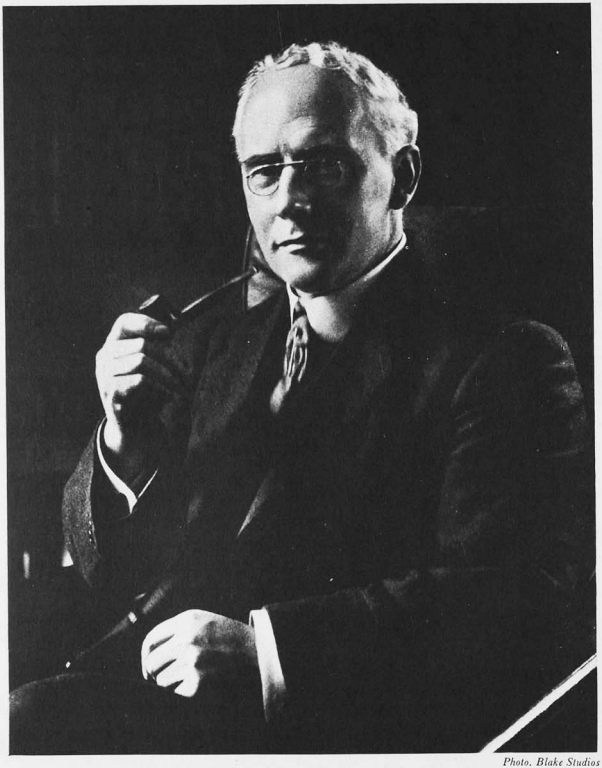

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ALBERT FREDERICK POLLARD

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1869–1948

ALBERT FREDERICK POLLARD, the Tudor historian, was born on 16 December 1869, and died on 3 August 1948, aged seventy-eight. In scholarship he is essentially the historian of the English Reformation, which he covered in two fine biographies of Henry VIII (1902) and Wolsey (1929). In university politics he was one of the 'big men' of London University for more than thirty years; and more especially as Chairman of the History Board (1910–23) he dominated the development of historical studies in the University. A flourishing history school was quickly developed in London, the significance of which was enhanced by the founding of the Institute of Historical Research in 1921. Though technically the outcome of the collective wisdom of the University, Pollard may safely be called its founder. He was its Director for eighteen years (1921–39) and with it his name will always be associated. A man of somewhat autocratic temper and tireless energy, he did a very great deal for the promotion of historical study in England. Equally brilliant as a teacher, a lecturer, and a writer he combined to a degree unsurpassed by any of his contemporaries a fine sense of proportion, with meticulous accuracy and lucidity in exposition. He was a typical Victorian in his distrust of philosophy or mysticism, and it is entirely characteristic of his clear-cut positive outlook that his achievement both in scholarship and in university politics can be so succinctly summarized. The time has hardly yet come for telling in detail the story of a life so full of academic clashes and antagonisms, though the material for doing it survives in a remarkable weekly correspondence with his father from 1884–1924. Professor Neale has told us that Pollard used often to say, 'What a man does, depends on what he does without', and if this is true a bare factual record should speak for itself. In any case, the saying takes us back to Pollard's nonconformist, Wesleyan background, which may help to explain his rather enigmatic personality.

His father, Henry Hindes Pollard, was the son of a Wesleyan minister, and we hear of a grandfather, a great-grandfather, and at least one uncle who had been Wesleyan preachers. After a normal education at Kingswood School, Bristol, Henry—since the universities were closed to nonconformists—elected to become

a chemist; and after many wanderings as an assistant, he set up on his own (1867) in Ryde, Isle of Wight. Of his seven children Albert was the second and the second boy. All were exceptionally gifted. The eldest, Harry, was an outstanding biologist who went to Christ Church, but was drowned while bathing in 1896, a tragedy which left its mark upon the younger brother. The youngest child, E. W. Pollard, earmarked in youth to assist his father, sacrificed thereby the prospect of a career as a pure scientist, to emerge none the less as an authority on seismology. Two of the daughters, like the brothers, acquired degrees, but here as elsewhere in the social life of the period, the girls took only a secondary place in the household, and the sons monopolized the family limelight. The father of this remarkable family was himself a remarkable man—a great radical, a keen Wesleyan, and a good chemist. He became a J.P. and Vice-Chairman of the Isle of Wight County Council, and on his death in 1924 was described with reason as 'the grand old man' of the Island. The minute and sympathetic interest of such a father in his son's career—to which the letters bear witness—must have meant a great deal to 'Bertie'; though with true Victorian reticence he seems only to have expressed his affection by the unfailing regularity and fullness of his letters 'home'. Undoubtedly it was great good fortune to the young man to be blessed, as we say, with such a happy home. In Victorian England, however, a certain social stigma attached both to Nonconformity and to shopkeeping—we cannot blink the fact—and this, too, perhaps left its mark upon the young man in London. However that may be, the Wesleyanism was shed at adolescence for a sort of 'occasional conformity' to the Church of England, at least after his marriage. There is, however, no record of any reaction against it, and the young Pollard, the best of sons, retained a lifelong respect for the creed of his ancestors.

