

A History of Early Modern Europe
1500-1815

A History of Early Modern Europe 1500-1815

by

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Preface

THE WAYS OF TEACHING HISTORY are many, more than can be served by any one textbook. Yet this introduction to the history of Europe in the early modern period is designed to meet the needs of most methods. It does not clamp upon the teacher a rigid pattern which determines for him how he must shape his course. Instead, by providing the student with a clear expository and narrative account of the principal institutions and events, it gives the instructor greater freedom. It enables him to build upon this foundation his own structure of analysis and interpretation, and to introduce more effectively into the classroom and into collateral reading the major debates among historians.

To be sure, the historical picture here presented rests upon the author's own reading of the meaning of the past, but he has sought to embody therein the discoveries and judgments of recent scholarship. He has endeavored to keep his focus fixed upon specific people, not faceless groups: to tell what kind of persons these men and women were, what problems they met, how they sought to solve them, and what were the consequences of their acts. He has sought to tell this tale with clarity, vigor, and color, not just in order to keep the student from dozing over it, but simply because he does not believe that history is dull and sees no reason why it should be made dull.

The manner of presentation has been adapted to the character of the material. The first chapter describes the geographic, demographic, social, and political structure of Europe in the early modern period; the discussion of these factors within the chapters devoted to the histories of the states is therefore confined to noting how the particular country fits within the large pattern. Chapters 2-6 and 25-27 treat the economic, religious, artistic and intellectual life of Europe, as well as its overseas expansion, as general European phenomena. Political history is told for each country in narrative sequence. For the convenience of those who wish to use the book over two semesters, it is divided into two approximately equal parts, with the mid-seventeenth century as the place of division; but it may be easily used for a one-semester course.

It is even more pleasure than duty to thank those who have helped me to bring this work to completion. Among those who have read sections lying within their fields of interest, and have given me the priceless benefit of their corrections and suggestions, are Professors Charles Gibson and

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John C. McGalliard of the State University of Iowa; Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, William J. Bouwsma, and Thomas Kuhn of the University of California, Berkeley; Eugen Weber of the University of California, Los Angeles; Donald Weinstein of Roosevelt University; Martin Wolfe of the University of Pennsylvania; and George W. Forell of the Lutheran Theological Seminary of Chicago. Yet, the responsibility for the book being mine alone, I had to decide which of their criticisms to accept and which, at my peril, to decline. At greater distance the book owes much to my own masters at Columbia University; among them I should like to include the late John Bartlet Brebner, a scholar and a man of vision, no less than Garrett Mattingly, Shepard B. Clough, and John H. Wuorinen, with whom I worked more closely. I wish to give special thanks to Dr. E. Gunter Troche, Director, and Mr. Dennis Beall, Curator, of the Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts of the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, from whose collection of prints came many of the illustrations in this book; Dr. Troche, in particular, suggested many of the prints, and he and Mr. Beall were unfailingly courteous and helpful even when confronted with the vagaries of a historian's judgment and taste. President J. Ralph Murray of Elmira College graciously provided the services of his secretarial staff for typing the manuscript. The greatest burdens have fallen upon my wife, Mildred Ringel Rowen, and the greatest services have been hers too; I cannot express my gratitude to her better than to say that this book is hers, and our children's, no less than mine.

H. H. R.

Berkeley, California
March 21, 1960

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