

IDEA OF A UNIVERSAL HISTORY ON A COSMOPOLITICAL PLAN (1784)

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Whatsoever difference there may be in our notions of the freedom of the will metaphysically considered, it is evident that the manifestations of this will, viz. human actions, are as much under the control of universal laws of nature as any other physical phenomena. It is the province of History to narrate these manifestations; and, let their causes be ever so secret, we know that History, simply by taking its station at a distance and contemplating the agency of the human will upon a large scale, aims at unfolding to our view a regular stream of tendency in the great succession of events, — so that the very same course of incidents which, taken separately and individually, would have seemed perplexed, incoherent, and lawless, yet viewed in their connexion and as the actions of the human species and not of independent beings, never fail to discover a steady and continuous, though slow, development of certain great predispositions in our nature. Thus, for instance, deaths, births, and marriages, considering how much they are separately dependent on the freedom of the human will, should seem to be subject to no law according to which any calculation could be made beforehand of their amount: and yet the yearly registers of these events in great countries prove that they go on with as much conformity to the laws of nature as the oscillations of the weather. These, again, are events which in detail are so far irregular that we cannot predict them individually; and yet, taken as a whole series, we find that they never fail to support the growth of plants, the currents of rivers, and other arrangements of nature, in a uniform and uninterrupted course. Individual men, and even nations, are little aware that, whilst they are severally pursuing their own peculiar and often contradictory purposes, they are unconsciously following the guidance of a great natural purpose which is wholly unnoticed by themselves, and are thus promoting and making efforts for a great process which, even if they perceived it, they would little regard.

Considering that men, taken collectively as a body, do not proceed, like brute animals, under the law of an instinct, nor yet again, like rational cosmopolites, under the law of a preconcerted plan, one might imagine that no systematic history of their actions (such, for instance, as the history of bees or beavers) could be possible. At the sight of the actions of man displayed on the great stage of the world, it is impossible to escape a certain degree of disgust: with all the occasional indications of wisdom scattered here and there, we cannot but perceive the whole sum of these actions to be a web of folly, childish vanity, and often even of the idlest wickedness and spirit of destruction. Hence, at last, one is puzzled to know what judgment to form of our species, so conceited of its high advantages. In such a perplexity there is no resource for the philosopher but this, — that, finding it impossible to presume in the human race any rational purpose of its own, he must endeavor to detect some natural purpose in such a senseless current of human actions; by means of which a history of creatures that pursue no plan of their own may yet admit a systematic form as the history of creatures

that are blindly pursuing a plan of nature. Let us now see whether we can succeed in finding out a clue to such a history, leaving it to nature to produce a man capable of executing it, — just as she produced a Kepler who unexpectedly brought the eccentric courses of the planets under determinate laws, and afterwards a Newton who explained these laws out of a universal ground in Nature: —

THE FIRST PROPOSITION

All tendencies of any creature to which it is predisposed by Nature are destined in the end to develop themselves perfectly and agreeably to their final purpose.

External as well as internal (or anatomical) examination confirms this remark in all animals. An organ which is not to be used, a natural arrangement that misses its purpose, would be a contradiction in physics. Once departing from this fundamental proposition, we have a Nature no longer tied to laws, but objectless and working at random; and a cheerless reign of Chance steps into the place of Reason.

THE SECOND PROPOSITION

In Man, as the sole rational creature upon earth, those tendencies which have the use of his reason for their object are destined to obtain their perfect development in the species only, and not in the individual.

