

PREFACE.

If we had to prove here the utility of History, we would confine ourselves to recalling what Bossuet himself has said at the commencement of his admirable "*Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle*," or *Treatise on Universal History*, and that would amply suffice; but of what avail to endeavor proving a truth which no one doubts? We will only say that, taken in its largest acceptation, History is nothing more than an exhibition of human nature on a large scale, and that, consequently, it offers a vast field from which the mind and the heart may gather in a rich harvest. We will add, that it is never too early to commence instilling into young people the love and taste for serious things, and that there is no profane study which tends more to this excellent end, than that of History. It is also worthy of remark, that a young man, who has been early habituated to read instructive and moral works, rarely addicts himself to light or pernicious reading. This truth is so generally acknowledged, that many of the novel-writers of the present day, endeavor to make use of some historical scaffolding as a foundation for their unsafe and frivolous works. Without intending it, perhaps, they thus render the most glorious homage to History.

As for the order to be observed in the study of History, it is traced beforehand by the very nature of things. The People of God, being the only one of antiquity which faithfully preserved, till the coming of the Messiah, the sacred deposit of the true principles of morality, the basis of all real education, it is undoubtedly fitting that to its history the place of honor should be assigned. Then follows National History, which is, to a certain degree, inseparable from the preceding, forming its logical sequel and indispensable adjunct. If the one shows us the hand of