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# ETHICAL VALUES IN HISTORY.

BY

HENRY CHARLES LEA,  
PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION.

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## ETHICAL VALUES IN HISTORY.<sup>a</sup>

By HENRY CHARLES LEA.

Circumstances deprive me of the honor of presiding over this meeting of the American Historical Association to which your kindly appreciation has called me, but at least I can fulfil the pleasant duty of addressing to you a few words on a topic which is of interest to all of us, whether students or writers of history. In this I do not pretend to instruct those whose opinions are, to say the least, fully as mature and worthy of consideration as my own, but merely to contribute to a discussion which will probably continue as long as men shall strive to bring the annals of the past to the knowledge of the present.

One whose loss we all deplore and whose memory we honor as perhaps the most learned and thoughtful scholar in the English-speaking world—the late Lord Acton—in his well-known Cambridge lecture, has formally placed on record his opinion on ethical values in history when saying, “I exhort you never to debase the moral currency or to lower the standard of rectitude, but to try others by the final maxim that governs your own lives and to suffer no man and no cause to escape the undying penalty which history has the power to inflict on wrong. The plea in extenuation of guilt and mitigation of punishment is perpetual. At every step we are met by arguments which go to confuse, to palliate, to confound right and wrong, and to reduce the just man to the level of the reprobate. The men who plot to baffle and resist us are, first of all, those who made history what it has become. They set up the principle that only a foolish Conservative judges the present time with the ideas of the past; that only a foolish Liberal judges the past with the ideas of the present.”

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<sup>a</sup>The President's address to the American Historical Association, December 29, 1903

The argument with which Lord Acton justifies this exhortation to his students presupposes a fixed and unalterable standard of morality, together with the comfortable assurance that we have attained to that absolute knowledge of right and wrong which enables us to pass final judgment on the men of the past, secure that we make no mistake when we measure them by our own moral yardstick. Every foregone age has similarly flattered itself, and presumably every succeeding one will continue to cherish the same illusion.

I must confess that to me all this seems to be based on false premises and to lead to unfortunate conclusions as to the objects and purposes of history, however much it may serve to give point and piquancy to a narrative, to stimulate the interest of the casual reader by heightening lights and deepening shadows, and to subserve the purpose of propagating the opinions of the writer.

As regards the inferred premiss that there is an absolute and invariable moral code by which the men of all ages and of all degrees of civilization are to be tried and convicted or acquitted, a very slender acquaintance with the history of ethics would appear sufficient to establish its fallacy. It would be overbold to suggest that morals are purely conventional and arbitrary, yet anthropological research has shown that there is scarce a sin condemned in the Decalogue which has not been or may not now be regarded rather as a virtue, or at least as an allowable practice, at some time or place among a portion of mankind, and no one would be so hardy as to judge with the severity of the Hebrew lawgiver those who merely follow the habits and customs in which they have been trained. We regard the gallows as the rightful portion of him who slays his fellow-creature for gain, yet who among you would inflict the death penalty on the head-hunter of Borneo? You would condemn the superstition which leads him to glory in the deed, but your conscience would acquit him of personal guilt, for he but follows the tradition of his race, and he may in all other human relations lead an exemplary life. The actor in a Corsican vendetta is not to be judged as a common murderer, although his life may rightly pay to society the forfeit arising from his being the survival of an older and ruder civilization.