Reason in a creature is a faculty for extending the rules and purposes of the exercise of all its powers far beyond natural instinct; and it is illimitable in its plans. It works, however, not instinctively, but tentatively, by means of practice, through progress and regress, in order to ascend gradually from one degree of illumination to another. On this account, either it would be necessary for each man to live an inordinate length of time in order to learn how to make a perfect use of his natural tendencies; or else, supposing the actual case that Nature has limited his term of life, she must then require an incalculable series of generations (each delivering its quota of knowledge to its immediate successor) in order to ripen the germs which she has laid in our species to that degree of development which corresponds with her final purpose. And the period of this mature development must exist at least in idea to Man as the object of his efforts: because otherwise his own natural predispositions must of necessity be regarded as objectless; and this would at once take away all practical principles, and would expose Nature, the wisdom of whose arrangements must in all other cases be assumed as a fundamental postulate, to the suspicion of capricious dealing in the case of Man only.

THE THIRD PROPOSITION

It is the will of Nature that Man should owe to himself alone everything which transcends the mere mechanic constitution of his animal existence, and that he should be susceptible of no other happiness or perfection than what he has created for himself, instinct apart, through his own reason.

Nature does nothing superfluously, and in the use of means to her ends does not play the prodigal. Having given to Man reason, and freedom of the will grounded upon reason, she had hereby sufficiently made known the purpose which governed her in the

choice of the furniture and appointments, intellectual and physical, with which she has accoutered him. Thus provided, he had no need for the guidance of instinct, or for knowledge and forethought created to his hand; for these he was to be indebted to himself. The means of providing for his own shelter from the elements, for his own security, and the whole superstructure of delights which add comfort and embellishment to life, were to be the work of his own hands. So far indeed has she pushed this principle that she seems to have been frugal even to niggardliness in the dispensation of her animal endowments to Man, and to have calculated her allowance to the nicest rigor of the demand in the very earliest stage of his existence: as if it had been her intention hereby to proclaim that the highest degree of power, of intellectual perfection, and of happiness to which he should ever toil upwards from a condition utterly savage, must all be wrung and extorted from the difficulties and thwartings of his situation, and the merit therefore be exclusively his own; thus implying that she had at heart his own rational self-estimation rather than his convenience or comfort. She has indeed beset Man with difficulties; and in no way could she have so clearly made known that her purpose with Man was not that he might live in pleasure, but that by a strenuous wrestling with those difficulties he might make himself worthy of living in pleasure. Undoubtedly it seems surprising on this view of the case that the earlier generations appear to exist only for the sake of the latter, viz. for the sake of forwarding that edifice of man's grandeur in which only the latest generations are to dwell, though all have undesignedly taken part in raising it. Mysterious as this appears, it is, however, at the same time necessary, if we once assume a race of rational animals as destined by means of this characteristic reason to a perfect development of their tendencies, and subject to mortality in the individual, but immortal in the species.

THE FOURTH PROPOSITION

The means which Nature employs to bring about the development of all the tendencies she has laid in Man is the antagonism of these tendencies in the social state — no farther, however, than to that point at which this antagonism becomes the cause of social arrangements founded in law.

By antagonism of this kind I mean the unsocial sociality of man, — that is, a tendency to enter the social state, combined with a perpetual resistance to that tendency which is continually threatening to dissolve it. Man has gregarious inclinations, feeling himself in the social state more than Man, by means of the development thus given to his natural tendencies. But he has also strong anti-gregarious inclinations, prompting him to insulate himself, which arise out of the unsocial desire (existing concurrently with his social propensities) to force all things into compliance with his own humor, — a propensity to which he naturally anticipates resistance from his consciousness of a similar spirit of resistance to others existing in himself. Now, this resistance it is which awakens all the powers of Man, drives him to master his propensity to indolence, and, in the shape of ambition, love of honor, or avarice, impels him to procure distinction for himself amongst his fellows. In this way arise the first steps from the savage state to the state of culture, which consists peculiarly in the social worth of Man. Talents of every

