he forms any humblest judgment of an historical matter, does so not as a scientist, not as an artist, but as a philosopher, a wise man. An historian may be a great scientific researcher, or a fine artist in historical narrative, and yet lack the true judgment of values, have the wrong sort of bias, be in fact no philosopher. You may complain that such judgments are all matters of opinion. So they are. All history is a matter of opinion based on facts, of opinion guided and limited by facts that have been scientifically discovered. But the opinion, or bias, cannot itself be scientific. It must be philosophic.



## STRAY THOUGHTS ON HISTORY (1948)

HISTORY is read by different people for various reasons; it has many uses and values. To me, its chief but not its only value is poetic. Its poetic value depends on its being a true record of actual happenings in the past. For the mystery of time past continually enthralls me. Here, long before us, dwelt folk as real as we are to-day, now utterly vanished, as we in our turn shall vanish. History can miraculously restore them to our vision and understanding, can tell us a little of what were their hopes and fears, their words and works. The curtain of cloud that hides the scenes of the past is broken here and there, and we have magic glimpses into that lost world, which is as actual as our own, though placed on another step of the moving staircase of time. Forward we cannot see at all; backward we can see fitfully and in part. In that strange relation of past and present, poetry is always inherent, even in the most prosaic details, in Greek potsherds and Roman stones, in Manor rolls and Parliamentary reports, all hallowed in our imagination by the mere passage of the years.

And apart from this consecration by time which envelops all the past, so many of the things which history reveals belong by their own nature to the stuff of poetry, the passions and aspirations of men and even of nations, their dramatic failures and successes, the action of chance the disposer, the wonderful creativeness of man, the brief life of his best creations and hopes and systems, above all his indomitable spirit, always beaten down and rising again in some new, utterly unpredictable form. As a great poem, as an epic without beginning or end, I read History and never tire.

But I can find in it no 'philosophy of history.' Philosophy must be brought to history, it cannot be extracted from it. And I have no philosophy of my own to bring, beyond a love of things good and a hatred of things evil.

On the last page of his *Philosophy of History* Hegel thus sums up:—'The History of the World is nothing but the development





of the idea of Freedom,' of which he finds the best or at least the latest expression in the Protestant Monarchical States of Germany about 1830. Whatever the freedom of the individual was worth in the Germany of that period—and it was worth a good deal, I think—where is it now? Clearly it was not the one far-off divine event to which the whole Creation moved!

Acton contemplated writing a history of Freedom growing up through the balance of opposing forces. That idea might indeed have been made to cover much of the political and religious history of Europe from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries, but it would not have covered all the aspects of that period, for politics and religion are not everything; and it would not have gone far to explain the story of the century in which we live.

A larger lead is given by our own contemporary, Mr. Toynbee. With a scope of historical knowledge deeper than Hegel's and wider than Acton's, he treats the history of man as a series of episodes, of outbursts of activity first in one region then in another, and tries to detect the causes of such outbursts, the circumstances conducive to great movements of human energy and achievement. 'Challenges and responses,' he writes (I, p. 329), 'is the factor that counts above all others.'

Mr. Toynbee's *Study of History* is indeed very suggestive, but it does not pretend to be a complete explanation of the Past. For 'challenges' are so often made that meet no 'response'; circumstances so often make a call on a portion of mankind and the call is not answered. Sometimes indeed it is answered, and then as often as not in some utterly unexpected and novel manner. The life of a great man has often diverted the course of history. How are you to make a 'Philosophy of History' out of such a casual affair? The rise of Christianity was either the result of the special intervention of God, or else of a series of chances. In either case it was not the consequence of a law of human affairs to be explained by 'your philosophy.' It is easy to show how the ground was prepared for a world-wide religion, by the Roman Empire, the Roman roads, the Stoic philosophy and so forth. Such was the field, but whence the seed? The particular world-wide religion that actually came was the outcome of the lives of Jesus Christ and Paul of Tarsus. Their advent was not 'inevitable'—unless indeed it was miraculously provided. History can record the facts, but neither philosophy nor science can tell us why they occurred, nor



why Caesar, Mahomet and Shakespeare were born in their appropriate times.

'History repeats itself' and 'History never repeats itself' are about equally true. The question, in any given case, is which part of history is going to repeat itself. We never know enough about the infinitely complex circumstances of any past event to prophesy the future by analogy. The best informed and perhaps the wisest of our statesmen in 1792 was William Pitt. In reducing the armed forces of the Crown that February he argued that it would be safe to do so because of the state to which France had been brought by her Revolutionary troubles.

Unquestionably [he told the House of Commons], there never was a time in the history of this country, when from the situation of Europe, we might more reasonably expect fifteen years of peace than at the present moment.

That was one of the world's worst prophecies. Yet Pitt was no fool. I presume that his error arose from too confident a use of historical analogy. The fighting power of nations had often been weakened by internal faction. England, as Pitt knew, had been of little importance in Europe during the fierce political struggles of the reigns of Charles I and II. But then there had been the episode of Cromwell which Pitt's calculation overlooked. No one ever knows which part of the past is going to 'repeat itself.' It is not even true that a violent political and social revolution is always followed by a military despotism: George Washington was not a military despot.

What opportunities, what stimulants, what liberties for the development of a man's faculties and for his enjoyment of life, were available to folk in the various regions and epochs of the past? My curiosity on such points draws me to what is called social history. The question is not completely answered by political history, by recording the presence or absence of civil and religious freedom. It is true that in a totalitarian state there can be little chance for the development of a man's best individual self. But if we contrast, let us say, mediaeval England with present-day England, it is not easy to decide which gave most freedom and stimulus to the development of a man's power to be himself,





to exert his talents, to enjoy and enlarge his life. In the Middle Ages there was a great deal of civil liberty of a local and privileged kind for some individuals and corporations; but there was, legally at least, no religious liberty at all. People whose best thoughts and instincts led them to be heretics, were liable to be crushed by power; and the serf bound to the manor had to accept the village life to which he was born.

And yet, I suspect there were then certain kinds of opportunity and freedom that have diminished in our modern city life. I mean the liberties and opportunities that result from isolation. Absence of means of communication did more for human freedom than Magna Carta. The badness of the roads, the want of mechanical transport, diminished the tyrant's power; restricted the range of bureaucracy; exalted local differences into the main rule of life; limited even the supposedly ubiquitous powers of the Church; left every man free to look about him at the world God made, and say what he himself thought and felt, without first looking in the daily paper to find out what they were thinking and feeling in London. The shepherd watching his flocks on the Downs, alone by himself all day, may or may not have been a serf, but he enjoyed a particular kind of spiritual freedom unknown to the trade union workman, the bank clerk or the civil servant of to-day. Which was the freer on the whole, is a difficult question. The knight in the manor house, the baron in his castle, though restrained by royal laws and local customs, was so much the cock of his own walk that his individual idiosyncrasy in speech and character developed freely whether for good or for bad. 'The world is too much with us,' complained Wordsworth, and it is a vast deal more with us in our day than it was in his. But in the Dark and Middle Ages 'the world' was much less 'with' people, for the simple reason that a very thin population was widely scattered over a land of woods and marshes only half redeemed from nature. Men living amid such surroundings were not all of a pattern.

These conditions still held good to a large extent in Tudor and Stuart times. The liberty due to isolation was gradually diminishing, but was not lost until the Industrial Revolution. The intellectual stimulus of the Reformation and its controversies, the new learning, the new sense of nationhood, the discovery of the world beyond the ocean, impinging on a people still bred in



more or less of rural isolation, gave us the age of Shakespeare. The Forest of Arden lay at his door in boyhood and youth; it was cut down to feed the furnaces in Stuart times. That freedom of the forest was one sort of freedom, well known to the English of old, the freedom of Robin Hood and Maid Marian, of the Nutbrown Maid, of Rosalind and the man who made her.

Chaucer and Shakespeare both give an impression of their English contemporaries, as rough but for the most part good-natured men and women, each markedly individual, inconsequent in their moral judgments, with a great zest for life, not looking far ahead nor expecting much from the future, using their tongues with amazing force and freedom, moulding that wonderful new instrument, the English language, to express the humour and passion of each passing hour.

Only such occasional gleams of light reveal to us the texture of the minds of ordinary folk in England from the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Century. But there is one unpremeditated achievement of theirs which tells us much about them; I mean the creation of the English language, their living monument. In the Twelfth Century, different parts of the community spoke Anglo-Saxon, French and Latin respectively. Gradually, in the wear and tear of social intercourse, a new language was roughed out by the shaping and welding together of these three elements, until in Chaucer's time it was already said:—

Learned and lewid, old and young  
All understanden English tongue.

But if the new language had been made by the time of Chaucer, it was not perfected till the time of Shakespeare. The people who could fashion such a vehicle for their common, daily thoughts in castle and cottage, in field and market, must have possessed wit, humour and imagination, more I think than their descendants, whose minds, moulded by science, newspapers and films, have different merits and different defects. No people since the ancient Greeks had evolved so rich a vocabulary and phraseology as that which we find in Chaucer, the English Bible and Shakespeare.

Even in small things the words they coined indicate the quality of their minds. The obscure country folks who, in forgotten centuries, found the names for our birds and wild flowers, —buttercup, day's eye and marigold, ousel and thrush, robin red





breast, tom-tit, and a hundred more,—had minds simpler and in some ways sweeter than ours. In other ways indeed they were more coarse and more cruel than their descendants. Being a race of craftsmen, not mass-producers, their average artistic sense was greatly superior to ours; as their architecture and masonry, and all their 'utility' articles of common use incontestably prove.

But to think thus of our ancestors is not to regard the mediaeval period as an age of gold. War, pestilence and famine were perpetually destroying human happiness. Greed, cruelty and hypocrisy characterized the holders of power, ecclesiastical, monarchical and feudal. In certain respects the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries had a right to look back with pity and contempt on the Middle Ages, but the Twentieth Century with its world wars and totalitarian governments has lost even that right.

All through the Middle Ages and long afterwards, the fact of local isolation, due to badness of communications, protected many things individual and excellent, permitted to survive not on principle but by neglect. Moreover, on the positive side, mediaeval folk had one supreme merit; they rejoiced to create privileged autonomous societies to perform special functions: beginning with clerical corporations, they went on to craft-gilds, and self-governing cities; Parliaments and Inns of Court; Universities and Grammar Schools; all of these proved invaluable 'pockets' for the development of civilization, for they could perform their special functions freely in their own way.<sup>1</sup> And so the Middle Ages prepared the Renaissance and the Reformation, the Tudor, Stuart and Hanoverian epochs, because in mediaeval times there had been so many 'pockets' guarded, either by privilege or by neglect, from the surrounding tyranny and barbarism.

In a totalitarian State all 'pockets' are eliminated. In present-day England our still surviving love of political liberty protects 'pockets' to a certain extent, but the centralizing tendency of the age and modern means of locomotion destroy them apace. Without 'pockets' any civilization soon becomes stale. Those who desire uniformity in all things lose sight of this important principle. Where there is nothing with independent life outside the

<sup>1</sup> An exception that proves the rule is found in the violent suppression of the 'liberties' of Oxford University by Church and State in 1382 on account of Wycliffe's influence there, with the result of sterilizing intellectual life for most of the ensuing century.



State machine, civilization must lose all power of healthy growth. It is from minorities, small groups and individuals that fresh life has always come.

The mixture of good and evil in historical events is very difficult to disentangle. Later mediaeval England and therefore modern England were the outcome of the impact of the Norman Conquest on the Anglo-Saxons. Harold's Anglo-Saxons were in fact largely mixed with Scandinavians in the East and North, and with Britons in the West. The Norman Conquest made relatively little difference to the racial strains, but a great difference to the type of civilization. Instead of remaining a part of Norse or Scandinavian Europe, England became for some centuries a part of French and Latin Europe.

Was this change good or bad? We cannot say with certainty, because we cannot have it over again the other way and compare results. It is utterly impossible to say what power of self-development the Anglo-Saxons would have shown if they had not been first subjected to the Norman-French and then merged with their conquerors.

If William's invasion had failed as it so nearly did, could an independent England, affiliated to Scandinavia, have evolved a civilization as valuable and as powerful as that which was produced under the Plantagenet kings. My personal sympathies are with Harold, but that does not answer the question. I would not take the responsibility of asking the Fates to reverse the decision of Hastings. If Harold had beaten William, there would never have been the plays of Shakespeare, and I should never have been here to read them. It is difficult to vote for the non-existence of oneself and everyone and everything one knows. Things might indeed have been better if Harold had won, but they might so easily have been less good in the end.

I say 'in the end.' For a century after the Conquest the evils of the subjection of the island to cruel foreign taskmasters must have appeared to outweigh any benefits already accruing, though no doubt the deep foundations of English power and government were being laid. But what a price to pay for future security and civilization! The French-speaking adventurers whom William had enlisted by the promise of the lands of the Anglo-Saxons, everywhere replaced the easygoing, kindly native landlords. In





fact the English were treated as they themselves treated the Irish five hundred years later. The able Norman Kings exercised some restraint over the feudal hierarchy they had installed, but as late as the reign of Stephen (1135-54), these foreign devils were behaving with revolting cruelty to the inhabitants of the land. Indeed William himself had subdued the North by depopulating whole districts. And in the richest part of England, East Anglia, many Scandinavian freemen had been, by the time of the Domesday survey, reduced to the position of unfree villeinage.

Those who feel sure of the ultimate benefit of Norman-Angevin rule in developing the many-sided civilization of later mediaeval England may well be right. But they must all the more stand astonished at such mixture of evil with good. How can the two strands be separated? However we read it, this affair of the Norman Conquest is at once the most fascinating drama and the most bewildering enigma of all our long history.<sup>1</sup>

What, similarly, are we to say of another event, even greater than the Norman Conquest of England, the fall of the Roman Empire in the West? Bury, who knew the facts better than any other modern historian, said once that its fall was due to a chance concatenation of circumstances, and was not inevitable. In the East the Byzantine form of the Roman Empire survived for another millennium, in a fossilized sort of way. I doubt whether such fossilization would have been possible in the livelier West of Europe. At any rate it did not occur. As Macaulay put it, 'It cost Europe a thousand years of barbarism to escape the fate of China.'

There is no doubt the Dark Ages meant 'barbarism,' though it did not last for quite a thousand years. But in the course of centuries this vigorous barbarism, helped in the early stages by the discipline and tradition of Roman Christianity, gave birth to an entirely new civilization of astonishing vigour and variety, which lasted and grew into ever new shapes from the Twelfth Century until our own day. No such new civilization was the child of the Eastern Empire that survived.

It is impossible not to mourn with Gibbon over the destruction of the outward form and fabric of Ancient Rome and its

<sup>1</sup> The dramatic aspect has been finely brought out by Miss Hope Muntz in her *Golden Warrior*, the saga of Harold and William. (Chatto and Windus, 1948.)



appendages,—the hundreds of magnificent cities; the thousands of marble temples and palaces; the scores of thousands of gracious Graeco-Roman statues; the literature and philosophy; and the *Pax Romana* itself, which the world has in vain been seeking to replace ever since. But not only did the *Pax Romana* rest on a totalitarian system of politics, but the art and elegance, the towers and temples, the wealth and comfort, the leisure and luxury of it all rested on the slavery of white populations, as completely as the much inferior civilization of the Southern States of the American Union rested on the slavery of negroes. The conquests that created the Roman Empire, not excepting Caesar's conquest of Gaul, had been a series of colossal slave raids. The basic economy of Roman society in the first centuries after Christ was a slave basis. So firmly rooted was the system that even the Christian Church did not demand the manumission but only the kindlier treatment of slaves.

For my part I cannot wish such a society, for all its splendour, to have survived. Nor do I believe that the slaves would ever have got free except by the destruction of that society. At any rate that was how they did get free. The break-up of the *Pax Romana*, the invasion of Gaul and Italy by the barbarian hosts, gave the slaves the opportunity of emancipating themselves which they eagerly seized. War and anarchy opened the doors of the *ergastula*. The slave society 'agonized, dissolved and sank.' Upon its ruins 'mediaeval' society was gradually formed on the feudal basis. The craftsman of the town became a freeman, the tiller of the soil a freeman or a serf—no longer at any rate a slave. And political power, formerly concentrated in the Roman Emperor, was divided between ten thousand ever-shifting local centres, between innumerable individuals and corporations, clerical and lay. Feudal anarchy and priestcraft, local war and constant change, vigour and independence, everywhere the pulse of life! Not a pleasant time for quiet folk, and no culture to be had! Yet these Dark Ages proved a fine seedbed for a future civilization, such as no totalitarian system, ancient or modern, can supply, except at the price of its own disruption.

The difficulty of forming judgments about the past is that every historical approval or condemnation (say of the French Revolution) is based on the assumption that if things had gone differently





they would have been better—or worse. But this is just what we can never find out. And so, though we may each of us have his opinions, let us hold them with a modest diffidence.

The endlessly attractive game of speculating on the might-have-beens of history can never take us far with sense or safety. For if one thing had been different, everything would thenceforth have been different,—and in what way we cannot tell. Out of a million, or rather out of an infinite number of possible lines that human affairs might have taken, only one materialized under the impulsion of chance. And this arbitrary choice of Fate is constantly repeating itself every moment of Time.

As serious students of history, all we can do is to watch and to investigate how in fact one thing led to another in the course actually taken. This pursuit is rendered all the more fascinating and romantic because we know how very nearly it was all completely different. Except perhaps in terms of philosophy, no event was 'inevitable.' But, for good or for bad, it happened so, and wears for ever the inviolable sacredness of the accomplished fact. The statue has taken its shape and can never go back into the quarry.



## THE CALL AND CLAIMS OF NATURAL BEAUTY \*

SIR THOMAS BARLOW, LADY GODLEE, LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN: I had not the pleasure of knowing Sir Rickman Godlee, but I have heard much about him. And I have learnt much from reading his book *A Village on the Thames*, wherein he studies one after another the antiquities, the natural history and the beauty of the region that he made his home. He was an outstanding example of a type that has always specially attracted me—the specialist who has a wide outlook, broad knowledge and warm enthusiasms outside his own subject as well as in it; and more particularly a man whose mind has been trained in the splendid discipline of a physical science, but whose heart and eyes take also delight in the triumphs of art, the history of man, and the beauties of nature. Such a man is about the best thing that our modern civilization can produce.

Two things are characteristic of this age, and more particularly of this island. The conscious appreciation of natural beauty, and the rapidity with which natural beauty is being destroyed. No doubt it is partly because the destruction is so rapid that the appreciation is so loud. When someone you love is being executed before your eyes, it is natural to cry out.

Meantime, how much I loved him  
I find out now I've lost him.

The nearer the bone the sweeter the meat.

This passion for natural beauty that consumes so many of us to-day, found recent expression in the late poet laureate's *Testament of Beauty*. And in the sphere of practical effort we have National Trusts, Councils for the Preservation of Rural England, Town Plannings and other efforts of Mrs. Partington to sweep back the tide of machine-made ugliness a little while longer—in the desperate hope that the tide will some day turn, or consent at least to be channelled into

\* Being the Rickman Godlee Lecture for 1931.





limited streams and lakes, leaving to posterity some islands of the blest. Whether all this feeling and effort is to prove vain or not wholly vain, whether it be a rearguard action or a march to some modified victory, in any case many of us feel we must fight it to the end because of the faith and fire within us.

It is quite possible that our ancestors were as fond of natural beauty as we are, but they talked less often and less elaborately about it. Self-consciousness, the examination and proclamation of personal feelings, is a modern characteristic, in this as in other matters. Moreover, in our time, most people live buried deep in ugly towns, removed from every natural sight and sound save a strip of sky far overhead and the swish of rain on dirty streets. It is only on high days and holidays that we go out into the country, and therefore we more consciously relish

Our holiday of delight  
In the beams of the God of the Muse.

Even Milton, the cockney, had that experience in a modified form:

As one who long in populous city pent,  
Where houses thick and sewers annoy the air,  
Forth issuing on a summer's morn to breathe  
Among the pleasant villages and farms  
Adjoined, from each thing met conceives delight,  
The smell of grain, or tedded grass, or kine—

And if it was so with Milton, it is very much more so with us, for we are now, for the most part, city-dwellers—and in *such* cities, compared to which old London, for all its annoying sewers, was a paradise of beauty.

Our ancestors, most of whom lived all the year round in unadulterated rural surroundings, took less conscious note of natural beauty, because it was the common air they breathed, the element in which they lived and moved. It pervaded and formed their minds and personalities. The Cavaliers drew their charm from the fields and the Roundheads their strength from the earth. Cavalier and Roundhead are alike a vanished race, for they are not to be bred under the influences of modern city life, machinery and the cheap press of to-day. So, too, it was the influence of



the fields and woods of Elizabethan England that fostered the thousand-and-one lyric poets and musicians, those

Bards who died content on pleasant sward,  
Leaving great verse unto a little clan.

—the high-hearted company of English minstrels of that day, of whom Shakespeare was but the finest flower. Such poetry was as characteristic an expression of that country life, and its influences, as problem and detective novels are of the mechanical life of to-day. If we cannot save something at least of England's rural beauty, I do not believe there is any future for English poetry, or for the types of thought, feeling and aspiration to which poetry is akin.

The Elizabethan song-men had no doubt a certain consciousness of their own delight in natural beauty—

By shallow rivers to whose falls  
Melodious birds sing Madrigals.

They, too, could notice the sun

Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy.

But theirs was a simpler, more childlike delight in the obvious that was always around them. The modern attitude to natural beauty, more philosophic and more conscious, began, in this country at least, with Wordsworth, who gave it not only its first systematic, but its finest, expression. That is why he still appeals to so many of us to-day.

Going back to Chaucer's time we find the same influence of natural beauty as in the age of Shakespeare. I will give an example, representing conscious delight in the rural scene, simple and unphilosophical indeed, but awake and intense. It comes from that beautiful poem *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, once mistakenly attributed to Chaucer, which Wordsworth admired and modernised so well. But I quote the original version:

There sate I down among the fairé flours  
And saw the birds trip out of hir bours,  
There as they rested hem all the night  
They were so joyful of the dayés light  
They began of May for to done honours.





## NATURAL BEAUTY

CSL

They could that service all by rote,  
There was many a lovely note,  
Some song loud, as they had plained,  
And some in other-manner voice yfained,  
And some all out with the full throte.

And the river that I sate upon  
It made such a noise as it ron,  
Accordaunt with the birdes armony,  
Me thought it was the best melody  
That might ben yheard of any mon.

We, I fear, can never again expect to live under the continual and ubiquitous influence of natural and lovely sights and sounds. Through the conquests of science over nature, the human race has assigned to itself another destiny. Our present lot has its compensating advantages on the material side and in some respects on the intellectual side also. Doubtless the city life of to-day can in many respects be preferred to the rustic seclusion of old. I am not debating the general question of relative loss and gain, or trying to strike a balance. But to many of us city life can only be rendered tolerable on the condition of frequent holidays in the real country, and for that reason, if for no other, the real country must be preserved in sufficient quantity to satisfy the soul's thirst of the town dweller. That the unspoilt countryside is worth something also to its regular inhabitants, the English agriculturalists, is another fact, too frequently ignored.

The appeal of natural beauty is not a single, simple thing. The aspect of nature varies from place to place and day to day; and its appeal is made to the highly composite mind of modern man, which contains an infinity of aptitudes, tastes, desires, traditions, mysticisms, primeval inheritances and physical and physiological urgings, to all of which natural beauty makes, in a variety of ways, its strange and haunting appeal. To analyse that appeal is, therefore, not easy. Indeed, how can we analyse it at all without doing wrong to its delicate and fugitive spirit. 'We murder to dissect.' Yet, without pretending to make either a philosophical or a scientific analysis, I should like to pass a few remarks about the call of natural beauty, as I hear it.

It is clear, as I have said, that its appeal is made up of several,



perhaps of many, different elements, so inextricably blended in their action upon us that we can with difficulty distinguish them apart.

Obviously one appeal is the aesthetic, the mere beauty of form and colour apart from all association. Few would deny that general statement. Yet even here we are in the region of disputes, for on aesthetics there are many different views held in different times and places. A highly cultivated clergyman of the mid-Eighteenth Century, banished to the remote Rectory of Elsdon in Northumberland, wrote to his friends in the South that in the summer the moors around him were covered by the purple flower of a plant called ling, which made the landscape 'indescribably hideous.' Yet some of us like heather for its colour, as well as for its smell, and I should add for its 'feel'—or, in aesthetic parlance, its 'tactile value.'

Again, a modern artist of high name and accomplishment, once told a friend of mine, then his pupil at the Slade, that he should not paint bluebells in grass, because green and blue made a cacophony of colour. That may be true of those colours in a room—I am no judge—yet in early summer woods the combination of green and blue, even in its aesthetic aspect, seems to have charms for the human race. And the varieties of green in the early English summer makes our island, when the sun shines on it, at moments the loveliest spot on earth.

But the aesthetic appeal does not by any means make up the whole appeal of natural beauty, though it enters into and enhances all the other subtle and strange emotions that mankind feels in the presence of nature. One of these calls of nature is the sense of life and youth ever renewed, the eternal recurrence of spring—at once allegory and reality, the mighty mother for ever and for ever reborn. What joy when after a long winter one looks out into the garden and sees by some little sign that incorrigible old Mother Earth is 'at it again.' The crocus, pushing up its golden finger through the still half-frozen sod, aspiring out of darkness to light and life and warmth, fills us with a sense of joy, more primæval and powerful than the mere delight in its yellow colour. The thrush or blackbird's 'mellow fluting note,'

Sings me, out of winter's throat,  
The young time with the life ahead.





These instincts you may call religious or what you will; but they are older than any formal religion, older than *homo sapiens* himself. This joy in spring and early summer inspired prehistoric man to make those strange old rites and legends which Sir James Frazer has collected in the *Golden Bough*. Chaucer is full of it, from the first lines of the *Canterbury Tales* onwards. Such joy in the reviving year is natural to all the animals, to all the children of the Great Mother, to all the inhabitants of earth, of whom man is still one—even when he shuts himself up in cities and ceases to be a part of free, visible nature. And then, being cut off from these yearly sights and sounds that are natural to him by an infinitely long inheritance, he broods, pines, is miserable, mutinous, wants very often he knows not what, and goes off into follies, mad-nesses and meannesses innumerable.

But it is not only in the spring that we feel the love of growing things. It is a natural, brotherly love that we feel for trees, flowers, even for grass, nay even for rocks and water. We and they are all, literally, children of earth, for we have been evolved as science teaches us, out of earth by infinite generations. We are, literally as well as allegorically, brothers and sisters of a family, and when a beautiful aesthetic form has been given to our brother the tree, or our sister the water leaping over our brother the rock, we feel our kinship and delight in them and in their pulsing life, with a feeling of attachment stronger than the mere aesthetic pleasure, although that is certainly a great part of the sentiment. I do not mean that this family feeling of kinship with nature is often a conscious thought, but it is, I believe, at the back of our impulse towards nature, and there are moments when I for one am strongly conscious of it. George Meredith's poetry gave the most definite expression to this idea of our family relationship to earth and nature.

Man, as far back as we have evidence about his feelings, has always rejoiced in nature. But not all of mankind has rejoiced in the whole of nature. There has always been picking and choosing. The Arab has seen God in his deserts, where more casual visitors have only seen the Devil. The wild Highlanders have loved their rugged mountains from before the days of Ossian. But those mountains were, until recently, a horror to the lowlander and above all to the Englishman, though the Englishman rejoiced in



his own green and ordered landscape of field, hedgerow and copse. I should like to examine a little this change of our attitude with regard to mountain scenery; the change is almost identical in time and progress with the march of the industrial revolution, and has, I think a certain causal connection with it.

Let us first state the case for the old horror of mountains felt by civilized man until the latter part of the Eighteenth Century. I quote the *locus classicus*, Mr. Burt's letters, written to a friend, about 1725-27, from the Highlands of Scotland. This observant and highly intelligent gentleman was not a mere casual visitor to the Highlands; he lived among those wild hills for some years, as civil adviser of General Wade in the construction of his famous roads, the first thrust of civilization into that heart of old darkness. But Burt had not been born and bred among the mountains, and he had never met a civilized man who pretended to admire them. He had therefore no idea that admiration was their due. Here is what he wrote in his simplicity, very interesting to us to-day:

The summits of the highest (mountains) are mostly destitute of earth; and the huge naked rocks, being just above the heath, produce the disagreeable appearance of a scabbed head. Those ridges of the mountains that appear next to the ether, by their rugged irregular lines, the heath and black rocks, are rendered extremely harsh to the eye. But of all views, I think the most horrid, to look at the hills from east to west, or *vice versa*; for then the eye penetrates far among them, and sees more particularly their stupendous bulk, frightful irregularity, and horrid gloom, made yet more sombrous, by the shades and faint reflections they communicate one to another.

Observe that it was not from want of carefully observing the form and chiaroscuro of mountains that Burt failed to appreciate them.

In the next passage that I shall quote, Burt indicates one of the causes of the dislike felt by civilized man for mountains in those days, his lively fear of the fate that was apt to befall him amid their recesses. As Macaulay pointed out, the fear of having one's throat cut at the next turn of the track, was not conducive to picturesque raptures amid Highland scenery. The ruggedness of the mountains was associated in the mind of the lowland visitor with the lawless character of the inhabitants, the hard quality of board and lodging, the unbridged torrents and paths winding perilously among precipices. In this connection Burt writes:





In passing to the heart of the Highlands we proceed from bad to worse, which makes the *worst of all* the less surprising. But I have often heard it said by my countrymen, that they verily believed, if an inhabitant of the South of England were to be brought blindfold into some narrow rocky hollow, inclosed with these horrid prospects, and there to have his bandage taken off, he would be ready to die with fear, as thinking it impossible he should ever get out to return to his native country.

Burt was by no means insensible to natural beauty. But his idea of a 'poetical mountain' was Richmond Hill, rising amid the green, luxuriant landscape of South England. That was the hill, the hill for him:

Now what do you think [he continues] of a poetical mountain, smooth and easy of ascent, clothed with a verdant, flowery turf, where shepherds tend their flocks, sitting under the shade of tall poplars, etc? In short what do you think of Richmond Hill, where we have passed so many hours together delighted with the beautiful prospect? But after this description of these (Scottish) mountains, it is not unlikely you may ask, of what use can be such monstrous excrescencies?

But in the next paragraph the purposes of the Creator are explained, on the ground that the Highland mountains contain minerals, break the clouds, replenish the rivers, and serve for the breeding of cattle.

This passage, comparing Richmond Hill so favourably with the Highlands, is much the same as the sentiment of that old ballad writer of the Lady and her Demon Lover.

'O what are those hills; those pleasant hills  
That the sun shines sweetly on?'  
'O those are the hills of heaven,' he said,  
'Where you will never win.'

'And what is that mountain there,' she said,  
'So dreary with frost and snow?'  
'O that is the mountain of hell,' he said,  
'Where you and I must go.'

How very different are our feelings to-day. It is not that we love Richmond Hill less (except in so far as we have spoilt it by urbanization)—but that we have learnt to love the Highlands and the snowy Alps also. There are, I think, more reasons than one



for this change. In the first place there has been a change in aesthetic appreciation—our tastes are wider; we still love the woodland and hedgerow, but we also love the black rugged line of rocks on the skyline, in spite of, or on account of, its irregularity and darkness. The chiaroscuro of light and shade in a highland strath pleases instead of repelling our taste. This is, in part, a matter of growth or fashion in aesthetics; I state the fact, but I do not attempt to analyse it in so far as it is purely aesthetic.

But as regards associated ideas that have greatly contributed to this change of taste, I have something to say. No doubt Macaulay was right in attributing the dislike felt by our ancestors for mountain scenery in part to the danger, hardship and discomfort that then attended a tour in the Highlands. Yet that does not cover all the ground. Between 1915 and 1918 I knew a great many people whose daily occupation it was to be in considerable danger of being shot among the Alps, yet who did not for that reason fail to appreciate their beauty. And the modern mountaineer, though he likes his hardships moderated, deliberately seeks danger as an element in his relation to the mountains. The climber does his best not to be killed, but the danger such as it is is his own choice and creation.

The Spartan psychology of the modern mountaineer has been stated by Meredith in the 53rd chapter of *Harry Richmond*.

Carry your fever to the Alps, you of minds diseased: not to sit down in sight of them ruminating, for bodily ease and comfort will trick the soul, and set you measuring our lean humanity against yonder sublime and infinite; but mount, rack the limbs, wrestle it out among the peaks; taste danger, sweat, earn rest: learn to discover ungrudgingly that haggard fatigue is the fair vision you have run to earth, and that rest is your uttermost reward. Would you know what it is to hope again and have all your hopes in hand?—hang upon the crags at a gradient that makes your next step a debate between the thing you are and the thing you may become. There the merry little hopes grow for the climber like flowers and food, immediate, prompt to prove their uses, sufficient if just within the grasp, as mortal hopes should be. How the old lax life closes in about you there! You are the man of your faculties nothing more. Why should a man pretend to be more? We ask it wonderingly when we are healthy. Poetic rhapsodists in the vales below may tell you of the joy and grandeur of the upper regions, they cannot pluck you the medical herb. He gets that for himself who wanders the marshy ledge at nightfall to behold the distant Senn-





hüttchen twinkle, who leaps the green-eyed crevasses, and in the solitude of an emerald alp stretches a salt hand to the mountain kine.'

We must, therefore, I think, say that although the march of civilization, security and comfort into the Alps and Scottish Highlands has been a necessary condition of their wide popularity, it is not in itself an explanation of the modern love of mountains. That we must seek elsewhere.

I believe that the modern aesthetic taste for mountain form, is connected with a moral and intellectual change, that differentiates modern civilized man from civilized man in all previous ages. I think that he now feels the desire and need for the wildness and greatness of untamed, aboriginal nature, which his predecessors did not feel. One cause of this change is the victory that civilized man has now attained over nature through science, machinery and organization, a victory so complete that he is denaturalizing the lowland landscape. He is therefore constrained to seek nature in her still unconquered citadels, the mountains.

A new form of human desire has, under these conditions, arisen to get away from the vulgarity of man's triumph over nature, back to the old beginnings, to nature as God made her, as first she rose from the deep of time. Another use has been found for Mr. Burt's horrid mountains, in a way that he did not foresee; the providence and foresight of the Creator has been further justified in the matter of their creation.

