

**LECTURES ON THE STUDY
OF HISTORY. DELIVERED
IN OXFORD, 1859-61**

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Lectures on the study of history. Delivered in Oxford, 1859-61 by Goldwin Smith

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GOLDWIN SMITH

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LECTURES ON THE
STUDY OF HISTORY.

DELIVERED IN OXFORD, 1859-61.

BY GOLDWIN SMITH, M.A.,
LATE REGIUS PROFESSOR OF MODERN HISTORY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

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LECTURES
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—
INAUGURAL.
—

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

This Chair was founded in the reign of George I., and its original object was to train students for the public

service. The foundation was double, one Chair here and one at Cambridge. Attached to each Chair were two teachers of Modern Languages, and twenty King's scholars, whose education in history and the modern languages the Professor was to superintend; and the most proficient among whom he was to recommend from time to time for employment, at home or abroad, in the service of the State. Diplomacy was evidently the first object of the foundation, for a knowledge of treaties is mentioned in the letters patent of foundation as specially necessary for the public interest. Some subsequent regulations, though of doubtful validity, named International Law and Political Economy, with the method of reading Modern History and Political Biography, as the subjects for the Professor's lectures. Thus the whole foundation may be said to have been in great measure an anticipation of the late resolution of the University to found a school of Law and Modern History. The Professorship of Modern History, the Professorship of Political Economy, the Chichele Professorship of Diplomacy and International Law, the Professor and Teachers of the Modern Languages, do now for the students of our present school just what the Professor of History and his two teachers of Modern Languages were originally intended to do for the twenty King's scholars under their care. The whole of these subjects have further been brought into connection, in the new school, with their natural associate, the study of Law.

I have failed, in spite of the kind assistance of my friends the Librarian of the Bodleian and the Keeper of the Archives, to trace the real author of what we must

allow to have been an enlightened and far-sighted scheme—a scheme which, had it taken effect, might have supplied Parliament and the public service in the last century with highly trained legislators and statesmen, and perhaps have torn some dark and disastrous pages from our history. It is not likely that the praise is due to the King himself, who, though not without sense and public spirit, was indifferent to intellectual pursuits. Conjecture points to Sir Robert Walpole. That Minister was at the height of power when the Professorship was founded under George I. When the foundation was confirmed under George II., he had just thrust aside the feeble pretensions of Sir Spencer Compton, and gathered the reins of Government, for a moment placed in the weak hands of the favourite, again into his own strong and skilful grasp. If Walpole was the real founder, if he even sanctioned the foundation, it is a remarkable testimony from a political leader of a turn of mind practical to coarseness, and who had discarded the literary statesmen of the Somers and Halifax school, to the value of high political education as a qualification for the public service. It is also creditable to the memory of a Minister, the reputed father of the system of Parliamentary corruption, that he should have so far anticipated one of the best of modern reforms as to have been willing to devote a large amount of his patronage to merit, and to take that merit on the recommendation of Universities, one of which, at least, was by no means friendly to the Crown.

King George I., however, or his Minister, was not the first of English rulers who had endeavoured to draw