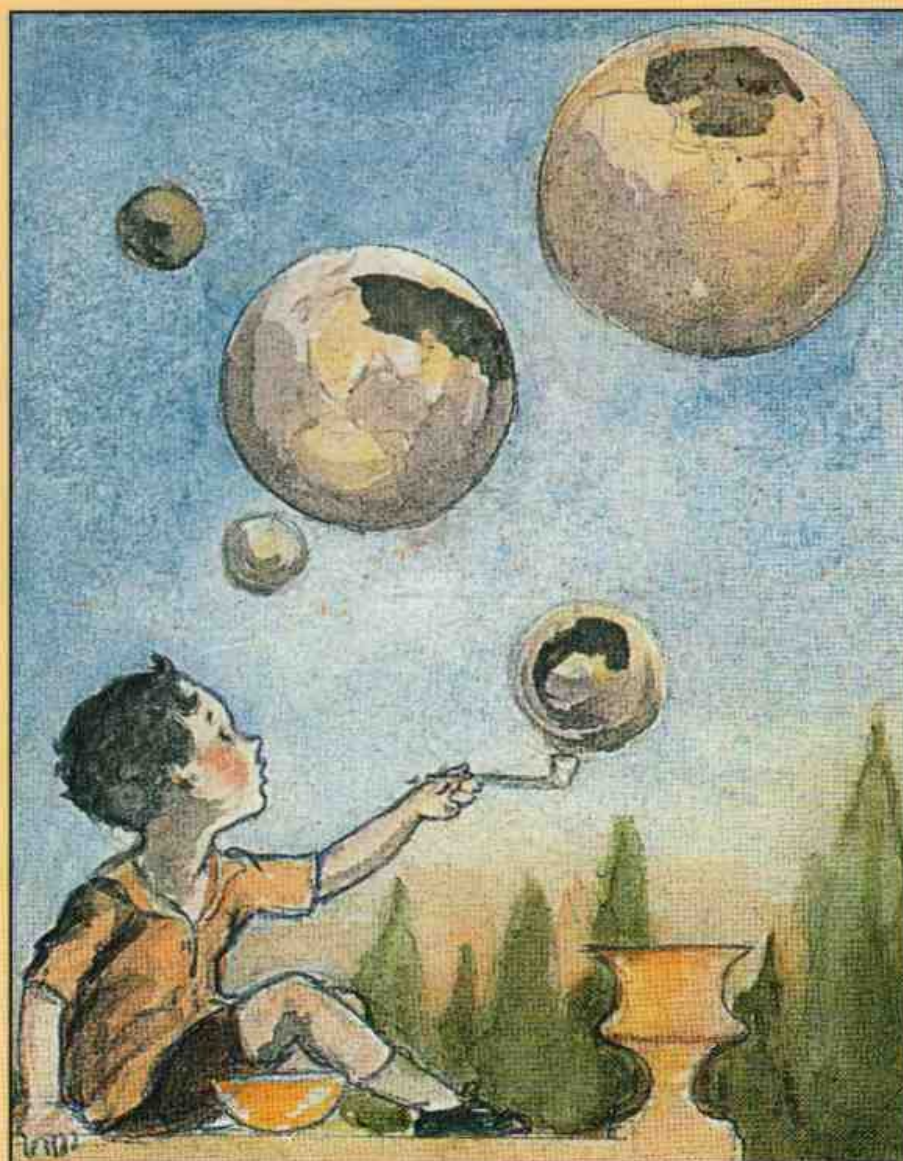


A Child's History of the World

by Virgil M. Hillyer



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SCHOOL

A Child's
History of
the
World

V.M. HILLYER



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This page is not for you, boys and girls. It is for that old man or woman—twenty, thirty, or forty years old, who may peek into this book; and is what they would call the

Preface

To give the child some idea of what has gone on in the world before he arrived;

To take him out of his little self-centered, shut-in life, which looms so large because it is so close to his eyes;

To extend his horizon, broaden his view, and open up the vista down the ages past;

To acquaint him with some of the big events and great names and fix these in time and space as a basis for detailed study in the future;

To give him a chronological file with main guides, into which he can fit in its proper place all his further historical study—

Is the purpose of this first Survey of the World's History.

This part is not for you, either. It is for your father, mother, or teacher, and is what they would call the

Introduction

In common with all children of my age, I was brought up on American History and given no other history but American, year in and year out, year after year for eight or more years.

So far as I knew 1492 was the beginning of the world. Any events or characters before that time, reference to which I encountered by any chance, were put down in my mind in the same category with fairy-tales. Christ and His times, of which I heard only in Sunday-school, were to me mere fiction without reality. They were not mentioned in any history that I knew and therefore, so I thought, must belong *not* to a realm in time and space, but to a spiritual realm.

