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HISTORY AND ASSASSINATION.

By HERBERT HAINES, M.A., F.R.Hist.S.

(Read January 1889.)

‘WITH a modern reader, the assassination of the four leaders, in their houses, and at the banquet, raises a sentiment of repugnance which withdraws his attention from the other features of this memorable deed.’

Grote, in the passage just quoted, is referring to the assassination which freed Thebes from the Spartan yoke.

But, though the historian himself apparently sympathises with the Theban conspirators, he only indirectly ventures to depreciate ‘the repugnance’ which he credits the modern reader with entertaining towards murder done in any cause, or on any persons.

The object of this paper is to raise, without attempting to answer, the question whether or no this repugnance, however useful and desirable, is invariably agreeable to reason?

Whether, in fact, we may, in studying history, assume as a moral law the iniquity of murder, or whether we must judge every recorded case of political murder on its own merits?

And further, whether, if we decide that assassination is sometimes permissible, we can classify the great political murders of history, and say, murders done in obedience to such and such principles, under such and such circumstances, were justifiable and right, and all other murders were unjustifiable and wrong?

Before entering on these questions, it is necessary to decide on a definition of murder. Now it must, I think, be allowed that every illegal killing is not murder: taking life in civil war, in accordance with the rules of war practised by the State in which the war takes place, is, for instance, not murder,

morally speaking. Whatever may have been the justice of their respective causes, such men as Simon de Montfort, Lord George Murray, and General Lee were not murderers.

But how and when does civil war begin ?

When and where does it end ?

What is civil war ?

Were the Sicilian Vespers civil war ?

Was the Massacre of St. Bartholomew civil war ?

Were the Spaniards, who, in provinces obedient to King Joseph, stabbed French sentinels, and shot in the back French couriers, warriors or assassins ?

Again, does murder depend, morally speaking, on the number of men employed in its perpetration, and on the geographical position of its theatre ? Take, for instance, the great plot to assassinate William III.

There is a dangerous inclination in the modern reader to dismiss with contempt as despicable sophistries the argument by which Barclay and his friends sought to justify their attempt.

‘Desperate Jacobite adventurers,’ says the modern reader, and passes on, with a smile or a sneer, at men well born, well bred, more unselfish, and twice as brave as himself. But the student of history, who is worthy of the name, pauses. Conspirators are always, to speak colloquially, ‘a mixed lot,’ but in this conspiracy we find men, gentlemen by birth and breeding, soldiers by profession, and adventurers only because they had sacrificed position and property to, what they regarded as, the cause of duty.

Now it is worth while considering the arguments by which such men thought they could justify their proposed assassination. To put them shortly, they were these. James, King of England, was at war with William, Stadtholder of Holland. And these servants of King James intended to begin a war in England by ‘cutting off the Prince of Orange in winter quarters.’ Why should they not do so ? In war it is quite permissible to kill by surprise the enemy’s general ; it is permissible to attack the enemy where you choose, except on

neutral ground ; it is permissible to pass through his lines by means of disguises and false watchwords ; and can the number of persons making the attack affect its moral nature ? Certainly it was not chivalrous to surprise and butcher a warrior, while taking a morning drive, but was chivalry an obligation in dealing with a man who had treacherously attacked his own father-in-law, and who owed his present advantageous position to the treason of the English people and the desertion of the English army ?

Again : George Cadoudal, a man whose name is synonymous with loyalty and courage, argued that he had plotted to kill, but not to murder, the First Consul. 'I proposed,' he said, in effect, 'to attack Buonaparte and his guards, numbers and arms being equal.' 'I had a perfect right to secure the advantage of the surprise, and a perfect right to shift the theatre of the war from Brittany to Paris.'

