

D 20

.H67

Copy 1



Preface

to

The History of Nations

By

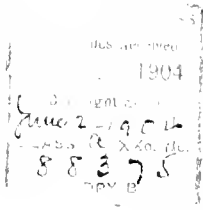
Henry Cabot Lodge, Ph.D., LL.D.



1904

John D. Morris and Company
Philadelphia





Copyright, 1904
By
Henry Cabot Lodge

VII.

1904

Preface

to

The History of Nations

by

Henry Cabot Lodge, Ph.D., LL.D.

THE purpose of this work is to give in compact form the history of all modern nations and of the states and civilizations from which they have sprung. Each volume is a work of authority by a writer of eminence. All not originally written especially for this series have been carefully edited, and, wherever necessary, the narrative has been brought down to the present day by additions and notes embodying the results of the most recent research and investigation. The intention is to offer in these volumes a general survey of history in a compendious and agreeable form. The value of the material thus furnished and thus arranged is undoubted; but much more depends upon the manner in which it is presented, the deductions drawn by the author and the use that is then made of it by the reader than upon the facts and observations recorded. In other words, the true importance of any history or of any collection of histories lies in the conception of the development and attainment of man which is therein set forth or which we ourselves are enabled to draw from it. What we mean by the word history and what it says to us as a whole are more essential than any disconnected knowledge of details, however accurate and however minute.

Our first step, therefore, on beginning any study of original sources or of historical writings ought to be as clear a definition as possible of our own conception of history itself as well as of its meaning and purposes, assuming as we must that it possesses both these attributes.

It has been wisely and wittily said that "one fact is gossip and two related facts are history," an aphorism very characteristic of the scientific age in which it was uttered. But the saying, with all its truth, like many other brilliant generalizations, may easily be pressed too far and contains an implication which is anything but sound. It may be quite true that collections of unrelated facts, whether trivial or important, or of facts presented without any philosophical sense or any "look before or after," merit their definition as "gossip"; yet we should do very wrong to underestimate this same "gossip," upon which, in common parlance, the name history is so often bestowed. History of the "gossip" variety is, to begin with, the foundation of all other history, upon which it will be necessary to say something more later. "Gossip," moreover, whether light or serious, is in its best forms, especially in the guise of memoirs, biographies and personal anecdotes, extremely entertaining. While it is read, perhaps, only for the sake of reading, it helps us to enjoy life and may also teach us to endure it. It has, too, a real value in an instructive way although how great that value shall be depends upon him who receives the information rather than upon the writer thereof. Even if one gathers from "gossip" nothing but an unphilosophical, unscientific knowledge of people and events, much is gained; for the man who knows something of the history of the race and of those who have played a part in the past not only has widened his own interest in the world about him, but, other things being equal, is a proportionately more agreeable companion to those whom he encounters in the journey of life. Dr. Johnson on more than one occasion defended desultory reading, to which he himself was very prone, and a wiser man than he laid it down as a maxim many years before that "reading maketh a full man." Therefore, let us not give way too much to the nineteenth century contention about scientific history, with its array of causes and deductions, theories and results, or to that other dogma of the same period, much in favor with writers who lack the historic imagination, that "pic-

turesque" history is a poor and trivial thing, and that, above all, history must be "judicial"—a bit of cant quite as objectionable as that concerning the "dignity of history" which imposed upon our ancestors and which we have laughed out of court. There was a good deal of sound truth in Byron's remark about Mitford: "Having named his sins, it is but fair to state his virtues—learning, research, wrath and partiality. I call the latter virtues in a writer because they make him write in earnest." The history, indeed, to be defined as "gossip," or which remains or becomes "gossip" in the mind of him who reads, has also its very real merits of entertainment and of instruction as well as of imparting a knowledge which, however desultory and disconnected, is a good thing for him who has it and makes the possessor thereof more desirable to his fellows. The "Memoirs of St. Simon" may be in themselves the merest gossip that was ever set down, as they are certainly the most copious; but he who has looked upon these vivid pictures of a vanished society, whether he is imaginative enough to see shining upon them the red light of after years or not, has enlarged his own mind, widened his own interests, quickened his own intelligence and made himself more attractive to others by following across these many pages the pageant of the great Louis and his court.

We may, indeed, go much further, if we would do full justice to "gossip," by remembering what has already been suggested, that the worth of any record of the past, no matter how trivial or fond, depends not merely upon the mind of the writer, but upon that of the reader as well. According to the canons of those modern extremists who would make history as destitute of literary quality as a museum of comparative anatomy, Herodotus and Suetonius, Joinville and Froissart, Pepys and Walpole and Franklin would be rejected with contempt as historians and set down as mere retailers of idle "gossip" or, at best, rather untrustworthy "original sources." It may be readily admitted that not one of them ever attempted to trace properly the sequence of cause and effect or to draw a truly scientific deduction. They were all probably quite innocent of any knowledge of their duties in that respect; yet not only the world but history in the truest sense would be much poorer and certainly much duller without them. The infinite charm which they all possess—from the ancient Greek, wandering

