

## THE FATE OF HISTORICAL FALSIFICATION.

THE hue and outcry made when De Maistre, in one of his pungent epigrams, declared that "history, as written during the last three hundred years, was nothing more than a conspiracy against truth," may still be recalled by readers familiar with that period of stress and storm. De Maistre was a man not given to sententious moralizing or verbal prudery. Sweeping and paradoxical as the epigram appeared at first blush, it was found upon closer scrutiny to be sharp of edge, packed with meaning and truth, a perfect crystallization of the pernicious influences which made historical writing the vehicle of partisanship, misrepresentation and falsehood. Ostensibly ignoring the imputation cast upon historians, in secret the trained eye of the scientific scholar did not fail to descry more than a mere substratum of truth in the caustic Frenchman's axiom, if indeed, it did not flash its full light into his dazzled eye. In fact instead of becoming an overt gibe, the epigram became a current truism.

Nor is this to be wondered at. A casual glance into the times, methods, purposes and environments of most historians, convinces us that they were the victims, sometimes not unconsciously or unwillingly, of afflictive circumstances, perverse taste, traditional misconception. Under such conditions it was an inevitable result that fierce antipathy, implacable bitterness, blundering ignorance, self-confident audacity, not to say blind partisanship, should usurp the place of manliness of thought, breadth of view, ripeness of judgment, honesty of purpose and fearless integrity.

History became a jest and by-word. The historian an advocate with a brief, the salaried functionary of the State, the tool of the political party, the apologist of the sect. "What is history?" sneeringly asks Napoleon, "but a fiction agreed upon?" "My friend," said Faust, "the times which are gone by are a book with seven seals, and what you call the spirit of past ages is but the spirit of this or that worthy gentleman in whose minds these ages are reflected." As if setting the stamp of fullest assent on this theory, Goethe's illustrious contemporary, Schiller, for years the accredited historian of the Thirty Years' War, with an ingenuousness almost childlike in its simplicity, formulates his historical creed—that history "in general is only a magazine for my fancy, and the objects must submit to be plastic in my hands." One is almost tempted to think that

Nietzsche had the famous Jena professor in view when he maintains the "Suabians are the best liars in Germany—they lie innocently."<sup>1</sup> "No, no," remonstrated the old veteran statesman, Sir Robert Walpole, when his son, in order to relieve the tedium of his declining days, read current literature to him. "No, no—not history, Horace; that *can't* be true." Our own sweet-tempered mild-mannered Emerson, with a tincture of ill-disguised petulance, owns that he is "ashamed to see what shallow village talk our so-called history is." Can it be wondered, then, that the raucous voice of Shopenhauer, the very antipodes of the Concord Sage, joins this chorus and ungallantly arraigns Clio "of being infected even in the smallest artery with the virus of falsehood?"

Seemingly this picture may be drawn with too dark a realism: appear exaggerated and pessimistic; a piece of grotesque jocularly. But who can view the Iconoclasm of History—to use a most applicable phrase of Lord Acton's—during the last fifty years, and not be convinced that the new methods adopted, the new researches instituted, the new discoveries made, and last, but not least, the new objectivity demanded, have shaken the credibility of many historians of the last three hundred years, invalidated the authority of some, remorselessly discredited the honesty of others? Data once looked upon as incontestably secure have been disproven; characters once invested with all the poetic romance and garish glamor of some eulogist's fervid imagination have passed the critical gauntlet woefully bedraggled, sadly crippled, unrecognizably disfigured; individuals once held up to scorn and execration, their bodies rotting in dungeons, their lives forfeited on the gibbet or at the stake, consigned to their graves without a tear, buried without an epitaph, their very ashes scattered to the winds of heaven, now appear irradiantly transfigured as humanity's proudest boast, God's own elect; epoch-making events that once thrilled the heart of a nation, under the modern diagnostician's merciless scrutiny have been found to be national aberrations, fanned by bigotry, nurtured by ignorance, inspired by political chicanery; heroes whose awesome and gigantic stature once dwarfed all posterity to a race of liliputians, have been toppled from their pedestals, hurled from their niches and found to belong, after all, to the common, ignoble herd. Disenchantment and disillusion fairly dazes us, and sends us groping into a still more bewildering amazement.

The veil of Isis is gradually being lifted. The modern critical and scientific spirit is no longer satisfied with the ancestral historical patrimony, with the unaccredited tradition of past ages and men.

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<sup>1</sup> Nietzsche's *Sämmtliche Werke*, Vol. VIII., p. 225.

Close investigation discovered the moral debasement, if not spuriousness of the current historical coinage; the die must be broken; the alloy differentiated from the pure gold; the original weight and value must be re-established. History must be rehabilitated, its equity vindicated. Detail and not deduction, reference and not inference, logic and not sophistry, fact and not fiction, self-effacement and not arbitrariness, are the shibboleths of the new movement. It begins with original research and penetrates the very fountain head. It rummages every neglected archive, ransacks every begrimed library, invades the buried wastes of the past, burrows into the bowels of the earth, scans every vestige of human activity, searches the very hearts of men; for not only geographical, economic and ethnographic problems demand solution, but psychical, political and ethical as well. The master builder of modern history cannot be satisfied with the printed page alone. After all, it is nothing more than the material used by his predecessor, straw that has been threshed a thousand times without wheat. The very process in its transmission is calculated more to perpetuate than rectify error. Documentary evidence is the battle cry of the new school. What revolutions it has effected within the last seventy years—for we can only date the documentary period from 1830—are manifest. The forgotten folio, the worm-eaten parchment, the century-stained manuscript, the shriveled papyrus, the tarnished palimpsest, the incrustrated clay brick, the shivered entablature have been triumphantly brought from their forgotten recesses or mouldering tombs to bear testimony, not only to the corruption of history, but more signally to the perennial youth and deathless vitality of Truth.

