

I will mention a long forgotten suggestion of my own, made when the school of modern history was first established in this University.

"Like my predecessor, Dr. Freeman, who along with his asperities had strong masculine sense, I have a high respect for the method of study pursued here before the modern changes. For men who wished to improve themselves I believe it to have provided as good an education as was ever tried. We had certain books, the best of their kind and limited in number, which we were required to know perfectly. We learnt our Greek history from Herodotus and Thucydides, our Latin history from Livy and Tacitus. We learnt our philosophy from Aristotle; and it was our business to learn by heart Aristotle's own words, weighing every one of them; and thus the thoughts and the language of those illustrious writers were built into our minds, and there indelibly remain. I asked myself whether there was any book on English history which could be studied with the same exactness. The *Chronicles* were too loose in their composition. They were to be read, but were insufficient. The famous modern writers, studying the past as we study the stars from a moving platform, were being continually corrected from a change in the point of view, and the shifting of lights and shadows.

"I had myself occasion to examine the early English Statutes and the Rolls of Parliament, and it struck me that in these compressed and pregnant Acts, where there is no verbiage and every word has a meaning, there was something like what I was in search of. You could not gather from them a continuous narrative, but you had fixed points all along of clear and brilliant light. Merely to be able to construe and explain the old Norman French and the technical Latin would require considerable attainments.

Add to this a knowledge of the *Chronicles* and other outside sources, a knowledge of the occasion when each of the Statutes was passed, and you would have an authentic bony structure round which you could build up things themselves instead of the wilderness of talk about things in which students have so often to wander. Extracts from this or that Act are not enough, for the object is to obtain an insight into the thoughts of the time. In the Statute Book the student would be fed from the spring, and would learn his history as we learnt our philosophy—from the *Ethics* and the *Organon*.

"I was unconnected with the University, and the suggestion was not taken up. But I still believe that it would be worth trying. I still believe that the Acts of the English Parliament down to the Reformation contain the truest history of the country that we have. Whether it can be put in practice others and not I must consider. The examinations are conducted by able and experienced men who can judge far better than I can do what methods should be followed. I am myself too old to make experiments, even if I had a right to make them, which I have not. I can merely say that in such contributions as I have made myself to the history of the sixteenth century the Statute Book has been the backbone of my work. If the statesmen who drew the Acts of the Reformation and the Parliaments which passed them into laws were the sycophants and cowards which we are generally told that they were, what I have written is worth nothing. If they were honourable men, as I believe that they were, there will be found in their own stately language a sufficient and true explanation of each successive step in the change. Anyway, I acted myself on the principles which I have recommended. The Statute Book gave me the skeleton of my figure. The