This taste for mountain scenery, this love of nature in its most natural and unadulterated form, has grown *pari passu* with the Industrial Revolution. James Watt and George Stephenson were contemporaries of Rousseau and Wordsworth, and the two movements have gone on side by side ever since, each progressing with equal rapidity.

The first sign of the change in taste was the movement for landscape gardening. In the mid Eighteenth Century, Capability Brown persuaded the noblemen and gentlemen of England to apply the hand of taste to their estates, and to bring the grass and trees of their parks up to the walls of their country seats, abolishing the formal Dutch and Versailles gardens in which their grandfathers had rejoiced. He was appealing to a new-born desire for wildness. That desire to go back from the artificial to the natural in landscape gardening, resulted from the fact that nature had



been by that time sufficiently tamed in England and was even getting a little too tame. The enclosures were turning more and more of England into a chess-board—a very pretty green chess-board certainly, but less irregular and less accidental than the heaths, forests, commons and small, irregularly shaped fields that were vanishing before the march of progress. In ancient and mediaeval times, when man was still battling with forest, fen and heath, the lords of creation desired to retire occasionally from the wild aspect which was then Nature's normal appearance, and take refuge in formal gardens made for their delight. The grandees of the Roman Empire had loved their gardens deep with ordered shade and shine. So too the mediaeval pleasure had been trim and rectangular, as you can see in MSS. illuminations, a plot of order in the surrounding wild. And such was the ideal of a garden and pleasure until in the middle of the Eighteenth Century the ordinary landscape had become so tame that men began to desire a little more wildness, such wildness at least as an English parkland affords. Hence Capability Brown and his works.

We, in our turn, have to complain of worse outrages on nature than the enclosure of square fields by lovely hedgerows. The destruction of lowland beauty is in our day so rapid that we fly to the highlands, or to the Alps themselves, where we address nature in Matthew Arnold's words:

Blow ye winds! lift me with you!  
I come to the wild.  
Fold closely, O Nature!  
Thine arms round thy child.

Ah! calm me, restore me;  
And dry up my tears  
On thy high mountain-platforms  
Where morn first appears;

Where the white mists, for ever,  
Are spread and upfur'd,—  
In the stir of the forces  
Whence issued the world.

You will note in those lines of Matthew Arnold a personifying of Nature in the Alps, as a friend and comforter to the individual man.





## NATURAL BEAUTY

To Thee only God granted  
A heart ever new—  
To all always open,  
To all always true.

Nature, no doubt, can fortify and console even in southern woodlands and on smooth hillsides. But to many of us the moorland and the mountain seem to have more rugged power and faithfulness, with which in solitude we can converse and draw thence strength and comfort. And the mountain above all seems to have personality, which says to us as we gaze on it at evening from the valley-head below—'I know, I understand. Such is the lot of man. I have watched him through the ages. But there is a secret behind. It will always be a secret.' That at least is what the mountains say to me when they talk. To others they may say something different. But to many they have something important to say, whatever it may be. If this personality of mountains is a fallacy, it is none the less a potent and beneficent emotion. It is one of the ways by which men see God. It is one of the sacraments prepared for man, or discovered by man.

This sense of personality in the mountain has been nobly rendered by Browning in his *Saul*:

Have ye seen when Spring's arrowing summons goes right to the aim,  
And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that held (he alone,  
While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a broad bust of stone  
A year's snow bound about for a breastplate—leaves grasp of the sheet?  
Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously down to his feet,  
And there fronts you, stark, black, but alive yet, your mountain of old,  
With his rents, the successive bequeathings of ages untold—  
Yes, each harm got in fighting your battles, each furrow and scar  
Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest—all hail, there they are!  
—Now again to be softened with verdure, again hold the nest  
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the green on his crest  
For their food in the ardours of summer.

And in our own day Miss Margaret Cropper, in her poem *The Broken Hearthstone* and others, has expressed the same idea of the personality of a mountain in a different but no less marvellous manner.

But while we may note, account for and approve this recent tendency of super-civilized man to seek out nature in her more



wild and uncompromising forms, we do not any the less love the ordered lowland landscape of hedgerow and covert, meadow and cornland, with farm and village nestling into the scene as an essential part of its purely aesthetic beauty, and of its association and intimate appeal. Here, in the South-English landscape, wherever it has not yet been spoiled, we have what we may call the marriage of man's work and nature's in perfect harmony. It reached its culminating point of perfection in the reign of George III, with the enclosures, the great plantations of woodland estates and parks round the country seats, and the building in great profusion of substantial but beautiful farms, farmbuildings and cottages harmonious with the landscape. I think the island as Wordsworth and Keats knew it must have been even more beautiful than in its wilder state in olden times. But after that, with extraordinary rapidity, a change came over the spirit of the scene. In the Nineteenth Century the machine age, commonly called the Industrial Revolution, destroyed our native school of architecture, debauched the taste for a while even of the most cultivated persons, and substituted for the beautiful materials of which old buildings and fences were constructed, materials which were ugly in proportion as they were cheap, in proportion therefore as they were imposed by economic necessity on the improver. By the end of the Nineteenth Century it was already true that almost all that was old was beautiful, almost all that was new was either ugly in itself, or in shrieking disharmony with the natural beauty amid which it was set.

In the Twentieth Century, so far as it has yet gone, two things have happened. The taste of the cultivated classes and of a very large proportion of all classes has greatly improved in architecture, and the desire to preserve natural beauty has become widely spread. But this change has not yet had more than a slight influence on the action of the State, which continues activities increasingly inimical to natural beauty. And, moreover, the advent of the motor car, though it enables the dweller in our unhappy cities to enjoy relief in the country more easily, is plastering the countryside with horrors of bungalows, advertisements and ugly houses in the wrong places at a pace of which the Victorians might perhaps have been proud, but which they were fortunately unable to rival for lack of the internal combustion engine. The Victorians at least acted up to their own ideals like the moral, serious





folk they were. They did the best they knew, even though in our eyes much of that best was bad. But we sin against our own light. We know that we are disfiguring England and murdering beauty, yet we continue to do so.

Video meliora proboque,  
Deteriora sequor.

Or, to speak more precisely, those of us who care for preservation of natural beauty are still outnumbered and overborne by those who, though not all of them wholly indifferent to our cause, hold other considerations to be of greater importance.

As the centuries pass the mystery of the Universe deepens. The thoughts of civilized man accumulate like snowflakes on the summit of Everest, or the leaves of many years in winter woods, burying one past system after another, one fashion after another in religion, science, poetry and art. Knowing that so much lies buried beneath, which but now was so hot and certain, it becomes ever more difficult to trust so implicitly as of old whatever still for the moment lies on the surface of human thought, the still surviving dogma, or the latest fashion in opinion. At least it becomes difficult to trust either to dogma or to thought alone. Man looks round for some other encouragement, some other source of spiritual emotion that will not be either a dogma or a fashion, something

That will be for ever,  
That was from of old.

And then he sees the sunset, or the mountains, the flowing river, the grass and trees and birds on its banks. In the reality of these he cannot fail to believe, and in these he finds, at moments, the comfort that his heart seeks. By the side of religion, by the side of science, by the side of poetry and art, stands Natural Beauty, not as a rival to these, but as the common inspirer and nourisher of them all, and with a secret of her own beside.

The appeal of natural beauty is more commonly or at least more consciously felt to-day than ever before, just because it is no new argument, no new dogma, no doctrine, no change of fashion, but something far older yet far more fresh, fresh as when the shepherd on the plains of Shinar first noted the stern beauty



of the patient stars. Through the loveliness of nature, through the touch of sun or rain, or the sight of the shining restlessness of the sea, we feel

Unworded things and old to our pained heart appeal.

This flag of beauty, hung out by the mysterious Universe, to claim the worship of the heart of man, what is it, and what does its signal mean to us? There is no clear interpretation. But that does not lessen its value. Like the Universe, like life, natural beauty also is a mystery. But whatever it may be, whether casual in its origin as some hold who love it well, or whether as others hold such splendour can be nothing less than the purposeful message of God—whatever its interpretation may be, natural beauty is the ultimate spiritual appeal of the Universe, of nature, or of the God of nature, to their nursling man. It and it alone makes a common appeal to the sectaries of all our religious and scientific creeds, to the lovers of all our different schools of poetry and art, ancient and modern, and to many more beside these. It is the highest common denominator in the spiritual life of to-day.

Yet now that it is most consciously valued, it is being most rapidly destroyed upon this planet, and above all in this island. In old days it needed no conservation. Man was camped in the midst of it and could not get outside it, still less destroy it. Indeed, until the end of the eighteenth century the works of man only added to the beauty of nature. But science and machinery have now armed him with weapons that will be his own making or undoing, as he chooses to use them; at present he is destroying natural beauty apace in the ordinary course of business and economy. Therefore, unless he now will be at pains to make rules for the preservation of natural beauty, unless he consciously protects it at the partial expense of some of his other greedy activities, he will cut off his own spiritual supplies, and leave his descendants a helpless prey forever to the base materialism of mean and vulgar sights.





## SOCIAL LIFE IN ROMAN BRITAIN\*

ROMAN Britain is the prelude to the drama of English history, of which the first scene must be England after the Saxon conquest. The Romans vanished, leaving their roads, their ruins, and here and there the potent Christian seed. But they did not found England as Caesar founded France. In our history, Roman cities and Villas are an alien interlude; all the more is imagination strangely stirred when we come on the bases of Mediterranean colonnades scattered on Northumbrian moors, and mosaic pavements buried deep in Cotswold woods. They give a heightened human significance to all that has since followed in this island of magic changes. In these latter days, more than ever, they appeal to us, taught as we now are by science to see our own age as a pin-point in the procession of infinite ages, and ourselves as builders by no means for eternity. Folk love to visit the moorland fort of Housesteads on the Roman Wall, merely to see the relics of its masonry, weathered by wind and rain, standing sentinel like Ozymandias over the waste, record of three centuries of rule and fifteen centuries of ruin. Roman stones in England feelingly persuade us what we are:

Today the Roman and his trouble  
Are ashes under Uricon.

From the close of the First Century A.D., when during the Governorship of Agricola, the Roman conquest of Britain reached its furthest limit, till the time of the withdrawal of the Legions more than three hundred years later, the social life of the Province was divided geographically into two parts: the Civil Zone, inhabited by a partially Romanized society, dwelling among the gently undulating and fertile lands of the Midlands, the South and the East; and the Military Zone of the more barren and mountainous North and West. In the Civil Zone stood the towns and the Villas that carried Roman civilization into the country-

\* Most of this Essay was given in the B.B.C. Third Programme.



side; it was a region of peace and safety, with few armed men and few fortified dwellings. In the Military Zone, on the other hand, the army of occupation patrolled wild Wales and the Pennine moorlands, and guarded the great Wall that stretched across the narrow neck of the island from Solway to the mouth of Tyne. As they marched and counter-marched from fort to fort, along the roads they themselves had made, the Legions were eyed from the fells above by sparse populations of tribesmen, who sometimes came down to traffic shyly outside the forts, and on occasions of rare opportunity broke in to kill and burn.

This distinction between the Civil and the Military Zones in Roman Britain answered to the primary geographic difference between South-East and North-West, which since earliest ages had dictated the place and the character of human settlement, and the speed and extent of each successive conquest of the island. For thousands of years before the coming of the Romans, race after race had poured in from Northern Europe by the easy gateways of the South-East with its flat coasts and navigable rivers. And after every fresh invasion the older races had maintained their independence, or at least their old ways of life, in the more barren and less accessible mountains of North and West. And so it was once more, when the Romans came.

But although the South-East could show a greater number of inhabitants and a higher stage of civilization, even in that favoured half of the Province of Britain not very much was done under the rule of the Caesars to reclaim new lands. The heavy clay soils with their forests of oak and impenetrable tangle of underwood, and the marshy bottoms of the valleys still prevented human settlement in regions that were afterwards the richest cornlands in England. As in the former days of Iberian and Celtic Kings, cultivation was still confined to downs free of forest or to regions where the woodland was thin and could be easily cleared, and to ground that was not water-logged and yet had springs near the surface. Such lands are called by archaeologists 'regions of primary settlement,' and there the Romano-Britons were still content to be settled. Thus the open plateau of Salisbury Plain was still as closely cultivated and as thickly inhabited as in earlier ages; but the valleys of the little rivers that intersect it, where the modern villages are found to-day, were still marshy jungles abandoned to the otter and the heron.





Taking the island as a whole, the map of human occupation was not very different in Roman times from the map of the Iron Age. Like the 'Ancient Britons' before them, the Romano-Britons still clung to the Chalk Downs and Wolds or to the oolite limestone of the Cotswolds and Lincoln. They still shunned wet valley bottoms like those of Trent and Severn, and avoided the lower Thames, save only the gravel areas, such as served to support the abutments of London Bridge and the foundations of London town. Other towns, like Cirencester, were similarly placed on patches of gravel by river sides. But where nature offered serious obstacles, the Romano-Britons declined the combat. They would not drain the rich valleys, nor would they go out with the axe against the dense forests that covered most of East Anglia and the Midlands. That great campaign against the heart of darkness was left to the Saxon and Scandinavian pioneers of a later period; it was they who won, from woodland and marsh, regions in general more fertile than those cultivated under Roman rule.<sup>1</sup>

But if the denser forests set a limit to Roman agriculture, nothing could turn aside the Roman road. The Imperial highways constructed by those indefatigable and skilled engineers, the soldiery of Rome, were the chief weapon of her military and political rule; and they were essential to the plantation of the cities which formed the chief contribution of the conquerors to the economic and social life of the barbarian island.

The straight Roman road was not intended, like the 'rolling English road' of mediaeval times, to join village to village, or to help the local needs of agriculture. In the Civil Zone the road was meant to run from city to city, in the Military Zone from fort to fort. The Villas and country estates of the Romanized Britons, and the fields and huts of the native villagers did not lie along the roads of the Empire, which marched through solitude towards distant towns.

<sup>1</sup> Of course some new lands were won in the Roman era, by the plantation or extension of Villas, but these advances were made on the lighter soils in the less dense woodlands. There was nothing comparable in extent or character to the clearing of the dense oak forests effected between the departure of the Romans and the Norman conquest.

Some gravel terraces in the middle section of the Thames Valley, between Oxford and Goring were occupied during the Roman era by British villages, but Oxford itself did not yet exist. The level of parts of the Cambridgeshire fen district was higher in that epoch than in later centuries, and there was therefore human habitation on some islands that afterwards sank into the fen.



Indeed the Roman road may be said to have dropped new towns as it marched over the land, especially where it crossed navigable rivers. One of the roads founded Cambridge, by throwing a bridge over the Cam that required a fort to guard it. Thence our road passed on another fifteen miles, to found Godmanchester where it crossed the Ouse.

The roads made and maintained the new towns, but did relatively little for the lands between, and that was one reason why the towns failed to make good. The Romano-British city served a countryside so thickly wooded and so thinly inhabited that no market-town could flourish in such surroundings.

The Imperial roads made by the Legions were twenty or more feet wide, either metalled with gravel or paved with stone, and often carried on an embankment across marshy ground. Of course there were many local roads of less solidity and pretension. There were *primaeval* trackways, still known to the modern pedestrian, on the chalk downs and oolite plateaux where Roman Villas and British villages clustered thickest,—the Icknield Way, the Ridgeway, Peddar's Way, Mare Way, Harroway, White Way. By the side of such green roads, the oldest in Britain, were reared the burial-mounds of ancient chiefs. The Romans made use of these trackways without much alteration, merely straightening them out in places and metalling them where the surface was bad.

Combined into one society by the system of old and new roads, primitive and Romanized Briton dwelt beneath the shadow of that august Empire, international in its large, hard heart, tolerant of all save rebellion; for Rome, while she erected her own monumental civilization in cities, forts, Villas, inscriptions and statues up and down the conquered land, spared to the subject his own gods, his own tribes, his chieftains and his ways of life, hoping merely that the barbarian would learn to imitate the civilized model so impressively set up before his eyes.<sup>1</sup>

The old tribal system and its loyalties were dovetailed in with the new Imperial administration. The first great effort of Roman policy in Britain was to attract the chiefs and other leading natives

<sup>1</sup> As Haverfield has written (*Romanization of Roman Britain*) 'The Empire did not grow into a nation'; he compares it to the old Austro-Hungarian empire, 'rather than France or Germany, but it gained,—what Austria missed—a unity of sentiment and culture which served some of the purposes of national feeling.'





to the towns, as the appointed centres of tribal government. In these new cities, British residents and visitors were subjected to Roman influence in its most intense form, and took it back with them to the countryside. In Britain the Roman cities did not grow; they were made. Thus Dorchester, with its rectangular streets, its public edifices and its walls of stone, was built three miles from the old tribal capital, the vast earthwork fortress of Maiden Castle on its flat hill-top, which the Romans had stormed at a rush; the inhabitants were moved thence to Dorchester in the plain below, leaving the hut circles on the old acropolis abandoned to the ghosts and crows.

The new cities were built sometimes on the sites of the British towns they replaced, oftener on new ground, always on one or more of the new roads. They were the centres of the tribal administration, which was carried on by Romanized Britons in basilicas and pillared forums of the Mediterranean type. The straight streets were laid out on the chessboard pattern, but many of the sites for houses remained vacant, and the town walls enclosed much space that was never built up. In Silchester, where a hundred acres had been enclosed, there were no more than eighty houses and perhaps two thousand inhabitants; but, since it was a tribal capital, it was furnished with a basilica sixty feet high and two hundred and forty feet long. These cities had public baths and amphitheatres and columned temples as in Italy or the South of France. They were, in fact, equipped as cities; but in trade and population they remained to the end the merest country towns, ranging from two thousand to five thousand inhabitants,—except only London.

These little towns were planted and watered by the Government in the hope that they would grow, and soon be able to carry the weight of all this municipal building and expense. But their economic development hung fire, and the rural hinterland, itself but thinly inhabited, continued to pay in taxes for the exotic urban display. The cities remained parasitic on the countryside. Except London with its cosmopolitan port, none of them were great makers of wealth, and their public works were out of all proportion to their economic life. It is not therefore surprising that in the middle of the Third Century the cities began to decay, and Rome's policy with regard to them was changed. As on the continent at the same period, the Imperial government



began to neglect and oppress the towns that had formerly been its favourites. Henceforth the rural Villa with its farm life was regarded as a better means than the city of Romanizing a passively recalcitrant countryside.

Thus at Wroxeter (Uricon) near the Welsh border, a great city had been designed, into which the inhabitants of the British fort on the neighbouring Wrekin height had been moved down. As many as 170 acres were enclosed by Wroxeter town walls. Yet we find that the public baths, begun regardless of expense, were left unfinished; and the forum, after it was burnt down in A.D. 300, was never rebuilt during the last century of Roman rule. Nor was this merely the result of proximity to the wild Welsh, for other towns in the heart of the most civilized region offered similar proofs of arrested building schemes and decay of social life. At Verulam, near the modern St. Albans, already by A.D. 275 the theatre was abandoned to be used as a quarry, and the town walls were in ruins.

It is clear then that even the most Romanized of the Britons never took kindly to town life, and never regarded the cities erected in their midst with that intimate affection and piety that the ancient Greek and Italian felt for his own town. Hellene, Etruscan and Latin held city life to be the chief good of man, which alone raised him to the plane of civilized being. But the attempt to transplant this essentially Mediterranean idea across the Alps, partly successful in Gaul, failed in Britain. The inhabitants of our island refused to learn it from the Romans and never afterwards learnt it from anyone else. Even during the great industrial and commercial expansion after the Tudors, the English remained countrymen at heart, their affections fixed on their fields and farms, their cottages and country houses, their woods and riversides,—until the mechanical revolution of the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries submerged the individuality of towns in a sprawl of 'urban development,' that bids fair to merge the whole island in a single featureless suburban society.

At no moment, therefore, has Britain been a civilization of cities, in the same sense as Italy. The Roman effort failed to erect in our midst cities like Perugia and the other hundred walled towns which defeated Hannibal, and then, when the barbarians conquered Italy at last, carried on a continuous civilization across the chasm of the 'Dark Ages.' In Britain the men of the





'Dark Ages' were destined to sweep down every frail barrier erected by Rome.

But there was one great exception to the economic failure of the Roman cities in Britain. London had not, like the other towns, been founded as an administrative or as a military centre. Its site had been chosen for commercial reasons, and chosen well. The Romans deliberately concentrated their Imperial road system on the two ends of the bridge they made over the Thames, at the point where the maritime commerce of Northern Europe could penetrate by water farthest into the heart of the land. They reaped the reward of their prescience, and we are reaping it still. The town sprang into sudden greatness in the early years of the Occupation, and, only when Rome herself was falling, fell to rise again. Londinium was a noble city of stone and brick, three times the size of any other town in the island both in area and population, with perhaps fifteen thousand inhabitants of many different races. Its long river-front was alive with merchant ships from overseas and boats from up the river. It stood where mediaeval London afterwards rose between the Tower and Ludgate Hill, but its streets were laid out on a more rectangular plan.

Londinium did not, like other Romano-British towns, depend on an agricultural district in its immediate vicinity, but solely on its long-range commerce by land and sea. The area of the future 'Middlesex' was, then and long afterwards, an unreclaimed forest filled with beasts of the chase, through which the great new roads carried the land commerce of London to more distant regions; while the tidal river floated the largest ships of the Europe of that day up to the wharves below the bridge.

London, therefore, was not a typical city of Roman Britain. To study the type, let us rather imagine ourselves visitors to one of the tribal capitals, such as Silchester or Verulam, about the year A.D. 200, when the transition from native British town to Romano-British city is complete, but before the Third Century decay of urban life has set in; while the citizens are still a privileged folk, playing at being Romans, with luxuries paid for by their less civilized neighbours of the rural world outside.

Emerging from the forest, we follow the road across fields cultivated by the townsfolk, till we reach the city wall, and pass under a lofty gateway protected on each side by a rounded tower,



which our guide, a travelled merchant, compares to one of the Portae of Rome. Inside, we have first to cross an open space, laid out for streets, but still occupied by market gardens. Beyond, we come to the houses. They are not ranged in contiguous rows of dwellings as in a city street, but are dotted about like cottages in a hamlet, each in its own grounds. Some have the thin Roman bricks as part of their structure, but most have walls of clay and timber based on stone foundations. The roofs are gabled, and covered with slates or with red tiles of the Italian pattern.

The less pretentious of these houses are workshops of craftsmen, presenting to the street counters across which the goods are sold. Some of these craftsmen-shopkeepers have each a few slaves. Here and there is an establishment large enough to be called a small factory. In these workshops men and women carry on industries for the countryside as dyers, ironworkers or makers of rough earthenware, besides supplying the building and other needs of the town. Some, possibly most, of the inhabitants are also tillers of the soil.

The better houses belong to the officials, Romanized Britons for the most part, with here and there a Gaul, or an Italian eating his heart out in exile bitter as Ovid's. The house-plan is usually of a Gallic rather than a Mediterranean model, as befits a colder climate: the internal corridor is more common than the open portico. But inside the best chambers even a Roman Senator might feel at home. Some of the floors are mosaic, others tessellated. The plastered walls are bright with frescoes on a red ground, representing the myths of Greece and Rome. There are statues, statuettes and bas-reliefs in stone and bronze, after the fashion of Italian art. Round the dining-table are ranged couches along which the guests recline to eat. The jars of the best wine; the service of red Samian ware, smooth to the touch; the finely wrought silver plate like the treasure recently discovered in Mildenhall, now in the British Museum—such luxuries have all come from overseas through the port of London. But the bread, meat, game and fish are local, and the oysters are native British, famed among the epicures of Rome herself. The better houses are warmed by underground hypocausts, from which the hot air is conducted by pipes to the dwelling-rooms above.<sup>1</sup> The water and

<sup>1</sup> In rooms of a lower order there were smoky hearths and braziers, for chimneys and fire-places in the wall were unknown in Roman Britain.





drainage systems would stand the test of modern inspection. The thick window-glass keeps out the weather and lets in the light, but is too opaque to allow much view of objects outside.

These miniature palaces are run by slaves; some of them are educated men and women, familiar members of the household; the rest are slaves indeed. Their master, proud to be in the right Roman fashion, combines the parts of British chief and Imperial magistrate. Clad in the official garb of Rome, he carries on administration and justice in the columned halls of the public basilica, whither the men of his tribe come in from the country round. Meanwhile, in the no less classic forum, the craftsmen and merchants of the town chaffer with rustics who have come to market bringing goods in panniers, or in four-wheeled waggons each drawn by a yoke of oxen. The illiterate farmers use some native dialect. But the townees even of the working class talk a debased Latin as well, and many of them can read and write.<sup>1</sup>

All free citizens of the town can spend their leisure lounging and gossiping in 'the Baths,' which resemble a 'Turkish bath' of to-day. As these public baths are provided gratis by the municipality, baths are not needed in the private houses.

The bath was to the Roman of the Empire what Club life was to the Victorian Englishman. One of the first things done by the conquerors of Britain was to develop the hot springs of *Aquae Solis* (the modern Bath) as a spa for the invalids and a centre for the fashionable loungers of the whole Province. Columned porticoes were erected round the sacred waters, and Bath in the Third Century was very much what it became once more in the days of Beau Nash and Jane Austen. But every several city, almost every Villa, must have its own bath for daily enjoyment; and so there is a public bath in the tribal capital we are visiting.

Equally free to the citizen of our town are the joys of the amphitheatre, where cock-fighting, bull and bear baiting, professional dancing, acrobatics and heaven knows what besides are to be seen on feasts and holidays; gladiatorial shows are too expensive for so small a place. There is no 'legitimate drama'; for, in all Britain, only Verulam can boast a 'theatre' in which a play could be acted. Indeed the culture of Greece and Rome is a thin crop on British

<sup>1</sup> 'Graffiti' scribbled up by town workmen on Romano-British remains have been found by archaeologists. They are in Latin, not in any native tongue. Probably little Latin was talked in the native villages.



soil, so far from its bright homelands,—even though Celtic art and song have withered in the presence of ‘fashions from proud Italy.’ Yes, it is hard to be a Roman so far from Rome. It is chilly work lounging in the courts and porticoes, but it has to be done, for it is the Roman thing to do.

There are temples in the town of many various cults, at whose altars priests sacrifice cattle, sheep and pigs, or burn packets of incense. And every house, rich or poor, has its domestic shrine. The official cult is Jupiter and the Emperors, but they are too grand and cold for personal needs and common occasions. Hercules and Mercury are more popular, Mercury not least, because he, like his worshipper, is a bit of a rogue at times. Then there are fancy religions, and mysteries, like those of Isis and Mithras, beginning to drift through from the East by way of Italy; they, too, are a Roman fashion. But there are, besides, British and Celtic deities of all sorts, some local to the neighbourhood, some like the Three Mothers common to many tribes of Northern Europe. Most of these native gods and goddesses are already half Romanized in name, and are reproduced for household use in rude statuettes and bas-reliefs, after the anthropomorphic fashion of Roman sculpture, alien to the old traditions of Celtic art and worship. Now that political Druidism has been stamped out, Rome smiles on all deities alike, save only on that jealous God of the Jews and his mysterious offspring Christ, of whom even here in Britain we are beginning to hear strange and contradictory tales.<sup>1</sup>

Our town, in fact, like Britain at large, contains numberless gods and goddesses, to suit all races and all tastes; there is a deity proper to almost every function of life, birth and death, war and hunting, love, theft and commerce. Soothsaying and black and white magic are flourishing trades. The little city, like St. Paul’s,

<sup>1</sup> Christianity might or might not have reached the humbler quarters of any British town by the time of our imaginary visit in A.D. 200. But in the Fourth Century there was a well-ordered Christian Church in Britain, with Bishops and heresies of its own, sending representatives to Councils in Gaul. The only Christian building of Roman Britain as yet identified by archaeologists is the little, apsed chapel in Silchester. But there must in fact have been many other Christian shrines in the later years of Roman rule, although even after the conversion of the Emperor Constantine, the new faith remained the religion of a minority in distant Britain. It was almost confined to the towns. In the rural parts dwelt the *pagani*,—the country folk or pagans, who knew not Christ. Collingwood and Myres, *Roman Britain*, pp. 305-6.





Athens, is 'wholly given to idolatry.' Everywhere in the Province of Britain, superstition runs unchecked in a hundred channels; it has not yet been canalized, and used for political, social and ethical purposes. It is power not yet harnessed to a machine. Since the death of Druidism, there is nothing to foreshadow the advent of the organized Christian priesthood, which a few centuries later is to become the chief directing force in the social history of England.

Altogether our town is making a gallant attempt to be a Roman city, but the scale is too small and does not grow bigger as the years pass. It is a fine Italian flower, bedded out, but it strikes no root in the soil.

Having visited the Romano-British town at its period of highest development about A.D. 200, let us try to imagine a country Villa a hundred years later, when the towns are already in decay, but the Villas are still advancing to the height of their prosperity, before the days of Rome's final decadence.

The Roman Villa in the British countryside stands in rural solitude, amid its own fields and woods. It is a self-contained agricultural and social unit. Its owner is a Romanized Briton. His dwelling-house, where he lives with his family and his domestic slaves, resembles one of the town houses, with red-tiled roofs, corridors, mosaic and tessellated pavements, and chambers warmed by hypocausts.

But the dwelling-house occupies only one side of the great enclosure on to which it fronts. This enclosure is a farmyard of magnificent proportions; the side opposite to the dwelling-house is formed by a high wall pierced by the main entrance to the Villa. The two other sides consist of quarters for the farmhands, stables, cowsheds, barns, workshops or small factories, furnaces, a kiln for drying corn and a horse-mill. In the yard itself are ample evidences that sheep, cattle, horses, pigs, poultry and geese are plentiful on the farm.

In the open fields of the Villa, cultivated by slaves, crops are grown. The products of the farm are partly for home use; partly for the market in the neighbouring town; partly to pay the *annona* or wheat-tax which the State exacts to feed the distant garrisons on the Wall, in Yorkshire and in Wales.

On a southern slope, slaves may be trying to grow vines, under



the orders of a foreman from Gaul; the wine, it is to be feared, will be poor stuff. But the Villa can well provide its own Celtic beer, its own meat, bread-stuffs, woollen cloth, tallow candles, and wood for carpentry and fuel. The necessary manufacture can be done by the Villa hands, male and female. Except iron, linen and pottery, little is needed from the world outside.

The whole establishment bears some resemblance to a 'country house' with its home farm in later England, and the owner's life, divided between field sports and directing the operations of agriculture, is not altogether unlike that of a 'squire.' But the atmosphere is less free and neighbourly, for there are no tenant farmers and there is no 'village' attached to the Villa.<sup>1</sup> It is all one large home-farm, a little too like one of the ill-omened *latifundia* of Italy, for it is cultivated chiefly by slaves. They till their master's large fields with the mould-board and coulter plough, which breaks up the land better than the primitive light plough with which elsewhere the unromanized Britons scratch the soil.<sup>2</sup>

But we must not suppose that the Villa was the commonest, though it was the most remarkable, type of agricultural life in Roman Britain. The greater part of the population still lived, as of old, either in isolated farms of a primitive kind, or in native village communities. The inhabitants still cultivated their small, enclosed fields, the ghostly lines of which have been revealed by air-photography cutting athwart the larger fields of a later England. But the villagers had only the primitive light plough, and had neither the implements nor the energy to win new lands from the waste. What little reclaiming of land was done in the Roman epoch, was chiefly done by the Villa owners with a better agricultural equipment.

Though little economic or agricultural progress was made by

<sup>1</sup> It appears that some Villa owners may have let off part of their land to semi-free tenants; but this was not normal.

<sup>2</sup> The Villa system of large isolated farms seems to have been introduced in some parts of Britain by the Belgae in the hundred years before the Roman conquest, when Roman or European influences were making peaceful penetration in the days of King Cymbeline. 'The Roman Villas are but Belgic farmsteads writ large.' To the same Belgic period belong the growth of some British towns afterwards Romanized, like Colchester. As to the ploughs used in the Villas and villages of Roman Britain, compare Collingwood, *Roman Britain*, pp. 211-2 to Orwin, *The Open Fields*, pp. 11-12, 21-4, 30-2.





the native villages, they were not unaffected by Roman influence. House-furniture, decoration and utensils of the Roman pattern made their way to some extent even into the houses of the rural poor. Wall-plaster painted in the Italian fashion, roof-tiles, rude hypocausts, Samian and glass ware have been found in native villages on Salisbury plain and elsewhere. But these are exceptions. In most cases the round native huts, wattled and thatched, or built in stone on the bee-hive pattern, showed little change from earlier times,—least of all in North and West Britain.

In the native village, as in the Romanized town and Villa, there was a great multiplicity of gods, playing constantly upon the easily terrified imagination of primitive man. In the more barbarous rural parts there were, of course, fewer deities deriving from Italy, Hellas or the East. But there was an even greater variety of local gods and goddesses, many of them connected with some aspect of nature. Every spring, wood, river and hill was haunted by named or nameless spirits, to be worshipped, propitiated, and at fall of night avoided. Such very ancient gods and the fear of them were strong with the strength and terrible with the terror of the untamed, all-enveloping wilderness. Even after Christianity had pronounced the outlawry of such woodland deities, they continued, as fairies and goblins or as old Puck, to haunt the forest till it was felled, and the fen till man had drained it.

Though air-photography and the spade of the archaeologist have revealed something of the agriculture and manner of life of the native villagers, their social and legal status cannot be ascertained. Probably it differed from time to time and from place to place. Many villages, it is thought, were Imperial estates, whose inhabitants were *coloni* rather than free proprietors. It is conjectured by analogy from Gaul that, as the needs of the central government and of the great landowners increased in the Fourth Century, the position of the peasants became worse and worse. In the Gaul of that period there were servile wars or *Jacqueries* of oppressed villagers, joined by runaway slaves from the Villas. It is possible but not proven that something of the same sort occurred in Britain.

At any rate, as the Fourth Century advanced, rural society began to break up. Raiding bands from Ireland and from the



coasts of Northern Europe, joined by many of the poorer and wilder of the Britons themselves, marched through the island sacking and burning the houses of the rich. The destruction or abandonment of so many Villas between A.D. 360 and 400 loosened the whole framework of Roman society, and upset the food-supply on which the towns depended. The Villa-owners ceased to be the dominant class in Britain. In those cities and Villas that survived or were rebuilt, life fell to a lower level; the roads were unsafe, connection with the outside world became less, coined money disappeared and was replaced by barter. The trade of the towns came to an end; they were mere cities of refuge. Their citizens, shrunk in number and impoverished, and the soldiers of the isolated forts living in constant fear of attack, gathered their neighbours within the shelter of their walls, and built up half of their double gateways. When, early in the Fifth Century, the Legions were finally withdrawn to the Continent, they departed from an island where the alien civilization of Rome was already sick to death. Britain 'went native' again.

