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The historian might place himself for a given period, say a series of ages, or in the human soul, or with some particular people; he might study, describe, relate, all the events, all the transformations, all the revolutions which had been accomplished in the internal man; and when he had finished his work, he would have a history of civilisation amongst the people and in the period he had selected.—Guizot, *Civilisation in Europe*, p 25.

History has been transformed, within a hundred years in Germany, within sixty years in France, and that by the study of their literatures.

It was perceived that a literary work is not a mere individual play of imagination, the isolated caprice of an excited brain, but a transcript of contemporary manners, a manifestation of a certain kind of mind. It was concluded that we might recover, from the monuments of literature, a knowledge of the manner in which men thought and felt centuries ago. The attempt was made, and it succeeded.

Pondering on these modes of feeling and thought, men decided that they were facts of the highest kind. They saw that these facts bore reference to the most important occurrences, that they explained and were explained by them, that it was necessary thenceforth to give them a rank, and a most important rank, in history. This rank they have received, and from that moment history has undergone a complete change: in its subject-matter, its system, its machinery, the appre-
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ciation of laws and of causes. It is this change, such as it is and must be, that we shall here endeavour to exhibit.

I.

What is your first remark on turning over the great, stiff leaves of a folio, the yellow sheets of a manuscript,—a poem, a code of laws, a confession of faith? This, you say, did not come into existence all alone. It is but a mould, like a fossil shell, an imprint, like one of those shapes embossed in stone by an animal which lived and perished. Under the shell there was an animal, and behind the document there was a man. Why do you study the shell, except to bring before you the animal? So you study the document only to know the man. The shell and the document are lifeless wrecks, valuable only as a clue to the entire and living existence. We must get hold of this existence, endeavour to re-create it. It is a mistake to study the document, as if it were isolated. This were to treat things like a simple scholar, to fall into the error of the bibliomaniac. Neither mythology nor languages exist in themselves; but only men, who arrange words and imagery according to the necessities of their organs and the original bent of their intellects. A dogma is nothing in itself; look at the people who have made it,—a portrait, for instance, of the sixteenth century, say the stern powerful face of an English archbishop or martyr. Nothing exists except through some individual man; it is this individual with whom we must become acquainted. When we have established the parentage of dogmas, or the classification of poems, or the progress of constitutions, or the transformation of idioms, we have only cleared the soil: genuine history is brought into existence only when the historian begins
to unravel, across the lapse of time, the living man, toiling, impassioned, entrenched in his customs, with his voice and features, his gestures and his dress, distinct and complete as he from whom we have just parted in the street. Let us endeavour, then, to annihilate as far as possible this great interval of time, which prevents us from seeing man with our eyes, with the eyes of our head. What have we under the fair glazed pages of a modern poem? A modern poet, who has studied and travelled, a man like Alfred de Musset, Victor Hugo, Lamartine, or Heine, in a black coat and gloves, welcomed by the ladies, and making every evening his fifty bows and his score of bon-mots in society, reading the papers in the morning, lodging as a rule on a second floor; not over gay, because he has nerves, and especially because, in this dense democracy where we choke one another, the discredit of the dignities of office has exaggerated his pretensions while increasing his importance, and because the keenness of his feelings in general disposes him somewhat to believe himself a deity. This is what we take note of under modern Meditations or Sonnets. Even so, under a tragedy of the seventeenth century we have a poet, like Racine for instance, elegant, staid, a courtier, a fine talker, with a majestic wig and ribbed shoes, at heart a royalist and a Christian, who says, "God has been so gracious to me, that in whatever company I find myself I never have occasion to blush for the gospel or the king;"¹ clever at entertaining the prince, and rendering

¹ Mary Wollstonecraft, in her Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution, p. 25, says, in quoting this passage, "What could be expected from the courtier who could write in these terms to Madame de Maintenon."—Ts.
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for him into good French the "old French of Amyot;" very respectful to the great, always "knowing his place;" as assiduous and reserved at Marly as at Versailles, amidst the regular pleasures of polished and ornate nature, amidst the salutations, graces, airs, and fopperies of the braided lords, who rose early in the morning to obtain the promise of being appointed to some office in case of the death of the present holder, and amongst charming ladies who count their genealogies on their fingers in order to obtain the right of sitting down in the presence of the King or Queen. On that head consult St. Simon and the engravings of Pérelle, as for the present age you have consulted Balzac and the watercolours of Eugène Lami. Similarly, when we read a Greek tragedy, our first care should be to realise to ourselves the Greeks, that is, the men who live half naked, in the gymnasia, or in the public squares, under a glowing sky, face to face with the most beautiful and the most noble landscapes, bent on making their bodies lithe and strong, on conversing, discussing, voting, carrying on patriotic piracies, nevertheless lazy and temperate, with three urns for their furniture, two anchovies in a jar of oil for their food, waited on by slaves, so as to give them leisure to cultivate their understanding and exercise their limbs, with no desire beyond that of having the most beautiful town, the most beautiful processions, the most beautiful ideas, the most beautiful men. On this subject, a statue such as the Meleager or the Theseus of the Parthenon, or still more, the sight of the Mediterranean, blue and lustrous as a silken tunic, and the islands that stud it with their massive marble outlines: add to these twenty select phrases from Plato and Aristophanes, and they will teach you much more than a multi-.
tupe of dissertations and commentaries. And so again, in order to understand an Indian Purâna, begin by imagining to yourself the father of a family, who, "having seen a son on his son's knees," retires, according to the law, into solitude, with an axe and a pitcher under a banyan tree, by the brook-side, talks no more, adds fast to fast, dwells naked between four fires, and under that terrible sun, which devours and renews without end all things living; who, for weeks at a time, fixes his imagination first upon the feet of Brahma, next upon his knee, next upon his thigh, next upon his navel, and so on, until, beneath the strain of this intense meditation, hallucinations begin to appear, until all the forms of existence, mingled and transformed the one with the other, quaver before a sight dazzled and giddy, until the motionless man, catching in his breath, with fixed gaze, beholds the universe vanishing like a smoke in the universal void of Being into which he hopes to be absorbed. To this end a voyage to India would be the best instructor; or for want of better, the accounts of travellers, books of geography, botany, ethnology, will serve their turn. In each case the search must be the same. Language, legislation, creeds, are only abstract things: the complete thing is the man who acts, the man corporeal and visible, who eats, walks, fights, labours. Leave aside the theory and the mechanism of constitutions, religions and their systems, and try to see men in their workshops, in their offices, in their fields, with their sky and soil, their houses, their dress, cultivations, meals, as you do when, landing in England or Italy, you look at faces and motions, roads and inns, a citizen taking his walk, a workman drinking. Our great care should
be to supply as much as possible the want of present, personal, direct, and sensible observation which we can no longer practise; for it is the only means of knowing men. Let us make the past present: in order to judge of a thing, it must be before us; there is no experience in respect of what is absent. Doubtless this reconstruction is always incomplete; it can produce only incomplete judgments; but that we cannot help. It is better to have an imperfect knowledge than none at all; and there is no other means of acquainting ourselves approximately with the events of other days, than to see approximately the men of other days.