His school record, as we should expect, was uniformly successful. He began at Portsmouth Grammar School, and at fourteen was offered scholarships both at Clifton and Felsted on the results of the Oxford Senior Locals. He chose Felsted (whither G. G. Coulton had preceded him), and though he did not enjoy it much, got good teaching from John Sargeaunt, afterwards at Westminster. His first letter home is preserved, dated 23 September 1884, and is a singularly full and objective description of the school for a boy of his age.

> The first thing we do in the morning is to go to Morning Service; then there is a short school and then breakfast. After breakfast there is

more school until 12.30. Then we do what we like, walk about the village or anything until 1 o'clock which is dinner time. At dinner they let us have as much bread and meat as we like and afterwards pudding which very few boys took. There is water to drink on the table but everybody's glass in the VIth is filled with ale if he does not object.

The letter continues with a full account of the classical curriculum, the arrangement of forms, the prospect of becoming a prefect, and so on. He notes that the average size of the boys is larger than that of Portsmouth G.S., but that 'on the whole the school is not much superior to the Portsmouth G.S. in the scholastic line'. 'I remain', he concludes, 'your very affectionate son, Bertie Pollard': and then—the only exhibition of feeling in the whole letter—he adds a 'P.S. I feel as though I would a great deal sooner be going to the P.G.S. than staying here.'

From Felsted he got a scholarship, as well as an exhibition at Jesus College, Oxford, producing £110 between them, and on this he managed to live at Oxford. He stroked his college eight, and enjoyed it, but did not play games. He also regularly attended the Union. At Oxford, finally, he became engaged to be married to Catherine Susanna the daughter of William Lucy, the Oxford ironworker, and under his fiancée's influence attended, somewhat half-heartedly, dances and theatres. They were engaged from 1891, the year in which he got his First in History, and married in 1894, in his twenty-fifth year. His wife had, fortunately, a small private income of her own, and her family helped by buying a house in Putney for the young couple. They also passed on a cook who had once been with Bishop Stubbs, and who remained with the family for thirty years, till ill health caused her to be retired on a pension. The long engagement was due to the extreme difficulty, in those days, of making a living in academic life; and he counted himself fortunate when in 1893 he obtained the assistant editorship of the *D.N.B.*, under Sidney Lee. This strenuous post besides producing a steady income (£200 a year) was a source of instruction and historical discipline to which Pollard himself always attached the greatest importance. The biographer may none the less pause to contrast the hard lot of the would-be professional historian in the nineties with the primrose path of a Lothian (1892) and Arnold (1898) prize winner at Oxford today. Pollard spent nine years with the *D.N.B.*; until, in fact, he fell out towards the end with the editor. There followed a very uncomfortable time of partial employment—examining, journalism, coaching at Wren's—until 1907 when University

College, London, began to pay him a satisfactory salary. Since 1903 he had been Professor of Constitutional History but without any other stipend than a part of the students' fees, which in the first year amounted to £25. 14*s*. 6*d*. From these facts we can make a reliable inference regarding the status of historical studies at University College, at a time when T. F. Tout had already presided for nearly fifteen years over the history school at Manchester. London needed shaking up, and it had certainly got the right man to do it. The year 1903 was none the less the turning-point in Pollard's life. He had at last, at the age of thirty-four, got his chance, and he took it with both hands. The rest of his life is the record of his long association with University College and the University of London, culminating with the foundation of the Institute of Historical Research. Already he had made his mark as a writer with *England under Protector Somerset* (1900) and *Henry VIII*, still the standard book on its subject. He was in fact a made man, and the fact was brought home to him by his election to a research fellowship at All Souls (1908). It was a splendid surprise, and for many years he used to visit All Souls at week-ends while his wife stayed with her mother in Oxford. For the research prescribed by his Fellowship Pollard's first idea was a volume, or two, on Parliament in the sixteenth century; but he later changed his mind, and wrote instead his *Evolution of Parliament* (1920), dealing with its medieval origins. For this task neither his earlier interests nor his scholarship were fully adequate. It was none the less a brilliant book and a useful introduction to its subject.

From 1903 until his retirement in 1931 Pollard worked untiringly for University College and for London University. The width of his interests and the force he exerted are reflected in his weekly letters, which by their fullness and clarity are historical documents of some importance. In his own province, the organization of historical teaching, Pollard's influence was decisive: the undergraduate syllabus was entirely remodelled and closely linked to postgraduate research by the development of seminar teaching. From 1910–23 he was continuously Chairman of the History Board and (in Professor Neale's phrase) the 'architect' of the London School of history. His term of office coincided with an astonishing development of the new universities and colleges throughout the country, and especially with a great revival of their Arts Faculties, which until the turn of the century had, in general, failed to compete with those of Oxford and Cambridge. In this movement historical study took pride of

