

7. Sekundärliteratur

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der Realschule I. Ordnung im Waisenhouse zu Halle am ...
in dem Versammlungssaale des neuen ...**

Halle (Saale), 1838

D. Hume and T. B. Macaulay.

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D. Hume and T. B. Macaulay.

Alexander the Great, when he came to the tomb of Achilles, envied the fate of that hero who had not only had the best opportunity of distinguishing himself by the bravest exploits, but had also been so fortunate as to find in Homer the most excellent herald of his valour. He gives us to understand that a great many heroes were buried in eternal oblivion, only because they did not find either a poet or an historian to commit their valiant deeds to the memory of posterity. The same, we think, may be said of nations; for though there be perhaps no one that, strictly speaking, has no history at all, yet we find a great many among whom there were no celebrated historians. Even the Romans, when they had conquered the whole universe, could not boast of any great historian; for Cicero de leg. l. c. 2. tells us that in his time history was still entirely wanting in Roman literature. Such was also the case of Great-Britain that, in this respect, had remained far behind most of the other nations of southern and western Europe. She had extended her power over Scotland and Ireland who had long been her most exasperated enemies; she had founded colonies which had soon become mightier and wealthier than the realms which Cortez and Pizarro had added to the Spanish empire, she had gone through a revolution which, in the most felicitous manner, had bound up together the prerogatives of the king and the privileges of the Parliament: but none of her sons had yet thought it worth while to write her history. This is so much the more astonishing as that freedom and selfgovernment, which are the foundation-walls of the British constitution, seem to us extremely favourable to historical researches. It was only after the middle of the last century that some historical works were published in Great-Britain which may even now be considered as really classical works, and we do not doubt that D. Hume, the first of the three, to whom we must probably ascribe the merit of having directed the attention

to historical composition in a higher style than had been practiced before him among the Britons, bore away the palm of his two great rivals Robertson and Gibbon.

David Hume was born in Edinburgh in 1711. He lost his father, before he had left college. His guardian wished him to study the law; but the young man had no taste for that study. He was, therefore, sent to a mercantile house at Bristol in 1734; but he soon found the drudgery of this employment intolerable. So he left Bristol after a few months, in order to go to France; and after a short stay at Rheims, he went to La Flèche in Anjou, where he spent several years in studying the philosophical works he found in the great library which the Jesuits had in that place. He commenced his literary career by the publication of his *Treatise on Human Nature* in 1739, which was soon followed by some more philosophical essays. In the beginning he had only the intention of controlling the philosophical principles of Locke, in order to give them an unshakable foundation by a proper study of the moral facts and of the laws of human understanding, and he developed the ideas of Locke with that rigour and that preciseness which have made him one of the greatest dialecticians. But in the course of his philosophical researches, he expressed the opinion that almost the same reasons that had been given by Berkeley, in order to show the impossibility of proving the existence of the external nature, might as well be turned against the spiritual substance, the sensations of the human soul; and Hume finished by establishing a sceptical philosophy which doubted both of the existence of the mind and of that of the matter.

In the latter part of his life, Hume struck into quite a different line, and the bold sceptic philosopher made his appearance in the character of an elegant historian by publishing in 1754 the first volume of his *History of the House of Stuart*. But the English of his time had so much given themselves up to the most absurd factions, that they could not justly appreciate so valuable a production as the work of Hume. Whigs as well as Tories Episcopalians and Dissenters received it, as he says himself, with one cry of reproach, disapprobation, and even detestation, because its author had been bold enough to deplore the lamentable fate of the unfortunate Charles the First, and to shed a generous tear even at the death of Strafford and Laud. There were only few people, but among them the Primates of England and Ireland, who encouraged Hume to go on in the same manner — and we do

not hesitate to take their side, because we think those very reproaches he was charged with, to be the best proof that he has not flattered any party. The second volume, however, which appeared in 1756 was better received and helped „to buoy up its unfortunate brother.“ In 1759 he published two more volumes which contained the reign of the House of Tudor, and in 1762 he completed his History of England by another couple of volumes, containing the history of Great-Britain from the invasion of the Romans down to the accession of Henry the Seventh. The whole work must have met with greater success now; for as early as 1764 a new edition of all the volumes was already published.