This is the first step in history; it was made in Europe at the revival of imagination, toward the close of the last century, by Lessing and Walter Scott; a little later in France, by Chateaubriand, Augustin Thierry, Michelet, and others. And now for the second step.

II.

When you consider with your eyes the visible man, what do you look for? The man invisible. The words which enter your ears, the gestures, the motions of his head, the clothes he wears, visible acts and deeds of every kind, are expressions merely; somewhat is revealed beneath them, and that is a soul. An inner man is concealed beneath the outer man; the second does but reveal the first. You look at his house, furniture, dress; and that in order to discover in them the marks of his habits and tastes, the degree of his refinement or rusticity, his extravagance or his economy, his stupidity or his acuteness. You listen to his conversation, and you note the inflexions of his voice, the changes in his
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attitudes; and that in order to judge of his vivacity, his self-forgetfulness or his gaiety, his energy or his constraint. You consider his writings, his artistic productions, his business transactions or political ventures; and that in order to measure the scope and limits of his intelligence, his inventiveness, his coolness, to find out the order, the character, the general force of his ideas, the mode in which he thinks and resolves. All these externals are but avenues converging towards a centre; you enter them simply in order to reach that centre; and that centre is the genuine man, I mean that mass of faculties and feelings which are the inner man. We have reached a new world, which is infinite, because every action which we see involves an infinite association of reasonings, emotions, sensations new and old, which have served to bring it to light, and which, like great rocks deep-seated in the ground, find in it their end and their level. This underworld is a new subject-matter, proper to the historian. If his critical education is sufficient, he can lay bare, under every detail of architecture, every stroke in a picture, every phrase in a writing, the special sensation whence detail, stroke, or phrase had issue; he is present at the drama which was enacted in the soul of artist or writer; the choice of a word, the brevity or length of a sentence, the nature of a metaphor, the accent of a verse, the development of an argument—everything is a symbol to him; while his eyes read the text, his soul and mind pursue the continuous development and the everchanging succession of the emotions and conceptions out of which the text has sprung: in short, he works out its psychology. If you would observe this operation, consider the originator and model of all grand contemporary culture, Goethe,
who, before writing _Iphigenia_, employed day after day in making drawings of the most finished statues, and who at last, his eyes filled with the noble forms of ancient scenery, his mind penetrated by the harmonious loveliness of antique life, succeeded in reproducing so exactly in himself the habits and peculiarities of the Greek imagination, that he gives us almost the twin sister of the Antigone of Sophocles, and the goddesses of Phidias. This precise and proved interpretation of past sensations has given to history, in our days, a second birth; hardly anything of the sort was known to the preceding century. They thought men of every race and century were all but identical; the Greek, the barbarian, the Hindoo, the man of the Renaissance, and the man of the eighteenth century, as if they had been turned out of a common mould; and all in conformity to a certain abstract conception, which served for the whole human race. They knew man, but not men; they had not penetrated to the soul; they had not seen the infinite diversity and marvellous complexity of souls; they did not know that the moral constitution of a people or an age is as particular and distinct as the physical structure of a family of plants or an order of animals. Now-a-days, history, like zoology, has found its anatomy; and whatever the branch of history to which you devote yourself, philology, linguistic lore, mythology, it is by these means you must strive to produce new fruit. Amid so many writers who, since the time of Herder, Ottfried Muller, and Goethe, have continued and still improve this great method, let the reader consider only two historians and two works, Carlyle's _Cromwell_, and Sainte-Beuve's _Port-Royal_; he will see with what fairness, exactness, depth of insight, a man may discover a soul
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beneath its actions and its works; how behind the old general, in place of a vulgar hypocritical schemer, we recover a man troubled with the obscure reveries of a melancholic imagination, but with practical instincts and faculties, English to the core, strange and incomprehensible to one who has not studied the climate and the race; how, with about a hundred meagre letters and a score of mutilated speeches, we may follow him from his farm and team, to the general's tent and to the Protector's throne, in his transmutation and development, in his pricks of conscience and his political sagacity, until the machinery of his mind and actions becomes visible, and the inner tragedy, ever changing and renewed, which exercised this great, darkling soul, passes, like one of Shakspeare's, through the soul of the looker-on. He will see (in the other case) how, behind the squabbles of the monastery, or the contumacies of nuns, he may find a great province of human psychology; how about fifty characters, that had been buried under the uniformity of a circumspect narrative, reappear in the light of day, each with its own specialty and its countless diversities; how, beneath theological disquisitions and monotonous sermons, we can unearth the beatings of living hearts, the convulsions and apathies of monastic life, the unforeseen reassertions and wavy turmoil of nature, the inroads of surrounding worldliness, the intermittent victories of grace, with such a variety of lights and shades, that the most exhaustive description and the most elastic style can hardly gather the inexhaustible harvest, which the critic has caused to spring up on this abandoned field. And so it is throughout. Germany, with its genius so pliant, so comprehensive, so apt for transformation, so well calculated to reproduce the most
remote and anomalous conditions of human thought; England, with its intellect so precise, so well calculated to grapple closely with moral questions, to render them exact by figures, weights and measures, geography, statistics, by quotation and by common sense; France, with her Parisian culture, with her drawing-room manners, with her untiring analysis of characters and actions, her irony so ready to hit upon a weakness, her finesse so practised in the discrimination of shades of thought;—all have worked the same soil, and we begin to understand that there is no region of history where it is not imperative to till this deep level, if we would see a serviceable harvest rise between the furrows.