Truth outraged demanded vindication; truth silenced demanded voice; truth suppressed demanded publicity. This is the real mission of the "epoch of full-grown history."

With few exceptions, the historians of the old school, and *pari passu*, their readers, were under the spell and thrall which Cardinal Newman, at one time himself its victim, most happily calls "the immemorial, unauthenticated tradition." This tradition was revered as a finality—a court from which there was no appeal. Like the Pillars of Hercules, it was the terminal of all exploration. Without questioning its authenticity, accounting for its inconsistencies, unraveling its contradictions, reasoning even about its possibility or probability, it was transmitted and diffused to generations as uncritical and credulous as itself. Thus misinformation and error were allowed to penetrate the minds of men till they fastened and ramified with the poisonous contagion of a cancer. What were most historians but mere canals, who in pure passivity received the

stream of human testimony without analyzing its wholesomeness, filtering its suspicious-looking murkiness, dredging its alluvial deposits or banishing its swarming infusoria?

Buckle claims that till the beginning of the seventeenth century France—and he might without much hesitancy have added Germany and England—did not produce a single historian, “because she had not produced a single man who presumed to doubt what was generally accepted.”<sup>1</sup> We know, of course, that he refers to that crucial period in French history when the men of “super-celestial opinions and subterranean morals” had an undisputed field to themselves; when truth was so outrageously caricatured that Montaigne, always epigrammatic, could only gloss it over on the plea “that lying was not a vice among the French, but a way of speaking;” when the hierophant of infidelity, Voltaire, inextricably entangled in his monstrous falsehoods, laughed his adversaries to sullen discomfiture by the flippant cynicism, “it was only a frolic of my imagination.” Striking, but illusory, as Buckle’s postulates sometimes are, there is more than a half truth concealed in the present one, and with some qualification we can readily concede it. Not on universal skepticism as a stepping stone must the historian climb the mountain of Truth, but on doubt as a preliminary to certitude. With Cartesian doubt, if you will, must the critical inquiry be prosecuted. He cannot be satisfied with the uncorroborated word or unproven fact of his precursor in the same field. He has the right to demand from his fellow craftsman his credentials as to character, vouchers as to capacity, testimonials as to trustworthiness. He can compel the production of the title deeds to his new acquisitions or discoveries; he can challenge the chain of evidence, and reject it, if but one link be missing which places it beyond the range of ascertainable and verifiable knowledge. Lord Acton substantially inclines to the same position. In his inaugural lecture, when assuming the chair of Modern History at Cambridge, he formulates a series of historical canons which in comprehensiveness seemingly meet every contingency and safeguard the historian with a defense and security that must command respect and carry authority.

“The critic,” he contends, “is one who, when he lights on an interesting statement, begins by suspicion. He remains in suspense until he has subjected his authority to three operations. First, he asks whether he has read the passage as the author wrote it. For the transcriber and the editor and the official or officious censor on the top of the editor have played strange tricks and have much to answer for. And if they are not to blame, it may turn out that the

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<sup>1</sup> “History of Civilization in England,” Vol. I., p. 555.

author wrote his book twice over; that you can discover the first jet, the progressive variations, things added and things struck out. Next is the question where the writer got his information. If from a previous writer, it can be ascertained, and the inquiry has to be repeated. If from published papers, they must be traced, and when the fountain head is reached, or the track disappears, the question of veracity arises. The responsible writer's character, his position, antecedents and probable motives have to be examined into; and this is what, in a different and adapted sense of the word, may be called the higher criticism, in comparison with the servile and often mechanical work of pursuing statements to their root. For a historian has to be treated as a witness, and not believed until his sincerity is ascertained. The maxim that a man must be assumed to be honest until the contrary is proved was not made for him. The main thing to learn is not the art of accumulating material, but the sublimer art of investigating it, of discerning truth from falsehood and certainty from doubt. It is by solidity of criticism, more than by plentitude of erudition, that the study of history strengthens and straightens and extends the mind. And the accession of the critic in the place of the indefatigable compiler amounts to a transfer of government in the historic realm."<sup>1</sup>

This may be said to give us a summary of the science of history, one that is now universally accepted and finds its best exponents in Menzel (K. A.), Ranke, Böhmer, Waitz, Janssen, in Germany; Maitland, Green, Stubbs, Gardiner, Brewer and Gasquet, in England. It lifts history from the humble sphere of a profession to that of an authoritative science.