Another, more obvious, and not yet altogether discredited, resource of sophistry, is to argue that the forms with which an act is accomplished can alter its moral nature. Thus we find that many persons have declined to classify the crime of the English regicides with that of Ravallac, on the ground that King Charles I. was tried, condemned, and executed as 'a traitor to the people of England.' These persons would have admitted indeed, that the offence of 'treason to the people of England' was unknown to the English law ; that the people of England were not represented at the trial ; that the Court was an illegal one, the Bench packed, the verdict a foregone conclusion, and the person of the victim, legally speaking, inviolable. Nevertheless the regicides at the time, and their defenders since, found a mysterious something in the (to quote Hallam) 'imaginary solemnity' of the trial, and 'in the insolent mockery of the forms of justice,' which distinguished the cutting through the neck of King Charles I. from the stabbing in the body of King Henry IV.

I am not aware whether anyone has held that the atrocious murder of the late Tsar was palliated by the fact that he had been solemnly condemned to death by a Nihilist com-

mittee, but it would not be at all surprising to find such an argument seriously advanced. For the idea that a crime can be altered in its nature by the machinery with which it is accomplished, or the forms with which it is surrounded, is a very widespread one. How widespread, is shown by the fact that, while the massacres of 'the Indian Mutiny' have found few, if any, European apologists, the more numerous and more atrocious massacres of the French Revolution have been frequently defended ; and this is the more curious, because an act committed after a mock trial, and with a certain sham legality, is necessarily committed with premeditation, and in cold blood.

A kindred theory to that just noticed was at the bottom of the curious ideas as to assassination which prevailed among Italian bravoës. Poisoning food or wine they regarded as not only unprofessional, but wicked ; but the least scrupulous of the brotherhood of murder held it permissible to use a poisoned weapon, while no one condemned the Venetian practice of breaking off the blade of a glass dagger in the victim's body.

Lastly, there was the ultra-scrupulous bravo, who, in his own opinion, earned his money like a man of honour ; that is to say, who put on a helmet and a shirt of mail, chose his own time and place, and then gave his client's enemy the opportunity of drawing a sword, the effective use of which he had done his best to provide against.

And this man, again, was despised by the professional duellist, who could be hired to pick a quarrel with anyone of sufficient social standing, and not too great skill in fence.

Then, again, we have the Corsican vendetta, in pursuance of which, when once engaged in, you may, without disgrace or sin, shoot any relative of your enemy in the back ; but, I believe, though I am not quite certain, that you must either shoot or stab, and may not poison.

Merely noticing these different theories to show the necessity for investigation, and care in the use, in historical studies, of the word murder, I pass on to the main subject of

my paper, and begin by giving a definition of murder, which, without defending as perfect, I propose to use for present purposes.

‘ Murder is the taking of human life without legal authority, and not in time of war, and in accordance with the existing laws of war.’

The political murders recorded in history, which have been committed in obedience, or in professed obedience, to some, more or less respectable, principle, may be roughly divided into—

1. Murders of tyrants (in the Greek sense of the word).
2. Murders of traitors.
3. Murders of enemies of the human race.
4. Murders of unscrupulous enemies in political self-defence.
5. Murders of the supposed enemies of God.

Let us consider—

1st. Murders of tyrants, the word being used in the Greek sense, meaning a man whose power is founded on usurpation.

The leading features of an ordinary Greek tyranny are familiar to all of us. There is a small state divided into bitterly hostile parties, and after a more or less prolonged period of misrule, varied perhaps by anarchy, one man seizes the supreme authority. Whether he has gained his power by the help of one party, or by deceiving all, by foreign support, or by means of mercenaries, that power has been gained by the unlawful use of force, and it exists by virtue of the force which can be employed in its defence: blood has been shed to establish it; blood will, when necessary, be shed to maintain it; blood must be shed if it is to be overthrown. Then arise these questions—

Has any citizen a right to resist power unlawful in its origin, has he a right to endeavour to overthrow the tyrant by means similar to those by which the tyrant rose to power?

As the tyrant has forfeited his life by the law he has subverted, is any citizen at liberty to execute that law?

Speaking generally, it may be said that ancient public

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opinion answered all these questions with emphatic affirmatives ; now, was this ancient public opinion, or was it not, correct ?

