

that we may examine in this history the two most powerful springs of human transformation, natural bent and constraining force, and we may examine them without uncertainty or gap, in a series of authentic or unmutilated memorials." ¹

Attempts to understand the collective life of man, as distinguished from the individual life, were made, more or less independently of Comte, both in England and Germany. In the latter country Comte remained unknown long after his works had been studied and translated in England. But in England also one brilliant attempt was made to understand and define the

¹ These quotations are all taken from the Introduction to the 'History of English Literature' (transl. by Van Laun, 1887, pp. 16 sqq.) Although Taine has done so much to impress upon his readers the importance of the *milieu*, taking this in the larger sense which he gave it, and has thus emphasised an important sociological principle, he has not received a prominent place among the great teachers and founders of sociology. Political historians, such as Lord Morley ('Miscellanies,' vol. iii. p. 265), have indeed pointed out that, *e.g.*, his great work on the 'Origins of Contemporary France' belongs more to the region of sociology than to that of history. But on the other side Dr Barth (*loc. cit.*, p. 58), though recurring frequently to Taine's principle, remarks that he has not treated sociology as a whole. If we have to note in Comte's writings an inherent dualism, we have, still more, from a philosophical point of view, to complain of the unreconciled ideas which we discover in Taine's various writings. They comprise in a

long series such very different but equally original treatises as the 'History of English Literature' (1863), the 'Philosophie de l'Art' (1865), the psychological treatise 'De l'Intelligence' (1870), and the 'Origines de la France Contemporaine' (1876-91). The fact is that Taine is much more of an artist than a philosopher or a scientific thinker, though he is both these to a certain extent. His works are more like great tableaux or outstanding portraits, and, like all works of art, self-contained and, to a great extent, mutually exclusive. In this respect he belongs more to the history of literature and poetry, and has in this capacity probably exerted a much wider though very varying influence upon the thought of his country. It is also interesting to note that though he did more than any other writer to develop one of Comte's fruitful ideas and generally to fix the modern conception of French positivism, his allegiance to Comte is not very much dwelt on by himself or by his critics.