The moral fervour that glows in the closing pages of the Machiavelli burns with an intenser heat in the treatise " On Compromise," of which the motto is, " It makes all the difference in the world whether we put Truth in the first place or in the second place." The writer sets out to find the boundary between " wise suspense in forming opinions " and " disingenuousness and self-illusion," between " wise reserve in expressing opinions" and "voluntary dissimulation," between " wise tardiness in trying to realise them " and "indolence and pusillanimity" in neglecting the attempt. The book is throughout an untiring rebuke to those who adopt the conventional path of easy compromise ; the tone of it stimulating, trenchant, thorough, very foreign to an age which is more ready to ask a question than to stay for the answer. No one, who reads intelligently and who can be quit of political or religious bias, will lay it down without finding that he has been undergoing a very vigorous self-examination.

The chapter on " the possible utility of error " is another extremely ingenious attempt to oppose on utilitarian grounds those disingenuous persons who support religion not for its truth but for its expediency. Yet Gibbon and Voltaire in familiar oracles and Bagehot when he speaks of " the pain of new ideas " have taught, what few students of history and hardly any statesmen would deny, that an age of popular faith is always happier, more vigorous, more contented, more productive, than an age of popular doubt, and that even religious credulity is always pleasanter, alike for the society and the individual, than religious vacancy. Surely, then, the moral principle which forbids us to encourage and countenance error is something better than " registered generalisation from experience," out of which alone, Mr. Morley will have it, true moral principles are built up. The explanation—it is not (intellectually speaking) an excuse —is, perhaps, that when " Compromise " was written the writer was expecting the early advent of a new religion— not Comte's, but something akin to it—which should arise,