And his History really deserved that success; for Hume was indeed the first English historian who did not only treat of kings and wars, of the rise and fall of ministers, of intrigues in the palace and debates in the parliament; but he thought it his duty to give an accurate description of the civil and ecclesiastical government; to inform us of the state of the finances, army and navy; to describe the country and the manners of the people; to show which progress commerce and manufactures had made in every period.

He had prepared himself to the performance of so difficult a task by a long and assiduous study. His moral and political essays, published in 1741, already contained some very interesting articles on the Liberty of the Press, on the Parties in England, on the Independence of the Parliament, and the diary which he kept during the journey which he made through Holland, Germany, and Italy as an aid-de-camp to General St. Clair, gives us the strongest proof that he always used to pay the greatest attention to the soil and productions of the different countries, and to the civilisation, social condition, and manners of their inhabitants. It is, therefore, not astonishing that the philosopher succeeded so well in writing a history which will always retain its place among the classical works which the English possess in this department; for it is equally excellent both in style and in matter. To be sure, his style is neither passionate, nor vehement, but simple, polished, and graceful. His narration does not resemble a violent torrent that drags us along with it even against our will; it is more like a slow and soft river upon which we glide along without being aware of it. His reasoning is always so concise and so perspicuous, that we are never at a loss for its meaning. His sentiments are always expressed in a candid, gentle, and noble tone, which shows us in the best manner, how far he was from

asperity, intolerance, or unfairness to men whose conduct he could not avoid blaming. In short, his work is stamped with so much dignity and elegance that even his adversaries cannot but avow that, in this respect, Hume's manner of writing will always be considered the best pattern of the historical style. Some purists, it is true, have reproached him for having allowed so many Scotticisms and even French turns to slip into his style; but we see from his letters to his friends that he was fully aware of it; that he was constantly occupied in finding them out and correcting them for a later edition of his works, and that he entreated all his London friends to point out to him all the passages which might be blamable in this respect.

But it is not only his style that insures him his rank among the best English historians; no, he possesses also all the other virtues of an historical writer. He does not only tell us the events of past times in a worthy manner, but he is constantly occupied in representing them so distinctly as to enable us to penetrate into their interior connexion which is so often hid to most human eyes, and only reveals itself to the minds of the happy few who have judgment and sagacity enough to discern the true from the false, the essential from the insignificant, the causes from the effects. Besides, his history has the high charm of being impressed all over with the peculiar character of Hume's own mind. Every book, nay, every chapter of his work shows the gentleness of his nature, the tolerant candour by which, in spite of his sceptical researches, he had gained the friendship of so many celebrated ecclesiastical men, the great indifference with which he considered the usual objects of human ambition and human passions, and the warm sympathy which he felt for the sufferings of those whom he believed to have been possessed of the best intentions, but who had failed in attaining their ends. We discover in him an earnest craving after historical truth and an utter impatience of falsehood, which, in our opinion, are the most necessary qualities of a good historian. Above all, he takes the greatest pains to expose, as clearly as possible, the great lessons which history teaches all those who study it with the proper attention, and in this respect, he is one of the founders of that historical school which, in the second half of the last century, was flourishing in France, England and Germany.

After having spoken, thus, about the principal merits of Hume's history, we may safely venture to enter into an examination of the defects of his work, which the progress of historical knowledge and especially a diligent

and an accurate study of Macaulay's manner of writing, have enabled us better to perceive. To be sure, we do not entirely agree with those who maintain that there are a great many tracks of partiality to be found in Hume's history, especially in his representation of the great struggle between Charles I. and his subjects. We acknowledge that Hume seems to have had a decided predilection for the cause of the king; but we cannot admit, as some critics wish to make us believe, that his party views were so strong as to make him misrepresent the characters of the men that were engaged in that fatal struggle. Notwithstanding we cannot deny that there are a great many defects in his work, most of which are owing to that system of writing which he had adopted. Those pragmatists, as they call them, have committed the great mistake that they were too apt to apply to all events and to all times the standard of style and taste which they had received in the polished society of the eighteenth century. Like those travellers who set out on a journey in order to extend their knowledge, and who, everywhere, notice only what is homogeneous to the things they have had before their eyes in their native towns, most of the writers of that school have not been able to come to a proper understanding of the middle-ages, because they pretend to find there only „the adventures of barbarous nations which can afford little or no entertainment to men born in a more cultivated age.“ That, we think, is the principal cause of all the defects which we remark in Hume's work.