about his little world, tablets in hand and ears open to the tales of the temple, the court or the market place, down to the American boy seeking employment as a printer in London, where he was one day to determine the fate of empires—attracts and will always attract everyone who cares for literature and to whom humanity and humor and the life of a dead past appeal. To those who look with considerate eyes into these old writers of tales and purveyors of "gossip," these simple chroniclers and delightfully egotistic diarists, there rise up pictures of times long past, of social conditions and modes of thought long dead, as well as revelations of human character and motives, rich in suggestions of historic cause and effect and more fertile in explanation of the fate and meaning of man upon earth than acres of catalogued facts scientifically classified, or reams of calendared State papers arranged with antiquarian skill. The catalogues and calendars are work of high value, yet they have no importance until the seeing eye of the real historian has torn out the heart of their mystery. The gossip of the Greek and the Roman, of the mediæval chroniclers and the eighteenth century diarists, have delighted and instructed thousands who never write and to whom the solemn words "scientific history" have no meaning. At the same time, to those who would seek the deeper meanings and link together cause and effect, they offer far more than barren collections of indiscriminate facts, no matter how well or how scientifically arranged. Herodotus may be loose and inaccurate and Suetonius may be malignant and filled with error, but what light shines from the one upon the ancient civilizations of Asia Minor and of Egypt, and how could we ever realize the dark shadows which overhung the glories of the Cæsars without the grim pictures of the other? We should fare ill in any attempt to understand from mouldering parchments alone the wonderful century which gave to France her royal saint and the art that produced the Sainte Chapelle if we could not read the simple words of Joinville. The English and French wars live for us in the rambling pages of Froissart; Pepys, besides laying bare a human soul, tells more of what the restoration really was than all the professed historians then or since; in Walpole, greatest of English letter writers, we know the England of the three Georges, and in Franklin we can discover the secret of the loss of the American

colonies. In all alike we get the atmosphere of the times, we learn to know man as he then was in those various countries and widely separated periods. Such knowledge can only be obtained from men who had literary power, observation and imagination. Without such knowledge "scientific history" cannot make a beginning even, cannot advance a step. With it the seeker for cause and effect can find as long a chain as he may wish to forge and as many deductions as he may desire to draw. The "gossip" which is also literature is the best foundation for history and that which is not literature is, after all, merely a collection of the unclassified facts so dear to the scientific historian, who thinks they can be made alive by arrangement alone. Let us not, then, be too quick to throw aside "gossip" without discrimination, for when it has a high literary quality it will outlive scientific history in the hearts of men, and will, in the long run, teach them more about themselves and about their race than the wisest collector and classifier of facts who ever lived, because men will read the "gossip" and fall asleep over the reasoned catalogue.

So much, then, for the unscientific, unphilosophical, disconnected, desultory history, whether great literature or not, which we are quite ready to call "gossip," and to speak of patronizingly as an inferior thing, but which most of us in our heart of hearts really like better than any other. Let us leave it with all good wishes for the pleasure it has given us and the profound instruction it has offered to those who seek instruction diligently, and come to the superior function of history, the true history which, relying solely upon itself and not upon the reader, aspires not only to instruct and inform, but to explain man to himself. Of its importance there can be no doubt; still less of its seriousness. History in this aspect may easily fail to be amusing; if it is not literature also it will probably fail to be anything else, but properly written it cannot be otherwise than profoundly important and interesting. Here in this HISTORY OF NATIONS and in countless other volumes lie the garnered facts, ever being increased and ever shifting in their proportionate importance and in their relation to each other. In dealing with these facts, What is the purpose of history if in itself it is to be of any real value in the largest sense? There have been many answers to this question, many essays, most of them it must be confessed rather dreary, replying at

length as to the functions and uses of history. Setting aside as alien to what we are now considering all that vast and valuable mass which may be classified as "gossip," and which is at the lowest estimate certainly raw material, the object of history or the study of history now under consideration may be briefly stated. There is, to begin with, the old, classical and conventional phrase that history is philosophy teaching by example, which means little or nothing. Napoleon said that "history was the fable agreed upon," the quick utterance of a great genius who had never gone beyond the "gossip." Disraeli, readiest and most epigrammatic, perhaps, of the more modern public men—certainly the most un-English—saw use in history only as an explanation of the past, an excellent definition, but so limited as to make history of but little worth if it cannot pass these bounds. Emerson, in his vaguely beautiful essay, defines history as the record of man, tells us that we are history and that history is ourselves; in more prosaic words, that history is the explanation of the present. Add this definition to that of Disraeli and we have advanced a goodly distance, but history must be yet more and must go further still if it is to fulfill its whole function.

In a very recent essay Mr. George Trevelyan has described the function of history in a manner as fine and a style as perfected and beautiful as his conception of the work of the historian is noble and true. The three functions of history he defines as teaching the lessons of political wisdom, spreading the knowledge of past ideas and of great men, and, most important of all, "causing us in moments of diviner solitude to feel the poetry of time." The first two functions are of great worth, and it was never more necessary to preach their virtue and necessity than now, but they are the more immediate achievements of history inseparable from it when rightly written, and do not reach that larger and more ultimate purpose which I am seeking to find and express here. It is in the third aspect that Mr. Trevelyan touches history in its highest range, when he says that it ought to make us feel the poetry of time and the passing of the race through many epochs along the highway of eternity:

" Each changing place with that which goes before,
In sequent toil all forward do contend."

Such is the poetry of time, and there lies hid the secret of man and his relation to the universe.

To be more explicit, history must, it is true, explain the past as Disraeli wished and the present as Emerson desired. But that is not enough. Perhaps it is impossible that it should do more; but history, if it is carried to the full height of our conception, ought also to enable us to see into the future, to calculate in some degree the movement of the race as we now calculate the orbit of the stars, and read in the past, whether dim or luminous, a connected story and a pervading law. In other words, history in the ultimate analysis must give us a theory of the universe as well as of human life and action. Has this been done? Have these masses of facts, gathered of late with such ant-like diligence, yet been brought into such connection? have they been so ordered and mastered as to tell a coherent story and thus explain to us the course of human life and conduct? If they have not, then history has thus far failed of its final purpose in whole or in part.