place, and two men, Tout at Manchester and Pollard in London, stood out as its most commanding personalities. The ends they had in view were common to all the new universities, in each of which they found allies. They had help, too, from Richard Lodge at Edinburgh, whose wisdom was of great service when the Institute of Historical Research was set up. Nearly all these men came from Oxford and strove to extend its benefits, suitably modified and improved, to their new charges. In the face of the persistent preference for the older universities, the chief difficulty before the First World War was to attract students, though this was overcome as the Education Act of 1902 slowly but surely increased the demand for an Arts education. In the interval the new builders were led to take a live interest in the teaching of history in the schools and the general diffusion of the subject among a wider public. The Historical Association, of which Pollard himself was virtually the founder, was formed in 1906. He was an early president (1912–15) and for six years edited *History*, the journal of the Association. To these newcomers in the academic field no very warm welcome was extended by Oxford and Cambridge, and it is likely that not so much would have been achieved but for the outbreak, purely fortuitous, of a fierce dispute on the whole value of historical study. The trouble began almost simultaneously in Oxford and Cambridge where C. H. Firth (1904) and J. B. Bury (1903) in famous inaugural lectures pleaded for a 'more historical study of history' in the universities, much as Stubbs had done thirty years before. An immediate and sharp reaction occurred in both these ancient seats, and a confused battle ensued in which each party hopelessly misunderstood the other. It was summarily ended by the outbreak of the First World War, both sides claiming the victory; but the interest aroused was a godsend to the newer universities, which, generally speaking, were the champions of a more 'scientific' history—more 'Original Documents' and more postgraduate 'Research'. At Manchester, for example, the undergraduate wrote a 'thesis' and everywhere new degrees sprang up—the M.A. by 'thesis', the B.Litt. and the Ph.D.—which required special teachers. These new developments brought with them many more students, larger teaching staffs, and a considerable machinery of organized postgraduate research.

Pollard's attitude to all these problems is preserved in his lecture on 'The University of London and the Study of History', delivered at University College in 1904. History, he said, was neither an easy nor a pleasant way of making a living, but was

full of possibilities as a 'liberal education'. In Germany there was scarcely a university which did not possess two or three professors of modern history, while Berlin had six. America (with its seven professors of history at Chicago) was not 'far behind'; and he suggested that the business success of Germany was 'not due to their preference of technical instruction to a liberal education', but to the 'intellectual keenness which enables them to pursue both with success'. As for London, no history school (he said) existed, and he called for more teachers, more scholarships, and above all for the creation of a postgraduate School of Historical Research in London, which had such unique advantages in regard to the original sources. He pointed out that of the extant materials for English history, which was to be the main preoccupation of the London school, not one-tenth had yet been calendared or printed. Besides the national history, special emphasis should be laid on naval history and still more upon the history of London itself. Lastly, the teaching of history should be brought up to date, closing the notorious nineteenth-century gap which still obtained in Oxford. With such a programme and adequate resources the London School of History would find its real business 'not in making historians, but in the discovery and spread of historical truth'. So in conclusion he pleaded for the creation of a London University Press.

Such was the schedule proposed, based partly on the system of the old universities, partly on that of Manchester (the only real precedent he had to follow outside Oxford), but with shrewd criticisms of both. In the London of 1904 it needed both faith and vision to preach such a doctrine; yet before Pollard resigned most of his 'dream' was an actuality, and the rest was soon to follow. It was a great achievement, only done, as Professor Neale remarks, by forcing the pace.

Of this capacity to make things happen the foundation of the Institute of Historical Research is the supreme example. With the outbreak of war in 1914, the postgraduate seminar at University College, as also the number of undergraduates, 'inevitably dwindled', and in its place Pollard began the Thursday evening conferences for historians drawn from all over London. It was a great innovation which paved the way for the future Institute, and was widely copied in other universities. The conferences were often quite large gatherings, which did a great deal to overcome the isolation in which historians then worked. Young men and women, to their great profit, met their seniors there; and for the first time perhaps American scholars in England began to

mix more freely with our own. I recollect especially C. G. Crump, A. E. Stamp, and Charles Johnson, all of the Public Record Office, Sir George Aston, Claude Jenkins, Hilda Johnstone, and Eliza Jeffries Davis. Mrs. Pollard, too, was there, a gracious influence none the less felt though she seldom spoke. There was no agenda, still less any prepared paper or oration. All was impromptu, with Pollard as its centre, airing the problems of others, and when these, as often, failed (with infinite resource) propounding his own. The conferences had many critics, and I recall Tout complaining that before he had properly collected his wits on one matter, too often Pollard's razor-mind had passed to another. Others objected that almost any question raised led inevitably to the Tudor period. Nor was Pollard the man to catch fire at the interesting suggestions of others. For myself, I was fascinated by the brilliant, if not always sympathetic, personality of the central figure, who had such an enormous body of exact information in his head and who could use it so effectively. The years spent on the *D.N.B.* paid their best dividend in these meetings; while behind all the learning was an infinite curiosity and a mind of extraordinary speed and ingenuity.