Roman society showed a peculiar helplessness in the face of disorder, raiding and invasion. For it was not like the Saxon and Norman society of later times, based on the principle of local self-defence. The towns had stone walls, but they were not properly garrisoned. And neither the Villas nor the native villages were protected by anything answering to the feudal castle. Only rarely had the Villa so much as an earthwork cast round it. And its owner was not a thane or knight armed and trained to war. Archaeological excavators seldom find arms and armour in the Roman Villa or British village; the weapons seem designed against wolves and deer rather than against human foes.

The South-East half of the Province of Britain was in fact a purely civilian society, taught for three centuries to dwell secure behind the distant shield of the army on the wall and in the Welsh hills. When at last the Empire's outer guard was broken, when marauding bands from overseas, from beyond the Wall, and from the wilder regions of the North and West came pouring over the civilized part of Britain, its unwarlike inhabitants had to improvise their defence against the foe.

In the first years of the Roman Occupation, the conquerors from the Continent imported on a large scale those luxuries to





which they were accustomed. But as time went on, the island became less dependent on continental imports, as the native craftsmen learnt more and more to supply what was required. Their metal-work was excellent; and textiles and common pottery were produced for all the ordinary needs of life, though the very best still came from overseas.

Many towns, Villas and villages manufactured their own cloth and household ware. In some places small factories were set up to supply the market, like Chedworth Villa which was converted from the uses of agriculture to the fulling of cloth. In that Cotswold region of rich Villas, the wool and cloth of their pastures were sold at Cirencester, which became the most flourishing of the tribal capitals. In the Third Century, British cloth was celebrated in the Empire, and even found its way to Eastern Europe. At Winchester there was an Imperial weaving mill. But in the Fourth Century, as order and civilization declined, the level of luxury fell and the demands of a rougher age could be supplied with less recourse to continental imports or even to British market towns. Each town, Villa and village became more isolated and perforce self-sufficient.

But in the heyday of Romano-British civilization, the ordinary furniture and ornaments of house and person, whether made in Britain or overseas, were of Roman rather than Celtic design. Metal, woodwork, frescoes, mosaics, sculpture, and architecture in stone and brick, all followed Graeco-Roman tradition. Celtic art disappeared before the fashions set by the superior race. Aesthetically this proved a disaster, not without many analogies in the Europeanized Asia and Africa of our own day. For Celtic craftsmanship was highly skilled in symbolic patterns and pure ornament. Graeco-Roman art on the other hand, imitated realistically the forms of life in animals and men. The Romans could not bring their best artists as far as Britain, nor could the natives acquire the true spirit of the alien art they felt obliged to imitate. Therefore the artistic product of Roman Britain, particularly in sculpture, is Graeco-Roman usually of an inferior order. There are a few exceptions like the Gorgon's Head of Bath, a masterpiece wherein Celtic and Roman are perfectly blended; and here and there the Celtic genius peeps out in a rougher form. After the departure of the Romans, the old Celtic art revived, and in the course of years blended with Saxon, Irish, and



Mediterranean-Christian influences to produce the Saxon crosses and illuminated books like the gospels of Lindisfarne.

Besides the town, the Villa and the native village, the normal cells of Romano-British society, there were also the mining and the military communities.

The mineral wealth of Britain had been one of the motives that tempted Rome to the conquest of this outpost of Empire. Rome had a rule that minerals belonged to the State, and many of the more important mines of lead, iron and coal in the island were run as government concerns. Most of them were served by slaves, criminals and prisoners; of these some worked in chains; some were forced to dwell in perpetual darkness underground; others, as at Mendip, had better quarters. Some gold miners in Wales had pit-head baths, possibly because when stripped they would be less able to conceal the bits of precious metal. There may have been some free labour among the Romano-British miners, but in fact we know very little about their lives except that conditions differed from place to place but were usually most miserable.

Lead, iron and coal mines were scattered up and down the Province, many of them in the more mountainous Military Zone. Lead was much valued and used, for water-pipes and other domestic purposes, for large ornamental coffins, and also for the extraction of silver. Iron was worked, as it had been for ages past, in the Weald of Sussex and in the Forest of Dean. In Cornwall the natives continued to mine for tin, but the industry was not at first exploited by the Roman conquerors because Spanish tin held the market of the Empire. But in the later years of the Occupation, Government took up Cornish tin and made some local roads in the neglected peninsula. On the whole, however, the Romans, like the Saxons after them, left Cornwall to the natives as a world by itself. The Imperial road system ended at Exeter.

Coal was supplied to the forts on the Northumbrian Wall from Tyneside mines managed by the military authorities. And it was worked in other regions of the North and Midlands, and as far south as Somerset. Smelting was still done with wood. And the occasional domestic use of coal in towns and Villas depended on the accessibility of the nearest coalfield. In those days there was much coal near the surface, easily dug out by unorganized private





venture, but in some places shafts and galleries were sunk not far below the soil. Very little is known of the management of the coal mines.

Charcoal burning and the smelting of iron by charcoal had been carried on in Britain from primaeval times, especially among the oak forests in the Weald of Kent and Sussex. The advent of the Romans made little change in this very ancient industry.

The buildings of the Romano-British epoch are in themselves evidence that quarrying and the making of bricks and tiles must have employed a considerable number of hands,—under what conditions of servile or free labour we do not know. Much of the quarrying for the Northumbrian Wall and its forts was probably done by the soldiers themselves, since we know that it was they who built the Wall of local stone. Near the fortress of Chester there were tile works and mines controlled by the Commandant of the Legion; for in the Military Zone the army authorities were, for most purposes, the State.

Indeed in the North and West, the army and its appendages constituted the Roman world. Those natives who were not engaged in serving the army, dwelt in the most primitive villages of circular huts, and were the least Romanized of all the inhabitants of the Province of Britain. There were very few Villas north of the Yorkshire Wolds or in the Pennines or in Wales, and no towns that were not also military bases.

After the first conquest, the inhabitants of the Welsh hills gave the Romans little trouble, and lived quiet in the fortified villages on the hill tops. As time went on, it was no longer thought necessary to leave a large army of occupation beyond the Severn. For the greater part of the troops in Britain were engaged either in garrisoning the Northumbrian Wall, or in guarding its long communications with York and Chester, the Cities of the Legions. Between these bases and the Wall itself stretched the moorlands of the Pennine Hills, inhabited by the Brigantes, a turbulent and dangerous folk, not easily yielding to the charm of Roman influence, of which indeed there was little seen in their wild region. To link York with Chester and with the North-West, the Romans drove several roads westward across the Pennines, at right angles to the main roads going north to the Wall. Along these routes, stone forts, with garrisons of several hundred men each, were



placed at intervals. In this way the Roman peace was maintained among the wild Brigantes of Yorkshire and Durham.

On the north side of the Wall, outside the Empire, were the Picts and other Caledonian tribes, who in old days had fought the legions not without success in defence of Caledonia. Various enemies of Rome gathered to a head there from time to time.

Hadrian's stone Wall, the northernmost boundary of the Empire, ran for seventy-three miles from the mouth of the Tyne to Solway.<sup>1</sup> It marched from sea to sea over barren moors. Every five miles or thereabouts stood a large fort wherein one thousand soldiers were quartered. The barracks and offices, granaries and store-houses of the fort were built wholly or in part of stone, and were strong enough to support a fire-proof roofing of heavy stone tiles. There was little luxury-building on the Wall, but everything was solidly constructed to stand up for centuries against the battery of the Northumbrian winds.

Outside each of these forts, a village or *vicus* grew up, to supply the needs of the garrison. This semi-official settlement nestled so close under the walls of the fort as to suggest that there was a long period of careless confidence on the part of the garrison, which came to an end in the second half of the Fourth Century. The houses of the *vicus* were better than native huts; they were half-timber buildings on stone foundations, with gables, and some of them with windows of opaque glass. Here lived the women attached to the long-service veterans quartered in the fort; here were shops and other attractions to catch the military eye when off duty; and inns for travelling merchants from Caledonia and the South. A similar settlement on a larger scale round the garrison fortress of York led to trade on the Ouse, and became the origin of the later city. But the Roman establishments on the Wall perished.

In the forts of the Wall and their surrounding villages are

<sup>1</sup> At one time an attempt was made to carry the frontier forward to the still narrower bottle-neck joining Clyde to Forth (only 37 miles wide as against Hadrian's 73). But though a turf rampart was erected there, the new frontier proved too far from its base, so the Clyde-Forth rampart was abandoned and the watch was finally set on Hadrian's Wall. But even so, for many years the normal area of Roman influence extended beyond the Wall itself, up to the modern border on the Cheviot range, as is clearly proved by the camps, forts and other Roman remains in central Northumberland. The Wall was abandoned in the time of Maximus about 383 and was never rebuilt; it ceased then to act as the shield of Britain, though there were Roman armies in the island, intermittently at least, till 410 or later.





found hypocausts and wash-houses; pillared porticoes and arches; temples, altars, statues, statuettes and bas-reliefs of gods and goddesses without number; official and private inscriptions. There is in fact a great profusion of third-rate sculpture, for it is a stone country; but there are no mosaics and none of the higher artistic luxury of South Britain. Besides innumerable temples, each house has its little shrine. Mars, Mercury, and Mithras are specially popular with the soldiers, and there are many German and Celtic deities, for the army on the Wall came largely from Northern Europe.

Altogether the garrison of the Wall and its appendages formed a great Romanized society, representing most of the races of the Northern half of the Empire. Kipling's genius in *Puck of Pook's Hill* has familiarized us with this society as it may have become in the last days of its decadence. It is a well-informed guess at the past, but in one important matter Kipling is certainly wrong: there was no 'thin town eighty miles long' from sea to sea. There was only a *vicus* or large Romanized village attached to each of the forts. And, at rare intervals behind the Wall, a group of circular huts afforded a rude shelter to native farmers. Since the soldiers were probably not more than twenty thousand, soldiers and civilians may perhaps have made up together a total of fifty thousand people 'on the Wall.'

One other region of the Military Zone may be mentioned. The isolated group of mountains south of the Wall, now called the Lake District, was then very sparsely peopled. Its flat valley bottoms remained marshy jungles, until, centuries later, Scandinavian colonists came up from the sea to drain, clear and settle 'the dales.' In Roman times only a few barbarian hunters and agriculturists roamed the lower fellsides above the uninhabitable thickets below. Here and there, on the middle heights, the hut-circles they inhabited are found, surrounded by ramparts of unhewn stone. Yet even through this shaggy wilderness Rome pushed her roads. Her soldiers built a fort with permanent barracks and storehouses beside the lake-head at Windermere, and drove thence a road over the pathless hills by Wrynose and Hardknott where they placed a fort, and so on to the harbour at Ravenglass, a base for ships sailing the Irish Sea.

The Romans never attempted to conquer Ireland, but they patrolled the British seas with their war-galleys. When, late in



the Third Century, Saxon pirates from the coast of Germany began to give trouble, a dozen fortresses were erected along the coast from the Isle of Wight eastward, and round as far north as the Wash. The ruins of their concrete walls cased with brick or stone, sometimes twenty-five feet high, are the largest of the Roman remains in Britain. They can be seen at Pevensey, Richborough and Borough Castle near Yarmouth. Their rounded towers and bastions are more like mediaeval castle work than the classical masonry of Hadrian's Wall. Each of these establishments could hold five hundred to one thousand soldiers. They served to defend the ports and to block the estuaries up which the pirates strove to penetrate inland. From these well protected bases the Roman navy patrolled what was significantly called 'the Saxon shore'—on watch against the terrible invaders whose arrival in force was thus postponed for one hundred and fifty years. In the same disturbed period London was supplied with a river-wall, which had not before been thought necessary, to keep off landing from the Saxon long-boats. And since in these latter days the Irish pirates also were feared, a similar sea-fortress was erected at Holyhead, and another at Cardiff to protect the entrance of the Severn.

Such were the various elements of the society of Roman Britain,—in town, Villa, village, mine and fort. What was its total population? We do not know. Scholarly conjecture has placed it sometimes at half a million, sometimes at a million. At any rate there were many fewer inhabitants in Britain than at the end of the Saxon period, when a vast acreage of the best land had been won from the wilderness, and hundreds of villages had been planted on land that was forest or marsh when the Romans left the island. Students of Domesday Book have calculated that there may have been a million and a half folk in England in the age of Harold and William of Normandy. Even that estimate may be incorrect, though it has something to go upon. But whatever the numbers may have been in the England of Domesday, it is certain there were many fewer in the Britain ruled by the Caesars.

The Roman conquest may be compared to the Norman for its introduction of new social, administrative and cultural patterns. But neither the Roman nor the Norman invaders changed the





racial character of the islanders to the same degree as the intervening Saxon and Scandinavian mass-settlements of men and women. No doubt many continental types were found in Roman London. And the army was largely recruited from overseas; but it is not easy to tell how many of the discharged veterans remained in Britain. We know that Colchester, Lincoln, Gloucester and York were *Coloniae* or settlements for time-expired soldiers. Their children must usually have had British mothers. Towards the end of the Occupation a large proportion of the garrison were themselves British born. In the earlier period, the soldiers were chiefly enlisted in Gaul, Belgium or Germany, some from the Danube valley or from Spain. Far the greater number of them were of Teutonic or Celtic stock. This is shown not only on the evidence of inscriptions but by the skulls in the military cemeteries. The skulls of the legionaries at York are not of the Italian type, and this is what we should for other reasons expect. We may then conclude that the proportion of Mediterranean blood infused into Roman Britain was small; what racial addition was made, came chiefly from Northern Europe.

We must think of Roman Britain as it really was, not as a reproduction of Italy with her hundred ancient and flourishing cities, her vineyards and farmlands covering the plains and climbing the terraced hills. We must rather think of the Romano-Britons as scattered groups of not very efficient pioneers, camped out amid the wilderness. A few of them were men of a high but foreign civilization; many were not civilized at all; many betwixt and between. But all were fighting an uphill battle with the forces of enveloping nature, still too strong for man. The hunting of the deer and the wild ox, the trapping of wolves and bears, the adventure through the outskirts of the dank and quiet forest with its dangerous rustlings, the loss of men and cattle in fen and flood, such incidents were part of daily life in Britain. The modern Englishman, who, unless on war service abroad, has never seen a primæval forest or an undrained fen, and who thinks of food as an article bought by his wife in shops, must use his imagination to conjure up life in this island as it was then lived.

In the last decades of Roman rule, the Anglo-Saxon race, destined soon to win the battle against nature in England by a vigorous offensive of axe and spade and plough, are still beyond the sea. But already there are harbingers of their coming, pirates



whose undecked mastless boats leap along the 'whale-road,' propelled by eight-and-twenty oars apiece. These marauding fleets are still being chased away from the guarded island by the Roman navy, save when a lucky dash ashore leads to a raid, and plunder is borne back to the log-hall amid the heaths and fir woods behind the salt-marshes and sandy dunes of the North European coast. There, in the winter nights, over the ale and mead, unaccustomed hands finger the stolen plate and coins at leisure, while the returned adventurers tell their tales of the island with its ill-defended houses of rich men, its fat lands fit for deep ploughing, its green pastures for cattle, its oak forests for swine. "'Tis a better land than this of ours! If only Rome would fall! Some say she is falling. . .?" So they talk, and nod to sleep across the ale-board, dreaming of things to come.

## BOOKS FOR FURTHER READING

*Roman Britain*, by R. S. Collingwood, being Chaps. I-XIX of Vol. I of *Oxford History of England*; *The Roman Occupation of Britain*, Haverfield and Sir G. Macdonald, 1924; *Historical Geography of England*, Cambridge Press, 1936, Chap. II., by E. W. Gilbert; *The Romanization of Roman Britain*, Haverfield, revised by Sir G. Macdonald, 1923.





## THE COMING OF THE ANGLO-SAXONS

It is possible to give some account of life in Roman Britain, because its altars, carvings and inscriptions, and the foundations and contents of its stone buildings have in many cases survived. A great body of such evidence has been collected by the modern school of scientific archaeology, and has been compared to similar finds in regions of the Roman Empire of which more is known, with results that prove a good deal as to the manner of life in our island at that period. But when we approach the two hundred years that followed the withdrawal of the Legions, we are more in the dark. That period in Britain left almost no written or sculptured record of itself, and its wooden buildings have long since perished. Yet even under these difficult conditions, the wonderful archaeology of our day has discovered something and suggested more, partly from the position and contents of the Anglo-Saxon graveyards of the Pagan period scattered about England, partly from finds in the continental homelands of the invaders, partly from the study of early English place-names, partly by retrospective deductions drawn from the later Anglo-Saxon period with its poetry, its history, its codes of law and its charters of land.

But a further difficulty, besides want of information, confronts the historian setting out to describe society in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries: for is there any 'society' to describe? Roman Britain had been a settled and protected order of things, a scene with fixed features that can be delineated; but all that immediately followed its disappearance is a chaos of destruction and change. British tribes, relapsed to barbarism, at constant war with one another and with the Saxons; Saxon warbands, destroying towns, Villas and villages, killing, thrusting out or enslaving the old inhabitants, and then settling down in one place after another to cultivate the conquered land,—it is a state of confusion, not a 'state of society.'

Yet where there are men there is social life, even on board the pirate ship, in the ranks of the warband on the tramp, and in the



most primitive agricultural settlement of armed farmers. And it is from these rudimentary cells of military, political and agricultural life that modern England has since evolved without a break. There has never again in our island been such an overthrow and fresh beginning as took place in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries. The English village has had a continuous life, since the first Saxon settlements of wooden cabins and open fields replaced the Roman Villas and the hut-circles and field enclosures of the Britons. Since that remote and unchronicled era of convulsion, great changes have from time to time speeded the pace of English development, such as the Christian mission, the Norman Conquest, the Reformation, and the interminable Industrial Revolution in which we are still so restlessly living. But none of these movements broke off the continuity of life in our island, as the barbarians broke it when the Legions left.

Our English society does not, like Italian and French, derive from the direct survival of things Roman. The origin of modern England must be sought in the habits and ideas of the very primitive but very vital invaders who landed from the long-boats.

The northern sea-board of Europe, from Denmark to the mouth of the Rhine, had been little touched by Roman influence, particularly at its eastern end. Its principal inhabitants in the Fifth Century we may agree to call collectively 'Anglo-Saxons,' for the Angles and Saxons spoke a common language with local variations. And, as the evidence of English place-names shows, men of kindred tribes, such as the Frisians, were associated with them in the conquest of Britain. Unlike the Goths and other tribes then engaged in breaking up the Empire of the Caesars further south, these outer barbarians had had no prolonged contact with civilized man, had never served in large numbers in the Roman armies, nor been opposed to them in the field. Only the Jutes, another tribe of language closely resembling the Anglo-Saxon, who colonized Kent and South Hampshire, had had contact in their continental home with the more civilized Franks and thereby indirectly with the Roman world.

But neither Anglo-Saxons nor Jutes were Christians, as were the Goths, the Vandals and the Franks under Clovis. The invaders of Britain were moreover 'pagans,' *pagani*, in the older sense of the word, for they were 'country-folk' who lived in the





open and feared walled towns and stone houses as traps. Masonry was abhorrent to these dwellers in huts and halls of wood. Such characteristics made it certain that the Anglo-Saxons in England would be far more destructive of Roman civilization than were the Goths in Italy or the Franks in Gaul, if they should meet with equal military success. Moreover there was less of Roman civilization to destroy in the island outpost of Empire.

The Anglo-Saxons were indeed ruthless as foes. Fifty decapitated skeletons in the Bran ditch in Cambridgeshire are held to indicate the savage character of warfare at the time of the invasion. But their earliest extant literature represents them as bound to one another by a kindly comradeship and loyalty which may be the germ of modern English good nature. In their continental homes by the sea there had been an atmosphere of freedom. There had been few slaves. The warrior-farmers could speak as man to man with their lords and kings. But it was the lords and kings who ruled: the tribes were not governed by folk-moots of a primitive democracy, as Stubbs and the Nineteenth Century historians were too much inclined to imagine. It was the free obedience of the farmers and warriors to chiefs governing according to custom, that gave them quiet in peace and power in war. They brought over in their open boats the English Kingship, carnally in the persons of ancestors of our present royal house, spiritually in the mental habit of a free loyalty. The Kings of the various tribes were supposed to be descended from Woden, and had hereditary power and prestige if they were strong enough to maintain it. But men would obey no weakling in that rough age.

And besides these hereditary kinglets, there were other fighting chiefs who enlisted and led their ships' companies, easily turned to warbands when they had landed in Britain. Such leaders or their descendants might rise to be kings in some newly won region cut off by fen and woodland from its neighbours. For the first English kingdoms grew out of the first English settlements, by spontaneous generation; there was no official dividing up of the island. And if the war-chief could not aspire to kingship, he could at least become a thegn, a strong man armed, holding the land he had conquered and the log-hall he had built, and defending the neighbourhood that looked to him as leader and lord.

These rovers of the North Sea who overran our country, were



fishermen, whale-hunters and pirates, but they were also farmers, lovers of horses, oxen, sheep and pigs, devoted to deep ploughing of the open fields they reclaimed by axe and spade. The earth they tilled so zealously on the north European shore was much of it poor soil, shut in between sand-dunes, fir-forest and marsh; and on the Frisian coast the land was sinking and the sea encroaching. They sought in Britain not only richer plunder but drier and better lands. They were warrior pirates and Pilgrim Fathers at once, and therefore it was given them to change the face and fate of England and to name her by their name.

The military discipline and equipment of the Anglo-Saxon conquerors were of the simplest. They rode when they could get horses, but they fought on foot. The common warrior had no helmet or body-armour, battle-axe or sword, but only a spear, sometimes ten feet long, and a round shield of 'linden' (lime) wood, with an iron boss in its centre. A few chiefs and leading warriors had helmets adorned with a boar-shaped crest, and a rather inferior type of sword, and a 'byrnie' or 'war sark' of chain armour. In serious conflict with the 'Welsh' ('foreigners') as the Saxons called the old inhabitants of Britain, the invaders fought in close order, each shield of wood touching its neighbour, and so forming the 'linden wall' that the foe had to hew down; hence in the poem of *Beowulf* the word for battle is 'lind play' (*lind plega*). Beyond this wooden wall of shields protruded a hedge of long spears, as in the Macedonian phalanx or the infantry regiments of Gustavus and Cromwell. But no doubt on many occasions, particularly in the storming of walled cities and earthwork camps, the Saxon spearmen fought in open order, each man for himself. Some of them had also small axes for throwing; bows, too, and arrows tipped with iron or bone, though it is impossible to say what proportion of the spearmen were archers as well, or what place the bow had in their battle tactics.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Here is an accurate description of one of the warriors of the invasion, as found in his grave near Little Wilbraham, Cambridgeshire. 'The skeleton lay on its back with spear-head at its right shoulder, a buckle at the waist, and a knife at the hip. His left hand still clutching the grip of his shield-boss, lay over his chest and the shield had covered the shoulder and foreleg of a sheep (or possibly a goat), evidently put there to serve as rations in the next world.' *Camb. County Hist.*, I, p. 317.

On early Anglo-Saxon weapons, see Hodgkin, *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, I, pp. 24-27, and R. W. Chambers, *Beowulf, an Introduction*, pp. 357-60.





Such simple weapons borne by unarmoured tribesmen, led by a few mail-clad chiefs, would not have sufficed to conquer Roman Britain. The Anglo-Saxons made no attempt to convert their coastal raids into wars of conquest, until a generation after the withdrawal of the Legions. And indeed many years before the official departure of the Roman garrison (A.D. 410?) Roman society had been in a state of dissolution. After A.D. 360 Scots from Ireland and the Picts from Scotland, aided by some of the more primitive tribes of North and West Britain, had been periodically raiding the defenceless lands of the South and East, breaking to pieces the civilization that the Anglo-Saxons afterwards ground to powder. In the first half of the Fifth Century, Celtic barbarism had finally submerged Roman society from sea to sea. Not only the military but the political organization of Rome had disappeared from the island before the Saxon conquest began. But the prestige and example of the vanished Empire still lingered for a while. The cities which the Romans had built still stood, their commerce gone but their ruinous walls a welcome refuge in time of trouble. And the Christian influence, so far from disappearing, grew among the British tribes, for the missionary priest stepped into the place of leadership abandoned by the Imperial official: Saint Germanus on one occasion led a British tribe to battle against heathen invaders. But regular political power in the island was disastrously divided between a number of chiefs, constantly at war with one another: Celtic tribalism reared its head, destructive of union.

On this scene of confusion, on a society essentially but not yet wholly de-Romanized, fell the impact of Anglo-Saxon invasions when

the heathen host  
Swarmed overseas and harried what was left.

Then 'temple and tower went to the ground,' and the cities and stone houses became uninhabited ruins behind the path of the conquerors.

Under these conditions took place the gradual conquest of the larger and richer part of Britain by the Anglo-Saxons. It began about the middle of the Fifth Century and went on for two hundred years as a general movement, and locally in the Devonian peninsula and along the Welsh border for two hundred more.



Those astonishing ancestors of ours, essentially seafarers, must have been hardy and enduring folk. With their stout arms they rowed themselves and their families across the North Sea in long narrow open boats without mast or deck, clinker-built with overlapping planks of oak; each might contain forty persons, closely packed. That is how the first English women were brought to Britain in their thousands. As each big wave lashed in, over the line of round shields set along the boat's low side, how must those gallant wives and children have worked at baling out the vessel, while their men-folk tugged at the oars! We can only suppose that many of the ill-found emigrant ships went down in storms off the coasts of the promised land, as it is recorded that many of the masted Viking vessels went down in later invasions.<sup>1</sup>

The immediate effect of the conquest of Britain, in the first and most savage onset, must have been to reduce the numbers of the population and the area of cultivated land. This was the case, for instance, in Cambridgeshire, where in Roman times cornfields had been widely spread along the riverside, the islands of the fen and the lower chalk uplands. In the early years of the invasion, much of this land fell back to waste; but the ultimate effect of Anglo-Saxon settlement in this region was greatly to enlarge the arable area by the felling of the dense forests on the clay-covered plateaux which the Romano-Britons had left untouched. At the end of the Saxon period, almost every one of the present Cambridgeshire villages was in existence, and was duly recorded in Domesday; the forest was yielding to man. And the same story, with local variations is true of most districts of England.

The general direction of the conquest and colonization of the island was from east to west, but with many cross currents to north and south. Fifth Century Britain was not an open country to be marched over in any direction at will. It was cut up by natural defences of dense forest, scrub and marsh, which the invaders could only cross by filing along the Roman roads and

<sup>1</sup> In the later years of Anglo-Saxon invasion there were probably vessels with mast and sail, which had become usual by the time the *Beowulf* poem was written. But the mastless 'Nydam' boat is typical of the early invasions. It was 77 feet long and only 11 feet wide, very low amidships, with rowlocks for 14 oars a side. A large paddle in the stern guided it. It had little manoeuvring power. See Hodgkin, I, pp. 22-4, and Chambers' *Beowulf, an Introduction* (1932), pp. 362-4. The ship buried in the sands of Sutton Hoo, discovered in 1938, had no mast, though it dates as late as the first half of the Seventh Century, and commemorated an East Anglian King. (*The Antiquary* for March 1940.)





British trackways, or by forcing their boats up the river beds. Thus by following up the course of Trent from the Humber, and Ouse and Cam from the Wash, and by marching along the Ick-nield Way from its Norfolk end, Anglo-Saxon bands penetrated southwards, turned the rear of many forests and natural obstacles in East Anglia, and so found access to the upper Thames and the Western Midlands, where eventually they were joined by other tribes of invaders coming up from the south coast by way of Hampshire, Wilts and Dorset. So, too, the Yorkshire Ouse led other bands quickly northwards as far as York.<sup>1</sup>

How do we know where these earliest Saxon colonists settled? The wooden houses they built have gone. But 'the gravemaker builds stronger than the mason, the shipwright or the carpenter.' The cemeteries of the pagan Saxons have survived to tell us something of their story. These earliest English graves are found usually in the valley of a great river or on one of its tributaries where it emerged from the woodland. The men thus buried had penetrated upstream, and had settled down to plough the heavy valley soils as they had not been ploughed before. The Roman roads also greatly assisted the march of the invaders, particularly of those first bands of warriors more intent on destructive conquest than on immediate colonization. But the armed farmers who came over with their families to settle and till the land were not attracted by the regions traversed by the Roman roads; they preferred likely places near river banks. And so the earliest Saxon cemeteries, usually the only relics left to us of the earliest settlements, are less often found by the side of the Imperial highways, than by the side of still waters.<sup>2</sup>

What then was the social structure of these early settlements? As a rule the Anglo-Saxons did not, like the Romans and the Normans, come to exploit the land by the labour of the conquered

<sup>1</sup> The impenetrable character of much of early Saxon England is illustrated by the short length of the defensive works in Cambridgeshire known respectively as the Devil's Dyke and the Fleam Dyke. They extend only from the edge of what was then the fenland to the edge of what was then dense forest. Nature could be trusted to hold the marsh and the forest ends of the line against an invading force without aid of earthworks. So, too, as late as the end of the Eighth Century, it was not thought necessary to carry the artificial barrier of Offa's Dyke through the denser forest regions, which the raiding Welsh could not traverse.

<sup>2</sup> The famous Gilton cemetery was on a Roman road, but it was also favourably situated in relation to the river system of the Cam.



natives. They came to till it themselves by their own peculiar system of open-field cultivation, and for this purpose they formed their own village communities, of which more will presently be said. Many of the 'Welsh' (that is the Britons) were massacred, many fled to the West, many remained in communities of their own, islanded amid the settlements of the conquerors.<sup>1</sup> The laws of the early Saxon kingdoms show that the more fortunate of the 'Welsh' survivors in course of time acquired a definite status, below that of corresponding classes of Anglo-Saxons but far above that of slaves. On the other hand many Britons were no doubt made household or field slaves. Many of their women, we may suppose, were made concubines, and as time softened the feud, the races mingled on equal terms of marriage. But there is no positive evidence that the women of the conquered race survived in England to a greater extent than their men-folk. Contrary to what we should expect, the few British personal names taken into use by the conquerors are not female but male.

The whole question of the degree and method of British survival is controversial and obscure and is never likely to be fully solved. One thing, however, is certain—the villages throughout eastern, central and most of western England bear Saxon, not ancient British, names. They must in nearly all cases have been founded or re-founded as Anglo-Saxon settlements. The British village system, like the Roman towns and Villas for the most part disappeared. But the survival of ancient British river and hill names in the North, the central and western Midlands and in Wessex, is held to prove prolonged intercourse between the Britons and their conquerors. The rarity of British names even for rivers in Sussex and the eastern counties from Humber to Thames, indicates an earlier and more general disappearance of the native population. 'The old theory of a wholesale extermination or displacement of the British population is no doubt erroneous or exaggerated, but it may come near the truth in the districts first conquered.'<sup>2</sup>

The typical Anglo-Saxon village at the time of the settlement

<sup>1</sup> Place names like Wallington, Wallingford, etc., are Saxon words meaning places of the Welsh or foreigners, viz. the Britons.

<sup>2</sup> See the Presidential Address of Professor Stenton in the *Royal Historical Assoc. Transactions*, 1939.





was a community of freemen with a lord. In the majority of cases it was not, as used to be supposed, an equalitarian and democratic group of tribesmen, bound together by the tie of kindred. The family had certain responsibilities for the individual, when he committed a crime or failed in his duty. But it was rather the family than the clan that was the unit. The clan or tribal system of far-flung cousinship was never the basis of society among the English, as it was among the Irish, the Welsh and the Highlanders of Scotland. The clan had not been a powerful bond among the Anglo-Saxons even in their continental homes, and migration overseas had further weakened the tie. For the boat-loads and warbands who came to England were each composed of the personal followers of a fighting leader; they were not necessarily akin to each other, but they settled down together on the land they had won as comrades in war.

The society of the Anglo-Saxon village was in normal cases held together by a two-fold bond: on the one hand the rule of the lord or thegn, and on the other the common arrangements for agricultural use of the land made among the farmers themselves as a village community. We know far too little to say how these two elements—one aristocratic, the other democratic—were at that early date related to one another. But there they both were from the beginning, planted in the original English village, and there they continued, through Saxon, Norman-feudal, Plantagenet and Tudor times, as the dual basis of country life. It was only the modern enclosure of the open fields, chiefly in the Eighteenth Century, that abolished the public activities of the village community and left nothing but the rule of the squire and the enterprise of the individual farmer.

Once fixed on the good English soil, well inland, the newcomers rapidly lost the maritime habits they had acquired on the coasts of the North Sea. They left it to the Scandinavian invaders of a later age to revive the overseas trade of the island. In the Sixth Century its principal export appears to have been slaves, made in the inter-tribal wars of England. Gregory the Great, about the year 590, made his celebrated pun on seeing fair-haired 'Angles' exposed for sale in the market place at Rome, and Saxon slaves were a common article of sale in Gaul. Even after the conversion of England, the codes of English law continued to prescribe enslavement as a penalty for theft, and even for



sabbath-breaking, so little did the early Church object to slavery, though it tended to mitigate its worst cruelties.<sup>1</sup>

After the conquerors had settled down in their new homes, the class of professional warriors differentiated itself more and more from the common farmers of the village, who, bound to unrelenting toil upon the land, had little time for warfare; if they were still freemen, they were poor and dependent, gradually declining towards serfdom. The distance between 'gentle and simple' became more marked. For the ownership of slaves brought ways of wealth to the great man, unknown in the old homes overseas. The thegns and their bodyguards became a fighting and ruling class, more distinct from the tillers of the soil than at the time of the conquest, when all had stood side by side in the 'linden wall.' Similarly the power of the Kings, with their professional armies of war companions, tended to increase in the newly conquered land, even before the conversion to Christianity and the services of a learned clergy gave a still greater advantage to the Saxon Kingship.

