

CHAPTER IX

HISTORY

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WHAT IS HISTORY

Historie or *historia* meant in early Greek usage inquiry or learning by inquiry, then the knowledge so obtained, and finally the literary product of inquiry. It passed into the Latin *historia* and subsequently into modern languages as an account or record of past events. To this, later usage has contributed ambiguity by applying the term to the events themselves. We speak of a *History of the United States* that is now in Bancroft's six volumes, and also of a history of the United States that actually happened. There is, moreover, in both of these senses a history of plants, of animals, of rocks, of stars and planets, as well as a history of mankind. In its broadest sense, history has come to include the whole realm of accomplished fact, whether recorded or unrecorded, everything that ever *was* whether now known or unknown — the illimitable past, itself.

SOURCES OF HISTORY

Conditions and events in passing either do or do not leave traces. Where there are no traces there is nothing to study. Our practical interests in forming a conception of history are therefore with the traces of conditions and events, the method employed in studying such traces, and the results of the study. Traces of any kind may be regarded as possible material. But history, unless otherwise specified, usually means the