DR. S. R. GARDINER

Samuel Rawson Gardiner was born at Ropley, near Alresford in Hampshire, on March 4, 1829, and was the son of Mr. Rawson Boddam Gardiner and Margaret, daughter of Mr. William Baring Gould. On the father's side he was descended from the Protector Oliver Cromwell, by the marriage of Cromwell's eldest daughter, Bridget, with Henry Ireton. This descent, which lends an additional interest to Gardiner's historical work, was afterwards verified and worked out in detail by the investigations of Colonel J. L. Chester.

Gardiner, who was educated at Winchester College as a commoner, matriculated at Christ Church, Oxford, in October, 1847. In 1850 he was given a studentship by Dean Gaisford, and in 1851 he obtained a first-class in the School of Literae Humaniores. In the same year he took the degree of B.A., but theological reasons prevented him from keeping his studentship, and he did not proceed to the M.A. till 1884. In 1855, he married Isabella, the youngest daughter of Edward Irving, and soon after his marriage set to work upon the great task which was to occupy his life. Carlyle, Forster, and many other popular writers had already treated the struggle between the Stuarts and their people, but it seemed to Gardiner that their version of the story was inaccurate and their treatment of the actors unfair. He resolved to relate its history fully and exactly, depending entirely upon the original authorities for his facts, and allowing neither religious nor political prepossessions to influence his conclusions. Unendowed, and depending largely upon teaching for a livelihood, he began his investigations, and produced in 1863 the first instalment of his work—two volumes entitled *A History of England from the Accession of James I to the Disgrace of Chief Justice Coke*, 1603–1616. This was followed in 1869 by two further volumes entitled *Prince Charles and the Spanish Marriage*. About 140 copies of the first work were sold, but most of the edition went for waste-paper; the second had a circulation of about 500, but did not bring the author anything. Gardiner persevered, and his third instalment, published in 1875, *A History of England under the Duke of Buckingham and Charles I*, 1624–1628, actually

paid its expenses. In 1877 came the fourth instalment, *The Personal Government of Charles I*, 1628–1637, and in 1881 the fifth, *The Fall of the Monarchy of Charles I*, 1637–1642.

From the first the merit of Gardiner's book had been warmly appreciated by scholars, and it began at last to reach a wider circle of readers. The publication of a revised edition of the ten volumes in cabinet form in 1883 marked the turn of the tide. Gardiner's services to English history were now publicly recognized. In 1882 Mr. Gladstone gave him a Civil List pension of £150 a year, and in 1884 All Souls College elected him to a research Fellowship in order to assist him to continue his investigations. After his tenure of that Fellowship came to an end, he was elected to a similar one by Merton College in 1892, and was a Fellow of Merton at the time of his death. Degrees and other distinctions were conferred upon him by various universities and societies both English and foreign. In 1874 he had been elected a corresponding member of the Massachusetts Historical Society, and he was also made a member of the Royal Bohemian Society of Science, and of those of Copenhagen in 1891 and Upsala in 1893. In 1887 the University of Göttingen conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, whilst Edinburgh gave him the degree of LL.D. in 1881, Oxford that of D.C.L. in 1895, and Cambridge that of Litt.D. in 1899. Meanwhile Gardiner's work was gradually nearing completion. Three volumes issued separately in 1886, 1889, and 1891, under the title of *The Great Civil War*, brought the story down to the execution of Charles I; and three more, of which the last appeared in 1901, carried *The History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate* to the middle of the year 1656. Gardiner had originally intended to end his book at the Restoration, but finally the knowledge that his health was failing made him resolve to conclude it with the death of Cromwell. Even this was denied him. In March, 1901, he was stricken by partial paralysis, rallied for a time, and hoped to resume his work, but died on February 23, 1902. One chapter of what should have been the final volume was published after his death, and is included in the second edition of his *Commonwealth and Protectorate.*

Gardiner's life is the record of a single purpose persistently pursued, but in spite of his concentration upon his work, no man did more by his personal efforts to forward the progress of historical studies in England. No scholar was ever more ready to assist others; a beginner was sure of help and advice, and of kindly appreciation for his first efforts at research. In all enterprises for the promotion

of historical learning in England he took a leading part. From 1873 to 1878 he practically edited the historical department of *The Academy*, to which he contributed many notable estimates of contemporary historical books, and a number of unpublished historical documents of interest. To the *Revue Historique*, between 1876 and 1881, he supplied a series of 'bulletins' on the progress of historical literature in Great Britain. From the foundation of the *English Historical Review*, in 1886, he was one of its chief supporters, and from 1891 to 1901 its editor. His time, of which he was a rigid economist, and his labour, of which he was unsparing, were both freely given to societies for the publication of historical documents. Director of the Camden Society from 1869 to 1897, he edited for it twelve volumes of papers, besides several smaller collections printed in its 'Miscellanies.' Besides this, he published two volumes on *The First Dutch War* for the Navy Records Society, and a volume on *Charles II and Scotland in 1650*, for the Scottish History Society. These volumes represented a portion of the materials utilized by Gardiner in the production of his history, which he was anxious to make accessible in print, partly on account of their value to historical students in general, and partly because they formed the evidence on which he relied in his treatment of certain crucial episodes in his narrative. They were chips from his workshop. Twelve volumes of MS. of the same character, including papers copied with his own hand at Simancas, he presented to the British Museum for the benefit of students.