What were the houses of 'gentle and simple' respectively like, in these first English villages? As to the houses of the common folk, these redoubtable warrior-farmers housed themselves in hovels like the savages they still were. The structures they erected have completely disappeared, but of recent years archaeologists have discovered the earth foundations and floors of some homes of the first invaders; the character of the timber construction, though the wood itself has long perished, is indicated by holes in the earth flooring where the bases of the posts stood. The method of building a cottage appears to have been first to dig a pit, two feet deep and perhaps twelve feet long by ten wide, the bottom being, when possible, of gravel. Over this sunk floor, a gabled, tent-like superstructure was raised on poles. The thatched roof came down to the edge of the excavation, so that even in a cabin with a large floor the head-room must have been very small. In some cases there were low walls of wattle and daub. There were no windows and no chimneys. In one of the huts the posts of a weaver's loom had been set up; in another a dog had been

<sup>1</sup> 'If a freeman works on Sunday, except by his lord's command, he shall be reduced to slavery or pay 60 shillings,' *Laws of Ine* (King of Wessex, 688-725).





buried in the floor, in another a man,—why it is impossible to say. 'In such cabins, with bare head-room, amid a filthy litter of broken bones, of food and shattered pottery, with logs or planks raised on stones for their seats or couches,' lived the first English men and women. What must life have been like? 'Brutish, nasty and brief,' with frequent illness and perpetually recurring childbirth in such conditions! But these patient people had never known anything better, and their labour on the good new lands set those of their children who managed to survive on the slow upward grade towards decency and comfort.

If such were the dwellings of the folk, how was the lord lodged? No discovery has yet been made of the foundations of an English hall of the Pagan period, but it is known by analogy what it was like. An old-fashioned English barn, of which so many still survive, gives us the main architectural features of the interior of a Saxon hall. In the middle, between the tree-pillars which held up the rafters, an open hearth, sunk below the floor-level, was piled up with logs, whence the smoke eddied round till it escaped through the door or the holes in the roof. The log-walls were hung with armour and weapons, and sometimes with woven hangings.

Down both sides of the 'beer-hall' (*Beor-sele* as it was well called) stood long wooden tables laden with meat, bread, beer and mead. Here the warriors attached to the house feasted and drank, displayed with pride the bracelets and armour the lord had given to each, often quarrelled, sometimes murdered and fought, for the weapons were hanging close at hand. In more quiet moments the beer was carried round by the 'lady' (*Hlaefdige*, bread-kneader) and her maid-servants, released from the toils of spinning wool and preparing food. It was here, in the Anglo-Saxon hall, that the English idea of a 'lady' began to evolve. In *Beowulf* we read of the Queen coming down from her high stool to glide along between the tables, encouraging the young warriors, and sometimes stopping to bestow a 'bent ring' on some notable champion; she restrains their drunken quarrels, 'peace-bringer to the folk.' Then the minstrel would sing the deeds of a hero of old, how he slew some monster of sea or land, and routed his country's foes. Or the harp would be handed round the board among the warriors themselves. Here were the first beginnings of civilization, which in a primitive society can only grow with the growing wealth of



an aristocracy. Till the coming of the Christian clergy under Augustine, the only aristocracy and the only civilization was that of the warrior chief in his high hall. And the Christian missionaries attached themselves first and foremost to Kings and thegns for the furtherance of the new religion.

When sleep began to silence song, 'beds and bolsters' were strewn over the floor and benches (as we read in *Beowulf*), and the heroes snored loud where they had drunk deep. The women left the hall. Around it stood other dwelling-rooms, workshops and a farmstead complete with its byres, barns and muck-heaps, its cattle, pigs and dogs, of every kind; for agriculture and hunting varied the life of the warrior thegn. The whole group of buildings was of timber and thatch; it was enclosed by a moat, and a palisade of upright logs set close together, to guard 'the ton' from armed attack or fire-raising. Outside lay the cultivated fields, and beyond them the mysterious woodland, its oaks whispering under the stars,—bear, wolf, deer and swine stirring in its secret recesses.

How were the fields tilled, which lay between the houses and the forest? There were of course a variety of methods of agriculture differing according to the racial traditions of the settlers, or according to the character of the soil and surroundings. Enclosed fields were usual around a single hut, standing deep in a woodland 'den,' or alone among the winds of a northern moor. Indeed small enclosed fields had been the general custom of the ancient Britons before the Saxons came, and have continued to our own day not only in Wales and Cornwall but in many Saxon regions of the West, in most of Kent and sporadically elsewhere. In such 'enclosed' districts, hamlets or single farms prevailed rather than the larger compact village.

But in great parts of the Midlands and East Anglia, and on many of the best lands elsewhere, the normal Anglo-Saxon settlement was the large compact village, surrounded not by enclosed farmlands but by 'open fields.'<sup>1</sup> This implied a village community, working huge unenclosed fields on a principle of strip

<sup>1</sup> The method of cultivation and settlement differed with the differences of soil and its productivity. Thus Northumberland, a very 'Anglo-Saxon' county, had large, compact villages with open fields in the better lands near the coast, but hamlets and isolated farms with enclosures on the western moors.





allotments. Each settler had a certain number of strips of half an acre or one acre each. His long narrow strips did not lie next to one another in a single holding, for this would have involved the labour of hedging and would, moreover, have given one man too much of the good land and another too much of the bad. Each man's strips were scattered over the 'open field' of the village between those of his neighbours, so that the better and worse lands were shared by all.

Since the strips were not severally enclosed, but divided one from another only by open drains, the whole vast field was surrounded, at the proper season, by movable hurdles. The meadowlands for hay were cultivated on a similar principle. Both meadowland and arable, after hay and corn had been cut, were thrown open for common pasture, the grazing rights being ascribed to each man by 'stints' and regulations settled by the village community as a whole, to do justice to each of its members.

Under this system the Anglo-Saxons, with their oxen teams and deep-cutting ploughs, equipped with mould-board and coulter, took in acre after acre of waste, till the woodlands that once dominated Britain had shrunk to measurable proportions. Thus was accomplished 'the steady process of forest-clearing which makes the Anglo-Saxon conquest so vitally different to any earlier invasion of Britain.' (J. N. L. Myres, in the *Oxford History of England*, vol. I, p. 410.)

In some villages many of the strips in the great fields belonged to the thegn or lord, and he may also have had a more compact field of his own, like the 'demesne land' of the mediaeval manor. Did he compel the farmers to do a stated number of days' work on his lands, as his feudal successor claimed the fixed workdays of the mediaeval serf? Such questions cannot be determined as regards the original Saxon settlements. No doubt the relation of the thegn to the rest of the community differed from place to place. Even after the Normans had imposed the feudal system on England, great variety continued. But, unlike the Normans, the Anglo-Saxon conquerors brought over no uniform or theoretical system of society. Coming as they did from widely distant points on the Northern seaboard of Europe, and not all belonging to one tribe, they brought with them many varying customs. They settled down in each clearing won by sword, axe and plough, in



whatever way was customary or convenient to each group of colonists.<sup>1</sup>

There were some village communities with no lord at all. And in woodland 'dens' and on distant moors 'lordless' families dwelt in isolated freedom, the world forgetting by the world forgot. But the assumption of Anglo-Saxon law, when we come across it in its earliest written form, is that every man has a lord, who answers for his conduct and who gives him protection. And this legal assumption must have answered to a very large body of actual practice.

The Anglo-Saxons of the pagan period, it would be almost true to say, had no town life at all. A few small settlements were made among or just outside the ruins of Roman towns, as at York and Cambridge. More often, as at Silchester, Uricon and Verulamium, the sites of the cities were abandoned, to be rediscovered by archaeologists in ages to come. London may or may not have been for some years completely uninhabited; it ceased at any rate to have overseas commerce, and for a while dropped out of the country's life. But the English rural colonists were building up with their coulter ploughs a much greater body of agricultural wealth than that of Roman Britain; and therefore when town life and commerce revived, often on virgin sites like Oxford, there was a much larger agricultural hinterland to support the English towns and to prevent a repetition of the urban decadence that had overtaken the Roman cities in the Third Century.

In the latter part of the Sixth Century, the second of the conquest, we must imagine a number of small Saxon kingdoms with ever varying frontiers, usually at war with one another or with the 'Welsh.' We must also make allowance for a good deal of murdering, maiming, man-slaying, and mishandling of women, among the armed and still savage population. They were not always dutifully felling the forest and innocently ploughing the fields. The code of laws of Ethelbert of Kent, St. Augustine's convert (597), which has been called 'the earliest document written in the English language,' largely consists of a price-list of crimes, stating the money to be paid by the slayer or wounder,

<sup>1</sup> The variety of custom among the Anglo-Saxon and Jutish invaders is illustrated by the fact that some were buried with shield and spear by their side, others burned and their ashes deposited in an urn.





his lord or his relations, to the victim's relations or lord, in accordance with his rank or status. The institution of the 'wergild,' much older than the age of Ethelbert, represents the effort of primitive society to restrain the blood-feud, and to exact instead reparation in money for slaying, wounding and personal outrage.

We have no contemporary records or pictures of the dress of the pagan English. But in the first century of Christian England we are shown some of their near descendants, among the figures on the Franks casket in the British Museum. They are muffled up in hooded cloaks and girt with a kind of kilt; some have bare legs and some wear thick puttees. From the objects found in the graves of the earlier pagan period we know that the ladies wore a *chatelaine* of beads, keys and workbox. The kings and queens, the lords and ladies had rings and armlets of gold, and wore brooches and jewelry of bright colour and often of exquisite workmanship, made up of filigree-work, garnets, pearly shells, blue glass and gold.

In the south-east corner of the island, the art of enamelling flourished in the darkest period of the Dark Ages, just after the departure of the Romans. The famous 'Kentish enamels' were the work of Celtic artists, either from Britain or from the continent, living among the Jutish conquerors of Kent. Certainly the enamels represent the revival of the fine Celtic tradition of art patterns which the mere presence of Roman art had so long suppressed. They were the first step towards the amalgamation of Celtic and Saxon art tradition which led ere long to magnificent results.<sup>1</sup>

Jutish Kent was the most advanced of the pagan kingdoms in England. In their old continental homes the Jutes had had more contact than the Anglo-Saxons with civilized folk. And after they had established themselves in Kent, its geographical position made it the natural landing place for all peaceful comers from France and Italy, especially during the period when London port had ceased to function. It is significant that a vigorous life grew up in the Kentish capital of Canterbury at a time when town life had come to an end in most of the island; and that St. Augustine landed in Kent and quickly converted its king and its people (597),

<sup>1</sup> See E. T. Leeds, *Celtic Ornament and Early A. S. Art and Archaeology*; T. D. Kendrick, *Anglo-Saxon Art*, *passim*, pp. 69-73, for his controversy with Mr. Leeds,



partly through the agency of the King's Frankish wife. Kent was not typical of pagan Saxondom but was rather the link between it and western Europe. And as such it holds a great place in the social history of the nation.

The treasure that was recently found buried in the ship in the sands of Sutton Hoo, shows how considerable was the wealth of an East Anglian king in the last years of paganism, early in the Seventh Century; beautiful jewelry, probably English; silver plate from overseas; and gold coins from Merovingian France, for as yet there was no English coinage.

The religious ideas and rites which the Anglo-Saxons brought to Britain cannot be described in detail, for we know wonderfully little about them. They appear to have consisted of two elements,—the comparatively modern worship of Woden and Thunor, popular in the kingly and warrior class, and the far older practices and superstitions of the common folk. But there was nothing resembling our idea of a 'religion'; there was no body of doctrine or dogma, no ethical code attached, no exclusive claim of a God 'jealous' of other gods, no intolerance, and no organized hierarchy of priests like the Druid or Christian.

We hear indeed in some places of priests, but whereas Bede tells us that some of them resisted the Christian missionaries, he tells of one who took a leading part in introducing the new religion. There was no organized moral or intellectual defence of the old forms of worship. They were local customs, without a national or international centre. In many places there were no professional priests at all, but the King or householder conducted the worship, and himself presided over the sacrificial slaughtering of animals, and the feasts and wassailings that followed.

The kingly and aristocratic religion at the time of the invasion was the worship of Woden, a war-god, giver of victory and of treasure, the reputed ancestor of the royal families. But we must beware of ascribing to the Anglo-Saxon Woden and Thunor of the Fifth Century, the poetical and philosophical ideas attached to the Scandinavian Odin and Thor of a later date. Saxon Woden was not the 'All Father,' dwelling in a Gods' Home, such as Valhalla. He was just the god of the fighting men; his wooden idol, in all probability, came over in their long-boats, was dragged round on their campaigns and was finally set up in the





thegn's hall or in some meagre shanty of its own when the village was established. So at least we may guess. Thunor was the thunderer. We can say little else about Woden and Thunor, though Wednesday and Thursday are called after them, and even less about the deities who gave their names to Tuesday and Friday in the English week.

While the Kings and their chosen warriors sacrificed hecatombs to Woden, the common folk paid more attention to far older practices and superstitions,—fertility cults and harvest deities; earth and water spirits, and hauntings of the forest, all to be propitiated by traditional rites. There were festal seasons of infinite antiquity, like May Day and Yuletide, the one connected with the return of spring, the other with the long winter weeks when field work was suspended perforce and men could only eat and drink the products of last season's harvest and devour the flesh of the cattle they could no longer feed. Many ancient customs connected with these quasi-religious feasts survived into the Christian era. The May Day floral decorations, and the eating and drinking at Christmas are pagan in origin; the man dressed in the greenery of the new year, the 'Jack-in-the-Green' well known in the streets of Queen Victoria's England, was older than Christ, older than Woden.<sup>1</sup>

In all this realm of very ancient superstition, there was little essential difference between the Anglo-Saxon mind and that of the Britons whom they enslaved, or drove into the West. To primitive man, camped out amid the great forces of nature, which he was only gradually learning to master, earth and air, forest and water were all haunted by spirits, fairies, gnomes, nicors, dragons; some were good and some bad, some could be slain by heroes,<sup>2</sup> while the favour of others must be won by magic rites and charms.

And when, first among the Welsh, then among the Saxons, the

<sup>1</sup> On the complicated question of the relation of the pagan (Teutonic and Roman) to the Christian elements in spring and Christmas festivals, see E. K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, chaps. VI, XI, XII.

<sup>2</sup> I agree with Professor Tolkien ('Beowulf, the monster and the critic', *Brit. Ac. Proceedings*, 1936): I cannot, as many have done, feel that *Beowulf* is spoilt as literature or made absurd because the hero encounters dragons and monsters of the slime instead of mortal men. To the early Saxons these monsters were realities of their thought and common imagination. And in fact they are very terrible when we read the poem. *Beowulf*, though written in its present form by a Christian Anglo-Saxon, retains much of the feeling of an earlier age.



Christian missionaries took charge of the people's thoughts they could not abolish these 'millions of spiritual creatures,' who for centuries continued to haunt the forest, till it had disappeared before the axe. All the Church could do was to divide the spirits up into saints and devils. St. Winifred should have her well, as Coventina the goddess had had hers before. And the legion of devils should be controlled by Christian forms of magic, a comfort to the pious peasant whom the priests thus undertook to fend from harm. Only Puck and the fairies continued to hold a middle place between the good and bad spirits.

Before their conversion to Christianity, there is no evidence that the Anglo-Saxons believed in a heaven or hell, or even in the warrior's Valhalla as later conceived by the Norsemen. Certainly there was no priesthood formulating elaborate pictures of a future life of eternal bliss or woe. The commonest of many vague ideas about a future life was that of the dead man's spirit clinging to the burial mound, or to the grave where his body had been laid. The northern mind ran naturally to seeing 'ghosts,' in a land of forests and long winter nights.

'Wyrd,' fate, ruled gods and men, and the brave man must expect the end, soon or late. 'Wyrd goeth ever as she will,' we read in *Beowulf*.

'Wyrd oft saveth an earl unfated.'

'Each of us must abide an end of life in the world. Let him who may, win glory before death. That is best afterwards for the fighting man when he has ceased to live.'

So they sang in hall; but in the farmer's hovels outside, what were the thoughts of those who could win no glory by slaying or being slain? Perhaps the Christian message, in however crude a form, might lighten their darkness.

And what of those Britons who still retained their independence of Anglo-Saxondom? Decade after decade, their borders were perpetually being narrowed, as the invaders won their way first to the Bristol Channel (577) and a generation later to the mouth of the Dee, thus cutting 'Wales' into three separate parts—Cornwall, 'Wales' proper, and the Kingdom of Strathclyde in the north-west. During the long struggle with the Saxons, the Britons gradually lost all their civilized Roman characteristics—except Christianity, and even that with them was de-Romanized.





The reason is not far to seek. Those Britons who had been really subjected to the influence of Rome, who had dwelt in or near Roman towns and Villas, had been the inhabitants of the south-eastern half of Britain, and that was precisely the region which the Anglo-Saxons most completely overran in their first and most ruthless onslaught. Those Romanized Britons who did not perish or become subjected to the invaders, fled westwards, to live as miserable exiles among the wild Welsh tribesmen of the hills and heaths, to whose manner of life their descendants soon became assimilated.

On the material side of things it was a relapse to barbarism. But it was not all decadence. For a new spiritual life and hope was arising for these poor, quarrelsome Welsh tribesmen. Unable any longer to resist the Saxons or to unite for any useful worldly purpose among themselves, the best of them were turning their thoughts and energies in an entirely new direction, the Christian life in its most enthusiastic and ascetic form. They had indeed to work out their Christianity for themselves, just as St. Patrick's Irish had to do, because Anglo-Saxon heathendom lay athwart their communications with the Churches of Italy and France. Only the seafaring Britons of Cornwall were in touch with the scarcely less barbarous 'Brittany' across the Channel.

In this Celtic world, cut off from Rome, a tribal church structure and monastic organization took the place of the urban episcopate of Latin Christianity, which survived in the cities of France, but perished in all parts of Britain.

Thus, while the Saxons for nearly two hundred years remained pagan, their Welsh enemies were becoming more generally and more intensely Christian. The departure of the Roman officials and the decadence of material civilization actually aided the growth of Christianity among the Britons. It was no longer an alien creed, imposed by distant Emperors. It had now become the one light in a great darkness, a new object for life, a new direction of the spirit. The very unworldliness of the saints, missionaries, monks and hermits of that age appealed to the imaginative, unpractical Welsh. After the mission of St. Germanus, a born leader who came from Gaul in the early years of the Fifth Century, native Christianity did little to help the Britons to unite and organize their tribes, or to resist the pagan invaders. Rather it turned their minds to a new realm of thought and imagination.



## THE COMING OF THE ANGLO-SAXONS

The world had gone wrong, was in any case a wicked and worthless place. But there was 'another country' and the minds of many of the best men were more occupied with its invisible affairs than with the conquests of the ever-encroaching Saxons.

Such was the Saxon-Welsh Anarchy of the Sixth Century. Out of it modern England grew, by one of those astonishing miracles that Time and Nature sometimes work.





## RELIGION AND POETRY\*

I HAVE been asked to address you on the subject of Religion and Poetry, in the course of this evening's service. That service has itself consisted very largely of poetry. The religious poems that we call hymns, not found in the Prayer Book, were added to the custom of our ritual in the course of the last two hundred years. Of the hymns composed in the Nineteenth Century, most, though not all, represent the efforts of pious persons not very highly endowed with the poetic gift. But those hymns that we still use which have come down from the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries were the work of true poets. We have the abundance of Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley, real poets both, and occasional gems from our own George Herbert of Trinity, from Bunyan, Addison, Cowper and Blake. We have also to-night sung Hebrew Psalms and Christian Canticles, which are poems, translated out of the original tongues into English prose, at a time when our prose was much more poetical in quality than it is to-day. In short, our chapel service in large part consists of fine poetry, and fine prose-poetry, in our own language.

But I am not going to devote this address to the subject of Psalms, Canticles and Hymns. I am not going to discuss Poetry as the handmaid of Religion, but rather to consider secular Poetry in its own independent life, and to ask how it is related to Religion. I shall take my examples from those English poets of whose works I feel qualified to speak by more than half a century of companionship and love. Of present-day poetry I am debarred from speaking through age and ignorance. Neither shall I venture to discourse on the bards of ancient Greece and Rome, or of modern France and Italy, for I speak in the presence of some who have much more knowledge of them than I can claim. I will only hazard the remark that the magnificent poetry of ancient Greece was closely allied to Greek religion and reflects its ideas and qualities. But those great English poets of whom I feel competent to

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• speak offer a sufficiently wide variety to illustrate the general field of the subject.

Religion and Poetry have, I think, a common parentage, at least in their higher manifestations, which alone I wish to discuss to-night. They derive from a common origin in the spiritual and imaginative power of man, which forbids him to take a purely material view of the world, and gives him glimpses of something divine, either external to, or immanent in, nature and humankind. It is true that Religion, as we commonly use the word, offers to the believer a more sure and certain, and a more definite, creed than anything which the poets have authority to supply. But some poets,—for example Wordsworth, Shelley and Meredith,—though they have not been able to see the manifestations of the spiritual world in a clearly definable form, have felt the presence of the spirit in nature and in man with overwhelming intensity, and have expressed it in words of power.

Of these three, Shelley had the finest lyrical gift and the most ardent and other-worldly nature. His very love-songs, if you can call them love-songs, have the tone and quality of religious rhapsodies—

I can give not what men call love;  
But wilt thou accept not  
The worship the heart lifts above,  
And the heavens reject not—  
The desire of the moth for the star,  
Of the night for the morrow,  
The devotion to something afar  
From the sphere of our sorrow?

But Shelley's mind was too fanciful, too erratic, too abstract to give his readers any religious or philosophical food to sustain them. One does not go to Shelley for that.

Meredith indeed offered a more solid spiritual repast, and to me his poems have quasi-religious value. In Meredithian thought, it is through our mother Earth, Nature, that we approach God.

She will lead us, only she,  
Unto God's footstool, whither she reaches.

Meredith rejects miracle; there is 'no power to interpose.' For behind us and all around us stands 'the army of unalterable law,'—law not only physical but moral. The starry sky is its symbol; gazing on the winter heavens the poet says:





There, past mortal breath,  
Life glistens on the river of the death.  
It folds us, flesh and dust, and have we knelt,  
Or never knelt, or eyed as kine the springs  
Of radiance, the radiance enringing:  
And this is the soul's haven to have felt.

Sometimes, as in the *Hymn to Colour*, Meredith has delivered himself of a rhapsody of the deepest spiritual significance and of universal applicability to life, in words of haunting beauty. But his diction was so often obscure, and his poetical inspiration was so often clogged by his passion for intellectual subtlety. Too much intellect in a poem is as bad as too little. Intellect is the salt of poetry, but not its substance. The substance of poetry is not the brain but the spirit. Meredith had both in abundance, but he did not always fuse them in due proportion.

Wordsworth therefore is the poet who has, for the modern world, best succeeded in expressing the vague but powerful intuitions which many of us feel about life and the universe, particularly in the presence of natural scenery, as when he says in Book VI of the *Prelude*:—

Whether we be young or old  
Our destiny, our being's heart and home,  
Is with infinitude, and only there;  
With hope it is, hope that can never die,  
Effort and expectation and desire,  
And something evermore about to be.  
Under such banners militant, the soul  
Seeks for no trophies, struggles for no spoils  
That may attest her prowess, blest in thoughts  
That are their own perfection and reward,  
Strong in herself and in beatitude  
That hides her, like the mighty flood of Nile  
Poured from his fount in Abyssinian clouds  
To fertilise the whole Egyptian plain.

And in his Ode on the *Intimations of Immortality* he speaks of:—

those first affections,  
Those shadowy recollections,  
Which, be they what they may,  
Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,  
Are yet a master-light of all our seeing,  
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make  
Our noisy years seem moments in the being  
Of the eternal silence.



Our years are even more noisy than those in which Wordsworth lived. But we can each of us still endeavour to have hours of inspiration which we feel to be 'moments in the being of the eternal silence.' Again to quote Wordsworth, we can sometimes attain the sense of

Central peace, subsisting in the heart  
Of endless agitation.

It is the common aim of Religion and Poetry, at their highest, to enable us sometimes to feel that 'central peace'—'the peace of God which passeth all understanding.'

But there is another class of poets,—including two of the very greatest, Dante and Milton,—who accepted the religion of their time. They are the glory, and I trust will always remain the study, of those who profess and call themselves Christians. Because, owing to the irruption of science, you no longer hold the entire cosmological beliefs either of Dante or of Milton, that is no reason why you should not read the *Divine Comedy* and *Paradise Lost*. Not to do so, is to lose a part of your heritage as Europeans and as Englishmen, to impoverish your spiritual being.

Another Christian poet was Samuel Taylor Coleridge; his *Hymn before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamounix* is a magnificent religious poem,

Ye ice-falls! Ye that from the mountain's brow  
Adown enormous ravines slope amain  
—Utter forth God and fill the hills with praise.

It is, in fact, an adaptation to mountain scenery of the idea of Adam's orison in Book V of *Paradise Lost* (lines 153–208).

Tennyson's *In Memoriam* is another kind of religious poem, describing the ordeal of a mind assailed at once by a great personal loss, and by religious doubts arising from the grim cosmological prospects then first being revealed to man by modern science. In the middle years of the last Century *In Memoriam* meant much to leaders of English thought, like our own Henry Sidgwick, and even to Thomas Huxley himself. Our College can always be proud that it was written by one Trinity man in memory of his College friendship with another.

Some of our great poets were not religious-minded. Chaucer was a man of the world, and so were two Trinity men, Andrew





Marvell and Byron. When Chaucer rises to mystic heights, his subject is the love of men and women not the love of God. Marvell uses philosophical metaphors and images, but rather for poetical than for philosophical purposes. As in his lines on 'The Garden':

Meanwhile the mind, from pleasure less,  
Withdraws into its happiness;  
The mind, that ocean where each kind  
Does straight its own resemblance find;  
Yet it creates, transcending these  
Far other worlds, and other seas,  
Annihilating all that's made  
To a green thought in a green shade.

Or, in his lines to his 'Coy Mistress':

But at my back I always hear  
Time's winged chariot hurrying near,  
And yonder all before us lie  
Deserts of vast eternity.

No, Andrew Marvell though he lived in the heart of a religious age and served as Secretary to Oliver Cromwell himself, had not what I should call a religious mind. But he had a deep poetical sense of spiritual values, and of first and last things. As to Byron, he is best when his feet are firmly on the ground of worldly affairs.

Keats in his golden youth found the divine in beauty. He even said that Beauty was Truth, Truth Beauty, that was all. Alas, it is not all! And Keats was beginning to find that out and to bring forward the vast enginery of his mind to attack the riddle of life in its deeper aspects, when death cut him short. The rest is silence.

Most poems approach Religion not directly but indirectly. It is the special function of secular poetry to give to ordinary human themes their full spiritual value, which the poet has the sensibility to perceive and the power to make his readers feel. Such, in particular, is the work of the greatest poet of all, Shakespeare. I should not call him either a religious poet like Milton, or a man of the world like Chaucer. There is, I think, no evidence that he was interested in the relation to Religion borne by the spiritual values of ordinary life, which were his theme. But there is such



a relation. The whole world of spirit and emotion, both secular and religious, is one world. Its apparently separate parts are connected by underground fibres that permeate unseen the soil of humanity. So at least I believe.

Let me illustrate my meaning. When Shakespeare wrote *King Lear*, he was not thinking in religious, certainly not in Christian terms. The *Dramatis Personae* are heathens. One of the references to the divine powers is the bitter outcry of the blinded Gloucester:

As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods;  
They kill us for their sport.

Some of the other characters, like the religious-minded Edgar, regard the gods as good; others regard them as powers controlling fate, but neutral between good and bad. In the tremendous finale of the play, no appeal is made to heaven. And yet in another sense, it would hardly be a paradox to call *King Lear* a great religious poem. Its theme, intensely serious from first to last, is the awful power of evil. Sin and cruelty, apparently triumphant, brood over the play like the Nazi power over Europe. But in the long run evil rends itself; it is self-destructive; its power is not permanent in its grosser forms. Goodness tends to survive it. But only some of the good survive. Others, often the very best like Cordelia, perish, victims to the powers of evil, as so many have perished in this war. The consolation that Shakespeare offers to the human race is no easy and false optimism, like that of the unobservant man who declared that he had never seen the righteous forsaken. The consolation offered us by the author of *Lear* is very different. His consolation is the goodness of good people, the all-enduring love of Cordelia, the loyalty of Kent, the power of Edgar to 'bear free and patient thoughts.' These things we are taught to contemplate and with these things to be content. Virtue is its own reward. A hard saying, but it lies at the base of religion and of morality.

Not only is *Lear* a great moral poem. It is analogous to Christian feeling. Cordelia could pass as the presentment of Christian character, not quite perfect as such, because of the just but too stubborn pride with which she repels her father's absurdities in the first scene; but she is supreme over all that fate can do to her, in the strength of her goodness and the power of her love. And *Lear* himself? Surely his conversion to humility and universal





sympathy through the discipline of sorrow, is a well known Christian *motif*. But it is a universal *motif* also, and I do not believe that Shakespeare was consciously thinking of it as specifically Christian.

But Shakespeare, whatever his personal religion may or may not have been, was an outcome of Christian civilization, and of long centuries of Christian thought and feeling.

Religion, as it seems to me, fulfils two great purposes. First, it supplies a man with a rule of conduct, a moral obligation which I rather think was the original meaning of the Latin word *religio*: Religion prohibits sin and it constrains to righteous action. Secondly, Religion unites man to God, to the unseen world, through ecstasy and adoration. Poetry subserves both these purposes of Religion.

First, the rule of conduct, in obedience to God's law, is the direct theme of some of our finest poems, like Wordsworth's *Ode to Duty*, and Milton's *Comus*. But the support given by secular poetry to the law of righteousness is less often given in this specific manner, than in the attitude towards right and wrong pervading poems that have no direct didactic purpose. In this way Shakespeare is a very great moral teacher. Robert Browning and Matthew Arnold are deeply concerned with the law of righteousness and the many subtle problems that arise in its interpretation to meet the varying circumstances of life. Browning wrote a century of poems, each one the study of the case of some individual man or woman in contact with life. Intensely interested as Browning was in all the varieties of human experience and aspiration, bad as well as good, small as well as great, his fundamental interest was moral or religious. It is summed up in the last stanzas of *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, where he speaks of the character of each one of us as moulded on an individual pattern by the hand of God, through the touch of circumstance, as a cup is moulded by the wheel of the potter.

He fixed thee mid this dance  
Of plastic circumstance,  
This present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest:  
Machinery just meant  
To give thy soul its bent,  
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.



There have indeed been schools of poetry and individual poets, even in England, who did not make for righteousness! But on the whole the two finest bodies of poetry, the ancient Greek and the English, have both been on the side of obedience to the laws of God.

Even more markedly has secular poetry aided the second great purpose of Religion, in giving voice to adoration and ecstasy. Most of the illustrations which I have cited or to which I have referred have been of this character. There is often a personal or individual note in the ecstasy or adoration of the poet, which gives it added force and reality. In the *Divine Comedy* you are never out of Dante's company, or likely to forget his life-history, his loves and hates. Milton became blind: his blindness chastened his faults, and elicited his consummate virtues. It raised him above the world and united him to God. His blindness and his mastery of that affliction produced the sonnet on his blindness, and inspired *Samson Agonistes*, and the opening passage of Book III in *Paradise Lost*, which represents the closest identification of religious feeling and personal experience with pure poetry:—

Hail holy light, offspring of Heav'n first-born,  
Or of th' Eternal Coeternal beam  
May I express thee unblam'd? since God is light,  
And never but in unapproach'd light  
Dwelt from Eternitie, dwelt then in thee,  
Bright effluence of bright essence increate.

\* \* \* \* \* Thee I revisit safe,

And feel thy sovran vital Lamp; but thou  
Revisit'st not these eyes, that rowle in vain  
To find thy piercing ray, and find no dawn;  
So thick a drop serene hath quencht thir Orbs,  
Or dim suffusion veild. Yet not the more  
Cease I to wander where the Muses haunt  
Cleer Spring, or shadie Grove, or Sunnie Hill,  
Smit with the love of sacred song; but chief  
Thee STON and the flowrie Brooks beneath  
That wash thy hallowd feet, and warbling flow,  
Nightly I visit: nor sometimes forget  
Those other two equal'd with me in Fate,  
So were I equal'd with them in renown,  
Blind THAMYRIS and blind MAEONIDES,  
And TIRESIAS and PHINEUS prophets old.





## RELIGION AND POETRY

CSL

Then feed on thoughts, that voluntarie move  
Harmonious numbers; as the wakeful Bird  
Sings darkling, and in shadiest Covert hid  
Tunes her nocturnal Note. Thus with the Year  
Seasons return, but not to me returns  
Day, or the sweet approach of Ev'n or Morn,  
Or sight of vernal bloom, or Summers Rose,  
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;  
But cloud in stead, and ever-during dark  
Surrounds me, from the chearful waies of men  
Cut off, and for the Book of knowledg fair  
Presented with a Universal blanc  
Of Natures works to mee expung'd and ras'd,  
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.  
So much the rather thou Celestial light  
Shine inward, and the mind though all her powers  
Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence  
Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell  
Of things invisible to mortal sight.

## CROMWELL'S STATUE

It was agreeable to the nature of things that Cromwell's statue was not hidden away during the Second World War, but remained under fire, guarding the entrance of the House of Commons, with Bible and with Sword. It was equally appropriate that Charles I's statue was put away as a work of art too precious to be exposed to the chances of battle.

It is often remarked that some of our London statues are oddly chosen or curiously placed. The Duke of York, who deserves a bust in the War Office for the good work he did there, is set on the top of a column that rivals Nelson's, as though he meant as much in our military history as Nelson in our naval. Meanwhile the Duke of Cambridge rides for ever outside the War Office! But Charles I and Cromwell are 'just right.' There they both are, in the heart of our capital, each statue symbolizing aspects of England's life once in mortal conflict, now reconciled, and making up together the best part of what we now are. What is less good in us to-day is neither Roundhead nor Cavalier.

The Nineteenth Century was agitated by the question—'Should Cromwell have a statue?'—and settled it in 1895 in a characteristically English way. Thornycroft's fine statue of him was placed at Westminster, but was not paid for out of public funds. The Liberal government of that day wished to pay for it, but the proposal was vetoed by their political allies from Ireland. For in those old days England had to consult Ireland about English affairs, as the price of governing Ireland against her will. The great Unionist (or Conservative) party, to whom this arrangement about Ireland seemed to be the very palladium of the Constitution, was itself in two minds about Cromwell's statue: on the one hand he was a Dissenter and a Radical; on the other hand he was a Patriot and an Imperialist. So a compromise was agreed to, by which Lord Rosebery, the Liberal Prime Minister, paid out of his own pocket for the statue, which was set up outside the entrance to the House of Commons.