In the wonderful nineteenth century just past we have gone clearly beyond the simple-minded writers of annals and chronicles. We have learned, indeed, to regard annals and chronicles, as well as biographies and statistics and every phase and form of human activity, as primarily so much raw material, so many observations to be sifted and compared and grouped until they afford a theory or explanation of some sort for the man or the incident or the events to which they relate. But have we by this method as yet deduced a result which really explains at once the past and the present, which makes us not only feel the poetry of time, but which also throws a bright light along the pathway of the future? Have we attained in any degree to a working hypothesis which shall make clear to us the development and fate of man upon earth? Unless we can answer these questions quite clearly in the affirmative then history has not yet fulfilled her whole mission, and still sits by the roadside like the Sphinx waiting for the traveler who can guess her riddle.

It is a riddle worth guessing. None more so. The genius who will draw out from the welter of recorded time a theory which will explain to man both himself and his relation to the universe need fear comparison with no other that has ever lived, for he must not only make the great discovery, but he must clothe it in

words which will live as literature and touch it with an imagination which will reach the heart of humanity and endure like the poetry of those who sang for the people when the world was young.

Let us see, however, what has been accomplished; let us at least try to measure "the petty done, the undone vast." We have brought together immense masses of facts, in some cases far too many—so much so that their very density has caused men not infrequently to lose their way among details, and, having deprived them of the sense of proportion, has led them to mistake the particular for the general. We are, indeed, more likely now to suffer from having too many facts than too few. By no possibility can we have in anything which relates to human affairs all the facts. Even some of the most tangible and external escape us; and of the tangle of passions, emotions and desires which so largely determine the course of human events we can know but little, and must always be content with large inferences and with a psychology of the masses because that of individuals, except in a few isolated instances, is lost to us forever. Unable, therefore, to know all the facts, we must proceed by selection and by generalizations based on those dominating types which have been chosen through the instinct and the imagination, the very qualities that no amount of mere training will give. The besetting danger of the time lies in the tendency to reverence mere heaps of facts and to treat one fact, because it is such, as equal in value to every other: a doctrine much enhanced by those who would separate history from literature and make it nothing more than a series of measurements or a classified catalogue. Facts in themselves have no value except as the material from which the men of high and co-ordinating intelligence can, by selecting and rejecting, bring forth a theory, a philosophy, or a story which the world will be able to read and understand because it is helped to do so by all the charm and all the light which literary art and historic imagination can give. A "scientific history," crammed with facts, well arranged, but unreadable, and at the same time devoid of art and selection, is, perhaps, as sad a monument of misspent labor as human vanity can show. None the less, after all deductions, the accumulation of facts, if properly used and then supplemented by all the resources of literary art, is absolutely essential to the highest history, for

laws governing human development rest, in large degree, like those of science, on the number of recorded observations, and find in that way control and correction. This is especially true in the case of archæology, which is daily adding so enormously to our knowledge of early civilizations in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Asia Minor and in the Greek islands and peninsula, and which thus enables us to make those comparisons, stretching over long periods of time, upon which any stable theory of the movement of civilized mankind must ultimately rest. To this must also be added the scientific investigation into the condition of prehistoric man and of primitive tribes and races, our prehistoric contemporaries, from which alone it is possible to draw the wildest deductions as to the primary development of what we call civilized man. To put this first proposition in a few words, we have in the last one hundred years gathered, and in a large measure arranged intelligently, the necessary material to which we are still adding, and which is an essential preliminary to writing history in the highest sense of the word.

We have also passed definitely and finally out of the stage where history was considered too solemn and too dignified to have any of the attractions of what is frankly "gossip," and yet remained nothing but a stringing together of facts, as if they were single beads, each separated from the others by a dividing and impassable knot. The habit is now ingrained in all writers of history, even if they are merely dealing with an episode or preparing a monograph, to lead up from cause to effect, to point out the sources of an event, the culmination of the various compelling forces and the ultimate results, or else to arrange the narrative in such wise that the reader must perforce draw his own deductions and thus learn the lesson which the author desires to impart. This method of dealing with history varies, of course, most widely in the extent of its application. It may be applied to a single incident or to the occurrences of a few years; or, on the other hand, it may stretch over the centuries, seeking in past generations the distant conditions from which sprang finally some great event; or, again, it may strive to connect with the phenomena of our modern times remote causes which are dimly discerned in the dawn of civilization, and in this way establish a law which shall govern the entire movement of humanity.

It is this search for cause and effect which has been the distinguishing feature of historical work in the nineteenth century. No doubt the practice has existed, sporadically at least, since history began to be written; but in the last century it became the dominant note, the ruling characteristic to which all writers aspired, although naturally with varying degrees of success. That which concerns us now is to try to estimate approximately to what point the increased knowledge, the multiplied observations and the system of seeking cause and effect have brought us on the road to fulfilling the highest function of history. We can see very readily that in the explanation of the past and the present much has been achieved. For example, the causes which led to the revolt of the American colonies against England, or to the French Revolution, have been studied not only in the immediately preceding years, but have been patiently tracked through the centuries, and sought not merely in political and economic conditions, but in the qualities, habits and characteristics of the people and in the attributes and ethnic peculiarities of the stocks from which these historic races were formed. The time when it was possible to treat great and violent changes of this kind as isolated events, growing suddenly out of surrounding conditions, has passed away never to return.