These defects are especially to be found in the first volumes which, though they met with the best reception from his contemporaries, were by far the weakest part of his work. About the old Britons, for instance, he does not teach us any thing but what is known to every third class boy who has read his Caesar with a little attention. Of course, Hume is right, when he says that the early part of the history of all nations is either buried in silence and oblivion, or enveloped in fables which supply the place of history; but he is quite wrong, when he thinks that an historian is entitled to disregard these fables altogether. He would certainly be the first to blame a writer of the history of the Greeks who should not take any notice of the celebrated ancient fictions of that nation; why, then, does he consider it a fruitless labour to search for the fables of the old Celts or Saxons? — He gives us a reason for it in stating that it would not be worth while „to search for the annals of nations who were so barbarous as to believe their first leaders to descend from a fabulous deity or from men, exalted by ignorance into that

character." Does he forget, that Hercules, Theseus, and so many other Greek heroes were also supposed to be sons of the Gods, that even in later times almost all the Roman emperors were exalted to the rank and dignity of the Gods? Or does he perhaps mean to say that the history of the old Celts and Germans is less interesting to their descendants than the mythology of the old Greeks or that of the old Egyptians and other nations of the East? — In the history of the Anglo-Saxons we cannot complain of his giving too few historical facts; on the contrary, he speaks almost too much of the battles which were fought among the seven petty kingdoms. We regret, however, that he does not say any thing of the customs which the Saxons brought with them to England; that he does not give us a distinct idea of the degree of civilisation which they had attained at the time of the conquest. He only says in general that they were a rude, uncultivated people, ignorant of letters, unskilled in the mechanical arts; that they distinguished themselves only by their military courage; that even the Normans, who were not overcivilised either, speak of them as barbarians. Does he not know that the same Saxons were so easily vanquished by the Danes, only because they had so much given themselves to all the peaceful occupations as to get disaccustomed of the use of the sword? Does he not remember that he told us himself that, in the age of Alfred, there was already so much learning in England, that Charles the Great requested that king to send some learned men over to France? —

We certainly cannot believe that it was the conquest of the Normans that put the people into a situation of receiving, from abroad, the rudiments of science and civilisation. It may be that the conquest served to that purpose, because it brought the Saxons into a connexion with another people; but in the beginning it certainly retarded the progress of civilisation among the Anglo-Saxons for a long time, perhaps for some centuries. It is true that, a few years after the conquest, King William took advantage of the general illiteracy of the Saxon clergy, in order to deprive great numbers of them of their benefices and to replace them by his Normans; but who knows whether this was not a mere pretence which he used to give the most important places to persons whom he had good reasons to think more attached and faithful to him than he could expect the priests of a subjugated tribe to be.

From all that we have mentioned, it becomes evident that Hume has not a right understanding of these ancient times of the British history; and