The position is excellently chosen. For one thing, it arouses





question. 'Who is this?' says the casual visitor to the Houses of Parliament, 'Cromwell here? He of all people! Why, he marched his troopers into the House of Commons and took away the bauble!'

Nevertheless my opinion is that the statue is well placed—as well placed as the statue of Richard I, a hundred yards further on, is ill placed. What indeed is that levanting knight-errant doing outside the Houses of Parliament? No King had less concern with the development of our Constitution, or even with the government of England. Why not put Richard Lionheart in front of the War Office instead of the Duke of Cambridge?

But Oliver is well placed at the entry of the House of Commons, because without him we should not have become a nation governed by Parliament—not at any rate in the Seventeenth Century. For the King would have won the Civil War, and Parliament would have been put back into the position it occupied under the Tudors, or would have gone under as completely as the Estates of France and the Cortes of Spain. If our training in Parliamentary government had thus been delayed until the Industrial Revolution was upon us, we should have fared as badly as other lands that postponed their rebellion against monarchical power,—as badly as France, Italy, Spain, Germany and Russia.

We have now been so long accustomed to government by the House of Commons, that we find it difficult to imagine what an original and bold thing it was of Pym and Hampden to embark on governing the country through a debating assembly, especially in an age when the whole tendency of things outside England was moving rapidly to Monarchical Despotism. In England the King's power was indefinite, so he thought it was infinite. But Parliament's power also was indefinite, and might therefore be regarded as infinite. Hence the Civil War. The idea taught to the English Parliamentary chiefs by Coke and the black-letter lawyers, that they were only defending their ancient privileges, was perhaps half true. But it was wholly useful, because the English like to think they have law on their side, even when they are making revolutions. Charles I attacked their ancient privileges, and the only way to save *privileges* which were legally theirs was to seize *power* which was not theirs by law. They claimed practical sovereignty for the House of Commons. It could not have been won except by war. And the war could not have been



So, too, he represented the union of classes,—gentry, yeomen, shopkeepers,—who stood together for 'the Houses and the Word.' In September 1643 he wrote:—

I had rather have a plain russet-coated Captain that knows what he fights for, and loves what he knows, than that which you call 'a gentleman' and is nothing else. I honour a *Gentleman* that is so indeed!

On these principles he built up first his own Troops of Ironsides, who cleared the Royalists out of East Anglia, and then the New Model Army that won the war. It was a long, hard struggle to create such a force, always against Presbyterian and aristocratic intolerance, and at first against financial difficulties also. Here in his letter to Oliver St. John in the early stage of the process, September 11, 1643:—

I am now ready for my march towards the enemy; who hath entrenched himself against Hull, my Lord Newcastle having besieged the town. Many of my Lord of Manchester's Troops are come to me: very bad and mutinous, not to be confided in; *they* paid to a week almost; *mine* noways provided-for to support them, except by the poor Sequestrations of the County of Huntingdon. My Troops increase. I have a lovely company; you would respect them did you know them. They are no 'Anabaptists', they are honest sober Christians; they expect to be used as men!

Cromwell was himself of a good county family of moderate estate, allied by kinship or marriage to Hampden, St. John and other Parliamentary leaders. He himself was not of the feudal type of squire, but a gentleman farmer. He belonged to the working rather than to the enjoying classes. It is characteristic of his unsentimental attitude to land that in 1631 he sold his patrimony at Huntingdon in order to take on lease richer grass-lands at St. Ives where he could fatten stock to more advantage. He was known and trusted by those with whom he dealt, the yeomen, labourers and merchants of East Anglia, particularly in his own Fen District, where he stood out as champion of the small men against unjust awards too favourable to 'the great,' in connection with the draining schemes. But he was much too practical to be opposed to the schemes themselves; as Protector he helped to bring them to fruition, so adding a rich agricultural region to England.

Being such a man, it was natural for him to write to the Suffolk





Committee, on the business of raising East Anglian forces in September 1643:—

Gentlemen, it may be it provokes some spirits to see such plain men made Captains of Horse. It had been well that men of honour and birth had entered into these employments:—but why do they not appear? Who would have hindered them? But seeing it was necessary the work must go on, better plain men than none; but best to have men patient of wants, faithful and conscientious in their employment.

The Ironsides whom he thus laboriously raised in the Eastern Counties became the nucleus round which the New Model Army formed itself, acquiring their spirit in the course of the victorious campaigns of 1645–46. But at Naseby in June 1645 many of the New Model soldiers were raw recruits, more numerous but certainly no better than the enemy opposed to them. The battle was won by Cromwell and his troopers.

I can say this of Naseby [he wrote], that when I saw the enemy draw up and march in gallant order towards us, and we a company of poor ignorant men to seek how to order our battle, the General having commanded me to order all the horse, I could not,—riding alone about my business—but smile out to God in praises in assurance of victory, because God would, by things that are not, bring to naught things that are, of which I had great assurance—and God did it.

The vigour of these broken words evokes a picture of the heavy, middle-aged horseman, his big orange scarf flowing from off his cuirass, as he canters 'alone' from headquarters in the centre of the open field to his post on the right among his Ironsides, the fen farmers whom he had enlisted in his own homeland, and trained into a cavalry whom he could trust. No wonder the solitary rider 'somewhat grimly smiles' to himself,—and, of course, 'to God.' As to the 'company of poor, ignorant men,'—well, well! Some of them were by that time not wholly ignorant of war!

The finest of several pieces written about Cromwell by great contemporary poets is Andrew Marvell's 'Horatian Ode' on his triumphant return,

from Ireland coming,

Bringing rebellion broached on his sword,

as poor Essex never did for all Shakespeare's good wishes. Now Marvell, though in later years he was one of Cromwell's



won without Cromwell. That was the real English Revolution. The Revolution of 1688 was only a conservative and official confirmation of the issue decided at Marston Moor and Naseby.

One often hears people who are devoted to our present free Constitution blame Pym and Cromwell for their violent courses. Such strictures are in some respects valid. No one to-day approves the whole Roundhead programme of 1641, especially as to religion; and the Regicide of 1649 still holds its place among the world's worst mistakes. But historical characters and historic policies must be judged in their totality. And I think England was better served by these rough fellows than Germany by her Liberals who could never say *boh* to a goose, either in 1848 or since, who always wilted before efficient ruffians like Bismarck or Hitler. In Germany the coarse-grained men of action who 'deliver the goods' have always, with the exception of Luther in the matter of religion, been on the side of authority. In England they have been more equally divided,—Strafford for instance on one side, but Pym and Cromwell on the other. If the Prussian Parliament had cut off Bismarck's head in 1860 as ours cut off Strafford's in 1640 the world would be a happier place to-day. But the Germans have never been as ready to fight for their own liberties as they have always been ready to fight against the liberties of other nations. It has been very different with the English-speaking peoples.

The amazing adventure of seizing 'the empire and the rule' for the House of Commons in place of the King, would scarcely have been undertaken, and most certainly would not have succeeded, but for the question of religion. The notion of tolerating more than one kind of religion within the borders of a state was alien to the thought of the time. Intolerance was the accepted doctrine not only of priests and presbyters, but of politicians. It was regarded by the pious as a duty to God. 'The abomination of toleration' was equally odious to most Anglicans and to most Puritans. Charles, being an Anglican with a Roman Catholic wife, was determined to put down all forms of Puritanism, both the narrow Presbyterianism of the Scots and of Prynne, and the less orthodox sectarianism and individualism dear to men like Cromwell and Milton, John Bunyan and George Fox. It was a dangerous undertaking, for Puritanism of one sort or another was then the prevalent inspiration and interest in life of the most active





mindful of the middle and lower orders of society, to say nothing of a very large section of the squirearchy of that day. However, Laud and the Bishops, under the Royal protection, were busy hunting all that down. Puritans of all kinds,—and there were many very different kinds,—must conform to the Anglican worship, or go to America,—or fight. At first they tried going to America. But after some years they found an opportunity to stay at home and make a bid for power,—the only way in those days to obtain toleration. The first of these movements founded the United States: the second founded English Parliamentary Government.

The reason why the Puritans were able to fight instead of continuing to go to America, was that from 1640 onwards Parliament, so long in abeyance, was again sitting, supplying them with a ground of authority on which to stand, and a flag round which to rally. They could fight for 'the Houses,' more particularly for the House of Commons. The political and religious issues ran together so precisely that it is often difficult to say whether a man chose his side for religious or for political reasons,—Hyde for instance, and Cromwell. Cromwell, in the middle of the Civil War (September 5, 1644), could write

We are said to be 'factious', to 'seek to maintain our opinions in religion by force,'—which we detest and abhor. I profess I could never satisfy myself of the justness of the War, but from the Authority of Parliament, to maintain itself in its rights.

Cromwell indeed represents the complete fusion, on equal terms, of the political and religious motives. It is impossible to imagine him as a supporter of the Court and the higher nobility; it is no less impossible to imagine him as a Catholic, either Roman or High Anglican. He was a man of the people, and he was a Protestant, standing at the junction of all those classes that opposed the Court, and of all those religionists who opposed the Bishops.

Presbyterians, Independents, all have here the same spirit of faith and prayer; the same presence and answer; they agree here, and have no names of difference: pity it is it should be otherwise elsewhere.'

he wrote to the House of Commons from the Army in September 1645.



household as Secretary, knew very little of him personally in 1650, when he wrote the Ode. Otherwise he would scarcely have written:—

And if we would speak true,  
Much to the man is due  
Who, from his private gardens, where  
He lived reservèd and austere,  
(As if his highest plot  
To plant the bergamot,)  
Could by industrious valour climb  
To ruin the great work of time,  
And cast the Kingdoms old  
Into another mould.

These are noble lines that enrich our history and our literature, but they are scarcely an accurate account of the young Cromwell, an active gentleman farmer, well known in local disputes as a popular champion. But at least they remind us of the fact that he was more than forty years old before he took to soldiering, or became even a minor figure on the national stage.

Cromwell, as we noticed, in September 1644, had written that he and his friends, 'abhorred' the idea of maintaining their 'opinions in religion by force,' and that he considered the war was only justified by the Authority of Parliament (p. 161 above); yet three years later he participated in the coercion of Parliament by force, in order to win the religious toleration that he and his friends demanded. Was he therefore a hypocrite? No more than other people who have changed their minds or their methods with changing circumstances. He was indeed, as we all know, a great 'opportunist.' That is to say he had a wonderful instinct for the need of the moment, and held no rigid theories about Church or State. Only he sought freedom of religion for Puritans of all sorts, and the government of the country by the House of Commons. But the two objects became incompatible after the war was won, because the House of Commons, egged on by the City of London, would tolerate no one but strict Presbyterians; he had therefore to choose, and after long hesitations he chose to secure religious freedom for himself and his fellow soldiers who had trusted him in war and in peace, at the expense of the liberties of the House of Commons. The House that had already 'purged'





itself of Cavaliers was now forcibly purged of the Presbyterian leaders.

This action deprived England of even the semblance of lawful government, and led through Regicide to the 'forced power' of the Council of State and the Protectorate. But the blame for creating the chaos that Oliver Protector had ultimately to control by despotic rule, seems to me to rest much less with Cromwell and the Army than with the House of Commons and the City of London for their action in 1647. They had, very wisely, determined in the winter of 1644-45 to create the New Model Army on a basis of toleration in its ranks for all Puritans, and had thereby won the war against the King. But as soon as the war was won they proposed to cheat the men who had saved them in the field, by refusing to them religious toleration, and by setting up a narrow Presbyterian tyranny, a religion which, as the future showed, was alien to everything English,—Anglican and Free Church alike. At the same time the House of Commons failed to pay the arrears due to the New Model, though it had found money for the purpose fast enough so long as the war lasted. The soldiers were to be demobilized unpaid, and as soon as they got back to civil life they were to be persecuted for their religion by Presbyterian Ministers whom they detested and despised. How could Cromwell consent to see his old comrades in the field, many of whom had enlisted because of their faith in him, thus defrauded at once of everything, mundane and spiritual, for which they had fought? When human folly reaches a certain point it has to be paid for, and that point was reached by the policy of Parliament and the City of London in 1647.

Cromwell's good faith and patriotism must be judged by the prolonged and earnest efforts which he made to prevent this fatal breach between Parliament and Army. For he knew that it would be fatal. In the course of these long negotiations, he and Ireton put forward the best of the various schemes suggested,—The Heads of the Proposals—which extended religious toleration to all Protestants, even permitting the use of the Prayer Book to those who wished. This was far more liberal than anything Parliament could swallow. He tried also to bring the King into the arrangement. But King and House of Commons were equally recalcitrant. It must never be forgotten in judging Cromwell's character and alleged schemes of personal 'ambition,' that he tried



long and earnestly to bring about an agreement by consent which would have reconciled all parties and all Protestant congregations under Charles as constitutional monarch. He failed. Chaos ensued. And it was only to control chaos that he usurped the rule, to save England and the Empire from disruption.

This, so far as it goes, is a true statement of the case. But taken by itself it is too favourable to Cromwell: for one must add that after the failure of his earnest efforts to secure agreement, and after King and Presbyterians had raised a second civil war against the Army and the Sects, Oliver lost his temper and cut off the King's head. Thereby he added fuel to the flame of conflicting passions which he had so long and so vainly striven to reconcile. Yes, he lost his temper. I can indeed understand anyone losing his temper with King Charles; the combination of high-minded obstinacy with deceptiveness and intrigue, the refusal to understand that the defeat in war meant anything, was vastly irritating to those who earnestly endeavoured to bring him to some agreement. And the Second Civil War (1648) which Royalists and Presbyterians raised against the Army and the Sects was a very real provocation to the soldier 'saints'. It is not wonderful that, at their famous Prayer-meeting at Windsor, before they marched off to the Preston campaign, they came to the conclusion that it was 'our duty, if ever the Lord brought us back again in peace, to call Charles Stuart, the man of blood, to an account.' One can hardly blame those soldiers: but the world will always debate how far Cromwell can be forgiven for agreeing with them.

It is not so much the personal injustice to Charles that condemns the act, though of course it was utterly illegal, like most acts in time of Revolution. But it was impolitic in the long run, even if convenient at the moment. It was a crime against England, even more than against Charles. For it outraged the feelings of the immense majority of the English people, and in particular it rendered impossible the reconciliation of the Cavaliers. It alienated almost the whole of the squirearchy, who had been almost half Puritan. It ruined, in the end, the Puritan cause, by associating Puritanism with a deed which the English people was taught for generations to abhor. When Carlyle wrote that

this action of the English Regicides did in effect strike a damp like death through the heart of Flunkeyism universally in this world, whereof Flunkeyism . . . has gone about incurably sick ever since,





I think he was mistaken. In England at least, what Carlyle calls 'Flunkeyism' got from the scene before Whitehall a new lease of life for centuries to come. The pity men felt for Charles became one of the strongest factors in English politics and religion, with results good and bad.

The Regicide ruined what chance Puritanism had of becoming the principle of the established Church, or the religion of any important section of the governing class. But even the reaction of 1660 could not eliminate Puritanism as a great factor in English life. For Cromwell's rule gave the Sects a decade of protection during which they struck deep roots in English soil,—ineradicable by later persecution. To Cromwell's protection we owe the survival of George Fox and his Quakers; Bunyan and his Baptists; Independents, Congregationalists and so forth. It was these Sects who survived the Restoration, very much more than the orthodox Presbyterians, in spite of the fact that the Presbyterians had opposed the Regicide and the Sects were mainly responsible for that permanently unpopular deed. The heart of English Puritanism down the ages has proved to be sectarian and individualist, not Presbyterian: there Cromwell was right and his work outlived him.

But, to go back to the Regicide, Cromwell, as I say, lost his temper and cut off the King's head. Here we come to grips with the very complicated question of Oliver's character, psychology and nervous system,—for though his nerves were of iron in battle,<sup>1</sup> he had 'nerves.' His mind and character were a mosaic of contradictory elements,—love of field sports and 'innocent jests,' followed by groaning in conventicles; championship of liberty, and determination to enforce order; long periods of doubt and hesitation, breeding at the end fierce, immutable resolve; tearful pity and implacable anger; long patience with fools as in 1647, and gusts of fatal impatience next year. Walter Scott, who in *Woodstock* made the first effort since Cromwell's death to depict the real man, has emphasized and even exaggerated the temperamental element in Oliver's changing moods. Gusts of passion are particularly dangerous in a statesman, for he does in his wrath things which men remember when they have forgotten his long patience

<sup>1</sup> One of his fellow-soldiers wrote, 'In the dark perils of war, in the high places of the field, hope shone in him like a pillar of fire, when it had gone out in all the others.' Carlyle, III, 30. (Letter cxxxix.)



and good will. As Protector he earnestly tried to work with Parliaments of which he well knew the necessity and the value. But being provoked he could be flint, and his passion exploded in the 'bauble' scene, which, in the eyes of half-informed posterity, has damned him as the enemy of Parliaments no less than of Kings.

Now in the matter of the Regicide, how did these psychological peculiarities work? In 1647 he had been striving with care and good temper to reconcile Parliament, Army and King,—Presbyterian, Independent and even Anglican. His word to his impatient soldiers had been 'What we and they gain in a free way is better than thrice so much in a forced way, and will be more truly ours and our posterities. That you have by force I look upon as nothing.' A wise word surely, and strangely pathetic as his honest opinion, when we consider all that was to come. His efforts at peace-making broke down, through no fault of his own; Presbyterian and Royalist joined to make a new war on the Army. The fury of Oliver's rebound was proportionate to the length and patience of his frustrated efforts for peace. In terms of his religion he believed that he had sinned in striving to effect a settlement with the ungodly, though in fact that effort is one of his clearest claims to honourable fame. During the Prayer-meeting at Windsor before the Preston campaign, he and his fellow soldiers wept in repentance of their recent falling away, though in fact it was into statesmanship and common sense that they had then fallen. They groaned over their 'carnal consultations with our own wisdoms, and not with the word of the Lord,' though in fact their own wisdoms were all that they or any man ever had to consult, and 'the word of the Lord' was merely another (and in this case less wise) mood of their own. A strange sight to modern eyes, Oliver and his strong comrades, the finest soldiers in the world, proved on a hundred stricken fields and stormed breaches,—sitting round bathed in tears. We cannot now quite understand it; we need not, with Carlyle, wholly admire it, but considering what manner of men these warriors were, we must reverence it,—reverently perhaps avert our eyes from that strange display of emotion, the more so as its outcome was a terrible mistake. Hypocrites? No. But earnest, well-meaning mortals, subject like all men to error.

Next winter the dread resolve to execute the King was put into effect, under the active leadership of Cromwell. It was, I think,





this religious or fanatical element, exacerbating his temperamental human passions, that blinded him on this great occasion to a realistic consideration of the public interest, usually uppermost in his mind. In his passionate human resentment at having been tricked, and his mistaken 'sense of sin' where there had been no sin, he failed in his duty to remember that the people of England regarded the Regicide with horror. And so, in a dangerous mood of exaltation, he crossed the Rubicon, a stream that should be traversed only in cold blood. He dug a gulf between himself and kindly English good sense, of which he had in his simpler and more usual moods more than an ample share.

But while we condemn the Regicide, it is only fair to remember the extreme difficulty of knowing what to do with Charles, as he would come to no agreement and would not let any of his sons take his place. There was no William III handy to solve England's problem, as forty years later. What they ought to have done with Charles, I confess I do not know. Men sometimes have the misfortune to be faced by problems actually insoluble. As Charles would not come to terms with the victors, he had to be deposed, and that necessarily involved either exile, imprisonment—or death. There were grave difficulties and dangers in each of these courses. I think they chose what proved in the long run the worst. But at least they did not degrade our history by assassinating him in prison, as had been done under similar circumstances with Edward II, Richard II and Henry VI.

What then was this religion of Oliver's which proved both his strength and his weakness? It supported him through life, inspired him to action, and strengthened him to bear intolerable burdens which other men refused to shoulder. But sometimes it blinded him, by making him think his own passion was God's will. In the words of Hudibras it was

A dark lantern of the Spirit  
Which none see by but those who bear it.

To think that God has given you victory in battle is modest in one sense, arrogant in another. It is certainly dangerous to suppose, as Oliver constantly supposed and said, that his victories were the direct work of God, and betokened the divine approval of some particular line of policy. The assumption was highly



irritating to opponents, who called Cromwell a hypocrite. He was not that, but he was claiming what no mortal man has a right to claim. Were the Roman Catholic victories in the French Wars of Religion and the Thirty Years War acts of God, one would like to have asked him. The Jesuits thought so.

On the other hand this perfect faith that God was on his side enabled him to endure, never to lose heart and hope either in war or in peace, although he was by nature subject to melancholy and to long periods of hesitation and doubt before taking his great resolutions, and in the latter part of his life was friendless enough on his barren eminence of power. But he felt that God was beside him, a present help in trouble.

His religion was as little doctrinal as the religion of any man of that day, except perhaps some of the Quakers, to whom he showed a sympathy then very unusual. As he wrote to his son Richard 'The true knowledge is not literal or speculative; but inward, transforming the mind to it.'<sup>1</sup> The doctrinal and ecclesiastical questions about which the religious parties were quarrelling so fiercely, frankly bored him. Therefore he was perfectly ready to treat Presbyterians and Sectarians as friends on equal terms, and to tolerate Anglicans. Within those limits, which excluded Roman Catholics, he was an early Apostle of the principle of Toleration. If he had not so fatally turned all Anglicans into life-long enemies by the execution of the King, he would as Protector have tolerated their worship as he had suggested in the Heads of the Proposals.

His religious belief and practice may be summed up with the utmost brevity:—a sense of sin and of his own human worthlessness, save when redeemed by God's grace; a continual communion with God, through Christ, in the sanctuary of his own mind and heart.<sup>2</sup> This personal intercourse with God is the essence of religion, stripped bare of all its trappings which to many mean so much but to the Puritan seemed impertinent and even impious.

<sup>1</sup> April 2, 1650 (from Ireland). In the same letter of advice to this rather mild young man, well worth reading as a guide to the father's mind and character, Oliver writes—'Take heed of an unactive vain spirit! Recreate yourself with Sir Walter Raleigh's History; it's a body of History, and will add much more to your understanding than fragments of story.'

<sup>2</sup> In that same letter to Richard from Ireland, we read 'Seek the Lord and his face continually:—let this be the business of your life and strength, and let all things be subservient and in order to this! You cannot find nor behold the face of God but in Christ; therefore labour to know God in Christ.'





When freshly and sincerely felt this personal communion with God is a mighty power, and in those days it wrought mightily. But it was too assiduously cultivated and too perpetually talked about—even by Cromwell. When, in men less sincere, the well-spring was really dry and the words were repeated artificially as the shibboleth of a sect or party, nothing could be more odious. In this dual aspect of the Puritan religion we have the key to the successful Revolution of 1642-48, and also to the Restoration of 1660.

John Buchan has written in his *Life of Cromwell*:—

He had the same power as Caesar and Napoleon, the gift of forcing facts to serve him, of compelling multitudes of men into devotion or acquiescence. But it is on that point alone that he is kin to those cyclopean architects and roadmakers, the world's conquerors. Almost without exception they were spirits of an extreme ambition, egotism and pride, holding aloof from the kindly race of men. Oliver remained humble, homely, with a ready sympathy and goodwill. For, while he was winning battles and dissolving parliaments and carrying the burdens of a people, he was living an inner life so intense that, compared with it, the outer world was the phantasmagoria of a dream. There is no parallel in history to this iron man of action whose consuming purpose was at all times the making of his soul.

The position in which the members of the Council of State found themselves on the morrow of the King's execution was appalling, and would have unnerved weaker men. Ireland and Scotland in their enemies' hands; the sea no longer in their obedience, for a portion of the fleet turned against them, under Prince Rupert; the English people divided into factions bitterly hostile to one another, but all from different points of view hostile to the self-appointed Government; the House of Lords abolished, and the House of Commons a mere 'rump,' pruned so often that it no longer represented any large body of opinion; the Powers of Europe, Protestant as well as Catholic, regarding the regicides with horror and contempt. If the government was to obtain any semblance of authority, it had first to reconquer Ireland and Scotland and the sea, while enforcing order in England. If it failed in this task, nothing like the happy Restoration of 1660 could have taken place, for as yet no such agreement of parties existed. England would have foundered in blood and chaos, and the



future destiny at home and overseas would have been fatally compromised. But she was saved by the courage and ability of the men who had usurped power, chiefly by means of their servant Blake and of their colleague and master Cromwell.

Blake recovered the sea by his victories first over the Cavaliers, then over the Dutch and finally over the Spaniards. The great Admiral and the series of Republican governments that employed and supported him, raised the naval power of England to a permanent level, that had been touched but not maintained under the pacific and parsimonious Elizabeth. Cromwell conquered Ireland and Scotland and held the State together by force. Between them, Blake and Cromwell raised the prestige of England in the world to a point from which it had declined under James and Charles I, and which it lost again under Charles and James II, so that, half a dozen years after the Protector's body had been gibbeted, Samuel Pepys noted 'It is strange everybody do nowadays reflect upon Oliver and commend him, what brave things he did and made all the neighbour princes fear him.' Then, once more England's proper place in the world was secured by the Revolution of 1688, and was rendered permanent that time by its connection not with a military Dictatorship but with a free constitution and an agreement of parties that had been impossible in Oliver's day.

As an imperial statesmen, he had an outlook far broader than that of subsequent Parliaments, Whig or Tory, who sacrificed the 'Protestant interest' in Ireland to the jealousy of English clothiers and cattle breeders. Oliver's capacious mind regarded all English-speaking Protestants in the British Isles as citizens with equal rights. In the end, all that was bad in his Irish settlement, the treatment of the native Roman Catholics, was confirmed, and all that was good in it was destroyed. Indeed his settlement of Ireland was not allowed a chance after his death because the 'Protestant interest' there was undermined by economic restrictions, and the exodus of Irish Protestants to America was set going. So, too, his government of Scotland was wholly generous and wise in its treatment of Scottish religion and Scottish trade. Only, as his settlement of Scotland was imposed by the sword, not in 'a free way,' it was, to use his own language 'not truly ours and our posterities.' It was undone at the Restoration. But in 1707 Great Britain, after many bitter experiences, freely agreed to the policy





of a just Union, such as Oliver had conceived and forced upon the recalcitrant island.

He never solved his English domestic problem. During the decade that elapsed between the King's death and his own he failed to win an agreement of parties to any new form of government, and failed to work with any of his Parliaments. The deep shadow of the Regicide still lay between him and his countrymen, so that he could not appeal to the Cavaliers or to moderate men in general against the uncompromising Republican idealists who more and more outraged his practical instincts as the governor of England, but to whom he was fatally committed by his past.

The same arts that did gain  
A power must it maintain.

He could not disband the army, for it was almost the sole basis of his government, except in so far as people put up with the Protectorate as the only means by which they could enjoy order and domestic peace. But the necessary maintenance of a great military and naval establishment, and the war with Spain on which Oliver had chosen to embark, were financially ruinous. The country needed a period of economy and lower taxation which it could not get from the Protector. His death in September 1658 was probably fortunate for himself and his reputation; it was certainly fortunate for his country, because he had held the ring until time and opinion were ripe for the agreed Restoration of King, Law and Parliament.

Was then Cromwell's career either a misfortune, or a failure on the whole? I think not. It is true that the institutions he set up did not survive. But he saved the country from a number of great evils—first from absolute monarchy, then from Presbyterian tyranny, and finally from chaos and dismemberment. 'I am a man standing in the place I am in,' he said in 1657, 'which place I undertook not so much out of hope of doing any good, as out of desire to prevent mischief and evil, which I did see was imminent on the nation.' So then he himself was conscious that his work was mainly negative, like half the great and good things that are done in this world—England's wars against continental militarist Empires for instance.

If Cromwell had not won the Civil War for Parliament, King



Charles and his Roman Catholic children after him could have done what they liked with England. They would certainly have set up such a royal despotism as was already the fashionable model on the continent. England would have forgotten Magna Carta and Edward Coke's black letter liberties, and become spiritually an apange of continental Europe. We should not have had our peculiarly English and Conservative Revolution of 1688, but haply have been long afterwards whelmed in some European convulsion more like that of 1789.

But this did not happen, for Charles II was restored not by Cavalier conquest but by Parliamentary vote, and the great work of the first session of the Long Parliament continued at the Restoration still to be the law of the land. Moreover England had undergone the unforgettable experience of twenty years of Kingless rule, first by Parliament, then by Republican soldiers. That period is only an interlude in our history, but it is an interlude of which, in spite of its own characteristic crimes and follies, Englishmen have no need to be ashamed, for it brought to England prestige and independent power in the family of nations, such as neither the earlier nor later Stuarts were able to maintain.

The defeat of royal absolutism in war, and the control of the chaos that threatened to engulf the Parliamentary victory, were both the personal doing of Oliver Cromwell. And the position that Republican England so unexpectedly maintained in face of the scandalized Powers of Europe, was his doing also. Indirectly and in the long run our national liberties are based upon these events. And therefore Cromwell's statue is well placed, defending the entry of the House of Commons.

So much for his work. What of the man himself? He was loved and hated in his life-time. After his death a simulacrum or false image of him was set up by his enemies as a butt for popular reprobation for nearly two centuries. Now that the truth about him is known, he is once more loved and hated, as in his own life, but since the issues of these old days are now buried deep beneath the leaves of many years, most Englishmen now take a more unprejudiced view of the man.

The finest of modern lyric outbursts about him is that of Carlyle in the last paragraph of *Historical Sketches*.





I confess I have an interest in this Mr. Cromwell; and indeed, if truth must be said, in him alone. The rest are historical, dead to me; but he is epic, still living. Hail to thee, thou strong one; hail, across the long-drawn funeral aisle and night of Time! Two dead centuries, with all that they have born and buried, part us; and it is far to speak together; how diverse are our centuries, most diverse, yet our Eternity is the same; and a kinship unites us which is much deeper than Death and Time. Hail to thee, thou strong one, for thou art ours, and I, at least, mean to call thee so.

Well, very few of us are big enough to talk on equal terms with Cromwell across the centuries. Carlyle was so, no doubt, though I suspect Oliver might have been a little puzzled by him. But 'Mr. Cromwell,' as Carlyle says, is 'ours' and not merely Carlyle's, and there are many things in him besides his rugged strength and mastership, which endear him to more homely English folk, of whom in some respects Cromwell is the finest representative before mankind. His very uncertainty 'whither he was going' which eventually carried him so far; his dislike of theory and dogma; his eye for the crisis of the moment; his long periods of brooding uncertainty; his fundamental modesty and refusal ever to regard himself as a 'superman,' are all good English traits. So are his affectionate family life; his good comradeship and feeling for men of all classes; his love of field sports and 'innocent jests'; his pity and generosity when he was not in one of his black rages (though these must not be forgotten in judging the man); his growing awareness of the interest of England in the overseas world though he had risen as the leader of a party; his constant reference of all he did to a tribunal higher than human, though this also had its dangers; his sympathy with the despised and eccentric Quakers when all others in authority detested them.<sup>1</sup>

Of his merits and qualities as a soldier I have no time to speak; they have been fully appreciated by military historians, irrespective of politics, Garnet Wolseley, Charles Firth and J. W. For-

<sup>1</sup> In 1655 George Fox was brought a prisoner to the Protector's house. Oliver after a long talk released him and said 'Come again to my house, for if thou and I were but an hour a day together we should be nearer one to the other.' Fox came again, and Oliver, unlike his officers, made no objection to his wearing his hat. On one occasion indeed the Quaker obtruded on political 'fundamentals', bidding the Protector 'lay down his crown at the feet of Jesus'. Instead of being angry, Oliver quizzed him, sitting on the table beside Fox and saying 'he would be as high as I was,' and 'went away in a light manner.'



rescue. The army he built up out of nothing was the first example in our history of an army with perfect moral cohesion throughout all its ranks, from the Lord General down to the 'poor foot,'—like the Eighth Army and others of our own day. He was the perfect leader of fighting Englishmen, of men 'who know what they fight for and love what they know.'

I will end with three quotations, presenting different views of Cromwell, from three writers of our own age, all of them fully versed in the complicated facts of that period. First Mr. Maurice Ashley (in his *Oliver Cromwell*, pp. 321–22).

During his years of supreme power he was a sick, somewhat lonely and rapidly ageing man. Perhaps for this reason he allowed, indeed encouraged, the reestablishment of monarchical institutions and forms, and himself was a king with the powers of a dictator. Save in religious questions he was essentially the counter-revolutionary. And at the end of life he was not the daring and mighty destroyer, but a painful re-builder of ancient institutions and a steady believer in orthodox political ideas of the class from which he emerged: *a well-meaning, dictatorial, and intensely irritable country gentleman*, insecurely seated upon a well-guarded throne.

These words give one side of the truth, but they do not cover all the ground of Oliver's capacious mind and nature.

Next I will quote Mr. G. M. Young, an acute commentator on our history:—

What is Cromwell, once released from the servitudes, falsities and austerities of party, but a rustic Tudor gentleman, born out of due time, of the stock of Hunsdon and Henry Sidney, rejoicing in hawk and hound, pictures and music, Scotland subjugated, Ireland prostrate, and England, the awe of the Western world, adorned and defended with stout yeomen, honourable magistrates, learned ministers, flourishing Universities, invincible fleets? (*Charles I and Cromwell*, p. 14.)

Last of all, John Buchan, his best biographer, who was also the no less admiring biographer of Montrose, sees Oliver as a figure of epic grandeur, yet singularly human and attractive. He writes (*Oliver Cromwell*, p. 516)

He had no egotism, and would readily take advice and allow himself to be persuaded. He would even permit opponents to enlarge on his faults and point out his spiritual defects, than which there can be no greater proof of humility.





Yet his brooding power and the sense of slumbering flames would, in spite of his patient courtesy, have repelled most men but for another endowment which impressed all who came into his company. He radiated an infinite kindliness. Here was one who hated harshness and cruelty, and who loved, and would fain be loved by, his fellows. 'He was naturally compassionate towards objects in distress,' says Maidston, 'even to an effeminate measure.' In war he had been notably merciful; in peace he had a heart that felt for all suffering and squandered almost too readily its affection. Marvell is the best witness, Marvell who had a poet's insight, and who had watched him often in the Council chamber and in the privacy of his family. The keynote of Marvell's memorial verses is the 'wondrous softness of his heart.'