kind are now unfolded, taste formed, and by gradual increase of light a preparation is made for such a mode of thinking as is capable of converting the rude natural tendency to moral distinctions into determinate practical principles, and finally of exalting a social concert that had been pathologically extorted from the mere necessities of situation into a moral union founded on the reasonable choice. But for these anti-social propensities, so unamiable in themselves, which give birth to that resistance which every man meets with in his own self-interested pretensions, an Arcadian life would arise, of perfect harmony and mutual love, such as must suffocate and stifle all talents in their very germs. Men, as gentle as the sheep they fed, would communicate to their existence no higher value than belongs to mere animal life, and would leave the vacuum of creation, which exists in reference to the final purpose of man's nature as a rational nature, unfilled. Thanks, therefore, to Nature for the enmity, for the jealous spirit of envious competition, for the insatiable thirst after wealth and power! These wanting, all the admirable tendencies in man's nature would remain forever undeveloped. Man, for his own sake as an individual, wishes for concord; but Nature knows better what is good for Man as a species; and she ordains discord. He would live in ease and passive content: but Nature wills that he shall precipitate himself out of this luxury of indolence into labors and hardships, in order that he may devise remedies against them, and thus raise himself above them by an intellectual conquest, not sink below them by an unambitious evasion. The impulses which she has with this view laid in his moral constitution, the sources of that anti-sociality and universal antagonism from which so many evils arise, but which again stimulate a fresh reaction of the faculties, and by consequence more and more aid the development of the primitive tendencies, all tend to betray the adjusting hand of a wise Creator, not that of an Evil Spirit that has bungled in the execution of his own designs, or has malevolently sought to perplex them with evil.

THE FIFTH PROPOSITION

The highest problem for the Human Species, to the solution of which it is irresistibly urged by natural impulses, is the establishment of a universal Civil Society founded on the empire of political justice.

Since it is only in the social state that the final purpose of Nature with regard to Man (*viz.* the development of all his tendencies) can be accomplished, — and in such a social state as combines with the utmost possible freedom and consequent antagonism of its members the most rigorous determination of the boundaries of this freedom, in order that the freedom of such individual may co-exist with the freedom of others, — and since it is the will of Nature that this as well as all other objects of his destination should be the work of men's own efforts: on these accounts a society in which freedom under laws is united with the greatest possible degree of irresistible power, — *i.e.* a perfect civil constitution, — is the highest problem of Nature for Man: because it is only by the solution of this problem that Nature can accomplish the rest of her purposes with our species. Into this state of restraint Man, who is otherwise so much enamored of lawless freedom, is compelled to enter by necessity, — and that the greatest of all

necessity, viz. a necessity self-imposed; his natural inclinations making it impossible for Man to preserve a state of perfect liberty for any length of time in the neighborhood of his fellows. But, under the restraint of a civil community, these very inclinations lead to the best effects: just as trees in a forest, for the very reason that each endeavors to rob the other of air and sun, compel each other to shoot upwards in quest of both, and thus attain a fine erect growth, — whereas those which stand aloof from each other under no mutual restraint, and throw out their boughs at pleasure, become crippled and distorted. All the gifts of art and cultivation which adorn the human race, — in short, the most beautiful forms of social order, — are the fruits of the anti-social principle, which is compelled to discipline itself, and by means won from the very resistance of Man's situation in this world to give perfect development to all the germs of Nature.

THE SIXTH PROPOSITION

This problem is at the same time the most difficult of all, and the one which is latest solved by Man.

The difficulty which is involved in the bare idea of such a problem is this: — Man is an animal that, so long as he lives amongst others of his species, stands in need of a master. For he inevitably abuses his freedom in regard to his equals; and, although, as a reasonable creature, he wishes for a law that may set bounds to the liberty of all, yet do his self-interested animal propensities seduce him into making an exception in his own favor whomsoever he dares. He requires a master, therefore, to curb his will, and to compel him into submission to a universal will which may secure the possibility of universal freedom. Now, where is he to find this master? Of necessity, amongst the human species. But, as a human being, this master will also be an animal that requires a master. Lodged in one or many, it is impossible that the supreme and irresponsible power can be certainly prevented from abusing its authority. Hence it is that this problem is the most difficult of any; nay, its perfect solution is impossible: out of wood so crooked and perverse as that which man is made of, nothing absolutely straight can ever be wrought. An approximation to this idea is therefore all which Nature enjoins us. That it is also the last of all problems to which the human species addresses itself is clear from this, — that it presupposes just notions of the nature of a good constitution, great experience, and above all a will favorably disposed to the adoption of such a constitution: three elements that can hardly, and not until after many fruitless trials, be expected to concur.

