GREECE
HISTORY: ITS AIMS AND METHODS

There are many different theories concerning the business of history as a science, but on one main point they all agree: it is evidently the business of the historian to reveal the past of humanity, and to reproduce the life of mankind in all its variety and trace its development from the most ancient times down to our own day.

History owes its origin to the same characteristic of man's nature which has created the other departments of learning: I mean the desire for knowledge innate in humanity. The object of this knowledge is the world in its entirety and, above all, man himself. In this desire to learn about the world and mankind and those powers which work in nature and human life, an important part is played by our inborn desire to know about our own past and the past of the world. From the earliest times man has endeavoured to record the prominent incidents of his own personal life, of the life of his family, clan, and country, and, eventually, of the life of humanity as a whole.

In this, as in other departments of knowledge, practical problems have moved side by side with this innate desire. Man learns by experience, and experience lies in the past. Many of our rights and claims are founded on incidents which took place in past times; and hence the desire to record these incidents and to preserve them from the possibility of being at any time forgotten.
But the memory of man is short, and his imagination is fertile. Facts in their actual form are easily forgotten and soon covered over by the accretions of imagination. Religion and reality overlap in human life; and therefore historical incidents easily assume the form of fairy-tales and legends, and are mixed up with man’s belief in higher powers which direct his life. For this reason many historical facts, in the course of oral or even of written transmission, assume the form of myths, or tales which describe the interference in human life of divine and superhuman powers.

As soon as man devised the means of perpetuating the incidents of his life in writing, it became possible for the first time to record exactly what had happened, and written historical tradition began. With the development of civilization man’s interest in his own past increased, a number of facts known to him concerning that past were accumulated, and methods were contrived for putting these facts together and combining them into a connected narrative dealing with the past of this or that group of men or of all mankind in general. Just as in other fields of knowledge, a disorderly accumulation of separate observations was followed by a period when these observations were reduced to order and system, and this again by a period when they were utilized by means of a series of methods intended to clear up these two questions: What are the laws which operate in man’s life and control him? Is it possible to learn these laws from the facts of history and, having learnt them, not only to understand the past but to foretell the future?

Different methods have been invented by man in order to learn about his own past. The first duty of history is to collect facts about that past. Incidents which aroused the interest of men were sometimes recorded by them immediately, at the moment of their occurrence, and sometimes, in a less exact form, later and from memory. But much was never recorded at all, and merely reflected in this or that form assumed by the outward and inward life of man; and therefore it is obviously
the business of the historian to collect not only the written records of man’s past but also the material relics of his existence at different periods of his development. For the former purpose all written memorials of the past are collected in archives, libraries, and museums; these are read, and the most important are published, and thus there is created the skeleton of history—a series of facts recorded by man in writing. To accomplish this task, the historian must be a philologist: in other words, he must know the languages in which historical documents are written, and also the gradual development of those languages, that is, the form which they possessed at different periods in the existence of this or that nation. Again, since the symbols which were and are used by man to denote the sounds, syllables, and words of language are unlike, and since this has given rise to an infinite variety in systems of writing, therefore the historian must be a palaeographer; that is, he must know the development of these systems and their peculiarities.

The unwritten monuments of man’s history which bear witness to his gradual advance in civilization are studied by specialists known as archaeologists. The results and methods of this specialist study must be completely known by the historian, because many eras of human life have left no written monuments. For it must be remembered that the first written symbols were invented not earlier than the fourth millennium B.C., and therefore have not existed more than 6,000 years, whereas the years of man’s life on earth are reckoned by tens of thousands. It must also be remembered that the peoples of Europe, for the most part, were decidedly later than the peoples of the East in making use of written symbols—later by some millenniums—and that the earliest written monuments left by the Greeks, the pioneers of European civilization, are not older than the eighth century B.C. For the period that precedes writing, the material and, in part, the spiritual life of man must be ascertained almost wholly by a single method—by collecting and studying the records of his life left by him in the ruins of his dwellings and in
his tombs. This period in the life of man in general and in the life of separate nations in particular is commonly called the prehistoric period.

When the historian has collected facts concerning the life of this or that nation, and wishes to make use of them to reproduce the past, he must, first of all, settle the sequence of these incidents and define which was earlier and which later; he must, that is, make clear their relative chronology. His next business is to define more precisely the time when this or that incident took place, and the interval that divides it from his own age; this we call the determination of absolute chronology. For this purpose, the historian must study and master the different methods of reckoning time which were devised by man in different places and at different epochs. These methods are infinitely different and very complicated; and all of them, including those which we now use, are exceedingly imperfect. We must not forget that our year is shorter than the astronomical year, and that our reckoning from the Birth of Christ is merely provisional, because we do not know the year in which Christ was born. Hence it is one of the fundamental problems of the historian to be able to calculate, precisely or approximately, by means of a series of observations and comparisons, the date of a given event or epoch in the life of a people.

