

the first two-thirds of the text. The pictures are preëminent because they are like what we ourselves might draw if we tried very hard for a long time, and besides they place a premium on imagination. As no man or no writing can make life as vivid as life itself, so we automatically derive less interest

from the text as we reach modern times. My advice is to read up to this point and then re-read the first part.

It is one of the very few non-scientific books I am taking to the jungle to pick up at odd moments in my study of animal evolution.

WILLIAM BEEBE

Van Loon—Historian

THE STORY OF MANKIND. By Hendrik van Loon. New York: Boni and Liveright.

MR. VAN LOON'S history is unique, just as is that of Wells. If history can be compared to a range of mountains, Wells takes us up to a distant high place and shows us the entire panorama; with Van Loon we trudge up the foot-hills to the peaks themselves and view the passing show at close hand. We rub mental shoulders with the characters; the glamor of distant years yields to close inspection and we perceive unexpected faults and frailties, beauties and dignities—resemblances to ourselves and our day which the "Outline" never gives. Wells' is a magnificent man's history, Van Loon's is a historical "Alice in Wonderland," belonging both to men and to children. It makes us think of Kipling's "The Greatest Story in the World," which is superlative praise. It makes us think of organic evolution, which all historians should but do not consider. We follow the rise of man from prehistoric times, through the building of great materialistic pyramidal structures, on past the age of glorification of artificial physical prowess, to that of mental dominance; and we recall the similar evolution of all other living creatures. With this in mind we realize the brief geological moment during which all this human history has occurred, compared with the ages of monad to worm, to amphibian, to reptile, to mammal, to man. And, constantly checked by this thought, our appreciation of the marvelous rapidity of man's rise is brought home. We are able to understand the persistence of primitive instincts in man, which so few years ago were uncontrolled by any mental or spiritual responsibilities. And, on the other hand, we need place no curb on our hopes for mutations so sudden that *a priori* one would be tempted to hail them as miracles.

The excellence of Van Loon's volume is two-fold, the illustrations and

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