THE SEVENTH PROPOSITION

The problem of the establishment of a perfect Constitution of Society depends upon the problem of a system of International Relations adjusted to law, and apart from this latter problem cannot be solved.

To what purpose is labor bestowed upon a civil constitution adjusted to law for individual men, i.e. upon the creation of a Commonwealth? The same anti-social impulse which first drove men to such a creation is again the cause that every commonwealth, in its external relations, — i.e. as a state in reference to other states, —

occupies the same ground of lawless and uncontrolled liberty; consequently each must anticipate from the other the very same evils which compelled individuals to enter the social state. Nature accordingly avails herself of the spirit of enmity in Man, as existing even in the great national corporations of that animal, for the purpose of attaining through the inevitable antagonism of this spirit a state of rest and security: i.e. by wars, by the immoderate exhaustion of incessant preparations for war, and by the pressure of evil consequences which war at last entails upon any nation even through the midst of peace, she drives nations to all sorts of experiments and expedients; and finally, after infinite devastations, ruin, and universal exhaustion of energy, to one which reason should have suggested without the cost of so sad an experience, — viz. to quit the barbarous condition of lawless power, and to enter into a federal league of nations, in which even the weakest member looks for its rights and for protection not to its own power, or its own adjudication, but to this great confederation (*Fœdus Amphictyonum*), to the united power, and the adjudication of the collective will. Visionary as this idea may seem, and as such laughed at in the Abbé de St. Pierre and in Rousseau (possibly because they deemed it too near to its accomplishment), — it is notwithstanding the inevitable[2] resource and mode of escape under that pressure of evil which nations reciprocally inflict; and, hard as it may be to realize such an idea, states must of necessity be driven at last to the very same resolution to which the savage man of nature was driven with equal reluctance — viz. to sacrifice brutal liberty, and to seek peace and security in a civil constitution founded upon law. All wars therefore are so many tentative essays (not in the intention of Man, but in the intention of Nature) to bring about new relations of states, and by revolutions and dismemberments to form new political bodies. These again, either from internal defects or external attacks, cannot support themselves, but must undergo similar revolutions; until at last, partly by the best possible arrangement of civil government within, and partly by common concert and legal compact without, a condition is attained which, like a well-ordered commonwealth, can maintain itself in the way of an automaton.

Now, whether (in the first place) it is to be anticipated from an epicurean concourse of efficient causes that states, like atoms, by accidental shocking together, should go through all sorts of new combinations to be again dissolved by the fortuitous impulse of fresh shocks, until at length by pure accident some combination emerges capable of supporting itself (a case of luck that could hardly be looked for); or whether (in the second place) we should rather assume that Nature is in this instance pursuing her regular course of raising our species gradually from the lower steps of animal existence to the very highest of a human existence, and that not by any direct interposition in our favor, but through man's own spontaneous and artificial efforts (spontaneous, but yet extorted from him by his situation), and in this apparently wild arrangement of things is developing with perfect regularity the original tendencies she has implanted; or whether (in the third place) it is more reasonable to believe that out of all this action and reaction of the human species upon itself nothing in the shape of a wise result will ever issue, — that it will continue to be as it has been, and therefore that it cannot be known beforehand, but that the discord which is so natural to our species

