

The highest ideal that Plato, the king of philosophers, could conceive was the united and self-sufficing *city*. But even in his time, the facts of history had begun to change,—the germs of new conditions had begun to appear; and before the time of his great successor, the cities of Greece had come under the dominating influence of Macedonia; they had lost their ancient independence, and formed but a small part of the *Empire* of Alexander. When the *Politics* of Aristotle was being written, the city of Rome had spread her power over central Italy, and had laid the firm foundation of her universal dominion.

That dominion was at length established, and the world was ruled for many centuries from its centre on the Seven Hills. The *facts* of Grecian history had passed away, and slowly, reluctantly, but inevitably, the *theory* of the City-State had followed them. The Roman Empire had now become the one great fact of human history. That fact produced its corresponding theory in the science of politics. All the political thought of the middle ages was pervaded with a belief in universal empire. It was the ideal of the noblest spirits of the times. It was the dream of popes and emperors, of poets and philosophers. But the stern *facts* of history had long been changed. Long before Dante wrote his *De Monarchia*, the great fact of universal empire had disappeared, and at the date of its publication, new conditions, entirely inconceivable to the mediæval philosopher, were beginning to arise. The inhabitants of England had asserted their independence of either claimant to universal empire,—of either emperor or pope. They had become assimilated and differentiated; a new race with a new language had begun its career; Englishmen had become a distinct and independent *nation*. Across the channel, Philip the Fair had triumphed over aggressive Papacy without, and

turbulent nobles within; Frenchmen, with their own language and their own race characteristics, had also become a *nation*. In the mountains of Castile, the germs of the Spanish *nation* were rapidly developing,—a nation which came quickly to maturity, and was the first to startle the world with the vastness of its power. Yet, while *facts* were thus moving irresistibly onward under the guidance of a Wisdom higher than that of man, the political *theorists*, still living in the past, were basing their ideas of government upon the worn-out conception of universal monarchy. It needed the shocks and storms of the Reformation and of the Thirty Years' War to awaken in them the realization that the old state of things had passed away. The great fact of modern history, the existence of a number of independent *national* States, struggling with each other, much like the cities of Greece before Rome arose across the Adriatic and enveloped them with her absorbing power, at last presented itself clearly and unmistakably to the minds of men.

For four hundred years that fact has been before us. We have seen Britain leading the world in commerce, in colonization, and methods of practical government; and we have admired the splendid literature of an Elizabethan or a Victorian age. We have seen France rising at one time to be the arbiter of Europe, and threatening to renew at Versailles the universal monarchy of Rome; we have seen her falling into the lowest depths of corruption and disgrace; and then, after one dark and despairing struggle with herself, in which she seemed the very soul of humanity in conflict with long centuries of its accumulated wrong, we have seen her stand forth the victor, the leader of the world in passionate devotion to the ideal, the most ardent champion of the great principles of human brotherhood and freedom. We have seen another nation, rude and half-civilized, half