This is the second step; we are in a fair way to its completion. It is the fit work of the contemporary critic. No one has done it so justly and grandly as Sainte-Beuve: in this respect we are all his pupils; his method has revolutionised, in our days, in books, and even in newspapers, every kind of literary, of philosophical and religious criticism. From it we must set out in order to begin the further development. I have more than once endeavoured to indicate this development; there is here, in my mind, a new path open to history and I will try to describe it more in detail.

III.

When you have observed and noted in man one, two, three, then a multitude of sensations, does this suffice, or does your knowledge appear complete? Is Psychology only a series of observations? No; here as elsewhere we must search out the causes after we have collected the facts. No matter if the facts be
physical or moral, they all have their causes; there is a cause for ambition, for courage, for truth, as there is for digestion, for muscular movement, for animal heat. Vice and virtue are products, like vitriol and sugar; and every complex phenomenon arises from other more simple phenomena on which it hangs. Let us then seek the simple phenomena for moral qualities, as we seek them for physical qualities; and let us take the first fact that presents itself: for example, religious music, that of a Protestant Church. There is an inner cause which has turned the spirit of the faithful toward these grave and monotonous melodies, a cause broader than its effect; I mean the general idea of the true, external worship which man owes to God. It is this which has modelled the architecture of Protestant places of worship, thrown down the statues, removed the pictures, destroyed the ornaments, curtailed the ceremonies, shut up the worshippers in high pews which prevent them from seeing anything, and regulated the thousand details of decoration, posture, and general externals. This again comes from another more general cause, the idea of human conduct in all its comprehensiveness, internal and external, prayers, actions, duties of every kind which man owes to God; it is this which has enthroned the doctrine of grace, lowered the status of the clergy, transformed the sacraments, suppressed various practices, and changed religion from a discipline to a morality. This second idea in its turn depends upon a third still more general, that of moral perfection, such as is met with in the perfect God, the unerring judge, the stern watcher of souls, before whom every soul is sinful, worthy of punishment, incapable of virtue or salvation, except by the power of conscience which
He calls forth, and the renewal of heart which He produces. That is the master idea, which consists in erecting duty into an absolute king of human life, and in prostrating all ideal models before a moral model. Here we track the root of man; for to explain this conception it is necessary to consider the race itself, the German and Northman, the structure of his character and mind, his general processes of thought and feeling, the sluggishness and coldness of sensation which prevent his falling easily and headlong under the sway of pleasure, the bluntness of his taste, the irregularity and revolutions of his conception, which arrest in him the birth of fair dispositions and harmonious forms, the disdain of appearances, the desire for truth, the attachment to bare and abstract ideas, which develop in him conscience, at the expense of all else. There the search is at an end; we have arrived at a primitive disposition; at a feature peculiar to all the sensations, and to all the conceptions of a century or a race, at a particularity inseparable from all the motions of his intellect and his heart. Here lie the grand causes, for they are the universal and permanent causes, present at every moment and in every case, everywhere and always acting, indestructible, and finally infallibly supreme, since the accidents which thwart them, being limited and partial, end by yielding to the dull and incessant repetition of their efforts; in such a manner that the general structure of things, and the grand features of events, are their work; and religions, philosophies, poetries, industries, the framework of society and of families, are in fact only the imprints stamped by their seal.
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IV.

There is, then, a system in human sentiments and ideas: and this system has for its motive power certain general traits, certain characteristics of the intellect and the heart common to men of one race, age, or country. As in mineralogy the crystals, however diverse, spring from certain simple physical forms, so in history, civilisations, however diverse, are derived from certain simple spiritual forms. The one are explained by a primitive geometrical element, as the others are by a primitive psychological element. In order to master the classification of mineralogical systems, we must first consider a regular and general solid, its sides and angles, and observe in this the numberless transformations of which it is capable. So, if you would realise the system of historical varieties, consider first a human soul generally, with its two or three fundamental faculties, and in this compendium you will perceive the principal forms which it can present. After all, this kind of ideal picture, geometrical as well as psychological, is not very complex, and we speedily see the limits of the outline in which civilisations, like crystals, are constrained to exist.

