

An Introduction to the History of Western Europe

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REVISED AND ENLARGED

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II



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PREFACE FOR THE 1934 EDITION

This volume, which relates mainly to the development and spread of European civilization during the past two centuries, is an attempt to present a rather broader conception of history than that hitherto current in our colleges. It includes some account of the growth of knowledge, as well as the political and economic changes. Man's future seems to depend largely upon his discoveries, their dissemination and application. The unprecedented and incredible increase of scientific knowledge is the chief distinguishing characteristic of the age in which we live, and consequently it should engage the attention of every historical student.

Portions of the volume are borrowed, with the necessary modifications and readjustments, from the *Development of Modern Europe*, written by Charles A. Beard and myself. It happens that the greater part of the material here taken from that book was essentially my own work, but there are portions of chapters and pages here and there which were written by Dr. Beard or are the result of our ever-friendly coöperation. I have his generous permission to include these where it has seemed unnecessary to attempt any restatement.

In the present edition the narrative has been brought down to the beginning of 1934. Chapter XXXVII has been readjusted, Chapter XL has been enlarged so as to include a fuller account of Russia, Italy, and Great Britain, and a new chapter is added on international problems. Several important maps have also been inserted.

J. H. R.

PREFACE FOR THE EDITION OF 1946

The task assigned to me to revise the last sections of the *History of Western Europe* and bring it up to date is both a high privilege and a challenge which is hard to meet. It is not too much to say that for some thirty years this work exercised a deep and lasting influence upon the study and teaching of history in the United States. Indeed, in the earlier years of the century its influence was revolutionary; for it brought into the classroom not only scholarship of a high order, but clarity of historical perspective through the elimination of a vast amount of unnecessary detail. It concentrated upon the "living past"—that part of our heritage which is still molding the thought of men and the policy of nations. In spite of the contributions of the great historians, textbooks were still too often the dust-dry record which each generation of textbook writers had copied from those preceding it, with something of the unquestioned acceptance of authority typical of the medieval chroniclers. Professor Robinson cut through this mass of detail and brought the past to life again for the intellectual enrichment of all those who studied the history of Europe in American schools and colleges.

Since Professor Robinson's text was completed, however, a vast new chapter of human history has been opened up, in which civilization itself has been at grips with destiny. The First World War, in which three great empires disappeared, raised issues which were not fully met in the peace settlement, and rampant nationalism first weakened the League of Nations from within and then, in a vast revolutionary movement, overthrew it from without. Neither these crises nor the Second World War which followed could have been foreseen when the

last edition of this volume was prepared. The revision and completion of the text therefore called for the same kind of editorial procedure—that of concentrating upon the central theme of our own day—as was followed by Professor Robinson throughout in the making of his history. This meant that parts of the thoughtful and thought-provoking chapters on the human problem with which the former text of the history concluded had to make way for a narrative of the most critical era in all the long record of the human past.

No one can regret more than I this elimination of part of the Robinson text in order to make way for the history of these last years. I still recall reading the manuscript of the first chapters which Professor Robinson wrote in the opening year of the century. It was my privilege, first as student and then as colleague and friend, to watch and to share in the development of this work as it first took shape and then was recast time and time again, with infinite care, by the author. The years have amply justified his historical scholarship. It could not have been otherwise; for this work was based upon the original sources, and the interpreter was one of the greatest of American teachers of history. It is my hope that, despite the almost impossible task of reducing to a few pages the great drama of our time, this drama will lend an added interest to the whole story of the evolution of Western civilization, which is the theme of this book.

J. T. S.

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