

great men, or of a number of great charters or constitutions, but as a slow growth and development. There do come times when a revolution seems to alter the face of society, when some constitutional change marks an epoch; but even then we cannot really understand the change unless we understand the previous causes, and the state of things which the change affected. Constitutional History thus understood is therefore, in the main, what the constitutional lawyer is apt to say it is not, "the steady growth of political changes," and not "occasional abrupt turns by organic amendment."

There is one other ambiguity to which we must refer before leaving the subject. The writer to whom I have already referred speaks of the legal conception of Constitutional History as itself inaccurate when compared with the *strict* sense of the term, which he thus defines:

"The aim of a Constitutional History is to give an account of the way in which the people of any country have governed themselves. This assumes that the people do govern themselves, that they form a nation, and that they are possessed of sovereign power. None but a self-ruling people can, in strictness, have a Constitution or a Constitutional History, because the meaning of the term constitution is the agreement or understanding whereby the whole people, the rulers and the ruled, choose to govern themselves."

This, you will see, is a special and derivative use of the word *Constitution*. Of course, there is nothing to prevent a writer from giving this meaning to the word, and confining himself to the history of very recent times in the great kingdoms and republics of Europe and America, with some occasional glances at ancient and mediæval republics, putting out of sight the history of the Roman Empire and nine-tenths of the history of modern Europe. But for our purpose,—to gain a true understanding of the forces at work in a political society,—this is insufficient.