

**LATENT IMPULSE IN
HISTORY AND
POLITICS, PP. 1-217**

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By

R. N. BRADLEY, B.A.

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W. N. B.

PREFACE.

IN reading over this work before sending it to press, I am affected by some small misgivings. I feel that if I wrote it over again I might write it somewhat differently, for I have not yet arrived at the age when ideas begin to permanently crystallise. Any faults of style and exaggerations of opinion I beg the reader to ascribe to immaturity; any errors in fact to the defect of circumstances, for the book was written in the heart of South Africa. In spite of all, however, I put forward my general theories of latent impulse with good heart, for every subsequent experience I have met with has tended to confirm them.

R. N. B.

Jan., 1911.

LATENT IMPULSE IN HISTORY AND POLITICS

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

A FITTING exordium to my undertaking should be a tribute to him who first directed my ideas upon it, and first taught me to take broad views of history, as of many other things—a tribute which can now, alas! only be paid to his memory. Before I heard him, history was, to me, but a dry catalogue from which one might, by monastic studiousness, load up one's mind with a fairly complete concatenation of facts, or, at best, an interesting tale, in which event followed upon event without any definite causation. The change which Dr. Emil Reich's lectures brought to pass in me was comparable to a similar one which occurred to a friend of mine, when certain administrative changes moved him from a Government office in London to an out-station. In the former he tells me he was sunk in an atmosphere of unreality, and although he could see that

everything was settled there—whatever the newspapers had to say—on the lines of common sense, or on the balance of probabilities, yet you could not get away from the fact that it was all pure abstraction, the letter without the reality. After the move he was plunged into a world of actuality, and the words became things and persons, solid matter, flesh and blood. It was very much the same with Dr. Reich's lectures, and yet not quite the same. I had always read J. R. Green, and surely if anyone can give flesh to the dry bones of history, it is he. But the influence of the new method was rather to give one a feeling of "throughth," or, even, without going so far as the fourth dimension, of thickness, where one had formerly only dealt with length and breadth. "Concentrate, gentlemen, concentrate," the Doctor would say, having, in characteristic fashion, set his class a problem to solve by discussion, in place of the orthodox lecture. That, I think, is what we learnt more than anything else—concentration; the hasty collection of all the relevant things we knew in history, literature, science, and bringing them to bear on the point at issue. And then, again, when the answer was long in coming, "Focûs, gentlemen, focûs!" It was as if his main idea was to wean us from the monastic methods instilled at the Universities, and to make us hammer out something for ourselves, our own handiwork; or to let the broad light of philo-

sophy dwell upon a spot until it germinated and blossomed. In "Mr. Isaacs" Mr. Marion Crawford draws a comparison between the Eastern and the Western methods of learning, the European toiling laboriously up each ladder of learning in turn, the Asiatic refining his mind by prayer and fasting until, as he sits on his mountain peak, he gradually perceives the little patches of known country below widen beneath his view, until by intuition the whole field has revealed itself to him in a continuous area. How this latter system would commend itself to the doctor, with his cosmopolitan ideas, his world-wide experience, his varied knowledge, and his rooted distrust of "authorities." Many of his views cannot be accepted; he may err too greatly on the side of originality; often one feels that he says things out of sheer perverseness; but it remains that he brings into being ideas which none of the older methods could have engendered, lays his finger on facts that had otherwise passed unnoticed, and shows that some forgotten event was the prime factor in an earth-shaking movement. "Nullum est jam dictum, quod non sit dictum prius," said the Latin poet, when he wished to tell us that there was nothing new under the sun; and the Doctor was always the first to admit that his startling theories were no new thing. But his merit was by "concentration," by "focussing," to show that that dry-as-dust sentence, glossed over in the old history

book was the ruling consideration, and should have been printed in capital letters. Some watchword may have hounded on a people to a great and successful revolution; but the watchword was not new by any means; no more than the discovery of the power of steam was new when Watt and Stephenson applied it. The important fact was that the time was ripe for the use of the discovery, and in the same way it was ripe for the watchword. But it is doubtful whether the time was quite ripe for some of the Reichian views. I am inclined to think he was a little too far ahead of us, for our immediate advantage.

Some of his more original ideas on a few of the great events in English and general history set me thinking, and when, later on, I took up in a rather dilettante fashion, the study of psychology—I suppose owing to the fact that this was the only subject upon which I could find any wealth of books in the up-country library in South Africa, where I happened to be placed—I began to see a connection between the ideas of latent impulse and collective psychology, which I have adumbrated in this book. Had I not gone further than the original ideas in trying to investigate them psychologically, and, moreover, had I not taken a wider field than the original examples afforded, I might lay myself open to a plea of unwarrantable plagiarism. Yet even if I were so placed, I might attempt to