The modern thinker will at least add certain conditions : he will require that the tyrant's rule shall have been not only wrongful in its origin, but bad in itself ; that the tyrant's death shall be the only means of subverting his rule, and shall be the signal for the commencement of a better state of things.

But, if all this were so, then, what is he to say ?

Ought patriots to have looked on with folded arms, during long years of disgrace abroad and oppression at home, till the author of all this evil, because he had thoroughly succeeded, because he had substituted his own will for the law which would have cut short his career, died in peace, full, it might be, of years, wealth, and honours ?

Take, for instance, the history of Klearchus of the Pontic Herakleia : if his assassins saw a reasonable chance of bringing about a less intolerable state of things by his death, were they, or were they not, wrong to act as they did ?

But it was not only in revenge for public injuries, or to effect a political revolution, that the ancient tyrants were stricken. Of some of them it was as true as of the Visconti that 'they never spared man in their anger or woman in their lust.' Even now, in most civilised countries, the law views with great leniency the act of a husband who slays the destroyer of his honour, in a maddening burst of righteous indignation. If we justify that law, should we not give wider rights to the husband who has lost a wife, or the father who has been robbed of a child, by brute force, exercised by a usurper whose successful political crimes have rendered the law powerless either to punish him or to shield his victim ?

If the famous Virginia legend were truth instead of fiction, should we be disposed to condemn Virginius, had he stabbed the Decemvir instead of his own innocent daughter ?

2nd. The murder of traitors.

(1) Let us take the case where the traitor's life is taken by the orders of his sovereign.

To a modern Englishman, living under a law-abiding and ultra-humane Government, there is certainly something repugnant in the conduct of a King, who, being bound to afford protection and an example to his subjects, should order one of them to be slain contrary to law and without trial. But is there not also something repugnant to a loyal and law-abiding Englishman in the fact that a traitor should escape punishment if his guilt has made it impossible for him to be brought to trial?

The captain of a ship is held justified if he quells a mutiny by shooting down its leaders; the colonel of a regiment is praised if, at the critical moment of some desperate struggle, he cuts down a soldier whose cowardice might demoralise the rest.

May not then a Sovereign save his country from the terrible disaster of civil war or revolution by the same means as the captain may employ to save his ship, or the colonel his regiment?

Is not a Throne a possession which its occupant is bound to protect at any price?

Is not the safety of the State the highest law, and is not its Monarch the proper judge of what that safety requires?

To answer these questions in the negative is to deny that the State has the right of self-defence, a right which each of its units possesses, and to deny that a King may do as much for his Crown as any one of his subjects might do in defence of his life. Of course this question of the moral right of a Sovereign to procure the murder of a traitor only arises when the traitor's guilt is certain, when the law is powerless to deal with him, and when his continued existence endangers the Crown.

It is a commonplace that 'revolutions are not made of rose-water,' meaning that they can scarcely be made successful without the use of illegal violence; but should a Sovereign be restricted to rose-water when his enemies are provided with vitriol? When the law is too weak to deal with a phenomenal state of things, should it still be powerful to hamper the defender who has sworn to maintain it?

The murder of the Duke of Guise is a well-known example of the assassination of a mighty traitor. And, assuming his treason, and admitting the impossibility of bringing him to trial, are we prepared to condemn Henry III. for taking the life whose continuance was incompatible with that of the Royal authority ?

No doubt a gentleman's sympathies go out to Crillon, and do not go out to Lorgnac ; and Guise, with all his faults, was a more lovable character than his Royal murderer. But the question is one, not of sympathy, but of judgment. Guise was stronger than any subject should ever be : he had, by unscrupulous advancement of his own interests, by exciting the fanaticism of the extreme Romanists, and by intriguing with a foreign Power, gained a position by means of which he could reasonably expect to rule Catholic, and to crush Protestant, France ; that power he and his house would have abused to the full, and, while respecting, probably, the King's life, and perhaps his nominal sovereignty, would have reduced him to the position of a figure-head of the vessel of State. Henry saved France, and saved the Throne, in the only way which the success of Guise's treason made possible.