Gardiner did much to promote historical education, and we owe to his hand a number of textbooks. For the *Epochs of English History*, published by Longmans, he wrote, in 1874, *The Thirty Years' War*, and in 1876, *The Puritan Revolution*. These are models of concise and lucid statement which exemplify his skill in presenting, with a few bold strokes, the pr nciples underlying a series of events and the character of the actors in them. He published also an *Outline of English History* (1881) for children, and a *Students' History of England* (1892) for the higher classes in schools, together with a *School Atlas of English History* to serve as a companion to them. All these attained a wide circulation.

During the greater part of his life, Gardiner was himself engaged in the teaching of history. From 1872 to 1877 he was a lecturer, and from 1877 to 1885 he was professor of Modern History at King's College, London. Between 1877 and 1894 he lectured regularly for the Society for the Extension of University Teaching in London. He also taught for some years at Bedford College, in various schools

near London, and conducted a class at Toynbee Hall. Besides this, he acted as examiner at Oxford and Cambridge, and in the University of London.

As a lecturer Gardiner was excellent. He used no notes, and spoke in a simple, fluent, conversational way, arranging his matter very clearly, making his points effectively, and weaving the different threads of his story into a connected whole with remarkable skill. His perfect familiarity with his subject, and the sense of reserved knowledge it gave, with the breadth of view and elevation of thought incidentally displayed, combined to make the result singularly impressive. The six lectures on *Cromwell's Place in History* given at Oxford in 1896, though not printed exactly as they were delivered, because they were not written till Gardiner was subsequently asked to publish them, exemplify his method, and form a memorial of this side of his activity.

Regret has often been expressed that a man so eager to spread a knowledge of history, and so skilful in communicating it, should have spent his time in elementary teaching or popular lecturing, when he might have been giving instruction in the higher branches of his subject. 'Being one of the two or three most solid historians in England,' complained Lord Acton in 1882, 'he has to teach at an inferior girls' school,' and foreign scholars could not conceal their amazement that neither Oxford nor Cambridge sought to enroll him amongst the teachers in their History Schools. Two years later, Dr. Stubbs, in his farewell lecture as professor, referred to Gardiner as 'a great constructive historian' who 'must be reclaimed for Oxford.' Nevertheless no employment of the kind was offered Gardiner till the last years of his life. If the chance had come earlier he would probably have accepted it, but when it arrived circumstances made him hesitate to make any change in his way of living. London was the best place for his researches. 'Nothing,' he once said, speaking of a friend who had taken a professorship in Scotland, 'would induce me to put four hundred miles between myself and the tracts in the British Museum'; and the same reasoning applied in some degree even to less distant seats of learning. Besides this, elementary teaching was easy to him, and demanded less time and exertion than advanced teaching would have required. More and more he felt the necessity of husbanding his strength for the completion of his History. For these reasons he refused the Regius Professorship of Modern History at Oxford, when it was offered to him by Lord Rosebery in 1894, but consented to fill in 1896 the newly-created office of Ford Lecturer there, as it involved merely the delivery of a single

course. On that occasion he gave the six lectures on Cromwell's Place in History referred to above. Outside his History he published, during the later years of his life, only two works of importance—a monograph on Cromwell for Goupil's series of illustrated biographies, in 1899, and a critical examination of the history of the Gunpowder Plot, in 1897. The latter, entitled *What Gunpowder Plot Was*, is an answer to Father Gerard's endeavour to prove that the plot was the contrivance of Cecil and the government, and a crushing refutation of that theory. It is an example of Gardiner's critical method, and of the care with which he tested received traditions before accepting them.

This combination of exact criticism and exhaustive research makes the eighteen volumes of Gardiner's *History of England* an achievement of permanent value. His workmanship is sound throughout, and the fabric rests upon broad and firm foundations. Gardiner searched the national archives of France, Spain, Italy, Sweden, and the Netherlands for the materials for the history of English diplomacy, and worked systematically through our own foreign and domestic state papers. He mastered the printed literature of his period with the same thoroughness, and ploughed through that vast mass of pamphlets and newspapers in the British Museum, in which the minutest incidents of the Civil War and all the shades of political and religious opinion to which the struggle gave birth are alike recorded. At the same time he made no one-sided use of any kind of material: state-papers, diplomatic reports, newspapers, and parliamentary speeches—each kind of evidence was employed in its proper place and proportion. Nor did Gardiner yield to the temptation to overestimate the importance of the new manuscript materials his researches brought to light, and undervalue that which was already published in print. One feels throughout that the materials have been strictly tested and examined, and that no piece of evidence has been admitted till its value has been carefully scrutinized. Neglect adequately to criticize their sources is a defect which vitiates the work of many English historians, but in this respect Gardiner's technical skill and conscientious thoroughness make him a model. Thanks to them he avoided many errors into which his predecessors had fallen, and destroyed many legends which passed for truth.

