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David Copperfield
by Charles Dickens



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DAVID COPPERFIELD

A Bantam Book

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**THE PERSONAL HISTORY
EXPERIENCE AND OBSERVATION
OF
DAVID COPPERFIELD
THE YOUNGER
OF BLUNDERSTONE ROOKERY
WHICH HE NEVER MEANT TO BE
PUBLISHED ON ANY ACCOUNT**

*(This is the title which appeared on the wrapper
of the first edition of David Copperfield.)*

Affectionately Inscribed
to
The Hon. Mr. and Mrs. Richard Watson
of
Rockingham, Northamptonshire

Preface to the First Edition

I DO not find it easy to get sufficiently far away from this Book, in the first sensations of having finished it, to refer to it with the composure which this formal heading would seem to require. My interest in it, is so recent and strong; and my mind is so divided between pleasure and regret—pleasure in the achievement of a long design, regret in the separation from many companions—that I am in danger of wearying the reader whom I love, with personal confidences, and private emotions.

Besides which, all that I could say of the Story, to any purpose, I have endeavoured to say in it.

It would concern the reader little, perhaps, to know how sorrowfully the pen is laid down at the close of a two-years' imaginative task; or how an Author feels as if he were dismissing some portion of himself into the shadowy world, when a crowd of the creatures of his brain are going from him for ever. Yet, I have nothing else to tell; unless, indeed, I were to confess (which might be of less moment still) that no one can ever believe this Narrative, in the reading, more than I have believed it in the writing.

Instead of looking back, therefore, I will look forward. I cannot close this Volume more agreeably to myself, than with a hopeful glance towards the time when I shall again put forth my two green leaves once a month, and with a faithful remembrance of the genial sun and showers that have fallen on these leaves of David Copperfield, and made me happy.

LONDON

October, 1850

Preface to the 'Charles Dickens' Edition

I REMARKED in the original Preface to this Book, that I did not find it easy to get sufficiently far away from it, in the first sensations of having finished it, to refer to it with the composure which this formal heading would seem to require. My interest in it was so recent and strong, and my mind was so divided between pleasure and regret—pleasure in the achievement of a long design, regret in the separation from many companions—that I was in danger of wearying the reader with personal confidences and private emotions.

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So true are these avowals at the present day, that I can now only take the reader into one confidence more. Of all my books, I like this the best. It will be easily believed that I am a fond parent to every child of my fancy, and that no one can ever love that family as dearly as I love them. But, like many fond parents, I have in my heart of hearts a favourite child. And his name is DAVID COPPERFIELD.

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MAN BEFORE CIVILIZATION

Part I is concerned with man's two million years before civilization. The other parts of the book are devoted to man's history since he became civilized, less than six thousand years ago. Thus, by far the longest phase of man's evolution will receive by far the briefest consideration. The reason for the disproportionate emphasis on the story of civilized man is the constantly accelerating tempo of human history. Geologic time is measured in billions of years, and man's prehistory in millennia; but since the advent of civilization, the chronological unit has shrunk progressively to centuries and to decades, until fateful events now daily crowd us, unceasingly and inexorably. Indeed the pace of change has reached such proportions that it is a very real question whether the human species is capable of adjusting with sufficient dispatch to avoid obsolescence, or even extinction.

*The disparity in the pace of events, and the corresponding disparity in emphasis in this study, should not lead us, however, to minimize the significance of what happened during prehistory. During those millennia, two developments provided the bedrock foundation for all later history. One was the gradual transition from primate to man—from hominid to *Homo sapiens*. The other was the transformation of the human newcomer from a food gatherer who was dependent on the bounty of nature to a food producer who became increasingly independent of nature—the master of his destiny. These two epochal*

events—the making of man and the advent of agriculture—are the subjects of the two chapters of Part I.