What is really the mental structure of man? Images or representations of things, which float within him, exist for a time, are effaced, and return again, after he has been looking upon a tree, an animal, any visible object. This is the subject-matter, the development whereof is double, either speculative or practical, according as the representations resolve themselves into a general conception or an active resolution. Here we have the whole of man in an abridgment; and in this limited circle human diversities meet, sometimes in the womb of the primordial matter, sometimes in the twofold
primordial development. However minute in their elements, they are enormous in the aggregate, and the least alteration in the factors produces vast alteration in the results. According as the representation is clear and as it were punched out or confused and faintly defined, according as it embraces a great or small number of the characteristics of the object, according as it is violent and accompanied by impulses, or quiet and surrounded by calm, all the operations and processes of the human machine are transformed. So, again, according as the ulterior development of the representation varies, the whole human development varies. If the general conception in which it results is a mere dry notation (in Chinese fashion), language becomes a sort of algebra, religion and poetry dwindle, philosophy is reduced to a kind of moral and practical common sense, science to a collection of utilitarian formulas, classifications, mnemonics, and the whole intellect takes a positive bent. If, on the contrary, the general representation in which the conception results is a poetical and figurative creation, a living symbol, as among the Aryan races, language becomes a sort of delicately-shaded and coloured epic poem, in which every word is a person, poetry and religion assume a magnificent and inexhaustible grandeur, metaphysics are widely and subtly developed, without regard to positive applications; the whole intellect, in spite of the inevitable deviations and shortcomings of its effort, is smitten with the beautiful and the sublime, and conceives an ideal capable by its nobleness and its harmony, of rallying round it the tenderness and enthusiasm of the human race. If, again, the general conception in which the representation results is poetical but not graduated;
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if man arrives at it not by an uninterrupted gradation, but by a quick intuition; if the original operation is not a regular development, but a violent explosion,—then, as with the Semitic races, metaphysics are absent, religion conceives God only as a king solitary and devouring, science cannot grow, the intellect is too rigid and unbending to reproduce the delicate operations of nature, poetry can give birth only to vehement and grandiose exclamations, language cannot unfold the web of argument and of eloquence, man is reduced to a lyric enthusiasm, an unchecked passion, a fanatical and limited action. In this interval between the particular representation and the universal conception are found the germs of the greatest human differences. Some races, as the classical, pass from the first to the second by a graduated scale of ideas, regularly arranged, and general by degrees; others, as the Germanic, traverse the same ground by leaps, without uniformity, after vague and prolonged groping. Some, like the Romans and English, halt at the first steps; others, like the Hindoos and Germans, mount to the last. If, again, after considering the passage from the representation to the idea, we consider that from the representation to the resolution, we find elementary differences of the like importance and the like order, according as the impression is sharp, as in southern climates, or dull, as in northern; according as it results in instant action, as among barbarians, or slowly, as in civilised nations; as it is capable or not of growth, inequality, persistence, and relations. The whole network of human passions, the chances of peace and public security, the sources of labour and action, spring from hence. Such is the case with all primordial differences: their issues embrace an entire civilisation.
and we may compare them to those algebraical formulas which, in a narrow limit, contain in advance the whole curve of which they form the law. Not that this law is always developed to its issue; there are perturbing forces; but when it is so, it is not that the law was false, but that it was not single. New elements become mingled with the old; great forces from without counteract the primitive. The race emigrates, like the Aryan, and the change of climate has altered in its case the whole economy, intelligence, and organisation of society. The people has been conquered, like the Saxon nation, and a new political structure has imposed on it customs, capacities, and inclinations which it had not. The nation has installed itself in the midst of a conquered people, downtrodden and threatening, like the ancient Spartans; and the necessity of living like troops in the field has violently distorted in an unique direction the whole moral and social constitution. In each case, the mechanism of human history is the same. We continually find, as the original mainspring, some very general disposition of mind and soul, innate and appended by nature to the race, or acquired and produced by some circumstance acting upon the race. These mainsprings, once admitted, produce their effect gradually: I mean that after some centuries they bring the nation into a new condition, religious, literary, social, economic; a new condition which, combined with their renewed effort, produces another condition, sometimes good, sometimes bad, sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly, and so forth; so that we may regard the whole progress of each distinct civilisation as the effect of a permanent force which, at every stage, varies its operation by modifying the circumstances of its action.
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V.

Three different sources contribute to produce this elementary moral state — RACE, SURROUNDINGS, and EPOCH. What we call the race are the innate and hereditary dispositions which man brings with him into the world, and which, as a rule, are united with the marked differences in the temperament and structure of the body. They vary with various peoples. There is a natural variety of men, as of oxen and horses, some brave and intelligent, some timid and dependent, some capable of superior conceptions and creations, some reduced to rudimentary ideas and inventions, some more specially fitted to special works, and gifted more richly with particular instincts, as we meet with species of dogs better favoured than others,—these for coursing, those for fighting, those for hunting, these again for house dogs or shepherds' dogs. We have here a distinct force,—so distinct, that amidst the vast deviations which the other two motive forces produce in him, one can recognise it still; and a race, like the old Aryans, scattered from the Ganges as far as the Hohridges, settled in every crime, and every stage of civilisation, transformed by thirty centuries of revolutions, nevertheless manifests in its languages, religions, literature, philosophies, the community of blood and of intellect which to this day binds its offshoots together. Different as they are, their parentage is not obliterated; barbarism, culture and grafting, differences of sky and soil, fortunes good and bad, have laboured in vain: the great marks of the original model have remained, and we find again the two or three principal lineaments of the primitive stamp underneath the secondary imprints which time has laid upon them. There is nothing astonishing in this extra-
ordinary tenacity. Although the vastness of the distance lets us but half perceive—and by a doubtful light—the origin of species, the events of history sufficiently illumine the events anterior to history, to explain the almost immovable steadfastness of the primordial marks. When we meet with them, fifteen, twenty, thirty centuries before our era, in an Aryan, an Egyptian, a Chinese, they represent the work of a great many ages, perhaps of several myriads of centuries. For as soon as an animal begins to exist, it has to reconcile itself with its surroundings; it breathes and renews itself, is differently affected according to the variations in air, food, temperature. Different climate and situation bring it various needs, and consequently a different course of activity; and this, again, a different set of habits; and still again, a different set of aptitudes and instincts. Man, forced to accommodate himself to circumstances, contracts a temperament and a character corresponding to them; and his character, like his temperament, is so much more stable, as the external impression is made upon him by more numerous repetitions, and is transmitted to his progeny by a more ancient descent. So that at any moment we may consider the character of a people as an abridgment of all its preceding actions and sensations; that is, as a quantity and as a weight, not infinite, since everything in nature is finite, but disproportioned to the rest, and almost impossible to lift, since every moment of an almost infinite past has contributed to increase it, and because, in order to raise the scale, one must place in the opposite scale a still greater number of actions and sensations. Such is the

2 Spinoza, Éthics, Part iv. axiom.
first and richest source of these master-faculties from which historical events take their rise; and one sees at the outset, that if it be powerful, it is because this is no simple spring, but a kind of lake, a deep reservoir wherein other springs have, for a multitude of centuries, discharged their several streams.

