

resulted from cherishing an impossibly high ideal, prevented it from coming to the light. One of his reasons for not beginning the History of Liberty was that the whole truth about the French Revolution had not yet been discovered. But the library was collected to illustrate the History, and thus the books, now at Cambridge, have a peculiar interest, or rather a peculiar character, of their own. When they were at Aldenham, Lord Acton knew the precise position which each volume occupied in its case and shelf. It is related that on one of his visits to his beloved room, while the house was let, the servants found him reading when they came in the morning to open the shutters. He had forgotten to go to bed. Mr. Bryce's *Studies in Contemporary Biography* describe in a peculiarly vivid and impressive manner how Acton was dominated and haunted by the idea that he never fulfilled. Late one night, in his library at Cannes, while Mr. Bryce was staying with him, it found vent in speech. "He spoke for six or seven minutes only; but he spoke like a man inspired; seeming as if, from some mountain summit high in air, he saw beneath him the far-winding path of human progress from dim Cimmerian shores of prehistoric shadow into the fuller yet broken and fitful light of the modern time. The eloquence was splendid, yet greater than the eloquence was the penetrating vision which discerned through all events and in all ages the play of those moral forces, now creating, now destroying, always transmuting, which had moulded and remodelled institutions, and had given to the human spirit its ceaselessly changing forms of energy. It was as if the whole landscape of history had been suddenly lit up by a burst of sunlight. I have never heard from any other lips any discourse like this, nor from his did I ever hear the like again."

With Professor Döllinger Sir John Acton visited France, and made many distinguished friends, including the foremost among French Liberal Catholics, Montalembert; Alexis de Tocqueville, the famous author of *Democracy in America*, whose memoirs record the blunders