Was he right or wrong ?

But, if Henry III. of France had a moral right to have Henry of Guise murdered, why had not Philip II. a similar right against William the Silent ?

William was even stronger in the Netherlands than Guise in France ; he was actually in arms against his Sovereign ; his death promised as great advantages to that Sovereign's cause, and to bring him to justice was even more obviously hopeless. As a matter of fact, William the Silent was, in everything but military ability, far superior to the Duke of Guise, and English public opinion has always regarded the Dutch Revolution as one of the few instances recorded in history of a justifiable rebellion. All this, however, cannot affect our judgment as to whether, in defence of his Crown and his kingdom, a Sovereign may cause to be done illegally what a rebel will not permit to be done legally.

Another instance of an attempt to terminate a civil war by the murder of the leader of one of the parties engaged in it, is furnished by the conduct of the English Government in offering a reward for Prince Charles Edward 'alive or dead.' This, of course, meant putting a premium on his assassination, since the attempt to kidnap a daring young soldier in the midst of a devoted army would probably have only been made in order to form an excuse for his murder. Now this case has the merit of placing the moral question in a very fair light. On the one hand, we have a Sovereign in possession and accepted as King *de jure* by the bulk of a nation which could not truthfully be described as badly governed. On the other hand, we have a Prince leading, with the utmost humanity and chivalry, a dangerous rebellion, to the success of which his life was essential, and fighting in a cause which any right-minded man might have embraced, and which every Roman Catholic was bound to support.

Ought we then, or ought we not, assuming, for the sake of the argument, that the Hanoverian cause was the rightful one, to blame the Government for seeking to secure its triumph, and terminate the civil war, by the murder of their chief opponent?

Then, too, what is the moral responsibility of the subject who obeys his Sovereign's orders? Assuming a King may command the necessary murder of a rebel, is the King the absolute judge of such necessity? Is the subject who executes the murder as irresponsible as the executioner of a lawfully, though it may be wrongfully, convicted criminal? Suppose you condemn the murder of D'Ancre, or that of Guise, what is your verdict on Vitri, or on the gentlemen of the Quarante-cinq?

(2) Let us take the case where the traitor's life is taken without his Sovereign's authority. Here the murderer has himself to answer in the affirmative three questions—

1. Is his victim a rebel?
2. Is he a dangerous rebel?
3. Is the law unable to touch him?

It may be asked by what right any man can answer these

questions concerning a fellow-subject, and, even if the answers are obvious and indisputable, as in the case of a traitor leading a dangerous revolt, has a private individual the right to sentence his equal, and to set by his action an example of treacherous bloodshed which any desperado can follow?

On the other hand, it must be admitted that the duty of protecting the Throne, and the expediency of terminating a civil war, is very obvious and very imperative.

3rd. Murders of enemies of the human race.

Does history show us men whose crimes have been so heinous as to deprive them of the right to protection from those laws of God and man which they have outraged? Our ancestors, as we all know, outlawed, in the strict sense of the term, certain criminals. These criminals were made 'wolf-heads,' and, like wolves, might be hunted down as dangerous vermin.

Now, what our ancestors could at one time do legally, can society, illegally, but morally, do at any time? May a man more dangerous than any ravenous beast, or venomous reptile, be slain as you would slay a tiger in the jungle, a mad dog in the street, or a cobra in your compound?

And, if not, why not?

Should the laws of society protect social pirates? May not a man place himself outside the limits, not indeed of Divine mercy, but of, so far as his fellow-men are concerned, Divine protection?

With regard to two classes of men, these questions have been put and answered. It has been held that there are crimes so atrocious that their authors should meet with punishment wherever that punishment can be made to find them out. It has also been held, by men of the Teutonic race, that persons may, when they have constituted themselves champions of crime and anarchy, be hunted down by volunteer champions of law and order. As examples of the first class of men, I instance, without expressing here any opinion as to their deserts, the English regicides, and the leaders in 'the Reign of Terror.' In the eyes of the Cavalier of that

day, believing, as an article of his Creed, in the personal inviolability of the Sovereign, the murder of King Charles was a crime the perpetrators of which must henceforth walk the earth branded more indelibly than Cain himself, and without his special immunity; and, if they had not, like the arch-traitor Judas, the grace to execute justice on themselves, then let every 'honest' man speed them towards their own place.