will finally prepare for us a hell of evils under the most moral condition of society, such as may swallow up this very moral condition itself and all previous advance in culture by a reflux of the original barbaric spirit of desolation (a fate, by the way, against which it is impossible to be secured under the government of blind chance, with which liberty uncontrolled by law is identical, unless by underlying this chance with a secret nexus of wisdom): – to all this the answer turns upon the following question: Whether it be reasonable to assume a final purpose of all natural processes and arrangements in the parts, and yet a want of purpose in the whole? What therefore the objectless condition of savage life effected in the end, – viz. that it checked the development of the natural tendencies in the human species, but then, by the very evils it thus caused, drove man into a state where those tendencies could unfold and mature themselves, namely, the state of civilization, – that same service is performed for states by the barbaric freedom in which they are now existing, – viz. that, by causing the dedication of all national energies and resources to war, by the desolations of war, and still more by causing the necessity of standing continually in a state of preparation for war, it checks the full development of the natural tendencies in its progress, but, on the other hand, by these very evils and their consequences, it compels our species at last to discover some law of counterbalance to the principle of antagonism between nations, and, in order to give effect to this law, to introduce a federation of states, and consequently a cosmopolitical condition of security (or police) corresponding to that municipal security which arises out of internal police. This federation will itself not be exempt from danger, – else the powers of the human race would go to sleep; it will be sufficient that it contain a principle for restoring the equilibrium between its own action and reaction, and thus checking the two functions from destroying each other. Before this last step is taken, human nature – then about half-way advanced in its progress – is in the deepest abyss of evils under the deceitful semblance of external prosperity; and Rousseau was not so much in the wrong when he preferred the condition of the savage to that of the civilized man at the point where he has reached, but is hesitating to take, the final step of his ascent. We are at this time in a high degree of culture as to arts and sciences. We are civilized to superfluity in what regards the graces and decorums of life. But to entitle us to consider ourselves moralized much is still wanting. Yet the idea of morality belongs even to that of culture; but the use of this idea, as it comes forward in mere civilization, is restrained to its influence on manners, as seen in the principle of honor, in respectability of deportment, &c. Nothing indeed of a true moral influence can be expected so long as states direct all their energies to idle plans of aggrandizement by force, and thus incessantly check the slow motions by which the intellect of the species is unfolding and forming itself, to say nothing of their shrinking from all positive aid to those motions. But all good that is not engrafted upon moral good is mere show and hollow speciousness – the dust and ashes of mortality. And in this delusive condition will the human race linger, until it shall have toiled upwards in the way I have mentioned from its present chaotic abyss of political relations.

THE EIGHTH PROPOSITION

The History of the Human Species as a whole may be regarded as the unraveling of a hidden Plan of Nature for accomplishing a perfect State of Civil Constitution for society in its internal relations (and, as the condition of that, by the last proposition, in its external relations also) as the sole state of society in which the tendencies of human nature can be all and fully developed.

This proposition is an inference from the preceding. A question arises upon it — whether experience has yet observed any traces of such an unraveling in History? I answer — some little: for the whole period (to speak astronomically) of this unraveling is probably too vast to admit of our collecting even the form of its orbit or the relation of the parts to the whole from the small fraction of it which Man has yet left behind him; just as little as it is possible from the astronomical observations hitherto made to determine the course which our sun together with his whole system of planets pursues amongst the heavenly host; although, upon universal grounds derived from the systematic frame of the universe, as well as upon the little stock of observation as yet accumulated, enough is known to warrant us in asserting that there is such a course. Meantime our human nature obliges us to take an interest even in the remotest epoch to which our species is destined, provided we can anticipate it with certainty. So much the less can we be indifferent to it, inasmuch as it appears within our power by intellectual arrangements to contribute something towards the acceleration of the species in its advance to this great epoch. On this account the faintest traces of any approximation in such a direction become of importance to us. At present all states are so artificially interconnected that no one can possibly become stationary in its internal culture without retrograding in power and influence with respect to all the rest; and thus, if not the progress, yet the non-declension, of this purpose of Nature is sufficiently secured through the ambition of nations. Moreover, civil liberty cannot at this day any longer be so arrested in its progress but that all the sources of livelihood, and more immediately trade, must betray a close sympathy with it, and sicken as that sickens; and hence a decay of the state in its external relations. Gradually, too, this liberty extends itself. If the citizen be hindered from pursuing his interest in any way most agreeable to himself provided only it can co-exist with the liberty of others, in that case the vivacious life of general business is palsied, and in connexion with that again the powers of the whole. Hence it arises that all personal restriction, whether as to commission or omission, is more and more withdrawn; religious liberty is established; and thus, by little and little, with occasional interruptions, arises Illumination: a blessing which the human race must win even from the self-interested purposes of its rulers, if they comprehend what is for their own advantage. Now, this Illumination, and with it a certain degree of cordial interest which the enlightened man cannot forbear taking in all the good which he perfectly comprehends, must by degrees mount upwards even to the throne, and exert an influence on the principles of government. At present, for example, our governments have no[3] money disposable for national education, because the estimates for the next war have absorbed the whole by anticipation. The first act, therefore, by which the state will express its interest in the advancing spirit of the age will be by withdrawing its opposition at least to the feeble and tardy exertions of the