we must be much more convinced of it, when we consider in what contemptible manner he speaks of the religious ideas of these ages. We do not wish to blame him for treating the religious ideas of the Celts and Saxons as gross and barbarous superstition; we only mean to say that a good historian would rather think it his duty to show that these religious ideas, superstitious as they were, entirely corresponded with the manners and customs of these rude nations, and that the Druids did a great deal of good by inflaming the people to that valour which enabled them to despise all dangers, in the hope of obtaining the favour of their Gods in this way. Hume, the sceptical philosopher, regards only the bad side of all religious tenets, and he, therefore, says, in speaking of the Druids, that they exerted a terrible influence over the minds of the old Celts, because they had not only the power of inflicting the severest penalties in this world, but inculcated also the eternal transmigration of souls and, thereby, extended their authority as far as the fears of their timorous votaries; — but he forgets that the same men were not only the priests, but also the teachers, judges and physicians of the nation, and that in this quality, they must necessarily have done a great deal of good. — The same fault is to be seen in his reflexions on the influence which Christianity effected upon the Saxons. He always puts the greatest stress upon the corruption which the Christian doctrines had suffered, upon the ignorance, and superstition which were already reigning in those ages. This makes him so unjust as to say that a doctrine which the Saxons received through so corrupted a channel, could not be effectual in banishing their ignorance and softening their barbarous manners. — Monks and priests, for instance, are in Hume's eyes as ignorant as laymen; they are strongly infected with credulity and with a propensity to imposture; they are not so much intent upon making the people virtuous as upon making them faithfully pay their tythes. — The pilgrimages to Rome and the Crusades appear to Hume as the most signal and durable monuments of human folly that have appeared in any age. — In speaking of King Olave whom the Church of Rome had honoured with the name of Saint, he says that a general presumption lies against the understanding or morals of every one who in those ignorant ages was dignified with that title.

We could give a great many more instances of the philosopher's narrow-mindedness and of his injustice against the Church, if we did not already think it sufficiently proved that Hume always puts too great a stress upon

the deficiencies of religious institutions, and that it often seduces him to speak of the Church with a contempt which she did not deserve. — Can we therefore, wonder that the ridiculous exaggerations which he found in the bearing of the Presbyterians and Independents, exasperated him so much against these Dissenters, that the great cause which they defended against King Charles could not but appear to him in the most unfavourable light; nay, we think this intolerance of the Presbyterians to be the principal cause of the already mentioned partiality for the unfortunate king, with which Hume has so often been reproached.

He saw that Charles was possessed of so many good qualities that, if he had lived in another age, he would have become a mighty, prosperous and highly esteemed monarch. He knew that in the long struggle between king and parliament the former had not claimed any right or power which had not been, for centuries, in the undisputed possession of his predecessors; that the glorious Queen Elisabeth, upon whom the writers of all the different parties of the country had bestowed unbounded panegyrics, on account of her tender regard for the constitution and of her great concern for the liberties and privileges of the people — that this queen, we say, had never been sparing in the use of martial law, that in her reign the Star-Chamber and High-Commission had been as active as under that of Charles, that even the rights of enacting laws as well as of granting subsidies, to which the Parliament laid claim, had been very insignificant during her reign; that she had expressly prohibited them from meddling either with state matters, or with ecclesiastical causes; and that she had openly sent to prison such members of Parliament as had ventured to transgress her imperial edict in these particulars. Hume was fully aware that Charles had even granted more liberties and privileges to his subjects than they had ever before enjoyed.

What, then, was the reason that the unfortunate king could never content the greater majority of his subjects? That is the question which every historian of that time must try to answer in a satisfactory manner; and we think, Hume is not wrong in saying that the great Rebellion was much less owing to the high ideas which the king entertained about his own authority and prerogatives, than to the spirit of enthusiasm and fanaticism which was universally diffused over the nation and disappointed all the views of human prudence. Hume candidly acknowledges that the king did not comprehend the spirit of liberty which began to prevail among his subjects; that he was