And this view, when acted upon, met with general approval alike in the Protestant republic of Holland and in the Catholic monarchy of Spain.

With regard to the Terrorists, public opinion has never, I think, condemned either Charlotte Corday or those agents of 'the *terreur blanche*' who struck down criminals as wicked as, though less notorious than, Marat himself.

In forming an opinion on this question, we should, it seems, determine—

1. The expediency of punishing certain crimes by assassinating their perpetrators.

2. Whether, when a criminal has subverted the law of his State, and defied that of his Maker, he has or has not divested himself of his claims on, as he has ignored his obligations to, his fellow-men.

As to the murder of habitual criminals, whom the law could not touch, and whose successes were a menace to society, this course was, as we all know, adopted in Germany in the Middle Ages, and in the United States in our own times.

The Vehmgerichte were terribly abused, and often struck the innocent and spared the guilty, but the principle on which they relied was this. Germany was infested by men who used their birth, their castles, and their retainers to secure for themselves, and their agents, impunity for lives of open crime. God did not, and the Emperor could not, strike: the Vehm could and sometimes did; and public opinion decided that arbitrary, uncertain, biassed, and illegal justice was still far better than no justice at all. Accordingly we find that 'the Secret Tribunals' spread, and flourished, in the teeth of powerful

opposition, and in defiance of some of the strongest Teutonic instincts, and, when they did fall, fell partly from their own corruption, and partly because the law of the land became at length strong enough to do their work.

The history of 'the Vigilance Committees' it is unnecessary to enlarge on: from time to time in different parts of the United States men, more or less moral, and with something to lose, have had to choose between anarchy and Lynch law; hitherto they have always preferred to endure the evils, and accept the responsibilities, of the latter.

4th. Murders of unscrupulous enemies in political or social self-defence.

The moral defence for such murders is so weak that I have only been induced to notice them by reason of the existence of one of the strangest and least investigated phenomena of modern history, that is, the existence, and the success, of the 'Ku Klux Klan' in the Southern States of the American Republic. Now, when the 'Ku Klux,' or 'Invisible Empire,' flourished, in the year 1868, there was in existence a fairly strong Government, regular courts of law, and a recognised legal code; but, in the opinion of the majority of Southerners, the Government was a foreign one, the courts hopelessly prejudiced, and the assumption on which the new laws were based, namely the equality of white and coloured citizens, was a lie, and an immoral and pernicious lie. The 'Ku Klux,' supported by the strongest and best party in the South, devoted itself to driving out the 'carpetbaggers' and 'schalawags'—who were manipulating the negro vote for their own profit and to the destruction of the party of property and intelligence—and by sheer terrorism succeeded; the political adventurers being hunted north, and the newly enfranchised blacks cowed into submission. This was done by threats, floggings, and murders, and the justification of the work, and of its tools, put forward by the Southerners, was this. Property, honesty, and intelligence were being crushed by the brute votes of an ignorant rabble led by political adventurers, and thrust into an unnatural and, except by Federal force, un-

tenable position by a Government to which no Southerner owed allegiance. The 'Ku Klux' might save all that was worth saving in the country, and the choice lay between its action and surrender.

Now, granting all this—and I have only reproduced the argument of Southern advocates—was the use of such means excusable? If an outside Power subverts the laws of a State, and uses one of its factions to work the moral and material ruin of that State, within what limits should the opposition to foreign tyrants and domestic demagogues be confined?

5th. Murders of the supposed enemies of God.

As a matter of fact, although religion has been the most potent motive with many murderers, it has very rarely been the sole one.

