

**THE WRITING OF HISTORY:  
AN INTRODUCTION TO  
HISTORICAL METHOD**

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The writing of history: an introduction to historical method by Fred Morrow Fling

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# THE WRITING OF HISTORY

AN INTRODUCTION TO  
HISTORICAL METHOD

BY

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*"The whole life of man is a perpetual comparison  
of evidence and balancing of probabilities."*

166614.  
28.10.21.

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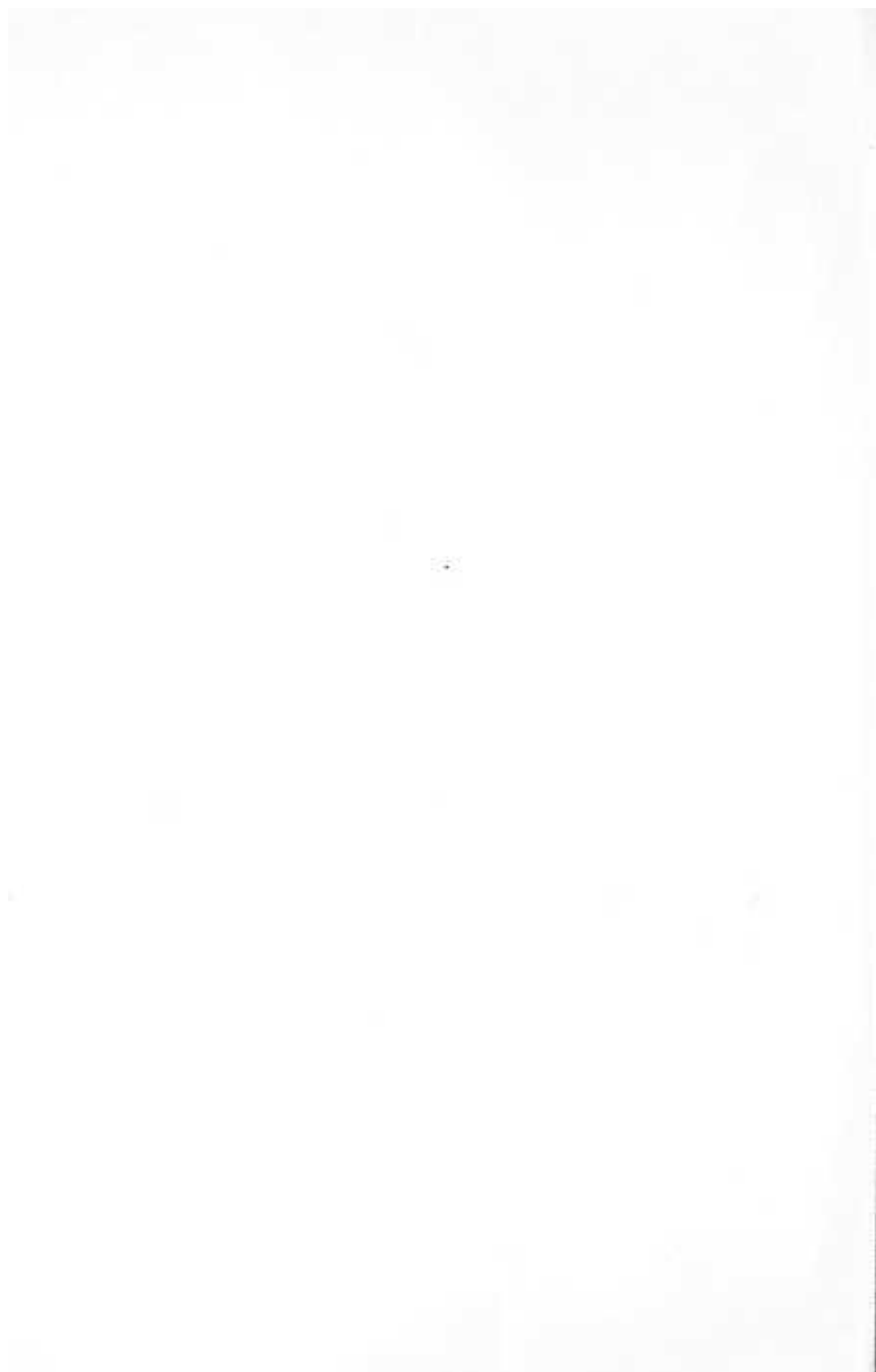
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The present volume is the second work published by the Yale University Press on the Theodore L. Glasgow Memorial Publication Fund. This Foundation was established September 17, 1918, by an anonymous gift to Yale University in memory of Flight Sub-Lieutenant Theodore L. Glasgow, R.N. He was born in Montreal, Canada, May 25, 1898, the eldest son of Robert and Louise C. Glasgow, and was educated at the University of Toronto Schools and at the Royal Military College, Kingston. In August, 1916, he entered the Royal Naval Air Service and in July, 1917, went to France with the Tenth Squadron attached to the Twenty-Second Wing of the Royal Flying Corps. A month later, August 19, 1917, he was killed in action on the Ypres front.





## FOREWORD

THIS volume is not a revised edition of my *Outline of Historical Method*; it is an entirely new work. It was written for college students who are beginning their studies in historical research, for teachers of history who have had no critical historical training, and for students of history who are hoping to find in private study some compensation for opportunities not enjoyed in college. This book does not aspire to fill the place of Bernheim's *Lehrbuch*, but rather to guide the student through his first steps in research, and to prepare him for the study of Bernheim. In a word, it is an "introduction" to historical method.

Although the simple reading of the text might not, I venture to hope, prove unprofitable, it will, nevertheless, yield the best return when studied in connection with a bit of research exemplifying the process I have endeavored to describe. I would suggest that some limited topic be carefully worked over, all the steps in method being taken from the criticism of the sources to the construction of the final narrative with notes. Only by such an experience can one fully understand what critical historical study means and how difficult and exacting the work of the scientific historian is.

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## THE WRITING OF HISTORY

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Although this volume does not deal with the teaching of history, it has, nevertheless, an important bearing upon it. A teacher who has not read at least an elementary text on historical method and completed a piece of careful scholarly research, lacks one of the most important parts of the equipment of a well-prepared teacher of history. However much historical information such a teacher may have accumulated, he lacks a scientific standard that would enable him to separate the true from the false, to deal scientifically with contradictory statements in secondary works and to protect himself and his pupils against unsound and superficial historical narratives.

It seems extraordinary that it should be necessary to insist upon the importance of what should be self-evident, but the really extraordinary thing about the pedagogical situation is that a large majority of the teachers of history in secondary schools neither possess an elementary knowledge of historical method nor consider such knowledge a necessary part of their equipment as teachers. A teacher of chemistry who could not direct experimental work in a laboratory could neither secure nor hold a position in a good high school today, but the history courses in the high schools are still "passed around" to teachers without technical training.

Fifteen years ago, in the introduction to my *Outline of Historical Method*, I wrote that "it is the popular belief that any intelligent person, without