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The Republican Tradition in Europe

H. A. L. Fisher



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The Republican Tradition in Europe

First published in 1911, this pioneering and ambitious work provides a history of the evolution of republican thought and practice in Europe from the fall of the Roman Empire to the beginning of the twentieth century.

Based a series of lectures delivered by the author at the Lowell Institute in 1910, this is a comprehensive treatment of the subject which moves deftly from the political thought of the middle ages through to the rise of Protestantism, the wave of revolution across Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, concluding with an analysis of the republican cause and the permanence of the republican idea in the consciousness of Europe.

**THE REPUBLICAN TRADITION
IN EUROPE**

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE MEDIEVAL EMPIRE

STUDIES IN NAPOLEONIC STATESMANSHIP

BONAPARTISM

A POLITICAL HISTORY OF ENGLAND, 1485-1547

FREDERIC WILLIAM MAITLAND : A BIOGRAPHICAL
SKETCH

THE REPUBLICAN TRADITION IN EUROPE

BY

H. A. L. FISHER, M.A.

FELLOW OF NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD, AND FELLOW OF THE BRITISH ACADEMY

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First Published in 1911

To

A. LAWRENCE LOWELL

PRESIDENT OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY

DEAR PRESIDENT LOWELL,

This book is the fruit of a course of lectures delivered at the Lowell Institute in the first year of your College Presidency. Will you allow me to dedicate it to you as a token of sincere admiration and friendship, and with every hope that the great University of Harvard may go from strength to strength under your vigorous and enlightened rule?

Though there have been a few alterations and additions, this little volume substantially represents my lectures as they were written for delivery, nor have I attempted to convert a series of discourses intended for a general audience into a complete or systematic treatise. The subject is large, and I do not profess to supply more than a bare outline of the course of Republican thought and action from the downfall of the Roman Empire to the present day. But the matter is comparatively unfamiliar, and, save for Emilio Castelar's "*Historia del Movimiento Republicano*," a characteristic monument of Andalusian exuberance, I am not aware that it has been made the subject of a book. To an American audience, nurtured

in the Republican tradition of the New World, it may be interesting to learn at what epochs, and within what limits, and with what results a political ideal similar to their own has been an operative force in European politics. For even in the Old World there have been moments when some have dreamt the dream of Abraham Lincoln: "Friend, the Lord prefers common-looking people; that is why He made so many of them." And so I venture to transgress the very sound maxim which reminds us that what will do well enough in a lecture-room is very seldom fit for the society on a book-shelf.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT A. L. FISHER

NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD
January 1911

NOTE

I cannot allow this little book to go out without acknowledging the valuable help which I have received from my friend and colleague, Mr Leopold Wickham Legg, who has been kind enough to read the sheets as they passed through the Press.

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THE REPUBLICAN TRADITION IN EUROPE

CHAPTER I

MEDIEVAL THOUGHT AND ANCIENT TRADITION

Moribus antiquis res stat Romana virisque.—ENNIVS

Let this moment be the beginning of an epoch of austere morality and of immaculate justice.—FIRST MANIFESTO OF THE PORTUGUESE REPUBLIC, Oct. 5, 1910

AMONG the political records of Europe there are few documents more instructive than those austere and noble pieces of pedagogic literature which were composed for the only son of Louis XIV. by the greatest Catholic Bishop of the seventeenth century. Of the moral elevation and literary splendour of Bossuet's spacious treatises, of the "Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle," which first inspired the ambition of the youthful Napoleon, and "La Politique tirée de l'Ecriture Sainte," it is needless to speak in this connexion; they have been appraised by many qualified judges. But some words may be said about the political creed which is expressed with so patient and systematic an intellectual procedure and in terms of such tranquil and unfaltering conviction. It is the creed of Catholic and Monarchical Europe formulated by a mind which saw in the resplendent triumphs of the French Monarchy fresh