The war had scarcely ended when Pollard determined to drive his project for a permanent research centre in London. By 1920 the senate had agreed in principle and an appeal committee was set up to raise £20,000. The first idea was to convert two or three houses in Bloomsbury, but a sudden twist was given to the negotiations by the government offer of the Bloomsbury site to the University, and the appearance of a generous benefactor in John Cecil Power. The appeal had not gone well: only £4,000 had come in and Pollard—a strong champion of the Bloomsbury offer—now worked for a special building for research in Malet Street on the offered site. The University was still inclined to haver, and the situation was saved by Power who increased his first offer of £5,000 to £20,000 on condition that a temporary building was erected *forthwith* in Malet Street. The senate quickly came to heel and the Institute of Historical Research was formally opened by H. A. L. Fisher (President of the Board of Education) on 8 July 1921. Pollard had 'forced the pace' indeed, and to how good purpose was only shown five years later, when the offer of the Bloomsbury site was withdrawn by the Government and the Institute found itself under notice to quit. But by 1926, when this crisis befell, there had been just enough time for the new Institute to prove its worth, to gain the goodwill of scholars at home and abroad, and to acquire something of what Maitland might have

called 'a beatitude of seisin'. For in the unusual flood of correspondence and newspaper comment that followed upon the Government's withdrawal of the Bloomsbury site, what stood out most steadily was the complete unanimity on one point—that the Institute of Historical Research had justified its creation and must not be allowed to disappear.[1]

It did not disappear. The crisis passed and the Institute remained at Malet Street until 1938 when it moved into temporary quarters in the new Senate House; thence in 1943 to Tavistock Square, where its fine library survived both the V.1's and the V.2's; and finally in 1947 to its long-planned present home.

By the foundation of the Institute Pollard earned the gratitude of all those—not perhaps a very large number—who are seriously concerned for the future of historical research in England. But for him, there is no reason to think it would ever have taken shape: but once established, the proximity of the Public Record Office and the British Museum opened up exciting possibilities of attack upon those nine-tenths of the materials for our history still unprinted and uncalendared to which he himself had called attention in 1904. Yet Pollard, paradoxically enough, was not much taken up with 'originals', preferring to work in his study from the printed calendars. In consequence his own work, though broad-based and exact, was not altogether thorough and rarely beckons us on towards the unknown. Nor was he, for the same reason, in close touch or sympathy with the new trends towards a more exact scholarship. Thus in 1936 he writes of one of the finest publications of new seventeenth-century manuscripts for many years:

> I can read Calendars of State Papers with comparative ease and pleasure; but this is the most indigestible mass of historical materials I've seen. These coal-miners of history treat their raw materials as sacrosanct lest they should be converted into gas for the cookers of history! And Clio becomes a mummy in a museum.

The not-uncommon view here expressed—despite the mixture of metaphors—is arguable, though the 'miner' might reasonably reply that he is only anxious that none of his coal should be lost *before* it is turned into 'gas'! Nevertheless it comes oddly from the founder of the Institute of Historical Research. Clearly the heavy problems raised by the sheer bulk of our records, both public and private, which can hardly be a matter of indifference to the Institute, did not interest him personally, and perhaps he had built better than he knew.

[1] J. G. Edwards, *Sir John Cecil Power, Bart., 1870–1950* (Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, vol. xxiii, no. 68 (November 1950).

Pollard was essentially a builder, and after thirty years one may pay a confident tribute to the soundness of the general conception of the Institute, and to the wisdom with which it was organized. Pollard himself was its Director, and largely responsible for every detail in its constitution. To him we may attribute its most salient features—the ordinary and the Anglo-American conferences; the ingenious system by which its unpaid teaching staff is drawn from the university, and the widely representative committee of management. So, too, in respect of its activities: the collection of *corrigenda* for some new edition of the *D.N.B.* and the absorption of the *Victoria County History* were Pollard's work, together with the *Bulletin*, a most welcome addition to the exiguous number of English historical periodicals. Great card indexes, too, were begun under his inspiration, and he himself made large collections for a future history of Tudor parliaments. If Pollard ruled the Institute, he did so only by his dominating personality: the forms at least of committee management were preserved, a point of some importance in the Institute's later history. In 1931 when he retired from his professorship and settled on the south coast, he remained honorary Director until 1939. The arrangement was not altogether satisfactory, and threw too heavy a burden upon the Institute's able secretary, Mr. Parsloe, to whom indeed, as to his predecessor Dr. Meikle, was due much of the credit for its early success. Growing misunderstanding between the Committee and its absentee Director ended in an unfortunate quarrel and Pollard resigned. It was a lamentable ending.

There was, however, another side to the wise senator and pioneer of historical research. Pollard's interest in contemporary politics was just as intense and continuous as his devotion to the past, and it was probably period and circumstance as much as attraction that made him the historian of the sixteenth instead of the nineteenth century. Re-reading his 1904 lecture it is plain that his conception of history as a liberal education for all sprang from his 'modernism', and it is the same healthy bias which makes the *Evolution of Parliament*, written at the zenith of his powers, either the best or the worst of his serious books. To him the *Fiction of the Peerage* and the *Myth of the Three Estates* were, so to speak, irresistible, though to many such an approach seemed only to muddy the stream of his narrative. This pro-occupation with politics is constantly reflected in his letters to his parents. On 26 July 1914, for example, he closes a letter describing Pember's election as Warden of All Souls with a side glance at the European situation.

