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MACAULAY'S HISTORY OF ENGLAND

The historical and critical essay is a species of literary composition which has arisen, and been brought to perfection, in the lifetime of a single generation. Preceding writers, indeed, had excelled in detached pieces of a lighter and briefer kind; and in the whole annals of thought there is nothing more charming than some of those which graced the age of Queen Anne, and the reigns of the first Georges. But though these delightful essays remain, and will ever remain, models of the purest and most elegant composition, and are always distinguished by just and moral reflections, yet their influence has sensibly declined; and they are turned to, now, rather from the felicity of the expression by which they are graced, than either the information which they contain, the originality by which they are distinguished, or the depth of the views which they unfold. It is still true that "he who would attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant without being ostentatious, must give his days and his nights to the study of Addison." It is not less true, that he who would appreciate the force of which the English language is capable, and acquire the condensed vigour of expression which enters so largely into the highest kind of composition, will ever study the prose of Johnson; as much as the poet, for similar excellencies, will recur to the *Vanity of Human Wishes*, or the epistles and satires of Pope.

But, with the advent of the French Revolution, the rise of fiercer passions, and the collision of dearer interests, the elegant and amusing class of essays rendered so popular by Addison and his followers passed away. The incessant recurrence of moralising, the frequent use of allegory, the constant straining after conceits, which appear even in the pages of the *Spectator* and the *Rambler*, are scarcely redeemed by the taste of Addison, the fancy of Steele, or the vigour of Johnson. In inferior hands they became insupportable. Men whose minds were stimulated by the Rights of Man – who were entranced by the eloquence of Pitt – who followed the career of Wellington – who were stunned by the thunderbolts of Nelson – could not recur to the *Delias*, the *Chloes*, or the *Phyllises* of a slumbering and pacific age. The proclamation of war to the palace, and peace to the cottage, sent the stories of the coquette, the prude, and the woman of sense to the right-about. What was now required was something which could minister to the cravings of an excited and enthusiastic age; which should support or combat the new ideas generally prevalent; which should bring the experience of the past to bear on the visions of the present, and tell men, from the recorded events of history, what they had to hope, and what to fear, from the passion for innovation which had seized possession of so large a portion of the active part of mankind.

The *Edinburgh Review* was the first journal which gave a decided indication of this change in the temper of the public mind. From the very outset it exhibited that vigour of thought, fearlessness of discussion, and raciness of expression, which bespoke the prevalence of independent feeling, novel yearnings, and original ideas, among the people. There was something refreshing and exhilarating in the change. Its success was immediate and immense. The long-slumbering dominion of the monthly and other reviews, which then had possession of the sceptre of criticism, was at once destroyed. Mediocrity fell into the shade when the light of genius appeared; criticism assumed a bolder and more decided character. Men rejoiced to see the pretensions of authors levelled, their vanity mortified, their errors exposed, their pride pulled down, by the stern hand of the merciless reviewer. The practical application of the maxim, "*Judex damnatur cum nocens absolvitur*," gave universal satisfaction. Every

one felt his own consequence increased, his personal feelings soothed, his vanity flattered, when the self-constituted teachers of mankind were pulled down from their lofty pinnacle.

But it was not merely in literary criticism that the *Edinburgh Review* opened a new era in our periodical literature. To its early supporters we owe the introduction of the Critical and Historical Essay, which was an entirely new species of composition, and to the frequent use of which the rapid success of that journal is mainly to be ascribed. The essay always had the name of a book prefixed to it: it professed to be a review. But it was generally a review only in name. The author was frequently never once mentioned in its whole extent. His work was made use of merely as a peg on which to hang a long disquisition on the subject of which it treated. This disquisition was not, like the essays of Addison or Johnson, the work of a few hours' writing, and drawn chiefly from the fancy or imagination of the author: it was the elaborate production of a mind imbued with the subject, and the fruit of weeks or months of careful composition. It was sometimes founded on years of previous and laborious study. Thence its great and obvious value. It not only enlarged the circle of our ideas; it added to the stock of our knowledge. Men came to study a paper on a subject in a review, as carefully as they did a regular work of a known and respectable author: they looked to it not only for amusement, but for information. It had this immense advantage – it was shorter than a book, and often contained its essence. It was distilled thought; it was abbreviated knowledge. To say that many of these elaborate and attractive treatises were founded in error – that they were directed to objects of the moment, not of durable interest, and that their authors too often

"To party gave up what was meant for mankind" – is no impeachment either of the ability with which they were executed, or denial of the beneficial ends to which they ultimately became subservient. What though great part of the talents with which they were written is now seen to have been misdirected – of the views they contained to have been erroneous. It was that talent which raised the counter spirit that righted the public mind; it was those views which ultimately led to their own correction. In an age of intelligence and mental activity, no dread need be entertained of the ultimate sway of error. Experience, the great assertor of truth, is ever at hand to scatter its assailants. It is in an age of mental torpor and inactivity that the chains of falsehood, whether in religion or politics, are abidingly thrown over the human mind.

But, from this very cause, the political essays of the *Edinburgh Review* have been left behind by the march of the world; they have been stranded on the shoals of time; they have almost all been disproved by the event. Open one of the political essays in the Blue-and-yellow, which were read and admired by all the world thirty or forty years ago, and what do you find? Loud declamations against the continuance of the war, and emphatic assertions of the inability of England to contend at land with the conqueror of continental Europe; continual reproaches of incapacity against the ministry, who were preparing the liberation of Spain and the battle of Waterloo; ceaseless assertions that the misery of Ireland was entirely owing to misgovernment – that nothing but Catholic emancipation, and the curtailment of the Protestant church, were required to make that island the most happy, loyal, and contented realm, and its Celtic inhabitants the most industrious and well-conditioned in Europe; loud denunciations that the power of the crown "had increased, was increasing, and ought to be diminished;" lamentations on the evidently approaching extinction of the liberties of England, under the combined action of a gigantic war expenditure and a corrupt selfish oligarchy; strong recommendations of the speedy abolition of slavery in our West India colonies, as the only mode of enabling our planters to compete with the efforts of the slave-sugar states. Time has enabled the world to estimate these doctrines at their true value. It is not surprising that the *political* essays of a journal, professing such principles, have, amidst great efforts towards bolstering up, and ceaseless strains of party laudation, been quietly consigned by subsequent times to the vault of all the Capulets.

It is on its literary, critical, and historical essays, therefore, that the reputation of the journal now almost entirely rests. No bookseller has yet ventured on the hazardous step of publishing its political essays together. They will not supplant those of Burke. But it is otherwise with its literary lucubrations.

The publication of the collected works of its leading contributors, in a separate form, has enabled the world to form a tolerably correct opinion of their respective merits and deficiencies. Without taking upon ourselves the office of critics, and fully aware of the delicacy which one periodical should feel in discussing the merits of another, we may be permitted to present, in a few words, what appear to us to be the leading characteristics of the principal and well-known contributors to that far-famed journal. This is the more allowable, as some of them have paid the debt of nature, while others are reposing under the shadow of their well-earned laurels, far removed from the heat and bustle of the day. Their names are familiar to every reader; their works have taken a lasting place in English as well as American literature; and their qualities and excellencies are so different as at once to invite and suggest critical discrimination.

The great characteristic of Lord Jeffrey is, with some striking exceptions, the fairness and general justice of the criticism which his works exhibit, the kindly feeling which they evince, and the lively illustrations with which they abound. He had vast powers of application. When in great practice at the bar, and deservedly a leading counsel in jury cases, he contrived to find time to conduct the *Edinburgh Review*, and to enrich its pages by above a hundred contributions. There is no great extent of learning in them, few original ideas, and little of that earnestness of expression which springs from strong internal conviction, and is the chief fountain of eloquent and overpowering oratory. He rarely quotes classical or Italian literature, and his writings give no token of a mind stored with their imagery. He seldom gives you the feeling that he is serious, or deeply impressed with his subject. He seldom strikes with force, but very often touches with felicity. The feeling which pervades his writings is always excellent, often generous; his taste is correct, his criticism in general just; and it is impossible not to admire the light and airy hand with which he treats of the most difficult subjects, and the happy expressions with which he often illustrates the most abstruse ideas. He deals more in Scotch metaphysics than suits the present age: he made some signal and well-known mistakes in the estimation of contemporary poetry; and laboured, without effect, to *write up* Ford, Massinger, and the old dramatists, whom their inveterate indecency has justly banished from general popularity. But these faults are amply redeemed by the attractions of his essays in other respects. There are no more charming reviews in our language than some which his collected papers contain: and no one can rise from their perusal with any surprise that the accomplished author of works containing so much just and kindly criticism should deservedly be a most popular and respected judge.

It is impossible to imagine a more thorough contrast to Lord Jeffrey than the writings of Sidney Smith exhibit. Though a reverend and pious divine, the prebendary of St Paul's had very little of the sacerdotal character in him. His conversational talents were great, his success in the highest London society unbounded; but this intoxicating course neither relaxed the vigour of his application, nor deadened the warmth of his feelings. His powers, and they were of no ordinary kind, were always directed, though sometimes with mistaken zeal, to the interests of humanity. His sayings, like those of Talleyrand, were repeated from one end of the empire to the other. These brilliant and sparkling qualities are conspicuous in his writings, and have mainly contributed to their remarkable success both in this country and America. There is scarcely any scholarship, and little information, to be met with in his works. Few take them up to be instructed; many to be amused. He has little of the equanimity of the judge about him, but a great deal of the wit and jocularly of the pleader. He would have made a first-rate jury counsel, for he would alternately have driven them by the force of his arguments, and amused them by the brilliancy of his expressions. There is no more vigorous and forcible diatribe in our language than his celebrated letter on North American repudiation, which roused the attention, and excited the admiration, of the repudiators themselves. He has expressed in a single line a great truth, applicable, it is to be feared, to other nations besides the Americans: "They preferred any load of infamy, however great, to any burden of taxation, however light." But Sidney Smith's blows were expended, and wit lavished, in general, on subjects of passing or ephemeral interest: they were not, like the strokes of Johnson, levelled at the universal frailties and characteristics of human nature. On

this account, though their success hitherto has been greater, it is doubtful whether his essays will take so high a lasting place in English literature as those of Lord Jeffrey, which in general treat of works of permanent interest.

Sir James Mackintosh differs as widely from the original pillars of the *Edinburgh Review* as they do from each other. The publication of his collected essays, with the historical sketch and fragment which he has left, enables us now to form a fair estimate of his powers. That they were great, no one can doubt; but they are of a different kind from what was at first anticipated. Not a shadow of a doubt can now remain, that, though his noble mind had not been in a great degree swallowed up as it was in the bottomless gulf of London society, and he had spent his whole forenoons for the last fifteen years of his life in writing his history, instead of conversing with fashionable or literary ladies, his labours would have terminated in disappointment. The beginning of a history which he has left, is a sufficient proof of this: it is learned, minute, and elaborate, but dull. The Whigs, according to their usual practice with all writers of their own party, hailed its appearance with a flourish of trumpets; but we doubt whether many of them have yet read it through. He had little dramatic power; his writings exhibit no traces of a pictorial eye, and though he had much poetry in his mind, they are not imbued with the poetic character. These deficiencies are fatal to the *popularity* of any historian: no amount of learning or philosophical acuteness can supply their want in the *narrative* of events. Guizot is a proof of this: he is, perhaps, one of the greatest writers on the philosophy of history that ever lived; but his history of the English Revolution is lifeless beside the pages of Livy or Gibbon. Sir James Mackintosh was fitted to have been the Guizot of English history. His mind was essentially didactic. Reflection, not action, was both the bent of his disposition and the theatre of his glory. His History of England, written for Lardner's *Encyclopedia*, can scarcely be called a history; it is rather a series of essays on history. It treats so largely of some events, so scantily of others, that a reader not previously acquainted with the subject, might rise from its perusal with scarcely any idea of the thread of English story. But no one who was already informed on it can do so, without feeling his mind stored with original and valuable reflection, just and profound views. His collected essays from the *Edinburgh Review*, lately put together, are not so discursive as those of Lord Jeffrey, nor so amusing as those of Sidney Smith; but they are much more profound than either, and treat of subjects more permanently interesting to the human race. Many of them, particularly that on representative governments, abound with views equally just and original. It is impossible not to regret, that a mind so richly stored with historical knowledge, and so largely endowed with philosophic penetration, should have left so few lasting monuments of its great and varied powers.