people in this direction. Finally, war itself becomes gradually not only so artificial a process, so uncertain in its issue, but also in the after-pains of inextinguishable national debts (a contrivance of modern times) so anxious and burthensome, and, at the same time, the influence which any convulsions of one state exert upon every other state is so remarkable in our quarter of the globe, — linked as it is in all parts by the systematic intercourse of trade, — that at length those governments which have no immediate participation in the war, under a sense of their own danger, offer themselves as mediators, though as yet without any authentic sanction of law, and thus prepare all things from afar for the formation of a great primary state-body, or Cosmopolitic Areopagus, such as is wholly unprecedented in all preceding ages. Although this body at present exists only in rude outline, yet already a stirring is beginning to be perceptible in all its limbs, each of which is interested in the maintenance of the whole. Even now there is enough to justify a hope that, after many revolutions and remodellings of states, the supreme purpose of Nature will be accomplished in the establishment of a Cosmopolitic State, as the bosom in which all the original tendencies of the human species are to be developed.

THE NINTH PROPOSITION

A philosophical attempt to compose a Universal History,[4] in the sense of a Cosmopolitical History, upon a plan tending to unfold the purpose of Nature in a perfect Civil Union of the Human Species (instead of the present imperfect union), is to be regarded as possible, and as capable even of helping forward this very purpose of Nature.

At first sight it is certainly a strange, and apparently an extravagant, project, to propose a History of Man founded on any idea of the course which human affairs would take if adjusted to certain reasonable ends. On such a plan it may be thought that nothing better than a romance could be the result. Yet, if we assume that Nature proceeds not without plan and final purpose even in the motions of human free-will, this idea may possibly turn out very useful; and, although we are too short-sighted to look through the secret mechanism of her arrangements, this idea may yet serve as a clue for connecting into something like systematic unity the great abstract of human actions that else seem a chaotic and incoherent aggregate. For, if we take our beginning from the Grecian History, as the depository, or at least the collateral voucher, for all elder or synchronous History; if we pursue down to our own times its influence upon the formation and malformation of the Roman People as a political body that swallowed up the Grecian state, and the influence of Rome upon the Barbarians by whom Rome itself was destroyed; and if to all this we add, by way of episode, the political history of every other people so far as it has come to our knowledge through the records of the two enlightened nations above mentioned[5]; we shall then discover a regular gradation of improvement in civil polity as it has grown up in our quarter of the globe, which quarter is in all probability destined to give laws to all the rest. If further we direct an exclusive attention to the civil constitution, with its laws and the external relations of the state, in so far as both, by means of the good which they contained,