The Jewish assassins of whom we read in the Old Testament struck in the national cause; Mahommedan fanatics may be credited with hating the Frank, as a Frank, as well as an infidel; the Roman Catholics who took, or attempted, the lives of leading heretics had often either political objects or pecuniary inducements; the Thugs, though acting on religious grounds, generally chose victims worth plundering; even the Scotch Covenanters had private wrongs to avenge, or political purposes to serve.

Still the religious motive has too often been the guiding and decisive one in the mind of the murderer; and, I conceive, if we condemn religious murders, it must be on one of the three following grounds. Either that the Deity disapproves of all religious murders; or that He disapproved of the special murder under consideration; or that the assassin was mistaken in his view of his victim's attitude towards the Deity.

Having considered the more or less plausible motives in obedience to which assassinations have been committed in the past, let us consider one great and *primâ facie* objection popularly urged against murder, committed on any person and in any cause—an objection which, if only it were valid, would go far towards deciding the problem before us this evening. The objection, with which, in more or less rhetorical

form, we are all familiar, is that 'murder is always a mistake,' that is, as I understand it, that, viewed as a means to a political end, it must either fail, or, at least, cause the end to be obtained at a disproportionate sacrifice. But is this true? Does not history, as a matter of fact, tell us of a number of murders which have fulfilled the expectations of their perpetrators; and does it not tell us of attempted murders which, if successful, would have altered the subsequent course of events?

Take a few instances.

The murder of the leaders of the Philo-Spartan party by Pelopidas and his companions. This assassination decided, and was in Grote's opinion essential to, the success of the Theban patriots. And that success was complete and enduring: the Theban traitors were crushed, the foreign garrison expelled from the Cadmeia, and the struggle commenced which resulted in reducing Sparta to a state of powerlessness north of the Isthmus.

The murder of Bardas Phokas. This is a case of absolutely dramatic expediency. No one who has ever opened Finlay can forget the picture he draws of the imperial and rebel armies set over against each other in battle array; of how Bardas, the successful general and mighty fighter, rode out in advance of his men, eager to strike at his Sovereign's person with the mace which had once before literally turned the scale of victory; and then—the great traitor died, a death too opportune to be natural, his army dispersed without striking a blow, and the civil war was over.

The history of Italy, again, furnishes so many cases of successful and repaying murders that it is difficult to select any one of them as a specially good example. It is probable, indeed, that, had the question been gravely put to one of her keen practical mediæval statesmen as to whether he held that murder might assist a cause or serve a party, it would have taxed his courtesy and self-restraint not to smile at the simplicity of the enquirer.

The political results of the murder of 'William the Silent' are thus summed up by Motley:—

‘Philip and Granville were right in their estimate of the advantages to be derived from the Prince’s death, in believing that an assassin’s hand could do more than all the wiles which Spanish or Italian statesmanship could teach, or all the armies which Spain or Italy could muster. . . . His (William’s) life gave existence to an independent country, his death defined its limits.

‘Had he lived twenty years longer, it is probable that the seven provinces would have been seventeen ; and that the Spanish title would have been for ever extinguished both in Nether Germany and Celtic Gaul.’

And, if Motley is right, or anything like right, in his view of the effect of the one blow successfully dealt against one of the three great enemies of Spain and intolerance, what would have been the effect if the other blows, aimed, roughly speaking, about the same time, had also been driven home? If, while the Dutch were weakened by the loss of their ‘Father William,’ the French Huguenots had been deprived of the chief whose birth and talents alone kept their party together, and England of the great and good Queen who had nursed her resources, roused her spirit, and, in spite of mutual wrongs and theoretical antagonisms, rallied a united people round her Throne? It would be too ridiculous to express a decided opinion as to what would have happened, if other things, which did not happen, had happened. But it is hard to see how any man, except Henry of Navarre, could have saved France from Spain and the Holy Catholic League, or how England, deprived of her great ruler and torn by factions—divided, it might have been, literally into opposing camps—could have triumphed over the Armada.