Having thus reached the point where it is not only possible but habitual to explain philosophically and on logical principles a past event, it is but a short step to find in past events, properly arranged and treated, the explanation of the present in any given country or in any group of countries similar, if not identical, in race and in the character of their civilization. It is also true that modern history, advancing from the explanation of a given event or of an important era by tracing its causes through a long succession of years, has gone on to the work of following out through the entire historic period tendencies of thought or art, of literature or morals, as well as the religious, economic and political movements of mankind. The results of these investigations have been more illuminating probably than anything else which has been accomplished. From these researches, which have embraced anthropology, philology, psychology, literature and archæology, as well as history proper, a brilliant light has been cast upon much that before seemed shrouded in hopeless darkness, and a multitude

of problems which puzzled the will and baffled the imagination have been made plain. From this source has come the theory of myths and folklore; the development of the identity of certain fundamental religious beliefs in all the many families of mankind; the reduction to a very small number of the absolutely different races of men; a knowledge of the often unexplained migrations of vast bodies of people, of the economic conditions, the trade, the commerce, the industries and the discoveries of mineral, which have played such a large and so often a controlling part in human affairs, and of the military and political attributes and tendencies which have so largely, in appearance at least, determined the fate of States and empires.

Yet the final question is still unanswered. The world still awaits a theory or an explanation of the movement of mankind as a whole which shall make clear the entire past, show whence we have come, why we have proceeded as has actually been the case, whither we are going and whither we must go, by a proof as relentless as the fall of the apple to the ground, which, as we assert, conclusively demonstrates what we call the law of gravitation.

To reach this ultimate goal we must have a theory of the universe, and the necessity of such a theory has been perceived more or less dimly or more or less clearly by all serious historians from the time when history first began to be written with any other purpose than that of making a brief abstract and chronicle of the time. The theory of the universe and of life upon which historians proceeded either deliberately or unconsciously down to the latter half of the eighteenth century was, broadly speaking, the theological theory. The doctrines, the dogmas and the formulas of theologians and priests, furnished the underlying theory upon which historians worked out their results, and this was as true of the East as of the West, of Asia as of Europe, of the writers of antiquity as of the schoolmen of the Middle Ages. In the last analysis history fell back upon theology, and accepted its formulas and its philosophy as giving the final answer whenever the historian sought to set forth an explanation of man's existence upon earth, or to show the connection and relation of events in the life of humanity.

In the eighteenth century the spirit of skepticism and inquiry rose up and took possession of the thought of Western civilization. In dealing with history its resources were meagre, its material was limited and its methods crude. Voltaire, who represented that skeptical spirit in its most powerful and concentrated form, and who exercised a wide and profound influence to a degree which it is now difficult even to imagine, was simply destructive. He struck at the theological conceptions and explanations of past events with penetrating force and with weapons of the keenest edge, but the simplicity of his attack is only equaled by his ignorance of the real meaning of the traditions and habits of thought at which he aimed his blows. None the less the work of the eighteenth century was effective so far as it went. It tore the theological theories of the universe to tatters and scattered the fragments to the four winds of heaven. It was unable to replace that which it destroyed, but it cleared the ground, and to this inheritance the next century succeeded. The old theories were discredited. The way was open to construct a new one.

The nineteenth century was pre-eminently scientific. Science during that period was the ruling force in the domain of thought, and its discoveries and advances are the monuments of its marvelous success. But its influence has spread far beyond its own province. In every direction the methods of science have been adopted and its standards set up as the best methods and the loftiest standards for all forms of thought and inquiry. History, therefore, during the last hundred years has sought to make itself and to call itself scientific as the highest quality at which it could aim; and the devotion to facts, the search for truth at all costs, the rigid deductions, coldly regardless of sentiment or prejudice, have all been attributes borrowed from science and of immense value to historical results. The study of history pursued in this way, and carried into adjoining fields of research like anthropology, archæology and philology, has brought about a complete readjustment of many of our ideas as to the development of man and his relations to the universe. Indeed, it is scarcely realized how penetrating the influence of history governed by scientific methods has been, and what a revolution it has wrought, for the most part quite insensibly, in all our conceptions as to the existence, meaning and fate of the human race.

That this has been accomplished at a loss and a serious loss to history as literature, can hardly be denied. Modern history of the purely scientific and judicial variety has thus far been unable to sustain the literary glories of the past. Thucydides and Tacitus and Gibbon were by no means wanting in a theory of the universe or of the life of man. They were masters of their subjects and of their material, but they were also most distinctly philosophers, reasoners and thinkers, although not given over to modern scientific methods; yet they still stand alone and unrivaled in literature, and would wonder greatly to be told that we cannot have serious history or a philosophy of life until we cease to be picturesque. They would marvel even more to be told that it is the fashion to hold that we must be "judicial" to the point of never taking sides, and usually of sustaining a paradox; that if we would really be historians we must assume that the accepted opinion is wrong because it is accepted, and must close our eyes firmly to the splendid pageant of the years which have gone if we would win the praise of the antiquarian, the specialist or the learned society. We owe much to the adoption of scientific methods in history; but if we give way to the intolerable dogma that history in order to be really scientific must divest itself of all connection with literature, it would be better never to have attempted those methods and to have blundered along in the old way. When Mr. Bury, the Regius Professor of History at Oxford, announces "that history is not a branch of literature" he advances a proposition which if adopted would kill history, and which could by no possibility give us science in its place. Imagination is no doubt one important quality among others in the really great men of science, but it is absolutely essential to the great historian, for without imagination no history worthy of the name can be written. Very valuable results can be achieved without it in the physical sciences, because their phenomena are devoid of the spiritual and emotional elements; but the history of man is in large measure governed or modified by passion, sentiment and emotion, and cannot be gauged or understood without the sympathy and the perception which only imagination and the dramatic instinct can give. Moreover, history is utterly vain unless men can learn something from it; they cannot learn unless they read, and they will neither read nor

