

I was always entranced by the strange half-lights, the shifting ideas, and the obedience to natural law, which the scene displayed.

Down to 1757 my materials were chiefly gathered from the Record Office and the Manuscript Department of the British Museum, to whose officials I am indebted for their courtesy; after 1757 the Record Office was obliged by its regulations to close its doors to me, and I was thrown back on contemporary writers, on Blue books, and on those second-hand authors, who have had access to first-hand authorities which I have not had. When I differ from what I have called second-hand authors, it must not be supposed that I have not considered or do not respect because I do not mention their opinions. I have neither room nor taste for discussion. History from my point of view has only to do with the movement of events. If I differ from any official point of view in any current or recent controversy, the same thing must be borne in mind, and it must be also remembered that I have not seen a single unprinted document between 1757 and the present day, that I do not know for instance what was argued at the Hague, and that I write as a pure impressionist.