neither prudent enough to give way to it, nor vigorous enough to subdue it; that by his wife and by his courtiers he was often precipitated into hasty and imprudent undertakings; and that he was apt hastily to correct any hasty step he had taken, which served much more to inflame than to appease the people. Hume does not deny that Charles's Queen, to whom he attached himself with unalterable fidelity and confidence, was of a somewhat passionate character and that her constant endeavours to procure some indulgences to her brethren in faith, alarmed and excited the nation; that the unrelenting zeal of his principal counsellor Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, to impose, by rigorous measures, his own tenets and the pious ceremonies of the Anglican Church on the whole country, exasperated the obstinate Presbyterians; that the unshaken fidelity with which Charles' Prime-Minister, the Earl of Strafford, in his later life employed all his energy to support the royal prerogative which he had formerly made his chief endeavours to diminish, must have rendered him odious and suspicious to his former friends. How, then, is it possible to charge Hume with partiality for the king and his counsellors, to call him a partisan of absolute monarchy, an enemy to political liberty? If Hume had been convinced that the king really intended to do away with the privileges of the nation, and to carry into execution those ideas about absolute monarchy which, under the reign of his father, Filmer had formed into a system: there can be no doubt that Hume would have candidly declared himself against Charles. But Hume saw that if only political causes had been at work, the seventeenth century would perhaps not have passed away without a fierce conflict between king and parliament, but that this conflict would never have taken the character of a rebellion. He, therefore, concluded that it was only the discontented sectaries, with whom he could not feel any sympathy, that had raised, to the highest pitch, the jealousy which prevailed against the court, and that had succeeded, at last, in driving the king out of his capital and compelling him to draw the sword against the partisans of his parliament. That is, methinks, the reason that Hume, though he certainly was a friend of that liberty which had been gained by the revolution of 1688, entirely disapproved of the way by which that liberty had been got. We may, therefore, say that his manner of appreciating the things almost approaches the principles of the Whigs, while his manner of painting the persons that acted in that great drama, is more conform to the prejudices of the Tories.

From all we have stated, it will be evident that his history will always remain a classical work, and that he will always be considered as the greatest of the three celebrated historians, who have illustrated the nineteenth century; and it is only in our modern times that the glory of being the first English historian, has been taken away from him by Thomas Babington Macaulay.

Macaulay was born on the 25th of October in 1800, at his uncle's residence (in Rothley Temple). His father had been a merchant in Jamaica, where he had heard the wail and seen the sorrow of slavery, so that he felt convinced that its entire abolition was a necessity. During his long residence in Sierra Leona, he strove to ameliorate the condition of the negroes, and on his return to England where he soon married a Quakeress, he associated with Wilberforce and others in an agitation against the trade of man in man. His son was early led to the study of the Bible and of compends of Calvinistic theology, and we may even say that he was too much restricted to religious reading. His early education was carefully superintended at home, and he might already be called a well informed lad, when he was placed under the care of a Mr. Preston at Melford (Cambridgeshire), under whose tuition he made so much progress, that he entered Trinity College, Cambridge, in his eighteenth year. Here he gained the Chancellor's gold medal in two successive competitions, 1819 for a poem on Pompeii, 1820 for one on Evening. Having become a Bachelor of Arts in 1822, he very soon entered the Union-Debating-Society, of which he was an active and prominent member. His first public speech was delivered 1824 in favour of the abolition of slavery and was noticed with praise in the Edinburgh Review. He, therefore, sent his first bold essay on Milton to the editor of that journal, in which it appeared in August 1824. Both his poems and his essays may be considered as preliminary preparations, as foreshadowings and pioneers of that work which, at last, became the business and pleasure of his life. Extending over more than twenty years they show the gradual ripening of the author's powers and enable us to observe the processes by which the historian was nurtured and trained. It was natural that the young writer soon attracted the attention of the leaders of the Whigs, and so we find him introduced into Parliament, by the patronage of Lord Lansdown, as member of the ancient borough of Calw, in Wiltshire. Here he took a prominent part in the debates on Parliamentary Reform and gained a high repu-

tation by his speeches, which were very elaborate, clever, and full of life, merit, and dash.