understand unless the theory or the doctrine drawn forth from the winnowed facts is presented to them with all the grace and force which style can give and with all the resources of a beautiful literary art. The worst enemies of scientific methods are those who would, in the name of science, reduce history to a sifted dust heap and who deery the art of literature because they cannot master it, although without it history has never yet been written and never will be able to speak to men or to give them the explanation of their existence if that great secret is ever discovered in all its completeness.

But the literary side of historical development, and without which it cannot continue, is not, after all, what concerns us here further than to point out its absolute necessity, if we would effect anything of lasting worth. It is in the achievements of modern scientific history, not yet ruined by its unreasoning devotees, that we must look for the dial hand of progress; and however dryly the fashion of the moment or personal incapacity may have compelled historians to state the conclusions thus reached, there are to be found the latest steps which have been taken toward the goal of that history which shall give us, if such a thing is possible, the full explanation which we seek. It is along the lines followed by modern history that we must proceed in our quest, but thus far these lines have been separate. One subject or one tendency has in turn and each by itself been traced out from the beginning, and the theory or law which has governed in each case has frequently been evolved and stated with the utmost care and acuteness. But the lines have not yet converged, the theories have not yet been grouped, the various laws still await the genius who shall cast them into a code.

The stupendous difficulties of the task must not be underestimated. Perhaps it is beyond the power of man to develop and state a great law of life, a comprehensive theory of the universe, when he must perforce rest it not merely upon a vast mass of recorded observations and classified facts, but must throughout allow for what no other scientific man need make allowance—the unending perturbations caused by human passion, human emotion and unreasoning animal instincts. One thing alone is certain: no single theory dealing with one set of facts and one set of passions and tendencies can ever explain everything. The forces which

have started the great migrations, the religious passions, the political aptitudes, can each explain much; the economic movement can probably explain more than any single clue, and yet no one of them alone is sufficient to make clear all that has happened and weave the many threads into a final answer to the riddle of the Sphinx, who waits and watches by the roadside as the procession of mankind marches by in endless files.

Yet is there here no reason for discouragement. Every failure of a proper attempt to reach that final and complete solution of the great enigma which history alone can give, if it is ever to be given at all, has advanced us in knowledge. It is much better to look at what has been accomplished than to sigh over the undone, fold our hands in despair and content ourselves by saying, like the scientific professor of history, that all we can do is to heap up more facts for distant generations to use. The answer may not yet have been found; but the light is growing brighter, and the prospect of attaining to a complete reply, if no nearer, seems at least clearer than ever before. Even to realize where we fall short is, if not very hopeful, very instructive, and opens the only possible path to future success.

The theological theory, then, which was so long dominant has been swept away and history has fallen under the control of scientific processes. It has not only assimilated its methods to those of science, but it has striven to deduce from its own phenomena the doctrines which science in the latter half of the nineteenth century adopted and promulgated. It has, in short, substituted for the theological theory that of science. So far as it has had any definite purpose it has aimed to show, like the science of the last fifty years, that the true explanation of man's existence and movements is mechanical; that at bottom we must fall back on the "fortuitous concurrence of atoms," and that a continuous evolution is the sole guide in the maze of human affairs as it has been partially shown to be in the animal world. And now, even while history is advancing on these lines, science is pausing in doubt, the mechanical theory seems to be breaking down, the "fortuitous concurrence of atoms" is being abandoned, the limitations of evolution are becoming constantly clearer, the younger biologists no longer trust implicitly the dogmas of the later years, and Lord Kelvin announces that the last word of the latest sci-

ence indicates a reversion to the doctrine of a governing law. Is history to go on in the old ways, which but yesterday were new, or is it to pause, as science has paused, and turn again, not to the old theological theory, but to one which involves a general and permanent law of the universe and of life?

What has history herself to say, speaking from her own experience and enlightened by her own efforts? What have the profound research and acute deductions of these later years to produce by way of solving the problem of what her future course shall be? Has history been able to show a process of evolution so continuous as at once to demonstrate that men from the beginning, despite many aberrations, have moved along one line, compelled thereto by environment and by their physical and mental structure, thus proving that humanity has been governed by mechanical processes as completely as science very recently held all physical developments to be, whether in the heavens above or in the earth beneath? Or, on the other hand, has history, like science, apparently failed to maintain the mechanical theory and found the "fortuitous concourse of atoms" insufficient to support the facts which she herself has brought to light? Has the Darwinian doctrine of evolution as applied to the events of history disclosed limitations there also which make it appear incomplete and at best tentative?