Although early man took those fateful first steps that were prerequisites for the future of his species, the fact remains that they were only first steps. In the process of becoming a thinking animal, man learned to use words and tools and fire; and in becoming a food producer, he learned to plant and to use the hoe and scythe. This technology placed him in an entirely different category from that of the animals about him, and yet it was a primitive technology compared to that which was to follow. The contrast is apparent if a stone hatchet or a flint-tipped scythe is placed beside a modern computer or space ship. Though the difference is self-evident, it needs to be underscored here because it explains the steady extension of the range of human activity, to be noted in the introduction to each part of this book.

*The more primitive the technology, the more constricted its range of operation; conversely, the more advanced the technology, the more extensive its range. In prehistoric times, the food gatherer perforce was restricted to the few square miles of his hunting grounds; the early cultivator, to his village and the surrounding fields and pastures. Thus the range of prehistoric human communities may be defined as being "local." The later history of man, depicted in the following pages and in *The World Since 1500*, was in large part the history of the extension of that range from local dimensions to regional, inter-regional, global, and planetary.*

*... universal history is more than
the sum of its parts; it cannot be divided
and subdivided without being denaturalized,
much as water, separated into its chemical
components, ceases to be water and
becomes hydrogen and oxygen.*

Chapter

1

GEOFFREY BARRACLOUGH

Introduction:

Nature of World History

The distinctive feature of this book is that it is a *world* history. It deals with the entire globe rather than with some one country or region. It is concerned not with Western man or non-Western man, but with all mankind. The viewpoint is that of an observer perched on the moon, surveying our planet as a whole, rather than that of one who is ensconced in London or Paris, or for that matter, in Peking or Delhi.

I. WHY WORLD HISTORY?

This global approach to history represents a new departure in modern historiography. Since the days of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century the emphasis has been on the nation rather than on mankind. But in recent years, interest in world history has been growing largely as a reaction to the manifestly global sweep of contemporary events. With astronauts and cosmonauts encircling the entire planet in a few hours and even reaching the moon, and with newspaper headlines concerned fully as much with Asia and Africa as with Europe and the Americas, it is increasingly recognized that a wider angle of

vision is needed. World history is manifestly essential for the understanding of a world that has become "one" in reality as well as in rhetoric.

4 This utilitarian function, however, is not the only reason for turning to world history. Equally important is the fact that the story of man from its very beginnings has a basic unity that must be recognized and respected. Neither Western nor non-Western history may be properly comprehended without a global overview encompassing both. Only then is it possible to perceive the degree of interaction amongst all peoples at all times, and the primary role of that interaction in determining the course of human history.

It is true that the interaction was fitful and inconsiderable until Columbus and da Gama set forth on their overseas explorations. Within a few decades they and their successors brought all parts of the world into direct contact, and the intimacy of that contact has grown steadily to the present day. By contrast, the various human communities prior to 1500 had existed in varying degrees of isolation. Yet this isolation was never absolute. During the long millennia before the European discoveries, the various branches of the human race in fact had interacted one with the other, though the precise degree varied enormously according to time and location. The details of this interaction comprise essentially the subject of this book for the period to 1500. And following that date, the earth, in relation to man's growing communication and transportation facilities, has shrunk at such an accelerating tempo that it is now a "spaceship earth," and "global village."

II. STRUCTURE OF WORLD HISTORY

If the fact of a common world history shared by all mankind is accepted, then there arises the question of its pedagogical viability. Frequently it is stated that since world history, by definition, encompasses all civilizations, it is far too broad a subject for classroom purposes. Western civilization, it is pointed out, is barely manageable by itself; how can all the other civilizations—including the Chinese, the Indian, and Middle Eastern—also be encompassed? The answer, of course, is that they cannot, and that world history, *thus defined*, is obviously impracticable. But such a definition is inaccurate and misleading. World history is *not* the sum of histories of the civilizations of the world, in the same manner that Western history is *not* the sum of the histories of the countries of the West.

If the study of Western civilization involved successive surveys of British history, German history, French, Italian, Spanish, Balkan, and the rest, then this obviously would not be a feasible subject of study. Yet, in fact, it is feasible, and the reason is that the approach is not agglomerative. Rather it focuses on those historical forces or movements that affected the West as a whole, such as Christianity, Islam, the Crusades, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the French Revolution, the scientific and industrial revolutions, and so forth. So it is with world history, though the stage in this case is global rather than regional, and the emphasis consequently is on movements of worldwide influence.

