

HISTORY

OF

ROME.

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TO
HIS EXCELLENCY
CHARLES CHRISTIAN BUNSEN,
&c. &c. &c.
HIS PRUSSIAN MAJESTY'S MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY
AT THE COURT OF ROME,
THIS HISTORY IS INSCRIBED,
WITH EVERY FEELING OF ADMIRATION, ESTEEM, AND REGARD,
BY HIS AFFECTIONATE FRIEND AND SERVANT,
THE AUTHOR.

P R E F A C E.

IN attempting to write the History of Rome, I am not afraid of incurring the censure pronounced by Johnson upon Blackwell¹, that he had chosen a subject long since exhausted; of which all men knew already as much as any one could tell them. Much more do I dread the reproach of having ventured, with most insufficient means, upon a work of the greatest difficulty; and thus by possibility deterring others from accomplishing a task which has never yet been fulfilled, and which they might fulfil more worthily. The great advances made within the last thirty years in historical knowledge have this most hopeful symptom, that they have taught us to appreciate the amount of our actual ignorance. As

¹ In his review of Blackwell's *Memoirs of the Court of Augustus*.—*Works*, Vol. II. 8vo. 1806.

we have better understood what history ought to be, we are become ashamed of that scanty information which might once have passed for learning; and our discovery of the questions which need to be solved has so outrun our powers of solving them, that we stand humiliated rather than encouraged, and almost inclined to envy the condition of our fathers, whose maps, so to speak, appeared to them complete and satisfactory, because they never suspected the existence of a world beyond their range.

Still although the time will, I trust, arrive, when points now altogether obscure will receive their full illustration, and when this work must be superseded by a more perfect history, yet it may be possible in the mean while to render some service, if I shall be able to do any justice to my subject up to the extent of our present knowledge. And we, who are now in the vigour of life, possess at least one advantage which our children may not share equally. We have lived in a period rich in historical lessons beyond all former example; we have witnessed one of the great seasons of movement in the life of mankind, in which the arts of peace and war, political parties and principles, philosophy and religion, in all their manifold forms and influences, have been developed with extraordinary force and freedom. Our own experience has thus thrown a bright light upon

the remoter past : much which our fathers could not fully understand, from being accustomed only to quieter times, and which again, from the same cause, may become obscure to our children, is to us perfectly familiar. This is an advantage common to all the present generation in every part of Europe ; but it is not claiming too much to say, that the growth of the Roman commonwealth, the true character of its parties, the causes and tendency of its revolutions, and the spirit of its people and its laws, ought to be understood by none so well as by those who have grown up under the laws, who have been engaged in the parties, who are themselves citizens of our kingly commonwealth of England.

Long before Niebuhr's death I had formed the design of writing the History of Rome ; not, it may well be believed, with the foolish notion of rivalling so great a man, but because it appeared to me that his work was not likely to become generally popular in England, and that its discoveries and remarkable wisdom might best be made known to English readers, by putting them into a form more adapted to our common taste. It should be remembered, that only the two first volumes of Niebuhr's History were published in his lifetime ; and although careful readers might have anticipated his powers of narration even from these, yet they were actually, by

the necessity of the case, more full of dissertations than of narrative ; and for that reason it seemed desirable to remould them for the English public, by assuming as proved many of those results which Niebuhr himself had been obliged to demonstrate step by step. But when Niebuhr died, and there was now no hope of seeing his great work completed in a manner worthy of its beginning, I was more desirous than ever of executing my original plan, of presenting in a more popular form what he had lived to finish, and of continuing it afterwards with such advantages as I had derived from a long study and an intense admiration of his example and model.

It is my hope then, if God spares my life and health, to carry on this history to the revival of the western empire, in the year 800 of the Christian era, by the coronation of Charlemagne at Rome. This point appears to me its natural termination. We shall then have passed through the chaos which followed the destruction of the old western empire, and shall have seen its several elements, combined with others which in that great convulsion had been mixed with them, organized again into their new form. That new form exhibited a marked and recognised division between the so-called secular and spiritual powers, and thereby has maintained in

Christian Europe the unhappy distinction which necessarily prevailed in the heathen empire between the church and the state; a distinction now so deeply seated in our laws, our language, and our very notions, that nothing less than a miraculous interposition of God's providence seems capable, within any definite time, of eradicating it. The Greek empire, in its latter years, retained so little of the Roman character, and had so little influence upon what was truly the Roman world, that it seems needless, for the sake of a mere name, to protract the story for six hundred and fifty years farther, merely to bring it down to the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks.

This first volume embraces the infancy of the Roman people, from their origin down to the capture of Rome by the Gauls, in the middle of the fourth century before the Christian æra. For the whole of this period I have therefore enjoyed Niebuhr's guidance; I have everywhere availed myself of his materials as well as of his conclusions. No acknowledgment can be too ample for the benefits which I have derived from him: yet I have not followed him blindly, nor compiled my work from his. It seemed to be a worthier tribute to his greatness, to endeavour to follow his example; to imitate, so far as I could, his manner of inquiry; to observe and pursue his

hints; to try to practise his master art of doubting rightly and believing rightly; and, as no man is infallible, to venture sometimes even to differ from his conclusions, if a compliance with his own principles of judgment seemed to require it. But I can truly say, that I never differ from him without a full consciousness of the probability that further inquiry might prove him to be right.

The form and style in which I have given the legends and stories of the first three centuries of Rome, may require some explanation. I wished to give these legends at once with the best effect, and at the same time with a perpetual mark, not to be mistaken by the most careless reader, that they were legends and not history. There seemed a reason, therefore, for adopting a more antiquated style, which otherwise of course would be justly liable to the charge of affectation.