But history is more than a mere science. It is also an art. It not only demands the analytical keenness of the paleographer, the critical subtlety of the philologist, the searching intuitiveness of the psychologist—not to mention a familiar acquaintance with political philosophy and economy, the comparative studies of legal institutions and international law—but the well-cadenced ear, the symmetric eye, the deft handiwork of the literary artist. Its influence, no matter how potent or essential, would be circumscribed, if not defeated, if it appared itself in archaic, forbidding garb, presented itself in the chilling form of a mathematical equation, chemical formula or metaphysical abstraction. True historic portraiture must appeal to the imaginative as well as perceptive faculties. Cold science must be cunningly blended with warm imagination; dry details must artfully coalesce with charming narrative. The philosophy of history must not deport itself with pedantic stiffness nor

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Nineteenth Century*, October, 1895, p. 624.

give utterance in portentous phraseology, but must captivate by engaging form and pleasing speech. The element of poetry, though judiciously subordinated, cannot be entirely eliminated. Was not the original, primitive history a legend, a romance, a poem? Shelley is not far astray when, in the language of the poet, he defines history as "the cyclic poem written by time upon the memories of men. The past, like an inspired rhapsodist, fills the theatre of everlasting generations with her harmony."

Here a most insidious snare besets the path of the historian and sorely tempts his historic conscience. "Instead of being equally shared," to quote Macaulay, who was better at preaching than practicing, "instead of being equally shared between its two rulers, the Reason and the Imagination, it (history) falls alternately under the sole dominion of each. It is sometimes fiction; it is sometimes theory."<sup>1</sup> Literature affords distressingly sad examples how literary ambition perverted the historic instinct and the unleashed imagination played havoc with truth and fact. The monuments authors reared in the fond expectation that they would share the perpetuity of Gizeh and insure an immortality in which as

Dead but sceptred sovereigns who still rule  
Our spirits from their urns,

have proven

Like the baseless fabric of a vision,  
Leaving not a wreck behind.

The old English school of history, notably that represented by Hume, Robertson and Macaulay, to single out three of its best exponents as a general illustration, suffered the full penalty of allowing imagination to outrun discretion and fairness. Looking at the exquisite workmanship revealed in their histories, it needs no keen sight to see that the midnight oil has been devoted, we will not say wasted, more in giving literary symmetry, rhetorical grace, imaginative scope to their productions than in searching musty documents or deciphering vexatious incunabula. The turning of a startling metaphor, the constructing of a striking antithesis, the rounding of a clever epigram, the chisseling of a scintillating *jeu d'esprit*, received the minutest care. Contemptuous indifference, utter neglect awaited the garbled reference, the unverified citation, the buried manuscript. The task of digging with patience and toil in the deep, unexplored mines of history's richest ore seldom entered their minds. Like surveyors, their sextants, with a wide sweep, staked off the ground on the surface; the woodman with his axe, the geologist with his hammer, the metallurgist with his crucible had to follow to reveal the hidden wealth. Besides, might not the intru-

<sup>1</sup> Macaulay's Essays, Vol. I., p. 145, 1879.

sion of unembellished data, like a discordant note in a cloyingly sweet melody, retard the stately march of the picturesque and absorbing narrative? Did not Macaulay boast that he would write a history whose literary charm would make the society woman throw her latest romance in the waste basket? Does he not furthermore contend that history begins in the novel and ends in the essay? On what ground can we account for the astonishing rapidity with which Hume wrote the history of England, from the Roman Invasion to the Revolution—five quarto volumes—in nine years? Or explain how Maitland's rude scalpel fairly eviscerates Robertson's Charles V., disclosing an uncritical and romancing spirit simply astounding? Or excuse Macaulay's diffuseness in covering a period of fifteen years of English history, with five portentous volumes? Do we not, to come to a later date, find one of the most admired historians fall into the same pit? The Prophet of Craigenputtock, booted and spurred and cap-a-pie, with savage philippics enters the arena to batter down all shams and hoist high the pennant of the "eternal verities:" what a redundancy of oracular declamation, pessimistic vaticination, crypt phrasemaking—

As when some mighty painter dips  
His pencil in the hues of earthquake and eclipse!

"Words, words, pictures, tropes, sublimities enough to make the major and minor prophets, but nothing to hold by, to work with or to teach."<sup>1</sup> "Is history a pageant or a philosophy?"—ask the genial author of *Obiter Dicta*. Even Taine, a worshiper of Carlyle, cannot but own that "prophecy is a violent condition which does not sustain itself, and when it fails, is replaced by grand gesticulations!"<sup>2</sup>

If the historian who is tempted into the realm of imagination, where facts form but the background of the canvass, encounters such dangers, what must be the ordeal and failure of the one who builds up a theory, battles for a hypothesis? Historical theory and historical partisanship are convertible terms. "A formed hypothesis," says Shopenhauer, "gives us a lynx-eyed vision for all that is favorable, but makes us blind to all that is unfavorable."<sup>3</sup> The theorist not only mars the beauty of his work, impairs its usefulness and destroys its credibility, but becomes the victim of an idiosyncrasy that relegates his performance more to the domain of the psychological than the historical student. Had Hume suppressed or even softened his bitter aspersions against the English, the Whigs, Whig principles and Whig ministers, the happy *bon mot*

