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Sommario/riassunto

J.S. Mill's deep interest in French intellectual, political, and social affairs began in 1820 when, in his fourteenth year, he went to France to live for a year with the family of Sir Samuel Bentham. French became his second language, and France his second home, where he died and was buried in 1873. His interest in history began even earlier when, as a child of seven, he tried to imitate his father's labours on the History of British India; though he never wrote a history in his maturity, study of the past remained a passion and helped shape the philosophy of history that informed his views of society and ethics. His intense interest in contemporary French politics also led him to seek connections between historical developments and present trends, both seen by him from a Radical perspective appropriate to what he believed to be an age of transition. The English historians of France, including Walter Scott and Thomas Carlyle, as well as the French, some of whom were themselves political figures, are judged by their historical methods, but those methods are seen as having practical effects in shaping as well as revealing the mind of the times. This volume brings together for the first time the essays, running from 1826 to 1849, that meld these abiding interests. They give as well insights into Mill's personal aspirations, his developing view of comparative politics and sociology, his concern for freedom, and his feminism. During these years Mill worked on and published his *System of Logic*, Book VI of which shows in condensed form the results of the speculations here developed; reading these essays with that work, which made his reputation as a philosopher, enables one to see the effects of romanticism on analytic thought in a way not as clearly evident even in Mill's *Autobiography*. Independently important, then, the essays in this volume also enable us to interpret anew the practical and theoretical concerns fundamental to his formative years and maturity. John C. Cairns' Introduction demonstrates how the essays reveal, through their reactions to the Revolutions of 1789, 1830, and 1848, and to French historiography, politics, and thought, the effect of France on Mill's ideas, and also the way in which his other concerns influenced his reactions to France. The texts, with the variants and notes that are the hallmark of this edition, are described in John M. Robson's *Textual Introduction*, which explains the editorial principles and methods.