Having thus outlined the interior structure of a race, we must consider the surroundings in which it exists. For man is not alone in the world; nature surrounds him; and his fellow-men surround him; accidental and secondary tendencies overlay his primitive tendencies, and physical or social circumstances disturb or confirm the character committed to their charge. Sometimes the climate has had its effect. Though we can follow but obscurely the Aryan peoples from their common fatherland to their final settlements, we can yet assert that the profound differences which are manifest between the German races on the one side, and the Greek and Latin on the other, arise for the most part from the difference between the countries in which they are settled: some in cold moist lands, deep in rugged marshy forests or on the shores of a wild ocean, beset by melancholy or violent sensations, prone to drunkenness and gluttony, bent on a fighting, blood-spilling life; others, again, within the loveliest landscapes, on a bright and pleasant sea-coast, enticed to navigation and commerce, exempt from gross cravings of the stomach, inclined from the beginning to social ways, to a settled organisation of the state, to feelings and dispositions such as develop the art of oratory, the talent for enjoyment, the inventions of science, letters, arts. Sometimes the state policy has been at work, as in the two Italian civilisations: the first wholly turned to action, conquest,
government, legislation, on account of the original site of its city of refuge, its border-land emporium, its armed aristocracy, who, by importing and drilling strangers and conquered, created two hostile armies, having no escape from its internal discords and its greedy instincts but in systematic warfare; the other, shut out from unity and any great political ambition by the stability of its municipal character, the cosmopolitan position of its pope, and the military intervention of neighbouring nations, directed by the whole bent of its magnificent and harmonious genius towards the worship of pleasure and beauty. Sometimes the social conditions have impressed their mark, as eighteen centuries ago by Christianity, and twenty-five centuries ago by Buddhism, when around the Mediterranean, as well as in Hindostan, the extreme results of Aryan conquest and civilisation induced intolerable oppression, the subjugation of the individual, utter despair, the thought that the world was cursed, with the development of metaphysics and myth, so that man in this dungeon of misery, feeling his heart softened, begot the idea of abnegation, charity, tender love, gentleness, humility, brotherly love—there, in a notion of universal nothingness, here under the Fatherhood of God. Look around you upon the regulating instincts and faculties implanted in a race—in short, the mood of intelligence in which it thinks and acts at the present time: you will discover most often the work of some one of these prolonged situations, these surrounding circumstances, persistent and gigantic pressures, brought to bear upon an aggregate of men who, singly and together, from generation to generation, are continually moulded and modelled by their action; in Spain, a crusade against the Mussulmans which lasted eight cen-
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turies, protracted even beyond and until the exhaustion of the nation by the expulsion of the Moors, the spoli-ation of the Jews, the establishment of the Inquisition, the Catholic wars; in England, a political establishment of eight centuries, which keeps a man erect and respect-ful, in independence and obedience, and accustoms him to strive unitedly, under the authority of the law; in France, a Latin organisation, which, imposed first upon docile barbarians, then shattered in the universal crash, was reformed from within under a lurking conspiracy of the national instinct, was developed under hereditary kings, ends in a sort of levelling republic, centralised, administrative, under dynasties exposed to revolution. These are the most efficacious of the visible causes which mould the primitive man: they are to nations what education, career, condition, abode, are to individuals; and they seem to comprehend everything, since they comprehend all external powers which mould human matter, and by which the external acts on the internal.

There is yet a third rank of causes; for, with the forces within and without, there is the work which they have already produced together, and this work itself contributes to produce that which follows. Beside the permanent impulse and the given surroundings, there is the acquired momentum. When the national character and surrounding circumstances operate, it is not upon a tabula rasa, but on a ground on which marks are already impressed. According as one takes the ground at one moment or another, the imprint is different; and this is the cause that the total effect is different. Consider, for instance, two epochs of a literature or art—French tragedy under Corneille and under Vol-
taire, the Greek drama under Æschylus and under Euripides, Italian painting under da Vinci and under Guido. Truly, at either of these two extreme points the general idea has not changed; it is always the same human type which is its subject of representation or painting; the mould of verse, the structure of the drama, the form of body has endured. But among several differences there is this, that the one artist is the precursor, the other the successor; the first has no model, the second has; the first sees objects face to face, the second sees them through the first; that many great branches of art are lost, many details are perfected, that simplicity and grandeur of impression have diminished, pleasing and refined forms have increased,—in short, that the first work has influenced the second. Thus it is with a people as with a plant; the same sap, under the same temperature, and in the same soil, produces, at different steps of its progressive development, different formations, buds, flowers, fruits, seed-vessels, in such a manner that the one which follows must always be preceded by the former, and must spring up from its death. And if now you consider no longer a brief epoch, as our own time, but one of those wide intervals which embrace one or more centuries, like the middle ages, or our last classic age, the conclusion will be similar. A certain dominant idea has had sway; men, for two, for five hundred years, have taken to themselves a certain ideal model of man: in the middle ages, the knight and the monk; in our classic age, the courtier, the man who speaks well. This creative and universal idea is displayed over the whole field of action and thought; and after covering the world with its involun-