Other matters will fill the papers. The Conference and its failure are not serious. The King wanted to try his hand at a settlement, and the result leaves Asquith freer than if the experiment had not been made. He sees further than most of his critics or admirers. I take it that the Amending Bill will be passed as introduced except that the time limit will be dropped, and some arrangement may be made about Tyrone.

The Austro-Servian business is much more serious, and the crisis looks to me worse than any of recent years. Austria seems bent on challenging Russia as well as Servia; and yet I do not see how Austria can gain by war. It looks like a monstrous and wanton provocation; Simon said the ultimatum was the most extraordinary document he had read, and they had been considering it at the Cabinet. Some of the telegrams indicated that war would begin last night. It isn't a cheerful prospect; but if it comes to war, I hope that Austria will be beaten.

He was quite right: the war came (though hardly as he envisaged it) and Pollard was drawn still more into contemporary studies. He lectured a great deal and in 1917 published *The Commonwealth at War*. In 1938 he served on the Government Committee on the League of Nations, from which sprang *The League of Nations: an Historical Argument* (1918). In 1920 he published his *Short History of the Great War*. He was now a public figure—at the height of his powers—and the almost inevitable sequel is recorded in a touching letter from his father, dated 11 January 1922:

It would give us infinite pleasure to see you the representative of the University. It is not altogether a surprise that you are mentioned in that connexion. Old age is naturally anxious. It so often happens that aspirants to parliamentary honours are expected to make repeated efforts before they succeed. I should not like you to be a candidate merely to test the strength of the party in the University. I look in Whitaker and find little encouragement from the numbers there. You are in the centre of information and would be well advised. One thing is certain, it would not be vulgar ambition that would move you. You are daily in the centre of the constituency and can feel its pulse; you have genuine reputation and would not need a vast amount of humbug to support you. Unquestionably you are rising, and *omnes orientem solem* etc. Bribery and corruption would find no soil in the University in which it would grow. You are made of real stuff, and every voter knows it. It seems as if the only other qualification you need is enough arithmetic to count the votes.

'Bertie' was standing as a Liberal for London University against H. G. Wells (Labour) and a certain S. R. Wells who, in fact, got in. Next year he tried again against Graham Little and was again defeated. The second failure is described in a

letter to his father and mother (9 December 1923) which illustrates his absorption in politics as well as his social circumstances at this time.

> The election is practically over with better results than one could have anticipated. . . . I imagine Baldwin resigns tomorrow or Tuesday, and does not advise the King to send for another Conservative. It would be too mean for the Party, having accepted Baldwin's policy and contemplated sharing the benefits of it (if successful), to turn round and disclaim responsibility in the hope of retaining office as Free-Traders. The King will, I think, send for Macdonald. [*He did.*] . . . I believe Macdonald will decline, on the ground that he has no majority to carry out the policy to which his party is pledged. I think the King will then send for Asquith who will succeed in forming an administration. If three parties are walking abreast along a road in the dark, the middle party is less likely to fall into the ditches on either side than the other two; and there is practically no question on which the Liberals, if attacked by Labour, would not be supported by the Conservatives, and *vice-versa.* Nor will any party push things to another dissolution in 1924, if it can possibly be avoided. I believe Asquith could get McKenna as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and form a far abler government than the last or any that Labour could form. . . .
>
> My own little affair is among the less encouraging items, though it matters little enough compared with the general result. The order will be the same as last year, but the rest only amounts to this: (1) I am 1,140 ahead of H. G. Wells this year, and was only 753 ahead of him last year: and (ii) I have just saved the University from the reproach that the more insignificant its M.P. was, the larger was his majority. . . .
>
> We had a small but select meeting of the Council of the Brit. Acad. on Wednesday: Balfour, Haldane, Sir F. Kenyon, Sir Arthur Evans, Hogarth and myself. I did not stay to Pringle Pattison's lecture. Haldane asked me (and Katie) to dinner on Friday to talk over the election results. It was an odd assortment of guests:—Bernard Shaw (and his wife), Sir James Barrie, Sir John and Lady Horner, Harold Baker (once a Portsmouth Grammar School boy, then M.P. and Asquith's secretary; also a colleague of Harold Butler at New College), Harold Laski and his wife. Mrs. Raymond Asquith was to have been present but could not come. It was worth going to, though out-of-doors the weather was abominable.
>
> I went to Oxford [i.e. All Souls] by the 4.45 last evening, but the gathering there was rather small and disappointing. The more important people were probably colloguing in London. . . .