In order to understand the events of history and estimate them aright, it is not enough to know what happened and when it happened; we must know also where it happened; that is, we must be able to connect the event with a definite place and have exact knowledge of the peculiarities of that place. Not only must man and his manner of life be known but also the sphere of his activity—the earth, with its different parts, with their geological and climatic differences, with their flora and fauna. In short, it is necessary to know the conditions of man's life in different places and at different epochs of his existence. The study of the earth is the business of the geographer. But this is not enough for the historian; he must know not merely the
present appearance of the earth but also its changes and its history. He must know, too, the changes that have taken place in the distribution of mankind upon the globe, the location of this or that people, and the main centres of the life of separate nations and of the different kingdoms and empires. The history of the earth is taught us by physical geography, while historical geography deals with the relations of man to the earth which he inhabits.

The fact that a man belongs to this or that clan, to this or that race, is of vast importance in human history. Clans and races differ from one another in physical peculiarities, and in peculiarities of habit and language. To explain these differences is the business of anthropology, which studies man, as a part of the animal world, in his historical development. Closely connected with this are two other sciences—ethnography, which studies the peculiarities of separate nations, and comparative philology. The historian must be acquainted with the methods and conclusions of all these sciences.

The facts collected by the historian, when arranged in order of time and definitely assigned to the places and peoples concerned, form only the skeleton of history. These facts, especially such as are recorded in written and oral tradition, require verification. I have said already that man has not only a strong impulse to learn truth but an equally strong impulse to mutilate it, consciously and unconsciously. Man’s tendency to poetic creation and the fertility of his imagination cause him often to restate facts till they are unrecognizable; he fills up gaps where he is ignorant and alters what he knows; he mixes up the region of religious and fabulous conceptions with the sphere of actual events. Myth and legend are inseparable from history, and even in our own time grow up round great historical events and, even more, round great historical persons. Together with this process, facts are also deliberately distorted under the influence of various motives—material advantage, or the endeavour to defend the reputation of the narrator or his friend, or the tendency to
support a particular point of view or political theory. The influence of patriotism is active here: the writer wishes to prove that the nation to which he belongs is superior to all others, that it is always in the right and its adversaries always in the wrong. We must never forget that historical events were not recorded by machinery but by men, distinct personalities with definite characteristics of their own. Few of them have kept free from prejudice while recording historical events which, in one way or another, touched themselves nearly. Hence the historian, while collecting facts, must at the same time verify them and convince himself that they correspond to reality. This is a complicated and difficult problem: it requires great caution and familiarity with various methods of verification. This part of the historian's work we call historical criticism.

When the historian has collected and verified his facts, he then proceeds to set them forth. But, while methods have been developed and perfected for dealing with facts, in order to collect and comprehend them, to date them and arrive at a critical estimate of them, there has arisen at the same time a different view of the historian's task, that is, of the immediate object of his labours. The number of historical facts is infinite, and they bear reference to different sides of the infinite variety of human life. Which among this multitude of facts are most valuable and important? What sides of life deserve study more than others? For long, history was mainly political history, and historical narrative was confined to an account of the most important crises in political life, or to an account of wars and great generals. But even the Greeks realized that if these facts, the incidents of man's history in politics and war, are important, it is still more important to ascertain the causes of these incidents and their connexion with one another and with the other phenomena of the life of communities. It has become clear that war, in spite of the profound impression it produces, is only one phase of man's life, and not the most important phase, and that the origin and course of wars are closely connected with the de-
velopment of economic, social, and religious life and civilization. From this point of view politics and war have not become less interesting and important in the history of the separate groups of mankind; but men's eyes have been opened to the immense importance of studying the conditions of human development during periods that were not disturbed by war. From another side, a more thoughtful attitude to historical events has shown the very great importance of personality in the history of man's development; hence the historian endeavours to explain the psychology of the most prominent individuals in history, and to throw light on their character and the conditions which created it. And gradually another fact has come to light—that, if the psychology of individuals has an important influence upon the course of historical development, history is affected not less, and perhaps even more, by the psychology of separate groups of men, the 'psychology of the herd', which finds its expression both in the organization of small groups of men, the family, for instance, and in the peculiar ordering of larger units—the clan, country, and nation. Lastly, it became clear how strongly this 'psychology of the herd' has affected acute crises in the life of the community, such as find expression in wars and revolutions.

