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**THE HISTORY OF ANTIQUITY.**

THE  
HISTORY OF ANTIQUITY.

FROM THE GERMAN

OF

PROFESSOR MAX DUNCKER,

BY

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*FELLOW AND TUTOR OF BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD.*

VOL. I



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## P R E F A C E

TO THE ENGLISH EDITION.

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FIFTY years ago, the opinion was held by some that we could watch, in the tradition of the most ancient realms of the East, the first awkward steps in the childhood of the human race, while others believed that it was possible to discover there the remnants of an original wisdom, received by mankind at the beginning of their course immediately from the hand of heaven. The monuments of the East, subsequently discovered and investigated by the combined labour of English, German, and French scholars, have added an unexpected abundance of fresh information to the Hebrew Scriptures and the narratives of the Greeks, which, till then, were almost our only resource. No one can any longer be ignorant that Hither Asia at a very remote period was in possession of a rich and many-sided civilisation. The earliest stages of that civilisation in the valley of the Nile, of the Euphrates and the Tigris, on the coasts and in the interior of Syria are, it is true, entirely hidden from our knowledge; even the far more recent culture of the

Aryan tribes we can only trace with the help of the Veda and the Avesta back to the point at which they were already acquainted with agriculture, and possessed considerable artistic skill.

Our object in regard to the ancient East is not to retrace the beginning of human civilization, but rather to understand and establish the value and extent of those early phases of civilisation to which the entire development of the human race goes back. The way to this aim is clearly sketched out for us. A minute comparison of tradition with the results of the successful advance of Oriental studies, a conscientious examination of the one by the other, opens out to us the prospect of discerning more precisely the nature of those ancient constitutions and modes of life.

To this purpose I have undertaken to contribute by a descriptive treatment of the subject. Such an attempt appeared to me indicated by the consideration that the fragments of our knowledge—and more than fragments we do not at present possess, and never shall possess, even though we assume that the number of monuments be considerably increased—if conscientiously brought together, would produce the most effective impression by exhibiting the connection of all the various sides of those ancient civilisations—and if to this collection were added the conclusions that can be drawn from it and from the monuments about the political life, the religion, the manners and laws, the art and trade of those nations.

How to offer in a general survey the sum total of these fragments of the ancient East is a problem attended with difficulties which I have felt at every step in my work. There are not many corner-stones immovably fixed ; the outlines are often to be drawn with a wavering pen ; the unavoidable explanations of the gaps to be filled up admit of a variety of opinions. Hence it is often — only too often — necessary to interrupt the narrative by comments, in order to support the view taken by the author, or refute other views, or arrive at the conclusion that there is no sufficient evidence for a final decision. The best mode of remedying these disagreeable interruptions was first to state the tradition, which is generally closely connected with the peculiar nature of the people whose fortunes it narrates, and if not actually true, is nevertheless characteristic of the manners and views of the nation, and then to examine this tradition in and by itself, and in conjunction with the monuments ; to state the opposite interpretations ; and, finally, to give the results thus obtained. In this way narrative and investigation are combined in such a manner that the reader is enabled to pursue the inquiry. The data and the critical examination of them, and lastly the results obtained, are put before him for his own decision.

The objections, made of late to the results of Assyrian researches, touch certain points only, in which over-hasty conclusions have prematurely declared the enigma to be solved. Whatever doubts may still remain, I have felt the more confidence in



following the main results, because wherever Asshur and Israel come into contact the Hebrew Scriptures agree with the records of the kings of Asshur. Who could understand the meaning of the verses of Nahum (iii. 8-10), of the fate of "No-Ammon, to whose aid came Ethiopians, Arabians, and Libyans," till G. Smith discovered the document of Assurbanipal relating to the capture of Thebes? Who could explain the words of Ezekiel about the grave of Elam (xxxii. 27) till the tiles of Babylonia and Assyria told us of the ancient supremacy and power of this kingdom, and of its battles with the Assyrians, and subjugation by their arms? If, in chronology, I have given the preference to the tablets of the Assyrian Archons over the Books of Kings, I have done so, not because I hold the former to be infallible, but because the chronological dates in the Books of Kings prove, by more than one contradiction, that they have not come down to us intact.

My narrative embraces those independent civilisations of the ancient East which came to exercise a mutual influence on each other. First we follow the realm on the Nile and the kingdoms of Hither Asia as far as the point where the nations of Iran began to influence their destinies. Then I attempt to set forth the peculiar development of the Aryan tribes in the valleys of the Indus and the Ganges, down to the times of Tshandragupta and Asoka. Then follows the history of the Bactrians, the Medes, and the Persians, until the period when the nations of the table-land of Iran were united by Cyrus and

Darius with the countries of Western Asia, when Aryan life and Aryan civilisation gained the supremacy over the whole region from Ceylon to the Nile and the Hellespont. The forms of life at which the great empires of Asia had arrived are finally brought face to face with the more youthful civilisation attained by the Hellenes in their mountain cantons. This new development we follow down to the first great shock when East and West met in conflict, and the Achæmenids sought to crush the Hellenes under the weight of Asia. With the failure of this attempt my history of the ancient world concludes.

MAX DUNCKER.

BERLIN, *March*, 1877.

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## ERRATA.

Page 14, line 3 from bottom, for "chalk rock" read "lime-stone."  
" 51, " 3 " for "sun-globe" read "sun-mountain."  
" 81, " 2 " for "horologe" read "sun-mountain."  
" 140, " 10 " for "savans" read "savants."