- tarily systematic works, it has faded, it has died away,
and lo, a new idea springs up, destined to a like domination, and as manifold creations. And here remember that the second depends in part upon the first, and that the first, uniting its effect with those of national genius and surrounding circumstances, imposes on each new creation its bent and direction. The great historical currents are formed after this law—the long dominations of one intellectual pattern, or a master idea, such as the period of spontaneous creations called the Renaissance, or the period of oratorical models called the Classical Age, or the series of mystical systems called the Alexandrian and Christian eras, or the series of mythological efflorescences which we meet with in the infancy of the German people, of the Indian and the Greek. Here as elsewhere we have but a mechanical problem; the total effect is a result, depending entirely on the magnitude and direction of the producing causes. The only difference which separates these moral problems from physical ones is, that the magnitude and direction cannot be valued or computed in the first as in the second. If a need or a faculty is a quantity, capable of degrees, like a pressure or a weight, this quantity is not measurable like the pressure or the weight. We cannot define it in an exact or approximative formula; we cannot have more, or give more, in respect of it, than a literary impression; we are limited to marking and quoting the salient points by which it is manifested, and which indicate approximately and roughly the part of the scale which is its position. But though the means of notation are not the same in the moral and physical sciences, yet as in both the matter is the same, equally made up of forces, magnitudes, and directions, we may say that in both.
the final result is produced after the same method. It is great or small, as the fundamental forces are great or small and act more or less exactly in the same sense, according as the distinct effects of race, circumstance, and epoch combine to add the one to the other, or to annul one another. Thus are explained the long impotences and the brilliant triumphs which make their appearance irregularly and without visible cause in the life of a people; they are caused by internal concords or contrarieties. There was such a concord when in the seventeenth century the sociable character and the conversational aptitude, innate in France, encountered the drawing-room manners and the epoch of oratorical analysis; when in the nineteenth century the profound and pliant genius of Germany encountered the age of philosophical systems and of cosmopolitan criticism. There was such a contrariety when in the seventeenth century the harsh and lonely English genius tried blunderingly to adopt a new-born politeness; when in the sixteenth century the lucid and prosaic French spirit tried vainly to bring forth a living poetry. That hidden concord of creative forces produced the finished urbanity and the noble and regular literature under Louis XIV. and Bossuet, the grand metaphysics and broad critical sympathy of Hegel and Goethe. That hidden contrariety of creative forces produced the imperfect literature, the scandalous comedy, the abortive drama under Dryden and Wycherley, the feeble Greek importations, the grooping elaborate efforts, the scant half-graces under Ronsard and the Pleiad. So much we can say with confidence, that the unknown creations towards which the current of the centuries conducts us, will be raised up and regulated altogether by the three
primal forces; that if these forces could be measured and computed, we might deduce from them as from a formula the characteristics of future civilisation; and that if, in spite of the evident crudeness of our notations, and the fundamental inexactness of our measures, we try now to form some idea of our general destiny, it is upon an examination of these forces that we must base our prophecy. For in enumerating them, we traverse the complete circle of the agencies; and when we have considered race, surroundings, and epoch, which are the internal mainsprings, the external pressure, and the acquired momentum, we have exhausted not only the whole of the actual causes, but also the whole of the possible causes of motion.

VI.

It remains for us to examine how these causes, when applied to a nation or an age, produce their results. As a spring, rising from a height and flowing downwards spreads its streams, according to the depth of the descent, stage after stage, until it reaches the lowest level of the soil, so the disposition of intellect or soul impressed on a people by race, circumstance, or epoch, spreads in different proportions and by regular descents, down the diverse orders of facts which make up its civilisation. If we arrange the map of a country, starting from the watershed, we find that below this common point the streams are divided into five or six principal basins,

1 For this scale of co-ordinate effects, consult Renan, *Langues Semitiques*, ch. i.; Mommsen, *Comparaison between the Greek and Roman Civilisations*, ch. ii. vol. i. 3d ed.; Toqueville, *Conséquences de la Démocratie en Amérique*, vol. iii.
then each of these into several secondary basins, and so on, until the whole country with its thousand details is included in the ramifications of this network. So, if we arrange the psychological map of the events and sensations of a human civilisation, we find first of all five or six well-defined provinces—religion, art, philosophy, the state, the family, the industries; then in each of these provinces natural departments; and in each of these, smaller territories, until we arrive at the numberless details of life such as may be observed within and around us every day. If now we examine and compare these diverse groups of facts, we find first of all that they are made up of parts, and that all have parts in common. Let us take first the three chief works of human intelligence—religion, art, philosophy. What is a philosophy but a conception of nature and its primordial causes, under the form of abstractions and formulas? What is there at the bottom of a religion or of an art but a conception of this same nature and of these same causes under form of symbols more or less precise, and personages more or less marked; with this difference, that in the first we believe that they exist, in the second we believe that they do not exist? Let the reader consider a few of the great creations of the intelligence in India, Scandinavia, Persia, Rome, Greece, and he will see that, throughout, art is a kind of philosophy made sensible, religion a poem taken for true, philosophy an art and a religion dried up, and reduced to simple ideas. There is therefore, at the core of each of these three groups, a common element, the conception of the world and its principles; and if they differ among themselves, it is because each combines with the common, a distinct element: now the power of abstraction, again the power
to personify and to believe, and finally the power to personify and not believe. Let us now take the two chief works of human association, the family and the state. What forms the state but a sentiment of obedience, by which the many unite under the authority of a chief? And what forms the family but the sentiment of obedience by which wife and children act under the direction of a father and husband? The family is a natural state, primitive and restrained, as the state is an artificial family, ulterior and expanded; and underneath the differences arising from the number, origin, and condition of its members, we discover in the small society as in the great, a like disposition of the fundamental intelligence which assimilates and unites them. Now suppose that this element receives from circumstance, race, or epoch certain special marks, it is clear that all the groups into which it enters will be modified proportionately. If the sentiment of obedience is merely fear,\(^1\) you will find, as in most Oriental states, a brutal despotism, exaggerated punishment, oppression of the subject, servility of manners, insecurity of property, impoverished production, the slavery of women, and the customs of the harem. If the sentiment of obedience has its root in the instinct of order, sociality, and honour, you will find, as in France, a perfect military organisation, a fine administrative hierarchy, a want of public spirit with occasional jerks of patriotism, ready docility of the subject with a revolutionary impatience, the cringing courtier with the counter-efforts of the high-bred man, the refined pleasure of conversation and society on the one hand, and the worry at the fireside and among the family on the other, the equality of