In the endeavour to comprehend the complicated structure of man's social life, history works hand in hand with the departments of scientific inquiry which have gradually become separate both from history and from philosophy: these are the economic sciences, sociology, political and juristic science, psychology, and such branches of knowledge as literature and art, which bear upon man's spiritual life and the special products of his civilization.

In close connexion with other departments of human knowledge, history tends to become more and more a science, whose end is to define the laws under which the life of man develops, and the regular process by which one type of communal life is displaced by another. Nevertheless, history still remains a branch of literature, because the narrative of events and the lively and
picturesque transmission of them, together with the truthful and artistic delineation of important historical characters, will always remain one of the historian's chief tasks, a task of a purely literary and artistic nature. While becoming more and more a department of exact science, history cannot and must not lose its literary, and therefore individual, character.
II

ANCIENT HISTORY:
ITS PROBLEMS AND IMPORTANCE

Ancient history is the history of man's development in the earliest period of his existence; it tells how at that period he created and developed the civilization from which the culture of all nations now existing is derived. By civilization I understand the creation of those forms of political, communal, economic, and cultural life which distinguish us from the savage. The savage continues to live in those primitive conditions which assimilate his life to that of the animal and distinguish it from the life of civilized man.

This ancient civilization, which spread by degrees over the world, was first developed in the Near East, and chiefly in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Central Asia, in the islands of the Aegean Sea, and in the Balkan peninsula. From the Near East it passed into the West, beginning with Italy; and from Italy it conquered all western Europe and some regions in the centre of that continent. In this civilization there were successive epochs of high development—a series of creative periods which produced inestimable treasures not only of a material kind but also in the intellectual region of culture; and there were also periods of temporary stagnation and decline, when the creative powers of this or that part of the ancient world were for the time enfeebled. The zenith of cultural creation was attained by Egypt and Babylonia in the third millennium B.C.; by Egypt again in the second
millennium and, at the same time, by Asia Minor and part of Greece; by Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia in the eighth, seventh, and sixth centuries B.C.; next by Greece from the sixth century B.C. to the second, and by Italy in the first century B.C. and the first century A.D. From the second century A.D. a general stagnation in creative power is observable in the whole of the ancient world; and from the third century an almost complete cessation of this power and a gradual reversion to more and more primitive conditions of life. But the foundations of culture still survived and were maintained—in the West by Italy and the provinces of the Roman Empire in western Europe, in the East by the Byzantine Empire, i.e. in the Balkan peninsula and Asia Minor. These foundations were taken over by new centres of government, which arose in the West in consequence of the conquest by German tribes of successive parts of the western Roman Empire, and in the East by the Slavonic kingdoms in the Balkan peninsula and in Russia, and by the great Mussulman powers, first Arabian and then Turkish. Thus taken over, they served as a basis of culture and enabled the peoples of Europe to start their creative civilization, not from the lowest stratum of prehistoric life but from the comparatively high level bequeathed to posterity by the ancient world.

Therefore it cannot be said that ancient civilization finally disappeared at any time: it still lives, as the foundation of all the chief manifestations of modern culture; but its creative period lasted, approximately, from the beginning of the third millennium B.C. to the second century A.D., or more than three thousand years, a period twice as long as that during which contemporary European culture has been developed.

From a geographical point of view, ancient civilization belongs to a single part of the world and not a large part: it was confined to a small part of Western and Central Asia and of the Mediterranean coast. It reached its highest development on the shores of the Mediterranean and may therefore be called 'Mediterranean civilization'. It was not confined to one people or one race:
a series of nations took an active part in creating it. The first pioneers were the Sumerians in Babylonia and the earliest inhabitants of Egypt, probably of African descent; next came the Semites of Western Asia and the Aryans originally of Central Asia; the natives of the Caucasus and Asia Minor; the Iranians in Persia and Central Asia; and, finally, the Greeks in Asia Minor and the Balkans, and the Italians and Celts in Italy. Among all these nations the Greeks were especially remarkable for the power of their creative spirit, and to them we are principally indebted for the foundations of our civilized life.

