

THE HISTORY
OF ENGLAND

VOLUME I





This portrait of the author is provided in all the earliest editions of his History. The reversal of letters in the word "philosophy" remains uncorrected throughout.

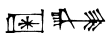
THE HISTORY OF ENGLAND

*from the Invasion of Julius Caesar
to The Revolution in 1688*

IN SIX VOLUMES
BY DAVID HUME, ESQ.



VOLUME I



Liberty Fund
Indianapolis

The cuneiform inscription that serves as our logo and as the design motif for our endpapers is the earliest-known written appearance of the word “freedom” (*amagi*), or “liberty.” It is taken from a clay document written about 2300 B.C. in the Sumerian city-state of Lagash.



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This Liberty Fund edition is based on the edition of 1778, containing the author's last corrections and improvements. The only two recorded sets of that edition in the United States were consulted. One is a complete set at the Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas at Austin. The other is an incomplete set in the Boston Public Library. The publisher acknowledges with thanks the cooperation of both institutions as well as the advice of Professors William B. Todd and David Levy.

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C O N T E N T S

O F T H E F I R S T V O L U M E

FOREWORD BY WILLIAM B. TODD XI

MY OWN LIFE BY DAVID HUME XXVII

LETTER FROM ADAM SMITH, LL.D.
TO WILLIAM STRAHAN, ESQ. XXXV

I

*The Britons – Romans – Saxons – the Heptarchy –
The kingdom of Kent – of Northumberland –
of East-Anglia – of Mercia – of Essex –
of Sussex – of Wessex*

PAGE 3



II

T H E A N G L O - S A X O N S

*Egbert – Ethelwolf –
Ethelbald and Ethelbert – Ethered –
Alfred the Great – Edward the Elder –
Athelstan – Edmund – Edred – Edwy –
Edgar – Edward the Martyr*

PAGE 55

III

*Ethelred – Settlement of the Normans –
Edmund Ironside – Canute the Great –
Harold Harefoot – Hardicanute –
Edward the Confessor – Harold*

PAGE 107

APPENDIX I THE ANGLO-SAXON GOVERNMENT AND MANNERS

*First Saxon government –
Succession of the kings – The Wittenagemot –
The aristocracy – The several orders of men –
Courts of justice – Criminal law – Rules of proof –
Military force – Public revenue –
Value of money – Manners*

PAGE 160



IV WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR

*Consequences of the battle of Hastings –
Submission of the English – Settlement of
the government – King's return to Normandy –
Discontents of the English – Their insurrections –
Rigours of the Norman government –
New insurrections – New rigours of the*

*government – Introduction of the feudal law – Innovation
in ecclesiastical government – Insurrection of the Norman
barons – Dispute about investitures – Revolt of prince
Robert – Domesday-book – The New forest –
War with France – Death – and character
of William the Conqueror*

PAGE 186



V

WILLIAM RUFUS

*Accession of William Rufus –
Conspiracy against the King – Invasion of
Normandy – The Crusades – Acquisition of Normandy –
Quarrel with Anselm, the primate – Death –
and character of William Rufus*

PAGE 228



VI

HENRY I

*The Crusades – Accession of Henry –
Marriage of the King – Invasion by duke Robert –
Accommodation with Robert – Attack of Normandy –
Conquest of Normandy – Continuation of
the quarrel with Anselm, the primate – Compromise
with him – Wars abroad – Death of prince William
– King's second marriage – Death –
and character of Henry*

PAGE 248

VII

STEPHEN

*Accession of Stephen – War with Scotland –
Insurrection in favour of Matilda – Stephen
taken prisoner – Matilda crowned – Stephen released –
Restored to the crown – Continuation of the civil wars –
Compromise between the King and prince Henry –
Death of the King*

PAGE 279



VIII

HENRY II

*State of Europe – of France –
First acts of Henry's government –
Disputes between the civil and ecclesiastical powers –
Thomas a Becket, archbishop of Canterbury –
Quarrel between the King and Becket –
Constitutions of Clarendon – Banishment of Becket –
Compromise with him – His return
from banishment – His murder – Grief –
and submission of the King*

PAGE 296



IX

*State of Ireland – Conquest of that island –
The King's accommodation with the court of Rome –
Revolt of young Henry and his brothers –*