Race, civilization, environment, all influence the moral perceptions, which vary from age to age, while the standards of right and wrong are modified and adapted to what at the moment are regarded as the objects most beneficial to the individual or to the social organization. At one time these may concern the purity or advancement of religion; at another, self-preservation or the welfare of the clan or the nation; at another, personal well-being and the development of industry as a means to that end. Whatever stands foremost in any given period will be apt to receive special recognition from both the ethical teacher and the lawgiver. It is to legislation that we must look if we desire to understand the modes of thought and the moral standards of past ages; and a comparison of these with those now current will show how unstable and fluctuating are ethical conceptions. We are unable to conceive of vicarious punishment as justifiable, yet Hammurabi in some cases slays the innocent son and lets the guilty father go scathless. To us the idea of levirate marriage is abhorrent, but it has been regarded as legally a duty by races so far removed from each other in origin and distance as the Hebrew and the Hindu. Among the Hebrews the severest of all penalties was lapidation, which was reserved for the most atrocious crimes. Of these, omitting sexual aberrations, which we need not consider here, Thonissen enumerates eight—idol worship, consecration of children to Moloch, magic and divination, blasphemy, Sabbath breaking, cursing a parent, and disobedience to parents. Examine our modern codes, in which these have either disappeared or are treated as comparatively trivial offenses, and you will be constrained to admit that crime is largely conventional, dependent not on an eternal and inprescriptible moral law, but on the environment in which a portion of mankind happens at the time to be placed. To the Hebrew priest the preservation of his religion was the one essential thing, and no penalty was too severe for aught that threatened its supremacy.

So it was in the middle ages, when the priest erected a similar standard of morals, claimed for it the sanction of divine law, and compelled its insertion in statute law. No character in medieval history stands forth with greater luster than the good St. Louis of France, yet, if his faithful biographer de

Joinville is to be believed, he held that the only argument which a layman should use with a heretic was to thrust a sword into him; and we know by authentic documents that he fostered the nascent Inquisition and had no scruple in enriching his treasury with the confiscations resulting from the burning of heretics. We of to-day are not lacking in religious convictions, though we are learning the lesson of toleration; lapidation and the stake for opinion's sake are abhorrent to us, but who among us would feel justified in applying Lord Acton's formula and condemning the Hebrew or St. Louis when we feel that they acted on profound conviction? No English jurist has left a fairer record than Chief Justice Hale, yet he calmly sent to the gallows poor old women for witchcraft, such being the law of the land to which he gave his hearty concurrence. Would you condemn him as you would a modern judge? Voltaire has sufficiently shown the use that may be made of thus trying one age by the standards of another in his mocking sketch of David, the man after God's own heart.

It may perhaps be urged that in thus asserting the temporary and variable character of morals we are destroying the foundations of morality in general and the eternal distinction between right and wrong. This is begging the question, for it presupposes that there is a universal and inflexible standard of morals. Such there may be, like the so-called law of nature of the scholastic theologians, but the history of mankind fails to reveal it, and the truest test of any period is the standard which it made or accepted, for this shows, better than aught else, whether it was a period of progress or one of retrogression. Speculations enough there have been among philosophers, ancient and modern, as to the origin of the conception of what we call sin and righteousness, which would lead us too far from our subject to discuss here. Suffice it to say that what we find current around us is merely the result of the finite wisdom of our ancestors adapting themselves to the exigencies of their surroundings. We have fortunately inherited the noble ideals of the school of Hillel, broadened and deepened and rendered applicable to all mankind by the teachings of Christ. We have accepted them in theory for well-nigh two thousand years, yet only within a century or two has there been any serious effort to reduce them to practice, and



that effort thus far has been more significant in its failures than in its successes. There is ample work before us in laboring for their embodiment in our daily lives, and we can well afford to cast the mantle of charity over those who, in fact, have been only one or two steps behind us in the application of the Sermon on the Mount.

Meanwhile, as connected with our subject, we may reflect that there is some truth in the distinction drawn by the casuists between material and formal sin—the sin which a man commits in ignorance being venial, while that which he does knowingly is mortal. This doctrine is not without its dangers, and Pascal has exposed the unmoral results to which it may lead in skillful hands, but for our purpose it may be borne in mind when we feel called upon to pass judgment on historical characters. It makes the human conscience the standard of conduct. If a man does wrong, conscientiously believing it to be right, he is justified before God; if he does right believing it to be wrong, he is condemned. Roughly speaking, in a region so full of pitfalls for unwary feet, the theory of invincible ignorance, though liable to abuse, is not to be overlooked.