The murder of Henry, Duke of Guise. It is true that the monarch who ordered that assassination perished by a retaliation he had provoked ; but the Monarchy triumphed over the League, and over the factious House of Lorraine. And was not this triumph due to the fortunate death of Guise, who, if he was not the great man he thought himself, was at least a much greater one than the chief who tried to take his place—

Mayenne, a fat, inoffensive gentleman of limited abilities and questionable courage? Yet, even under Mayenne, the League was able to press the Royalists hard : what, then, might it not have accomplished if its forces had been led by Guise, the conqueror of Calais, the victor of Dreux, the idol of Paris and the army, the first knight in France, a general of good abilities and great prestige, and a soldier equal in dash and personal daring to the King of Navarre himself?

The murder of Wallenstein. This assassination, it will hardly be disputed, saved the Emperor Ferdinand from the irreconcilable enmity of a man whose mighty fame, military skill, great civil abilities, and unique reputation would probably have ensured the downfall of the House of Austria.

The murder of the De Witts. This crime secured, as we may assume it was designed to do, the triumph of the Orange party in the Netherlands. Had John de Witt lived, who can say that his great name, great talents, and many virtues would not have ultimately secured the downfall of the young Prince of Orange? And, however we may blame and regret the assassination of two noble and innocent men, we shall, if admitting that there was no room in Holland for both John de Witt and the Stadtholder, have little doubt as to which of them the Netherlands and Europe could best afford to lose.

The murder of Gustavus III. of Sweden. This atrocious crime seems to have changed, as nothing else would have been likely to change, the whole policy of the Swedish Crown.

The murder of the Emperor Paul of Russia. Alison's summing up of the effect of this is, if exaggerated in language, not, it seems, materially incorrect :—

‘An event took place within the palace of St. Petersburg which at once dissolved the Northern Confederacy, defeated the sanguine hopes of Napoleon, and changed the face of the world.’ The success of the Emperor's murderers did undeniably bring about the fulfilment of their expectations ; and, while rightly condemning the crime, we, as Englishmen, must rejoice at its timely accomplishment.

The murder of Marshal Liniers. By this assassination the

Argentine rebels freed themselves finally from a most dangerous enemy. Liniers, the greatest soldier in the country, the 'Reconquistador,' who had twice saved Buenosaires from the British, could neither be defied with impunity nor imprisoned with safety ; if, like the gallant gentleman he was, he declined to be bribed or intimidated into treason to the King he served, then 'stone-dead had no fellow.'

Does not, in fact, the history of political murders prove that there are no exceptions to the crimes which men may do, and prosper in consequence of doing ? Of course it may be argued, that every murder, and perhaps more especially every political murder, exercises an indirectly injurious influence on the happiness of the human race ; but the argument assumes, either what is the very point to be determined—that political assassination is always a sin—or it assumes that the direct results obtained by the assassination of some person, even if beneficial in themselves, will be outweighed by the indirect evil done to the general morality.

But can this always be asserted ?

Taking the world and man as they have been since the beginning of known history, we may indeed say it had been well if political murder had remained an unknown crime ; but, as so many such murders have been committed, has it never been expedient that another should be added to the number ?

In any case the utilitarian system of morals, on which such arguments are based, is one which, in the opinion of many of us, itself still remains to be proved.

There is also the religious objection to political assassination, of which it is enough to say that it rests on one of two grounds : namely, either that the Deity has expressly forbidden all murders without exception, or that He has forbidden the commission of all sins, and that political murder is a sin.

However this may be, there can be little doubt of one thing : murder is such an extreme remedy, and such an uncertain one, that we may well view with the severest scrutiny any person or party which has employed it ; and, remembering the important fact, that the persons who are willing to take

life unlawfully and treacherously are not likely to be men of high morality or keen intellect, we may, when they appear before the bar of history, take the, generally speaking, unjudicial course of deciding every doubt against them.

And, after all, might it not be well to be guided in this matter by our 'modern sentiment of repugnance'? The social instinct which brands the assassin, from whatever motives, as an outcast from human sympathies may be a too sweeping prejudice; but is it not one which we should all of us be very sorry to see weakened?