

**LECTURES ON THE STUDY  
OF HISTORY,  
DELIVERED IN OXFORD,  
1859-61; PP. 1-189**

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LECTURES

ON THE

STUDY OF HISTORY,

DELIVERED

IN OXFORD, 1859-61.

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## An Inaugural Lecture, &c.

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NEW Statutes having just been made by the Crown, on the recommendation of the Council, for the purpose of adapting the Professorship I have the honour to hold to the present requirements of the University, this seems a fit occasion for saying a few words on the study of Modern History in Oxford, and the functions of this Chair in relation to that study. I made some remarks on the subject in commencing my first course with my class; but the new statutes were then only under consideration, and before venturing to address the University, I wished to become acquainted with the state of the Modern History school, and with the duties of my Chair.

This Chair was founded in the reign of George I., and its original object was to train students for the public service. The foundation was double, one Chair here and one at Cambridge. Attached to each Chair were two teachers of modern languages, and twenty King's scholars, whose education in history and the modern languages the Professor was to superintend; and the most proficient among whom he was to recommend from time to time for employment, at home or abroad, in the service of the State. Diplomacy was evidently the first object of the foundation, for a knowledge of treaties is mentioned in the letters patent of foundation as specially necessary for the public interest.

Some subsequent regulations, though of doubtful validity, named International Law and Political Economy, with the Method of reading Modern History and Political Biography, as the subjects for the Professor's lectures. Thus the whole foundation may be said to have been in great measure an anticipation of the late resolution of the University to found a school of Law and Modern History. The Professorship of Modern History, the Professorship of Political Economy, the Chichele Professorship of Diplomacy and International Law, the Professor and Teachers of the Modern Languages, do now for the students of our present school just what the Professor of History and his two teachers of Modern Languages were originally intended to do for the twenty King's scholars under their care. The whole of these subjects have further been brought into connection, in the new school, with their natural associate, the study of Law.

I have failed, in spite of the kind assistance of my friends, the Librarian of the Bodleian and the Keeper of the Archives, to trace the real author of what we must allow to have been an enlightened and far-sighted scheme—a scheme which, had it taken effect, might have supplied Parliament and the public service in the last century with highly-trained legislators and statesmen, and perhaps have torn some dark and disastrous pages from our history. It is not likely that the praise is due to the King himself, who, though not without sense and public spirit, was indifferent to intellectual pursuits. Conjecture points to Sir Robert Walpole. That Minister was at the height of power when the



Professorship was founded under George I. When the foundation was confirmed under George II., he had just thrust aside the feeble pretensions of Sir Spencer Compton, and gathered the reins of Government, for a moment placed in the weak hands of the favourite, again into his own strong and skilful grasp. If Walpole was the real founder, if he even sanctioned the foundation, it is a remarkable testimony from a political leader of a turn of mind practical to coarseness, and who had discarded the literary statesmen of the Somers and Halifax school, to the value of high political education as a qualification for the public service. It is also creditable to the memory of a minister, the reputed father of the system of Parliamentary corruption, that he should have so far anticipated one of the best of modern reforms as to have been willing to devote a large amount of his patronage to merit, and to take that merit on the recommendation of Universities, one of which, at least, was by no means friendly to the Crown.

King George I., however, or his Minister, was not the first of English rulers who had endeavoured to draw direct from the University a supply of talented and highly-educated men for the service of the State. I almost shrink from mentioning the name which intrudes so grimly into the long list of the Tory and High Church Chancellors of Oxford. But it was at least the nobler part of Cromwell's character which led him to protect Oxford and Cambridge from the leveling fanaticism of his party, to make himself our Chancellor, to foster our learning with his all-pervading

energy, and to seek to draw our choicest youth to councils which it must be allowed were always filled, as far as the evil time permitted, with an eye to the interest of England and to her interest alone. Cromwell's name is always in the mouths of those who despise or hate high education, who call, in every public emergency, for native energy and rude common sense,—for no subtle and fastidious philosophers, but strong practical men. They seem to think that he really was a brewer of Huntingdon who left his low calling in a fit of fanatical enthusiasm to lead a great cause (great, whether it were the right cause or the wrong,) in camp and council, to win Dunbar against a general who had foiled Wallenstein, to fascinate the imagination of Milton, and by his administration at home and abroad to raise England, in five short years and on the morrow of a bloody civil war, to a height of greatness to which she still looks back with a proud and wistful eye. Cromwell, to use his own words, “was by birth a gentleman, living neither in any considerable height, nor yet in obscurity;” he was educated, suitably to his birth, at a good classical school; he was at Cambridge; he read law; but what was much more than this, he, who is supposed to have owed his power to ignorance and narrowness of mind, had brooded almost to madness over the deepest questions of religion and politics, and, as a kinsman of Hampden and an active member of Hampden's party, had held intimate converse on those questions with the profoundest and keenest intellects of that unrivalled age. And therefore his ambition, if it was treasonable, was

not low. Therefore he bore himself always not as one who gambled for a stake, but as one who struggled for a cause. Therefore the great soldier loved the glory of peace above the glory of war, and the moment he could do so, sheathed his victorious sword; therefore, if he was driven to govern by force, he was driven to it with reluctance, and only after long striving to govern by nobler means; therefore he kept a heart above tinsel, and, at a height which had turned the head of Cæsar, remained always master of himself; therefore he loved and called to his council-board high and cultivated intellect, and employed it to serve the interest of the State without too anxiously enquiring how it would serve his own; therefore he felt the worth of the Universities, saved them from the storm which laid throne and altar in the dust, and earnestly endeavoured to give them their due place and influence as seminaries of statesmen. Those who wish to see the conduct of a real brewer turned into a political chief should mark the course of Santerre in the French Revolution. Those who wish to see how power is wielded without high cultivation and great ideas, should trace the course of Napoleon, so often compared with Cromwell, and preferred to him;—Napoleon the great despiser of philosophers;—and ask whether a little of the philosophy which he despised might not have mitigated the vulgar vanity which breathes through his bulletins, and tempered his vulgar lust of conquest with some regard for nobler things. It would indeed be a flaw in nature if that which Arnold called the highest earthly work, the work of government, were best performed by blind