published an article on “ L’Opinion en Allemagne et les Con­ditions de la Paix,” and in 1871 a pamphlet on *Le Suffrage Universel;* and it was about this time also that the more or less vague ideas which he had entertained of writing on the French Revolution returned in a new and definite shape. He determined to trace in the Revolution of 1789 the reason of the political instability from which modern France was suffering. From the autumn of 1871 to the end of his life his great work, *Les Origines de la France Contemporaine,* occupied all his time, and in 1884 he gave up his professorship in order to devote himself wholly to his task; but he succumbed before it was finished, dying in Paris on 5th March 1893. In the portion of the work which remained to be finished Taine had intended to draw a picture of French society and of the French family, and to trace the development of science in the 19th century. He had also planned a. complementary volume to his *Théorie de l’intelligence,* to be entitled *Un Traité de la Volonté.*

The *Origines de la France Contemporaine,* Taine’s monu­mental achievement, stands apart from the rest of his work. His object was to explain the existing constitution of France by studying the more immediate causes of the present state of affairs—the last years of what is called the *Ancien Régime,* the Revolution and the beginning of the 19th century, to each of which several volumes were assigned. He also had another object, although he was perhaps hardly conscious of it, which was to study man in one of his pathological crises; for Taine makes an investigation into human nature, and the historian checks and endorses the pessimism and misanthropy of Grain- dorge. The problem which Taine set himself was to inquire why the centralization of modern France is so great that all individual initiative is practically non-existent, and why the central power, whether it he in the hands of a man or of an assembly, is the sole and only power ; also to expose the error underlying two prevalent ideas:—(1) That the Revolution destroyed absolutism and set up liberty; the Revolution, he points out, merely caused absolutism to change hands. (2) That the Revolution destroyed liberty instead of establishing it; that France was less centralized before 1789 than after 1800. This also he shows to be untrue. France was already a cen­tralized country before 1789, and grew rapidly more and more so from the time of Louis XIV. onwards. The Revolution merely gave it a new form.

The *Origines* differ from the rest of Taine’s work in that, although he applies to a period of history the method which he had already applied to literature and the arts, he is unable to approach his subject in the same spirit; he loses his philosophic calm; he cannot help writing as a man and a Frenchman, and he lets his feelings have play; but what the work loses thus in impartiality it gains in life.

Taine was the philosopher of the epoch which succeeded the era of romanticism in France. The romantic era had lasted from 1820 to 1850. It had been the result of a reaction against the classical school, or rather against the conventionality and lifeless rules of this school in its decadence. The romantic school introduced the principle of individual liberty both as regards matter and style; it was a brilliant epoch, rich in men of genius and fruitful of beautiful work, but towards 1850 it had reached its decline, and a young generation, tired in turn of its conventions, its hollow rhetoric, its pose of melancholy, arose, armed with new principles and fresh ideals. Their ideal was truth; their watchword liberty; to get as near as possible to scientific truth became their object. Taine was the mouthpiece of this period, or rather one of its most authoritative spokesmen.

Many attempts have been made to apply one of Taine’s favourite theories to himself, and to define his predominant and preponderant faculty. Some critics have held that it was the power of logic, a power which was at the same time the source of his weakness and of his strength. He had a passion for abstraction. “ Every man and every book,” he said, “ can be summed up in three pages, and those three pages can be summed up in three lines.” He considers everything as a mathematical problem, whether it be the universe or a work of art: “ C’est beau comme un syllogisme,” he said of a sonata of Beethoven. Taine’s theory of the universe, his doctrine, his method of writing criticism and history, his philosophical system, are all the result of this logical gift, this passion for reasoning, classification and abstraction. But Taine’s imagina­tive quality was as remarkable as his power of logic; hence the most satisfactory definition of Taine’s predominating faculty would be one which comprehended the two gifts. Μ. Lemaitre gave us this definition when he called Taine a *poète-logicien;* Μ. Bourget likewise when he spoke of Taine’s *imagination philosophique,* and Μ. Barrés when he said that Taine had the power of dramatizing abstractions. For Taine was a poet as well as a logician; and it is possible that the portion of his work which is due to his poetic and imaginative gift may prove the most lasting.

Taine’s doctrine consisted in an inexorable determinism, a negation of metaphysics; as a philosopher he was a positivist. Enamoured as he was of the precise and the definite, the spiritualist philosophy in vogue in 1845 positively maddened him. He returned to the philosophy of the 18th century, especially to Condillac and to the theory of transformed sensa­tion. Taine presented this philosophy in a vivid, vigorous and polemical form, and in concrete and coloured language which made his works more accessible, and consequently more influential, than those of Auguste Comte. Hence to the men of 1860 Taine was the true representative of positivism.

Taine’s critical work is considerable; but all his works of criticism are works of history. Hitherto history had been to criticism as the frame is to the picture; Taine reversed] the process, and studied litérary personages merely as specimens and productions of a certain epoch. He started with the axiom that the complete expression of a society is to be found in its literature, and that the way to ohtain an idea of a society is to study its literature. The great writer is not an isolated being; he is the result of a thousand causes; firstly, of his race; secondly, of his environment; thirdly, of the circumstances in which he was placed while his talents were developing. Hence Race, Environment, Time—these are the three things to be studied before the man is taken into consideration. Taine completed this theory by another, that of the *predominating faculty,* the *faculté maîtresse.* This consists in believing that every man, and especially every great man, is dominated by one faculty so strong as to subordinate all others to if, which is the centre of the man’s activity and leads him into one particular channel. It is this theory, obviously the result of his love of abstraction, which is the secret of Taine’s power and of his deficiencies. He always looked for this salient quality, this particular channel, and when he had once made up his mind what it was, he massed up all the evidence which went to corroborate and to illustrate this one quality, and necessarily omitted all conflicting evidences. The result was an inclination to lay stress on one side of a character or a question to the exclusion of all others.

Taine served science unfalteringly, without looking forward to any possible fruits or result. In his work we find neither enthusiasm nor bitterness, neither hope nor yet despair; merely a hopeless resignation. The study of mankind was Taine’s incessant preoccupation, and he followed the method already described. He made a searching investigation into humanity, and his verdict was one of unqualified condemnation. In “ Thomas Graindorge ” we see him aghast at the spectacle of man’s brutality and woman’s folly. In man he sees the primeval savage, the gorilla, the carnivorous and lascivious animal, or else the maniac with diseased body and disordered mind, to whom health, either of mind or body, is but an accident. Taine is appalled by the *bête humaine;* and in all his works we are conscious, as in the case of Voltaire, of the terror with which the possibilities of human folly inspire him. It may be doubted whether Taine’s system, to which he attached so much import­ance, is really the most lasting part of his work, just as it may be doubted whether a sonata of Beethoven bears any resem­blance to a syllogism. For Taine was an artist as well as a