Thus far I have sought briefly to show that Lord Acton's dictum is defective in principle. As regards its practical application, I presume that you will agree with me that history is not to be written as a Sunday-school tale for children of larger growth. It is, or should be, a serious attempt to ascertain the severest truth as to the past and to set it forth without fear or favor. It may and it generally will, convey a moral, but that moral should educe itself from the facts. Characters historically prominent are usually so because they are men of their time, the representatives of its beliefs and aspirations; and they should be judged accordingly. If those beliefs and aspirations lead to evil the historian should seek to trace out their origin and development, and he can, if he so chooses, point out their results; but he should not hold responsible the men who obeyed their consciences, even if this led them into what we conceive to be wrongdoing. It is otherwise with those who have sinned against the light vouchsafed to them, for to condemn them is simply to judge them by the standards of their time.

In other words, this is merely to apply the truism that the

historian should so familiarize himself with the period under treatment that, for the time, he is living in it, feeling with the men whose actions he describes, and viewing events from their standpoint. Thus alone can he give us an accurate picture of the past, making us realize its emotions and understand the evolution of its successive stages. This is the true philosophy of history, and from this the reader can gather for himself the lessons which it teaches.

To depart from this and to inject modern ethical theories into the judgment of men and things of bygone times is to introduce subjectivity into what should be purely objective. We all of us have our convictions—perchance our prejudices—and nothing for the historian is more vital than to be on his guard against their affecting his judgment and coloring his narrative. Above all things he should cultivate the detachment which enables him soberly and impartially to search for and to set forth the truth. He may often feel righteous indignation—or what he conceives to be righteous—but he should strenuously repress it as a luxury to be left to his reader. Moreover, he should beware of theories; for when a theory once takes possession of a writer it renders him an unsafe guide and inspires reasonable distrust. The historian who becomes an advocate or a prosecutor instead of a judge forfeits his title to confidence, and, if he aspires to be a judge, he should not try a case by a code unknown to the defendant.

Perhaps this somewhat dry disquisition can be rendered more interesting by a concrete example; and for this I know of none fitter than Philip II of Spain, whose character has exercised so many brilliant pens. Our eloquent Motley, who represents him as a monster with scarce a redeeming trait, says that "To judge him, or any man in his position, simply from his own point of view, is weak and illogical. History judges the man from its point of view. It condemns or applauds the point of view itself. The point of view of a malefactor is not to excuse robbery and murder. Nor is the spirit of the age to be pleaded in favor of the evil doer at a time when mortals were divided into almost equal troops" (*History of the Netherlands*, I, 6). This is the language of a partisan and not of an historian; and the writer is blind to the inference to be drawn from another remark, "That

monarch considered himself born to suppress heresy and he had certainly been carrying out the work during his whole lifetime" (Ibid., I, 257).

Now, Philip II, as an abstract object of contemplation, is in no sense an attractive figure. In all that awful sixteenth century there was, perhaps, no one who wrought, directly or indirectly, so much of human misery, no one who was more ready to supplement open force with secret guile, no one who hesitated less to resort to corruption or, if needs be, to murder. To the historian who is content with the surface of things, it is easy to condemn him offhand and to adduce ample evidence in support of the verdict—the execution of Montigny, the assassination of William the Silent and of Escobedo, the terrors of the Tribunal of Blood, the horrors of the rebellion of Granada, the stimulation of the wars of the League, the systematic bribery by which he bought the secrets of every court in Europe, to say nothing of the satisfaction which he derived from the spectacle of his own subjects in an auto de fe. All this is true, and to the superficial observer it may seem idle to say a word in extenuation of so black a catalogue of misdeeds. Yet the student in earnest quest of truth may reasonably pause and ask himself whether Philip is to be held morally responsible for all these crimes, whether he was a mere bloodthirsty tyrant who rejoiced in the infliction of suffering on his fellow-creatures and revelled, like the Emperor Claudius, in witnessing human agony; or whether he was the misguided agent of a false standard of duty, and conscientiously believed himself to be rendering the highest service to God and to man. If the latter be the case, we must acquit Philip of conscious guilt, and reserve our censure for the spirit of the age which misled him. If Elijah is praised for slaying in one night four hundred and fifty priests of Baal, how is Philip to be condemned for merely utilizing larger opportunities in the same spirit? Does not, in truth, the difference lie only in the question, Whose ox is gored? Even in the assassinations which he ordered he had the assurance of his confessor, Fray Diego de Chaves, that a prince was fully authorized to take the lives of his subjects without process of law.

