

essential respects with those of any other country, not even excepting the United States or England; but still there is much to learn, and it is to the young men of the present day, who are now going out into the world to fight the practical battles of life, that we must look to continue the great work of those who have preceded them.

We need not be apprehensive that these studies will educate mere theorists. It is a truism to say that theory must always precede practice. Certainly it has its valuable influences on all political systems, whatever the purely practical politician may say in his contempt for studies beyond his ken. Who ever doubts now the importance of the political ideas of Montesquieu, or the value of the lessons drawn by De Tocqueville from his study of American democracy, or the soundness of the teaching of Burke, or of Hamilton in the 'Federalist'? Or who can exaggerate the influence of the work of Adam Smith in the wide field of Political Economy, since his time so important a branch of Political Science?

But among the great works that have been written on government, there is none that affords a more striking example of the influence that one book can make upon the political institutions of the world, than "*De l'Esprit des Loix*," which was written in the middle of the eighteenth century. No student of institutions should fail to read carefully a work replete with learning and showing a remarkable insight into the meaning and working of the English government, and the fundamental principles of civil liberty. He may be justly considered the founder of the historical school of modern times which comprises among its teachers many of the most learned and brilliant men who have been, or are now, connected with leading universities in America and Europe. He saw intuitively that we must interpret laws by history, and interpret history by custom. The influence of his opinions can be traced throughout the 'Federalist,' that excellent series of commentaries on the American constitution, which, it has been well observed by Chancellor Kent, "is equally admirable in the depth of its wisdom, the comprehensiveness of its views, the sagacity of its reflections, and the freshness, patriotism, candour, simplicity, and eloquence with which its truths are uttered and recommended." Hamilton, Madison, and the other authors of the constitution were deeply imbued by the ideas of the French writer. History must place him among the great architects of political systems. His ideas have inspired the statesmen of France in establishing their present parliamentary system, and have had their influence on the political institutions of Germany. "Montesquieu," says an eminent French writer,¹ "has left us something more than precepts, he has left a method which enables us to develop his thought and apply it to contingencies that he could not foresee. He exercised a deep and permanent influence in his own time, and is full of teaching for ours. His name is associated with many of the most excellent reforms which this century has seen in France, and he is the representative of the French spirit in all its clearness, breadth, generosity and wisdom."

I can well remember that the discussion of the union of the British North American provinces was actually left for years to theorists in the press, or was chiefly valued because it gave opportunities for brilliant rhetorical flashes in legislative halls. But the day came when this theoretical problem had to be solved to meet the political exigencies of old Canada, and the confederation of the provinces became a reality. Indeed,

¹ Albert Sorel in his *Life of Montesquieu* in the series of *Great French Writers*, p. 179.