His tenderness extended unto all  
And that deep soul through every channel flows  
Where kindly Nature loves itself to lose.  
More strong affections never reason served.

Marvell, by the time he wrote these lines, on *The Death of the Lord Protector*, had seen Oliver close and often, as he had not when in 1650 he wrote the 'Horatian Ode,' which I quoted above. Oliver as I conceive him, was a blend of the gentle Oliver of Buchan's perception and Ashley's 'intensely irritable country gentleman.' At Drogheda his 'notable mercifulness in war' had been overborne by one of his fatal gusts of passion. The variety and complexity of the elements in Oliver's nature will always fascinate and perplex posterity. We shall never see clearly to the bottom of him, for the well is deep.

But I can agree without qualification to Buchan's last word on him:—

His bequest to the world was not institutions, for his could not last; or a political faith, for his was more instinct and divination than coherent thought. It was the man himself, in his good and ill, his frailty and his strength, typical in almost every quality of his own English people, but with these qualities so magnified as to become epic and universal. He belongs to the small circle of great kings, though he never sat on a throne; like Milton's Adam,

in himself was all his state  
More solemn than the tedious pomp that waits  
On princes.  
His figure still radiates an immortal energy.



## CROMWELL'S STATUE

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That is well said. The world honours England the more because Cromwell was an Englishman. If he is not the typical Englishman, he is as near to it as Wellington or Dr. Johnson. Certainly none of those three could have been produced by any other land. A French, a German, even a Scottish Cromwell is unthinkable. And so let his statue stand, firmly planted on his own high-booted legs, on guard over us in the heart of our political and governmental life, with the book and the sword, his head slightly bent in a brooding study of the insoluble problems of the government of men, and the no less insoluble problems of man's relation to God.



## MILTON'S AREOPAGITICA, 1644\*

It is right that England should celebrate the third centenary of Milton's *Areopagitica*, partly for the sake of Milton and the noblest of his prose works, and still more because this pamphlet first gave full and reasoned expression to the demand for a principle which fifty years later became a part of our public law, a principle characteristically English, which has sharply divided our historical development from that of authoritarian States. Not only our policy but our whole intellectual and moral life has thriven on this principle of 'The liberty of unlicenc'd printing.'

What exactly does that mean? It means that there should be no censorship of printed works, enabling authority in Church or State to prevent publication. No author or publisher need go to any licenser for leave to produce a work. Of course the author or publisher is liable to an action for sedition or libel after publication. A jury of his countrymen may condemn the work as seditious or libellous, with disagreeable consequences for those responsible. Sometimes juries have acted unreasonably, but this check is very necessary to protect the State and to protect private individuals. Without the safeguard of possible action for sedition or libel the liberty of the press would become an intolerable nuisance and would soon be abolished.

But censorship of books before publication by arbitrary power, against which Milton raised his voice, that is a very different matter. The censorship of books had become an important part of ecclesiastical and State policy as a result of the invention of printing. It was a great weapon of the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation—a point much emphasized by Milton in his appeal to the Puritan Parliament. It had also become a weapon of the Royal Prerogative in England, and the Laudian Bishops had used it to stifle opposition. Of this also Milton makes a great point. But the Parliament that was waging war against King and Bishops in 1644 was trying to preserve it as a weapon of its own authority, although in fact a great deal of unlicensed printing was

\* By permission of *Time and Tide*.



going on in Roundhead London, the hearth and workshop of the Revolution. The Presbyterian clergy were hoping, by the authority of Parliament, to use the censorship of books to stop the spread of Sectarian ideas. That was one of Milton's griefs, for to him 'new Presbyter is but old Priest writ large.' But he had also a personal quarrel with the censorship. He had recently published tractates in favour of divorce which were highly unpopular; he had not sought license to print them, and if he had done so the *imprimatur* would probably have been refused. He had thereby contravened the Parliamentary law, and was in danger of being called to account for the offence. This was the immediate occasion, though not the sole cause, of his petition to the Houses of Parliament, to which he gave the famous title of *Areopagitica*. The appeal to the freedom of discussion in Athens and the free republics of the Ancient World is a most attractive part of his argument.

The reason why the *Areopagitica* is a great work of perennial interest, is that Milton has there set out, in language of singular felicity and power, the fundamental causes why a free press is desirable, in spite of all its admitted inconveniences and dangers. His arguments are as valid and important to-day as they were in the Seventeenth, the Eighteenth and the Nineteenth Centuries: he maintains that it is impossible to separate the tares from the wheat, that neither Church nor State is a fit judge of new ideas, that truth is usually regarded in its infancy as error, *e.g.* that the Reformation itself was once a 'heresy' in England. More generally, that

He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true wayfaring Christian. I cannot praise a fugitive and cloister'd virtue, unexercis'd and unbreath'd, that never sallies out to see her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortall garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat.

In the *Areopagitica* of 1644 the whole great argument was set out once for all, leaving very little to be added by modern political philosophy. But in fact the change in our law did not take place in Milton's day, or for the reasons he had urged. It came half a century later, partly by chance, and more because the censorship was found practically inconvenient than because it was re-





garded as wrong. (See Macaulay's *History of England*, Chapters XIX and XXI—index *sub Licensing Act*.) But the reason why the censorship was suffered to disappear, undefended and almost unnoticed, was because the climate of opinion had altered in favour of toleration, after the Revolution of 1688. So long as rival Churches and parties had continued to try to crush one another out by force, so long the censorship lasted. But when, after fifty years of that sad experience, the Whig and Tory parties were constrained to unite against James II, they were forced into mutual toleration, because neither Whigs nor Tories, Puritans nor Anglicans were strong enough quite to extirpate their opponents; then the age of Toleration ensued and the censorship ceased to be regarded as necessary. That it was a positive evil was not recognized by the men who allowed the Licensing Act to lapse in 1695; but it has never been restored, and now on the broad issue we all think on the subject as Milton thought.

One political consequence of a free press has been that controversy has gradually become less bitter and therefore more sensible. So long as the censorship prevented all legal publication by the critics of government and of religious orthodoxy, moderate and law-abiding men held their peace and only the more ardent spirits risked their lives and liberties in attacking authority, often with the utmost violence. That remained so under the Commonwealth and under the Restored Monarchy. But after 1695 freedom of the press gradually mitigated the fury of authors and enabled moderate men to be heard.

The censorship was never re-imposed, but authority still fought a rearguard action against freedom of the press by actions for sedition and blasphemy, and by trying to keep the decision in such cases in the hands of the Judges instead of the Juries. All through the Eighteenth Century there was a curious uncertainty as to whether Judge or Jury could decide that a publication was or was not seditious. Finally in 1792 Fox's Libel Act fixed the power in the hands of the Jury for good and all. Juries are not always right, but they were less favourable to acts of governmental oppression than the Judges, especially during the anti-Jacobin period.

Let us end with Milton's own magnificent words.

Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant Nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep and shaking her invincible locks. Methinks I see her as an Eagle muing her mighty youth, and kindling her



## MILTON'S AREOPAGITICA

undazl'd eyes at the full midday beam; purging and unscaling her long abused sight at the fountain itself of heav'nly radiance; while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about, amaz'd at what she means, and in their envious gabble would prognosticat a year of sects and schisms. What should ye doe then, should ye suppress all this flowry crop of knowledge and new light sprung up and yet springing daily in this City, should ye set an *Oligarchy* of twenty ingrossers over it, to bring a famin upon our minds again, when we shall know nothing but what is measur'd to us by their bushel.

Now once again by all concurrence of signs, and by the general instinct of holy and devout men, as they daily and solemnly express their thoughts, God is decreeing to begin some new and great period in his Church, ev'n to the reforming of Reformation itself; what does he then but reveal Himself to his servants, and as his manner is, first to his English-men? I say as his manner is, first to us, though we mark not the method of his counsels, and are unworthy. Behold now this vast City [London]; a City of refuge, the mansion house of liberty, encompassed and surrounded with his protection; the shop of warre hath not there more anvils and hammers waking, to fashion out the plates and instruments of armed Justice in defence of beleaguer'd Truth, then there be pens and heads there, sitting by their studious lamps, musing, searching, revolving new notions and ideas wherewith to present, as with their homage and their fealty, the approaching Reformation.

The 'Reformation' is always 'approaching,' in a thousand 'new notions and ideas' and God is for ever revealing himself anew 'to his Englishmen.'





## THE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM IN ENGLISH POLITICAL HISTORY\*

MR. VICE-CHANCELLOR, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

A Cambridge man by race and breeding, I have always been fortunate in the number and kindness of my Oxford friends, old and young, from Professor Dicey—who, as I well remember, first brought me to this town on a visit some thirty years ago—to some now in residence who must certainly be reckoned a full generation younger than myself. I have long had many strong and personal reasons for an affectionate familiarity with your streets and Colleges. And yet I confess that in the Sheldonian Theatre I have never felt at home. It still retains in my imagination the formidable and mysterious aspect of a place of alien rites, not to be shared in by the stranger. I still gaze up at its always surprising outward shape, or down into its interior depth, mystery, and colour—so strikingly different from the clear mathematical lines and white lights of our Senate House on the banks of Granta—with misgivings such as a tribesman from the far north may have felt as he lifted the curtain on the inner threshold of Jupiter Capitolinus. It is therefore with no pert or easy confidence that I raise my voice to address this audience in this place. I never dreamed that I should find myself in so honourable and alarming a position, until one day last winter I received the invitation which you, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, thought fit to send me.

I began at once to consider what theme, of those which I felt at all capable of treating, would be most likely to interest an Oxford audience. My thoughts were at that time running on a fascinating book, recently published by your own Clarendon Press—Mr. Keith Feiling's *History of the Tory Party* down to the death of Queen Anne. That book set me wondering why we have hitherto had so few serious historical works on our party system, seeing how great a place 'party' has held in the growth of our Parliamentary and Cabinet government, in our literature and our social conversation, and in many other aspects of our peculiar

\* The Romanes Lecture in the Sheldonian Theatre at Oxford, 1926.



## THE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM

English life. There could be few more important themes than the inner history and structure of the two perennial groups labelled Whig and Tory. Surely we need a closer analysis, based on research, of the inner life of these two extraordinary bonds, so potent yet so shadowy, which without corporate existence or legal recognition, and with continual change of creed and programme, yet somehow continued as the strongest and most lasting element in our public life from the days of Danby and Shaftesbury to the days of Salisbury and Gladstone.

Mr. Feiling has supplied us with an admirable account of the principles of the original Tory party, and their application, distortion, and modification in the stress of actual circumstance. But it has not been part of his scheme to analyse the class divisions and social instincts on which the structure of the two parties was built, nor the methods of local organization and propaganda that they respectively employed to perpetuate their influence in the country at large. Mr. Winstanley at Cambridge has made some interesting studies in the methods of Eighteenth Century Whiggism. Ostrogorski's remarkable work dealt with the democratization of the machinery of both parties in the last thirty years of the Nineteenth Century.

But we are only at the beginning of serious research into the party system as an institution in English life, although our histories are full of the doings of those two parties at Westminster. The proper study of the party system would take us far beyond the four walls of Parliament. It would trace the roots of party allegiance and enmity in the local life and circumstance of each shire, town, and district; it would delve into the history of the East India Company, the Bank of England, the origins of journalism, the rivalries of opposing systems of law; it would be deeply concerned with English religion, and with English scepticism; with the relation of landlord and tenant, employer and employed; with the rivalry of old and new wealth, of town and country, and with a hundred other aspects of daily life. In short, the history of party, if it ever came to be fully written, would be a new method of approach to English history as a whole.

There are many recognized approaches to English history, and perhaps Mr. Feiling is a pioneer of the latest. We have already the economic approach to history, now a large and flourishing concern; yet it began within the memory of the older among us, with





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the early controversies of Professor Thorold Rogers and Dr. Cunningham. We have the legal approach to history which the genius of Maitland carried to sudden perfection, and which is continued in his spirit by many students to-day, among whom your own Professor Holdsworth is the chief. Certainly no one will understand the full meaning of the Reformation in England and the full meaning of the conflict of Parliament and King under the Stuarts, unless he knows something of what Professor Holdsworth has so admirably told us in the less technical parts of his work. The ecclesiastical approach to history we have had with us always. We are now obtaining the history of our public administration, central and local. And our age seems particularly to rejoice in the history of social manners and customs and of everyday domestic life. All these different studies will be found to throw light on the history of party, and will receive back light from it in return.

To-day I propose to touch on a very small part of this vast, unwritten theme of party history. I shall not speak of the Twentieth Century, a period I have never studied; nor shall I propound the vexed question whether or not a three-party system is desirable if it correspond with the realities of public opinion. I am dealing only with the rather remote past. I propose to discuss how far and in what sense there was a continuity of life linking the party of Shaftesbury and Somers to that of Fox and Grey, the party of Danby and Bolingbroke to that of the younger Pitt and Canning. This continuity, so far as it existed or was deemed to exist, was a great fact in English history. How far was it a pretence, kept up for selfish purposes, or from a sound subconscious instinct that two parties were necessary for the efficient working of free Parliamentary government? Or how far, on the other hand, did Whigs and Tories represent, for over two hundred years, real differences of principle or interest, abiding from generation to generation?

But before I proceed further I will tell you a story. It will serve to bring home to you what I mean when I talk about the continuity of parties. In the reign of William III the future Lord Chancellor Cowper was the Whig member for Hertford, and he had a brother named Spencer Cowper, a young barrister, and, like the rest of his family, an active Whig. Now this Spencer Cowper was in 1699 accused of having murdered a Quaker girl of that



the energies and prestige of so many popularly elected chambers have been sunk. While the principles of a single party united the Cabinet as a homogeneous body, capable of common action, the divergent principles of two parties divided Parliament into supporters of government and adherents of opposition. Thereby was secured steady support and steady criticism of the executive power, instead of irresponsible action prompted by the selfish impulses of individual members, or the mob psychology of undisciplined assemblies.

To govern a country well is no easy matter for Ministers dependent on a chamber of five or six hundred persons. Strafford, in the interest of strong government, thought that it would be worse than idle to make the attempt. Pym first tried it, and taught a Parliament to seize the executive power, and to fight a great war with energy and prudence. Members waged that war with ropes round their necks, which gave them wisdom, but, as soon as the victory was won, the Long Parliament in 1646-48 made the mistakes of an irresponsible mob in possession of arbitrary power. Cromwell in his turn wished to govern through Parliament, but failed, and fell back on despotism. The giants of those days found government by assembly no easy matter.

So too, even in our own day, neighbouring nations often find it hard to work Parliamentary government. By modern instances we see, only too clearly, that Parliamentary government, with its concomitant personal liberty, is not an inevitable stage of progress, certain to be reached by every nation in turn, but a peculiar form of polity, not easily worked with success. Since, however, no other form of free government has yet been devised by the human race, since the only known alternative is some manner of tyranny, let us reverently examine how our forefathers first learned to rule themselves in that free way, for surely of that, if ever of anything, we may justly employ Milton's memorable brag that God's manner is to reveal himself 'first to his Englishmen.'

The secret of the English constitution, as it was developed in the course of the Eighteenth Century, was the steady confidence reposed by the Parliamentary majority in the Cabinet of the day. If that confidence is withdrawn every few months, government becomes unstable, and men cry out for a despotism, old or new. In Eighteenth Century England the requisite confidence of Par-





liament in the Cabinet could have been obtained in no other manner than through the bond of a party loyalty held in common by the Cabinet and by the majority of the House of Commons. The confused years at the end of William III's reign, and the yet more confused and far more disastrous years at the beginning of George III's, show us what 'government without party' really meant. Bolingbroke, so long as he was a practising statesman, was a strict party man, indeed much too violent as a party man, carrying his partisanship further than his wiser colleague, Oxford, wished; it was only as philosopher out of office that Bolingbroke found the party grapes sour and advised the abolition of the party system by a 'patriot King.'

The evils which Bolingbroke denounced under the first two Georges—the Parliamentary corruption of the Walpole and Pelham régimes—were real evils, but they were the result not of the two-party system, but, on the contrary, of its partial abeyance. Under George I and II the Tory party was too weak to be an effective opposition, because the activities of the Jacobites on their flank embarrassed and discredited them. England was being governed not on the two-party system but by a single party, the Whigs, who were in a position to divide the loaves and fishes among themselves with no powerful rivals to criticize or check their greed.

When, therefore, George III came to the throne and Jacobitism died, it was obviously the moment for the revival of a strong Tory party in Parliament. But Toryism was revived, in the first instance, not as a real Parliamentary party but as a Court party. The 'King's friends' in the Commons, under Bute and North, took their orders, not from the Parliamentary chiefs of the Tory party, but from King George III himself. The results of non-party government, beginning with the discreditable Wilkes episodes at home, and ending with the loss of the American colonies overseas, were not considered encouraging. Nor was Parliamentary corruption under George III any less bad than under the Whig oligarchy. The first of many great services that the younger Pitt rendered to his country was his reconstitution of the Tory party in 1783 as a Parliamentary party, looking for leadership to its Parliamentary chief instead of to the King. The rule of the Parliamentary Cabinet and of the two-party system were restored together.



town. She had really committed suicide. He was tried for his life—you will find the proceedings in *State Trials*, and an apt comment on them in the first volume of Stephen's *History of Criminal Law*. He was acquitted, but his danger had been great, for party feeling ran high at Hertford, and the Tories had joined with the Quaker community in taking up the cry against Cowper. In those rough old times, within twenty years of the Popish Plot and the Meal Tub Plot, neither Whigs nor Tories were much in the habit of probing evidence available against a political opponent. But, thanks to a jury whose sense of responsibility raised them above party feeling, Spencer Cowper escaped with life and honour intact; long afterwards, in the reign of George I, he became a distinguished judge, ever deeply considerate of the trembling prisoner at the bar. Generation after generation of the Whigs and Tories of Hertford town passed away, but still in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, in the days of Palmerston, Gladstone, and Disraeli, whenever a member of the Cowper family stood for Hertford in the Whig interest, as one of them generally did, the Tories used to interrupt his speeches with cries of 'Who killed the Quaker?' The thing had long been little more than a good-humoured joke or ancient custom, and even the sex of the alleged victim had been forgotten—at least so my father's informant in the matter, his friend Henry Cowper, told him. But my point to-day is that after nearly two hundred years the Cowpers were still leading the local Whig party, and for nearly two hundred years there had been an unbroken apostolic succession of Hertford Toryism handing down by continuous oral tradition, doubtless amid much other curious lore now irrevocably lost, a confused memory of that old-world tale from which the tragic and serious element had long been extracted. Old England with its rural market towns was a land of long memories and unchanging habits. We live in a more fast-hurrying age, borne along on the stream of constant industrial and social change. No electoral traditions of ours will live for two hundred years. But the England of which I am speaking this afternoon was a slow-moving, stable society, of long-enduring local pieties and loyalties and customs.

It was the function of this old England, first of all great nations, to show that efficiency could be combined with freedom. Till the





defeat of the Grand Monarch of France by free England at La Hogue, Blenheim, and Ramillies, it had been generally assumed that countries had to choose between power and safety on one side, and liberty on the other. If that had been the true alternative, as the contemporaries of Hobbes were taught to suppose, every State would have chosen safety and power; freedom would have remained a classic dream, instead of becoming a modern reality.

England learnt to combine efficiency with freedom—not, however, by the mere act of altering the law and customs of her constitution: more was needed than that. Many qualities of our race had to be called into play, and many devices had to be employed, among others this strange one of the party system, the unwritten law underlying the new Parliamentary order of things in England.

The party tie, that bound Whigs to Whigs and Tories to Tories, though it sometimes wrought havoc with the national tranquillity and interests, as in the latter years of Charles II, upon the whole made for efficient government and loyal public service after the Revolution of 1688. The party bond introduced a principle of unity among Cabinet Ministers other than that of mere individual obedience to the orders of the King. For that reason, party is the real secret of the step upwards from Cabal to Cabinet. The mutual loyalty of members inside the Cabinet was a reflection of the habit of party loyalty among the same persons in the world outside. The habit of co-operation had to be very strong to counteract the selfishness and want of principle that characterized statesmen in the time of the later Stuarts. Without the party bond we should have had Ministers perpetually intriguing against one another, like the members of Charles II's Cabal, and allying themselves with the Crown or the mob against their colleagues. Thanks to the party bond, the Whig Junta was sufficiently united and powerful to win the war in Queen Anne's reign and to make the Union with Scotland. Thanks to the party bond, the Tories under Oxford and Bolingbroke adhered together long enough in office to force through the difficult and indispensable Peace of Utrecht. And next year the strength of the Whig organization secured the accession of the House of Hanover without a serious civil war.

The party bond introduced discipline not only into the counsels of the Cabinet, but on to the benches of Parliament itself. It gave to members of the House of Commons a public motive other than mere opposition to the executive—that Serbonian bog in which



but contented themselves with repealing the Schism Act. Moreover, they left to the Tory squires a large share in local government as Justices of the Peace.

During the long Whig hegemony the liberty of the subject against the executive power was preserved and increased. The Common Law, which had triumphed over the executive in 1689, jealously protected the individual against government action, while the latent strength of disorganized Toryism kept the Whig rulers in wholesome awe. Thus freedom of speech and opinion was fostered by the two-party system in the country, even when the Tories could make but a poor show upon the floor of the House of Commons.

Moreover, we must observe that a 'pseudo' two-party system grew up within the ranks of the Whig body itself. Fierce Parliamentary factions developed between the Walpole and anti-Walpole Whigs. Owing to the weakness of Toryism, there were not two real parties of sufficient strength to provide a government and an active opposition, and so two provisional parties were manufactured on the floor of the House. An improvised Parliamentary opposition of 'patriot' Whigs joined with the few Tories to attack Walpole's government, on issues that were at bottom purely personal. We find the same phenomena seventy years later under analogous circumstances, when, during the period of extreme Whig weakness, the dominant Tory party, breaking up into Pittites and Addingtonians, conducted the business both of government and opposition.

Under the first two Georges the power of the House of Commons was growing greater, while its connexion with public opinion was growing less. Under William and Anne the hot and equal rivalry between Whigs and Tories had kept the country in a constant simmer of political excitement and controversy on great public issues. But under the Whig monopoly of power political interest and public spirit inevitably declined. One of the functions of the two-party system is to keep the people's eyes constantly fixed on the conduct of government, on the proceedings of Parliament, and on the fortunes of electoral contests. Such wholesome popular interest, strong under William and Anne, was relaxed after 1714, because the Tories had no programme and no prospects. Popular control of Parliament simultaneously declined, because





the rotten boroughs grew more rotten with every year, as population shifted with increasing rapidity. The Whig 'euthanasia of politics,' though not tyrannous, was enervating to public spirit. It partly accounts for the way in which, in 1745, the population stared like sheep at the Pretender and his Highlanders on their march to Derby, instead of either joining them or turning out to stop the invasion.

The two men whose action put an end to this creeping paralysis of our politics were the elder Pitt and George III. The elder Pitt appealed direct to the people athwart all party connexions, and as tribune and popular dictator in the Seven Years' War aroused a new spirit in the land, that Taper and Tadpole had thought extinct. Next after that, the youthful George III resumed the old powers of the Crown, and abolished, on Bolingbroke's principles, all government by party. But his proceedings had exactly the opposite effect to that which he had designed. His personal rule was a failure, but its reactions put new vigour into both Whig and Tory parties, and awakened a new democratic interest in politics.

Immediately on the fall of North the King's open enemies, the Rockingham Whigs, came into office for a few months. They were no longer the 'Whig oligarchy' of Walpole and the Pelhams. Though still under aristocratic leadership, they appealed first and foremost to public opinion. They could no longer rely on corruption and management, which had become the chief weapon in the skilful hands of their royal enemy. In 1782 the Economic Reform Bill, passed by the purified Whig party, swept out half the Augean stables of government corruption, by which the Whigs of the previous generation had profited so much. Their eclipse during the years of George III's personal rule had taught the Whigs to remember their older and better traditions, and they had sat at the feet of Edmund Burke. That great believer in party 'connexion' had for his ideal of government a patriotic aristocracy in close touch with middle-class opinion, which had been the ideal of the Whig party in its vigorous youth. It was revived under Rockingham.

Nevertheless, owing in part to Fox's mismanagement and in part to George III's alliance with the younger Pitt, it was not the revived Whig but the revived Tory party that ruled the country from 1784 to 1830. We must now turn our attention to Toryism. How far can we trace continuity between the party that the



We have, therefore, a period of nearly seventy years, stretching from the death of Queen Anne to the fall of Lord North and the rise of the second Pitt, during which the two-party system is not in full working order, as it had been in the days of Queen Anne. The question that I set before you this evening is this: How far and with what changes did Whig and Tory tradition and organization survive this long period when the two-party system was in partial abeyance?

In the case of the Whigs the answer is relatively easy. They bore rule under the first two Georges, holding power securely by means of their excellent party organization, and in the name of Whig principles. One of the first of those principles was limitation of the personal power of the monarch. Owing to George I's ignorance of English language and custom, and George II's dependence on the Whig party to protect him against Jacobite restoration, the Whigs were in the fortunate position of being able to limit the power of the wearer of the Crown, while standing as the loyalist party against the more lukewarm loyalty of the half-Jacobite Tories. The patronage of the Crown in Church and State, which William III and Anne had kept largely in their own hands, passed to the Whig magnates, who had indeed to consult the King, but usually got their own way with his consent.

The other Whig principles of the period of Walpole and Pelham, besides anti-Jacobitism, were religious toleration and 'moderation' in Church and State. You will remember the words of the Vicar of Bray:

When George in pudding times came o'er  
And moderate men looked big, sir;  
My politics I changed once more  
And I became a Whig, sir.

But if the Whigs stood for 'moderation' when George I 'came o'er,' they had not always done so. It was a distinct change in the atmosphere of the party, and a great improvement. A generation before, under Shaftesbury, Oates and Monmouth, the Whigs had vied with the Tories in the extravagance of their persecuting spirit. Violence then seemed the chief characteristic of the two-party system in its hot youth. Under James II both parties had





been usefully schooled by adversity, and had shaken hands at the Revolution. But even in the reigns of William III and Anne the Whigs had shown spasmodic violence against their opponents, as over the 'Sacheverell clause' and the prosecution of the other Sacheverell; and they had refused to give the country peace with France even after Marlborough had won the war for them. The Tories under Bolingbroke made peace abroad, but they were most immoderate in their domestic policy. Press and political prosecutions were their order of the day, and they attempted to turn the flank of the Act of Toleration by their Schism Act of 1714 to prevent Dissenters educating their own children in their own beliefs. On the accession of George I Whig violence displayed itself once more in the prosecution of the Tory leaders.

But under Walpole the Whigs definitely took their stand on moderation, latitudinarianism, and freedom of thought and speech. The spirit of the age, in the century of common sense and reasonableness, was propitious to the milder policy of the new Whiggism. Our English liberties in religion and politics owe much to the uninspiring 'pudding days' of the 'moderate men,' when the excellent and difficult habit of leaving other people alone became custom of the country.

It was but logical for the Whigs to practise liberty and toleration, because their philosophy was that of John Locke; but their temper had often been too much for their principles. Fortunately by Walpole's time they had learnt, at length, that it was their interest to be moderate, because they were a minority party. It was mainly by an accident—the accident of the dynastic question—that the Whigs bore rule for half a century after Anne's death. The Whig aristocrats, as patrons of the Nonconformist minority, ruled in a land where the Anglican Church was dominant; as friends of the commercial interest they governed an island that was still mainly rural in its economic and social structure. The Whigs, in the heyday of their power, were wisely aware of the great social strength of the Tory squires and Churchmen, which had been shown in the Sacheverell reaction in Anne's reign, and they took care not to provoke it again. 'Let sleeping dogs lie' was Walpole's motto: it had not been Shaftesbury's. For this reason during their forty-five years of continuous power in the Eighteenth Century, the Whigs, so far from attacking the Church, never even removed the civil disabilities of their clients, the Nonconformists,



younger Pitt assembled and led, and the party whose ship Bolingbroke's rash steering had piled up on the rocks on the day that Queen Anne died?

Toryism from 1714 to 1760 may be said to be hibernating. 'It is not dead but sleepeth,' dreaming, in old manor houses and colleges and cathedral cloisters, of Charles the Martyr and the days of the Merry Monarch 'when loyalty no harm meant.' The history of the long Tory hibernation has yet to be written. How far, and by whom, was the Tory electoral machine kept going in those barren years? How many candidates did they run at elections, and on what issues, and with what success? We need good books on the subject, based on research that has still to be done. The corresponding 'hibernation' of the Whig party from 1793 to 1830 is much better known to us all, from the picturesque records of Holland House, the interesting personalities of Fox and his followers, and the better reporting of Parliamentary debates and electoral contests at that later period.

But the Toryism of the period from 1714 to 1760, though its political activities remain somewhat obscure to us through the deficiencies of history, is known to us all as a personal creed through the merits of literature. Squire Western represents to us the more old-fashioned rural squirearchy, and Dr. Johnson the Church, the two pillars of the Tory temple which stood firm under water during the forty years when the Whig deluge covered the earth, to reappear strong as ever when the waves subsided.

Johnson, a man of the people from a cathedral town, is the typical High Churchman as Highchurchmanship was understood in that day. His religion, which underlay all he did, was by him identified with his ideal system of politics. Squire Western, a more comic character, drawn of course with all the exaggeration of humorous fiction, is not a man of much religion; we may say that landowning is his religion, for it is his sincere and earnest rule of life. He identifies landowning, illogically perhaps, with Tory politics and a dislike of Dissenters, who were probably small freeholders or even suspected poachers of his partridges.

Fielding's imaginary squire and Boswell's very real doctor have in common a traditional view of politics: a strong dislike of Dissenters and of their patrons the Whig lords; an attachment to the Anglican traditions of the earlier kings of the House of Stuart,





rendered inoperative in the present by the fear felt by all true Tories of again putting a Roman Catholic prince on the throne, and by their innate respect for law and order, even when administered by their political rivals. Politically, Toryism was rather a futile creed under the first two Georges. Its adherents were in an *impasse*, from which they were delivered by the accession to the throne of a particularly strong Protestant with their own Tory sympathies, in the person of George III.

From 1761 to 1782 the Tory party came out of its long hibernation and helped the King to rule the land. It did so in the first instance, not as a Parliamentary but as a Royalist party, as the 'King's Friends,' supporters of George III's personal rule. When this failed them, just as the personal rule of the later Stuarts had failed them, they again became a Parliamentary party—a transformation rapidly and easily accomplished under the able leadership of the younger Pitt. Thenceforward till 1830 the Tory party governed the Empire. The reaction against Jacobinism and the Napoleonic wars gave them an advantage over their rivals analogous to the advantage which the fear of Jacobitism and the ambitions of Louis XIV had given to the Whigs.

But Pitt had not been brought up in the Tory tradition. His great father had been a man of Whig principles, though strongly opposed to the exclusive and aristocratic narrowness of the Whig oligarchs. The younger Pitt broadened the base and the scope of Toryism. While winning the passionate attachment of the successors of Squire Western and Dr. Johnson, he gained also the confidence of the mercantile community which had previously been Whig. The Guildhall monuments remind us of it. The City which had trusted Whigs like Charles Montagu, and Walpole, and Pitt's own father, had equal confidence in this younger Pitt, who sympathized with the mercantile community, and was, with whatever imperfections, the great finance Minister of his time. The Whigs at Brooks's, who understood the arithmetic of the card table better than that of the Treasury, thought political economy was a dodge of Pitt's. The neglect of finance by the Whigs, both in Fox's day and on their return to power after the Reform Bill, was one of the reasons why Pitt and then Peel, who both understood finance, were able to effect a connexion between Toryism and the mercantile middle class, in spite of the fact that the inner heart of Toryism was still with the Church and the Land. For a



hundred years after 1782 the various sections of the middle class were ready to transfer their political allegiance from Whig to Tory, or from Tory to Whig, according to circumstances, and for this reason they carried all the more weight with both parties, who courted them in rivalry with alternating success.

As a social and political system the new Tory oligarchy was not very different from the old Whig oligarchy. The monopoly of political power by the landowning class was equally powerful under both, while the interests of the trading community still held a first place in the policy of government. In Church and State there was little difference between the 'Hanoverian system' defended by Walpole against the Jacobites and the 'Hanoverian system' defended by Pitt and Eldon against the Jacobins. The same institutions in Church and State were being maintained by later Tories as by earlier Whigs, but the fact that it was no longer the Pretender and the Non-jurors but Tom Paine and Napoleon who were the enemies of the House of Hanover, made the Tory squires and clergy as enthusiastic in defence of Hanoverianism as their grandfathers had been lukewarm.

Burke, in his later anti-Jacobin mood, became the prophet of the Tory party and of Nineteenth Century Conservatism. He taught the Tories to regard themselves as the true heirs and protectors of the English Revolution Settlement of 1689 against the false cosmopolitan lights of the French Revolution. The violent methods of the Jacobins and of Napoleon, which connected modern democracy in its earliest stage not with the ballot-box but with the bayonet, put the English Tories into the advantageous moral position of defenders of law and constitutionalism against the 'direct action' of the Jacobins and the popular Caesarism of Napoleon. In making that stand in the name of English Parliamentary government they did the world a great service, as became fully apparent after Waterloo, when Canning's version of Toryism became synonymous for a few years with the cause of European liberty. Canning made it clear, at any rate to his followers, that Tory England had fought and conquered in the war not in the interest of despotism, but of constitutional and Parliamentary government. But in the minds of the English Tories constitutional and Parliamentary government was very different from democracy. Pitt's Attorney-General, John Scott, the future Lord Eldon, when he prosecuted Radical propagandists, argued in court that it was





high treason for the Radical Societies to advocate 'representative government, the direct opposite of the government which is established here.'

The Tories, though staunch believers in Parliament, failed to perceive that Parliamentary government must gradually adapt itself to the new age by becoming more directly representative of the people. Burke and Canning were both of them to the end of their lives opposed to the abolition of rotten boroughs, and so was the Tory party as a whole.

