

race—is, we think, the most interesting and instructive pursuit that can engage the human mind. It is also one of the most essential. History, it is well said, is philosophy teaching by example. The great problems of the ages repeat themselves. He who would understand the urgent questions of to-day and the best mode of their solution must know how these questions have been met and answered in the past. No one can pass muster as well informed who has not some adequate conception of the past record of our race. Yet many are deterred from this task by its seemingly hopeless magnitude, by the vast number of volumes to be mastered. And this is a real difficulty. To master the works of the great historians who have written in detail the annals of the nations is the work of a life time.

The volumes under review, however, bring an apparently almost impossible task within easy accomplishment. By judicious omission of unimportant details and by skilful condensation of narrative and grouping of facts into their proper relations, a clear and connected conspectus of the history of the world may be obtained. Most abridgments of history are as juiceless and dry as last year's hay. Dr. Ridpath's cyclopaedia is free from this fault. He is master of a picturesque and dramatic style that rivets the reader's attention and presents the great features of the period he treats in a singularly vivid manner. He possesses also the critical skill that sifts out the legendary and gives the results of the labours of the ablest original investigators of the past.

We venture to say that the careful study of these volumes is, in a very important sense, a liberal education. The reader is made acquainted with the chief actors in the great drama of time, with the nature of their work and with its influence on the world. Talk of the interest of fiction and romance! It will not compare with the fascination of the truths stranger than fiction of history.

God is far the sweetest poet
And the *real* is His song.

To the scholar this work is of interest for its rapid review of the periods and movements with which he is familiar. To the busy mass of readers it will be of special value as giving a comprehensive bird's-eye view of the stream of history from its early sources to its varied ramifications in modern times. One of its most striking features is its copious illustration. It has no less than 1,210 high-class engravings of persons, places, and the great dramatic incidents referred to in the text. These really illustrate the subject and not merely embellish the book, and many of them are drawn by artists of national and international repute as, among others, Vogel, Alma Tadema, Doré, Neuville, Leutemann, Bayard, Philippoteaux and many others. Of not less utility than these are the thirty-two coloured historical maps, and nine coloured chronological charts showing at a glance by an ingenious arrangement the relations in time and place of the events described. There are also thirty-one genealogical diagrams of the royal and noble houses of ancient and modern times.

The author, we think, has very judiciously begun his history with Egypt instead of with the Chaldean and Assyrian monarchies. The choice of the valley of the Nile rather than the valley of the Tigris, as the place of beginning, has been determined by chronological considerations and the true sequence of events. He then transfers the scene to Mesopotamia, and follows the course of events from the Euphrates to the Tiber, from Babylon to Rome. He makes the Fall of the Western Empire, 1453, the date of the death of Antiquity, and in the second volume returns to the barbarian nations of Europe from which, quickened by contact with ancient learning, has sprung the complex civilization of modern times. The spread of Mahomedanism, feudal ascendancy, the Crusades, the conflict of the kings and the people, the new world and the Reformation, the growth of England, the age of Revolutions, and the record of the advancement of civilization throughout