In 1833 he accepted an appointment as legal adviser to the Supreme Council of India with a salary of ten thousand a year, and he went to Calcutta. On his return from India, he was again chosen Member of Parliament for Edinburgh and represented that city for a number of years. From 1839 till 1841 he was Secretary at War in the Melbourne ministry, and 1846 he was appointed Paymaster to the Forces under Lord J. Russell and remained in this office till 1848. But when the Anti-Maynooth Endowment agitation was waged with some zeal, he had the honesty to maintain, in opposition to his bigoted constituents in Edinburgh, that religious differences ought not to entail civil disabilities. This won him the enmity of the austere Presbyterians of Edinburgh, and they thrust him from his seat in Parliament 1847. From all these frequent disappointments Macaulay had drawn the conclusion that books and study were more congenial to him than the routine of office and the transient glory of eloquence. He felt within himself the ambition of gaining the undisputable admiration of all his countrymen, whether friends or foes to the opinions which he had embraced, and he reached his ends in 1848. For when he had published the first volumes of his „History of England from the Accession of James the Second,“ the approbation was universal. Scarcely a pen was raised but to pour out raptures at the gigantic stores of information which were heaped in that work, and at the harmonious and perspicuous blending of minute, varied, and important materials and details with warmth of faith, soundness of reasoning, and vigorous productivity of imagination. For it would be difficult, nay even impossible to name any modern work in which the several parts are so well arranged, the general teachings of history so accurately and pleasingly brought out, and in which patriotism and rhetorics are so pure and indubitable.

Great and glorious were the honours with which Macaulay was now loaded. On the 21st of March he was elected Lord Rector of the University of Glasgow, and honoured with the title of L. L. D. (utriusque juris doctor) by his University, and soon after he was chosen Professor of History in the Royal Academy. In 1852 he was again elected M. P. for Edinburgh, and when some years after, he withdrew from the parliamentary career in order to hasten on the great work he had undertaken, a royal patent elevated him,

on the 10th of September 1857, to the peerage of the United Kingdom with the title of Baron Macaulay of Rothwell.

In 1855 he had published two more volumes of his History, which were still more enthusiastically read, discussed, and admired than even the former. But at the end of 1859, just at the moment when the whole world was full of expectation of another couple of volumes, which a welcome report had said to be ready for the press — the pen of the historian was suddenly laid aside, death snatched from earth a large-minded soul and destroyed for ever the most conscientious toil of many years, the exquisite skill and mastery of language which had been acquired by a continuous assiduity. — The chisel has been struck from the artist's grasp, and the grave covers the hand which had drawn so accomplished a picture of past times — but this picture will live for ever and delight the eyes and hearts of all thoughtful men.

But what is it now that makes the study of his History so very interesting and at the same time instructive? Is it perhaps the time which he has chosen? It is true, the history of that revolution which terminated the long struggle between the English kings and their Parliaments, and the subsequent history of the reigns of William and Mary, of Queen Ann, and their successors must be very interesting; for it gives us the best proof that the authority of law and the security of property are perfectly compatible with a liberty of discussion and of individual action never before known. It shows us that by means of that happy union of order and freedom, a country which under princes who only cared for extending their prerogatives, had almost sunk to a state of ignominious vassalage, had rapidly risen to the rank of umpire among the European nations and become the most mighty and prosperous empire that was ever found in ancient or modern times. Yet we cannot help saying that the short reign of James seems to us almost like a weak additional farce connected with the great tragedy of the struggle between Charles and the Commons, and that the prudent cautiousness of William of Orange must necessarily strike us much less than the wild energy of Cromwell; that the history of Ann and the princes of the House of Hannover is much less interesting and attractive than that of the celebrated princes of the Houses of Plantagenet and Tudor, whose lives and heroic actions are so well painted by Hume. — No, it is not the matter, but only his great art of writing history to which he owed his great successes; and we will now

examine in what this great art consists, and by what Macaulay differs from all his predecessors and especially from Hume.

He belongs, properly speaking, to the same historical school as Hume; nevertheless his method of writing history is very different from that of the celebrated philosopher. Macaulay was a poet, before he became an historian, and though we cannot assign to him as a poet the rank in the first class, yet we must admire the great simplicity of his style which forms a beautiful contrast with the masculine force and majesty of his thoughts. The most celebrated of his poems are the Lays of ancient Rome, in which he tries to reproduce a semblance of those ancient songs out of which the early history of Rome may perhaps have been constructed. They are rather like romantic legends and resemble very much the beautiful poems of his great countryman W. Scott, and we should say that Macaulay endeavoured to represent the life and manners of the old Romans as faithfully as his great countryman had painted those of the English and Scotch of earlier ages. Besides there is another resemblance between Macaulay and W. Scott. The latter recognised very soon that the turn of his mind was more fit for prose writing than for poetry, and he invented that historical novel which spread his fame all over Europe and was imitated by all other nations. It was from the same reasons perhaps, that Macaulay abandoned poetry, took to prose writing, and by a series of brilliant essays prepared himself to that great historical work through which he took his place among the greatest masters of the English language, and founded a new school of historical writing, which will certainly find a great many enthusiastical votaries among all the nations of Europe and America.