This characteristic letter—which incidentally illuminates the melancholy eclipse of Liberalism in these crucial years—shows the historian and the scholar moving at last on the fringe of a larger society. The way lay through politics, and Pollard, his

ambition fairly aroused, made a third attempt to enter Parliament (1924). It was not to be. There was no political future for Liberalism, as the career of Ramsey Muir was to prove. Pollard, like H. A. L. Fisher, cut his losses and relapsed into scholarship. Yet one cannot but wonder whether the air of disappointment, or rather disillusionment which marks the later years, was connected with his failure to emerge on this larger stage.

Pollard's failure as a politician was offset by his increasing eminence in the historical world. In 1924, accompanied by his wife, he made a second and highly successful journey to America as visiting professor at Columbia University. He was away four months, returning early in the new year, and his visit conformed to the familiar pattern of the English professor in America. In addition to a heavy assignment of teaching at Columbia, he had to cope with 'the inexhaustible thirst for lectures, talks, &c., which characterizes this country', and 'the epidemic of dinners' which attended his itinerary. He visited all kinds of universities and colleges from Canada to Virginia: there were long railway journeys and lavish hospitality. He met a number of important Americans, and thoroughly enjoyed the homage he received on every side. On 1 December he wrote to his daughter:

> We had an excellent time at Montreal. The journeys were rather long, 12½ hours going, 11 hours coming back, though railway travelling in U.S.A. is infinitely more comfortable than in England. . . . Basil Williams met us at 9.10 and took us to our hotel—the Windsor—close by the station of that name. On Thursday I had to breakfast with Stephen Leacock: an old-fashioned Oxford breakfast, very solid. As soon as I got back to the hotel I fell into the hands of an interviewer. Then there was the lunch of the Canadian Women's Club which I had to address. About 400 were present, and as a result of some of my remarks a Government official wanted to take me on Thursday to discuss the point with his friend Mackenzie King, the Prime Minister! At 4 p.m. we were due at Victoria College (women's) for tea, and at 5 was my lecture to McGill University. At 7.30 we went out to Westmount to dine with the Williams; the other principal guests were Sir Arthur and Lady Currie. He succeeded Byng in command of the Canadians, and was full of interesting reminiscences of the War. Haig told him afterwards (in 1919) that there were 200,000 French troops in mutiny in May 1917 after the failure of Nivelle's offensive. . . .
>
> I have a rather irate inquiry from Quebec why I did not go and lecture there. That is the general trouble.

There is no mention in his letters of strain or tiredness. He seems to have taken it all in his stride—the lectures, the dinners, the travelling—and enjoyed it to the full. Indeed, throughout his

tour his closest interest was English politics, for owing to the autumn dissolution of Parliament, he had to begin his third election struggle for London University *in absentia*. His letters in November are full of the general election, oddly interspersed with details of his 'talk' on historical research to the Columbia Graduate School ('200–250 strong'), lectures at Barnard College, Mount Holyoke, and so on. All this blunted the edge of the disappointment—at least for the moment—which was none the less very keen. In another way also the year 1924 marks an epoch in Pollard's life. While he was in America his father died at the age of eighty-seven, and on 13 October he wrote to his daughter:

> It was, however, something that we were able to render his declining years somewhat less intolerable than some earlier periods in his life; but I wish he could have been spared the last eight months. The end, of course, was not unexpected though he might have gone on for some months. He was eleven days younger at the end than was your great-aunt Sarah when she died in 1914, and she was the longest lived of that family, though Aunt Polly lived to 86 and Aunt Lizzie to 81 or 82. I had a letter from him on Saturday, written on 28 September—the last of a series which began 40 years ago when I went to Felsted; except when I was at home I don't think either of us missed writing any week.

The career outlined above was only made possible by his brilliance as a writer of history. The publication of the *Life of Henry VIII* in 1902, when he was only thirty-three, established his reputation as the leading Tudor historian, and ten years later he wrote for the *Political History of England* the volume covering the years 1547–1603, which was a great advance on anything so far written on the period. Sixteen years later he published his *Life of Wolsey*, to which he was stimulated by the invitation to deliver the Ford Lectures at Oxford. These three books have been lately described as 'masterpieces of the historian's craft, which remain unsurpassed in their several fields'. They are the best, yet only a fraction of his total output. There were also, for example, the 500 articles (= 1 volume) which he contributed to the *D.N.B.*; the *Life of Cranmer* (1904); *The Reign of Henry VII from Contemporary Sonnets*, 3 vols., 1913–14; his articles in the *E.H.R.* and *History*, together with a steady stream of 'scholarly journalism', chiefly in *The Times Literary Supplement*. The full list of his works is larger still, but only two other works call for special notice: the *Evolution of Parliament* (1920), mentioned above, and his *Factors in Modern History* (1907). The first of these, which was more than ten years in the making, marks a curious—and praiseworthy—diversion from his Tudor interests,