Much as these very eminent men differ from each other, Mr Macaulay is, perhaps, still more clearly distinguished from either. Both his turn of mind and style of writing are peculiar, and exhibit a combination rarely if ever before witnessed in English, or even modern literature. Unlike Lord Jeffrey, he is deeply learned in ancient and modern lore; his mind is richly stored with the poetry and history both of classical and Continental literature. Unlike Mackintosh, he is eminently dramatic and pictorial; he alternately speaks poetry to the soul and pictures to the eye. Unlike Sidney Smith, he has avoided subjects of party contention and passing interest, and grappled with the great questions, the immortal names, which will for ever attract the interest and command the attention of man. Milton, Bacon, Machiavelli, first awakened his discriminating and critical taste; Clive, Warren Hastings, Frederick the Great, called forth his dramatic and historic powers. He has treated of the Reformation and the Catholic reaction in his review of Ranke; of the splendid despotism of the Popedom in that of Hildebrand; of the French Revolution in that of Barère. There is no danger of his essays being forgotten, like many of those of Addison; nor of pompous uniformity of style being complained of, as in most of those of Johnson. His learning is prodigious; and perhaps the chief defects of his composition arise from the exuberant riches of the stores from which they are drawn. When warmed in his subject he is thoroughly in earnest, and his language, in consequence, goes direct to the heart. In many of his writings – and especially the first volume of his history, and his essay on the Reformation

– there are reflections equally just and original, which never were surpassed in the philosophy of history. That he is imbued with the soul of poetry need be told to none who have read his *Battle of the Lake Regillus*; that he is a great biographer will be disputed by none who are acquainted with the splendid biographies of Clive and Hastings, by much the finest productions of the kind in the English language.

Macaulay's style, like other original things, has already produced a school of imitators. Its influence may distinctly be traced, both in the periodical and daily literature of the day. Its great characteristic is the shortness of the sentences, which often equals that of Tacitus himself, and the rapidity with which new and distinct ideas or facts succeed each other in his richly-stored pages. He is the Pope of English prose: he often gives two sentiments and facts in a single line. No preceding writer in prose, in any modern language with which we are acquainted, has carried this art of abbreviation, or rather cramming of ideas, to such a length; and to its felicitous use much of the celebrity which he has acquired is to be ascribed. There is no doubt that it is a most powerful engine for the stirring of the mind, and when not repeated too often, or carried too far, has a surprising effect. Its introduction forms an era in historical composition. To illustrate our meaning, and at the same time adorn our pages with passages of exquisite, almost redundant beauty, we gladly transcribe two well-known ones, taken from the most perfect of his historical essays. Of Lord Clive he says —

"From Clive's second visit to India dates the political ascendancy of the English in that country. His dexterity and resolution realised, in the course of a few months, more than all the gorgeous visions which had floated before the imagination of Dupleix. Such an extent of cultivated territory, such an amount of revenue, such a multitude of subjects, was never added to the dominion of Rome by the most successful proconsul. Nor were such wealthy spoils ever borne under arches of triumph, down the Sacred Way, and through the crowded forum, to the threshold of Tarpeian Jove. The fame of those who subdued Antiochus and Tigranes grows dim, when compared with the splendour of the exploits which the young English adventurer achieved, at the head of an army not equal in numbers to one-half of a Roman legion. From Clive's third visit to India, dates the purity of the administration of our eastern empire. He first made dauntless and unsparing war on that gigantic system of oppression, extortion, and corruption, which had previously prevailed in India. In that war he manfully put to hazard his ease, his fame, and his splendid fortune. The same sense of justice which forbids us to conceal or extenuate the faults of his earlier days, compels us to admit that those faults were nobly repaired. If the reproach of the Company and its servants has been taken away; if in India the yoke of foreign masters, elsewhere the heaviest of all yokes, has been found lighter than that of any native dynasty; if to that gang of public robbers which formerly spread terror through the whole of Bengal, has succeeded a body of functionaries not more highly distinguished by ability and diligence, than by integrity, disinterestedness, and public spirit; if we now see such men as Munro, Elphinstone, and Metcalfe, after leading victorious armies, after making and deposing kings, return proud of their honourable poverty from a land which once held to every greedy factor the hope of boundless wealth, – the praise is in no small degree due to Clive. His name stands high on the roll of conquerors; but it is found in a better list – in the list of those who have done and suffered much in the cause of mankind. To the warrior, history will assign a place in the same rank with Lucullus and Trajan; nor will she deny to the reformer a share of that veneration with which France cherishes the memory of

Turgot, and with which the latest generation of Hindoos will contemplate the statue of Lord William Bentinck."¹

The well-known description of Hastings' trial is as follows: —

"The place was worthy of such a trial. It was the great hall of William Rufus — the hall which had resounded with acclamations at the inauguration of thirty kings; the hall which had witnessed the just sentence of Bacon, and the just absolution of Somers; the hall where the eloquence of Strafford had for a moment awed and melted a victorious party, inflamed with just resentment; the hall where Charles had confronted the High Court of Justice with the placid courage which has half redeemed his fame. Neither military nor civil pomp was wanting. The avenues were lined with grenadiers; the streets were kept clear by cavalry; the peers, robed in gold and ermine, were marshalled by the heralds, under the Garter king-at-arms. The judges, in their vestments of state, attended to give advice on points of law. Near a hundred and seventy lords, three-fourths of the Upper House, as the Upper House then was, walked in solemn order from their usual place of assembling to the tribunal. The junior baron present led the way — George Elliott, Lord Heathfield, recently ennobled for his memorable defence of Gibraltar against the fleets and armies of France and Spain. The long procession was closed by the Duke of Norfolk, earl-marshal of the realm, by the great dignitaries, and by the brothers and sons of the king. Last of all came the Prince of Wales, conspicuous by his fine person and noble bearing. The gray old walls were hung with scarlet. The long galleries were crowded by an audience, such as has rarely excited the fears or the emulation of an orator. There were gathered together, from all parts of a great, free, enlightened, and prosperous empire, grace and female loveliness, wit and learning, the representatives of every science and of every art. There were seated round the queen the fair-haired young daughters of the house of Brunswick. There the ambassadors of great kings and commonwealths gazed with admiration on a spectacle which no other country in the world could present. There Siddons, in the prime of her majestic beauty, looked with emotion on a scene surpassing all the imitations of the stage. There the historian of the Roman Empire thought of the days when Cicero pleaded the cause of Sicily against Verres, and when, before a senate which still retained some show of freedom, Tacitus thundered against the oppressor of Africa. There were seen, side by side, the greatest painter and the greatest scholar of the age. The spectacle had allured Reynolds from that easel which has preserved to us the thoughtful foreheads of so many writers and statesmen, and the sweet smiles of so many noble matrons. It had induced Parr to suspend his labours in that dark and profound mine from which he had extracted a vast treasure of erudition — a treasure too often buried in the earth, too often paraded with injudicious and inelegant ostentation, but still precious, massive, and splendid. There appeared the voluptuous charms of her to whom the heir of the throne had in secret plighted his faith. There, too, was she, the beautiful mother of a beautiful race, the Saint Cecilia whose delicate features, lighted up by love and music, art has rescued from the common decay. There were the members of that brilliant society which quoted, criticised, and exchanged repartees under the rich peacock hangings of Mrs Montague. And there the ladies, whose lips, more

¹ *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, iii. 205, 206.

persuasive than those of Fox himself, had carried Westminster against Palace and Treasury, shone round Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire."²

As a contrast to these splendid pictures, we subjoin the portrait of the Black Hole of Calcutta, which proves that, if the author is in general endowed with the richness of Ariosto's imagination, he can, when necessary, exhibit the terrible powers of Dante.

"Then was committed that great crime – memorable for its singular atrocity, memorable for the tremendous retribution by which it was followed. The English captives were left at the mercy of the guards, and the guards determined to secure them for the night in the prison of the garrison, a chamber known by the fearful name of the Black Hole. Even for a single European malefactor that dungeon would, in such a climate, have been too close and narrow. The space was only twenty feet square. The air-holes were small and obstructed. It was the summer solstice – the season when the fierce heat of Bengal can scarcely be rendered tolerable to natives of England by lofty halls, and by the constant waving of fans. The number of the prisoners was 146. When they were ordered to enter the cell, they imagined that the soldiers were joking; and, being in high spirits on account of the promise of the nabob to spare their lives, they laughed and jested at the absurdity of the notion. They soon discovered their mistake. They expostulated, they entreated, but in vain. The guards threatened to cut all down who hesitated. The captives were driven into the cell at the point of the sword, and the door was instantly shut and locked upon them.

"Nothing in history or fiction – not even the story which Ugolino told in the sea of everlasting ice, after he had wiped his bloody lips on the scalp of his murderer – approaches the horrors which were recounted by the few survivors of that night. They cried for mercy; they strove to burst the door. Holwell, who even in that extremity retained some presence of mind, offered large bribes to the gaolers. But the answer was, that nothing could be done without the nabob's orders; that the nabob was asleep, and that he would be angry if anybody woke him. Then the prisoners went mad with despair. They trampled each other down, fought for the places at the windows – fought for the pittance of water with which the cruel mercy of the murderers mocked their agonies – raved, prayed, blasphemed, implored the guards to fire among them. The gaolers, in the meantime, held lights to the bars, and shouted with laughter at the frantic struggles of the victims. At length the tumult died away in low gaspings and moanings. The day broke. The nabob had slept off his debauch, and permitted the door to be opened; but it was some time before the soldiers could make a lane for the survivors, by piling up on each side the heaps of corpses on which the burning climate had already begun to do its loathsome work. When, at length, a passage was made, twenty-three ghastly figures, such as their own mothers would not have known, came forth alive. A pit was instantly dug: the dead bodies, a hundred and twenty-three in number, were flung into it promiscuously, and covered up."³

This style does admirably well for short biographies, such as those of Warren Hastings or Clive, in the *Edinburgh Review*, in which the object is to condense the important events of a whole lifetime into comparatively few pages, and fascinate the reader by as condensed and brilliant a picture as it is possible to present, of the most striking features of their character and story. But how will it answer

² *Critical and Historical Essays*, iii. 446, 447.

³ *Ibid.*, iii. 144-146.

for a lengthened history, such as Macaulay's great work promises to be, extending to twelve or fifteen volumes? How will it do to make the "extreme medicine of the constitution its daily bread?" Ragouts and French dishes are admirable at a feast, or on particular occasions, but what should we say to a diet prescribed of such highly seasoned food every day? It is true, there are not many such brilliant and striking passages as those we have quoted. The subject, of course, would not admit of, the mind of the reader would sink under, the frequent repetition of such powerful emotion. But the style is generally the same. It almost always indicates a crowd of separate ideas, facts, or assertions, in such close juxtaposition that they literally seem wedged together. Such is the extent of the magazine of reading and information from which they are drawn, that they come tumbling out, often without much order or arrangement, and generally so close together that it is difficult for a person not previously acquainted with the subject to tell which are of importance and which are immaterial.