\(^1\) Montesquieu, *Esprit des Lois, Principes des trois gouvernements.*
husband and wife, the imperfection of the married state, and consequently the necessary constraint of the law. If, again, the sentiment of obedience has its root in the instinct of subordination and the idea of duty, you will find, as among the Germans, security and happiness in the household, a solid basis of domestic life, a tardy and incomplete development of social and conversational life, an innate respect for established dignities, a superstitious reverence for the past, the keeping up of social inequalities, natural and habitual regard for the law. So in a race, according as the aptitude for general ideas varies, religion, art, and philosophy vary. If man is naturally inclined to the widest universal conceptions, and apt to disturb them at the same time by the nervous delicacy of his over-sensitive organisation, you will find, as in India, an astonishing abundance of gigantic religious creations, a glowing outgrowth of vast and transparent epic poems, a strange tangle of subtle and imaginative philosophies, all so well interwoven, and so penetrated with a common essence, as to be instantly recognised, by their breadth, their colouring, and their want of order, as the products of the same climate and the same intelligence. If, on the other hand, a man naturally staid and balanced in mind limits of his own accord the scope of his ideas, in order the better to define their form, you will find, as in Greece, a theology of artists and tale-tellers; distinctive gods, soon considered distinct from things, and transformed, almost at the outset, into recognised personages; the sentiment of universal unity all but effaced, and barely preserved in the vague notion of Destiny; a philosophy rather close and delicate than grand and systematic, with shortcomings in higher
metaphysics,¹ but incomparable for logic, sophistry, and morals; poetry and arts superior for clearness, artlessness, just proportions, truth, and beauty, to all that have ever been known. If, once more, man, reduced to narrow conceptions, and deprived of all speculative refinement, is at the same time altogether absorbed and straitened by practical occupations, you will find, as in Rome, rudimentary deities, mere hollow names, serving to designate the trivial details of agriculture, generation, household concerns, customs about marriage, rural life, producing a mythology, hence a philosophy, a poetry, either worth nothing or borrowed. Here, as everywhere, the law of mutual dependence² comes into play. A civilisation forms a body, and its parts are connected with each other like the parts of an organic body. As in an animal, instincts, teeth, limbs, osseous structure, muscular envelope, are mutually connected, so that a change in one produces a corresponding change in the rest, and a clever naturalist can by a process of reasoning reconstruct out of a few fragments almost the whole body; even so in a civilisation, religion, philosophy, the organisation of the family, literature, the arts, make up a system in which every local change induces a general change, so that an experienced historian, studying some particular part of it, sees in advance and half predicts the character of the rest. There is nothing vague in this interdependence. In the living body the regulator

¹ The Alexandrian philosophy had its birth from the West. The metaphysical notions of Aristotle are isolated; moreover, with him as with Plato, they are but a sketch. By way of contrast consider the systematic vigour of Plotinus, Proclus, Schelling, and Hegel, or the wonderful boldness of Brahminical and Buddhistic speculation.

² I have endeavoured on several occasions to give expression to this law, notably in the preface to Essais de Critique et d'Histoire.
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is, first, its tendency to manifest a certain primary type; then its necessity for organs whereby to satisfy its wants and to be in harmony with itself in order that it may live. In a civilisation, the regulator is the presence, in every great human creation, of a productive element, present also in other surrounding creations,—to wit, some faculty, aptitude, disposition, effective and discernible, which, being possessed of its proper character, introduces it into all the operations in which it assists, and, according to its variations, causes all the works in which it co-operates to vary also.

VII.

At this point we can obtain a glimpse of the principal features of human transformations, and begin to search for the general laws which regulate, not events only, but classes of events, not such and such religion or literature, but a group of literatures or religions. If, for instance, it were admitted that a religion is a metaphysical poem, accompanied by belief; and remarking at the same time that there are certain epochs, races, and circumstances in which belief, the poetical and metaphysical faculty, show themselves with an unwonted vigour; if we consider that Christianity and Buddhism were produced at periods of high philosophical conceptions, and amid such miseries as raised up the fanatics of the Cévennes; if we recognise, on the other hand, that primitive religions are born at the awakening of human reason, during the richest blossoming of human imagination, at a time of the fairest artlessness and the greatest credulity; if we consider, also, that Mohammedanism appeared with the dawning of poetic prose, and the conception of national unity,
amongst a people destitute of science, at a period of sudden development of the intellect,—we might then conclude that a religion is born, declines, is reformed and transformed according as circumstances confirm and combine with more or less exactitude and force its three generative instincts; and we should understand why it is endemic in India, amidst imaginative, philosophic, eminently fanatic brains; why it blossomed forth so strangely and grandly in the middle ages, amidst an oppressive organisation, new tongues and literatures; why it was aroused in the sixteenth century with a new character and heroic enthusiasm, amid universal regeneration, and during the awakening of the German races; why it breaks out into eccentric sects amid the coarse American democracy, and under the bureaucratic Russian despotism; why, in short, it is spread, at the present day, over Europe in such different dimensions and such various characteristics, according to the differences of race and civilisation. And so for every kind of human production—for literature, music, the fine arts, philosophy, science, the state, industries, and the rest. Each of these has for its direct cause a moral disposition, or a combination of moral dispositions: the cause given, they appear; the cause withdrawn, they vanish: the weakness or intensity of the cause measures their weakness or intensity. They are bound up with their causes, as a physical phenomenon with its condition, as the dew with the fall of the variable temperature, as dilatation with heat. There are similarly connected data in the moral as in the physical world, as rigorously bound together, and as universally extended in the one as in the other. Whatever in the one case produces, alters, or suppresses the first term, produces, alters, or
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suppresses the second as a necessary consequence. Whatever lowers the surrounding temperature, deposits the dew. Whatever develops credulity side by side with a poetical conception of the world, engenders religion. Thus phenomena have been produced; thus they will be produced. As soon as we know the sufficient and necessary condition of one of these vast occurrences, our understanding grasps the future as well as the past. We can say with confidence in what circumstances it will reappear, foretell without presumption many portions of its future history, and sketch cautiously some features of its ulterior development.