To give an American child only American History is as provincial as to teach a Texas child only Texas History. Patriotism is usually given as the reason for such history teaching. It only promotes a narrow-mindedness and an absurd conceit, based on utter ignorance of any other peoples and any other times—an intolerant egotism without foundation in fact. Since the World War it has become increasingly more and more important that American children should have a knowledge of other countries and other peoples in order that their attitude may be intelligent and unprejudiced.

As young as nine years of age, a child is eagerly inquisitive as to what has taken place in the ages past and readily grasps a concept of World History. Therefore, for many years Calvert School nine-year-old pupils have been taught World History in spite of academic and parental skepticism and antagonism. But I have watched the gradual drift toward adoption of this plan of history teaching, and with it an ever-increasing demand for a text-book of general history for young children. I have found, however, that all existing text-books have to be largely abridged and also supplemented by a running explanation and comment, to make them intelligible to the young child.

The recent momentous studies into the native intelligence of children show us what the average child at different ages can understand and what he cannot understand—what dates, figures of speech, vocabulary, generalities, and abstractions he can comprehend and what he cannot comprehend—and in the future all text-books will have to be written with constant regard for these

intelligence norms. Otherwise, such texts are very likely to be “over the child’s head.” They will be trying to teach him some things at least that, in the nature of the case, are beyond him.

In spite of the fact that the writer has been in constant contact with the child mind for a great many years, he has found that whatever was written in his study had to be revised and rewritten each time after the lesson had been tried out in the class-room. Even though the first writing was in what he considered the simplest language, he has found that each and every word and expression has had to be subjected again and again to this class-room test to determine what meaning is conveyed. The slightest inverted phraseology or possibility of double meaning has oftentimes been misconstrued or found confusing. For instance, the statement that “Rome was *on* the Tiber River” has quite commonly been taken to mean that the city was literally built *on top* of the river, and the child has had some sort of fantastic vision of houses built on piles in the river. A child of nine is still very young—he may still believe in Santa Claus—younger in ideas, in vocabulary and in understanding than most adults appreciate—even though they be parents or teachers—and new information can hardly be put too simply.

So the topics selected have not always been the most important—but the most important that can be understood and appreciated by a child. Most political, sociological, economic, or religious generalities are beyond a child’s comprehension, no matter how simply told. After all, this History is only a preliminary story.

Excellent biographies and stories from general history have been written. But biographies from history do not give an historic outline. They do not give any outline at all for future filling in; and, indeed, unless they themselves are fitted into such a general historical scheme, they are nothing more than so many disconnected tales floating about in the child’s mind with no associations of time or space.

The treatment of the subject in this book is, therefore, chronological—telling the story of what has happened century by century and epoch by epoch, not by nations. The story of one nation is interrupted to take up that of another as different plots in a novel are brought forward simultaneously. This is in line with the purpose, which is to give the pupil a continuous view or panorama of the ages, rather than Greek History from start to finish, then, retracing the steps of time, Roman History, and so on. The object is to sketch the whole picture in outline, leaving the details to be gradually filled in by later study, as the artist sketches the general scheme of his picture before filling in the details. Such a scheme is as necessary to orderly classification of historical knowledge as is a filing system in any office that can function properly or even at all.

The Staircase of Time is to give a visual idea of the extent of time and the progressive steps in the History of the World. Each “flight” represents a thousand years, and each “step” a hundred—a

century. If you have a spare wall, either in the play-room, attic, or barn such a Staircase of Time on a large scale may be drawn upon it from floor to reaching height and made a feature if elaborated with pictures or drawings of people and events. If the wall faces the child's bed so much the better, for when lying awake in the morning or at any other time, instead of imagining fantastic designs on the wall-paper, he may picture the crowded events on the Staircase of Time. At any rate, the child should constantly refer either to such a Staircase of Time or to the Time Table as each event is studied, until he has a mental image of the Ages past.

At first a child does not appreciate time values represented by numbers or the relative position of dates on a time line and will wildly say twenty-five hundred B.C. or twenty-five thousand B.C. or twenty-five million B.C. indiscriminately. Only by constantly referring dates to position on the Staircase of Time or the Time Table can a child come to visualize dates. You may be *amused*, but do not be *amazed*, if a child gives 776 thousand years A.D. as the date for the First Olympiad, or says that Italy is located in Athens, or that Abraham was a hero of the Trojan War.

If you have ever been introduced to a roomful of strangers at one time, you know how futile it is to attempt even to remember their names to say nothing of connecting names and faces. It is necessary to hear something interesting about each one before you can begin to recall names and faces. Likewise an introduction to World History, the characters and places in which are utterly unknown strangers to the child, must be something more than a mere name introduction, and there must be very few introductions given at a time or both names and faces will be instantly forgotten. It is also necessary to repeat new names constantly in order that the pupil may gradually become familiarized with them, for so many strange people and places are bewildering.