This tendency, when as confirmed and general as it has now become, we consider by far the most serious fault in Mr Macaulay's style; and it is not less conspicuous in his general history than in his detached biographies. Indeed, its continuance in the former species of composition is mainly owing to the brilliant success with which it has been attended in the latter. In historical essays it is not a blemish, it is rather a beauty; because, in such miniature portraits or cabinet pieces, minuteness of finishing and crowding of incidents in a small space are among the principal requisites we desire, the chief charm we admire. But the style of painting which we justly admire in Albano and Vanderwerf, would be misplaced in the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, or even the extended canvass of the Transfiguration. We do not object to such elaborate finishing, such brevity of sentences, such crowding of facts and ideas, in the delineation of the striking incidents or principal characters of the work; what we object to is its continuance on ordinary occasions, in the drawing of inconsiderable characters, and in what should be the simple thread of the story. Look how easy Hume is in his ordinary narrative – how unambitious Livy, in the greater part of his history. We desiderate such periods of relaxation and repose in Macaulay. We there always discover learning, genius, power; but the prodigal display of these powers often mars their effect. We see it not only in delineating the immortal deeds of heroes, or the virtues of princesses, but in portraying the habits of serving-women or the frailties of maids of honour. With all its elevated and poetical qualities, the mind of Macaulay occasionally gives token of its descent from our common ancestress, Eve, in an evident fondness for gossip. It would perhaps be well for him to remember that the scandal of our great great-grandmothers is not generally interesting, or permanently edifying; and that he is not to measure the gratification it will give to the world in general, by the avidity with which it is devoured among the titled descendants of the fair sinners in the Whig coteries. There is often a want of breadth and keeping in his pictures. To resume our pictorial metaphor, Macaulay's pages often remind us of the paintings of Bassano, in which warriors and pilgrims, horses and mules, dromedaries and camels, sheep and lambs, Arabs and Ethiopians, shining armour and glistening pans, spears and pruning-hooks, scimitars and shepherds' crooks, baskets, tents, and precious stuffs, are crammed together without mercy, and with an equal light thrown on the most insignificant as the most important parts of the piece.

When he is engaged in a subject, however, in which minute painting is not misplaced, and the condensation of striking images is a principal charm, Mr Macaulay's pictorial eye and poetical powers appear in their full lustre. We observe with pleasure that he has not forgotten the example and precept of Herodotus, who considered geography as a principal part of history; and that, in the description of countries, he has put forth the whole vigour of his mind with equal correctness of drawing and brilliancy of colouring. As a specimen, we subjoin the admirable picture of the plain of Bengal, in the life of Clive: —

"Of the provinces which had been subject to the house of Tamerlane, the wealthiest was Bengal. No part of India possessed such natural advantages, both for agriculture and for commerce. The Ganges, rushing through a hundred channels to the sea, has formed a vast plain of rich mould, which, even under the tropical

sky, rivals the verdure of an English April. The rice-fields yield an increase such as is elsewhere unknown. Spices, sugar, vegetable oils, are produced with marvellous exuberance. The rivers afford an inexhaustible supply of fish. The desolate islands along the sea-coast, overgrown by noxious vegetation, and swarming with deer and tigers, supply the cultivated districts with abundance of salt. The great stream which fertilises the soil is, at the same time, the chief highway of Eastern commerce. On its banks, and on those of its tributary waters, are the wealthiest marts, the most splendid capitals, and the most sacred shrines of India. The tyranny of man had for ages struggled in vain against the overflowing bounty of nature. In spite of the Mussulman despot, and of the Mahratta freebooter, Bengal was known through the East as the garden of Eden, as the rich kingdom. Its population multiplied exceedingly. Distant provinces were nourished from the overflowing of its granaries; and the noble ladies of London and Paris were clothed in the delicate produce of its looms. The race by whom this rich tract was peopled, enervated by a soft climate, and accustomed to peaceful avocations, bore the same relation to other Asiatics which the Asiatics generally bear to the bold and energetic children of Europe. The Castilians have a proverb, that in Valencia the earth is water, and the men women; and the description is at least equally applicable to the vast plain of the lower Ganges. Whatever the Bengalee does he does languidly. His favourite pursuits are sedentary. He shrinks from bold exertion; and though voluble in dispute, and singularly pertinacious in the war of chicane, he seldom engages in a personal conflict, and scarcely ever enlists as a soldier. We doubt whether there be a hundred Bengalees in the whole army of the East India Company. There never, perhaps, existed a people so thoroughly fitted by nature and by habit for a foreign yoke."⁴

The talent of military description, and the picture of battle, is one of a very peculiar kind, which is often wholly wanting in historians of a very high character in other respects. It is a common observation, that all battles in history are like each other – a sure proof that their authors did not understand the subject; for every battle, fought from the beginning of time, in reality differs from another as much as every countenance. In his previous writings, Mr Macaulay had enjoyed few opportunities of exhibiting his strength in this important particular; though it might have been anticipated, from the brilliancy of his imagination, and the powerful pictures in his *Lays of Rome*, that he would not be inferior in this respect to what he had proved himself to be in other parts of history. But the matter has now been put to the test; and it gives us the highest satisfaction to perceive, from the manner in which he has treated a comparatively trifling engagement, that he is fully qualified to portray the splendid victories of Marlborough, the bold intrepidity of Hawke, and the gallant daring of Peterborough. It would be difficult to find in history a more spirited and graphic description than he has given in his great work of the battle of Sedgemoor, with the scene of which he seems, from early acquaintance, to be peculiarly familiar: —

"Monmouth was startled at finding that a broad and profound trench lay between him and the camp he had hoped to surprise. The insurgents halted on the edge of the hollow, and fired. Part of the royal infantry, on the opposite bank, returned the fire. During three quarters of an hour the roar of musketry was incessant. The Somersetshire peasants behaved as if they had been veteran soldiers, save only that they levelled their pieces too high. But now the other divisions of the royal army were in motion. The Life Guards and Blues, came pricking up from Weston Zoyland, and scattered, in an instant, some of Grey's horse, who had

⁴ *Critical and Historical Essays*, iii. 141, 142.

attempted to rally. The fugitives spread a panic among the fugitives in the rear, who had charge of the ammunition. The waggoners drove off at full speed, and never stopped till they were some miles from the field of battle. Monmouth had hitherto done his part like a stout and able warrior. He had been seen on foot, pike in hand, encouraging his infantry by voice and example. But he was too well acquainted with military affairs not to know that all was over. His men had lost the advantage which surprise and darkness had given them. They were deserted by the horse and by the ammunition waggons. The king's forces were now united, and in good order. Feversham had been awakened by the firing, had adjusted his cravat, had looked himself well in the glass, and had come to see what his men were doing. What was of much more consequence, Churchill (Marlborough) had rapidly made an entirely new disposition of the royal infantry. The day had begun to break. The event of a conflict on an open plain by broad sunlight could not be doubtful. Yet Monmouth should have felt that it was not for him to fly, while thousands, whom affection for him had hurried to destruction, were still fighting manfully in his cause. But vain hopes, and the intense love of life, prevailed. He saw that, if he tarried, the royal cavalry would soon be in his rear: he mounted, and rode off from the field.

Yet his foot, though deserted, made a gallant stand. The Life Guards attacked them on the right, the Blues on the left; but these Somerset clowns, with their scythes and the but-ends of their muskets, faced the royal horse like old soldiers. Oglethorpe made a vigorous attempt to break them, and was manfully repulsed. Sarsfield, a brave Irish officer, whose name afterwards obtained a melancholy celebrity, charged on the other flank. His men were beaten back: he himself was struck to the ground, and lay, for a time, as one dead. But the struggle of the hardy rustics could not last; their powder and ball were spent. Cries were heard of, "Ammunition! for God's sake, ammunition!" But no ammunition was at hand. And now the king's artillery came up. Even when the guns had arrived, there was such a want of gunners, that a sergeant of Dumbarton's regiment had to take upon himself the management of several pieces. The cannon, however, though ill served, brought the engagement to a speedy close. The pikes of the rebel battalions began to shake – the ranks broke. The king's cavalry charged again, and bore down everything before them. The king's infantry came pouring across the ditch. Even in that extremity, the Mendip miners stood bravely to their arms, and sold their lives dearly. But the rout was in a few minutes complete; three hundred of the soldiers had been killed or wounded. Of the rebels, more than a thousand lay dead on the moor."⁵

We have dwelt so long on the general characteristics and peculiar excellencies of Mr Macaulay's compositions, that we have hardly left ourselves sufficient space to enter so fully as we could wish into the merits of the great work on which he has staked his reputation with future times. It was looked forward to with peculiar, and we may say unexampled interest, both from the known celebrity and talents of the author – not less as a parliamentary orator than a practised critic – and the importance of the blank which he was expected to fill up in English literature. He has contracted an engagement with the public, to give the *History of England* during the last century; to fill up the void from the English to the French Revolution. He came after Hume, whose simple and undying narrative will be coeval with the long and eventful thread of English story. He has undertaken the history of the glorious age of Queen Anne, and the era of the first Georges – of the victories of Marlborough, and the disasters of North – of the energy of Chatham, and the brilliancy of Bolingbroke; he has to recount equally the chivalrous episode of Charles Edward and the heroic death of Wolfe – the inglorious capitulation

⁵ *History*, i. 610, 611.

of Cornwallis, and the matchless triumphs of Clive. That the two first volumes of his work have not disappointed the public expectation is proved by the fact, that, before two months had elapsed from publication, they had already reached a third edition.

We shall not, in treating of the merits of this very remarkable production, adopt the not uncommon practice of reviewers on such occasions. We shall not pretend to be better informed on the details of the subject than the author. We shall not set up the reading of a few weeks or months against the study of half a lifetime. We shall not imitate certain critics who look at the bottom of the pages for the authorities of the author, and, having got the clue to the requisite information, proceed to examine with the utmost minuteness every particular of his narrative, and make in consequence a vast display of knowledge wholly derived from the reading which he has suggested. We shall not be so deluded as to suppose we have made a great discovery in biography, because we have ascertained that some Lady Caroline of the last generation was born on the 7th October 1674, instead of the 8th February 1675, as the historian, with shameful negligence, has affirmed; nor shall we take credit to ourselves for a journey down to Hampshire to consult the parish register on the subject. As little shall we in future accuse Macaulay of inaccuracy in describing battles, because on referring, without mentioning it, to the military authorities he has quoted, and the page he has referred to, we have discovered that at some battle, as Malplaquet, Lottum's men stood on the right of the Prince of Orange, when he says they stood on the left; or that Marlborough dined on a certain day at one o'clock, when in point of fact he did not sit down, as is proved by incontestable authority, till half-past two. We shall leave such minute and Lilliputian criticisms to the minute and Lilliputian minds by whom alone they are ever made. Mr Macaulay can afford to smile at all reviewers who affect to possess more than his own gigantic stores of information.

In the first place, we must bestow the highest praise on the general sketch of English history which he has given down to the period of Charles. Such a *precis* forms the most appropriate introduction to his work, and it is done with a penetration and justice which leaves nothing to be desired. Several of his remarks are equally original and profound, and applicable – not only to a right understanding of the thread of former events, but to the social questions with which the nation is engaged at the present moment. We allude in particular to the observations that the spread of the Reformation has been everywhere commensurate with that of the Teutonic race, and that it has never been able to take root among those of Celtic descent; that, in modern times, the spread of intelligence and the vigour of the human mind, has been coextensive with the establishment of the Reformed opinions, while despotism in governments, and slumber in their subjects, has characterised, with certain brilliant exceptions of infidel passion, those in which the ancient faith is still prevalent; and that the Romish belief and observances were the greatest blessing to humanity, during the violence and barbarism of the middle ages, but the reverse among enlightened nations of modern times. It is refreshing to see opinions of this obviously just and important kind advanced, and distinctions drawn, by a writer of the high celebrity and vast knowledge of Mr Macaulay. It is still more important when we have only just emerged from an age in which the admission of the Roman Catholics into parliament was so strenuously recommended, as the greatest boon which could possibly be conferred on society – and are entering on another, in which its ceremonies and excitements have become the refuge of so many even in this country, at least of the softer sex, and in the highest ranks, with whom the usual attractions of the world have begun to fail or become insipid – to see the evident tendency of the Romish faith characterised in a manner equally removed from the bigoted prejudices of the Puritans, and the blind passion of modern Catholic proselytism, by an author bred up amid the din of Roman Catholic Emancipation, and a distinguished contributor to the *Edinburgh Review*.