It was here that the value of the two-party system came in once more. The Whig Party, which had failed to rise to the issue of the war with France, had under the leadership of Fox and Grey seen the necessity of Parliamentary Reform if Parliamentary government was to survive in the new era. So imperfect is human nature that probably no single party could have been right both on the war with France and on the necessity for reform—so powerful in the political mind is the instinct to associate ideas not logically connected with one another. Hence the necessity for a two-party system. No one party can cover all the ground. If Fox and Grey in the 'nineties had joined Pitt's anti-Jacobin *bloc*, as many then thought, and some still think, it was their patriotic duty to have done, there would have been an end of the two-party system, there would have been no Whig Reform Bill in 1830, and our Nineteenth Century struggle for power between the classes would have proceeded by armed revolution and reaction instead of by continuous Parliamentary and party life.

In the era of the French Revolution, Roman Catholic claims to civil rights in England and Ireland were revived. Opposition to these claims completed the reconciliation of the Tories to the principles of 1689. The revived Tory party became enthusiastic for the House of Hanover and the Revolution Settlement, while on the other hand the Whigs began to demand civil rights for Roman Catholics, which the Tory party won great popularity by refusing. It may then reasonably be asked, Along what line are we to trace the continuity of the two parties from the days of Titus Oates and Dr. Sacheverell to the very different times of Sydney Smith and Eldon? The continuity was to be found mainly in the unbroken connexion of the Tories with the Church interest, and of the Whig aristocrats with the Protestant Nonconformist voters. Pitt, in 1787, opposed the abolition of the Test and Corporation



Acts which debarred Protestant as well as Catholic Dissenters from civil office. Charles Fox, on the other hand, warmly espoused the cause of religious equality, and asserted the modern principle that 'religion is not a proper test for a political institution.'

The Dissenters, therefore, saw no chance of admission to full civic rights except through the new Whig party under Fox, and through Parliamentary Reform. If once the rotten boroughs were abolished, the electoral strength of the Protestant Nonconformists would, it was thought, compel Parliament to redress their grievances. For analogous reasons the clergy of the established Church and their keenest supporters became determined opponents of Parliamentary Reform, which they feared might lead to Disestablishment. In the records of the Loyalist Associations of 1792-93 in the British Museum MSS., which I once studied, I was much struck by the extent to which it was a Church movement as opposed to the Dissenters who were supporting Priestley's demand for Parliamentary Reform. The religious division on the great political issue of the new era continued to influence the course of politics until the Reform Bills of 1832, 1867, and 1884, laid the question to rest.

The removal of Nonconformist disabilities, together with modern social and religious change, the outcome of the industrial revolution, have made the distinction between Church and Dissent a comparatively slight, if not a negligible, element in our modern political parties. But as regards the past, from the Restoration to the latter years of the Nineteenth Century, the continuity of the two parties in English politics was very largely due to the two-party system in religious observance, popularly known as Church and Chapel. That religious dualism was created or stereotyped when the Cavalier Parliament passed the Act of Uniformity of 1662. The dualism of the English religious world, and the disabilities imposed on Dissenters, form a large part of the explanation of the peculiarly English phenomenon of two continuous political parties in every shire and town of the land, surviving even when obvious political issues seem asleep or settled, or when the programmes of the two parties seem in certain important respects to have been exchanged. The disabilities under which the Nonconformists lay, of which exclusion from this famous University was one among many, tended to make them act together





in politics. They no longer, indeed, acted under Puritan leaders of their own, as in the time of Pym, Hampden, and Cromwell, but under the leadership of Whig aristocrats, who conformed to the Anglican worship but remained anti-ecclesiastical in their general sympathies. In this alliance of the Nonconformists with a part of the aristocracy, we find for two hundred years the constant irreducible nucleus of the Whig party, just as the Church and squirearchy were the constant irreducible nucleus of Toryism. Moreover, the disabilities under which the Nonconformists suffered during this long period made them sympathize more strongly than they would otherwise have done with the idea of political liberty. The dualism in the religious life of the nation reflected itself into a political dualism, which the philosophic historian, from the vantage point of our own very different age, may regard as having contributed largely to the unexpected success of free Parliamentary government as a method of ruling a great country and a great Empire in peace and in war.



## INFLUENCE OF SIR WALTER SCOTT ON HISTORY\*

WALTER SCOTT did more than any professed historian to alter mankind's vision of its past. Not only did he invent the historical novel, but he revolutionized the scope and study of history itself. It was not, indeed, his 'historical works' that wrought the miracle. The transmuting magic did not lie in his *Life of Napoleon* or even in his *Tales of a Grandfather*. It was begun by the *Lays of the Last Minstrel* and carried on and completed by the long series of the *Waverley Novels*. After reading *Waverley*, *Old Mortality*, *The Heart of Midlothian*, *Woodstock*, *Quentin Durward*, and the rest, men could never again be contented with the cold and limited kind of information so admirably purveyed to them by the historians of the previous generation—Voltaire, Robertson, and Gibbon.

The change was to be exemplified and carried forward by a boy, himself half Scottish, who read the Lays and Novels as they came out and could repeat whole pages of them by heart. The mind and purpose of Macaulay as an historian were framed on Scott. That the *Lays of Ancient Rome* adapted the methods of Scott's Lays to enliven the traditional solemnity of classical studies is a significant fact. But still more to the purpose of my argument is an article that young Macaulay wrote in the *Edinburgh* in 1828, where he avows the ambition to write serious history with the colour, variety, and human detail of Scott, and to show in professional histories, as Sir Walter had done in his novels, the social and economic causes of political events, which older historians had treated *in vacuo*.

If a man [wrote young Macaulay] should write the history of England, he would assuredly not omit the battles, the sieges, the negotiations, the seditions, the Ministerial changes. But with these he would intersperse the details which are the charm of historical romances. At Lincoln Cathedral there is a beautiful painted window, which was made by an apprentice out of the pieces of glass which had been rejected by his master. It is so far superior to every other in the church that, according to the

\* By permission of *The Times*.





tradition, the vanquished artist killed himself from mortification. Sir Walter Scott, in the same manner, has used those fragments of truth which historians have scornfully thrown behind them, in a manner which may well excite their envy." He has constructed out of their gleanings works which, even considered as histories, are scarcely less valuable than theirs. But a truly great historian would reclaim those materials which the novelist has appropriated.

Twenty years later the author of these remarks published the famous Third Chapter of his *History of England*, which may be regarded as a chief pioneer of social history and of the social and economic explanation of political history.

The difference between Gibbon and Macaulay is a measure of the influence of Scott. Gibbon's work comes as near to perfection as any human achievement. It is able to approach perfection partly because of its limitations. It does not attempt the warm and intimate reality of human affairs in all their perplexed and romantic detail, but deals in a few facts and some very broad generalizations. Gibbon is a wonderfully accurate historian; he tells the truth, but he does not attempt to tell more than a small portion of the truth. Living as he did before Scott, he conceived of mankind as essentially the same in all ages and countries. This was, indeed, a view characteristic of the Eighteenth Century with its cosmopolitan outlook, untroubled by national or sectarian prejudice. The 'Philosophers' and the early French Revolutionists would have measured all human problems by the same rule. Against that unreal unity of mankind Burke protested. Scott illustrated and popularized Burke's protest.

Gibbon did not perceive the extent to which the habits and thoughts of men, no less than the forms of society, differ from country to country and from age to age. The men of the Fifteenth Century are in his handling much the same as the men of the Fifth. The long centuries of diverse human experience, which he chronicled with such passionless equanimity, look all much the same in the cold, classical light of his reason. His history is like the procession on the Parthenon frieze. But Scott's mind is the stained glass of a mediaeval window, that breaks the light into a hundred hues and flashes. To Scott each age, each profession, each country, each province, had its own manners, dress, ways of thinking, talking, and fighting. To Scott a man is the product of his special environment, made by it utterly distinct from his fellows, as



distinct as Dugald Dalgetty the Scottish soldier of fortune, Edie Ochiltree the Scottish beggarman, Rob Roy the Highland chieftain, Andrew Fairservice the Presbyterian gardener. And ever since Sir Walter showed mankind this new and richly variegated pattern of history, not as a mere narrative of events, still less as a mere generalization, but as 'a fair field full of *folk*,' mankind has craved after Scott's view rather than Gibbon's, as being both more interesting and nearer the fullness of the truth. The professional historians have tried to follow suit, though never with the perfect success that Gibbon achieved in his more limited task.

Imagine what Gibbon would have made of Cromwell: a few resonant platitudes about ambition, fanaticism, and the rest. But see what has been made of the theme by Sir Walter Scott, in spite of his Cavalier sympathies, by reason of his human insight and historical imagination. The Cromwell of *Woodstock* lives, palpates as a terrible, lovable, laughable piece of manhood—the iron soldier, the deep-scheming politician, yet all the time with something of the heart of a child. It was the first attempt made since Cromwell's own day to draw aside the curtain of oblivion and prejudice, and see the actual man. And this attempt to see the real Cromwell by humanizing the man instead of dealing in generalities is typical of the new inspiration that Scott gave to history. He 'fished the murex up'—the rich dye of historical imagination. The rest of us, great and small, have been bottling it ever since.

Yet the Cromwell of *Woodstock* is far from a perfect portrait. It is 'stagey,' like the rest of the book, like all the novels that Scott did not locate in Scotland. It is true that some of the English and Continental tales, notably *Ivanhoe* and *Quentin Durward*, did at least as much as the Scottish novels to impress Sir Walter's view of history on the world at large, particularly on the Continent. But, as we all recognize now, they are not nearly as good. Sir Walter did not know what the people in the Middle Ages, or in Tudor and Stuart England, were really like, though he evolved some brilliant and suggestive guesses from the deep stores of his antiquarian knowledge. But for the most part he had to take refuge in the able manipulation of 'tushery,' to use an expression invented by his pupil Stevenson.

On the other hand, the Scots of the later Eighteenth Century





were Sir Walter's own folk, and their shrewd, poetic, forceful talk was his own mother tongue. Their character and their conversations could be transplanted, with historical likelihood enough, a century and a half back to the Covenanting days of Montrose and Claverhouse, and still more easily to 1715 or 1745.

Scott was, moreover, the most learned of Scottish antiquaries before ever he dipped pen in ink as a novelist. He had a memory the rival of Macaulay's, and reading hardly less extensive. When he sat down to write a tale, the history, legend, language, manners, and ways of thinking of old Scotland gushed out on to his paper as from a fountain where the sand dances. He did not 'get up' the period of *Old Mortality*, or of the *Bride of Lammermoor*, or of the *Heart of Midlothian*, as he got up *Quentin Durward* and *Kenilworth*. Before he began to frame the stories in his mind, the Scotland of Charles II, of Queen Anne, or George II was already a part of his being.

As John Buchan says of *Waverley*:—

He put into his first novel a large part of the harvest of his youthful wanderings. The period—60 years back—lived for him like a personal reminiscence, so vividly had he been impressed by what he had seen and heard.

For this reason *Waverley* is still the best history-book on the Forty-five considered as a social phenomenon in its peculiar time and place, better even than the admirable narrative in the *Tales of a Grandfather*. Another remark of Buchan's may be quoted about *Waverley*:—

Scott, as is his custom, shows a profound comprehension of the merits of the different points of view, however fiercely they may conflict in action.

This is one of his merits as an historian. Scott is far above the whole brood of sentimental Jacobite romanticists, not only in imaginative power but in historic grasp and impartiality.

I am an Englishman, and I am sometimes called a Whig; Sir Walter was the most patriotic of Scots, and in sentiment at least was all Cavalier and Tory. But his ultimate judgment on parties and issues in the period of *Old Mortality*, his thoughts on the Union, on the Porteous riots, on the Forty-five, are very much the same as mine, though his feelings are in some cases different. For his judgment was nearly always the master of his feelings, at least



in the realm of history, and that is one reason why he was a great historian. He was all the greater because he had feelings to control. The impartial historian who has no feelings to control, rides a sorry nag safely to market; Sir Walter bestrode a war-horse that never ran away with him.

The work that the Waverley Novels did in transmuting both the popular and the learned view of history has been done and can never be undone. Even if, to their own great impoverishment, future generations were to cease to read his books at all, this achievement of his would have to be recorded as a stage in the history of man's mental evolution. But in judging him as an historian it is necessary also to consider the absolute historical value of his writings as they appear to the eye of modern scholarship. Here the superiority of the Scottish novels to the rest is as great in the realm of history as it is admitted to be in the realm of literature.

It is, indeed, true that *Ivanhoe*, when it first appeared, did much to promote an understanding of the long misunderstood Middle Ages. But it was brave guesswork, and we now know that a good deal of it was wrong. *Quentin Durward*, *Kenilworth*, and *Woodstock*, though always stimulating to the historical imagination, can scarcely be said, considered as historical works, to teach a modern student what he could not find elsewhere. In knowledge of the Middle Ages, and of Tudor and Stuart England, Scott has been since outstripped by many. When, in *Kenilworth*, he represents Shakespeare as a poet already famous at Court in the year of Amy Robsart's death, which took place four years before he was born, in the year after the Queen's accession, Scott, by this wilful transmutation of dates, telescoping the two very different ends of the Elizabethan age, betrays a mind unfamiliar with the gradualness and greatness of the changes that took place in England and in the position of the Queen during the four and forty years of her reign.

But, if his knowledge and understanding of English history had the limits usual in his day, the man who knows more than Sir Walter Scott knew about old Scotland has yet to be found. He carried in his head as much book-knowledge of his country's history and antiquities as any modern scholar, together with a vast deal more of oral and traditional knowledge than any one before or since. He had, besides, one advantage that no Scottish his-





forian can ever have again: he knew personally, by his boyish and youthful experience, the Eighteenth Century mind and character of the upper, middling, and lower orders of Scottish society. It is no wonder that a man equipped with these various kinds of knowledge, gifted moreover with the greatest historical imagination that any man ever had, and all his splendid powers kept in place and harmony by a balanced and wise judgment on the quarrels and feuds in Kirk and State that had formerly divided his countrymen, all of whom he loved for being Scots—it is not wonderful that such a man, standing as he did at that moment of time between the old world and the new, should have written works about the history of the Covenanters, of the Jacobites, and of the social life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century which will not only delight but instruct people for all time to come, in proportion, I had almost said, as they have or have not the true love of history.



## JONATHAN SWIFT\*

It is just two hundred years since the tormented spirit of Jonathan Swift at length found rest, 'ubi saeva indignatio ulterius cor lacerare nequit.' Such are the words of the most terrible epitaph a man ever wrote for his own tomb. 'Fierce indignation' was, indeed, the dominant impulse of his nature, a perpetual lava stream welling out from his torn heart to excoriate his enemies and, in a sense, the whole human race.

The giant greatness of the man, great in his indomitable and domineering spirit and in his genius as an author, make his writings the most formidable instrument in our language of irony and attack. And this dark colossus had a dark fate to match. The long tragedy of his life was crowned by the insanity of which with grim courage he watched the approach. His indeed was 'woe, than Byron's woe more tragic far.' And his was a sincerity greater than Byron's; he made no 'pageant of his bleeding heart,' though he scorned to hide it. His 'saeva indignatio' was always the genuine article, though sometimes misdirected. It is indeed to be hoped that it was sometimes misdirected, for it was directed against us all, against the whole race of Yahoos. His hatred of evil was stronger than his love of good. His mind's eye saw men and women in their naked deformity. He could see no merit in his enemies, and sometimes charged them with hideous crimes which in fact they had never committed.

Yet he had his friends, and was most true to them. And he loved a woman, haply two; respected them, lifted them to his own intellectual level, and, by sad mismanagement, involved them both in tragedy. He was no hypocrite in any sense. He was a man of strict conduct, fit to be a priest, though scarcely a Christian as we nowadays conceive that character.

He was earnest in his religion, because he thought Yahoos could be restrained from crime only by the fear of God. Therefore he hated the infidel as much as he hated the Papist and the

\* From an address delivered at the opening of a Jonathan Swift Exhibition at Cambridge on October 18, 1945.





Dissenter. What he regarded as superstition and fanaticism were as abhorrent to him as atheism. So he himself became a fanatic for the Church of England. He was the opposite of a doctrinal bigot, but his temperamental intolerance put him out of touch with the latitudinarian spirit of the Eighteenth Century, which was better represented by the less formidable figure of Addison. His attitude to religion is set forth in the *Tale of a Tub*, a work to be enjoyed by all, save, I suspect, Christians of real piety. No wonder Queen Anne, good simple soul, refused to make its author a Bishop or even an English Dean.

English politics have enlisted three men of supreme genius as pamphleteers—Milton, Swift and Burke. The author of the *Areopagitica* gave to the political pamphlet the spirit and almost the language of poetry. Swift gave it a prose pliancy, and therefore with greater effectiveness; he gave it also the weapon of irony. Burke's political writings combined many of the qualities of Milton and of Swift, and added a largeness of political philosophy that was all his own. Of these three great men, Swift was, I think, the greatest as a pamphleteer in the more limited scope of the pamphlet as an engine of party. Milton was more poetical; Burke established wider principles, sometimes Liberal, sometimes Conservative. But Swift knocked down the adversary of the moment with the surest aim.

As an historian Swift was less successful. It was the only sphere he entered in which he failed. His *History of the Four Last Years of the Queen*, not published in his life-time, is decidedly the least successful of his more important works. So deficient is it in his own great qualities that one would not suppose it to be his work at all, but for positive external evidence. That evidence is, however, now supplied to the full by one of the most interesting documents on exhibition here to-day (no. 77 in the catalogue), graciously lent by H.M. the King. In the absence of that positive evidence, now available, my great-uncle, Macaulay, made up his mind on internal evidence that *The Four Last Years of the Queen* was not by Swift. In the catalogue of this Exhibition you will see what he said about it, in a marginal note in his copy of Swift, which I possess. When Macaulay thought anything, he was always so sure about it that he must sometimes pay the penalty of raising a smile at his over-confidence, which in this case is now proved to have been misplaced. Macaulay, who greatly admired



Swift's style, would not believe that he could have written anything so poor. I am not surprised. The explanation is that it was Swift's only attempt at History, and he had no historical gift.

But though Swift was inferior to his enemy Burnet as an historiographer, he was supreme as a pamphleteer, in an age when pamphlet was the most important weapon of political warfare. In *The Conduct of the Allies* and other pamphlets, Swift did much to win for England the peace to which her victories entitled her, but which Marlborough and the Whigs denied her. But in doing this service to his country, he calumniated Marlborough and the gallant army who had won us the victory. As a black coat, he hated red coats with a fierce professional hatred; he wrote a dirty libel on Cutts, the Salamander, the year after that gallant officer had done his country such signal service at Blenheim.

The last years of Queen Anne saw the brief heyday of Swift's personal and political fortunes. But, without realising it, he was in a false position. As a Protestant who had lived much in Ireland, he was so far from Jacobitism that he could not believe his friend Bolingbroke was intriguing for a Restoration. Like another of his friends, Matt. Prior, Swift, though he was not a Whig, was a Williamite. In the language of the day 'he stood on a Revolution foot.' That being so, he should have supported Oxford's policy of moderation and toleration; but his fierce temper led him to urge on Bolingbroke's persecution of Dissenters that culminated in the Schism Act, a violent policy that could only be secured and perpetuated by a Jacobite Restoration. This Swift failed to perceive.

Bolingbroke flattered him with the pretence of full confidence, but took care to keep him in the dark about his own dealings with the Pretender. Then the crash came, the Tory party was submerged, and Swift was condemned to his Dublin Deanery for life. He thought the world a prison and Ireland one of the worst wards. Yet, by an irony peculiarly Swiftian, he became the national hero of the whole discontented island, Catholic and Protestant alike. For he defied England, then ruled by his own political enemies. In the *Drapier's Letters* of 1724 he bade the world believe that Wood's half-pence were worthless metal. All who accepted them, he declared, would lose almost eleven pence in the shilling. What cared he that Newton, as Master of the Mint, being ordered to assay Wood's coins, reported them correct both as to weight and quality?





Something else was at issue—Swift's own revenge on the Whigs; and the revenge of Ireland, Protestant and Catholic alike, on those who held her in thrall from across the water. 'There are few things,' wrote Lecky, 'more touching than the constancy with which the Irish people clung to their leader, even at a time when his faculties were wholly decayed. And notwithstanding his creed, his profession, his intolerance, the name of Swift was for many generations the most universally popular in Ireland. He first taught the Irish people to rely upon themselves.' When Primate Boulter accused him of exciting the people, he replied with scarcely an exaggeration—'If I were to lift my finger, you would be torn to pieces.' His birthday was celebrated with bonfires by all sects in that divided community. At the very end, twenty years after the *Drapier's Letters*, with dimmed eyes and clouded brain he saw the glare of the bonfires through the window and heard the cheering in the street. 'My birthday!' he muttered. 'It's all folly. They had better leave it alone.'

I do not know whether his poetry or his prose was the most wonderful instrument. Jingling rhymes of the simplest structure became in his hands a vehicle for the same qualities as we find in his prose—vivid pictures of scenes, wit, humour, fun, and of course irony sometimes ferocious, sometimes delicate, sometimes aimed at himself and his fate in a kind of jovial bitterness of spirit, as in his *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift*:

From Dublin soon to London spread,  
'Tis told at court the dean is dead.  
Kind lady Suffolk in the spleen  
Runs laughing up to tell the Queen.  
The Queen so gracious, mild and good,  
Cries, 'Is he gone? 'Tis time he should.'

\* \* \*

He gave the little wealth he had  
To build a house for fools and mad;  
To shew, by one satiric touch,  
No nation wanted it so much.

But last and most of all he is Gulliver, that traveller in new worlds of fancy who discovered Lilliput and Brobdingnag. As Defoe lives for all time in Robinson Crusoe, so Swift in Gulliver. The prosaic and realistic imagination of the Augustan age



culminated in these two classic works, the fancies of two eccentric Englishmen, which have become household words, as familiar to all the civilized world as Hamlet and Don Quixote. There is Swiftian paradox and irony in the fate of Gulliver as a book. It was the origin of that peculiarly English kind of literature written for the pure delight of childhood. Yet much of it was composed in the spirit of Timon of Athens, to scourge the vices and follies of the world. And much of it consists of cryptic political allusions which bore children and puzzle their elders. Yet with all these disadvantages, so rich was this grim giant in fun and fancy that he brought the little children and the grown men to crowd together round his knees and listen to the same tale; God bless him for it!

We feel in Swift's writings and in the story of his life, what we do not feel in Defoe or Addison or Pope, the sense of greatness more than human, neither divine nor diabolic but titanic; a nature as big as Dr. Johnson's, less lovable indeed but as powerful in mundane contacts, and a yet greater master of the written word. The prose style of Swift is the strongest contrast to that of Johnson—the latter so formal, rotund, sententious and long drawn out; Swift's so simple, concise, almost conversational, dangerously polite and ironically restrained, yet, for all its quiet simplicity, serving as the vehicle for passion as explosive and devastating as gunpowder in store.





CSL

## FRIENDS LOST

SIR JOHN CLAPHAM\*

(1873-1946)

THE sudden death of Sir John Clapham has been a hard, unexpected blow to his many friends and to all historians. Though seventy-two years of age, he was still in full vigour. He died after a few seconds' illness, in a railway carriage, coming back to Cambridge from London where he had been taking the chair at a meeting with his accustomed serenity and power. Since he published his *History of the Bank of England* in 1944, he had already written three-quarters of a one-volumed *Economic History of England*, which most fortunately he has left in a state to be published for the benefit of innumerable teachers and students in the years to come. He had in fact no period of cessation from work or even of lessened powers. So his loss is acutely felt. He was not 'the shade of that which once was great.' He was still an integral part of our national activity. Yet on a calm view I know no one of my contemporaries whose life was more fulfilled and whose personal achievement was more complete. He was still going on, but he had already passed the goal.

His lecturing and teaching, and his many administrative services, academic and public, would in themselves have been enough for a lesser man. But this prodigious worker took them in his stride, while he was at the same time producing books of the first order. He had little patience, perhaps too little, with academicians who find difficulty in producing books without leisure. His permanent fame will rest on his economic histories.

It is not easy to write Economic History well and readably. William Cunningham, who fifty years ago had the chief hand in founding the academic study which has since grown to such vast proportions, did not excel as a writer. Clapham did. And one reason why he so excelled was that the largeness of his culture and the breadth of his mind and sympathies enabled him to place Economic History in its real setting of actuality, as a part of the

\* From the *Economic Journal*, Sept. 1946.





human life of each successive age, as social history. And he connected it with political and other circumstance, with administrative machinery and with the clash of parties, with the personalities of particular men (the successive Governors of the Bank of England and Chancellors of the Exchequer, for instance), and with the current thought and literature of each successive period, including even its novels and its poetry, which he loved and often most aptly quoted. He put Economic History in its true place in human history, and prevented it from becoming an arid and theoretical study apart. Others helped in that saving work—his friend Eileen Power, and Mr. and Mrs. Hammond with whom he was sometimes in courteous controversy. But Clapham's *Economic History of Modern Britain* towers up like a mountain in size and in rock-like solidity of structure, probably the greatest economic history ever written. He was influenced by ideas and he was open to emotions, but neither ideas nor emotions ever carried him away from facts. He always strove to subject economic history to the ultimate criterion of statistical fact, into which ideas and emotions must fit themselves. His three great volumes are there, and it is within their findings that thought and theory about our industrial revolution have henceforth very largely to move.

Closely akin to the intellectual characteristics of his work was his marked personality. He had the best qualities of the Englishman of the Northern type; commonsense, adherence to fact, serenity that was never rattled, fair-mindedness—call it if you will by the severer word 'justice'—in all his dealings with men. At first contact he was a 'formidable' man, with his giant frame and slightly rolling gait and large 'Cromwellian' features (though he was not 'temperamental' like Oliver). Kindness and affection lay close behind, and very often broke through, and were the more valued because they were always sincere, and were not scattered broadcast on undeservers. I always added thirty per cent. to any words of approval from that great Yorkshireman, as compared to the value of the same words from a polite and flattering southerner.

He was ever ready to go out of his way and work for those in distress, but he would never 'spoil' anyone at the expense of others or of the public. These qualities made him, in the war of 1939-45, an ideal member of the local Conscientious Objectors' Tribunal, Chairman of the Cambridge Employment Committee,



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and of the Cambridge Refugee Committee, and finally Chairman of the national organization of the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning, dealing with the cases of refugee scholars. Professor A. V. Hill, his Vice-Chairman in the latter capacity, writes—

Clapham's deep humanity and his faith in the dignity and worth of human personality and freedom found strong expression in this real and active concern of his last years. These qualities may not always have been so apparent as his strength of body, mind and character or his keenness of intellect, but they were a fundamental part of his nature, and no estimate of his work and influence could be accurate which disregarded the foundation they provided.

Such a man naturally had crowds of devoted friends, and an extremely happy family life. I knew him for more than half a century, and the world seems a less sure and trustworthy place now he is gone. In the storms through which we have passed—and are passing—his presence among us seemed to guarantee the fundamental sanity of mankind, and the continuance of our civilization.

I have called Clapham a Yorkshireman, because he recalled in appearance his yeoman ancestors from the Ridings, about whom he loved to talk. But Lancashire had a share in him. His grandfather, Thomas Clapham, had been a Yorkshire farmer, but his own father, John, migrated to Manchester. The story of John Clapham senior is worth telling as an example of early Victorian 'Self-help.' In 1837, at the age of fifteen, he left the farm and walked to Bradford to look for a clerk's job. At the end of the day he had found nothing, but he saw in a jeweller's shop window that an apprentice was wanted. He went in and got the job, which included sweeping out the shop and sleeping under the counter. Here he learnt watch-making and developed the 'jeweller's eye.' Here also he was 'converted' and became a Methodist. At the age of nineteen he went to Manchester by stage coach to be junior salesman in John Hall and Co., and eventually rose to be head of the firm. He married Mary Jane Chambers, daughter of a small-ware manufacturer of Manchester. Altogether a proper parentage for the historian of our industrial revolution.

So John Harold Clapham was born at Broughton, Salford,





Manchester, on September 13, 1873, and his boyhood was spent at his father's house, 'The Hills, Prestwich, Manchester, then a pleasant region of broken ground, more rural than urban. He was brought up a Methodist, though in later years he became a Churchman at King's, where, like Milton, he delighted to hear

the pealing organ blow  
To the full voiced quire below.

A broadminded, not very dogmatic Protestantism fitted in well with his character. He belonged to our generation that knew the Bible. I remember his delight over a French scientific historian who, in writing of the 'Adullamites' of our political crisis of 1866, explained 'allusion biblique: Adullam avait voulu tuer David.'

As his school and College life were both spent at Cambridge, Cambridge may divide with the North the credit of producing him. He went to Leys school in 1887, where, besides his scholarly achievement, he was a leader in athletics. He was in the first team for Rugby football, captain in cricket and lacrosse, ran for the school and was second in the Public School quarter mile. He edited the school magazine and became Senior Prefect. He retained a great affection for the Leys and in later years became a Governor.

He went up to King's College in 1892 as a History Exhibitioner, became a scholar in 1894, and in 1895 got his first in the history Tripos of that year, in which only twenty men and thirteen women were classed. But though the history school was still small, it was about to have a great expansion in which he took a part. Moreover there were in those days three great historians at Cambridge—Acton, Maitland and William Cunningham. The three Cambridge teachers who most influenced Clapham's mind in these formative years were Acton, Cunningham and Alfred Marshall. He became equally interested in economics and in history.

His was indeed an all-round mind—'an orb'd mind.' In 1896 he became Lightfoot Scholar in Ecclesiastical History. In 1897 he won the Prince Consort Prize with an essay on *The Causes of the War of 1792* which was published. In 1898 he was elected a Fellow of King's.

At College he continued to play Rugby and cricket, but he



found salvation as a mountaineer. Climbing at home and in the Alps was his passion for nearly forty years. This most strenuous of all forms of holiday kept him fit for his arduous and unceasing intellectual labours, and the harsh, delightful contact with nature at her roughest and grandest still further developed his character and his imaginative power.

After teaching for some years in the now rapidly expanding history school at Cambridge, he went to Leeds in 1902 as Economic Professor, at the instigation of Alfred Marshall. It was always one of Clapham's most characteristic sayings that young Cambridge dons ought to take Professorships in the newer Universities if they got the chance, to see something of the world outside the sheltered College life. They might hope to return to Cambridge and be all the more use there, and less 'donnish,' as a result. It certainly happened to him.

He felt at home in the Yorkshire manufacturing towns, and made many friends among his fellow Yorkshiremen. He seized the opportunity to make a first-hand study of the wool trade. He enjoyed personal contact with business men, and was always interested in seeing mechanical and technical processes at work. In 1907 he produced his book on *The Woollen and Worsted Industries*. While he was Professor in Leeds, the Yorkshire College became Leeds University, and he took a large share in the reorganization necessitated by this change. He was always a first-rate colleague and citizen, whether at Leeds or Cambridge or elsewhere, ever ready to shoulder burdens that required volunteers, and outspokenly impatient of those too nice to do their bit.<sup>1</sup>

While at Leeds he met and married Margaret, daughter of W. E. Green of Ross. It proved in every respect a perfect union. After they had returned to Cambridge, he bought a piece of freehold land on the edge of town and country, and on it built a house and planted a garden, both unpretentiously combining the *utile* with the *bellum*, and there his and Margaret's three daughters and one son grew up under ideal conditions of family life. It was always a pleasure to have an excuse to visit Storey's End, a secure fortress of friendship, good sense and truth.

<sup>1</sup> An instance of his readiness to shoulder heavy burdens for others is his joint editorship of the Cambridge Economic History. The war prevented the publication of more than the first volume (1940) and that was rendered possible only because he himself translated or rewrote several of the articles contributed by foreigners.





The return to King's, Cambridge, took place in 1908. He came back as assistant tutor in History, in succession to Oscar Brownning, and at once began to deliver the great series of lectures to freshmen on Economic History which went on till 1945. 'Clapham's lectures' were famous, a prominent feature in the education that Cambridge offered to successive generations of undergraduates. He was an active member of the Faculty of History and of the Faculty of Economics. In his opinion, there ought to have been more history in the economic Tripos, which he considered too theoretical as an education by itself. He served long and well on The University Press Syndicate, for he loved the details of printing and publishing.

During the War of 1914-18 he was at the Board of Trade, and was given the C.B.E. for his war work. He became Tutor of King's in 1913 in succession to his grand old friend, William Macaulay; and he remained Tutor till 1928 when he became the first Professor of Economic History in Cambridge. In 1933 he became Vice-Provost of King's, from which office he retired in 1943. He enjoyed and valued to the last his close association with the College which he always served with unfailing loyalty and love. His portrait by Gunn, which pleased him well, now hangs in the hall, the place where he would most wish it to hang.

One of his now distinguished former pupils, Mr. G. C. Morris, writes of him:

He was a wonderful supervisor. He might so easily have seemed formidable, but, without a trace of patronage, one was put immediately at one's ease; and few men so obviously adult have been more tolerant of the callowness of the young. Most supervisions turned into delightful and far-ranging historical gossips. Of course the Olympian quality was always present and the immense technical learning, but he was no less liable to discuss the Savoy Operas, or the tactics and politics of the 1914 War, than the decay of villeinage. His knowledge of economic realities, and his long and wide experience of men and affairs, made his teaching singularly unacademic and alive.

Somehow his 'eye for country' was always coming in. After a visit to Palestine he would delight in telling how something he had noticed in the lie of the land had thrown light on one of Joab's campaigns. His verbal memory of the Bible and of a great deal else was quite astounding. 'Let me see,' he would say, 'how does it run?' And then would come a long and telling quotation. It might be Milton or Hobbes; it might be Dickens or a Wells scientific romance; very often it was



Trollope and very often Housman. He knew much more poetry and there was much more poetry in him than many people realised.'

In the last years of his life his eminent place among British historians was recognized. In 1940 he was chosen President of the British Academy, a national position which he filled with his large presence and wisdom until his death. In 1943 he was knighted, and became 'Sir John' to all the world.

He was well fitted to represent England, because he was and he looked the most 'English' of Englishmen, and yet he took a deep personal interest in the work and fortunes of foreign scholars. I have quoted above the testimony of Professor A. V. Hill to his work as Chairman of the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning during the recent war. After the war he was Chairman of the Committee of the International Congress of Historical Sciences, till the time of his death. Miss Jean McLachlan writes to me about his tenure of this post:

The first sign of reviving international academic co-operation was the resumption of the informal gatherings of English and French historians, which up till 1939 had been annual events. The meeting of September 1945 took place in London, and much of its success was due to the care which Sir John had so generously spent on the preparation, to his genuine and obvious interest in all its activities, and to his understanding and appreciation of the French point of view.