VIII.

History now attempts, or rather is very near attempting this method of research. The question propounded now-a-days is of this kind. Given a literature, philosophy, society, art, group of arts, what is the moral condition which produced it? what the conditions of race, epoch, circumstance, the most fitted to produce this moral condition? There is a distinct moral condition for each of these formations; and for each of their branches; one for art in general, one for each kind of art—for architecture, painting, sculpture, music, poetry; each has its special germ in the wide field of human psychology; each has its law, and it is by virtue of this law that we see it raised, by chance, as it seems, wholly alone, amid the miscarriage of its neighbours, like painting in Flanders and Holland in the seventeenth century, poetry in England in the sixteenth, music in Germany in the eighteenth. At this moment, and in these countries, the conditions have been fulfilled for one art, not for others, and a single branch
has budded in the general barrenness. History must search now-a-days for these rules of human growth; with the special psychology of each special formation it must occupy itself; the finished picture of these characteristic conditions it must now labour to compose. No task is more delicate or more difficult; Montesquieu tried it, but in his time history was too new to admit of his success; they had not yet even a suspicion of the road necessary to be travelled, and hardly now do we begin to catch sight of it. Just as in its elements astronomy is a mechanical and physiology a chemical problem, so history in its elements is a psychological problem. There is a particular system of inner impressions and operations which makes an artist, a believer, a musician, a painter, a man in a nomadic or social state; and of each the birth and growth, the energy, the connection of ideas and emotions, are different: each has his moral history and his special structure, with some governing disposition and some dominant feature. To explain each, it would be necessary to write a chapter of psychological analysis, and barely yet has such a method been rudely sketched. One man alone, Stendhal, with a peculiar bent of mind and a strange education, has undertaken it, and to this day the majority of readers find his books paradoxical and obscure: his talent and his ideas were premature; his admirable divinations were not understood, any more than his profound sayings thrown out cursorily, or the astonishing precision of his system and of his logic. It was not perceived that, under the exterior of a conversationalist and a man of the world, he explained the most complicated of esoteric mechanisms; that he laid his finger on the mainsprings; that he introduced into
the history of the heart scientific processes, the art of notation, decomposition, deduction; that he first marked the fundamental causes of nationality, climate, temperament; in short, that he treated sentiments as they should be treated,—in the manner of the naturalist, and of the natural philosopher, who classifies and weighs forces. For this very reason he was considered dry and eccentric: he remained solitary, writing novels, voyages, notes, for which he sought and obtained a score of readers. And yet we find in his books at the present day essays the most suitable to open the path which I have endeavoured to describe. No one has better taught us how to open our eyes and see, to see first the men that surround us and the life that is present, then the ancient and authentic documents, to read between the black and white lines of the pages, to recognise beneath the old impression, under the scribbling of a text, the precise sentiment, the movement of ideas, the state of mind in which they were written. In his writings, in Sainte-Beuve, in the German critics, the reader will see all the wealth that may be drawn from a literary work: when the work is rich, and people know how to interpret it, we find there the psychology of a soul, frequently of an age, now and then of a race. In this light, a great poem, a fine novel, the confessions of a superior man, are more instructive than a heap of historians with their histories. I would give fifty volumes of charters and a hundred volumes of state papers for the memoirs of Cellini, the epistles of St. Paul, the Table-talk of Luther, or the comedies of Aristophanes. In this consists the importance of literary works: they are instructive because they are beautiful: their utility grows
with their perfection, and if they furnish documents it is because they are monuments. The more a book brings sentiments into light, the more it is a work of literature; for the proper office of literature is to make sentiments visible. The more a book represents important sentiments, the higher is its place in literature; for it is by representing the mode of being of a whole nation and a whole age, that a writer rallies round him the sympathies of an entire age and an entire nation. This is why, amid the writings which set before our eyes the sentiments of preceding generations, a literature, and notably a grand literature, is incomparably the best. It resembles those admirable apparatus of extraordinary sensibility, by which physicians disentangle and measure the most recondite and delicate changes of a body. Constitutions, religions, do not approach it in importance; the articles of a code of laws and of a creed only show us the spirit roughly and without delicacy. If there are any writings in which politics and dogma are full of life, it is in the eloquent discourses of the pulpit and the tribune, memoirs, unrestrained confessions; and all this belongs to literature: so that, in addition to itself, it has all the advantage of other works. It is then chiefly by the study of literatures that one may construct a moral history, and advance toward the knowledge of psychological laws, from which events spring.

I intend to write the history of a literature, and to seek in it for the psychology of a people: if I have chosen this nation in particular, it is not without a reason. I had to find a people with a grand and complete literature, and this is rare: there are few nations who have, during their whole existence, really thought
and written. Among the ancients, the Latin literature is worth nothing at the outset, then it borrowed and became imitative. Among the moderns, German literature does not exist for nearly two centuries. Italian literature and Spanish literature end at the middle of the seventeenth century. Only ancient Greece, modern France and England, offer a complete series of great significant monuments. I have chosen England, because being still living, and subject to direct examination, it may be better studied than a destroyed civilisation, of which we retain but the relics, and because, being different from France, it has in the eyes of a Frenchman a more distinct character. Besides, there is a peculiarity in this civilisation, that apart from its spontaneous development, it presents a forced deviation, it has suffered the last and most effectual of all conquests, and the three grounds whence it has sprung, race, climate, the Norman invasion, may be observed in its remains with perfect exactness; so that we may examine in this history the two most powerful moving springs of human transformation, natural bent and constraining force, and we may examine them without uncertainty or gap, in a series of authentic and unmutilated memorials.

I have endeavoured to define these primary springs, to exhibit their gradual effects, to explain how they have ended by bringing to light great political, religious, and literary works, and by developing the recondite mechanism whereby the Saxon barbarian has been transformed into the Englishman of to-day.

1 From 1550 to 1750.