

# A British history of the nineteenth century

Autor(en): **C.E.L.**

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The Swiss Colony in London, which I have the honour to represent here, have felt it a most agreeable duty to join this meeting. They welcome the opportunity given to them, by taking part in a manifestation of international co-operation on British soil, to show their feelings of hearty sympathy for the British people and their grateful appreciation of British hospitality. We want also to assist the League of Nations Union in their useful work, and especially in their steady endeavours to win evermore for the League of Nations the enlightened interest, the conscious and cordial support of public opinion at large.

May I remind you that Switzerland has given to the world the unique example of a whole people being called to vote themselves on the question of their accession to the League of Nations? For such a decision our Constitution required a two-fold majority: not only the majority among the Swiss electorate at large, but also a majority in more than half of the 22 Federate States. And yet, this double majority carried the day in favour of the League, two years ago, in spite of all the difficulties which were involved in the task of bringing the great bulk of the population to face and solve such a new and big problem.

During these two years the League of Nations, despite innumerable difficulties, has fully deserved the trust and confidence reposed in them. Time is too short here—and the weather has got really too bad—to permit me to expand upon all that the League has already done. Let me recall the only fact that it has succeeded in securing at last the possibility of a regular administration of international justice by setting up, as a really permanent institution, the best organized International Tribunal the world has ever known. This object, which the second Peace Conference at the Hague had already contemplated and pursued, but which it failed entirely to secure, was successfully attained last year at Geneva by the cordial co-operation of the Council of the League and the Assembly of Nations. It has been shown thereby that with mutual goodwill these two Powers are fully able to perform and achieve in common the task entrusted to them. Of course, this task, the task of the League, is not such as to promise immediate and startling results. It requires time and patience and steadiness, such as you have just shown during the rain. It requires it the more because the League wants to show to the world that, while calling all the Nations to co-operate in the pursuit of common interests in the great field of international solidarity, it remains anxious to respect completely the independence and the national sovereignty of each of them. But we may hope and trust that the League will continue successfully its patient and beneficent work, that it will be joined by the great American people, whose place is marked and reserved therein foremost among the Nations, and that in Europe, too, it will ere long include all States willing to take their part in its objects and endeavours."

Insistent rain rang down the curtain, in every sense of the word, otherwise the many ladies and gentlemen who graced the procession and demonstration in their national costumes would, no doubt, have attracted the attention of the unusually large Saturday afternoon throngs in Hyde Park for a considerable time longer, as such a striking spectacle is not an everyday occurrence, even for London.

Let us hope that on the next occasion the clerk of the weather will feel more kindly disposed towards the League of Nations Union Demonstration, and that the Swiss contingent will muster in "four figure" numbers!

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## A BRITISH HISTORY OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

England is at present assiduously discussing the nineteenth century; the publications relating to it are frequent. The twentieth century has gained consciousness enough to look critically back upon the way whence it came. In France, too, the nineteenth century is at present the object of much controversy; they call it "*le stupide dix-neuvième siècle*." But in France they are fond of "*boutades*," and this is undoubtedly one. There may be, however, from their particular point of view, some truth in it. George Macaulay Trevelyan calls it a century not only of hope, but of solid achievements.

From the pen of this very capable and eminent English historian a "British History of the Nineteenth Century" has recently appeared by Longmans, Green & Co. It covers the period from the end of George III's personal government to Queen Victoria's death on the 22nd January, 1901. It is a book that will be read with the greatest interest and satisfaction not only by the student of modern history and economics, but also by the general reader.

Trevelyan's books are remarkable for their literary skill as well as for their historic mastery. His works are highly appreciated in this country for both these qualities. The language is rich and vivid, yet terse and to the point. It is a book from which to quote, and one is easily tempted to do so, for the precision and judiciousness of its remarks. Its pages bristle with facts. To condense into the space of 424 pages such tremendous amount of material in such a fascinating, brilliant and, at the same time, in such a well-balanced form is, indeed, a great feat. From his eminent relative, Lord Macaulay—England's great historian—Trevelyan has inherited a rare gift for the summing up of character. The portraits of Great Britain's prominent and influential men are often perfect miniatures, owing to the delicacy with which individual traits are brought to paper.

Trevelyan does not attempt to elaborate theories; neither does he indulge in generalisations, nor draw conclusions as to the future development. He ascertains facts and examines the underlying forces and tendencies, at the same time trying to convey to his readers the sense of continuous and organic growth. He shows how, in one complicated process, economic changes lead to social alterations; how the alteration in the social structure of the nation brings about political changes; and how these political changes react upon the social and economic basis of the nation. He further points out how new ideas and thoughts sometimes accompany, sometimes direct the whole complicated process of growth.

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Paine's democratic doctrine laid down in his famous book on the "Rights of Man," written in response to Burke's "Reflections on the French Revolution," wonderfully expressed the ideas and hopes of that period. They did not at once, however, alter the course that history then pursued in the British Islands. On the other hand, in the sixties, John Stuart Mills' political claims that "everyone ought to take part in the election not only of Parliament, but of the responsible local bodies, so that the whole people should learn to take an interest in all that concerned them, from drains to foreign policy, from the village school to national finance," had an immediate and directing influence on the policy of the time. These are but two examples of many.

