

slavery. Yet without slavery there would have been no war. If not the *causa causans*, it was the *causa sine qua non*. The value of Sir John Acton's lecture lies chiefly in the ability with which he dissects the American Constitution, and indicates, sometimes in the words of its authors, its weak points. Whatever may be thought of his constructive faculty, his critical acumen was not surpassed by any of his less learned contemporaries.

In 1867, and the early part of 1868, Sir John Acton wrote regularly for the *Chronicle*, a weekly paper of high repute during its brief existence, contributing a narrative of current events in Italy during the period of Mentana, and the second French occupation of Rome. On the 10th of March 1868 he lectured again at Bridgnorth on the Rise and Fall of the Mexican Empire. This is in my opinion the best popular lecture that Acton ever gave, and I do not know where I could lay my hands on a better. It is clear, spirited, eloquent, and so perfectly well arranged that the whole story of Louis Napoleon's Mexican Expedition, with its plausible pretext, and its miserable failure, was told, not meagrely but completely, in the compass of an hour. The joint intervention of England, France, and Spain in the affairs of Mexico did not last long. Its object was to obtain redress for injuries to European residents, and payment of debts due to subjects of the three Powers. England and Spain soon discovered that the French Emperor had quite other designs, being intent on substituting a Mexican Empire for the Mexican Republic. Sir John Acton explained why in his opinion, which has not been justified by experience, Mexico was unable to stand alone. "A society so constituted could not make a nation. There was no middle class, no impulse to industry, no common civilisation, no public spirit, no sense of patriotism. The Indians were not suffered to acquire wealth or knowledge, and every class was kept in ignorance and in rigorous exclusion; when therefore the Mexicans made themselves independent, the difficulty was to throw off not the bondage but the nonage in which they had been