Looking broadly at the situation as it is to-day, the story of man upon earth seems to fall into two divisions, the prehistoric and the historic periods. The earliest knowledge that can in any proper sense be called historical, or which rests upon records of any sort, is imparted to us by the remains of the civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Western Asia. These civilizations, as disclosed to us by the latest archaeological discoveries, appear to have been substantially at the point where we ourselves were a century ago, and if not complete were certainly in a stage of high development. How and by what processes that position was reached we do not and probably can never know. A long road certainly had been traveled before it was attained. The starting point is dim. The earliest human skulls which have been found do not differ more widely in size and shape from the skulls of men to-day than the skulls of several actually existent races vary from each other. They leave the gulf which yawns

between the skulls of races now existent and the most highly developed ape substantially unbridged and undiminished. Man, therefore, as we know him, is not fundamentally different physically from the earliest progenitor who can be distinctly recognized as a man, a human being in our sense of the word. But the gap between the earliest man known to us, between the man of the drift or the shell heap, for instance, and the neolithic man is immense, although it is trifling compared to the chasm which separates the man of flints from the man who lived under the earliest Egyptian dynasties, who reared the first buildings by the Nile, or who constructed the first palaces of Babylonia, drained the streets and houses of her cities and codified her laws. We find man at the outset with nothing apparently except the discovery of fire, although we must infer a period when even the use of fire was unknown; and then we find him with weapons of stone, at first rudely and then ingeniously worked; with pottery and with indications of some use of metals in the form of pins or copper models of stone implements for war or the chase. Then we plunge into darkness again, and when we emerge we behold a man possessed of language and written characters, who has organized society and government and enacted laws; who has invented the wheel for locomotion, mastered the application of animal or muscular power; who has developed a splendid architecture and a noble art; who understands engineering, carries on an extensive commerce, marshals armies and conducts wars with ordered legions. The distance to the man who could do all this from the man who applied and controlled fire, the greatest single discovery ever made, and from the later man who was able to chip stone, fabricate weapons and make pottery staggers imagination when we strive to guess at what had happened and been accomplished in the interval. We seem to pass at a single bound from the dimly conceived being who, stark naked or dressed perhaps in skins, was savage to a degree beyond our power of description, and who waged an unequal war with monstrous animals, to men who are so like us in comparison with what had gone before that it seems as if the solemn Egyptian kings and the makers of the winged bulls were our own kin and lived but yesterday instead of dwelling on the misty verge of recorded time. In that long interval which elapsed between the earliest trace of man onward

and upward from the discovery of fire to the time of these ancient civilizations, what happened? By what steps has man, or rather certain tribes and races of men, climbed to such a height? We do not know, probably we never shall know more than reasonable conjecture can tell; yet the inference seems irresistible, inevitable we may almost say, that during that period of darkness there was a steady process of evolution advancing slowly but surely by the discovery and development of forces which radically changed the environment and all the conditions surrounding the race to a position where man had essentially all that he possessed a hundred years ago. These ancient civilizations and their successors ripen as we approach the Christian era. Their art was refined, their language was perfected, their literature attained to imperishable beauty; they widened their geography and increased the sum of knowledge, but there was no radical change of environment, there were no new forces to compel such a change. In the earliest civilizations really known to us we find that men had arms and arts, architecture and letters, organized government and systems of laws, commerce, war, armies, means of transportation by land and water. All these things they perfected down to the fall of the Roman empire; but they added no new force like fire or the wheel, like linguistic symbols or organized society, such as they had brought slowly forth in the prehistoric days.

When the empire of Rome went to pieces Western Europe sank into a period of anarchy, in which all the arts, whether ornamental or economic, and all forms of organization retrograded, and the period known as the Dark Ages set in. The traditions of science and learning, of literature and art, were kept alive only by Byzantium in the East, where they were destined to disappear under the onset of the Ottoman Turks and by the Moors in Spain. Slowly and painfully new systems, new States and a new social order were evolved from the welter of destruction which followed the downfall of Rome; and out of these new movements came at last the Renaissance, the revival of learning, the junction of the present with the classical past and thence modern civilization. But through all these chances and changes, alike through the rise and fall of Egypt and Chaldea, of Assyria and Persia, through the supremacy of Greece and the final dominion of Rome, as well as through the Middle Ages and the growth of our modern

civilization, there was no fundamental change in the conditions and achievements such as we find indicated at the close of the prehistoric period. No new forces had come into play to alter the development of man. States and empires had waxed and waned; there had been great migrations of people, great shiftings of the center of military, political and economic power. We can trace these movements, we know their causes, we understand the influence of mineral wealth and of trade routes, but the foundations are undisturbed. In the eighteenth century, as in the time of the earliest Egyptian dynasty, men still depend on themselves and on animals as the source of power; they have the wheel for transportation, the written word for communication; they reap and sow and build and have literature and the fine arts. The bounds of knowledge have widened, broadening far in the days of Greece and Rome, and then contracting after the fall of the empire only to widen again after the fourteenth century and then stretch farther and farther out with each succeeding year. Still there is no vital change. The art of war is revolutionized by the introduction of gunpower, the acquisition of knowledge by the invention of printing; but these two things apart, the man of the eighteenth century does not differ essentially from the Egyptian and the Babylonian, from the Greek or the Roman, in the conditions of life or in his relations to the earth and his fellow-men. He still travels with the horse on land and with the wind or the oar at sea. His journeys are still along paths and trails and roads or by canals, rivers and ocean. He knows the earth and its extent more completely than the Roman, but it is probable the roads and methods of communication were better under Rome so far as they extended at all than they were a hundred years ago. One civilization has succeeded another, new States have risen, old ones flourished and decayed; the economic equilibrium has shifted and trade routes have altered, carrying prosperity to one kingdom and ruin to another; the fine arts have taken on new forms and developments among different people, have touched the heights, blazed with splendor and gone out only to shine again in some new home. But still there has been no fundamental change. No empire, no State, no civilization seems to have passed beyond a certain point which others had already achieved. The scene shifts, the accessories change, but the drama is the same. If there had been a steady