We wish we could bestow equal praise on the justice of the views, and impartiality of the delineation of character, in the critical period of the Great Rebellion, which Mr Macaulay treats more at length; and lest he should fear that our praise will be valueless, as being that of a panegyric, we shall be proud to give him fierce battle on that point. We thank God we are not only old Tories, but,

as the Americans said of a contemporary historian, the "*oldest of Tories*;" and we are weak enough to be confirmed in our opinions by the evident fact that they are those of a small minority of the present age. It is not likely, therefore, that we should not find an opportunity to break a lance with our author in regard to Charles I. and the Great Rebellion. We must admit, however, that Mr Macaulay is much more impartial in his estimate of that event, than he was in some of his previous essays; that he gives with anxious fairness the arguments on the opposite side of the question; and that he no longer represents the royal victim as now a favourite only with women – and that because his countenance is pacific and handsome on the canvass of Vandyke, and he took his son often on his knee, and kissed him.

Mr Macaulay represents the Great Rebellion as a glorious and salutary struggle for the liberties of England; – a struggle to the success of which, against the tyranny of the Stuarts, the subsequent greatness of England is mainly to be ascribed. The trial and execution of Charles I. he describes as an event melancholy, and to be deplored; but unavoidable and necessary, in consequence of the perfidy and deceit of a "man whose whole life had been a series of attacks on the liberties of England." He does full justice to the courage and dignity with which he met his fate, but holds that he was deservedly destroyed, though in a most violent and illegal manner, in consequence of his flatteries and machinations.⁶ "There never," says he, "was a politician to whom so many frauds and falsehoods were brought home by undeniable evidence." We take a directly opposite view of the question. We consider the resistance of the Long Parliament to Charles as a series of selfish and unprincipled acts of treason against a lawful sovereign; not less fatal to the liberties of the country at the time, than they were calculated in the end to have proved to its independence, and which would long ere this have worked out its ruin, if another event had not, in a way which its author did not intend, worked out a cure for the disease. We consider the civil war as commenced from blind selfishness, "ignorant impatience of taxation," and consummated under the combined influence of hypocritical zeal and guilty ambition. We regard the death of Charles as an atrocious and abominable murder, vindicated by no reasons of expedience, authorised by no principle of justice, which has lowered for ever England to the level of the adjoining nations in the scale of crime; and which, had it not been vindicated by subsequent loyalty and chivalrous feeling, in the better part of the people, would long since have extinguished alike its liberties and its independence. Even Hume has represented the conduct and motives of the leaders of the Long Parliament in too favourable a light – and it is no wonder he did so, for it is only since his time that the selfish Passions have been brought into play on the political theatre – which at once explains the difficulties with which Charles had to struggle, and put in a just light his tragic fate.

Mr Hume represents the Long Parliament, in the commencement of the contest with the king, as influenced by a generous desire to secure and extend the liberties of their country, and as making use of the constitutional privilege of giving or withholding supplies for that important object. If this was really their object, we should at once admit they acted the part of true patriots, and are entitled to the lasting gratitude of their country and the world. But, admitting this was what they professed, that this was their stalking-horse, in what respect did their conduct correspond with such patriotic declarations? Did they use either their legitimate or usurped power for the purpose of extending and confirming the liberties of their country, or even diminishing the weight of the public burdens which pressed most severely on the people? So far from doing so, they multiplied these burdens fiftyfold; they levied them, not by the authority of parliament, but by the terrors of military execution; and while they refused to the entreaties of the king the pittance of a few hundred thousand pounds, to put the coasts in a state of defence, and protect the commerce of his subjects, they levied of their own authority, and without parliamentary sanction, no less than *eighty-four millions* sterling, between 1640 and 1659, in the form of military contributions – levied for no other purpose but to deluge the kingdom with blood, destroy its industry, and subject its liberties to the ruin of military oppression.

⁶ Vol. i. p. 127, 128.

True, Charles I. dissolved many parliaments, was often hasty and intemperate in the mode of doing so; for eleven years reigned without a House of Commons, and brought on the collision by his attempt to levy ship-money, for the protection of the coasts, of his own authority. But why did he do so? Why did he endeavour to dispense with the old and venerable name of parliament, and incur the odium, and run the risk, of governing alone in a country where the hereditary revenue was so scanty, and the passion for freedom so strong that, even with all the aids from parliament, he had never enjoyed so large an income as two millions a-year? Simply because he was driven to it by necessity; because he found it was absolutely impossible to get on with parliaments which obstinately refused to discharge their first of duties – that of providing for the public defence – or discharge his duties as chief magistrate of the realm, in conformity either with his coronation oath or the plain necessities and obligations of his office, from the invincible resistance which the House of Commons, on every occasion, made to parting with money.

Their conduct was regulated by a very plain principle – it was perfectly consistent, and such as, under the existing constitution, could not fail very soon to bring government to a dead-lock, and compel the sovereign either at once to abdicate his authority, or barter it away piecemeal against small grants of money, reluctantly, and in the most parsimonious spirit, granted by his subjects. They said, "Govern any way you please, defend the country the best way you can, get out of your difficulties as you think fit, but do not come to us for money. Anything but that. It is your business to defend us, it is not ours to contribute to our defence. Let our coasts be insulted by the French, or pillaged by the Dutch; let our trade be ruined, and even our fishermen chased into their harbours, by the Continental privateers; but don't come to us for money. If we give you anything, it will be as little as we can in decency offer; and, in return for such liberal concessions, you must on every occasion surrender an important part of the prerogative of the crown." The king did this for some years after he came to the throne, always trusting that his concessions would secure at length a liberal supply of money, for the public defence, from the House of Commons. He said, and said with truth, that he had conceded more to his subjects than any monarch that ever sat on the throne of England. The Petition of Rights, granted early in his reign, proved this: it contained nearly all the guarantees since desired or obtained for English freedom. But all was unavailing. The Commons would give no money, or they would give it only in exchange for the most essential prerogatives of the crown, without which public defence was impossible, and anarchy must have usurped its place.

They began the civil war at length, and handed the nation over to the horrors of domestic slaughter and military despotism, because the king would not consent to part with the command of the armed force – a requisition so monstrous that it plainly amounted to an abrogation of the royal authority, and has never, since the Restoration, been seriously contended for by Radicals, Repealers, or Chartists, even in the worst periods of the Irish Rebellion or French Revolution. It is not surprising that subsequent times for long mistook the real nature of the king's situation, and threw on him blame for events of which, in reality, he was blameless. Mankind were not then so well acquainted as they have since become, with the strength of an ignorant impatience of taxation. Since then, they have seen it divide the greatest empires, ruin the most celebrated commonwealths, disgrace the most famed republics, paralyse the most powerful states. It has broken down the central authority, and divided into separate kingdoms the once puissant German empire; it has ruined and brought partition on the gallant Polish democracy; it induced on France the horrors of the Revolution, and permanently destroyed its liberties by causing the Notables to refuse Calonne's proposition for equal taxation; it has disgraced the rise of American freedom, by the selfishness of repudiation and the cupidity of conquest. These were the evils, and this the disgrace, which Charles I. strove to avert in his contest with the Long Parliament; these the evils, and this the disgrace, which their leaders strove to impose on this country. We have only to look at the Free-trade Hall at Manchester, at this time re-echoing with applause at proposals to disband our army and sell our ships, in order to be able to sell cotton

goods a halfpenny per pound cheaper than at present, to see what was the spirit with which Charles I. had to contend during the Great Rebellion.

Historians have often expressed their surprise at the vigour of the rule of Cromwell, and the energetic manner in which he caused the national flag to be respected by foreign states. But, without detracting from the well-earned fame of the Protector in this respect, it may safely be affirmed, that the main cause of his success in foreign transactions was, that he had got the means of making the English pay taxes. He levied them with the sabre and the bayonet. Between contributions, sequestrations, and impositions, his commissioners contrived to wrench enormous sums, for those days, out of the country. He raised the revenue from £2,000,000 a-year to nearly £6,000,000. He got quit of the disagreeable burden of parliamentary grants. He found his troops much more effectual tax-gatherers. He did what, by gentler means, and in a less oppressive way, Charles had tried to do. He levied sums from the nation adequate for the public defence, and which enabled it to take the place to which it was entitled in the scale of nations. Had the original leaders of the Long Parliament not been superseded by his iron hand, they would have left England as much exposed to foreign insult, as much in peril of foreign invasion, as Poland proved from the triumph of the same selfish principles.

It is true Charles at length became a dissembler, and made many promises which were afterwards broken. But why did he become a dissembler? How did it happen that his nature, originally open, unreserved, and chivalrous, even to a fault, became at length cautious, and marked by dissimulation? Simply because he was assailed on all sides by dissemblers and dissimulators. He was driven to it by stern necessity in his own defence, and as the only way of carrying on the government. The whole conduct of his parliaments to him was one tissue of falsehood and deceit. They constantly professed loyalty with their lips, while they were thinking only of treason in their hearts; they were loud in their protestations of zeal for the public service, when they were thinking only of keeping close their purse-strings, and shaking off every imaginable tax levied for the public defence. Like their descendants in Transatlantic realms, they, "preferred any load of infamy, however great, to any burden of taxation, however light." It was only by fair words, by promising more than he was able to perform, by bartering the prerogative of the crown for parsimonious grants – £200,000 one year, £300,000 another – that he was able to provide, in the most penurious way, for the public service. His faithful Commons were impressed with the idea, and proceeded on the principle, that the monarch was an enemy cased in armour, and that it was their business to strip him of every article he possessed, so as to leave him entirely at their mercy, and reduce the government to a pure untaxed democracy. They first got the shield; they next seized the helmet; the breast-plate could not long be withheld; and at last they began to fight for the sword. Was consistency, or perfect sincerity of conduct, practicable with such men? Have not the English, in their wars in the East, been under the necessity of borrowing from their opponents much of their vigour and violence, and not unfrequently their ambition and dissimulation? Let us figure to ourselves Queen Victoria, without a national debt or parliamentary influence, going to Mr Cobden and the Commons in Free-Trade Hall, Manchester, and asking for funds to support the army and navy in a defensive war, which promised no extension of the market for cotton goods; or the president of the American republic proposing a direct income-tax of five per cent on his faithful repudiators, to support a war which held out a prospect neither of Mexican silver nor Californian gold, and we shall have some idea of the difficulties with which the unhappy Charles had to contend in his parliamentary struggles, and appreciate the stern necessity which turned even his noble and chivalrous character to temporary shifts, and sometimes discreditable expedients.

Again, as to the death of Charles, can it be regarded in any other light but as a foul and atrocious murder? He was tried neither by the Peers nor the Commons – neither by the courts of law, nor a national convention – but by a self-constituted junto of military officers, rebels to his government, traitors to their country, who, having exhausted in their remorseless career every imaginable crime of robbery, rape, arson, assault, and treason, now added WILFUL MURDER – cold-blooded murder, to the number. However it is viewed, the crime was equally unpardonable and inexpedient. If the country

was still to be regarded as a monarchy, though torn by intestine divisions, then were Cromwell and all his brother regicides not only murderers, but traitors, for they put to death their lawful sovereign. If the bonds of allegiance are to be held as having been broken in the preceding convulsions, and the contest considered as that of one state with another – which is the most favourable view to adopt for the regicides – then Charles, when he fell into their hands, was a prisoner of war; and it was as much murder to put him to death as it would have been in the English, if they had slain Napoleon when he came on board the *Bellerophon*, or in Charles V., if he had despatched Francis I. when he became his prisoner after the battle of Pavia. The immediate object at issue when the civil war began – the right claimed by the Commons of appointing officers to the militia – was one in which they were clearly and confessedly in the wrong, and one which, if granted by Charles, as all the previous demands of the Commons had been, would infallibly have landed the nation in the bottomless pit of an untaxed, unbridled, and senseless democracy, as incapable of self-defence as Poland, as regardless of external rights as Rome in ancient, or America in modern times.