<sup>1</sup> Frederic Harrison: "Choice of Books," p. 197. <sup>2</sup> "The methodical people so much ridiculed by Carlyle," continues Taine, "have at least the advantage over him of being able to verify all their steps. Moreover, these vehement divinations and assertions are often void of proof." "History of English Literature," Vol. II., p. 451. <sup>3</sup> *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Vol. II., p. 244.

that he was "a political historian, or rather a historical politician" would have left his name untarnished. Had Robertson endeavored to take his authorities even at second or third hand, instead of working on a theory and jotting down the first ragged and vague citation that was offered to him, he would not now be consulted with suspicion by the ordinary reader and relegated to the top shelf by the scholar.<sup>1</sup> Had Macaulay threaded his way through "unfair party spirit," which made him make so many loose statements and rash inferences, his value would be immeasurably enhanced. Had even Gibbon, who probably focalizes more of the essential requisites of a great historian than any writer in the language,<sup>2</sup> omitted the last two chapters of the first volume of his inimitable masterpiece, he would not have offended Christian sensibility, done violence to truth, called into question a work well nigh perfection. Had Buckle abandoned his fatuous theory about the general laws governing the course of human progress, he would have bequeathed to posterity one of the most precious and classic torsos in the history of any literature. Had not the late Regius professor of modern history at Cambridge<sup>3</sup> confined his theory "that history fades into mere literature when it loses sight of practical politics" to England, who knows but that it would have dignified the mission of the "ring" and its ethics elevated the status of the "heeler" had it ever reached our own shores? Had Froude, the most exquisite prose colorist of the language, the incomparable master of *mis-en-scene*, steered clear of the theories he wished to establish, he would never have devoted the copious resources of his passionate eloquence, exuberant fancy and matchless verbal brilliancy to prove that Henry VIII. "cut off his wife's head one day and married her maid the next morning out of sheer love of his country."<sup>4</sup> He might even have escaped the crushing British fisticuff given him by one of the most conservative of English reviews, when it remarks that "ordinarily it is the task of a critic to notice any error into which an author may have fallen. But in the case of Mr. Froude the problem ever is to discover whether he has deviated into truth."<sup>5</sup> But why continue? The task of enforcing a theory—of historical rehabilitation was not the besetting sin of Froude alone, when he tried to efface what Dickens somewhat unpatrically calls

<sup>1</sup> "Robertson had the oddest way of consulting his friends as to what subject it would be advisable for him to treat, and was open to proposals from any quarter with exemplary impartiality. This only showed how little the stern conditions of real historic inquiry were appreciated by him." J. Cotter Morrison's *Gibbon*: "English Men of Letters Series," p. 192.

<sup>2</sup> "The work of Gibbon as a whole, as the encyclopaedic history of thirteen hundred years, as the grandest of historical designs, carried out alike with wonderful power and with wonderful accuracy, must ever keep its place. Whatever else is read, Gibbon must be read, too." Freeman, *ibid.*, 104-5. <sup>3</sup> J. R. Seeley. <sup>4</sup> Freeman: "The Method of Historical Study," p. 66. <sup>5</sup> *London Quarterly Review*, July, 1898.



“that blot of grease upon the History of England,”—no we might point to Lord Elphinstone, who wrote a most eloquent defense of Pontius Pilate; or Carducci, whose pathetic efforts to restore the shattered reputation of Judas Iscariot are still in process; or Proudhon, who yearned to embrace Satan and defend him from the cunning malice of Jesuits and the malignant libels of the priests.

It is clearly evident that danger lurks alike in historical fiction and historical theory, and we can only gain a sure foothold in the one case and a clear vision in the other by planting ourselves upon the unshifting ground of fact, above the nebulous haziness of speculation. If the philosophy of history is teaching by example—a truth which in spite of the Latin saw—*exempla illustrant, non probant*, we will assume for the present, it is equally patent, that we must endorse Macaulay when he, perhaps somewhat regretfully, moralizes, “to be a really great historian is perhaps the rarest of intellectual distinctions.” But this reflection should never be dissociated from the more pregnant one, “That the true historian . . . seeking to compose a picture of the thing acted, must collect facts, select facts and combine facts. Methods will differ, styles will differ. Nobody ever does anything exactly like anybody else, but the end in view is generally the same, and the historian’s end is truthful narration.”<sup>2</sup>

These reflections bring us to the subject indicated by the rubric of this article: to ascertain the attitude of historical writing during the last three hundred years toward the Catholic Church; to discover whether fiction or fact, theory or truth, were the contributing elements to build up the accepted tradition; to allow the new school of Protestant historians to pass judgment on the credibility and motives of their predecessors who erected and buttressed the tradition, and in what manner it has served the cause of truth.