*Wars and insurrections – War with Scotland –
 Penance of Henry for Becket's murder – William,
 King of Scotland, defeated and taken prisoner –
 The King's accommodation with his sons – The King's
 equitable administration – Death of young Henry –
 Crusades – Revolt of Prince Richard – Death and character
 of Henry – Miscellaneous
 transactions of his reign*

PAGE 339



X

RICHARD I

*The king's preparations for the crusade –
 Sets out on the crusade – Transactions in Sicily –
 King's arrival in Palestine – State of Palestine –
 Disorders in England – The king's heroic actions
 in Palestine – His return from Palestine –
 Captivity in Germany – War with France –
 The king's delivery – Return to England –
 War with France – Death – and character
 of the king – Miscellaneous transactions
 of this reign*

PAGE 377



XI

JOHN

*Accession of the king – His marriage –
 War with France – Murder of Arthur, duke of
 Brittany – The king expelled from all*

*the French provinces – The king's quarrel
with the court of Rome – Cardinal Langton
appointed archbishop of Canterbury – Interdict of
the kingdom – Excommunication of the king –
The king's submission to the pope –
Discontents of the barons – Insurrection of
the barons – Magna Charta – Renewal of the
civil wars – Prince Lewis called over – Death –
and character of the king*

PAGE 407

APPENDIX II

THE FEUDAL AND ANGLO- NORMAN GOVERNMENT AND MANNERS

*Origin of the feudal law –
Its progress – Feudal government of England –
The feudal parliament – The commons –
Judicial power – Revenue of the crown –
Commerce – The church –
Civil Laws – Manners*

PAGE 455

FOREWORD

WHEN DAVID HUME began his *History of England* the undertaking came, not from any sudden resolve nor as an entirely new enterprise, but as one possibly contemplated thirteen years before, in 1739, probably attempted several times thereafter, and certainly considered, at least as a corollary discipline, in a philosophical discourse published in 1748. Even so, any concerted effort long sustained necessarily awaited appropriate conditions: all happily combining for Hume upon his election, January, 1752, as Keeper of the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh. With this appointment the author finally had "a genteel office," ready access to a collection of some thirty thousand volumes, and, no less desirable, leisure indefinitely extended to pursue his research. Heretofore, by mere exertion of his own commanding intellect, philosopher Hume had more than once set forth what he perceived to be the "constant and universal principles of human nature." Now, as a philosophical historian, he could ascertain from dreary chronicles all the aberrations of human behavior as there exhibited in "wars, intrigues, factions, and revolutions." These and other vagaries, previously recorded simply as odd phenomena, in Hume's more coherent view constituted a varied range of "materials" documenting the "science of man."

Once intent upon a history so formulated, the immediate question for this author was where to begin. In his own *Life* (an essay prefixed to the first, 1778, posthumous edition of the *History* and so reprinted here), Hume ingenuously speaks of being "frightened" away from the very start—that is, from the time of Caesar's invasion—and so at once passing over seventeen hundred years to "the accession of the House of Stuart [1603], an epoch when, I thought, the misrepresentations of faction began chiefly to take place." Indeed this was Hume's final decision, though he

FOREWORD

earlier admitted in a letter to Adam Smith, 24 September 1752, some inclination to commence with the preceding Tudor “epoch” [1485].

I confess, I was once of the same Opinion with you, & thought that the best Period to begin an English History was about Henry the 7th. But you will please to observe, that the Change, which then happen'd in public Affairs, was very insensible, and did not display its Influence till many Years afterwards. Twas under James that the House of Commons began first to raise their Head, & then the Quarrel betwixt Privilege & Prerogative commenc'd. The Government, no longer oppress'd by the enormous Authority of the Crown, display'd its Genius; and the Factions, which then arose, having an Influence on our present Affairs, form the most curious, interesting, & instructive Part of our History. . . . I confess, that the Subject appears to me very fine; & I enter upon it with great Ardour & Pleasure. You need not doubt of my Perseverance.

For a historian tracing, in one period or another, the progress or decline of human welfare, the “influence” twice mentioned in the letter to Smith eventually required a “backward” narrative: from present effects to earlier precedents and then to causes earlier yet. Thus over the ensuing years Hume proceeded retrogressively, representing first the Stuart reigns (now volumes V–VI in this reprint), then the Tudors (III–IV), and finally all the “barbarous” times before Henry VII (I–II). Hence in surveying the development of this history, and the various reactions to its initial publication, we should remember that what Hume reports of his first two volumes (originally published 1754, 1757) is lastly conveyed here as V–VI (volumes not so designated until issue in 1762 of the “complete” edition).

About his early work, so ebulliently described to Smith, Hume has much else to say, all of it in great confidence as to the rectitude and efficacy of his own procedure. To one friend he observes: “You know that there is no post of honour in the English Parnassus more vacant than that of History. Style, judgement, impartiality, care—everything is wanting to our historians; and even Rapin, during this latter period, is extremely deficient.” To another he confides that he has “more propos'd as my Model the concise manner of the antient Historians, than the prolix, tedious Style of

FOREWORD

some modern Compilers. I have inserted no original Papers, and enter'd into no Detail of minute, uninteresting Facts. The philosophical Spirit, which I have so much indulg'd in all my Writings, finds here ample Materials to work upon." To a third correspondent Hume is even more assured.

The more I advance in my undertaking, the more am I convinced that the History of England has never yet been written, not only for style, which is notorious to all the world, but also for matter; such is the ignorance and partiality of all our historians. Rapin, whom I had an esteem for, is totally despicable. I may be liable to the reproach of ignorance, but I am certain of escaping that of partiality: The truth is, there is so much reason to blame and praise alternately King and Parliament, that I am afraid the mixture of both in my composition, being so equal, may pass sometimes for an affectation, and not the result of judgement and evidence.

In this last comment the allusion to troubles between King and Parliament—obviously in reference to Charles I rather than to his father, James I—provides a clue to the advance in Hume's narrative. On 26 May 1753 he reports that he is "now beginning the Long Parliament," i.e., chapter V (subsequently chapter LIV of this edition). Five months later, on 28 October, he had come to the execution of the King, representing the final chapter of his original volume. By then, as he realized, "the history of [these] two first Stuarts will be most agreeable to the Tories: That of the two last, to the Whigs. But we must endeavour to be above any Regard either to Whigs or Tories." The "two last," Charles II and James II, were of course to be considered in his next volume, one as yet hardly under way.

Early in 1754, and still affirming his conviction that "I am of no party, and have no bias," Hume sent off to press his first volume and on 1 September received his final proofs. During the course of printing, some of the sheets circulated among interested persons, with the Whigs and Tories among them alternately approving or disapproving, and "a few Christians" in some anguish reproaching this "Libertine in religion." The latter accusation, possibly quite unexpected, quickly prompted Hume to reassure his confidant that he was "tolerably reserved on this head."

FOREWORD

Whatever the author's claims, advanced perhaps all too complacently before issue, the charge of irreligion was hotly pursued upon publication of the volume, 20 November 1754. It may well be, as Hume discloses in his *Life*, that the primates of England and Ireland—surely much divergent in their own beliefs—both encouraged him to persevere; but the Bishop of Gloucester, in a violent outrage, privately denounced this historian as “an atheistical Jacobite, a monster as rare with us as a hippogriff.” Even among the secular reviewers exception was at once taken, first in the opening chapter to the excessive “enthusiasm” Hume discerned in the Protestant Reformation, then in the next chapter to the intolerable “superstition” he discovered in the Roman Catholic Church. Always responsive to critical commentary, but only when it did not run counter to his own principles, or to the dictates of history itself, Hume in later editions prudentially withdrew both of these passages in their entirety, and thus excised some interior text apparently beyond the immediate cause of complaint. So that the present reader may determine whether, at the very beginning of his work, Hume has maintained in suitable language his own impartial attitude these suppressed sections are now reprinted.

The first, on the Protestants, appeared originally in Volume I of the first edition, pages 7–9 (1778 text, Volume VI, page 10) after the paragraph ending “reconcile both parties.”

The first reformers, who made such furious and successful attacks on the Romish SUPERSTITION, and shook it to its lowest foundations, may safely be pronounced to have been universally inflamed with the highest ENTHUSIASM. These two species of religion, the superstitious and fanatical, stand in diametrical opposition to each other; and a large portion of the latter must necessarily fall to his share, who is so courageous as to control authority, and so assuming as to obtrude his own innovations upon the world. Hence that rage of dispute, which every where seized the new religionists; that disdain of ecclesiastical subjection; that contempt of ceremonies, and of all the exterior pomp and splendor of worship. And hence too, that inflexible intrepidity, with which they braved dangers, torments, and even death itself; while they preached the doctrine of peace, and carried the tumults of war, thro' every part of Christendom.

However obstinate and uncomplying this species of religion, it necessarily received some alteration, according to the different situ-

FOREWORD

ation of civil affairs, and the different species of government, which it met with in its progress.

In the electorates of Germany, in Denmark, and in Sweden, where the monarch was early converted, and, by putting himself at the head of the reformers, acquired authority amongst them; as the spirit of enthusiasm was somewhat tempered by a sense of order, episcopal jurisdiction, along with a few decent ceremonies, was preserved in the new establishment.

In Switzerland and Geneva, which were popular governments; in France, Scotland, and the low countries, where the people reformed themselves in opposition to the prince; the genius of fanaticism displayed itself in its full extent, and affected every circumstance of discipline and worship. A perfect equality was established among the ecclesiastics; and their inflamed imagination, unconfined by any forms of liturgy, had full liberty to pour out itself, in wild, unpremeditated addresses to the Divinity.

They were the preachers of Switzerland, France, and the low countries, who carried the reformation into England: But as the government was there monarchical, and the magistrate took the lead in this grand revolution; tho' the speculative doctrines were borrowed from the more fanatical churches, yet were the discipline and worship naturally mitigated with a more humane spirit of religion.

But after the persecutions of Mary had chased abroad all the most obstinate reformers, who escaped her fury; they had leisure to imbibe a stronger tincture of the enthusiastic genius; and when they returned, upon the accession of Elizabeth, they imported it, in its full force and virulence, into their native country.

That renowned Princess, whose good taste gave her a sense of order and decorum, and whose sound judgment taught her to abhor innovations, endeavored, by a steady severity, to curb this obstinate enthusiasm, which, from the beginning, looked with an evil aspect, both on the church and monarchy. By an act of parliament in 1593, all persons above the age of sixteen, who were absent from church a month, or who, by word or writing, declared their sentiments against the established religion, were to be imprisoned, till they made an open declaration of their conformity. This if they refused during three months, they were to abjure the realm; and if they either refused such abjuration, or staid in England beyond the time limited, they were to suffer as felons, without benefit of clergy. To such extreme rigor was the severity pushed of Elizabeth's administration.

The Queen too had established the high commission court, which preserved an uniformity of worship thro' all the churches, and inflicted severe penalties on all innovators. The powers, with which this court was invested, were mostly discretionary; tho' by law

FOREWORD

it could exact a fine of twenty pound for every month that any one was absent from the established worship.

The second passage, on the Roman Catholics, occurred in the next chapter, pages 25–28 (1778 text, Volume VI, page 39) in the paragraph starting “The moderation” after the sentence ending “conformed himself to it.”

Here it may not be improper, in a few words, to give some account of the Roman catholic superstition, its genius and spirit. History addresses itself to a more distant posterity than will ever be reached by any local or temporary theology; and the characters of sects may be studied, when their controversies shall be totally forgotten.

Before the reformation, all men of sense and virtue wished impatiently for some event, which might repress the exorbitant power of the clergy all over Europe, and put an end to the unbounded usurpations and pretensions of the Roman pontiff: But when the doctrine of Luther was promulgated, they were somewhat alarmed at the sharpness of the remedy; and it was easily foreseen, from the offensive zeal of the reformers, and defensive of the church, that all christendom must be thrown into combustion. In the preceeding state of ignorance and tranquillity, into which mankind were lulled, the attachment to superstition, tho’ without reserve, was not extreme; and, like the antient pagan idolatry, the popular religion consisted more of exterior practices and observances, than of any principles, which either took possession of the heart, or influenced the conduct. It might have been hoped, that learning and knowledge, as of old in Greece, stealing in gradually, would have opened the eyes of men, and corrected such of the ecclesiastical abuses as were the grossest and most burthensome. It had been observed, that, upon the revival of letters, very generous and enlarged sentiments of religion prevailed thro’out all Italy; and that, during the reign of Leo, the court of Rome itself, in imitation of their illustrious prince, had not been wanting in a just sense of freedom. But when the enraged and fanatical reformers took arms against the papal hierarchy, and threatened to rend from the church at once all her riches and authority; no wonder she was animated with equal zeal and ardor, in defence of such antient and invaluable possessions. At the same time, that she employed the stake and gibbet against her avowed enemies, she extended her jealousy even towards learning and philosophy, whom, in her supine security, she had formerly overlooked, as harmless and inoffensive. Hence, the severe check, which knowlege received in Italy: Hence, its total extinction in Spain: And hence, the slow progress, which it made, in France, Germany, and England. From the admi-

FOREWORD

ration of antient literature, from the inquiry after new discoveries, the minds of the studious were every where turned to polemical science; and, in all schools and academies, the furious controversies of theology took place of the calm disquisitions of learning.

Mean while, the rage of dispute and the violence of opposition rivetted men more strongly in all their various delusions, and infected every intercourse of society with their malignant influence. The Roman pontiff, not armed with temporal force, sufficient for his defence, was obliged to point a-new all his spiritual artillery, and to propagate the doctrine of rebellion and even of assassination, in order to subdue or terrify his enemies. Priests, jealous and provoked, timorous and uncontrolled, directed all the councils of that sect, and gave rise to such events as seem astonishing amid the mildness and humanity of modern manners. The massacre of Paris, that of Ireland, the murder of the two Henrys of France, the gunpowder conspiracy in England, are memorable, tho' temporary instances of the bigotry of that superstition. And the dreadful tribunal of the inquisition, that utmost instance of human depravity, is a durable monument to instruct us what a pitch iniquity and cruelty may rise to, when covered with the sacred mantle of religion.

Tho' the prospect of sharing the plunder of the church had engaged some princes to embrace the reformation, it may be affirmed, that the Romish system remained still the favorite religion of sovereigns. The blind submission, which is inculcated by all superstition, particularly by that of the catholics; the absolute resignation of all private judgment, reason, and inquiry; these are dispositions very advantageous to civil as well as ecclesiastical authority; and the liberty of the subject is more likely to suffer from such principles than the prerogatives of the chief magistrate. The splendor too and pomp of worship, which that religion carefully supports, are agreeable to the taste of magnificence, that prevails in courts, and form a species of devotion, which, while it flatters the pampered senses, gives little perplexity to the indolent understandings, of the great. That delicious country, where the Roman pontiff resides, was the source of all modern art and refinement, and diffused on its superstition an air of politeness, which distinguishes it from the gross rusticity of the other sects. And tho' policy made it assume, in some of its monastic orders, that austere mien, which is acceptable to the vulgar; all authority still resided in its prelates and spiritual princes, whose temper, more cultivated and humanized, inclined them to every decent pleasure and indulgence. Like all other species of superstition, it rouses the vain fears of unhappy mortals; but it knows also the secret of allaying these fears, and by exterior rites, ceremonies, and abasements, tho' sometimes at the expence of morals, it reconciles the penitent to his offended deity.

FOREWORD

Employing all these various arts, along with a restless enterprise, the catholic religion has acquired the favor of many monarchs, who had received their education from its rival sect; and Sweden, as well as England, has felt the effect of its dangerous insinuations.

However one may regard these two influential religious movements, it must be conceded that Hume here betrays no unwonted partiality and is quite even-handed in his censure. To all sectarian objections then, both political and clerical, he may be allowed the rejoinder that, while his book had been “extremely run down by Faction . . . it has been met with such Indulgence by good Judges, that I have no Reason to repent of my Undertaking.” In later time the critics could be more than indulgent, indeed lavish in their praise, for upon completion of the work, essentially, in 1762, it had been greatly improved in many respects: incidentally by more precise and extensive footnoting, as well as by more careful typography; in its text by the gradual elimination of peculiarly Scottish spelling and idioms; in its authorities by reference to other historical archives, especially those at the British Museum; and in its scope by extending now, in other volumes, to less controversial matters. All this achieved, the work received an extensive review by Voltaire, himself an accomplished *philosophe* and historian, who considered this English account to be “perhaps the best written in any language.” Moreover, he continued, the author thereof “is neither parliamentarian, nor royalist, nor Anglican, nor Presbyterian—he is simply judicial,” one obviously of a “mind superior to his materials; he speaks of weaknesses, blunders, cruelties as a physician speaks of epidemic diseases.” No less effusive was the Earl of Chesterfield, who rightly predicted that this was “the only History of England that will go down to Posterity.”

Still another way of assessing, now statistically, the continued acceptance of the *History* may be discovered in the printers' own accounts. Confronted by six massive quarto books, gradually appearing one or two at a time, even the most assiduous readers, as Hume anticipated, would become less and less interested, especially when each succeeding volume took them backward to epochs of lesser concern. Nonetheless, the complex printing records, when reduced to tabular form, disclose a total quarto issue hardly surpassed, in this period, for work of any kind.

FOREWORD

<i>Printed</i>		1754	1757	1759	1761	1762	1763	1764	<i>Total</i>
"Stuarts"	1 [5]	2,000		750		800	[225?]		3,775
	2 [6]		1,750	750		750	255		3,475
"Tudors"	1-2 [3-4]			2,250		750		250	3,225
"Ancient"	1-2 [1-2]				2,000	750			2,750

Before the long-produced, expensively priced but highly successful quarto issue had run its course, the *History* was already destined to appear in a more economical format designed for an even wider audience—and ultimately in a radical transformation of the text. The first hint of this new enterprise appears in a letter from Hume to his publisher concerning the full quarto edition then pending for 1762.

I am very glad, that you are in so good a way, and that you think so soon of making a new Edition. I am running over both the antient History & the Tudors, and shall send you them up by the Waggon as soon as they are corrected. Please tell Mr Strahan [the printer] to keep carefully this Copy I send up, as well as that which I left of the Stuarts: For if you intend to print an Octavo Edition next Summer, it will be better to do it from these Copies which are corrected, than from the new Edition, where there will necessarily be some Errors of the Press.

Actually the octavo edition, a smaller format in eight volumes, did not appear until 1763 and then, effective 1 November, was sold either as a complete set leather bound for £2.8s., or under an ingenious installment plan of one volume a month unbound for 5s. Acting on what he believed to be sufficient warrant from the quarto sales, still continuing at £4.10s. a set, the publisher enthusiastically ordered five thousand copies of this cheaper issue, a printing far exceeding total production of all preceding editions. About this extraordinary venture Hume soon voiced nothing but contempt: Andrew Millar, the publisher, had been "rapacious"; the book was "ill-printed"; misleading statements about its lagging sales were quite "detestable"; and such an enormous issue effectively prevented him from introducing, in another, still further revisions.

FOREWORD

To promote these sales Millar eventually resorted to a deceptive technique which, it seems, went quite unnoticed by Hume at the time and has gone undetected ever since. Beginning with the quarto issue of 1762 all titles uniformly read *A New Edition, Corrected*, excepting only an octavo issue now appearing in 1767, which suggestively announced *A New Edition, With Corrections, and some Additions*. Close inspection of this "edition" discloses, however, that it is merely a reissue of the 1763 octavo with substitute titles.

Quite undeterred by his cheap 1763–1767 fiasco, Millar next imagined that he might profit still further from his more affluent clientele, and accordingly produced in 1770, under the imprint of Thomas Cadell, a magnificent "Royal Paper" quarto edition priced at £7.7s. Copies of this as well as the earlier £4.10s. quarto issue, then designated as "Small Paper," were still being advertised in 1778, a clear indication that the quality market had been saturated long before. Even so, the luxurious 1770 edition is not without merit, textually for the inclusion of numerous substantive revisions, many of them based on materials found 1763–65 during Hume's travels in France, and typographically for the transfer, to the end of the volumes, of all the longer footnotes. Almost from the outset certain of Hume's subtended commentaries had threatened to overwhelm the text; now as separate "Additional Notes" they could be steadily augmented, or occasionally increased in number, all without any restraint.

Eventually, when the supply of "that abominable Octavo Edition" had diminished, and the sale of the sumptuous quarto was "pretty well advanced," Hume on 20 July 1771 submitted to press yet another corrected copy, this now containing, as he advised printer Strahan, "many considerable Improvements, most of them in the Style; but some also in the matter." Stylistic refinements of old material variously introduced in times past admittedly would not be much appreciated; yet, Hume confesses, "I cannot help it, and they run mostly upon Trifles; at least they will be esteemd such by the Generality of Readers, who little attend to the extreme Accuracy of Style. It is one great advantage that results from the Art of printing, that an Author may correct his works, as long as he lives." The words are somewhat prophetic, for the edition then