In Paleolithic times, for example, there was the emergence in Africa of man himself and his gradual dispersal through Eurasia, Australia, and the

Americas. During the Neolithic period occurred the fateful breakthrough to agriculture, followed by metalworking and assorted other crafts, and leading to urban life and civilization—all of which diffused outward in all directions from their Middle East center of origin. This in turn led to the development of the great Eurasian civilizations—the Chinese, Indian, Middle Eastern, and European—which for millennia developed autonomously along parallel lines, though with varying degrees of interaction as a result of powerful interregional historical forces such as Hellenism, Christianity, Buddhism, and the recurring invasions from the Central Eurasian steppes. After 1500 this Eurasian balance gradually gave way to a global unity imposed by an emerging West and culminating in the nineteenth century in an unprecedented worldwide hegemony. Finally, the essence of twentieth-century world history is the growing reaction against this hegemony and the perilous groping toward a new world balance necessitated by the rapid diffusion of Western technology and ideology. Such, in capsule form, is the rationale and structure of world history.

III. GEOGRAPHY OF WORLD HISTORY

Just as the structure of world history is commonly assumed to be the sum of the histories of the world's civilizations, so the geography of world history is assumed to be the sum of the continents comprising the earth's surface. This latter assumption is as mechanical and misleading as the former. The traditional division of the globe into continents, useful though it may be for the student of geography, has little meaning for the student of world history. For the same reason that the structure of world history requires focusing on historical movements that have had major influence on man's development, so the geography of world history requires focusing on those regions that initiated those historical movements.

When this is done, one land unit stands out uniquely and unchallengeable: Eurasia, the veritable heartland of world history since Neolithic times. Eurasia encompasses two-fifths of the total land surface of the globe, and nine-tenths of the world's population. Within its confines developed the most advanced and most enduring civilizations. To an overwhelming degree, the history of man is the history of those Eurasian civilizations.

The distinguished anthropologist Franz Boas makes an observation that contains perhaps the chief reason for Eurasia's predominance:

The history of mankind proves that advances of culture depend upon the opportunities presented to a social group to learn from the experience of their neighbors. The discoveries of the group spread to others and, the more varied the contacts, the greater the opportunities to learn. The tribes of simplest culture are on the whole those that have been isolated for very long periods and hence could not profit from the cultural achievements of their neighbors.¹

In other words, *if other geographic factors were equal*, the key to human progress has been accessibility. Those with the most opportunity to interact

with other people have been the most likely to forge ahead. Indeed they were driven to do so, for there was selective pressure as well as opportunity. Accessibility involved the constant threat of assimilation or elimination if opportunity was not grasped. By contrast, those who were isolated received neither stimulus nor threat, were free from selective pressure, and thus could remain relatively unchanged through the millennia without jeopardizing their existence.

The Eurasian peoples obviously were the prime beneficiaries of this principle of accessibility. All were accessible to each other. They stimulated and threatened each other at an increasing tempo through the ages, as technological advances facilitated communication amongst the regions of Eurasia.

These regions need to be defined, for Eurasia is too large a land mass to be viewed as a single unit. Nor may Eurasia be defined as the combination of Europe and Asia, for this definition is both geographically and historically misleading. Geographically, Europe obviously is not equivalent or comparable to Asia. A glance at the map shows that Europe is a peninsula of the Eurasian land mass, corresponding, for example, to the Indian Peninsula. Historically, also, Europe is comparable not to Asia but to another Eurasian center of civilization, of which again India provides a good example. Thus Europe and India are intelligible equivalents in territorial extent, size and variety of population, and complexity of culture and historical traditions. From the viewpoint of world history, therefore, Eurasia should be viewed as comprising not the two continents of Europe and Asia, but five historically meaningful regions: the Middle East, India, China, Europe, and the Central Eurasian steppes.