Since the Reformation, and until within the last fifty or sixty years, Protestantism occupied and monopolized the field of ecclesiastical history in Germany and in England, the two nations wrested from Catholic unity. It was more than a monopoly; it was what in the phraseology of the day might properly be called, if not chartered, at least a sort of consecrated trust. The literary activity of the Reformation, primarily the result of the late discovery of printing, was an inheritance of the Renaissance, and not its own spontaneous outgrowth. The subsequent ascendancy of the Reformation was coincident,—the cause of literary deterioration. The Reformers became the residuary legatees of the methods, tactics, grandiloquence and calumnies of the pagan element of Humanism. Boccaccio was

<sup>1</sup> “A Child’s History of Engl.,” Vol. II., p. 106. <sup>2</sup> Birrell: *Contemporary Review*, June, 1885, 79.

the precursor of Erasmus; the Decameron is the model of the Familiar Colloquies; Ulrich von Hutten is the lineal descendant of Lorenzo Valla; the literary syndicate that perpetrated the *Epistolæ obscurorum virorum*, abstracting, of course, from its unprintable coarseness and untranslatable obscenity was more than a reminiscence of Lorenzo Medici's Academia. What Humanism attempted by a repristination of ethical paganism, though the sensuous element was always dominant, the Reformation ostensibly attempted to accomplish by a return to primitive Christianity, though its elemental truths were always lacking. When Humanism discovered the unæsthetic and unintellectual drift of the Reformation, the line of demarcation at once became apparent, it deepened and widened into a breach, until the rupture became pronounced and final. But the ultimate object of both was consistently the same in the beginning—the undermining of Catholicism and the severance of the bonds that moored the two nations to the Holy See.

In literary activity the Church was anticipated and outstripped by its antagonist, and the latter was far in the race before the former was in readiness to start. With its printing resources it fairly deluged the land before the Catholic scholars, resting on the security of sixteen centuries' undisputed possession were aware of the cataclysm, had time to prepare for the coming tide, much less adopt effective means to divert or stem it. Feverish unrest and brooding discontent like an infection permeated the political body; stoic apathy and moral laxity enervated the ecclesiastical life; a clamorous craving for change was a most pronounced symptom, an ominous portent in the lower strata of society. By invoking the aid of the secular government and rewarding the bankrupt princes and robber barons with undreamed wealth—investing their persons with unprecedented dignity and prestige and holding out prospects still more alluring—the Reformers played the master stroke in diplomacy.<sup>1</sup> "In Silesia," says Menzel, "the new church was mainly established by the favor and protection of princes and magistrates. Nearly all the people were loyal to the ancient faith and had not the remotest thought of making any change in their religion. . . . In Sweden, Gustavus Vasa, who had conquered the independence of his country, professed the new teachings because he desired to bring to the support of his throne the wealth and the power that had been taken from the clergy."<sup>2</sup> "The princes of the North are unquestionably under great obligations to them [the Reformers,]" writes Frederic the Great to Vol-

<sup>1</sup> "What the Reformation would have been without the three Saxon Electors . . . it is impossible to say." Beard: "The Hibbert Lectures," 1883, p. 101. <sup>2</sup> "Neuere Geschichte der Deutschen," Vol. II., p. 1.

taire . . . "for by secularizing the church property they have added considerable to their incomes."<sup>2</sup> "If the church had no property," is the laconic way the Puritan Dr. Coxe, when Bishop of Ely, puts it, "there would have been a faint cry for its reformation."<sup>2</sup> Did not the maintenance of the new order involve the piratical rights the princes and nobility secured over the confiscated monastery and lands? Did not the newly acquired social and legal and ecclesiastical prerogatives conferred on the civil power gratify their ambition and cupidity? The logical evolution of this Reformation endowment was the creation of a new element and power in Christendom—secular absolutism in the ecclesiastical sphere. Inspired and encouraged by the Reformers, it grew with marvelous rapidity. In Germany it found its culmination in the peace of Augsburg (1555), when the infamous axiom—*cujus regio, illius religio*—received legal sanction, and the prince became the master of the body and soul of his subject.<sup>3</sup> In England it even advanced further than in Germany by a public promulgation under the most bloody accompaniments of Cæsaro-Papism. The act of supremacy dethroned the Pope and enthroned the King—the triple crown was torn from the venerable head of Clement VII. and now adorned the chaste brow of Henry VIII.! The effect of this course in giving strength to the tradition can hardly be overestimated.

In the next place the pulpit was not silent or inactive in propagating it and carrying legend and myth, properly garnished, into every village and cottage. The priests of the old Church were gagged in the one land and exiled in the other if they dared contravene the shrieking innovator. The professorial chairs at the universities and colleges and gymnasia were in the gift of the ruling prince or the local parish. The fitness of the incumbents was gauged by the ability, zeal and success with which they vindicated the tradition and traduced the Mother Church. It mattered little that the very endowment which made the sinecure a possibility, was the revenue of the desecrated sanctuary, the secularized monastery or the suppressed orphan asylum.

In Germany polemical bitterness and secular despotism made the task of the apologist of Rome one of daring hardihood. A prejudice blind, insatiate, ineradicable, swept the countries like a blighting typhoon. The champions of the Church were derided as obscurantists, bigots, idolators—traitors to national, religious and intellectual liberty. In England confiscation, the tower, the headman's axe

<sup>1</sup> Oeuvr.. Vol. XXI., p. 64, May 14, 1731. <sup>2</sup> "Historical Portraits of the Tudor Dynasty," etc. Sir Hubert Burke, Vol. II., p. 411. <sup>3</sup> "Luther," says Wolfgang Menzel, "was only promulgating the doctrine of the right of temporal sovereigns to decide all ecclesiastical authority. . . . Episcopal power passed entirely into the hands of the prince." *Geschichte Deutschlands*, Vol. II., p. 249.

awaited the doughty soul that would question royal supremacy. To continue the unequal struggle at long range, from Douay, Rheims or Salamanca, proved perhaps less dangerous, but despairingly ineffective.