and scientific evolution in the prehistoric period, after the close of that period the evolution of the most highly developed portions of mankind seems to have ceased. The movements are all sporadic, and never get beyond the point which the most ancient civilization, when it emerges from the darkness to greet our eyes, had in all essential things already at hand. There is no indication that man has improved physically since the day when history began. That he has advanced in his moral attributes and conceptions under the influence of religion we can hardly refuse to believe, if we would, and the facts by any test furnish sufficient proof that man's attitude to his fellows is finer and better even if we have improved in no other way. On the other hand, although we know more, there can be no doubt that man is no stronger as an intellectual being than he was when Plato taught and Sophocles composed his tragedies, when Phidias carved and Zeuxis painted and Pericles fought and governed. In the fine arts, indeed, it is difficult to see that, except in rare instances, man has ever attained a higher standard in sculpture or architecture of which alone we are able to judge with certainty than he reached in the earliest civilization.

It must always be carefully borne in mind that there is a broad distinction between the elaboration or perfection of an existing art or a discovered force and the successive introduction of new forces which lead on to a different structure of society and to conditions wholly different from what has gone before. The latter is a true scientific evolution, no matter how infinitesimal the advance or how slow the movement which destroys the unfit and causes the survival of those fittest to survive. The mere elaboration or perfection of existent arts and forces, although they may exhibit in a distinctly limited way the operations of the laws of evolution, do not, in the broad scientific sense, constitute a race evolution, which can supply us with an explanation of the development of the race as a whole, or with a theory of the universe or of life. The discovery of the means by which fire could be applied and controlled whenever it occurred changed all the conditions surrounding the race of men. It was a true evolutionary step in the development of the race, and the Promethean myth shows how the tremendous impression of its effects survived through ages the length of which we cannot calculate. The same may be said of

the application of animal power, of the invention of written symbols, of the organization of society, of the art of building. But the elaboration and perfection of architecture, the refinement of written characters into a literature, the increase of size in boats or vessels when propulsion by wind or muscle had once been discovered are not an evolutionary progress of the race in any true sense, nor do they furnish a general law to explain the entire mystery of humanity. The men who first discovered the process of making bricks, and then the further possibility of so putting stones or bricks together as to make a permanent structure to shelter their gods, their dead or their living, took a long step on the path of evolution. But this step once taken, the men who built the temples of Egypt or of Nippur or the Lion Gate of Mycenæ, the Parthenon of Athens, the Colosseum of Rome, or the Gothic cathedrals of France were expressing the same invention in different forms, but they were not carrying forward at all the evolution of the race. These forms of surpassing strength, grandeur and beauty were evolved, no doubt, from the principles of the rude beginnings which constituted the scientifically evolutionary step; but it was the original discovery which was evolutionary and not the refinement and elaboration which followed and which failed to change the fundamental conditions of the race. It is very essential to keep clearly in mind the distinction between the evolution of the race, as a whole, through a vital change in environment and conditions necessitating a corresponding adaptation and alteration in the life of man and in the organization of society on the one hand, and the evolution of a given art or society or of an economic structure or political state on the other. From the discovery of the means by which a fire could be kindled and controlled to the lamps of the Roman or the Greek is a long process of evolution in the use of fire, but does not touch the general evolution of the race. The original discovery changed vitally the conditions which surrounded man and forced him into a new environment to which he was obliged slowly to adapt himself, but the improvements and extensions of the use of fire had in themselves no such effect. The process by which men advanced from picture writing to the plays of Euripides and Aristophanes is of great importance in the evolution of language, but it was the invention of a symbol for human speech which altered the environ-

ment of man and not the improvements and developments of such symbols. The secret we would wring from the past is not the law governing the evolution of any particular state or people, of any especial art or form of social organization, but what the forces are in their union which have changed the environment of humanity and which will give us a law that explains the entire movement of the race, solves the mystery of existence and defines with a single answer man's relation to the universe. We can readily understand the difference between the essentially evolutionary step and that which is only an elaboration of a discovery already made if we can imagine the world divested of all that has come into it through the agency of steam and electricity and then contrast it with that which existed under the ancient civilizations. The men who separated the American colonies from England and carried through the revolution in France, which together changed the entire political system of America and Western Europe, possessed gunpowder and printing, but beyond these two things they did not differ essentially in their environment from the men of the ancient civilizations. Like the Egyptian, the Assyrian, the Greek and the Roman, they still depended upon the muscles of men and animals or on the wind, the rivers or the tides for power. They propelled their boats by sails or oars, they traveled on horseback; and in war and peace their transport rested on wheels, which they caused to revolve by the force of draft animals or of men. After developing new forms of architecture they had reverted to the ancient models, and it may be safely said that they never surpassed the work of the builders of the Parthenon or of the tombs and temples of Egypt. Modern engineering has yet to show whether it can rival the Pyramids, or outdo the engineers whose lofty bridge over the Gard still stands with its tiers of arches, after nineteen hundred years, absolutely plumb, and along which

“Men might march on nor be pressed
Twelve abreast.”