During all these years of College, University and public work, the great books and important articles had been pouring out in an ever more rapid and deepening stream. I will mention a few.

In 1912 he published *The Abbé Sieyès*, not one of his most important works, but illustrating how wide he cast the net of his historical understanding. His knowledge of the French Revolution and its characters enabled him to appreciate the greatness as well as the limitations of Carlyle's epic; he and I used to swap quotations from it. Among Clapham's special favourites was the description of his own special subject of study:

With ineffable serenity sniffs great Sieyès, aloft, alone; his Constitution ye may babble over, ye may mar, but can by no possibility mend: is not polity a science he has exhausted?

Again the meeting of Robespierre and Danton:

With what terror of feminine hatred the poor seagreen formula looked at the monstrous colossal Reality, and grew greener to behold





him:—the Reality, again, struggling to think no ill of the chief-product of the Revolution; yet feeling at bottom that such chief-product was little other than a chief windbag, blown large by popular air.

For Clapham had a strong sense of humour both about life and about history, which Carlyle satisfied.

A greater book than *Sieyès* and more in the central line of Clapham's work was *The Economic Development of France and Germany, 1815-1914*, published in 1921. Its massive learning illustrates not only the grasp of economic history, but his knowledge of foreign countries in many different aspects of their life, past and present.

This powerful excursus into the economic history of Europe prepared him for his *magnum opus*, undertaken with fully ripened powers, *The Economic History of Modern Britain*, of which the first volume (*The Early Railway Age, 1820-50*) was published in 1926; fitly dedicated to 'the memory of Alfred Marshall and William Cunningham.' Indeed no more completely and characteristically 'Cambridge' product was ever published by the University Press. It is 'monumental' in its weight of scholarship, yet it is alive with thought and is human on every page. Volume II (*Free Trade and Steel, 1850-86*) followed in 1932, and in 1938 Volume III (*Machines and National Rivalries, 1887-1914, with an Epilogue, 1914-29*). On the completion of this great task he had definitely placed himself on the list of memorable English historians.

After that, the authorities of the Bank of England paid him the compliment of asking him to write the history of their great institution, placing their archives at his disposal. He greatly enjoyed his days at the Bank, and his lunches and personal contacts with the Directors and officers, and they had the highest regard and liking for him. The last paragraph of his Preface, dated November 23, 1943, may here be quoted:

The writing of the book has all been done during war. The State asked only for fractions of my time. The Bank has had most of the rest. At black moments the work has been an anodyne; at all times a privilege and a pleasure. As this is not an official history I may perhaps be allowed to say that I have found the wartime atmosphere of Threadneedle Street tonic. A Frenchman would no doubt have expected to discover 'le flegme britannique' in the ascendant at the Bank of England: he would not have been disappointed.



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In 1944 the Cambridge Press was enabled, in spite of war-time restrictions which made most publications so unseemly in appearance, to produce the two black-bound volumes in a form worthy of the finest publishing traditions. The story of the Bank is there told from 1694 to 1914. Some day, when the years following 1914 have passed into history, another volume which Clapham prepared will, I believe, be forthcoming.

Such, in brief, is the story of this man, whose memory will live with his works, even after all those who knew and loved him have passed away.



## ADMIRAL SIR HERBERT RICHMOND\*

1871-1946

ADMIRAL SIR HERBERT WILLIAM RICHMOND (K.C.B., 1926) was the son of Sir William Richmond, K.C.B., R.A., and Clara Jane Richards. Born on September 15, 1871, he entered the Navy before he was fourteen and went to sea in 1887.

Not only was his father a distinguished artist, but his grandfather, George Richmond, was even more celebrated, chiefly for his portrait heads of Victorian celebrities. 'There were few men of eminence in the middle of the century [says the *Dictionary of National Biography*] who did not sit to him, and many of the portraits were engraved.' Many of us are familiar with his work on the walls of London clubs or in country houses up and down England. Moreover George Richmond was himself the son of Thomas Richmond, a well-known painter of miniatures.

Admiral Herbert Richmond was therefore the descendant of three generations of artists, and was brought up in a home entirely devoted to art. He himself had strong artistic instincts and powers; they were his recreation throughout his life, and they might have been professionally developed. Yet he went into the Navy with which he had no family connexion, but towards which as a boy he felt a strong inclination deriving from his own personal character and temperament. In considering the sailor and the historian, we must not forget the artistic side of his family tradition and of his own talents, for it surely had something to do with his fine scholarship and his gift of clear and attractive writing, which helped him to become a great naval historian.

His father and mother married in 1867 and spent the next three years abroad, chiefly in Italy. I remember, years ago, seeing in a little old *pension* at Assisi, long since closed, the walls that had been frescoed by William Richmond during his residence.

Soon after their return to England Herbert was born. He grew up in an atmosphere favourable to childhood with a mass of

\* By permission of the British Academy.



brothers and one sister, to whom he was devoted, and with whom he kept in close touch as long as they all lived. He adored his mother whose gentle serenity was combined with much shrewdness and wit, and he was proud as well as fond of his gifted and charming if rather difficult father. Their home was an old house in Hammersmith which stood in the midst of hayfields, and was a great resort of artist friends. It was also tenanted by a ghost, a weeping, sighing lady, who was seen or heard so often by one or another of the family that most of them seemed to have believed in her reality.

Fraternal recollections of Herbert in his childhood were those of his cheerfulness, courage, and love of enterprise; climbing on the ruins of Corfe Castle and breaking his arm; 'deeply affectionate but fond of fighting.' Just the boy to turn into a sailor! But the decisive incident that drew him to the sea occurred when he was nine or ten years old.

He was unwell [writes his brother, E. T. Richmond], so he and I to keep him company were packed off to Eastney near Portsmouth, where we were lodged in the cottage of a Mr. Barham, who had formerly served with the Marines in the Crimean War. He was the brother of our old nurse. One day Mr. Barham took him to Portsmouth. I did not go. But he told me later that he then saw a sight which ultimately settled his career: a boatload of bluejackets coming ashore under the command of a small midshipman, alert and authoritative, clothed in the glory of a uniform and armed with a dirk. 'That', he told Mr. Barham, 'is what I should like to be.' A few days later we were on a height from which we could see some men-of-war in Portsmouth harbour. 'There sir', said Mr. Barham, 'is your future ship.'

It must have been soon after this that he was sent with his elder brother to St. Mark's School near Windsor. He was not happy there. The complexities of Greek, Latin, and mathematics worried him and confirmed him in his desire to go to sea.

He failed to pass into the Navy at the age of twelve and cried. He tried again at thirteen and got in. If he had failed a second time his intention was to be an artist.

Another brother, Mr. Arthur C. Richmond, writes as follows:

When a boy he received a good deal of help from his father in developing a talent for drawing. But he was of a rather dynamic temperament seeking continually for outlets for his energy which resulted in his early years in some sense of frustration. He did not find what satisfied





him. His choice of the Navy as a career was, he told me, quite accidental. He disliked intensely the private school he was sent to and declared his choice for the Navy because that offered a way of escape from school. But the career of a naval officer alone would never have satisfied him. He was possessed throughout his life by a creative urge. Even as a midshipman he would not just keep a log-book. He had to illustrate and decorate it. And even at that time of life he was a great letter-writer. I think he always had to write. It was a necessary form of self-expression to him, and he wrote excellent and vivid letters. By nature he had to seek perfection. By that I mean that wherever he touched life in a practical form and found what seemed to him defects he had to try and remedy them. For that reason he could have been anything. Essentially his interests and sympathies were liberal. He hated injustices and if the circumstances of his life had brought him into touch with social problems he would have been an ardent social reformer. Perhaps as a result of his early training in the Navy, which in some ways was a hard one, he developed a superficial attitude of sympathy with conservative and traditional ideas and methods, but in fact he spent his life fighting against established ways of thought in his profession and championing ideas which were often regarded by his superiors as revolutionary. Indeed the liberalism of his instinctive outlook constantly broke through the conservatism of a partially superimposed personality. Yet he had prejudices which he cherished. They were part of his intense loyalty. He was incapable of being disloyal and his affections were very strong.

Throughout his life he had to use his hands in some way or other. In his leisure he painted or he carved or he fixed up some gadget in his house or he re-planned his garden and himself worked at carrying out his ideas.

At fifteen he went to sea as a midshipman and was three years on the Australian station. He used in after life to regale his family with stories of midshipman's pranks and adventures that recall Marryat's tales.

His first sea-going ships were under sail, and he was always glad to have had his training in such a school. He would recall how as midshipman of the fore-top there was never a dull moment in the four hours on watch; there was a sail to adjust, a rope to be made fast, a hundred and one things that might need attention, and the officer's eyes had to be everywhere, seeing that all was in order. He would compare such watch-keeping with the dreary walking up and down the bridge of a modern ship, which takes its place to-day.



At the age of about twenty-four when he had passed all his examinations and was qualified as a torpedo lieutenant, the technical and routine side of naval life ceased to satisfy him, and he began to ask himself what it was all for. The study of naval history, which arose out of that, proved to be the dominating interest of his life. He soon saw the connexion between naval happenings in the past and those of to-day, and sought to establish the principles that should govern the employment of navies in war. The perfecting of the Navy as a fighting instrument was what he was always working for and thinking of. 'When he was courting me,' writes his wife, 'the chief thing I remember about our conversations was his outlining with fervour his plans for a Naval General Staff.'

His marriage which took place in 1907, began a long and very happy family life. Elsa Bell was the daughter of a very remarkable and delightful man. Sir Hugh Bell, the iron-master of Middlesbrough, was a man of the first class of intellectual power, deeply interested in literature and in politics as well as in business, and devoted to the service of his country in all sorts of ways. His second wife, Florence, Lady Bell, Lady Richmond's mother, was also a most remarkable woman and hostess, with a great knowledge of French language and society. Their house in 95 Sloane Street and their Yorkshire house of Rounton were centres of a great society of cousins and friends, with whom Herbert was very soon a favourite. He much enjoyed the social life in London, and in Yorkshire he threw himself with zest into whatever was going on—the hunting and shooting, the dancing, the skating on ice however rough, the acting in village plays, and all the round of country activities. It was a side of English life he had not known intimately before, and he loved every bit of it. That was a happy period for him, in the years before 1914, with so much already in hand, and a career full of possibilities still ahead. Like many sailors, too, who have lived for years in officers' messes, he relished the seclusion and comfort of home life, and as time went on, he was a devoted and delightful father and companion to his family of four daughters and one son. His wife's sister Mary had married Charles (now Sir Charles) Trevelyan, and her half-sister was Gertrude Bell of Arabia, with both of whom, as well as with her brothers, Herbert was on terms of the friendliest intimacy.

I am not competent myself to assess his professional career, but





Rear-Admiral Henry Thursfield has kindly communicated the following account to me for publication here:

Throughout his service in the Navy, Herbert Richmond was recognized as an officer of outstanding qualities. Even those who, in the later stages of it, could not believe that one of his wide reading and literary distinction could possibly be at the same time a practical man of affairs—as in fact throughout his life he was—and who lacked the breadth of view and insight that would have led them to accept the validity of the principles for which he strove, admitted both his great abilities and his services to the Navy. The misfortune that during his service on the flag list that school was predominant in the higher ranks of the Navy excluded him from the highest posts, and deprived the Navy of the services therein of the ablest man of his generation. But his writings after he had retired from the Service and begun his academic career, continued to have an immense influence on current naval thought, and he lived to see the soundness of the principles for which he had striven so hard fully substantiated by the course of events in the last war.

Herbert Richmond entered the Navy as a cadet in the *Britannia* in 1885, going to sea two years later as a midshipman in the *Nelson*, flagship of Rear-Admiral Fairfax, Commander-in-Chief on the Australian Station, one of the first of twin-screw warships but also fully rigged as a sailing ship. He thus had experience of naval conditions that had all but passed away, which was repeated a few years later when he served as a lieutenant in the *Active*, flagship of the sailing Training Squadron which survived until 1898; in the interval, he had served for a short period in the Hydrographic Service—in which his inherited talent as an artist may well have proved useful—in the surveying ship *H.M.S. Stork* in the Mediterranean, one of whose lieutenants was the present Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Oliver. In 1894 he was one of those selected to qualify as a torpedo lieutenant—evidence at that time of abilities above the average—and after qualifying high in his class, served in that capacity in several ships. One of them was the flagship of the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, another the flagship of the Channel Squadron, whence he was promoted commander in 1903. The officers of flagships were specially selected from those of high promise, and his bare record of service at this period is evidence of distinction on the scientific and technical side of his profession, which was further recognized by his employment, after promotion to commander, in the Naval Ordnance Department at the Admiralty. That was the last of his technical appointments, however, and after a little more than two years as executive officer of the *Crescent*, flagship of the Commander-in-Chief on the Cape



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Station, he returned to the Admiralty as Assistant to the Second Sea Lord, whose duties included the supervision and administration of all training. After two years there he was promoted captain.

His first seagoing appointment was the plum of the whole Navy—command of the famous battleship *Dreadnought*, then a new ship and flagship of Sir William May, Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleet. Staff duties under a chief who was determined to bring about a renaissance in the science of tactics, together with command of one of the largest ships in the Navy of the day, can have left him little leisure for any intensive study of naval history to which his interest had already turned; but after the full two years of that command, his appointment to the cruiser attached to the Torpedo School left him the time to undertake a task after his own heart, that of editing for the Navy Records Society a volume on *The Loss of Minorea*. His own study of the operations at sea in that war, begun some years earlier, was embodied in his book on the War of the Austrian Succession, which he had in hand at that time but which was not actually published until after the 1914-18 War. The present writer has a very vivid recollection of Richmond's lectures on some of the sea campaigns of that war, delivered voluntarily to officers undergoing the first Naval Staff Course, instituted when Mr. Churchill in 1912 established the Naval Staff to which Richmond was one of the first officers appointed. It was at that period that he took the leading part in establishing *The Naval Review*, a privately printed and circulated magazine designed to encourage young officers to study and think about the higher problems of their profession, and to provide a medium, in spite of the repressive spirit of the Regulations of the day, in which they could put their ideas down on paper. He was in rebellion against the tradition, fairly firmly established among senior naval officers of the day, that the higher direction of war was a matter for admirals alone, and that for younger officers to venture an opinion on them was impertinent and presumptuous; and he held that it was a great handicap to naval officers never to have had an opportunity of discussing important matters of policy, or indeed of expressing themselves clearly and concisely on paper, until they reached exalted rank.

In 1913 he was appointed Deputy Director of the Operations Division of the newly-established Naval Staff at the Admiralty—a post in which he would have delighted if he could have been given real responsibility and an opportunity to turn to good account the results of several years study of strategy and history. But the tradition about which I have written was too strong for him; and once the war had begun in 1914 he was shut out from all useful work in its direction, condemned to inaction and to watching helplessly what he regarded as the negation of clear thought and the plain teachings of history. It was doubtless a





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relief to him when, in May 1915, he went out to the Mediterranean as Liaison Officer with the Italian Naval Command. In April 1917 he was given command of the battleship *Conqueror* in the Grand Fleet, and after he had held it for a year was appointed to the Admiralty as Director of the newly-established Training and Staff Duties Division of the Naval Staff. Again the prospect was entirely congenial, and he looked forward to the opportunity of remedying all the defects of staff organisation that had irked him so much three years earlier, and of inaugurating reforms in the training of officers of which he had been a warm advocate for several years. He wanted to extend the entry of officers from public schools, at the expense of the early entry, and to do away with the system which endeavoured, after midshipmen went to sea, to carry on general education simultaneously with the performance of duty as an officer—a system which still survived though condemned by committee after committee which had examined the subject. But again tradition was too strong for him. Despite the title of his office, he was allowed no say in action by the Admiralty, decision being in the hands of flag officers on the Board who had no sympathy with such unorthodox ideas. Again it was probably a relief to him after less than a year to leave an appointment in which he experienced nothing but frustration, and return to sea in command of the battleship *Erin* in the Grand Fleet. But one, at least, of his proposals bore fruit after the war—that sub-lieutenants whose education had been perforce cut short by the war should after it be sent for a term or two to Cambridge, where the outlook would be wider than at the Naval College at Greenwich, where their predecessors had been given courses at that stage of their service.

In 1920 Richmond was promoted to flag rank, and very soon afterwards was selected for the duty that he was capable of performing better than any other, that of restarting the Senior Officers' War Course, suspended since the outbreak of war. It was a task after his own heart, and he had practically a free hand, though he incurred their lordships' disapprobation on one occasion. When Admiral Niblack, President of the United States Naval War College at Newport, R.I., visited England, Richmond, who had known him before, invited him to Greenwich to address the officers of the British War Course, without asking Admiralty permission beforehand. He was informed officially that permission ought to have been asked, and that it would not have been granted. Richmond's withers were unwrung by that bit of foolishness, as he saw it, but he felt deeply the next blow that fell. When the 'Geddes Axe' descended on the Navy in 1921, more than three-quarters of the officers at the War College, comprising his own staff as well as those taking the course, were found to be amongst those selected for immediate retirement; and he regarded that action, not without some justi-



fication, as an indication that those then in authority at the Admiralty really regarded the historical and strategical studies there pursued—which in his view were of the highest importance—as of so little value that only officers for whom there was no other employment were sent to take part in them. But the course was resumed in due time. The War College had long vacations between courses, and Richmond profited by these to resume work for the Navy Records Society, taking over the last two volumes of the *Spencer Papers* from Sir Julian Corbett who was too fully occupied with the Official Naval History of the War to complete the series he had started.

On leaving the War College in 1923, Richmond became Commander-in-Chief on the East Indies Station. A squadron consisting of three cruisers and some small ships hardly provided full employment for his active brain, and one of the fruits of his tenure of the command was the appearance of a masterly treatise on the principles of Imperial Defence in respect of naval bases in a volume under the title *The Navy in India, 1763-83*. After two years in the East Indies, he would have welcomed a more active sea-going command, or a post of responsibility at the Admiralty; but the 'material school' who regarded him as necessarily an unpractical theorist—no practical naval officer, they held, could possibly have acquired his learning or literary ability—were still in control, and for a time he was unemployed. In 1927, however, when the Imperial Defence College was founded, he was so obviously the man for the post of its first Commandant that he was selected for it. Again he had a task after his own heart, and he set himself with energy to the work of deducing, from the experience of the past applied to the conditions of the present and future, a British scheme and policy of defence, or British way of war, and seeing to it that his students should neither neglect what history had to teach them on that theme nor tolerate any loose thinking in reaching conclusions regarding policy or the higher conduct of war. It was not his way to seek to instruct so much as to guide the studies of those under him in the new College; he never laid down the law on his own authority in formulating principles or conclusions, but rather sought to convince by argument—in which he rarely failed. No man could have been better fitted to found a tradition for the new College; the pity was that he could only hold the command of it for two years.

After relinquishing that important post, he expected further responsible employment, for it might reasonably be concluded that the man chosen to guide the best brains of all three Services must himself be fitted for the highest posts in his own. It was not to be, for those of the material school were still in the saddle and they were unlikely to abandon their delusion that he was an unpractical theorist; moreover, he soon





found himself at issue with them. Revision of the Washington Treaty for the limitation of navies was under discussion, and Richmond wrote two articles in *The Times* in which he pointed out the strategical absurdity of seeking a formula by which to limit the numerical strength of navies, and urging that limitation should be sought rather in the size of individual ships. But his arguments, cogent as they were, were very unwelcome to the Admiralty, already committed to the opposite view; and the result was that Richmond was informed that there would be no further employment for him, and he retired in 1931. It was no new experience for the naval officer whose ideas were in advance of his time, but few if any of his predecessors were able to render such signal service to the Navy after it had discarded them as was Richmond. The series of books that he published after his retirement, and his lectures as Professor of Naval History at Cambridge, did an immense amount to spread sound strategical knowledge and opinion not only in the Navy but elsewhere; and when the full history of the late war comes to be written, it will undoubtedly be manifest that a closer observance of his teaching by those in high places would have avoided many of the disasters and failures which were his country's fate in the course of it.

And so it came about that Richmond's greatest service to this country was his work as a naval historian, in which he was not impeded; indeed his relatively early retirement from his professional career enabled him to fulfil more completely this part of his life's work. But his achievement as an historian is all of a piece with his naval career; both were inspired by a desire to elucidate the true principles of national policy as regards maritime affairs, for which the civil government is ultimately responsible, and secondly the principles of naval strategy and tactics. These he sought to discover and illustrate by a close study of our naval history. In all his works there are two lines of investigation: first, what ought to have been the naval policy of the civil government and Admiralty, both as regards preparation of naval strength in time of peace and its use in time of war; and secondly how far the naval officers in charge of particular operations failed or succeeded with the means placed by Government at their disposal in the given circumstances of each case.

These characteristics are equally present in those of his books which are detailed histories of particular wars and in those other books which are rather of the nature of historical essays to instruct the public in the principles of sea power. To the first group, close studies of particular events, belong *The Loss of Minorca*, *Introduction* (Navy Records Society, 1913); *The Navy and*



*the War of 1739-48* (three volumes, begun in 1907, published in 1920); and *The Navy in India, 1763-83* (1930). To the second class of more general works belong *National Policy and Naval Strength* (1928); *Imperial Defence and Capture at Sea in War* (1932); *Sea Power and the Modern World* (1934); and the finest of all his books, *Statesmen and Sea Power* (1946), based on the Ford Lectures of 1943, an historical survey of Britain's use of sea-power from Elizabeth's day to 1945.

If such a series of books had been written in the past it would have had a great effect in educating the British people, British statesmen, and British sailors in an understanding of the bases of Britain's power and would probably in the course of years have had profound effects on our policy in peace and in war. But until Mahan's books in the last decade of the Nineteenth Century, there was no serious naval history even in England. *The Life of Nelson* had been written by Southey, who knew little indeed about the sea. General historians, Macaulay for instance, had no professional authorities to guide them about naval affairs and were therefore often mistaken and generally inadequate on the subject. The 'Silent Service,' efficient as it was, did not try to instruct the public nor had it searched history for the principles to guide its own action. In Queen Anne's reign there had indeed been Burchett, but anyone who has used his reliable work knows the very narrow limitations which that prudent civil servant put upon himself as an historian.

Mahan was an American, but his theme was at once followed up by Sir John Laughton and Julian Corbett in this country. Richmond was of their school. In his early historical work he was helped by Laughton and by Corbett. In this great though entirely modern English school of naval history, which mourns to-day the recent loss of Geoffrey Callender, Herbert Richmond holds a very high place indeed.

Those of his works which are detailed studies of naval events, the loss of Minorca, the war of 1739-48, and the Indian duels of Hughes and Suffren, are interesting even to the non-professional reader because they are not merely chronicles of naval happenings. They discuss at every turn the motives of the rival commanders in view of the circumstances of each moment, and they criticize or approve the decisions taken in the light of possible alternatives. Instructed by meticulous scholarship as well as by professional experience, Richmond's keen intellect is alive on





every page, thinking out the problem of the day and hour, first as it presented itself, and secondly as it should have presented itself, to the admiral in his cabin or in some cases to the government at home.

The other class of his works which discuss national policy in relation to sea power, imperial defence, capture at sea, etc., although more of the nature of tracts for the times, are based on history as well as on the situation of the present day. The volume *Statesmen and Sea Power*, written during the recent war, is definitely a history, but it is also a summing up of the principles of sea power as Britain ought to understand them if she is to face the future aright. It is a naval history of Britain from Elizabeth to 1945, and as such ought to be studied by all historians, and read by all citizens who wish to understand their country's interest. This remarkable book was produced at a time when its author was busily engaged in war-time activities at Downing in ways described below, and while he was suffering from chronic heart complaint that might have carried him off at any moment and did carry him off in the end. In the production of this important book he was helped by his daughter Nora. It is his legacy to England. He died on December 15, 1946.

It was in 1934 that I took part in the election of Richmond to the Vere Harmsworth Chair of Naval History. Our choice was a marked compliment to his eminence as an historian, for owing to the age limit affecting professorships he could only hold it for two years; but we felt that his qualifications were so great that even this disadvantage could be overlooked. He was an excellent lecturer and teacher. One of his pupils wrote. 'It was from him I first realized that history was a true affair and not, as I supposed from the way it was taught at school in those days, a mass of unrelated and dull facts.'

It was doubly fortunate indeed that the electors brought him to Cambridge as professor, for people there got to know him and in consequence he was chosen Master of Downing in 1936 and so had another decade added to his official life in the University. Mr. Cuttle of Downing has told the story of his Mastership in the *Cambridge Review* (January 25, 1947), and I am permitted to reprint the relative parts of that article:

He retired in 1932 to his house at Great Kimble in Buckinghamshire, with a charming garden of his own creation: he loved the hard work of hedging and lopping as well as the gentler tasks of planning and plant-

ing. But in 1934 he was elected to succeed Dr. Holland Rose in the Vere Harmsworth chair, and a new career began. He used to spend term in his rooms at Jesus, of which College he was made a professorial Fellow, finding this academic world most congenial to him. He was very soon drawn happily into the circle of 'Q' and entered into the life of his college with a whole-hearted zest. Downing owes much to Jesus for all that Richmond learned during the two years of his professorship about the ways of Cambridge and its undergraduates.

He was known at Downing before he became its Master in 1936, for he twice addressed the Maitland Society; his charm and his affability—no-one could have been easier for anyone to speak to—showed how well he knew how to encourage young men. He took his Mastership very seriously; he thought of himself, I think, as the captain of the ship, concerned primarily with the well-being of the whole ship's company. Of University and college routine he had at the beginning little knowledge, but he made it his business to inform himself. The commanders of British battleships live in isolation: they have their own quarters where they work and take their meals; and the executive officer of the Royal Navy is at no stage of his career concerned with routine office duties, which are the affairs of another branch. Richmond's modesty quickly yielded to the expectancy which welcomed his company in Hall, and when a matter of business called for his attention he went to great pains to understand it. As the Head of his House, he believed in 'a band of brothers' and proved what the infection of such a belief can be. He was impatient of quiddities and taradiddles, but was too good a fighter, as his professional and scholarly record shows, to decry honest controversy decently conducted. Two days before his death he presided at a long and important college meeting with conspicuous skill, acumen, patience and wisdom.

The advent of war though it put an end to many plans for the college, gave him opportunities which partly compensated for the blow. He was able to place his knowledge at the disposal of the Allied cause in a large number of ways; he wrote and he advised; he and Lady Richmond entertained members of the services, British, Dominion, and Allied, especially those of France, a country for which his friendship was strong and abiding. He eagerly talked with serving members of the College, and was always ready to try to help them if he judged it right. He was first chairman of the Joint Recruiting Board,<sup>1</sup> and was throughout in constant attendance to advise young men about the Navy. It gave him great satisfaction to see the University Naval Division established in his College and to live again with the white ensign flying. He had always felt strongly that young men at Cambridge ought to be well informed on

<sup>1</sup> Incidentally, the first undergraduate who appeared before the Board, at the outbreak of war, was his son, then an Exhibitioner in History at Trinity College, and later Lieutenant, R.N.V.R.



foreign affairs, and among his most notable contributions to this object was a series of talks in the Junior Combination Room on the progress of the war. Of these the most memorable was given in the summer of 1940. After the war the Amalgamation Club of the College wished that these lectures should be continued and extended, and known as 'the Richmond Lecture' and the first visiting speaker, Lord Halifax, addressed the Club just over a week before Richmond's death. The imaginative breadth of Richmond's interest was remarkable; being lent a book on the economics of ancient Greece, he was excited by the discovery of the first expression of the doctrine of sea power in an Athenian writer of the fifth century, and incorporated it into an article he was writing; having been consulted on what should be said about a distinguished naval officer who was to receive an honorary degree, he was eager to get at what he might feel to be an adequate translation of the admirable Latin oration, in order that he might have it printed for naval men to read. When Oxford gave him his own honorary degree in June 1939, he took especial pleasure in the reference to himself as one who had ruled ships and now ruled a college—*an facilius rectu, incertum*. Easier or more difficult, that rule will long be remembered gratefully.

When, in 1940, a serious illness forced him to give up more strenuous pursuits, he fell back upon his sailor's gift of handiness, and found relief from hard thinking in the making to scale of beautiful little reproductions of period furniture, which were sold for the Red Cross; and from this developed the planning, building, and equipment of a large doll's house for a granddaughter, a work of art which might rank with the best that have been produced of that delightful domestic kind. He kept bees, but they were prone to sting him, and he not infrequently bore their marks and objurgated their unreasonable hostility.

The courage with which he lived and worked after that illness needs no stressing. His last book, *Statesmen and Sea Power*, published by the Clarendon Press a few weeks before his death, has been called his masterpiece, a book which Mahan could not have bettered. His wisdom was as great as his intellectual powers, and he was sensitive and tasteful. In all his intercourse with other men he was charming and humorous; but when all his qualities are numbered, the greatest of these was kindness.

In all relations of life he was as nearly perfect as it is given to man to be, and those who were nearest him knew best what he was. When goodness and beauty of character, superior to what we ordinary men can show, are united to great and well-disciplined powers of mind, we see to what height in the hierarchy of being a brother man can rise.



## DENYS ARTHUR WINSTANLEY\*

1877-1947

WINSTANLEY was born in Bloomsbury in December 1877, the son of Howard Winstanley. He was educated at Merchant Taylors and came up to Trinity as a Sub-Sizar on Verrall's side in 1897. He got Firsts in the History Tripos in 1899 and 1900, and in 1901 was Lightfoot Scholar. From 1903 to 1906 he was in north England as a school inspector and then returned to Trinity as Fellow and Lecturer. In the First World War he did intelligence work in Egypt. In 1919 he became Tutor, and in 1925 Senior Tutor. In 1935 he succeeded Parry as Vice-Master. His work as school inspector and intelligence officer gave him that experience of the outside world that helps to make the right sort of don and the right sort of historian. As Lecturer and as Tutor he won the affection of successive generations of undergraduates. As teacher of history he had an extraordinary power of interesting young men in the subject, and filling them with his own infectious enthusiasm. Handled by him, the death of Charles Yorke in 1770 became a matter of living concern once more.

Fifty years ago the first question asked by old Trinity men re-visiting the College was, 'How is Jackson?' Later on it was, 'How is Parry?'; and of recent years, 'How is Winstanley?' It was not merely that they were successive Vice-Masters, for the feeling about each of them long preceded his holding of that office. Each was a very remarkable personality and each seemed, in a different way, to embody the life and spirit of the College.

The affection with which Winstanley was regarded was due to the entirely unselfish kindness of his disposition, his wide-ranging interest in other people (in their manners and characters more than in their fortunes) and his shrewd insight into his friends, colleagues and pupils expressed in terms of humane but witty epigram. He was not a loud or continuous talker, but in the Combination Room or by his own fireside he kept the ball of

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conversation moving with quiet skill, and his own incursions into the talk were the best part of it.

A friend from another college writes to me:

He was the perfect embodiment of the don in the modern world. He was not an antique survival, but he seemed to preserve all of the charm of the eighteenth-century Fellow of a college, and combine it with the conscientiousness which the present age demands. His felicitous epigrams were a joy, and it was characteristic of him that he frequently pretended that they had been composed by someone else.

In his criticism of personal foibles he was the incarnation of the Comic Spirit as defined by George Meredith (the *Essay on Comedy*, page 88):

If you believe that our civilization is founded in common-sense (and it is the first condition of sanity to believe it), you will, when contemplating men, discern a spirit overhead. . . . Its common aspect is one of unsolicitous observation, as if surveying a full field and having leisure to dart on its chosen morsels, without any fluttering eagerness. Men's future upon earth does not attract it; their honesty and shapeliness in the present does; and whenever they wax out of proportion . . . the Spirit overhead will look humanely malign and cast an oblique light on them, followed by volleys of silvery laughter. That is the Comic Spirit.

And that also was Winstanley.

As a storyteller he was delightful, and his lisp was as welcome as Henry Sidgwick's stammer of old. He was the author of the saga of R. V. Laurence, which kept the memory of his old friend living and actual to us. But with all this he was essentially serious. He was no dilettante or epicure, though he had a spiritual and historical love of port. If ever you were out of bed early enough to see him from your window starting briskly out across the court for his very early morning walk through the Backs and beyond, you were reminded that he always kept himself girt up and in training to do his duty in life. He was a Christian. He was a Liberal. But he was entirely without the limitations that sometimes accompany political and religious creeds held as sincerely as he held his. His judgment of others was a judgment of their qualities and behaviour, not of their opinions. He said of his old friend Laurence, 'To know him was a Conservative education.' To know Winstanley was an education in more than Liberalism.



His hospitable and social instincts found full play as Vice-Master, especially during the late war, when he worked indefatigably and with great success at entertaining our American and other military visitors.

The older generation of Cambridge historians has been swept away in the last few months. John Clapham, Herbert Richmond, Coulton, Zachary Brooke, Previt  Orton, all have gone, and now Winstanley has gone too. I do not think that the world, or even the University, whose modern history he wrote so well, has quite recognized how good an historian he was. Consider the quantity and quality of his actual production. *Personal and Party Government, 1760-66* (1910), and *Lord Chatham and the Whig Opposition* (1912) were followed by *Cambridge in the Eighteenth Century* (1922), the story of the Duke of Newcastle's political exploitation of the University. That book led Winstanley on from his early studies in Eighteenth Century politics to his *History of the University*, the principal work of his life. It consists of a series of volumes, each with a separate title: *Unreformed Cambridge* (1935), *Early Victorian Cambridge* (1940) and *Later Victorian Cambridge* (1947), taking the story down to the new statutes of 1882, beyond which he had no intention of going. He has, in fact, completed his life's work.

It is a great work. It is based on profound and accurate scholarship, enlightened by insight into the men of the past, Whewell and Adam Sedgwick for example, as shrewd and humorous as his insight into his own contemporaries. It is true that his wit came out more strongly in his conversation than in his writings. The history of the University must, to a large extent, be a record of institutions and statutes; but whenever there is a story to be told of personal controversy he always tells it most interestingly, most fully and most fairly, as in the cases of the Peterhouse Mastership in his first volume, Christopher Wordsworth and Thirwall in his second, and Robinson's vote in the last volume. Happy is the university that has such an historian. If things mortal move at all the spirits of the just in a better world, what good talk he will now have with Gunning! And he will politely point out to Gunning the mistakes he made.

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