But it must be remembered that the lofty creation of Greece was developed from the culture attained by the ancient East; that Greek civilization only became world-wide as the result of a fresh and prolonged contact with the Eastern cultures, after the conquest of the East by Alexander the Great; and that it became the property of the West, that is, of modern Europe, simply because it was taken over in its entirety by Italy. We must also remember that Italy alone made it accessible, in its Roman form, to all those parts of the ancient world which Italy united for the purpose of civilized life. If the civilization of the East and of Greece was not confined to the eastern part of the ancient world but became the foundation of culture for the West and for modern Europe, for this Europe is indebted to Italy and to Rome. Hence, if ancient civilization is to have any ethnographical label, it should properly be called Graeco-Roman.

The study of this ancient Graeco-Roman civilization is of immense importance to every intelligent sharer in modern culture, and ought to form one of the main subjects of higher education.

The creation of a uniform world-wide civilization and of similar social and economic conditions is now going on before our eyes over the whole expanse of the civilized world. This process is complicated, and it is often difficult to clear up our minds about it. We ought therefore to keep in view that this condition in which we are living is not new, and that the ancient
world also lived, for a series of centuries, a life which was uniform in culture and politics, in social and economic conditions. The modern development, in this sense, differs from the ancient only in quantity and not in quality. The ancient world witnessed the creation of a world-wide trade and the growth of industry on a large scale; it lived through a period of scientific agriculture and through the development of strife between the different classes of the population, between capital and labour. It also witnessed a period, when each discovery became at once the property of all civilized humanity, when the nations and peoples, over the enormous expanse embraced by the Roman Empire, came into daily and constant contact, and when men began to realize that there is something higher than local and national interests, namely, the interest of all mankind.

In a word, the ancient world experienced, on a smaller scale, the same process of development which we are experiencing now. If we study the successive stages of that development, we shall realize how nearly and closely we are connected with that world. For instance, the ancient world created the three main forms of government which are still preserved in our own political life. These are, first, the monarchical form, where the country is ruled by a central bureaucracy and all the threads of government are united in the hands of the monarch alone; secondly, the self-ruling free state, where all are politically equal and power resides in the sovereign people and its chosen representatives; and, lastly, the federal system, which combines in one political alliance a number of free and self-governing political units. To this day we have never got beyond these three fundamental forms of government; to this day we are struggling with the master problem of political organization—how to combine personal freedom and self-government of the separate parts with a single strong and intelligent controlling power.

Our dependence on antiquity is just as great in the sphere of science and art. Modern exact science has been built up entirely on the method of experiment, and this was first applied to the
natural sciences by the Greek thinkers of the fourth and third centuries B.C. Our philosophy and morals are still founded on the scientific methods of abstract thought first hammered out by the ancient philosophers, and especially by Plato and Aristotle. In literature and the plastic arts we merely build on foundations laid by the genius of the ancient writers and artists; we re-fashion the same literary ideas and the same artistic themes which they originally created. Finally, in the sphere of religion, a great part, if not the whole, of modern mankind lives by virtue of beliefs which were first made their own by men of the East and of the West in the age of classical antiquity. We must not forget that Christ lived in the time of Augustus and Tiberius; that the Jewish religion is one of the religions of the Semitic East; and that the Mussulman creed grew up among the Arabian Semites who were strongly influenced by Greek civilization. These few indications are sufficient to prove that the study of antiquity is of immense importance to ourselves; for no one can understand the present, unless he has a clear conception of the evolution of government and civilization in the ancient world.
III

GREECE AND THE AEGEAN KINGDOMS

The beginnings of civilization, that is, of settled life, are as early in Greek lands as in Egypt and Mesopotamia. The villagers, who mostly settled in Thessaly, Cyprus, and other places where the alluvial soil was easy to cultivate with the most primitive tools, grew cereals and bred livestock. Men of this prehistoric (neolithic) period used tools and weapons of stone, and although they still did not know how to make pottery, the statuette of a woman (pl. I) from Lerna to our eyes foreshadows Greek art. The Acropolis of Athens, the future site of Corinth, and the hill of Troy were already occupied in the third millennium B.C.

We do not know what race it was or even whether it was a single people who originally inhabited the western coasts of Asia Minor, the Aegean islands, and the southern part of the Balkan peninsula that was one day to be Greece. For simplicity, we shall speak of them as Aegeans. The Greeks preserved no memory of the migration of their ancestors from a distant land, although they remembered that peoples who spoke no Greek (Pelasgians and Leleges) had once inhabited their country. We do not know how or when men speaking Indo-European tongues entered Greece and imposed what, in the course of time, evolved into the Greek language with all its dialects. An earlier dialectal form of Greek is now known from the tablets written in the fifteenth century B.C.

Thanks to the excavations of Schliemann and his successors