When, in fact, we analyze his reign, we find that the enforcement of religious unity was the primary motive of his

public career, and that it was the object of almost all the acts for which we are asked to condemn him. For three hundred years it had been the uncontested rule in both church and state that the obstinate dissident, or heretic, was to be put to death by fire. Even men of the largest Christian charity accepted this as one of the eternal verities, and he who ventured to question it became himself a heretic who must either recant or share the same fate. Heresy was not only a sin, subject to spiritual animadversion, but a crime visited with capital punishment by all the secular codes of Europe. Pity were better invoked for the murderer or the highwayman than for the heretic; for the heretic was the slayer of souls, while the ordinary criminal affected only the body or the purse. With the outbreak of the Reformation, the threatened disruption of the unity of faith inflamed to the highest pitch the zeal for its preservation, though we need not pause to inquire how much the lust of worldly power and wealth disguised itself under the striving for the salvation of souls. When dynasties depended on dogmas, religion became of necessity the most absorbing of public questions, and the self-deception was easy which clothed secular ambitions in spiritual garments. In the passions of the tremendous struggle each side was equally sure that it alone possessed the true faith, which was to be vindicated with fire and sword. If the canon law required sovereigns to put heretics to death, Luther in 1528 subscribed to a declaration of the Wittenberg theologians prescribing the same fate for those whom they classed as such. If Paul IV in 1555 decreed that all who denied the Trinity should be pitilessly burned, even though they recanted and professed conversion, he but followed the example which Calvin had set, two years before, in the case of Miguel Servet. If France had her feast of St. Bartholomew, Germany had led the way in the slaughter of the Anabaptists. If Spain had her inquisition, England in 1550, under the reforming Edward VI. created a similar organization, with Crammer at its head, and Ridley, Miles Coverdale, and other eminent Protestants as inquisitors, to seek out, try, and punish dissidents, and to abandon to the secular arm those who proved to be obstinate. Motley fell into grievous error when he asserted that in the sixteenth century "mortals were divided into almost equal troops" concerning the "spirit of the age." Those whom

he represents as struggling for freedom of conscience only wanted freedom to coerce the consciences of others, as was shown in 1566 by the Fury of Antwerp, and in 1618 when the Synod of Dort sat in judgment on the Remonstrants. How the Calvinists shared the "spirit of the age" is well expressed in John Knox's exulting declaration that in 1561, before the arrival in Scotland of Queen Mary, "the Papists were so confounded that none within the Realme durst avow the hearing or saying of Masse then the thieves of Tiddisdale durst avow their stouth or stealing in the presence of any upright judge." The Massachusetts law of October 19, 1658, under which Quakers were put to death on Boston Common, suffices in itself to show that this conception of public duty was not confined to one race or to one confession of faith.

This was the inevitable result of the deplorable doctrine of exclusive salvation, which rendered the extinction of heresy a duty to God and man. To its abandonment by Protestantism is attributable the gradual spread of toleration. To its retention by the Latin Church is ascribable the Ordonnance of May 14, 1724, under which, so late as 1762, Rochette, a pastor of the desert, was executed, merely for performing the rites of his religion. It is, moreover, the inspiration of the encyclic of 1864 in which the kind-hearted Pius IX ordered every Catholic to condemn the error that a man is free to follow the religion which his reason dictates.