The most obvious characteristic of Gardiner's method of exposition was his strict adherence to chronological arrangement. Some critics complained that he carried this to excess, and termed him a chronicler rather than an historian. However, the choice was made deliberately; from the scientific point of view it had great advantages which fully

compensated for its drawbacks from the literary; if it was not the cause of some of the peculiar merits of his book, it assisted in producing them, and it gave freer scope than any other way of writing to Gardiner's special gifts as an historian.

According to his view it was the historian's business not merely to relate what happened, but how and why it happened. It was therefore incumbent upon him to adhere to the natural order of events in order to show the sequence of cause and effect. For it was only by adherence to this order that it was possible to judge fairly either men or events, and to make complicated questions plain. In his hands this process was eminently successful. Thanks to it he elucidated much that had been obscure, set in their true light many things which had been distorted, and cleared away many misconceptions. It was not only a guide to truth, but also a security against error. The most invidious danger that besets the historian is the danger of being biased in his conception of a problem by his knowledge of the way in which it was finally solved. Unless he is careful, history may become in his hands merely the science of justifying foregone conclusions. Gardiner escaped this danger by putting the sequel out of his mind in order that both he and his readers might better understand the real nature of events and their gradual evolution. He traced, month by month and year by year, the development of a policy, the growth of a party, or the gradual culmination of a crisis, in order to show how circumstances, and even accidents, shaped results which appear, at first sight, inevitable. Thus, by eliminating one great cause of error, he not only elucidated the connexion of cause and effect, but explained more clearly than before the relative share of personal and general causes in producing the revolution he narrated.

Just as in relating events Gardiner endeavoured to put himself in the position of a contemporary, so in estimating the actors in them he seeks to judge them from the standpoint of their own age, and by the light of their own ideas. He lays down the rule that 'the first canon of historical portraiture is to start by trying to understand what a man appears to himself, and only when that has been done to try him by the standard of the judgement of others.' Instead of drawing full-length historical portraits of the conventional type, he leaves his personages to reveal their nature bit by bit in their acts or utterances, confines himself to comment upon the characteristics revealed, and allows the character to develop itself with the progress of events. His own judgements of statesmen are not only impartial, but inspired by a certain sympathetic imagination. He

seeks the key to their character in the ideal they pursued, and asks how far they acted up to the light that was in them. He is prone, therefore, to dwell upon the best side of the men he describes, and to adopt the most favourable explanation of their motives. 'Probably,' he says, 'the most lenient judgement is also the truest,' and his condemnation of their errors is always modified by a knowledge of their difficulties, and an appreciation of their position. Gardiner judges parties with the same fairness. He shows what gave each its strength, what constituted its weakness, and what each contributed to the political life of the nation. He gives us for the first time a history of the great struggle of the seventeenth century, in which neither all the vices nor all the virtues are exclusively on one side, and the attitude of men and parties is shown to be the natural outcome of their training and position.

In estimating Gardiner's place amongst historians, the comparison with Ranke, suggested in several foreign appreciations of his work, inevitably arises in the mind. Gardiner possessed neither the qualities nor the defects of Macaulay or Froude, whilst in more than one respect he resembled the great German scholar. Like Ranke, he endeavoured to see things exactly as they were, and to let the facts speak for themselves; he was like Ranke too in his breadth of view, in his constant sense of the connexion between national and European life, and in the independence and equity of his judgements. As an investigator Gardiner was at least the equal of Ranke, if somewhat inferior to him as a writer. But no historian of Gardiner's rank ever devoted himself simultaneously to the work of historical investigation and to the popularization of historical knowledge. Gardiner had a very high conception of the place of history in popular education, and especially of its political value. The historian, he wrote in one of his prefaces, cannot do much directly to help the statesman, though he may be of some assistance in sweeping away false analogies and making plain the causes of existing evils. Indirectly he can do a great deal by teaching the mass of educated men to understand the nature of political problems, and thus creating the enlightened public spirit which helps the statesman in his task. It seemed to Gardiner that in making clear the history of a time which passion and prejudice had obscured, he was doing work which had a practical as well as a scientific value. 'It has always been my wish,' he wrote to a friend, 'that I might so be able to write the story of that period as to convey something better than information. It seems to me that, without any attempt at preaching, merely to explain how men acted towards one another, and the reason

of their misunderstandings, ought to teach us something for the conduct of our own lives.'

For further particulars of Dr. Gardiner's life and estimates of his historical work, see—*The Times*, February 25, 1902; *The Athenaeum*, March 1, 1902; *The English Historical Review*, April 1902 (article by the late Professor F. York Powell); *The Atlantic Monthly*, May, 1902 (by Dr. J. F. Rhodes); and *The Quarterly Review*, April, 1902 (article by the author of the present notice). The most important foreign estimates of his work are to be found in Sybel's *Historische Zeitschrift*, vol. lxxxix, p. 190, by Alfred Stern; *Historisch-politische Blätter*, vol. 129, p. 7, by A. Zimmermann; *Revue Historique*, vol. lxxix, p. 232. A full bibliography of his historical writings was edited by Dr. W. A. Shaw, for the Royal Historical Society in 1903.

C. H. FIRTH.