

P R E F A C E.

For Canadians, and for Catholic Canadians, especially, an interest in general European history is both natural and essential. As Canadians, we belong to a country which is peopled by contingents from every European nation; by ancestry we are all foreigners here; and our interests in history are as general as the mixture of blood in our people is varied and diverse. As Catholics, our conception of history cannot centre in the assumed superior importance of any one nation to all others, such as a narrow patriotism sometimes imagines for its own kindred and race; nor can our conception be satisfied with a knowledge of the one or two national histories to which a blood relationship alone might confine it.

History, for Catholic conception, is a history of Christian civilization, or of the ancient civilizations which preceded, as transformed and resurrected by it. This history converges in ancient times to that centre of ancient civilization which became, and has ever since remained, the focus of the Christian faith. It diverges from that centre to the nations of later time as they became subject to its influence, and have remained to the present day, unconsciously, it may be in some cases, controlled by it.

In offering this book for uses of instruction, the author is supported, then, by the sense that its topic is one of vital importance; but as for the methods in which this topic shall be presented in one short book, under the limitations of size which practical usefulness demands, there, indeed, is a broad field for variance of opinion. For the art of teaching has little to do with the knowledge it conveys. The art of teaching is also a science to whose acquisition a lifetime of experience, or the bent of natural genius, must be assistant. A good historian may be a poor instructor—may fail, and sometimes does fail, in the preparation of a text-book on the subject. Practical usefulness being, then, the condition of success and the standard of judgment, the author takes the liberty of noting the practical features of this work.