This combination of potential influences only accounts for the propagation of the tradition, but leaves its origin unexplained. How did it take its rise? Under what conditions and circumstances was it fostered? What credence can be attached to its authors?

Taking the queries in the concrete, the answer is—and Protestants are the witnesses—that their true source is misapprehension and misrepresentation, ignorance and prejudice, fabrication and forgery. The ethical code that swayed the historian was of a jelly fish pliancy. It was the glorification of Protestantism primarily, the defense of truth secondarily. If conflict arose between the two postulates, the latter was invariably sacrificed to the former. Truth might be mutilated, its sacred mission prostituted, posterity imposed upon, but the cause of Reform could not be allowed to suffer or the Catholic Church appear in any light than that of the Apocalyptic Vision. No concession to Rome. *Calumniare audacter, semper aliquid adhaeret.*

In Germany Luther himself sounds the keynote. "What harm would there be," says the new Ecclesiastes, "if to accomplish better things and for the sake of the Christian religion, one told a good, thumping lie?"<sup>1</sup> That his followers fully availed themselves of this plenary license is a stain on the escutcheon of a brave people, and the confusion it gave rise to forms the lament of all modern German historians. "The falsification of history during the last three hundred years," is the plaint of Wolfgang Menzel,<sup>2</sup> "has done an immeasurable amount of harm and occasioned deep shame, and even now the end is not in view, when this falsehood will take an end." "Protestant historians," is the refrain of Töllner, "have made history nothing more than an historic apology for the necessity of ecclesiastical reformation. According to the Protestants, the Church was since the eighth century, the home of ignorance and wickedness. All in authority were abominable heretics and the Church a perfect bedlam (Narrenhaus). . . . The exaggerated care with which they represented all former rulers and leaders of the Church as tyrants and the members as pagans, and the disgraceful neglect with which the exemplary piety existing at all times side by side with the encroaching evil was overlooked—these shortcomings of Protestant historians have been most assiduously used by the opponents of Christianity."<sup>3</sup> The great Ger-

<sup>1</sup> "Was wäre es, ob Einer schon um Besseres und der christlichen Kirche willen eine gute starke Lüge thäte." Lenz: "Briefwechsel," etc., Vol. 1., p. 382; Kolde: "Analecta Lutherana," p. 356. <sup>2</sup> "Kritik des modernen Zeitbewusstseins," 2. Aufl., p. 153. <sup>3</sup> "Vermischte Aufsätze," p. 71.

man historiographer Böhmer, in 1826, already exposes the weakness and imposture of the Reformation historians. "The history of the Reformation," he writes, "demands an entirely new treatment. This I realize the more searchingly I look into the writings of the Reformers themselves, who in the new current representations appear before us in a mythical garment."<sup>1</sup> The slogan "Protestantism is an uninterrupted attack, the utmost straining of every nerve and sinew against Rome; its whole battle is to extirpate Roman Catholic doctrine and energy,"<sup>2</sup> was then, as it is now, the focus of all its concentrated zeal and activity. If at times some honest and courageous spirit, smarting under the yoke of this oppression of conscience, this muzzling of truth, tried to allay this bitterness, it was only to be "prepared for the most brutal defamation and enmity," says one of the victims, "in spite of all adulation and self-praise of German impartiality the same holds good to-day. Disciples of the school of wisdom who look upon their master [Hegel] as the absolute personification of the Spirit, demand that the Reformation century shall only be written by those who are penetrated with an unshaken conviction that the men of their affected veneration were right in everything, and the opponents just as uniformly and constantly wrong."<sup>3</sup> "Because I did not maintain the Pope to be anti-Christ and Rome to be the Babylonian——" says Janssen's great preceptor, Böhmer, "Waitz [professor at Göttingen] declares me destitute of all German patriotism."<sup>4</sup>

When Ranke's "History of the Popes" first appeared, a work which in spite of much painstaking research and documentary copiousness does but scant justice to some of the illustrious men it deals with, he was branded as a "crypto-Catholic" by one of the most conservative and influential journals.<sup>5</sup> K. A. Menzel in the first volume of his great history of Germany<sup>6</sup> cut away from the traditional acceptance of the Reformation and brought the Reformers from the national Walhalla of German myth-history to the critical tribunal of scientific investigation, with the result that he was fiercely attacked by the literary journals and condemned to a conspiracy of silence by the German savants. In language temperate but trenchant he vindicates himself in the preface to the second volume. After his death his editors bodily cut the preface out of the second edition. Novalis pays a most glowing and impassioned tribute to the Catholic Church in one of his most inspirational works.<sup>7</sup> In the first three editions of the author's complete

<sup>1</sup> Janssen: "Böhmer's Leben und Anschauungen," p. 265. <sup>2</sup> Stahl: "Die lutherische Kirche und die Union," p. 455. <sup>3</sup> K. A. Menzel: "Neuere Geschichte," etc., Vol. II., p. 8. <sup>4</sup> Janssen, ut supra, p. 22. <sup>5</sup> Kreuz-Zeitung, 28 Mai, 1886. <sup>6</sup> Neuere Geschichte der Deutschen, 3 vols. Breslau, 1826-30. <sup>7</sup> "Die Christenheit oder Europa. Ein Fragment."

