

Preface by the Author

Mr. D. C. Somervell explains in his own following prefatory note how he came to make this abridgement of the first six volumes of my book. Before I knew anything about it, a number of inquiries had been reaching me, particularly from the United States, as to whether there was any likelihood of an abridgement of these volumes being published pending the time—now inevitably postponed far beyond all original expectations owing to the war—when I should be able to publish the rest of the work. I had been feeling the force of this demand, but had not seen how to meet it (being, as I was, very fully occupied with war-work) until the problem was solved in a most happy way by a letter from Mr. Somervell telling me that an abridgement, made by him, was now in existence.

When Mr. Somervell sent me his manuscript, more than four ~~years~~ had already passed since the publication of volumes IV–VI and more than nine years since that of volumes I–III. For a writer the act of publication always, I suppose, has the effect of turning into a foreign body the work that, so long as it was in the making, was a part of its maker's life; and in this case the war of 1939–1945, with the changes of circumstance and occupation that it brought with it, had also intervened between my book and me (volumes IV–VI were published forty-one days before the war broke out). In working over Mr. Somervell's manuscript, I have therefore been able—notwithstanding his skill in retaining my own words—to read the abridgement almost as though it were a new book from another hand than mine. I have now made it fully my own by here and there recasting the language (with Mr. Somervell's good-natured acquiescence) as I have gone along, but I have not compared the abridgement

with the original line by line, and I have made a point of never reinserting any passage that Mr. Somervell had left out—believing, as I do, that the author himself is unlikely to be the best judge of what is and is not an indispensable part of his work.

The maker of a skilful abridgement does an author a most valuable service which his own hand cannot readily do for him, and readers of the present volume who are acquainted with the original text will, I am sure, agree with me that Mr. Somervell's literary craftsmanship has been skilful indeed. He has managed to preserve the argument of the book, to present it for the most part in the original words and at the same time to abridge six volumes into one volume. If I had been set this task myself, I doubt whether I could have accomplished it.

Though Mr. Somervell has made the lesser task of working over his abridgement as light a one for the author as it could well be, two further years have passed since I first set to work on it. For periods of weeks and months on end I have had to let it lie untouched at my elbow. These delays have been due to the exigencies of war-work; but the notes for the rest of the book are intact, in the safe keeping of the Council on Foreign Relations in New York (I posted them in Munich week to the Executive Secretary of the Council, Mr. Mallory, who kindly undertook to look after them), and while there is life there is hope of finishing one's work. Not the least of my reasons for being grateful to Mr. Somervell is that the process of working on his abridgement of those volumes of the book that have already been published has helped me to begin to turn my mind again to those that I have still to write.

It is also a happy thing for me that this volume is being published, like the full version of the book, by the Oxford University Press, and that the Index is being made by Miss V. M. Boulter, to whom readers of the full version are already indebted for the two indexes to Volumes I–III and Volumes IV–VI.

Note

by the Editor of the Abridgement

Mr. Toynbee's *Study of History* presents a single continuous argument as to the nature and pattern of the historical experience of the human race since the first appearance of the species of societies called civilizations, and that argument is illustrated and, so far as the nature of the material allows, 'proved' at every stage by a diversity of illustrations drawn from the whole length and breadth of human history, so far as human history is known to the historians of our day. Some of these illustrations are worked out in great detail. That being the nature of the book, the task of the editor of an abridgement is in essentials perfectly simple, namely to preserve the argument intact, though in an abbreviated statement, and to reduce in some degree, the number of illustrations and, in a much greater degree, the detail of their exposition.

I think that this volume makes an adequate presentation of Mr. Toynbee's philosophy of history in so far as it is set forth in the six published volumes of his yet unfinished work. If it did not do so Mr. Toynbee would obviously not have approved its publication. But I should be very sorry if it came to be regarded as an entirely satisfactory substitute for the original work. For 'business purposes' it is perhaps an adequate substitute; for pleasure surely not; for a large part of the charm of the original resides in the leisured amplitude of its illustrations. Only the big book, one feels, is aesthetically worthy of the bigness of its subject. I have been able to use to such a very large extent the actual sentences and paragraphs of the original that I have no fear that this abridgement will be found dull, but I am equally certain that the original will be found much more entrancing.

I made this abridgement for my own amusement, without Mr. Toynbee's knowledge and without any idea of publication. It seemed to me an agreeable way of passing the time. Only when it was finished did I tell Mr. Toynbee of its existence and place it at his disposal if at any time he cared to make any use of it. Such being its origin I allowed myself occasionally to interpolate a little illustration of my own not found in the original work. After all, it is written 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox which treadeth out his master's corn'. These intrusions of mine are small in extent and smaller in importance. As the whole of my manuscript has been carefully revised by Mr. Toynbee and they have received his *imprimatur* along with all the rest, there is no need to indicate them either here or by means of footnotes to the text. I mention them merely because a careful reader who discovered them by comparing this book with the original might feel that, in respect of them, the game of abridgement was not being played according to the strictest rules. There are also one or two places where a few sentences have been interpolated either by Mr. Toynbee or by myself, in view of events that have occurred since the original work was published. But on the whole, seeing that the first three volumes were published in 1933 and the others in 1939, it is amazing how little work of that kind was called for.

The 'Argument' which appears as an Appendix to the work is in effect an abridgement of an abridgement. Whereas this work presents an original of over 3,000 pages in 565, the 'Argument' presents the same in a mere 25. Read as a 'thing in itself' it would prove extremely indigestible, but it may prove useful for purposes of reference all the way through. It is, in fact, a kind of 'Table of Contents', and the only reason for not putting it at the beginning is that it would constitute a rather large and ugly object in the foreground of the picture.

For readers who wish to refer from this book to the original volumes the following equations will be useful.

Pages 15-102	represent	Volume I	of the original work.
Pages 103-196	represent	Volume II	of the original work.
Pages 197-285	represent	Volume III	of the original work.
Pages 286-413	represent	Volume IV	of the original work.
Pages 414-489	represent	Volume V	of the original work.
Pages 490-641	represent	Volume VI	of the original work.

Plan of the Book

(The present volume is an abridgement of Parts 1–5)

1. *Introduction*
2. *The Geneses of Civilizations*
3. *The Growths of Civilizations*
4. *The Breakdowns of Civilizations*
5. *The Disintegrations of Civilizations*
6. *Universal States*
7. *Universal Churches*
8. *Heroic Ages*
9. *Contacts Between Civilizations in Space*
10. *Contacts Between Civilizations in Time*
11. *Rhythms in the Histories of Civilizations*
12. *The Prospects of the Western Civilization*
13. *The Inspirations of Historians*