served for a period to raise and to dignify other nations, and with them the arts and sciences, — yet again by their defects served also to precipitate them into ruin, but so that always some germ of illumination survived which, being more and more developed by every revolution, prepared continually a still higher step of improvement, — in that case, I believe that a clue will be discovered not only for the unraveling of the intricate web of human affairs, and for the guidance of future statesmen in the art of political prophecy (a benefit which has been extracted from History even whilst it was regarded as an incoherent result from a lawless freedom of will), but also such a clue as will open a consolatory prospect into futurity, in which at a remote distance we shall discover the human species seated upon an eminence won by infinite toil, where all the germs are unfolded which Nature has implanted, and its destination upon this earth accomplished. Such a justification of Nature, or rather of Providence, is no mean motive for choosing this cosmopolitical station for the survey of History. For what does it avail to praise and to draw forth to view the magnificence and wisdom of the creation in the irrational kingdom of Nature, if that part in the great stage of the supreme wisdom which contains the object of all this mighty display, — viz. the history of the human species, — is to remain an eternal objection to it, the bare sight of which obliges us to turn away our eyes with displeasure, and (from the despair which it raises of ever discovering in it a perfect and rational purpose) finally leads us to look for such a purpose only in another world?

My object in this essay would be wholly misinterpreted if it were supposed that, under the idea of a Cosmopolitical History which to a certain degree has its course determined a priori, I had any wish to discourage the cultivation of empirical History in the ordinary sense. On the contrary, the philosopher must be well versed in History who could execute the plan I have sketched, which is indeed a most extensive survey of History, only taken from a new station. However, the extreme, and, simply considered, praiseworthy, circumstantiality with which the history of every nation is written in our times, must naturally suggest a question of some embarrassment. In what way will our remote posterity be able to cope with the enormous accumulation of historical records which a few centuries will bequeath to them? There is no doubt that they will estimate the historical details of times far removed from their own, the original monuments of which will long have perished, simply by the value of that which will then concern themselves, — viz. by the good or evil performed by nations and their governments in a cosmopolitical view. To direct the eye upon this point as connected with the ambition of rulers and their servants, in order to guide them to the only means of bequeathing an honorable record of themselves to distant ages, may furnish some small motive (over and above the great one of justifying Providence) for attempting a Philosophic History on the plan I have here explained.

[edit]Footnotes

↑ Appeared originally in the London Magazine for October 1824: reprinted by De Quincey in 1859 in vol. xiii of his Collective Edition of his writings. — M.

↑ During the two last centuries (i.e. from the date of the scheme for organizing Christendom for some common purpose, no matter what, by the first of the Bourbons, Henry IV of France, down to the late Congresses at Aix-la-Chapelle and Verona) the human species have been making their first rude essays – putting forth their feelers as it were – towards such an idea. – The reader must not confound (as too generally is done) that St. Pierre to whom Kant refers, – viz. the visionary who speculated on the means of abolishing war, – with the sentimentalist of our own century, author of *Paul and Virginia*, *Studies of Nature*, &c. The first was at work early in the 18th century, say 1720; the other was patronized by the first Napoleon during his Consulate, consequently entered the 19th century. – Tr.

↑ “No money disposable,” &c.: – The reader must remember that this was written in Germany in the year 1784, and in the midst of petty courts (which are generally the most profligate). In England, and even elsewhere, there is now the dawn of a better system. – Tr.

↑ The reader must remember what Kant means by a Universal History. In the common sense, as the history of the whole world in its separate divisions, such a history exists already in many shapes that perhaps could not be essentially improved. But in Kant’s sense, as a history of the whole as a whole, no essay has been made towards it. – Tr.

↑ A learned public only that has endured unbroken from its commencement to our days can be an authentic witness for Ancient History. Beyond that, all is terra incognita; and the history of nations who lived without that circle must start from time to time as they happened to come within it. This took place with the Jewish people about the time of the Ptolemies, and chiefly through the Septuagint translation of the Bible; apart from which, but little credit should be given to their own insulated accounts unsupported by collateral evidence. From this point we may pursue their records upwards; and so of all other nations.