The extreme peril to English liberties and independence which arose from the exorbitant pretensions and disastrous success of the Long Parliament, with their canting military successors, distinctly appears in the deplorable state and disgraceful situation of England from the Restoration in 1661 to the Revolution in 1688. Notwithstanding all their professions of regard for freedom, and their anxiety to secure the liberties of the subject, the Long Parliament had done nothing for either in future times, while they had destroyed both in present. They had not even introduced a *habeas corpus* act to guard against arbitrary imprisonment. They had not given life appointments to the judges. They had made no provision for the impartial selection of juries. They had left the courts of law what, till the Revolution, they had ever been in English history – the arena in which the contending factions in the state alternately overthrew or murdered each other. They were too decided tyrants in their hearts to part with any of the weapons of tyranny in their hands. They had made no permanent provision for the support of the crown, or the maintenance of a force by sea and land adequate to the public defence; but left their sovereign at the mercy of a parliament of Cavaliers eager for vengeance, thirsting for blood, but nearly as indisposed to make any suitable grants for the public service as any of their predecessors had been. The "ignorant impatience of taxation" was as conspicuous in the parsimony of their supplies as it had been in those of Charles's parliament. But such was the strength of the reaction in favour of monarchy and royal authority, in consequence of the intensity of the evils which had been suffered from democratic and parliamentary government, that there was scarcely any sacrifice of public liberties that the royalist parliaments were not at first disposed to have made, provided it could be done without trenching on their pecuniary resources. An *untaxed despotism* was their idea of the perfection of government, as an untaxed republic had been the bright vision of the parliamentary leaders. Had Charles II. been a man of as much vigour and perseverance as he was of quickness and talent, and had his abilities, which were wasted in the boudoirs of the Duchess of Portsmouth or the Countess of Castlemaine, been devoted, like those of Louis XI. or Cardinal Richelieu, to a systematic attack on the public liberties, he might, without difficulty, have subverted the freedom of England, and left, as a legacy of the Long Parliament, to future times, not only the murder of their sovereign, but the final ruin of the national liberties.

Mr Macaulay has done one essential service to the cause of truth by the powerful and graphic, and, we doubt not, correct account he has given in his first volume of the desperate feuds of the rival parties with each other during this reign, and the universal prostitution of the forms of justice, and the sanctity of courts of law, to the most cruel and abominable purposes. There is no picture of human iniquity and cruelty more revolting than is presented in the alternate triumphs of the Whig and Tory parties, from the excitement produced by the Popish and Ryehouse plots, and the noble blood which was shed alternately by both parties in torrents on the scaffold, to allay the terrors of insensate folly, or satiate the revenge of aroused indignation. The hideous iniquity of the courts of law during those disastrous days, and the entire concurrence of the ruling majority of the moment in

their atrocious proceedings, demonstrate how lamentably the Long Parliament had failed in erecting any bulwarks for the public liberties, or strengthening the foundations of public virtue. At the same time, the disgraceful spectacle of our fleets swept from the Channel, or burnt in their harbours by the Dutch, proves how wretched a provision the Great Rebellion had made for the lasting defence of the realm. Nor was private morality, either in high or low places, on a better footing. The king and all his ministers received the pensions of Louis XIV.; the whole leaders of the patriots, from Algernon Sidney downwards, with the exception of Lord Russell, followed his example. The ladies of the metropolis, as well as the court, were intent only on intrigue. The licentiousness of the stage was such as almost exceeds belief. Nothing was thought of in the House of Commons but saving money, or satisfying revenge. Such was the parsimony of parliament, whether the majority was Whig or Royalist, that the most necessary expenses of the royal household could only be defrayed by pensions from France. French mistresses directed the king's councils, and almost exclusively occupied his time; French alliance misdirected the national forces; French manners entirely subverted the national morals. England, from its vacillation in foreign policy, had forfeited all the respect of foreign nations, while, from the general selfishness and corruption which prevailed, it had lost all respect for itself. The Long Parliament and Great Rebellion, from the necessary reaction, to which they gave rise, of loyalty against treason, and of the thirst for pleasure against the cant of hypocrisy, had all but ruined England; for they had exchanged its liberties for tyranny, its morals for licentiousness.

In truth England *was ruined*, both externally and internally, from these causes, had it not been for one of those events by which Providence at times confounds the counsels of men, and changes the destiny of nations. The accession of James II., and the systematic attack which, in concert with Louis XIV., he made on the Protestant faith, at length united all England against the fatal attempt. The spectacle of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, in France, in November 1685, showed the Protestants what they had to expect from the measures simultaneously adopted, and in virtue of a secret compact, by James II. in England. The Treaty of Augsburg in 1686, by which the Protestant states of the Continent were united in a league against this Roman Catholic invasion, and to which William III. on the Revolution, immediately got England to accede, was the foundation of the grand alliance which secured independence to the Reformed faith, and liberty to Europe, as effectually as the grand alliance in 1813 rescued it from the tyranny of Napoleon. We go along entirely with Mr Macaulay's admirable account of the causes which led to the general coalition of parties against James – the abominable cruelty of Jeffrey's campaign in the west, after the suppression of Monmouth's rebellion, and the evident determination the monarch evinced to force the slavery and absurdities of the Romish faith on a nation too generally enlightened to submit to either. It is refreshing to see these just and manly sentiments, so long the glory of England, coming from a man of his weight and learning, after the sickly partiality for Roman Catholic agitators which, for the purposes of faction, have so long pervaded many of his party, and the inexplicable return to the sway of priests and confessors which has recently appeared among some of our women of fashion. We hold that James justly forfeited his crown for his share in these atrocious proceedings, and entirely concur with Mr Macaulay in regarding the Revolution as the turning-point of English history – the *terminus a quo*, from which we are to date its celebrity in arms and literature, its mighty advance in strength and power, and the establishment of its liberties on a lasting foundation. We congratulate the country that the task of recording the circumstances, and tracing the consequences of this great event, has fallen into the hands of a gentleman so singularly qualified to do it justice, and sincerely wish him a long lease of life and health to bring his noble work to a conclusion.

If we were disposed to criticise at all the manner in which he has executed the part of this great work hitherto presented to the public, we should say that, in the tracing the causes of events, he ascribes too much to domestic, and too little to foreign influences; and that in the delineation of character, though he never advances what is false, he not unfrequently conceals, or touches but lightly, on what is true. He represents England as almost entirely regulated in its movements by internal

agitation or parliamentary contests; forgetting that that agitation, and these contests, were in general themselves, in great part, produced by the simultaneous changes going on in opinion and external relations on the Continent. His history, as yet at least, is too exclusively English, not sufficiently European. Thus he mentions only incidentally, and in three lines, the treaty of Augsburg in 1686, which bound Protestant Europe against France, and entirely regulated the external policy and internal thought of England for the next century. So also in the delineation of character: we can never fall to admire what he has done, but we have sometimes cause to regret what he has left undone. He has told us, what is undoubtedly true, that James II. did not, after the struggle began in England, evince the courage, he had previously shown in action with the Dutch; but he has not told us what is equally true, that in those actions he had fought as often, and evinced heroism as great, as either Nelson or Collingwood. He has told us that James sedulously attended to the royal navy, and was successful because he was the only honest man in his dockyards; but he has not told us what is equally true, that it was that attention to the navy, and the effort to raise funds for it, which the Long Parliament from selfish parsimony positively refused to grant, which cost Charles I. his throne and life, and, now renewed by his son, laid the foundation of the navy which gained the battle of La Hogue, 1692, broke the naval power of Louis XIV., and for the next century determined the maritime struggle between France and England.

He has told us sufficiently often, that the beginning of the Duke of Marlborough's fortunes was the gift of £5000, which he received from the beautiful mistress of the king, Lady Castlemaine. This is undoubtedly true; and he has added what we have no doubt is equally so, that on one occasion he was so near being caught with her ladyship that he only escaped by leaping out of the window. He has added, also, that whenever he was going to do anything particularly base, Marlborough always began speaking about his conscience, and the Protestant faith. We have no objection to the leaping the window, for it is very probable, and at all events *piquant*— and *se non e vero e ben trovato*; but we object vehemently to his protestations in favour of the Reformed religion being set down as a hypocritical cover for base and selfish designs, for that is imputing motives – a mode of proceeding never allowed in the humblest court of justice, and in an especial manner reprehensible in a first-rate historian, who is painting a character for the instruction and consideration of future times. And since Mr Macaulay has so prominently brought forward what is to be blamed in Marlborough's career, (and no one can condemn more severely than we do his treachery to James, though it has been so long praised by Whig writers,) we hope he will record with equal accuracy, and tell as often, that he refused repeatedly the offer of the government of the Low Countries, with its magnificent appointment of £60,000 a-year, made to him by the Emperor after the battle of Ramillies, lest by accepting it he should induce dissension in the alliance; that his private correspondence with the duchess evinces throughout the war the most anxious desire for its termination; and that, at the time when the factious Tory press represented him as prolonging hostilities for his own sordid purposes, he was anxiously endeavouring to effect a general pacification at the conferences of Gertruydenberg, and writing a private and very earnest letter to his nephew, the Duke of Berwick, then at the head of the French army, urging him to use his influence with Louis XIV. in order to bring about a peace. We would strongly recommend Mr Macaulay to consider the advice we have heard given to a historian in the delineation of character: "Make it a point of conscience to seek out, and give with full force, all authentic *favourable* anecdotes of persons whom you *dislike*, or to whose opinions you are *opposed*. As to those whom you like, or who are of your own party, you may exercise your own discretion."

Cordially concurring, however, as we do with Mr Macaulay, in his estimate of the beneficial effects of the Revolution of 1688, there is one peculiar benefit which he may possibly not bring so prominently forward as its importance deserves, and which, therefore, we are anxious to impress upon the public mind. It is true that it purified the bench, confirmed the Habeas Corpus Act, closed the human shambles which the Court of King's Bench had been, pacified Scotland, and for above a century effected the prodigy of keeping Ireland quiet. But did yet greater things than these; and the

era of the Revolution is chiefly remarkable for the new dynasty having taught the government *how to raise taxes in the country*, and thus brought England to take the place to which she was entitled in the scale of nations, by bringing the vast national resources to bear upon the national struggles. Charles I. had lost his crown and his head in the attempt to raise money – first legally, and then, when he failed in that, illegally – in the realm, adequate to the national defence. Cromwell had asserted the national dignity in an honourable way, only because his troops gave him the means of levying sufficient supplies, for the first time in English history, at the point of the bayonet. But with the termination of his iron rule, and the restoration of constitutional sway at the Restoration, the old difficulty about supplies returned, and government, to all practical purpose, was nearly brought to a dead-lock. The Commons, now Royalist, would vote nothing, or next to nothing, in the way of money; and the nation was defeated and disgraced, from the impossibility of discovering any way of making it vote money for its own defence. But that which the Stuarts could never effect by appeals to honour, spirit, or patriotism, William III. and Anne soon found the means of accomplishing, by bringing into play, and enlisting on their side, different and less creditable motives. They did not oppose honour and patriotism to interest, but they contrived to rear up one set of interests to combat another. They brought with them from Holland, where it had been long practised, and was perfectly understood, the art of managing public assemblies. They no longer bullied the House of Commons —*they bribed it*; and, strange to say, it is to the entire success of the gigantic system of borrowing, expending, and corrupting, which they introduced, and which their successors so faithfully followed, that the subsequent greatness of England is mainly to be ascribed.