works it was omitted. Schlegel insisted upon its insertion in the fourth edition.<sup>1</sup> In the fifth edition Tieck, after Schlegel's conversion, had it again suppressed, and the mutilated edition is still in circulation. Janssen followed the advice of his Protestant master, when, standing before the statue of Charlemagne at Mayence, "that picture tells us what is wanting: a history of the German people from the pen of a Catholic historian; for what we call German history is a mere farce."<sup>2</sup> He wrote a work that should make him a national classic and hero, but he was denounced by the champions of the tradition as an "historical juggler," "the assassin of historical science," "a traitor to his country;" his masterpiece of German scholarship was "the work of a scoundrel," "a devil's work."<sup>3</sup> Even one of the most eminent professors of the Berlin University, Hans Delbrück, went as far as to put the question whether "in view of this densely stupid forger some one did not have the impulse of Hutten when he cut off the ears of the two Dominicans!"<sup>4</sup>

"German historical writing"—to return from the digression and quote Professor Hillebrand—"during the last thirty years [1875] was in its whole character national and Protestant. The learned professors may indulge many illusions concerning their objectivity, their scientific incorruptibility and conscientiousness, concerning the infallibility of their wonderful methods. . . . They have unconsciously and unintentionally served the Protestant and national interests, and in obedience to them have they made history yield, have they sifted and compiled facts. . . . The nation (not the entire nation, but the greater part of the so-called men of culture) was actuated since the twenties with the anti-Catholic, or, rather, anti-Christian spirit."<sup>5</sup> Caustic and bitter is the arraignment of Professor Scherr (Zurich): "Mammon and Moloch, the golden calf and the brazen steer, money and success, are the only deities in which our epoch believes with sincerity. An immoral writing of history (Geschichtschreibung) such as is now prevalent, especially in Germany, prostrates itself before and swings incense to these idols."<sup>6</sup>

It is more than passingly strange that the German Universities, notorious hotbeds of rationalism, pantheism, atheism, are allowed to disseminate their pernicious teachings without molestation or hindrance; but if they dare represent with even an approximation to truth Catholic history or doctrine, consternation seems to take possession of the lay and academic world. The panic is amusingly analogous to that of the Church of England at the present time.

<sup>1</sup> Berlin, 1826, Vol. I., pp. 189, 191, 208. <sup>2</sup> Pastor: Johannes Janssen: "Ein Lebensbild," p. 2. <sup>3</sup> *Ib.*, pp. 100, 106. <sup>4</sup> "Preussische Jahrbücher," Vol. 53, p. 259. <sup>5</sup> Karl Hillebrand: "Zeiten, Völker und Menschen," Vol. II., pp. 317-319. <sup>6</sup> T. Scherr: "Von Zurichberg," p. 141, 2. Aufl.

Every shade of theology and neology is complacently tolerated, but the mere suspicion of the odor of incense or the casual whispering of the words, reservation of the sacred species, though the actual meaning of the words has not been defined by dogmatic enactment or primatial decree, all the same it rouses the choleric Briton to a frenzied state of patriotic devotion. Exeter Hall and Trafalgar Square ring with delirious, hysterical protests, Parliamentary seats are jeopardized, Ministries threatened with dissolution, a national crisis like a London fog looms up menacingly over the British Empire. The German Protestant is somewhat like his English brother—whenever he “sees anything in religion which he does not like he always *prima facie* imputes it to the Pope.”<sup>1</sup>

If we turn our attention to England, we find the tradition even more deeply rooted, more carefully propagated and the mighty arm of the State for nearly three centuries barricading every avenue that might disturb its peace or threaten its security. With the most inhuman proscriptive enactments against the Catholic episcopate and priesthood, the printing of Catholic literature made a treasonable offense, the adherents and advocates of the ancient faith martyred, the tradition, though seated on a throne, propped by the bayonet and sword, with every advantage of human influence and royal power, all the same met the fate of historical falsification and had to bite the dust in the end. The very names that once were indissolubly identified with the history of the English Reformation have lost their authority, are quoted with feelings of distrust, treated with contempt and of about as much interest to the scientific historian, as the provender which the saurians and crustaceans munched in pre-diluvian days is to the political economist.