In order to serve the purpose of a basal outline, which in the future is to be filled in, it is necessary that the Time Table be made a permanent possession of the pupil. This Time Table, therefore, should be studied like the multiplication tables until it is known one hundred per cent and for "keeps," and until the topic connected with each date can be elaborated as much as desired. The aim should be to have the pupil able to start with Primitive Man and give a summary of World History to the present time, with dates and chief events without prompting, questioning, hesitation, or mistake. Does this seem too much to expect? It is not as difficult as it may sound, if suggestions given in the text for connecting the various events into a sequence and for passing names and events in a condensed review are followed. Hundreds of Calvert children each year are successfully required to do this very thing.

The attitude, however, usually assumed by teachers, that "even if the pupil forgets it all, there will be left a valuable impression," is too often an apology for superficial teaching and superficial learning. History may be made just as much a "mental discipline" as some other studies, but only if difficulties of dates and other abstractions are squarely met and overcome by hard study and

learned to be remembered, not merely to be forgotten after the recitation. The story part the child will easily remember, but it is the “who and when and where and why” that are important, and this part is the serious study. Instead of, “A man, once upon a time,” he should say, “King John in 1215 at Runnymede because—”

This book, therefore, is not a supplementary reader but a basal history study. Just enough narrative is told to give the skeleton flesh and blood and make it living. The idea is not how much but how little can be told; to cut down one thousand pages to less than half of that number without leaving only dry bones.

No matter how the subject is presented it is necessary that the child do his part and put his own brain to work; and for this purpose he *should be required to retell each story after he has read it* and should be repeatedly questioned on names and dates as well as stories, to make sure he is retaining and assimilating what he hears.

I recall how once upon a time a young chap, just out of college, taught his first class in history. With all the enthusiasm of a full-back who has just kicked a goal from field, he talked, he sang; he drew maps on the blackboard, on the floor, on the field; he drew pictures, he vaulted desks, and even stood on his head to illustrate points. His pupils attended spellbound, with their eyes wide open, their ears wide open, and their mouths wide open. They missed nothing. They drank in his flow of words with thirst unquenched; but, like Baron Munchausen, he had failed to look at the other end of the drinking horse that had been cut in half. At the end of a month his kindly principal suggested a test, and he gave it with perfect confidence.

There were only three questions:

- (1) Tell all you can about Columbus.
- (2) " " " " Jamestown.
- (3) " " " " Plymouth.

And here are the three answers of one of the most interested pupils:

- (1) He was as *grate* man.
- (2) " " " " "
- (3) " " " " " *to*.

Chapter 1
How things Started



Once upon a time there was a boy—

Just like me.

He had to stay in bed in the morning until seven o'clock until his father and mother were ready to get up;

So did I.

As he was always awake long before this time, he used to lie there and think about all sorts of curious things;

So did I.

One thing he used to wonder was this:

What would the world be like if there were—

No fathers and mothers,

No uncles and aunts,

No cousins or other children to play with,

No people at all, except himself in the whole world!

Perhaps you have wondered the same thing;

So did I.

At last he used to get so lonely, just from thinking how dreadful such a world would be, that he could stand it no longer and would run to his mother's room and jump into bed by her side just to get this terrible thought out of his mind;

So did I—for *I was the boy.*

Well, there *was* a time long, long, long ago when there were no men or women or children, *NO PEOPLE* of any kind in the whole world. Of course there were no houses, for there was no one to build them or to live in them, no towns or cities—nothing that people make. There were just wild animals—bears and wolves, birds and butterflies, frogs and snakes, turtles and fish. Can you think of such a world as that?

Then,

long, long, long

before that, there was a time when there were *NO PEOPLE* and *NO ANIMALS* of any sort in the whole world; there were just growing plants, trees and bushes, grass and flowers. Can you think of such a world as that?

Then,

long, long, long,

long, long, long

before that, there was a time when there were *NO PEOPLE, NO ANIMALS, NO PLANTS*, in the whole world; there was just bare rock and water everywhere. Can you think of such a world as that?

Then,

long, long, long

long, long, long—you might

keep on saying—

“long, long, long,” all day, and

to-morrow, and all

next week, and next

month, and next

year, and it would

not be long enough—

before this, there was a time when there was *NO WORLD AT ALL!*

There were only the Stars Nothing else!

Now, real Stars are not things with points like those in the corner of a flag or the gold ones you put on a Christmas tree. The real stars in the sky have no points. They are huge burning coals of fire—coals of fire. Each star, however, is so huge that there is nothing in the world now anywhere nearly as big. One little bit, one little scrap of a star is bigger than our whole world—than our whole world.

One of these stars is our Sun—yes, our Sun. The other stars would look the same as the Sun if we could get as close to them. But at that time, so long, long ago, our Sun was not just a big, round, white, hot ball as we see it in the sky to-day. It was then more like the fireworks you may have seen on the Fourth of July. It was whirling and sputtering and throwing off sparks.