William III., on his accession, immediately joined the league of Augsburg against France – a league obviously rendered necessary by the exorbitant ambition and priest-ridden tyranny of Louis XIV.; and the contest, brought to a glorious termination by the treaty of Ryswick in 1697, was but a prelude to the triumphant War of the Succession, abruptly closed by the discreditable peace of Utrecht in 1714. That England was the life and soul of this alliance, and that Marlborough was the right arm which won its glorious victories, is universally acknowledged; but it is not equally known, what is not less true, that it was the system of managing the House of Commons by means of loans, good places, and bribes, which alone provided the sinews of war, and prepared the triumphs of Blenheim and Ramilies. It is true the nation was, at first at least, hearty and unanimous in the contest, both from religious zeal for the Reformation and national rivalry with France; but experience had shown that, when the prospect of private plunder, as in the wars of the Edwards and Henrys, did not arouse the national strength, it was a matter of absolute impossibility to get the House of Commons to vote the necessary supplies for any time together. No necessity, however urgent, no danger, however pressing, – no claims of justice, no considerations of expedience, no regard for their children, no consideration for themselves, could induce the English of those days to vote anything like an adequate amount of taxes. As this was the state of matters in this country at the time when the whole resources of the neighbouring kingdoms were fully drawn forth by despotic power, and Louis XIV. had two hundred thousand gallant soldiers under arms, and sixty sail of the line afloat, it is evident that, unless some method of conquering this reluctance had been devised, England must speedily have been conquered and partitioned, or have sunk into the rank of a third-rate power like Sweden. But William III., before the Protestant zeal cooled, and the old love of money returned, provided a new and all-powerful agent to combat it. He founded the national debt! He and Anne raised it, between 1688 and 1708, from £661,000 to £54,000,000. He tripled the revenue, and gave so much of it to the House of Commons that they cordially agreed to the tripling. He spent largely; he corrupted still more largely. He no longer attacked in front the battery; he turned it, got into the redoubt by the gorge, and directed its guns upon the enemy. He made the national interests in support of taxation more powerful than those operating to resist it. Thence the subsequent greatness and glory of England – for by no other possible method could the impatience of taxation, so strongly rooted in the nation,

have been overcome, or the national armaments have been placed on the footing rendered necessary, either for securing the national defence, or asserting the national honour.

The whole Whig Ministers, from the Revolution to 1762, when they were dispossessed of power by George III. and Lord Bute, acted on this system of government by influence and corruption. Mr Macaulay's ample acquaintance with the memoirs, published and unpublished, of that period, will doubtless enable him to give numerous anecdotes on the subject, as true and as amusing as Marlborough's leaping from Lady Castlemaine's window, or James II.'s thralldom to Catherine Sedley. The memoirs on the subject that have recently come out, give details of corruption so barefaced and gross that they would exceed belief, if their frequency, and the testimony to their authenticity from different quarters, did not defy disbelief. It is now known that, when Sir Robert Walpole's parliamentary supporters were invited to his ministerial dinner, each of them found a £500 note under his napkin.

We do not blame the Whigs for this wholesale system of influence and corruption, which pervaded every class of society, and regulated the disposal of every office, from the humblest exciseman to the prime minister. There was no other way of doing. But for it, government would, a century and a half ago, have been brought to a stand, and the nation defeated and subjugated. We are no supporters of corruption, or the influence of money, if higher and nobler principles of action can be brought into play, and rejoice that it has now for nearly a century been exchanged for the less offensive and demoralising, but not less effectual system of influence and patronage. But, though much higher motives are sometimes most powerful on extraordinary occasions, all experience proves that, at ordinary times, and in the long run, it is in vain to attempt to combat one interest but by another interest. If any man doubts it, let him try to persuade the free-trade audiences at Manchester to agree to a duty on cotton goods to uphold the navy, or the Irish in Ulster to agree to a rate to save their countrymen in Connaught from dying of famine, or the Scotch lairds to agree to a tax for a rural police, to save themselves from robbery and murder. We should rejoice if men, as a body, could be brought to act only from pure and honourable motives; but, taking them as they are, we are thankful for any system which brings the selfish motives round to the side of patriotism, and causes parliamentary influence to save us from the Russian knout or French requisitions.

One of the most interesting and original parts of Mr Macaulay's work is the account he has given, in the first volume, of the manners and customs, habits of the people, and state of society in England, prior to the Revolution, compared with what now exists. In doing so, he has only exemplified what, in his admirable essay on history in the *Edinburgh Review*, he has described as a leading object in that species of composition; and it must be confessed that his example tends greatly to show the truth of his precept. This part of his work is learned, laborious, elaborate, and in the highest degree amusing. It is also in many respects, and in no ordinary degree, instructive. But it has the same fault as the other parts of his work – it is *one-sided*. It exhibits, in the highest degree, the skill of the pleader, the brilliancy of the painter, the power of the rhetorician; but it does not equally exhibit the reflection of the sage, or the impartiality of the judge. It savours too much of a brilliant party essay in the *Edinburgh Review*. Mr Macaulay's object is to *write up* the present times and *write down* the past; and we fully admit he has done so with the greatest ability. But we are thoroughly convinced his picture, how graphic soever, is in great part deceptive. It tells the truth, but not the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. It represents the ludicrous and extreme features of society as its real and average characteristics; it bears, we are convinced, the same relation, in many respects, to the real aspect of times of which it treats, which the burlesques of Mrs Trollope do to the actual and entire features of Transatlantic society. These burlesques are very amusing; they furnish diverting drawing-room reading; but would a subsequent historian be justified in assuming them as the text-work of a grave and serious description of America in the nineteenth century? We have no doubt Mr Macaulay could produce an authority from a comedy, a tract, or a satire, for every fact he advances; but we have just as little doubt that hundreds of other facts, equally authentic and true, might be adduced

of an opposite tendency, of which he says nothing; and therefore his charge to the jury, how able soever, is all on one side.

His object is to show that, in *every* respect, the present age is incomparably happier and more virtuous than those which have preceded it – a doctrine which has descended to him, in common with the whole liberal party of the world, from the visions of Rousseau. We, who have a firm belief in human corruption, alike from revelation and experience, believe such visions to be a perfect chimera, and that, after a certain period of efflorescence, decay and degradation are as inevitable to societies as to individual men. There can be no doubt that, in many respects, Mr Macaulay is right. The present age is far richer, more refined, and more luxurious than any which has preceded it. In a material view, the higher and middle classes enjoy advantages, and are habituated to comforts, unknown in any former age. The chances of life have increased over the whole population twenty-five, in the higher classes at least forty per cent. Humanity has made a most cheering progress: the barbarity of former days is not only unknown, but seems inconceivable. A British tradesman is better clothed, fed, and lodged, than a Plantagenet baron. So far all is true; but *audi alteram partem*. Are we equally disinterested, magnanimous, and brave, with the nations or ages which have preceded us? Are the generous affections equally victorious over the selfish? Are the love of gain, the thirst for pleasure, the passion for enjoyment, such very weak passions amongst us, that they could be readily supplanted by the ardour of patriotism, the self-denial of virtue, the heroism of duty? Would modern England have engaged in a crusade for the deliverance of the holy sepulchre? Would the merchants of London set fire to their stock-exchange and capital, as those of Numantia or Saguntum did, to save it from the spoiler? Will Free-trade Hall ever overflow with patriotic gifts, as the Bourse at Moscow did in 1812? We have laid out a hundred and fifty millions on railways, in the hope of getting a good dividend in this world: would we lay out one million in building another York Cathedral, or endowing another Greenwich Hospital? Have we no experience of an age

"When wealth accumulates and men decay?"

These are the questions an impartial judge will ask himself after reading Mr Macaulay's brilliant diatribe on the past, in his first volume.

He tells us that the country gentlemen, before the Revolution were mere ignorant country bumpkins, few of whom could read or write, and who, when they for once in their lives came up to London, went staring about on Holborn or Ludgate Hill, till a spout of water from some impending roof fell into their mouths, while a thief was fumbling in their pockets, or a painted denizen from some of the neighbouring purlieus decoyed him into her bower. Be it so. It was these country bumpkins who gained the battles of Cressy, Poitiers, Azincour, and Flodden; they built York Cathedral and St Paul's; their sons gained the victories of Sluys and La Hogue, of Ramilies and Blenheim; they were ennobled by the devotion and sufferings of the cavaliers. We hope their well-fed, long-lived, and luxurious descendants would rise from their beds of down to do the same. He tells us the clergy of the age of Charles II. were almost all drawn from the very humblest classes, that their education was very imperfect, and that they occupied so low a place in society that no lady's-maid, who had hopes of the steward, would look at them; and that they were often glad to take up with a damsel whose character had been blown upon by the young squire. Be it so: that age produced the Clarkes and the Cudworths, the Barrows and the Tillotsons, the Taylors and the Newtons, the Halls and the Hookers, of the Church of England; and their efforts stemmed the torrent of licentiousness which, in reaction against the cant of the Covenanters, deluged the country on the accession of Charles II. The schools and colleges in which they were bred had produced Milton and Spenser, Shakspeare and Bacon, John Locke and Sir Isaac Newton. We hope that the labours of their "honourable and reverend" successors, who have been so highly educated at Oxford and Cambridge, may be equally

successful in eradicating the prevailing vices of the present age, and that, after the lapse of a century and a half, their works will occupy as high place in general estimation.

To illustrate our meaning, we shall extract two paragraphs from a manuscript work on Contemporary History, which recently passed through our hands, and ask Mr Macaulay himself whether he can gainsay any fact it advances, and yet whether he will admit the justice of the picture which it draws.

"The British empire, from 1815 to 1848, exhibited the most extraordinary social and political features that the world had ever seen. No former period had presented so complete a commentary on the maxim, 'extremes meet.' It immediately succeeded the termination of a desperate and costly war, in the course of which the most herculean efforts for the national defence and the interests of the empire had been made; and it witnessed the abandonment of them all. Twenty years of desperate hostility had bequeathed to it untouched a sinking fund of fifteen millions annually; thirty-five years of unbroken peace saw that sinking fund extinguished. Protection to industry – support of the colonies – upholding of the navy, had been the watchwords of the nation during the war. Free trade, disregard of the colonies, cheap freights, became the ruling maxims during the peace which it had purchased. The only intelligible principle of action in the people seemed to be to change everything, and undo all that had been done. The different classes of society, during this divergence, became as far separated in station and condition as in opinion. The rich were every day growing richer, the poor poorer. The wealth of London, and of a few great houses in the country, exceeded all that the imagination of the East had conceived in the *Arabian Nights*: the misery of Ireland, and of the manufacturing towns, outstripped all that the imagination of Dante had figured of the terrible. The first daily exhibited, during the season, all the marvels of Aladdin's palace; the last, at the same period, presented all the horrors of Ugolino's prison. Undeniable statistics proved the reality and universality of this extraordinary state of things, which had become so common as to cease to attract attention. The income-tax returns established the existence of £200,000,000 annual income above £150, in Great Britain alone, by far the greater part of which was the produce of realised wealth; while the poor-law returns exhibited, in the two islands, four millions of paupers, or a full seventh of the population subsisting on public charity. The burden of the poor-rates in the two islands rose, before the close of the period, to £8,000,000 a-year, besides £1,300,000 for county rates. Population had increased fast, but crime far faster: it had, during forty years, advanced *ten times* as fast as the numbers of the people. General distress prevailed during the period among the working classes, interrupted only by occasional and deceptive gleams of sunshine. So acute did it become in 1847 that a noble grant of £10,000,000 from the British parliament alone prevented two millions of Irish dying of famine; as it was, 250,000 in that single year perished from starvation, and as many, in that year and the next, were driven into exile from the United Kingdom. The people in Liverpool returned thanks to God when the inundation of Irish paupers sank to 2000 a-week. Glasgow, for two years, suffered under an infliction of above a thousand weekly, which in that short time raised its poor-rates from £20,000 to £200,000 a-year. During this protracted period of suffering, the feeling of the different classes of society became as much alienated as their interests had been. Rebellion broke out in Ireland; the West Indies were ruined, and the Chartists numbered their millions in England. The Treasury shared in the general distress. It had become impossible to raise funds from the nation adequate to its necessary expenses; and, at length, so pressing did the clamour for a reduction of taxation become, that it was seriously proposed, and loudly approved by a large and influential portion of the community, to sell our ships of war, disband our troops, and surrender ourselves unarmed to the tender mercies of the adjoining nations, when war with unwonted fierceness was raging both on the continent of Europe and in our Eastern dominions.

