to show that he died in Thrace, and by violence. It would seem that, when he wrote chapter 116 of his third book, he was ignorant of an eruption of Etna which took place in 396. There is some reason then, for believing that he did not survive his seventy-fifth year. According to ancient tradition, he was killed by robbers. His relics were brought to Athens, and laid in the vault of Cimon’s family, where Plutarch saw their resting-place. The abrupt­ness with which the History breaks off agrees with the story of a sudden death. The historian’s daughter is said to have saved the unfinished work, and to have placed it in the hands of an editor. This editor, according to one account, was Xenophon, to whom Diogenes Laertius assigns the credit of having “ brought the work into reputation, when he might have suppressed it.” The tradition is however, very doubtful. In its origin, it may have been merely a guess, suggested by a feeling that no one then living could more appropriately have discharged the office of literary executor than the writer who, in his *Hellenica,* continued the narrative.

At the outset of the History Thucydides has indicated his general conception of his work, and has stated the principles which governed its composition. His purpose had been formed at the very begin­ning of the war, in the conviction that it would prove more im­portant than any event of which Greeks had record. The leading belligerents, Athens and Sparta, were both in the highest condition of effective equipment. The whole Hellenic world—including Greek settlements outside of Greece proper—was divided into two parties, either actively helping one of the two combatants or medi­tating such action. Nor was the movement confined within even the widest limits of Hellas; the “barbarian” world also was affected by it,—the non-Hellenic populations of Thrace, Macedonia, Epirus, Sicily, and, finally, the Persian kingdom itself. The aim of Thucydides was to preserve an accurate record of this war, not only in view of the intrinsic interest and importance of the facts, but also in order that these facts might be permanent sources of political teaching to posterity. His hope was, as he says, that his History would be found profitable by “those who desire an exact knowledge of the past as a key to the future, which in all prob­ability will repeat or resemble the past. The work is meant to be a possession for ever, not the rhetorical triumph of an hour.” As this context shows, the oft-quoted phrase, “a possession for ever,” had, in its author’s meaning, a more definite import than any mere anticipation of abiding fame for his History. It referred to the permanent value of the lessons which his History contained. Thucydides stands alone among the men of his own days, and has no superior of any age, in the width of mental grasp which could seize the general significance of particular events, The political education of mankind began in Greece, and in the time of Thucy­dides their political life was still young. Thucydides knew only the small city-common wealth on the one hand, and on the other the vast barbaric kingdom ; and yet, as has been well said of him, “ there is hardly a problem in the science of government which the statesman will not find, if not solved, at any rate handled, in the pages of this universal master.”@@1

Such being the spirit in which he approached his task, it is interesting to inquire what were the points which he himself con­sidered to be distinctive in his method of executing it. His Greek predecessors in the recording of events had been, he conceived, of two classes. First, there were the epic poets, with Homer at their head, whose characteristic tendency, in the eyes of Thucydides, is to exaggerate the greatness or splendour of things past—as, for instance, conceding the historical character of the Trojan war, he supposes the strength of the Greek fleet to be overstated in the Iliad. Secondly, there were the Ionian prose writers whom he calls “ chroniclers ” (λογογράφοι). These writers are directly known to us only by meagre fragments ; but Dionysius of Halicarnassus has described their general characteristics in a manner which serve to illustrate the differences indicated by Thucydides between their work and his own. Their general object was to diffuse a know­ledge of legends preserved by oral tradition, and of written docu­ments—usually lists of officials or genealogies—preserved in public archives ; and they published their materials as they found them, without any attempt at sifting fact from fable. Thucydides de­scribes their work by the word ξυvτιθέvaι, but his own by ξυγγρáφϵιv, —the difference between the terms answering to that between com­pilation of a somewhat mechanical kind and historical composition in a higher sense. The vice of the “chroniclers,” in his view, is that they cared only for popularity, and took no pains to make their narratives trustworthy. In contrast with these predecessors,

Thucydides has subjected his materials to the most searching scrutiny. The ruling principle of his work has been strict adher­ence to carefully verified facts. “ As to the deeds done in the war, I have not thought myself at liberty to record them on hearsay from the first informant or on arbitrary conjecture. My account rests either on personal knowledge or on the closest possible scrutiny of each statement made by others. The process of research was laborious, because conflicting accounts were given by those who had witnessed the several events, as partiality swayed or memory served them.”