How much of our pavement will remain after two thousand years? There are miles of Roman pavement still to be found scattered over Europe from Italy to Scotland. How much better is our system of water supply than that which the great aqueducts striding across the plains brought to Rome and to her provincial

towns? Have we improved materially upon the Cloaca Maxima or the almost perfect arched drain in the deepest excavation of Nippur? Have we carried architecture or painting or sculpture further than it was carried in Egypt or in Greece? We may go over the whole field and the results will be everywhere the same, and all alike will point to the same conclusion, that from the earliest civilizations historically known to us down to the close of the eighteenth century there had been no change in environment and conditions sufficient to warrant the assertion of a continuous evolution such as we must have if we are to find in it a general law and complete explanation. The stream of civilization rises and falls, plunges out of sight in one place and reappears in another, but it never cuts new channels or reaches a higher plane or flows with a broader current than at first. Evolution of the race in the sense in which it is used here must go steadily forward without a break, compelled thereto by successive radical changes in race environment. No matter how minute or how slow the advance it cannot stand still; and variety alone or mere shifting of place is not advance, although it may be movement. Thus it seems, speaking broadly, that during the historic period and down to the closing years of the eighteenth century there has been no true race evolution in the proper sense of the word or in the manner in which we may reasonably infer it to have existed and proceeded down to the time of historical records. It would seem, if this be true, that there are marked limitations upon the doctrine of evolution in history as there are in science, and the difficulty is one which history itself must meet.

But there is a still further difficulty if we consider the period just preceding the present day, for there we find strong evidence of a resumption of the real evolutionary movement of the race if we may assume that such a movement went on in prehistoric times; and history is in this way confronted with the demand that it should enunciate some law which shall cover not only the periods of evolution, but also the space filled with intense activity in which no evolution took place. This demand becomes apparent if we examine closely the very latest period in the life of humanity, the one through which we have been and are at this moment passing. To make clear what this latest period means it is necessary briefly to summarize and restate the proposition which

has just been laid down. We find man at the opening of the nineteenth century with a vastly extended knowledge, with greatly advanced methods of killing other animals, including himself, and with highly improved machinery for transmitting and diffusing his knowledge through the medium of printed speech. Otherwise he does not differ in any radical manner from his predecessor on the upper Nile, in the temples of Nippur, the streets of Bactra, or within the walls of Tiryns or Mycenæ. To men in this condition came suddenly two new forces in the practical application of steam as power, and of electricity first as a means of transmitting thought and knowledge and then as a form of power also. These new forces have changed the face of the world and radically altered human conditions, creating a wholly new environment, by the quickening of transportation and communication and by bringing the whole earth so easily within the grasp of the dominant races that it is nearly all reduced to possession in name and will soon be so in reality. There is need to point out or dwell upon the marvels which have thus been wrought out or the social and political revolutions which have been effected. Gunpowder and printing worked social and political revolutions in their time also. The important point for us now is that under the mastery of these new forces, which have produced a new environment, another period of regular and scientific evolution has apparently set in; and the new movement, which is chiefly economic and social, has gone on not only with regularity, but with an accelerated momentum which is little short of appalling. Here, under these new forces, we are not carrying the well-understood civilization of the past five thousand or six thousand years once more to a pitch of splendor, but we are producing a civilization and a social system wholly different from what has gone before. To speak more exactly, we are pushing forward the civilization we have inherited from the countless centuries beyond all the former limits and on to heights or depths never before touched. The phenomena of this resultant of the new forces are largely economic on the surface, but they are at bottom not only economic but social. We are creatures of habit, and we still express the new forces in terms of the only power the race knew for many thousands of years; but what we have actually done is to change the world from the horse to the engine, from the man to the

machine. We are rapidly increasing this force estimated in horse power until it has already gone well-nigh beyond imagination. And still we are increasing it, still concentrating the whole movement of the world and the daily life of humanity on the production of machine power, heedless alike of the velocity at which we are traveling, or the fact that a single break at any point might mean ruin and desolation such as the world has never known. Armed with this power we are tearing out the resources of the earth with entire disregard of the future, and heaping up wealth in a profusion and in masses such as the world never before imagined even in its dreams.

But the one fact more important than any other is that a process of steady evolution, owing to a change in the conditions surrounding humanity, seems to be again in progress. Can history explain this present time in which we are passing beyond any civilization hitherto known, borne on by new and untried forces, or predict the future which this present portends? Can history, with the assistance of archaeology, anthropology, geology and the rest, do this and by researches in the prehistoric times, when there must have been evolution, owing to radical discoveries and changes and by the local and limited evolution in specific cases in modern times, tell us the manner in which this new evolutionary power is going to work? Are we to infer that because the movement of our own time appears to rest upon the conservation, concentration and control of energy and upon the development of natural forces to that end that therefore the movement of prehistoric times must have had the same evolutionary process at work and that here we are to find at last the clue to the development of the race? Can history bring all the periods within the operation of one harmonious law and the scope of a single explanation? The purely mechanical theory of the universe seems to have broken down under science. It has also failed apparently to explain finally and completely the history of man. Must history, like science, return upon her steps and seek for some new governing law which shall succeed where dogma was defeated and where evolution fell short of the final goal? A new period, bringing with it forces and conditions hitherto unknown, confronts modern history. Unless she can solve the problem it presents, unless she can bring forth a theory of the universe and of life which

shall take up the past and from it read the riddle of the present and draw aside the veil of the future, then history in its highest sense has failed. To the men of the twentieth century comes the opportunity to make the effort which shall convert failure to success if success be possible.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 018 485 521 5