The fertile river valleys and plains of the first four regions gave rise to the great historical civilizations that together have been responsible for the vital role of Eurasia as the heartland of world history. More specifically, the innovative center or "core" of the Middle East comprised the Nile and Tigris-Euphrates valleys and the Iranian Plateau; in India, the center was the Indus and Ganges valleys; in China, the Yellow and Yangtze valleys; and in Europe, the northern shore of the Mediterranean, which was economically and culturally dominant from Minoan times to the late Middle Ages. It should be added that Europe as defined here includes North Africa, because this area historically has usually had closer ties with Europe and the Middle East than with the lands south of the great Sahara barrier. It follows that the term "Africa" henceforth refers to sub-Saharan Africa.

The Central Eurasian steppes comprise the endless grasslands stretching from Manchuria in the east to Hungary in the west and provide an overland channel of communication amongst the centers of civilization strung out in Eurasia's periphery. These steppes supported nomadic herdsman who were ever on the move with their flocks and who were always ready, when opportunity presented itself, to grasp at the riches of Peking, Delhi, Baghdad, and Rome. Fertile valleys and plains created the ancient core civilizations of Eurasia, but the steppes facilitated contact amongst these civilizations, either by peaceful communication along overland trade routes or by the ceaseless nomadic raids from the arid interior to the provocatively affluent periphery. Thus the history of Eurasia was to a great extent molded by this interaction between nomadic tribes and sedentary civilizations. The continual raids, which periodically built up into elemental and wide ranging movements of peoples, were regenerative as well as destructive. They swept away fossilized dynasties,

institutions, and practices, introduced new peoples, techniques, and ideas, and determined in large degree the course of Eurasian history. The ancient, the classical, and the medieval periods of pre-1500 Eurasian history—the three broad historical periods that will be studied in this volume—were heralded by major turning points primarily attributable to these nomadic invasions.

The non-Eurasian world was made up of the three remaining land masses: Africa, the Americas, and Australia. Viewed in the light of the principle of accessibility, their disadvantage compared to Eurasia is apparent. They had no contact whatsoever with each other.

Africa alone had a physical connection with Eurasia, yet even here the interaction was tenuous and intermittent because of formidable geographic barriers between Africa and Eurasia, and within Africa itself. Nevertheless the progress of the Africans did rest in large part on outside stimuli such as the introduction of agriculture, of ironworking, and of new plants and animals. Consequently, in the Sudanic lands immediately to the south of the Sahara, Africans were able to organize a succession of medieval empires that were comparable in certain respects to those of contemporary Europe.

The American Indians, by contrast, were relatively handicapped by virtue of their complete isolation after crossing over from northeast Asia over 15,000 years ago. Their general level of development was not equal to that of the Africans, though they did develop impressive civilizations in Mexico, Central America, and Peru.

Finally, the Australian aborigines were the most retarded, having been cut off on their remote island continent for some 30,000 years. They all remained at the food-gathering stage, in contrast to the Africans, who had large Sudanic empires in addition to Hottentot and Pygmy food gatherers, and the American Indians, who had the advanced Aztec, Inca, and Maya civilizations along with food gatherers in California and Tierra del Fuego. Indeed Australia's isolation in the South Pacific had led not only to the retardation of human culture but also to the survival of archaic forms of flora and fauna, such as the eucalyptus plant, the monotremes, and the marsupials.

Such, then, was the understandable diversity of human societies encountered by the Europeans when they set out on their explorations from the fifteenth century onward. The spectrum ranged from the ancient and sophisticated civilizations of Eurasia, through the mixture of imperial structures and food-gathering bands in Africa and the Americas, to the unrelieved Paleolithic level prevailing throughout Australia.

This global pattern determines the organization of this book. For the period to 1500, the emphasis is on the Eurasian civilizations, which were incomparably more advanced and consequently made correspondingly greater contributions to human development during those millennia. Thus Parts II, III, and IV are devoted to the evolution of the Eurasian civilizations, while Part V summarizes the developments in the non-Eurasian world.

SUGGESTED READING

The most recent overall treatment of world history has been provided by W. H. McNeill, *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community* (Chicago: