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978-1-107-62077-3 - A History of Modern Europe: From the Middle of
the Sixteenth Century

John E. Morris

Frontmatter

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A HISTORY
OF
MODERN EUROPE

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FROM THE MIDDLE OF THE
SIXTEENTH CENTURY

by

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PREFACE

“A potentate who keeps a very small army and don't mean any harm.” HENRY KINGSLEY.

THE said potentate's own statement was “L'Empire, c'est la Paix.” But, whether he spoke sincerely or not, he was forced into war to justify his seizure of power and to show himself worthy of being a Napoleon. He found himself fighting, just because he had, or thought he had, the means. On the other hand, the grandson of his great and successful rival has also a small army, and has not yet used it.

It may seem queer for an author to preface a new book with an apology. But I must say that to present to young students the story of Philip II and Henry of Navarre, of Gustavus and Louis XIV and Frederick, of the Republic and the Empire, of United Germany and United Italy, and yet to abstain from giving details of wars, has seemed to me impossible. At least they can learn the need of readiness in face of possible dangers, the evils of disunion, and the influence of war as bringing out the best or the worst instincts, devotion or greed, according as a nation's cause is just or unjust. The part played by England, or by Great Britain, in several great wars is worthy of their study. Yet they will have but a distorted view of history if they read only of their own country. The best way for them to understand the aspirations of neighbouring nations is to look into the causes of the struggles, the means whereby the Dutch shook themselves free from Spain and the Houses of Hohenzollern and Savoy won their way to lead Germany and Italy, and the consequences of successful efforts, while

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PREFACE

our country was, as it were, on the fringe of European complications. So, after all, I do not apologise for putting war in the front place. A despot to satisfy personal ambition overawes his neighbours, or a nation in arms professes to spread to others the benefits of its superior "ideas," and at once resistance is laudable. Only the fighting machine may be made too strong, and then the instrument of honourable defence may become the instrument of wanton aggression, for the simple reason that the sovereign or nation possessing it wishes to use it.

BEDFORD,

May, 1914.

PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION.

The text remains substantially as it was written in 1913, but references to the Great War made for the Second Edition have been changed from the present to the past tense.

Having read a good many of the recent books on the Great War I have come to the conclusion that it is better not to add anything after 1914. We have hardly yet got our focus right. The comments of some writers on both statesmen and generals are so naïve as to be almost ludicrous. Other writers seem to think that to denounce patriotism and national aspirations is the one duty of the super-intellectual man. The future of India and Egypt and Turkey is beyond our ken. So I prefer to leave untouched what is here written about the "ideas" which have influenced Europe up to 1914. The question of how to use a very small army in the future and yet not to mean any harm cannot be solved off-hand.

J. E. M.

January, 1925

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