

III. ANSWER TO PROFESSOR BURGESS 23

that his first duty is to 'present his credentials'. However, as Professor Burgess thinks credentials are the first thing, I will examine those which he submits. He relies first of all on his blood, of which he judges that it must be good, because he comes of an English stock. He is proud of that because England has done something for liberty and self-government at home and borne the white man's burden throughout the world. Here, I feel, is an American who is bound to do justice to my country and, as you describe him as a scholar and historian, there is a second strong point in his favour. I have myself been for many years a student of the historians from Thucydides to Ranke. The shelves in front of me hold more than thirty volumes of Ranke's histories from which I have learned as much as I have been able to take in. Ranke set up, I think, the right standard of impartiality. The historian's one aim, he thought, was to understand what had happened. Ranke wanted to understand the history of Europe; he did not start out to praise or blame or to take sides. He did not confine himself to his own country of Germany. In 1829 he wrote an account of the Servian revolution, afterwards enlarged into a history of Servia. From this work I first learned that the cause of Servia in her struggle for freedom is that of European civilization against barbarism. From Ranke's history of England I first learned that England lives and has lived not merely for herself, but for the freedom of Europe and for the resistance to its conquest by any empire or by any despot. We have in England a historical school of which Stubbs, Freeman, York-Powell, and Firth have in turn been the representatives at Oxford. Its leading idea is that historical inquiry must rest upon the scrupulous examination of the evidence.