



The Ancient History of the Near East from the Earliest Times to the Battle of Salamis

Henry Hall

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This is a history of the Middle East during antiquity, from the ancient Babylonians and Assyrians to the Battle of Salamis during the Persian Wars.

From the preface:

“IN this book I have endeavoured to tell the story of the ancient history of the Near East within the limits of a single volume. Those who know the great works of Maspero and of Meyer will realize that in order to effect this great compression has been necessary, and will guess that many matters of great interest have had to be treated more cursorily than I would have wished. But, while writing as succinctly as possible, I have of set purpose refused to sacrifice too much on the altar of brevity, and have aspired to make the book readable as well as moderate in size.

Of all regions of the earth probably the Near East has had and will have the greatest interest for us Europeans, for from it sprang our civilization and our religion.

There took place the mingling of the Indo-European from the North with the Mediterranean of the South, which produced the culture, art, and law of the Greeks and Romans; and there, on the Semitic verge of Asia, the home of religious enthusiasms from the beginning, arose the Christian Faith. And if the Near East has from the first seen the mingling of the ideas of the East and West, it has also seen their secular struggle for mastery, the first phase of which ended at Salamis, when the Aryan invader made good his footing in the Mediterranean world, and threw back the Asiatics from Greece, now become the most eastern of western lands instead of the most westerly of the eastern. The second phase ended with Arbela and the complete triumph of the West. At the end of the third, Kossovo-polje and Constantinople registered the return of the pendulum, which swung its weight from east to west as far as Vienna. Then it swung back, and the end of the fourth phase seems to be approaching as I write, when Bulgars and Greeks are hammering at the gates of Constantinople.

It is with the history of the first phase of the great drama that this book deals, from the beginning of things to the grand climacteric of Salamis. The story begins with prehistoric Greece. Of the Bronze Age civilization of Greece which has been revealed to us by the discoveries of Schliemann, Halbherr, and Evans we cannot yet write the history: we can only guess at the probable course of events from the relics of antiquity which archaeology has revealed to us. It is otherwise with Egypt, with Babylonia, and Assyria. Of them we have intelligible records upon which we can base history.”

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