"Nor was the aspect of society more satisfactory in its social condition – the manners of the higher, or the habits of the lower orders. Intoxication, seemingly purposely encouraged by government by a large reduction of the duties on spirits, spread the most frightful demoralisation through our

great towns. Licentiousness spread to an unparalleled extent in the metropolis, and all the principal towns; and the amount of female corruption on the streets, and at the theatres, exceeded anything ever witnessed since the days of Messalina or Theodora. The drama was ruined: it was supplanted, as always occurs in the decay of nations, by the melodrama; the theatre by the amphitheatre. Drury Lane was turned into an arena for wild beasts, Covent Garden into an Italian Opera. The, magnificent attractions of the opera exceeded anything ever witnessed before; the warmth of its scenes, and the liberal display of the charms of the *danseuses*, did not prevent it from being nightly crowded by the whole rank and fashion of the metropolis. A universal thirst for gain or excitement had seized the nation. No danger, however great, no immorality, however crying, was able to stop them, when there was the prospect of a good dividend. At one period, a hundred and fifty millions were wasted in loans to "healthy young republics," as the Foreign Secretary himself admitted in parliament; at another, a still larger sum was laid out on domestic railways, not one half of which could ever produce anything. Three guineas a-night were habitually given for a single stall-seat at the Opera, to hear a Swedish singer, during the railway mania: but then the occupant was indifferent – he put it down to the railway, and came there, reeling from the champagne and hock drunk at a neighbouring hotel, at its expense. Most of these railways were mere bubbles, never meant to go on; when the fortunate projectors had got the shares landed at a premium in the hands of the widow and the orphan, they let it go to the bottom. There was a great talk about religion, but the talkers were not always exclusively set on things above. Fine ladies sometimes asked a sly question on coming out of their third service on Sunday, or their second on Friday, what was the price of Great Westerns, or whether the broad or the narrow gauge was likely to carry the day. The reading of men was chiefly confined to the newspapers; of women to novels, or occasional morsels of scandal from scandalous trials. There was great talk about the necessity of keeping up the tone of public morality; but it was appearances, not realities, which were chiefly aimed at. 'Not to leave undone, but to keep unknown,' was the maxim of the London, as it had been of the Venetian dames; the delinquents who were punished were chastised, like the Spartan youths, not for what they had done, but for what they had let be discovered. So capricious was public opinion in this particular, in the very highest circles, that it was stated by the most popular author of the day, in the *Edinburgh Review*, that the English women wakened every seven years, and massacred some unfortunate detected delinquent: they then fell asleep, satisfied with the sacrifice to propriety, for seven years, when they slaughtered another, and again sunk into a third septennial torpor. Meanwhile the morals of the manufacturing districts were daily getting worse; millions existed there who did not attend divine service on Sunday; hundreds of thousands who had never been in a church; thousands who had never heard the name of Jesus but in an oath. A hideous mass of heathen profligacy had arisen in the heart of a Christian land. From it thousands of both sexes were annually sent up to the metropolis to feed its insatiable passions, or sacrifice their souls and bodies on the altar of Moloch."

So far our unpublished manuscript. Mr Macaulay is too well acquainted with passing events not to know that every word in the preceding picture is true, and too candid not to admit that all these observations are just. But he knows there is something to be said on the other side. He is familiar with a counter set of facts; and he could in half-an-hour write two paragraphs on the state of the country during the same period, equally true and striking, which would leave on the mind of the reader an impression of a directly opposite character. Where is the truth to be found between such opposite statements, both true in regard to the same period? In the *combination of both*, and an impartial summing up by the historian of the inferences deducible from *both sets of facts*, equally clearly and forcibly given. It is this statement of the facts on both sides which, amidst all our admiration for his genius, we often desiderate in Mr Macaulay; and nothing but the adoption of it, and taking his seat on the *Bench instead of the Bar of History*, is required to render his noble work as weighty as it is able, and as influential in forming the opinion of future ages, as it unquestionably will be in interesting the present.

JOHNSTON'S PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY.⁷

In this age of scientific illustration, no more splendid work has been produced than the one of which we now give some general notice to our readers. It is not our purpose to panegyrisé either the work or the author; but it is only justice to say, that no work more distinguished by completeness of knowledge on its subject – by the novelty, variety, and depth of its researches – by the skill of its arrangement, and by the beauty of its engravings and typography – has ever appeared in this country, or in any other. It is a magnificent tribute to the science and to the skill of England.

The author, in his desire to acknowledge his obligations, by stating that his work is founded on the *Physical Atlas* of Professor Berghaus, has done himself injustice. His volume, though naturally availing itself of all contemporary knowledge, exhibits all the originality which can make it his own.

Of all modern sciences, the science of the globe has made the most rapid, the most remarkable, and the most important progress. Bacon makes the fine remark, that while the works of man advance by successive additions, the works of Nature all go on at once: thus the machinist adds wheel to wheel, and spring to spring, but the earth produces the tree, branch and bark, trunk and leaf, together. There is something analogous to this combined operation in physical geography: a whole crowd of remarkable discoveries seem to have burst on us at once, expressly designed to invigorate and impel our progress in geographical science. Thus, our century has witnessed new phenomena of magnetism, new laws of heat and refrigeration, new laws even of the tempest, new rules of the tides, new expedients for the preservation of health at sea, new arrangements for the supply of fresh food, and even for the supply of fresh water by distillation, and all tending to the same object – the knowledge of the globe.

The use of steam, to which modern mechanism has given almost a new existence, and certainly a new power – the conquest of wind and wave by the steam-ship, and the almost miraculous saving of time and space by the steam-carriage; the new necessity of remote enterprise, originating in the urgency of commercial and manufacturing difficulties; the opening of the thousand islands of the Indian Archipelago, till now known to us as scarcely more than the seat of savage life, or the scene of Oriental fable; the breaking down of that old and colossal barrier of restrictions and prejudices, which, more than the wall of China, excluded England from intercourse with a population amounting to a third of mankind; and most of all, those vast visitations of apparent evil, which the great Disposer of things is evidently transmuting, year by year, into real good, by propelling the impoverished multitudes of Europe into the wildernesses of the world – all exhibiting a stupendous combination of simple means, and a not less astonishing convergency to the one high purpose, the mastery of the globe – place Physical Geography at the head of the sciences essential to the happiness and power of humankind.

In the glance which we shall give at this great science, we look only to the external structure of the earth; briefly protesting against all those theories which refer its origin to an earlier period, or a longer process, than the "six days" of Scripture. It is true, that Moses may not have been a philosopher, though the man "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" may have known more than many a philosopher of later days. It is equally true, that the object of the Book of Genesis was not to give a treatise on geology. But Moses was a historian – it is the express office of a historian to state *facts*; and if Moses stated the "heavens and the earth, and all that therein is," to have been created and furnished in "six days," we must either receive the statement as true, or give up the historian as a fabricator. But if we believe, in compliance with the Divine word, that "all Scripture is by inspiration of God," by what subterfuge can we escape the conclusion, that the narrative of Genesis is divine?

⁷ *The Physical Atlas: A series of Maps and Notes on the Geographical Distribution of Natural Phenomena.* By Alexander Keith Johnston, Geographer in Ordinary to Her Majesty, &c. Folio.

Or if, in the childish scepticism of the German school, we require a more positive testimony, what can be more positive than the declaration of the commandment of the Sabbath, "that in six days God made heaven and earth;" founding also upon this declaration the Sabbath – an institution meant for every age, and for the veneration and sanctification of every race of mankind? If such a declaration can be false, what can be true? If ever words were plain, those are the words of plainness. The law of Sinai was delivered with all the solemnities of a law forming the foundation of every future law of earth. It would have been as majestic, and as miraculous, to have fixed the creation at a million of years before the being of Adam. But we can discover no possible reason for the history, but that it was the truth. That truth is divine.

If the geologist shall persist in repeating, that the phenomena are incompatible with the history, our reply is, "Your science is still in its infancy – a science of a day, feebly beginning to collect facts, and still so weak as to enjoy the indulgence of extravagant conclusions. There have been a thousand theories of creation – each popular, arrogant, and self-satisfied, in its own time; each swept away by another equally popular, arrogant, and self-satisfied, and all equally deserving of rejection by posterity. You must acquire *all* the facts, before you *can* be qualified to theorise. The last and most consummate work of genius, and of centuries, is a true theory."

But, without dwelling further on this high subject, we must observe, that there is one inevitable fact, for which the modern geologist makes no provision whatever; and that fact is, that the beginning of things on the globe *must* have been totally different from the processes going on before our eyes. For instance, Adam must have been created in the full possession of manhood; for, if he had been formed an infant, he must have perished through mere helplessness. When God looked on this world, and pronounced all to be "very good" – which implies the completion of his purpose, and the perfection of his work – is it possible to conceive, that he looked only on the germs of production, on plains covered with eggs, or seas filled with spawn, or forests still buried in the capsules of seeds; on a creation utterly shapeless, lifeless, and silent, instead of the myriads of delighted existence, all enjoying the first sense of being?

But, if the first formation of the world of life *must* have been the act of a vast principle, to which we have no resemblance in the subsequent increase and continuance of being, what ground have we for arguing, that the common processes of material existence in our day must have been the same in the origin of things? On the whole, we regard the declaration – "In six days God made the heavens, and the earth, the sea, and all that in them is," as an *insuperable bar* to all the modern fantasies of the geologist, as a direct rebuke to his profaneness, and as a solemn judgment against his presumption.

The whole surface of the globe gives striking evidence of design, and of design contemplating the service of man. But one of the most remarkable evidences of that design is given in the *Mountain Map* of the globe. Variety of temperature, the supply of water, and the change of level, are essential to variety of production, to fertility of soil, and to the vigour and health of the human frame – the expedient to meet them all is provided in the mountain districts of the great continents. A mountain chain girdles the whole of the mass of land from the Atlantic to the Sea of Kamchatka. Minor chains, some parallel, some branching from the great northern chain, and some branches of those branches, intersect every region of the globe. The whole bears a remarkable resemblance to the position of the spine in the human frame, with its collateral muscular and venous connexion with the body. An outline view of the mountains of our hemisphere would be strikingly like a sketch of the human anatomy. The general formation of the countries north and south of those chains is early the same – vast plains, extending to the sea, or traversed and closed in by a bordering chain. The great Tartarian desert is a plain extending, under various names, five thousand miles from west to east.

Spain is a country of mountains, or rather a vast table-land, intersected by six ranges of lofty, rugged, and barren hills. Northern Africa is a basin of plains, surrounded by vast ridges. Morocco, Algiers, and Tunis, find in those hills at once their frontiers and their fertility. The Pyrenees form a chain of nearly three hundred miles long, and upwards of fifty broad – a province of

mountains, intersected by valleys of romantic beauty and exuberant fertility. But the Alps, from their position between the two most brilliant nations of the Continent – France and Italy – and from the extraordinary series of memorable events of which they have been the theatre, since the earliest periods of European history, are the most celebrated range of mountains in the world. The higher Alps, beginning at the Gulf of Genoa, and extending north and east through the Grisons and the Tyrol, stretch between four and five hundred miles. They then divide into two branches, one of which reaches even to the Euxine. The breadth of the great range is, on an average, a hundred and fifty miles.

The Apennines, another memorable chain, also beginning at the Gulf of Genoa, strike direct through the heart of Italy, and end in Calabria – a line of eight hundred miles. Dalmatia and Albania are *knots* of hills; Pindus, and the mountains of Northern Greece, are bold offsets from the Eastern Alps.

Among those wonderful arrangements, the table-lands are perhaps the most wonderful. In the midst of countries where everything seemed to tend to the mountainous form, we find vast plains raised almost to a mountainous height, yet retaining their level. This form peculiarly occurs in latitudes of high temperature. The centre of Spain is a table-land of more than ninety-two thousand square miles – one half of the area of Spain.

The country between the two ranges of the Atlas is a table-land, exhibiting the richest products, and possessing the finest climate, of Northern Africa. Equatorial Africa is one immense table-land, of which, however, we can only conjecture the advantages. Whether from the difficulty of approach, the distance, or the diversion of the current of adventure to other quarters of the world, this chief portion of the African continent continues almost unknown to Europeans. The central region is a blank in our maps, but occasional tales reach us of the plenty, the pomp, and even of the civilisation and industry of the table-land. The centre of India is a table-land, possessing, in that region of fire and fever, a bracing air, and a productive, though rugged soil.

The table-lands of Asia partake of the characteristic magnitude which belongs to that mighty quarter of the globe. That of Persia has an area of more than a million and a half of square miles. That of Tibet has an area of six times the extent, with a still greater elevation above the level of the sea – its general altitude being about the height of Mont Blanc, and, in some instances, two thousand feet higher. The mean altitude of the Persian plateau is not above four thousand feet.

