

Adolphus William Ward



*Leibniz
as a Politician*

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In an early chapter of the book which must be regarded as the chief literary monument of the late Professor Adamson's great intellectual powers in one of those *Lectures on the Development of Modern Philosophy* in which every sentence seems to fall weightily from unfaltering lips and the superfluous is shunned with uncompromising directness—there is a brief explanation of the fact that the central idea of Leibniz's philosophy was never systematically worked out by him. "No doubt," says Adamson, "the main reason for this is to be found in the enormous varied activity of a public kind which fills the life of Leibniz from 1676 on to his death" [in 1716]. "In all the great movements of religion and politics he shared largely; expended infinite time and energy on the perfectly hopeless task of striving to reunite the Protestant and Catholic Churches, laboured with greater success to bring about, by the foundation of academies of science in the capitals of Europe, a kind of community of learned men; and was the first to project what is even yet incomplete—a detailed and comprehensive history of the fortunes of various European states. His public work, indeed, would have amply occupied the energies of a more ordinary man. It is not surprising, therefore, that the philosophical writings of these later years are fragmentary, that the most important points are often advanced in occasional correspondence, and that the most condensed statement of his views requires for its elucidation reference to a variety of incomplete sketches and plans of undeveloped works never carried into execution."