The first great step which he made in historical composition, was that he admitted into the narrative a picture of the domestic habits, architecture, and even dress of the inhabitants at that period which he wants to illustrate. We have seen that something of that kind was already to be found in Hume; but the latter gives in his appendices only a dry description of the manners of the people, whereas in Macaulay we find a vivid picture of the whole English society in that period; and it is painted in such lively colours that we almost believe to see the English of that age before our eyes, fighting and suffering, acting and talking, praying and intriguing, and even eating and drinking. And since we know them so well, we must, of course, feel a greater sympathy with them. In this respect he imitates W. Scott in such a

felicitous manner, that even that great class of novel readers who formerly took no interest at all in pure historical compositions, find the same pleasure in reading Macaulay, which W. Scott and his imitators were formerly alone able to afford them.

That leads us to his second merit, that is the vivacity and brilliancy of his style. His sentences are clearly formed, his periods are lucid and transparent, his illustrations vigorous, his logic plausible and effective. The train of his ideas is always distinctly visible to his readers, and he never fails to call their attention to the principal points. He is always conscious that he does not only write for learned readers, as Hume and most of our own historical writers frequently do, but for the public in general. He, therefore, is not satisfied to recount the events of past times in a clear and intelligible manner, but he is constantly intent upon laying a particular stress upon those things to which he wants to direct the attention of his readers. In studying his works, we often forget that we are only reading, and we feel as if we heard Macaulay, the orator, speak before our ears with such an impressive eloquence, that his arguments must necessarily make the deepest impression upon our minds and that we cannot forget them so very easily. In this manner we are never in danger of losing the connexion of his ideas, in spite of the many particulars which he introduces; and when, at last, he comes to a conclusion and explains his final opinion about the events he has related, we are so fully convinced of the truth of his reflections, that we should blame every body who would venture to make any objections to the author's reasoning.

The principal reason, however, of the great satisfaction which the study of Macaulay's works affords to us, and which is not even injured by the great trouble and difficulty we must experience in going through that enormous heap of particulars which he crams into his work — this principal reason, we think, is that he blends, so to say, the talents of a powerful dramatic writer to those of a clever novelist and of a passionate orator which we have already mentioned. This dramatical talent is easily recognised in the great skilfulness which he shows in grouping the leading features of the period to be represented, in dividing light and shade between the different parties, and in concentrating the attention of his readers or rather spectators on that hero whom he thinks most worthy of being set before us for our admiration. William of Orange is the man to whom Macaulay teaches us to look up as

to a hero destined by Divine Providence to become not only the preserver of the English constitution, but also as the defender of Protestantism, and the vigorous champion against the tyrannical intentions of that French king who, without William's indefatigable efforts, might perhaps have succeeded in overthrowing the whole state of European affairs. From the skilful representation of this great man, Macaulay's history derives a sort of dramatic unity which, in our opinion, forms its greatest charm. No historian, before him, had introduced that method into his historical compositions which Macaulay, the oratorical and dramatical historian, as we should like to call him in this respect, adopted and employed in such a felicitous manner. That is the reason, we think, that we get never tired of reading Macaulay, while we always feel a sort of annoyance, after having read some chapters of Hume or other historians.

Besides there is that great advantage in this method of writing, that we entirely surrender ourselves to Macaulay, because we feel confident that he who is able to speak of his subject so clearly and decisively, must know it much better than other people; and when we see what beautiful and correct pictures he draws of those men whom we know already, we must, of course, feel disposed to believe that he has painted, with the same faithfulness, those men whom, hitherto, we were ignorant of.