Trevelyan begins his record with a description of the quiet old England that still existed in 1782, before the Industrial Revolution destroyed it. At that time the country village was the principal nursery of national character. The ruling class lived then, he says, "a life more completely and finely human than any that has been lived by a whole class since the days of the freemen of Athens. Society, when Charles Fox was its leader, was as literary and cultivated, as it was fashionable, athletic, dissipated and political." It was a privileged class, whose prerogatives were unchallenged in a time possessing an essential static view of life. Our doctrine of evolution and continual change for the better has been holding human thought for but half a century.

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Improved methods of agriculture, the factory system and machinery, the increase of population, the revolution of the means of transport, not to speak of new ideas, have upset the ancient state of affairs. In no period of our human annals have the changes been more rapid and more sweeping. The problems arising out of them have been as manifold as difficult. A corrupt government and incapable municipal administrations, obsolete laws and inveterate ideas have had to be changed and adapted to completely new conditions and purposes. New nations have arisen; new continents have awakened to political existence; new liberties have been reached and new duties have had to be recognised; an empire has developed. There is no room here to go into details. Trevelyan, in succinct and illuminative paragraphs, gives a clear account of these complex and intricate processes.

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Owing to her insular situation, whose paramount importance in this day of the aeroplanes is decreasing, Great Britain's history has developed very differently from that of any continental country. Her history of the last century is the history of the greatest liberal and civilising factor in modern humanity. Politically as well as economically she has been the leading democratic and progressive liberal Power. "In the middle of the century the five continents consisted of a number of countries, all chiefly, and some entirely, agricultural, grouped for commercial purposes round the manufacturing centre of England." At the end of the period "a wholly new type of society had developed, infinitely more complicated and interdependent in its parts and more full of potentialities for progress and disaster than anything the world has before seen. British common-sense and good nature, British idiosyncrasy and prejudice has produced, after labours, errors and victories innumerable, the strange world of modern England."

In Switzerland we are exposed to the danger of having our sense of proportion marred by the very importance and nearness of our mighty neighbours. Britain and British history, seen through German or French goggles, are very different things from what they really are. It is, indeed, not easy to understand this peculiar blend of aristocratic and democratic elements, of a spirit of co-operation and imperialism, of utilitarian philosophy and idealistic enthusiasm.

No man interested in the history of our time can possibly read Trevelyan's book without lasting profit, and, in addition, he will surely read it with much pleasure.

June, 1922.

Dr. C. E. L.

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## PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED.

*Schweizer Mustermesse*—Basle.—The June bulletin gives an account of the Sixth Basle Fair. In spite of the adverse trade conditions 812 exhibitors participated, showing a decrease as compared with last year; this decrease is, however, not so pronounced as has been the case with similar exhibitions held recently in other countries. A very considerable increase is recorded in the number of visitors as well as of buyers' cards, of the latter no less than 40,000 being issued—10,000 more than last year. Attention is drawn with satisfaction to the large attendance from foreign countries, which specially benefitted those exhibiting building materials, machines, electro-technical articles, silk fabrics, chemical products, watches and embroidery.—A special article deals with the film and cinema industry, which in the world's market now ranks third, coming directly after the coal and corn trades.

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*The World's Health*—Geneva.—The May number publishes an obituary notice of Henry Pomeroy Davison, the founder of the League of Red Cross Societies. "Born in 1867, Mr. Davison began his career in a humble position in the Liberty National Bank, and rose to be its chairman within five years. Rapid though his advancement was, he had not yet attained the zenith of his success. In 1917, having by this time become one of the best-known financiers of his day, he was elected chairman of the War Council of the American Red Cross, a post which gave him ample opportunity of displaying his devotion to the highest ideals, as well as his great personal charm. The end of the war found him with a unique insight into Red Cross activities, and about the time of the Peace Conference he conceived a far-reaching plan for the development of peace-time Red Cross activities throughout the entire world."—A number of highly interesting and instructive articles deal with the origin and organisation of the "Swiss Red Cross" (by Dr. C. de Marval, its secretary), "How American Charities raise Money," "The Proper Choice of Food" (which latter, apart from some learned discourses about calories, gives extremely useful lessons on human diet), etc.

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*Informations Economiques*—Lausanne, published by the "Bureau Industriel Suisse."—The No. 8 bulletin (May) contains a number of articles from correspondents all over the world dealing with the commercial situation and prospects of their respective spheres of influence. The bulletin, which indirectly, through the B.I.S., is subsidised by the Confederation and some of the Cantons, serves as a means of commercial propaganda abroad and proposes to enlighten the home trade about the conditions and possibilities in foreign centres. All this information is supplied free of charge, and the co-operation is invited of those residing abroad and interested in particular trades.

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*Comptoir Suisse*—Lausanne.—The June bulletin (No. 16) gives full particulars of the trades and groups which will be represented at the Third Comptoir; the latter takes place from September 9th to September 24th. It is stated that the number of, and the space booked by, exhibitors in advance is in excess of the figures for last year. The crisis is still very acute in Switzerland, but in some industries there are indications that things are on the mend.