



Ancient Times a History of the Early World: An Introduction to the Study of Ancient History and the Career of Early Man

James Henry Breasted

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From the preface: "In the selection of subject matter as well as in style and diction, it has been the purpose of the author to make this book sufficiently simple to be put into the hands of first-year high-school pupils. A great deal of labor has been devoted to the mere task of clear and simple statement and arrangement. While simple enough for first-year high-school work, it nevertheless is planned to interest and stimulate all students of high-school age. In dealing with each civilization a sufficient framework of political organization and of historical events has been laid down; but the bulk of the space has been devoted to the life of man in all its manifestations—society, industry, commerce, religion, art, literature. These things are do presented as to make it clear how one age grows out of another, and how each civilization profits by that which has preceded it. The story of each great race or nation is thus clearly disengaged and presented in period after period; but, nevertheless, the book purposes to present the career of man as a whole, in a connected story of expanding life and civilization from the days of the rudest stone hatchet to the Christian cathedrals of Europe, without a serious gap. A symmetrical presentation of the career of man requires adequate space for the origins of civilization and the history of the Orient, as these two subjects have been revealed by the excavations and discoveries of the last two generations, especially the last twenty-five years. The reasons for devoting more than the customary space to these subjects in this book may therefore be briefly noted. The length of the career of man discernible by us has been enormously increased at the present day by archaeological discovery, carrying back the development of human arts at least fifty, and perhaps two hundred thousand, years. Even a recorded in written documents, modern discovery in the Orient has placed behind the period of human history as formerly known to us another period equally long, thus doubling the length of the historic age. It cannot be said that all this vast new outlook has as yet been surveyed and briefly presented in a form intelligible to younger students as an imposing panorama of the expanding human career. The attainment of such a point of view of the career of man has been a slow process. The ancient history written by Sulpicius Severus, about 400 A.D., survived for over a thousand years, and became a respected textbook, which was in use as late as the sixteenth century. It dealt almost exclusively with the history of Rome. A mention of the battle of Marathon was its only reference to Greek history. The Roman colossus bulked so large that nothing earlier could be seen behind it."

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