The embers which thus are not yet extinct were burning fiercely in the sixteenth century, and into its superheated fanaticism Philip II was born in 1527. The very air which he breathed in childhood and youth was surcharged with all the elements that made persecution a supreme duty and toleration a denial of God. His tutor was a narrow-minded bigot, Martinez Siliceo, rewarded in 1541 with the see of Murcia, and in 1546 with the primatial dignity of Toledo, where he distinguished himself by forcibly introducing the rule that no cathedral preferment should ever be conferred on one who had the slightest trace of Jewish or Moorish blood. Under such guidance, in such environment, and with the example before him of his father as the champion of Catholicism, it was impossible for a youth of Philip's sickly frame, limitations of thought, sluggishness of intellect, habitual suspicion, and obstinate tenacity of purpose to be other than what he was.

When he succeeded to the great Spanish monarchy and found himself the most powerful sovereign in the civilized world, with authority stretching from the North Sea to the Mediterranean and from the farthest Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, he could scarce fail to regard himself as the instrument selected by Providence to defend the true religion and to overcome the powers of evil which had risen to supplant the Kingdom of God. He could not but feel that this enormous power had been intrusted to him for a purpose, and that it carried with it a correlative obligation to employ it for that purpose. To borrow the happy phrase of Major Hume, he felt himself to be the junior partner of God, and in carrying out with unswerving resolution the plans of God he was answerable to no human judgment.

If, in the performance of this supreme duty, he found or deemed it necessary to employ craft and cruelty, treachery and corruption, he was but combating the adversaries of God with their own weapons—weapons, indeed, which the statecraft of the age had rendered familiar to all, and which were sanctified by the cause to which they were devoted. The maxims which Machiavelli had formulated with such cynical clearness were utilized by others to gratify the lust of vulgar ambition; should he be debarred from using them when interests were at stake superior to all worldly possessions? Nor, indeed, is the present age entitled to cast the first stone at the sixteenth century, when we consider the duplicity and the contempt for human rights which have continued to mark the career of statesmen from that time to this, save perhaps in the matter of assassination, which has been abandoned to anarchy.

Apart from religious convictions, moreover, Philip as a statesman might well feel it to be his supreme allotted task to preserve in his own dominions the unity of faith which at the time was, reasonably enough, regarded as the absolute condition precedent of internal peace. Religious differences were not mere academic questions to be debated in the schools with more or less acrimony. We need not pause to ask against whom the responsibility for this is to be charged, and we may be content to accept the fact that in the passionate zeal of the time there was nothing which so deeply stirred popular feeling or lent more bitterness to civil broils than the theological

issues which to-day arouse an interest comparatively so faint. Philip might well look upon the internal wars of Germany and France as a warning to keep his own territories free from the pestilent innovators, whose claim to exercise freedom of conscience included the right of resistance to any authority that denied the claim. To him they were perturbators of the public peace, potential rebels who at all and every cost must be prevented from gaining a foothold if the prosperity of the state and the divine right of kings were to be maintained. In the earlier years of his reign the growing disquiet of the Netherlands emphasized the importance of this precaution and, in the latter part, the fierce struggle which exhausted his resources demonstrated the necessity of strangling heresy in the cradle.

Human motives, as a rule, are complex; pride and ambition doubtless had their share in those which urged him on his course, especially when he nourished vain hopes of establishing a daughter on the throne of France; but religious conviction and the welfare, temporal and eternal, as it was then regarded, of his subjects were ample to impel him along the course which he had inherited with his crown and for which he had been carefully trained. Philip at least was no hypocrite, using religion merely as a pretext. The sincerity of his faith can not be called into question, and, if his favorite vice was licentiousness, the dissociation of religion and morals is too common an anomaly to excite special incredulity. The keen-witted Venetian envoys concur in admitting his piety, although their experiences at his court were not such as to propitiate their favor, and they were by no means blind to his defects. Perhaps the severest characterization of him is that of Gianfrancesco Morosini in 1581: "His temper is cruel, although he covers it with zeal for justice. He was never known to pardon a criminal, even his own son. He shows no affection for his children and no sign of regret at the death of his nearest kin. He is a great observer of religion, but is very vindictive. Yet he manifests no signs of it, and there is a proverb in Spain that between the king's smile and a knife there is little to choose."