It might seem ludicrous to speak of impartiality in writing the history of remote times, did not those times really bear a nearer resemblance to our own than many imagine; or did not Mitford's example sufficiently prove that the spirit of modern party may affect our view of ancient history. But many persons do not clearly see what should be the true impartiality of an historian. If there be no truths in moral and political science, little good can be derived

from the study of either: if there be truths, it must be desirable that they should be discovered and embraced. Scepticism must ever be a misfortune or a defect: a misfortune, if there be no means of arriving at truth; a defect, if while there exist such means we are unable or unwilling to use them. Believing that political science has its truths no less than moral, I cannot regard them with indifference, I cannot but wish them to be seen and embraced by others.

On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that these truths have been much disputed; that they have not, like moral truths, received that universal assent of good men which makes us shrink from submitting them to question. And again, in human affairs, the contest has never been between pure truth and pure error. Neither then may we assume political conclusions as absolutely certain; nor are political truths ever wholly identical with the professions or practice of any party or individual. If for the sake of recommending any principle, we disguise the errors or the crimes with which it has been in practice accompanied, and which in the weakness of human nature may perhaps be naturally connected with our reception of it, then we are guilty of most blameable partiality. And so it is no less, if for the sake of decrying an erroneous principle, we depreciate the wisdom, and the good and noble feelings

with which error also is frequently, and in some instances naturally, joined. This were to make our sense of political truth to overpower our sense of moral truth; a double error, inasmuch as it is at once the less certain, and to those who enjoy a Christian's hope, by far the less worthy.

While then I cannot think that political science contains no truths, or that it is a matter of indifference whether they are believed or no, I have endeavoured also to remember, that be they ever so certain, there are other truths no less sure; and that one truth must never be sacrificed to another. I have tried to be strictly impartial in my judgments of men and parties, without being indifferent to those principles which were involved more or less purely in their defeat or triumph. I have desired neither to be so possessed with the mixed character of all things human, as to doubt the existence of abstract truth; nor so to dote on any abstract truth, as to think that its presence in the human mind is incompatible with any evil, its absence incompatible with any good.

In this first volume of my History, I have followed the common chronology without scruple; not as true, but as the most convenient. Where the facts themselves are so uncertain, it must be a vain labour to try to fix their dates minutely. But when we arrive

at a period of greater certainty as to the facts, then it will be proper to examine, as far as possible, into the chronology.

Those readers who are acquainted with Niebuhr, or with the history written by Mr. Maldon, for the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, may be surprised to find so little said in this volume upon the antiquities of the different nations of Italy. The omission, however, was made deliberately; partly because the subject does not appear to me to belong essentially to the early history of Rome, and still more, because the researches now carried on with so much spirit in Italy, hold out the hope that we may obtain, ere long, some more satisfactory knowledge than is at present attainable. Pelasgian inscriptions, written in a character clearly distinguishable from the Etruscan, have been discovered very recently, as I am informed, at Agylla or Cære. And the study and comparison of the several Indo-Germanic languages is making such progress, that, if any fortunate discovery comes in to aid it, we may hope to see the mystery of the Etruscan inscriptions at length unravelled. I was not sorry, therefore, to defer any detailed inquiry into the antiquities of the Italian nations, in the expectation that I might be able hereafter to enter upon the subject to greater advantage.

Amongst the manifold accomplishments of Niebuhr's mind, not the least extraordinary was his philological knowledge. His acquaintance with the manuscripts of the Greek and Roman writers was extensive and profound; his acuteness in detecting a corrupt reading, and his sagacity in correcting it, were worthy of the critical ability of Bentley. On no point have I been more humbled with a sense of my own inferiority, as feeling that my own professional pursuits ought, in this respect, to have placed me more nearly on a level with him. But it is far otherwise. I have had but little acquaintance with manuscripts, nor have I the means of consulting them extensively; and the common editions of the Latin writers in particular, do not intimate how much of their present text is grounded upon conjecture. I have seen references made to Festus, which on examination have been found to rest on no other authority than Scaliger's conjectural piecing of the fragments of the original text. But besides this, we often need a knowledge of the general character of a manuscript or manuscripts, in order to judge whether any remarkable variations in names or dates are really to be ascribed to the author's having followed a different version of the story, or whether they are mere blunders of the copyist. For instance, the names of the consuls, as given at the beginning

of each year in the present text of Diodorus, are in many instances so corrupt, that one is tempted to doubt how far some apparent differences in his *Fasti* from those followed by Livy, are really his own, or his copyist's. And the text of Caesar's *Commentaries* is also so corrupt, and has in the later editions been sometimes so unhappily corrected, that I dread the period when I shall have to follow it as the main authority of my narrative, and can no longer look to Niebuhr's sagacity for guidance.

There are some works which I have not been able to consult; and there are points connected with the topography of Rome and its neighbourhood, on which no existing work gives a satisfactory explanation. On these points I have been accustomed to consult my valued friend Bunsen, Niebuhr's successor in his official situation as Prussian minister at Rome, and his worthy successor no less in the profoundness of his antiquarian, and philological, and historical knowledge. From him I have received much important aid—the continuation of the benefit which I derived from his conversation, when I had the happiness of studying the topography of Rome with him, and of visiting in his society some of the most memorable spots of ancient Latium. Without his encouragement and sympathy I should scarcely have

brought this volume to a completion ; may he accept my warmest acknowledgments for this and for the many other proofs which I have received, during the last ten years, of his most valued friendship.

*Fos How, Ambleside,
January 15th, 1838.*

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