

of the greatest masters of historical criticism, "that the same strict rules of evidence are applicable to historical composition, which are employed in courts of justice, and in the practical business of life, history must remain open to the well-grounded suspicions under which it often labors, and will, by many, be treated with that despairing scepticism, which is one of the great obstacles to the advancement of knowledge. The historian will do well to remember the old legal adage, '*Mendax in uno, præsumitur mendax in alio,*' and if, in putting together his materials, he makes additions from his imagination, he incurs the danger of being met—by persons who adopt Sir R. Walpole's canon of judgment—with general disbelief."¹

Those of us, indeed, whose mission it is (in the opinion of our critics) only to *destroy*² may derive consolation from some remarks of Buckle, which occur in his encomium upon Descartes. Of the pioneer of Modern Philosophy, he says—"He deserves the gratitude of posterity, not so much on account of what he built up, as on account of what he pulled down. His life was one great and successful warfare against the prejudices and traditions of men. . . . To prefer, therefore, even the most successful discoverers of physical laws to this great innovator and disturber of tradition, is just as if we should prefer knowledge to freedom, and believe that science is better than liberty. We must, indeed, always be grateful to these eminent thinkers, to whose labors we are indebted for that vast body of physical truths which we now possess. But let us reserve the full measure of our homage for those far greater men, who have not hesitated to attack and destroy the most inveterate prejudices—men who, *by removing the pressure of tradition*, have purified the very source and fountain of our knowledge, and secured its future progress, by casting off obstacles in the presence of which progress was impossible."³

Until quite recently—and it must be frankly confessed that the practice is not yet extinct—the historians of the craft have treated their subject in a free and discretionary style, by interpolations, not derived from extrinsic evidence, but framed according to their own notions of internal probability.⁴ They have supplied from conjecture what they think

¹ "Testimonium testis, quando in unâ parte falsum, præsumitur esse et in ceteris partibus falsum" (Menochius, de Præsumptionibus, lib. v., præf. 23).

² Lewis, On the Methods of Observation and Reasoning in Politics, vol. i., p. 246. The same writer observes: "It is of paramount importance that truth, and not error, should be accredited; that men, when they are led, should be led by safe guides; and that they should thus profit by those processes of reasoning and investigation which have been carried on in accordance with logical rules, but which they are not able to verify for themselves" (On the Influence of Authority in matters of Opinion, p. 9).

³ As the term "iconoclast" has been frequently applied to me by my friend, the Rev. A. F. A. Woodford, who, moreover, suggests that my historical studies evince a policy of "dynamite," the attention of my reverend critic is especially invited to the following observations of Dr Arnold: "To tax any one with want of reverence, because he pays no respect to what we venerate, is either irrelevant, or is a mere confusion. The fact, so far as it is true, is no reproach, but an honor; because to reverence all persons and all things is absolutely wrong. . . . If it be meant that he is wanting in proper reverence, not respecting what is really to be respected, that is assuming the whole question at issue, because what we call divine, he calls an idol; and as, supposing we are in the right, we are bound to fall down and worship, so, supposing him to be in the right, he is no less bound to pull it to the ground and destroy it" (Lectures on Modern History).

⁴ History of Civilisation in England, vol. ii., p. 83. As Turgot finely says: "Ce n'est pas l'erreur qui s'oppose aux progrès de la vérité. Ce sont la mollesse, l'ontêtement, l'esprit de routine, tout ce qui porte à l'inaction" (Pensées, Œuvres de Turgot, vol. ii., p. 848).

⁵ See Chap. XII., p. 126.