Maitland,<sup>2</sup> and no better authority could be produced, writes that “for the history of the Reformation in England we depend so much on the testimony of writers who may be considered as belonging or more or less attached to the puritan party, or who obtained their information from persons of that sect, that it is of the utmost importance to inquire whether there was anything in their notions respecting *truth*, which ought to throw suspicion on any of their statements.” He continues: “There is something very frank (one is almost inclined to say honest) in the avowals, either

<sup>1</sup> Bagehot: “Literary Studies,” Vol. II., p. 61. <sup>2</sup> “Let me name a historian who detested fine writing and who never said to himself, ‘Go to; I will make a description,’ and who yet was dominated by a love for facts, whose one desire always was to know what happened to dispel illusion and establish the true account—Dr. S. R. Maitland, of the Lambeth Library, whose volumes entitled ‘The Dark Ages’ and ‘The Reformation’ are to History what Milton’s ‘Lycidas’ is said to be to poetry: if they do not interest you, your tastes are not historical.”—Augustin Birrell, *Contemp. Rev.*, June, 1885, p. 775.

direct or indirect, which various puritans have left on record that it was considered not only allowable, but meritorious, to tell lies for the sake of the good cause in which they were engaged.<sup>1</sup>

Unconsciously Foxe, to whom Maitland alludes, absorbed the same conception of truth as Luther. He was the fountain head of the English Reformation history, the reservoir that fed all the smaller tributaries, the cribbing ground of almost every subsequent writer. Maitland finds his work fairly bristling with the grossest and at times most ludicrous perversions of truth. His credulity is phenomenal, his ignorance palpable, his falsehoods transparent.<sup>2</sup>

Men, measures, scenes and all  
Misquoting, misstating,  
Misplacing, misdating.

It can hardly be a matter of surprise that Brewer accuses him of downright falsehood and forgery. "Had he," writes the English historian, "been an honest man, his carelessness and credulity would have incapacitated him from being a trustworthy historian. Unfortunately he was not honest; he tampered with the documents that came into his hands."<sup>3</sup> Burnet, the other column supporting the Reformation's historical arch, was certainly a scholarly man, and had access to a perfect treasure-trove of unpublished documents; but, as his editor proves, "his dates are nearly as often wrong as right, while with regard to individuals, he constantly makes mistakes from mere ignorance of the history of the period. . . . He selected from the immense mass of papers which were open to inspection such as suited his purpose. . . . He can never be trusted except when he gives a reference, and will be generally found to have misrepresented the author he quotes."<sup>4</sup> Mackintosh, the Scotch historian, calls him a "purveying advocate," and, to show his utter contempt for him, continues: "To express astonishment at this would perhaps argue a want of due acquaintance with human nature and with Burnet."<sup>5</sup>

In Scotland our Reformation data came from the pens of Knox and Buchanan. Of the former Dr. Whitaker, Regius professor in the University of Cambridge, writes, and with abundant illustrations presents a formidable indictment, "that he was an original genius in lying . . . that he felt his mind impregnated with a peculiar portion of falsehood which is so largely possessed by the father of lies."<sup>6</sup> Of the latter he continues "that he became equally devoid of principle and of shame, ready for any fabrication

<sup>1</sup> "Essays on subjects connected with the Reformation in England."—S. R. Maitland, D. D., F. R. S., F. S. A., p. 1, 1849. <sup>2</sup> Eight glaring blunders are pointed out on one random page by Maitland. "Six Letters on Fox's Acts and Monuments," p. 40. <sup>3</sup> Brewer: "Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic," etc., Vol. I., p. 60, pref. <sup>4</sup> N. Pocock: "Christian Remembrancer," Vol. XLIX, pp. 147, 183. <sup>5</sup> Mackintosh: "History of the Revolution," p. 617. Lond., 1834. <sup>6</sup> J. Whitaker: "Mary Queen of Scots Vindicated," Vol. II., p. 22.



of falsehood and capable of any operation of villainy."<sup>1</sup> The language may sound harsh and intemperate, but it must be borne in mind that his falsehoods were of a nature to compel the interposition of a special Parliamentary act to expurgate them. At Oxford his book was publicly burned. It seems that shameless dishonesty and conscienceless garbling of documents was the prominent attribute of the Reformation historian of that period, or why should the same Dr. Whitaker have the confession wrung from his saddened heart. "Forgery—I blush for the honor of Protestantism while I write—seems to have been peculiar to the Reformed. I look in vain for one of those accursed outrages of imposition among the disciples of Popery!"<sup>2</sup>

With Foxe and Burnet in England, Knox and Buchanan in Scotland, found lacking the constitutive principles of reliable historians, their honesty impugned, their veracity successfully challenged, "the credit of their copyists has also disappeared," and with their disappearance the fate of historical falsification becomes not only an unsightly actuality, but manifests the hand of God in visible retributive justice.

The pathway of the three last centuries is strewn with the wreckage of historical falsehood. The triumph of truth may be impeded, but with crushing step it will and must move on. The disappearance of the phantasmal Popess Joanna, the darkness lifted from the Middle Ages, the explosion of the Gunpowder Plot, the leveling of the "tall bully" that commemorated the Popish plot to burn London, the moribund Galileo myth, the supposititious divine mission of the Reformers, the tottering St. Bartholomew legend, the misty Inquisition spectre, whose total disappearance was only prevented by Llorente's assassination of the witnesses, all, all prove that the Catholic Church has nothing to fear, all to hope and gain by the new scientific school of history. Its guiding maxims resolve themselves into the simple but adequate law laid down to the Catholic historian by the present illustrious Pontiff Leo XIII.: "The first law of history is not to tell a lie; the second, not to fear to tell the truth." In this he more than anticipates—sees the full and glorious realization of the prediction made by one of France's most commanding intellects, Alexis de Tocqueville—that "*the restoration of the science of history is the restoration of Catholic greatness.*"

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<sup>1</sup> *Ib.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.*, p. 2.