A portion of this unflattering characterization is justified by Philip's treatment of his erstwhile favorite, Antonio Pérez,

who had abused his master's confidence and had misled him into ordering the murder of Escobedo; but in other respects the habitual Spanish self-control, the studied repression of all exhibition of feeling under an exterior of kindly courtesy, deceived the Venetian, for Philip was in reality a most affectionate father. No one can read his familiar letters to his daughters, girls of fourteen and fifteen, written during the cares of his conquest of Portugal in 1581 and 1582, without recognizing a most unexpected side of his character, while his allusions to their letters to him show that the family intercourse was delightfully intimate and unreserved. His solicitude as to their welfare is extreme; he relates whatever is passing around him that he thinks will amuse or interest them; there is no sermonizing, but only the unaffected expression of a love that is sure of reciprocation. When he commences a long letter, June 26, 1581, by saying that he had been unable to write on the previous Monday, and now, in order to prevent a similar omission, he begins before taking up the business that will probably occupy him until late, we recognize that he did not allow the cares of state to choke up the fountains of mutual affection. Even more unlooked for are the references to Madalena, an old serving-woman who scolds him and threatens to leave him when he does not please her. On one occasion she had promised to write to the girls but had not shown herself; perhaps wine was the cause of this, but if she knew of his suggesting such a thing she would make him smart for it. Altogether this revelation of the *vie intime* of Philip and his family gives us a more human conception of the gloomy monarch whom we are accustomed to picture to ourselves as ensconced in the Escorial, toiling through the midnight hours in scrawling notes on ever accumulating despatches and interminable consultas.

The unaffected tenderness of the relations between Philip and his daughters throws some light on the tragedy of Don Carlos, which has been used so effectually to blacken Philip's memory. Nothing but a sense of the most absolute necessity would have led him to deprive his son of the succession, which would have relieved him of the burden of royalty. Sickly and suffering, indolent by nature, and fond of country life, if he had had sons fit to govern, Sigismondo Cavalli tells us, in 1570, that he would have abandoned to them all affairs of state and have retired to the Escorial. Unfortunately,



Carlos, by his wayward excesses, had long forfeited the affection and confidence of his father when in 1568 he was confined. From his early years he had been an object of dread to all who looked forward to his future reign. At the age of 12 Federigo Badoero describes him as bright and quick, but fierce, passionate, and obstinate. When small animals, such as rabbits, were brought in from the chase he took delight in roasting them alive and watching their agonies. At a still earlier age, when he learned that the marriage treaty between his father and Mary of England provided that the Netherlands should descend to their issue, he declared that he would not submit to it, but would fight his future half-brother, and he wrote to Charles V, then in Brussels, and asked to have a suit of armor made for him. As he reached manhood the curse of insanity, which he inherited from his great-grandmother, Queen Juana la loca, developed into actions manifesting his dangerous unfitness for the throne. At the age of 22 he one day shut himself up in his stables for five hours, and when he came out he left twenty horses maimed with the most brutal cruelty. The slightest cause of displeasure provoked threats or attempts to poniard or to throw out of window, irrespective of the dignity of the offender. In one of his midnight sallies through the streets of Madrid a little water chanced to fall upon him, when he ordered the house from which it came to be burned and its occupants to be put to death, and his servants only evaded his commands by pretending that when they went there for the purpose they were prevented by finding that the holy sacrament was being carried in. When to these evidences of a disordered brain we add the unpardonable indiscretions manifested in the conduct of public business in which Philip was endeavoring to train him, we may imagine how the father might well shudder at the prospect of his vast monarchy, the bulwark of the Catholic faith, falling into such hands at a time when all constitutional barriers had been broken down and no check existed to curb the impulses of the sovereign. He might well fear also for his own life, for Carlos had avowed mortal hatred of him, and in a nature so violent and ungovernable that hatred might at any moment express itself in acts. Yet what to do with a successor to whom the estates of Castile had already sworn allegiance was a problem to tax to the utmost the wisdom of the King