We have adverted to those formations of vast elevated plains in the midst of countries necessarily exposed to extreme heat, as one of the remarkable instances of providential contrivance, if we must use that familiar word in such mighty instances of design, for the comfort of animated being. We thus find, in the latitudes exposed to the fiercest heat of the sun, a provision for a temperature consistent with the health, activity, and industry of man. Persia, which, if on the level of the sea, would be a furnace, is thus reduced to comparative coolness; Tibet, which would be a boundless plain of fiery sand, exhibits that sternness of climate which makes the northern Asiatic bold, healthy, and hardy.

If the Tartar ranger over those lofty plains is not a model of European virtue, he at least has not sunk to the Asiatic slave; he is bold, active, and has been, and may be again, an universal conqueror. The same qualities have always distinguished the man of the table-land, wherever he has found a leader. The soldiery of Mysore no sooner appeared in the field, than they swept all Hindostan before them; the Persians, scarcely two centuries since, ravaged the sovereignty of the Mogul; and the tribes of the Atlas, even in our own day, made a more daring defence of their country, than all the disciplined forces of the Continent against Napoleon.

The two most remarkable ranges of Asia are, the Caucasus, extending seven hundred miles from west to east, with branches shooting north and south; and the Himalaya, a mountain chain of nearly three thousand miles in length, uniting with the Hindoo Coosh and the mountains of Assam. This range is probably the loftiest on the globe, averaging eighteen thousand feet – several of the summits

rising above twenty-five thousand. Many of the *passes* are above the summit of Mont Blanc, and the whole constitutes a scene of indescribable grandeur, a throne of the solitary majesty of Nature.

But, another essential use of the mountain chains is their supply of water – the fluid most necessary to the existence of the animal and vegetable world, – and this is done by an expedient the most simple, but the most admirable. If the surcharge of the clouds, dashing against the mountain pinnacles, were to be poured down at once, it must descend with the rapidity of a torrent, and deluge the plains. But, those surcharges first take a form by which their deposit is gradual and safe, and then assume a second form, by which their transmission to the plains is gradual and unintermitting. They descend on the summits in snow, and are retained on the sides in ice. The snow feeds the glacier; the glacier feeds the river. It is calculated that, without reckoning the glaciers of the Grisons, there are fifteen hundred square miles of glacier in the Alps alone, from a hundred to six hundred feet deep. The glacier is constantly melting, from the mere temperature of the earth; but, as if this process were too slow for its use, it is constantly moving downwards, at a certain number of feet a-year, and thus bringing the great body of ice more within the limit of liquefaction. All the chief rivers of Europe and Asia have their rise in the deposits of the mountain glaciers.

In addition to all these important uses, the mountains assist in forming the character of man. The mountaineer is generally free from the vices of the plain. He is hardy and adventurous, yet attached to home; bold, and yet simple; independent, and yet unambitious of the wealth or the distinctions of mankind. Whether shepherd or hunter, he generally dies as he lived; and, though daring in defence of his hills, he has seldom strayed beyond them for the disturbance of mankind. The Swiss may form an exception; but their hiring warfare is not ambition, but trade. Their nation is pacific, while the individuals let themselves out to kill, or be killed. The trade is infamous and irreligious, offensive to human feeling, and contrary to human duty; but it has no more reference to the habits of the mountaineer than the emigration to California has to the habits of the clown of Massachusetts; the stimulant only is the same – the love of gold.

We have adverted to the mountain system of the globe, from its giving a remarkable illustration of the Divine expediency. We judge of power by the magnitude of its effects, and of wisdom by the simplicity of its means. In this instance the whole of the results seem to arise from the single and simple act of raising portions of the earth's surface above the general level. Yet from this one act, what a multitude of the most important conditions follow! – variety of climate, variety of production, the temperature of Europe introduced into the tropics, health to man and the inferior animals, the irrigation of the globe, the defence of nations, and the actual enlargement of the habitable spaces of the globe, by the elevated surface of the hills – not to mention the beauty and sublimity of the landscape, which depend wholly on the colours, the forms, and the diversity of mountains.

An interesting note on this subject says, "It appears probable, that a legitimate way is now opening towards the solution of the ultimate problem of the upheaving force. The agreement of deductions from the scientific hypothesis goes far to establish, that all dislocations of strata, and the accompanying mountain chains, have resulted from the upheaval of large portions of the earth's surface by a diffused and equable energy – an energy concentrated in one point or district, only when it has produced craters of elevation. Accepting instruction from the surface of the moon, we have certain lights also respecting the history of the development of this force; for, while its concentrated action, with its varied and remarkable craters, has evolved nearly all the mountain forms in that luminary, even as we find it among the almost obliterated ancient forms of the earth, its operation in raising extensive zones, now so frequently and characteristically exhibited in our own planet, has yet scarcely appeared in the moon. The time will doubtless come, when, viewing it as a great cosmical agency, all such specialities belonging to this yet hidden power shall receive their solution."

The Ocean. – The next most important portion of the globe to man is that mighty reservoir of water which surrounds the land, penetrates into every large portion of it, supplies the moisture

without which all life must rapidly perish, and forms the great means of intercourse, without which one-half of the globe would be ignorant of the existence of the other.

In the ocean, we have the complete contrast to the land, the whole giving an extraordinary evidence of that extreme diversity of means, which the Creator wills to exercise for every purpose of his creation. The land is all variety, the ocean is a plain of millions of square miles. The land never moves, the ocean is in perpetual movement. Below the surface of the land, all animal life dies; the ocean is inhabited through a great portion of its depth, and perhaps through its whole depth. The temperature of the land is as varying as its surface; the temperature of the ocean is confined within a few degrees. The temperature of the earth appears to increase with the depth to which man can descend; the temperature of the ocean, at a certain depth, seems always the same.

Even in that relation to beauty and grandeur, which evidently forms a part of the providential design, the sources of enjoyment to the human eye, in the land and the ocean, are strikingly different. On land, the sublime and the beautiful depend on variety of form – the mountain shooting to the skies, the valley deepening beneath the eye, the rush of the cataract, the sharp and lofty precipice, the broad majesty of the river, the rich and coloured culture of the distant landscape. In the ocean, the sublime arises from total uniformity. An unbroken surface, stretching round, as far as the eye can gaze, forms the grandeur; the clouds and colours of the sky, reflected on its surface, form the beauty. Even when the phenomena are most similar, the effect is different: the sunset of land and sea are equally magnificent; but the sunset on land is lovelier, from its inlaying of gold and purple light on the diversities of hill and valley, forest and field: at sea, it is merely one gorgeous blaze – splendour on cloud above and wave below. But moonlight at sea is lovelier than on land. Beautiful as it is, even on the imperfect outlines of trees and hills, a large portion of the lustre is broken and lost by the obstacles and varieties of the landscape. But at sea there is no obstruction; its lustre falls on a mighty mirror; all around is light, all above is majesty: the absence of all the sights and sounds of life deepens the sense of calm admiration, and the impression almost amounts to a feeling of the holy.

The ocean covers three-fourths of the globe, yet even this enormous extent has not been sufficient for the providential object of human intercourse. The Divine expedient was the formation of inland seas. Nothing in the distribution of land and sea is more remarkable, than the superior magnitude of the world of waters to the world of land, in a globe whose chief purpose was evidently the support of man. The Pacific alone is larger than all the land. From the west coast of America, to the eastern coast of Africa, spreads one sheet of water – a traverse of sixteen thousand miles. The valley of the Atlantic has a breadth of five thousand miles, while its length reaches from pole to pole – its surface is an area of more than twenty millions of square miles.

Yet, it is perfectly possible that this proportion was once of a different order. As we know nothing of the antediluvian world but by the Mosaic history, and as that history has not revealed the original boundaries of the land and sea, no positive conclusion can be obtained. Yet, from the deposits of marine products in the existing soil, it has been conclusively conjectured, that the land has been once the bed of the ocean, while the present bed of the ocean has been the land. The almost total absence of the human skeleton among fossils, and some old and dim traditions of a continent submerged, where the waters of the Atlantic now roll, may add to the conjecture. The globe *then* would have afforded room for a population threefold that which it is now destined to contain. If it is now capable of supporting sixteen times its present number, as has been calculated, it would then have been equal to the sustenance of little less than fifty thousand millions. Yet, what would be even that space to the magnitude of Jupiter; or that number to the beings of flesh and blood, however differing from man, which may at this moment, in that most magnificent planet, be enjoying the bounty of Providence, and replenishing a circumference of two hundred and forty thousand miles!

Uniform as the ocean is, it is a vast theatre of contrivances. To prevent the impurity which must arise from the decay of the millions of fish, and perhaps of quadruped and reptile life, constantly dying in its depths, – it is saline. To prevent the stagnation of its waters, which would reinforce the

corruption, it is constantly impelled by currents, by the trade-wind, and by the universal tide. At the equator the tide moves with a rapidity which would shatter the continents; but it is met by shallows, by ridges of rock, and by islands; a vast system of natural breakwaters which modify its force, and reduce it to an impulse compatible with safety.

The water of the sea retains its fluidity down to four degrees below the freezing point of fresh water; the object is, perhaps, the preservation of the millions of animated beings contained in the waters; but as, in the tropic latitudes, its exposure to the sun might engender disease, or create tempests, vast refrigeratories are provided at both the poles, which are constantly sending down huge masses of ice to cool the ocean. Some of those floating masses are from ten to twelve miles long, and a hundred feet high above the water, with probably three hundred feet below. They have been met with two thousand miles on their way to the equator, and have sensibly cooled the sea for fifty miles round, until they wholly dissolved. Of course, on subjects of this order, human observation can do little more than note the principal effects – the rest can be only probable conjecture. It may be, that human sagacity has never ascertained the hundredth part of the purposes of any one of the great agents of nature. Still, it is the business of science to inquire, as it is the dictate of experience to acknowledge, that every addition to discovery gives only additional proof of the sleepless vigilance, boundless resources, and practical benevolence of the great Ruler of all.

The variety of uses derived from a single principle is a constant, and a most admirable, characteristic of nature. The primary purpose of the ocean is probably, to supply the land with the moisture necessary to production. But, the collateral effects of the mighty reservoir are felt in results of the first importance, yet of a wholly distinct order. The ocean refreshes the atmosphere, to a certain degree renews its motion, and obviously exerts a powerful agency in preventing alike excessive heat and excessive cold. The tides, which prevent its stagnation – a stagnation which would cover the earth with pestilence – also largely assist navigation in the estuaries, in the lower parts of the great rivers, and in all approaches to the shore. The currents, a portion of this great agency, (still perhaps to give us new sources of wonder,) fulfil at least the triple office of agitating the mass of ocean, of speeding navigation, and of equalising or softening the temperature of the shores along which they pass, in all directions. They seem equivalent to the system of high-roads and cross roads in a great country. It had been said of rivers, that "they are roads which travel;" but their difficulty is, that they travel only one way. The currents of the ocean obviate the difficulty, by travelling all ways. And, perhaps, we may look forward to a time when, by the command of wind and wave given by the steamboat, and by our increased knowledge of "ocean topography," if we may use the phrase; a ship may make its way across the ocean without ever being out of a current; a result which would be obviously a most important accession, if not to the speed, at least to the security of navigation.

Those ocean traversers evidently belong to a *system*. Some are permanent, some are periodical, and some are casual. The permanent arise chiefly from the effect of the flow from the poles to the equator. Descending from the poles in the first instance, they pour north and south. They gradually feel the earth's rotation; but on their arrival at the tropics, being still inferior in velocity to the equatorial sea, they seem to roll backwards; in other words, they form a current from east to west. This current is farther impelled by the trade-winds.

The progress of this great perpetual current includes almost every part of the ocean. In going westward, it necessarily rushes against the coast of America, where it divides into two vast branches, one running south with great force, and the other north-west. A succession of currents, all connected, obviously form a "moving power" to prevent the stagnation of the ocean, and, by their branches, visit every shore of the globe.

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