

about, faithfully delineated, with all the circumstances that surround them, completely perceived, and made intelligible, and then let them unfold their characters in their actions with such insight as you can gain into their inner natures. You will forbear to judge.

"If you have done your work well there will be always something which evades your censure, and which you must be content to treat as in a work of art.

"Unless you have faithfully mastered the particulars of the situation you will only mislead. You had better have left the subject alone. Orestes killed his mother. If that were all we knew, he was a monster, but that mother had killed his father, and judgment is suspended into awe. You may say that in history the outward fact is all that we can know, and that insight into the heart is impossible. It may be so. It often is so. But when it is so no true history is possible. . . . Where we cannot have the real motive we may, if we please, invent false motives, and create a sort of spurious legend; but history it is not, and is so far worse than fiction, that it pretends to be truth.

"But how, you ask, are we to penetrate at all into the inner secrets of past times? How are we to understand the characters of men who lived long ago, under conditions so unlike our own, when the forms of men and things have grown visionary in the mist of distance? When they do melt thus into mist, be content to say so and leave them. I think it wrong to take the names of real men and draw pictures of them out of the imagination, as Raphael painted the Apostles.

"But something can be done, if not all. Remember, first, that in accounts of events which occurred in distant centuries you do not have the

events themselves, but the events as reflected in the minds of the relator. Therefore, if you would understand a particular period study the original authorities. Go to the chronicles written by men who lived at the time and breathed the contemporary air. Drink at the fountain. The stream of tradition contracts always some alien matter from the soil which it flows through. Read, if you can find them, the letters and writings of the persons that you are concerned with. Read what they say themselves. Read what others who knew them said about them, and do not trust your own imagination. Take nothing at second-hand. The originals will always contain something which is lost in the translation of paraphrase. The language itself breathes the atmosphere in which it grew. Do not rest while any point which you can reach remains obscure. You will then find that the forms of departed things rise up and take shape before you. 'This is how Carlyle called up out of the world of shadows the real Cromwell; and the half enthusiast, half impostor, which had haunted our historical literature disappeared for ever.

"But such a method, you will say, involves immense labour. What we want is a general notion of the history of at least our own island, and you tell us to give the labour of a lifetime to a single age. I can only say that the general notion you ask for will not be the history, but only the opinion of this or that writer about the history; and each succeeding generation will provide what it needs of this kind for itself. But I am speaking to genuine students. Try the plan which I set before you, and you will see that one such effort successfully made will shine like a lamp in the past, and will illuminate other subjects besides itself.

"But without dwelling upon this,