A period of at least twenty years must have elapsed between the date at which Herodotus ceased to write and that at which the History of Thucydides received its present form. There can be no doubt that Thucydides knew the History of Herodotus, and that in some places he alludes to it. The diligence and the honesty of Herodotus are alike beyond question, and would, we may be sure, have been fully recognized by Thucydides. The work of Herodotus was distinct in kind from that of the Ionian chroniclers, and was of an immeasurably higher order. While they dealt, in a bold fashion, with the annals of separate cities or peoples, Herodotus set the first example of multifarious knowledge subordinated to the execution of a great historical plan, and also showed for the first time that a prose history could have literary charm. But Thucy­dides doubtless thought of Herodotus as having certain traits in common with the Ionian chroniclers, and as being liable, so far, to the same criticism. One such trait would be the inadequate sift­ing of evidence ; another, the mixture of a fabulous element with historical fact; and another, perhaps, the occasional aiming at rhetorical effect. Of this last trait the chief instances would be those imaginary dialogues or speeches with which Herodotus some­times enlivens his narrative. This brings us to an important topic, —the purpose with which Thucydides himself has admitted speeches into his History, and the manner in which they have been com­posed.

The speeches constitute between a fourth and a fifth part of the History. If they were eliminated, an admirable narrative would indeed remain, with a few comments, usually brief, on the more striking characters and events. But we should lose all the most vivid light on the inner workings of the Greek political mind, on the motives of the actors, and the arguments which they used,— in a word, on the whole play of contemporary feeling and opinion. To the speeches is due in no small measure the imperishable intellectual interest of the History, since it is chiefly by the speeches that the facts of the Peloponnesian War are so lit up with keen thought as to become illustrations of general laws, and to acquire a permanent suggestiveness for the student of politics. When Herodotus made his persons hold conversations or deliver speeches, he was following the precedent of epic poetry ; his tone is usually colloquial rather than rhetorical; he is merely making thought and motive vivid in the way natural to a simple a e. Thucydides is the real founder of the tradition by which historians were so long held to be warranted in introducing set speeches of their own composition. His own account of his practice is given in the following words. “As to the speeches made on the eve of the war, or in its course, I have found it difficult to retain a memory of the precise words which I had heard spoken ; and so it was with those who brought me reports. But I have made the persons say what it seemed to me most opportune for them to say in view of each situation ; at the same time I have adhered as closely as possible to the general sense of what was actually said.” So far as the language of the speeches is concerned, then, Thucy­dides plainly avows that it is mainly or wholly his own. As a general rule, there is little attempt to mark different styles. The case of Pericles, whom Thucydides must have repeatedly heard, is probably an exception ; the Thucydidean speeches of Pericles offer several examples of that bold imagery which Aristotle and Plutarch agree in ascribing to him, while the Funeral Oration, especially, has a certain majesty of rhythm, a certain union of impetuous movement with lofty grandeur, which the historian has given to no other speaker. Such strongly marked characteristics as the curt bluntness of the Spartan ephor Sthenelædas, or the insolent vehemence of Alcibiades, are also indicated. But the dramatic truth of the speeches generally resides in the matter, not in the form. In regard to those speeches which were delivered at Athens before his banishment in 424,—and seven such speeches are contained in the History,—Thucydides could rely either on his own recollection or on the sources accessible to a resident citizen. In these cases there is good reason to believe that he has repro­duced the substance of what was actually said. In other cases he had to trust to more or less imperfect reports of the “general sense”; and in some instances, no doubt, the speech represents simply his own conception of what it would have been “most opportune ” to say. The most evident of such instances occur in the addresses of leaders to their troops. The historian’s aim in these military harangues—which are usually short—is to bring out the points of a strategical situation ; a modern writer would have attained the object by comments prefixed or subjoined to

@@@1 Freeman, Historical Essays, 2d ser., iii.