and his advisers. Simply to declare him incapable of succession, to ask the Cortes to revoke their oaths, and to await the birth and maturity of some more promising heir would merely be to invite insubordination and civil war, with the prospect that Carlos, if left at liberty, would execute the design which was the immediate cause of his arrest—of flying from Spain and raising Italy or Flanders in open revolt. The only practicable solution seemed to be to treat him as Queen Juana had been treated—to place him in confinement, where in the course of six months despair led him to commit such excesses of alternate gluttony and abstinence that his fragile and enfeebled frame sank under them. The cold impassiveness with which Philip watched the extinction of a young life that had opened under such brilliant promise invites criticism, but what was passing under that exterior trained to repress all manifestations of emotion none may guess. Paternal affection, it is true, had been chilled by the strained relations which had long existed, but the complications in his plans caused by the catastrophe must have been the severest of trials, and he doubtless sought consolation in imagining himself to be repeating the sacrifice of Abraham. Prescott, it seems to me, shows a curious blindness to the situation when he asks the question, "Can those who reject the imputation of murder acquit that father of inexorable rigor toward his child in the measures which he employed or of the dreadful responsibility which attaches to the consequences of them?"

It has been no part of my purpose to attempt the rehabilitation of Philip. I have simply sought to represent him as an ordinary man fashioned by influences which one may hope will wholly pass away in the course of human progress, although the affaire Dreyfus and the massacre of Kitcheneff show how the fires of the persecuting spirit are still occasionally rekindled in their ashes. To judge of Philip in this manner is not to approve, tacitly or overtly, the influences which made him what he was—what, in fact, he could not help being. These influences we may condemn all the more heartily when we see that they made of a man, slow of intellect but obstinate in the performance of what he was taught to regard as his duty, the scourge of his fellow-creatures in place of being their benefactor. We can, moreover, enforce this lesson by the fact that this perverted sense of duty proved a curse not only to those on whom he trampled, but to his native land, which he

fondly imagined that he was guiding to the height of glory and prosperity. It had already been dangerously crippled by his father, whose striving for the universal monarchy was disguised by zeal for the faith. Philip's ardor in the extirpation of heresy not only wasted the millions which he drew from the mines of the New World, but exhausted Spain to a point that left for his successors a land of indescribable misery, of which the outward decadence but faintly reflected the internal wretchedness. Yet the principles which misled him survived him, and to the Spaniard of the seventeenth century Philip the Prudent remained the incarnate ideal of a Catholic prince.

It is not to be assumed that history loses, in the colorless treatment which I advocate, its claims as a teacher of the higher morality—if I may be allowed thus to designate some system of practical ethics superior to that in which we of to-day are grouping somewhat blindly. To depict a man like Philip as a monster of iniquity, delighting in human misery, may gratify prejudice and may lend superficial life and vigor to narrative, but it teaches in reality no lesson. To represent him truthfully as the inevitable product of a distorted ethical conception is to trace effects to causes and to point out the way to improvement. This is not only the scientific method applied to history, but it enobles the historian's labors by rendering them contributory to that progress which adds to the sum of human happiness and fits mankind for a higher standard of existence. The study of the past in this spirit may perhaps render us more impatient of the present, and yet more hopeful of the future.

As one of the last survivors of a past generation, whose career is rapidly nearing its end, in bidding you farewell I may perhaps be permitted to express the gratification with which, during nearly half a century, I have watched the development of historical work among us in the adoption of scientific methods. Year after year I have marked with growing pleasure the evidence of thorough and earnest research on the part of a constantly increasing circle of well-trained scholars who have no cause to shun comparison with those of the older hemisphere. In such hands the future of the American school of history is safe and we can look forward with assurance to the honored position which it will assume in the literature of the world.





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