and coincides with his growing absorption in the history of Parliament. This work occupied him off and on for the rest of his life and at his death he left behind considerable collections on the Reformation parliament. The other book, the *Factors*, is a masterly summary of sixteenth-century ideas, and a summary of the distinctively Pollardian outlook on the period. Here already one finds the thesis (to which all his work moved) that the Reformation parliament was only too eager to take away the Church lands and that Henry did not need to push them. Like all his ideas, it was never really worked out or driven home, but to it he constantly recurred in conversation and on these occasions he was often racy and exciting. In part this was due to his biographical approach, which debarred a systematic narrative of events; but we can easily underrate the astonishing wealth of minute, accurate knowledge in his two fine *Lives*, for the accumulation of which the calendar of the *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII* was a vast, and—up to a point—a reliable quarry. It is doubtful whether there is a better biography of an English ruler in the language than *Henry VIII*: or a better book for young students than the *Factors*. The durable quality of all this work on so controversial a period springs from its sincerity, and the imaginative sympathy by which it is informed. The choice of such a profession by one so supremely able as Pollard is only to be explained by something like a passion for getting at the truth. It was his ultimate inspiration, strictly disciplined by the nine years on the *D.N.B.* and helped undoubtedly by his own freedom from theological dogma. Given his basic outlook on the Reformation, which tied up with his nonconformist origin, there is not much to find fault with. Perhaps he was rather apt to 'fall' too much for his own ideas, as in his picture of Protector Somerset or even Cranmer. He was, too, no mystic, nor even a philosopher. On the other hand, he was essentially fair-minded and objective: the pity and sympathy he showed for his characters was deep and strangely at variance with the man we knew in society: and above all he was lucid and lively: a man who thought and wrote history as only very few historians in any generation seem to do it.

To say that he revealed himself best in his writing is, after all, no more than saying that he did not wear his heart on his sleeve. It is true but hardly explains that inner shyness which seemed to make him shrink from all intimacies. The hard and glittering surface he presented in society was at bottom defensive. He was always tense, alert, and eager; he never seemed to sit back

or relax. When he lectured and when he just talked he was quick, witty, and full of suggestion.

> The French Revolution was a high jump rather than a long jump and the French people . . . came down from their leap not very far from where they started.
>
> 'Man is what he eats'—it might be taken for a motto by those people who believe in the economic interpretation of history.
>
> When you worship a man like a god, you are doing your best to make him a devil.
>
> The right had to be divine, or it was not much use in the ages of faith: for men had less reluctance then than now to saddle Providence with responsibility for their own creations. All legitimate institutions were regarded as of divine ordination.
>
> This movement made the fourteenth century the first epoch of English nationalism. . . . Its battles are fought with a national weapon, the long bow (since become the national weapon of the Americans). . . .

These examples, though now in print, are all the spoken word, thrown off on the spur of the moment, and my wife is wont to recall just such another. She had mentioned a School Certificate 'howler' to the effect that Elizabeth 'banned all clergymens' clothes except the surplice', to which Pollard instantly replied: 'And he should have added that the Puritans thought even this superfluous.' Men of such alertness are seldom dons, more rarely still researchers; and it is obvious that Pollard possessed some of the gifts that make for success in the more combative professions of the Law and Politics. The very qualities that made him such a good teacher and lecturer, made him also a formidable adversary in committee. He was a great fighter, but he was not a man of friendships nor did he draw men to him. His prejudices against and his intolerance of what and of those he disliked were deep and lasting, and too often perhaps he sat in the seat of the scorner. In the view of his fellow historians he wrote far too often to *The Times*, and his severer *Reviews* were often excessive. Nor did he seem to mellow with the years, although there was no lack of recognition. In 1924, when he gave up the Chairmanship of the Board of Studies, friends and pupils joined together in a presentation volume of *Tudor Studies*. In 1920 he was elected to the British Academy and in 1930 he was made a Corresponding Member of the Academie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres (Institut de France). By 1933 he had received an Honorary Degree from Manchester University and was an Honorary Fellow of Jesus, his old college. Somewhat later he received further degrees both from London and from Oxford Universities.

Such a picture—and it is essentially that drawn by his colleagues over many years—if more than a half-truth, is still far from the whole truth. Pollard was a Victorian, whose sole emotional outlet was the Family. His parents, his wife, his children, with all the collateral interests these implied, filled his life and were his refuge from loneliness. An inveterate writer of letters (and in a beautiful script) he retailed week by week the story of his own doings, and expected to share their life 'by return'. Birthdays, punctiliously noted in his diary, involved a constant interchange of letters. Postmarks were scrutinized, and it was useless to antedate the forgotten missive. Thus he writes to his daughter Peggie (18 December 1932):

Graham regularly forgets the date of my birthday, but he called at Thornleigh the other day and lit upon your uncle Theo. Didn't you forget the date? Your letter is dated 15 Dec. all right; but the unusually legible postmark is Dec. 17—12.45 a.m. and it reached me by our second post that morning. I had a note from Jeff, stamped Dec. 16—12.45 a.m. which similarly reached me by second post on the 16th. Our second post comes in about noon, so that is rather good.