Like Hume, Macaulay endeavours to put the principal stress upon the important lessons taught by history, to measure, and examine the characters and actions of all men by a certain rule. But it is not a theoretical philosophy, but only a strict moral rule, and it has that advantage that it is not too high for his readers, and that it is deduced from habits and practices which are acknowledged as good and moral by all respectable people. He never falls into that error which we found so often committed by Hume, that is to speak with contempt of those things which may perhaps appear ridiculous to the enlightened minds of men of later ages. On the contrary, Macaulay who, as a poet, knew so very well how to represent the manners of the old Romans, shows in every page of his history, that he always has a right understanding of the manners and ideas of past ages. We need only read the few pages which he writes about the salutary revolution that was the consequence of the conversion of the Saxons to Christianity in order to be fully convinced how widely he differs from Hume in his manner of viewing religious ideas and institutions.

We have already stated that the standard by which Macaulay examines and measures the actions of men is not too high. It is the great law of morality, the practical side of Christianity, by which he judges the conduct of men. The best way of showing that we are not unworthy of the world to come is, in his opinion, to fulfil all our duties in this world. He does not care for the spiritual side of christianity, nor for metaphysical speculations, and he certainly would not allow any body to refuse obedience to the political authorities of his country for the sake of his religious scruples, nor to upset her constitution for the sake of his philosophical convictions.

As for his political opinions we have only to state that he was a true Whig, differing from the more aristocratical members of that party only by the greater sympathy which he felt for the wailing and sorrow of the oppressed, by the ardour which he displayed in satisfying the desires of the middle classes that were still excluded from parliamentary representation, and by the courage with which, even in opposition to his constituents, he maintained in Parliament that religious dissensions ought not to entail civil disabilities. But in spite of his strong Whig convictions, he was never unfair in the judgments which he pronounced on the character and actions of men of the opposite party. He never blamed or praised a man for his political views, but only for his actions; and though he does not conceal the great veneration in which he holds those men who, in the days of the Stuarts, have risked their goods and even their lives for the sake of the liberty of the people, yet he never shuts his eyes to their foibles; and so we may safely say that he is quite impartial. Moreover his work is so much imbued with genius, permeated with patriotism, and impressed with the author's deep-felt convictions of the great excellency of the English constitution, when considered as a whole, that it cannot fail to fill the heart of every thoughtful reader with enthusiastical admiration.

So, when the first two volumes had appeared, they were read with the greatest pleasure and met with the approbation of all readers. Even the Tory critics forgot for a while that it was a Whig historian who had caused such a sensation in the country. After some time, however, they did no longer think of their first admiration, but tried to find fault with that beautiful work, and being unable to lay any blame upon the whole, they examined the details, in which the work was so rich, with the most microscopic inquisitiveness — and who should wonder, when they really succeeded in finding out

some errors and in discovering, as they said, some crying injustices Macaulay had made himself guilty of.

William Penn and the Duke of Marlborough were, according to them, those persons who had been treated by Macaulay in the most unjust manner. It cannot be our business to examine here, whether Macaulay was wrong in saying that Penn was employed by king James to seduce, by the offer of an alderman's gown, the baptist William Kiffin to support the Declaration of Indulgence, nor do we wish to prove here that Macaulay was right, when he asserted that it was the Duke of Marlborough who, in 1694, informed the French government that Talmash had got an order by William of Orange to undertake an expedition against the French coast. Mr. Dixon and Mr. Paget have taken upon themselves to justify Penn and Marlborough against the crimes Macaulay had charged them with; but we believe that if they had really succeeded in convincing him of his errors, he would have acknowledged and regretted them with the same candour that made him say, in after years, that his essay on Milton hardly contained one sentence which his more mature judgment approved of. Be that as it may, nobody will be entitled to say that Macaulay intentionally committed these errors, in order to throw upon those men a blame which they did not deserve. Occasional errors will be found in every historical work, especially when it is written in Macaulay's style and crowded with so many details in which it is so easy to be mistaken. — Those critics, therefore, can never induce us to change our opinion that Macaulay is the greatest historian who has ever written in the English tongue, and that his works will be read and admired as long as the English language and literature are not entirely effaced from the earth.

