

views; in fact, the portrait of Joan of Arc is a stain upon the character of the poet which no ages can efface. (But the English always blackguard gallant enemies.) The merit of the histories lies almost entirely in the character of Falstaff, who has nothing to do with the period. And the political errors of Shakespeare show how difficult it is, even for one who has the vision of the eternal, to keep straight when he comes to deal with the temporal. But the explanation is that Shakespeare was a snob, the lackey of debauched noblemen, without virility or independence of character. Courage is certainly the first of the virtues, for without it none of the others can be exercised. In the case of statesmen a little more latitude must be allowed, because they are compelled to deal with the conditions of the moment. But, even there, the best epithet that can be applied in praise of such a man is that he is far-sighted; and the way to be far-seeing is to refuse to be obsessed by the expediencies of the hour. And while it is of course impossible to make every particular conform to the general, it can at least be arranged that it should not be in flagrant contradiction of the first principles.

As a concrete example, the annexation of conquered countries. Economic or military reasons have often been allowed to over-ride considerations of the will of the inhabitants. Such acts have almost invariably caused trouble later on, and such trouble frequently extends far beyond the territory in dispute. The injury to the fingertip poisons the whole body. The Germans in 1870, when asked whom they were fighting, replied: "Louis XIV."