Even a visit to America merely meant that 'Home' was temporarily moved to New York. His minute inquiry into the movements of ships is the measure of his anxiety about the home mail. Whole pages of his letters deal with this matter. Thus, to his daughter on 3 November 1924:

I have three of your letters to answer, two of which we found awaiting our return on Monday. The first of them you had begun on Sunday 12 Oct. and ended on Tuesday the 14th. But it is postmarked 1.15 a.m. 15 Oct. and did not catch that Wednesday's boat. The same apparently happened to E. J. D.'s letter. Your first accordingly came with your second, dated 15 Oct., and Harold's of the 17th. Your third dated 21 Oct. and post-marked 24 Oct. came by the *Berengaria* and reached us 1 Nov. The *Berengaria* was delayed a day by storms and did not dock until Sat. 1 Nov. afternoon, instead of the usual Friday. But they distributed the mails rapidly, and we had some of ours that afternoon, though one from Payne was only delivered this morning. The folks at Ilminster, like you mention the s.s. *Republic*; but our letters cannot have gone by her, and I doubt if she carries mails for England. She is an American liner calling at Queenstown, Cherbourg, Bremen, but no English port. Moreover she takes 10 days to Queenstown, and that would mean 11 or 12 before letters reached you.

This extract, which is very characteristic in the precision of its curiosity, illustrates the seriousness with which he took everything relating to his family; and the subject of the mails recurs again and again in his letters.

In due course, the grandchildren were drawn in. So, on 17 December 1931, he writes:

My dear Christina, Nora, Michael and David,

Thank you very much for your best wishes and presents for my birthday. I suppose the clips are meant to keep my wits together and the bands to bind my hair. I have to be careful with both nowadays, for they are not so plentiful as they were; and while my wits go gathering wool, they don't collect much hair. However, I may get hare-brained in time.

A. F. P. was not 'very good' with children, who do not today like puns, and probably never did; 'grandfather' belonged to the age of Lewis Carrol. But the older they got, the more adequate he became, and his granddaughter Christina must surely have enjoyed—without reserve—the letter he wrote to her on 18 January 1941.

Many a happy return of your birthday! and may the returns find you in a happier frame than the splints you are probably wearing now! I hope you will not have to wear them as long as I did in 1913, when the first Rhodes Scholar to be elected Fellow of All Souls' ran amok at the Bursar's dinner and broke my 'tibia' which is, I believe, the counterpart of your 'fibula'. The Bursar (Pember, afterwards Warden) improvised the following in the metre of 'Dies Irae, Dies illa'.

'In Coll. Omn. Animarum,
Ferialis Harum Scarum,[1]
Archibaldus, censor morum (!)
Frangit crura Professorum.'

Anyway you won't have to cross the Atlantic in an equinoctial gale with your ankle in plaister of Paris, and clamber up three flights of steep steps, with the ship rolling, and carrying one crutch in the hand which used the other! It was six weeks before I got out of the plaister of Paris, and I had to lecture at Cornell standing on one leg and supporting my other knee on a stool! However old Freeman was worse off: he had gout, and had to lecture from the same place reclining on a couch!

Pollard was never so happy as when he had a pen in his hand. Like all his family, he wrote easily and fluently and there is in his correspondence a great deal of unpremeditated art. Nothing that interested him was left out, and mixed up with the readings of the thermometer and the rain-gauge, close observation of the weather, and the domesticities of life, is a running commentary upon contemporary personalities, politics, and world affairs, often acute and always outspoken. The stuff of history is in these letters. They are not intimate; still less are they affectionate in their terms. But at least they are very human, and we can hardly

[1] Note: see Marie Edgeworth in "Belinda" iii D, 'What I call harum scarum manners'.

doubt they were to him, in early years a safety-valve, and later on a distraction from his over-devotion to study and research.

The last phase—a long one—began with his retirement in 1931 from the Chair at University College. In August 1930 his wife had a very serious illness while on holiday at Milford-on-Sea. Pollard knew that it would recur and that her life was not likely to be prolonged. Her wishes and welfare became the chief motive in his life, even greater than his interest in the Institute of Historical Research. She was not told the truth about her health, and thought he would be happier at Milford-on-Sea (he loved bathing and the sea) than near London. She therefore encouraged him to buy a house at Milford, not realizing that he would shortly become very much a recluse there, when her sociable influence was removed. They came to Milford in 1932. After that his contacts with fellow historians were almost limited to the two days a fortnight which, as Director of the Institute, he used to spend in London during term-time. On these visits he made his home at his daughter's house in Gordon Square, and it was characteristic of him that if a room was not available there, he refused to put up in an hotel instead. At Milford he made no friends and few acquaintances, though he worked away until about 1944 at his parliamentary research. He was not, however, very competent to manage his house or his large garden—his wife had always done that. From this state of growing domestic discomfort, he was rescued in 1942 by his marriage to Miss Orchardson, who brought not 'academics' but music (which he loved) and more order and happiness than he had known for nearly ten years. And so in a deepening twilight he lived surrounded by the cheerful society of his wife and the filial attentions of his children until his death in 1948. It cannot be said that these were very happy years: in particular he resented what he regarded as his forcible eviction from the Institute of Historical Research. Yet perhaps at every stage in his life his home and family—the letters suggest it—meant more to him even than the Institute, and these never failed him.

V. H. Galbraith.

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