

The Study of History.

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Glancing around us we are sometimes surprised at what reveals itself. In our haste we are often ignorant of many things that exist all around and about us. Things taken for granted are by no means always found to be true. One thing which I imagine would surprise most of us is the lack of a knowledge of history among the people at large and even among students of our colleges. One thing which has allowed this state of things to exist is the fact that we too often take for granted that the established methods are the proper ones. Even in the present so called age of advancement it is difficult to introduce new methods though greatly superior to the old. But we are fast leaving such notions and finding that it pays to have the best (this itself the teaching of history).

There has been in the past among certain classes at least the idea afloat that history was a nice study for those who had the time but that it was of no practical use.

But a closer examination of the nature of study reveals the fact that it is of no such trivial nature especially where the nation and the individual are so closely connected as they are in the United States. Those holding such views I dare say know little of the true nature of history. In the past twenty-five years much has been done to bring to light the true use of history and it is beginning to take effect in our educational system. It is curious that people take so little interest as to what has happened to man in all the centuries of his existence, the causes that have brought about present conditions, the slow evolution of all they now enjoy and how little they care for the welfare of those who shall succeed us.

But the study of history is well worthy of our attention and the love for such study marks an interest in the general welfare. Once impregnated with a love for history the more one reads the more interested does it become and thus it acts and reacts when once seen in the

proper light. It is of all studies the one which inspires men to better deeds brings him in sympathy with his fellow men and fills his soul with deepest, tenderest love for those who have fought for liberty and right. If he can read the trials of the pilgrim fathers or a description of the battle of Bunkers Hill without feeling in his own soul that he is indebted to them for much he now enjoys.

But few really have a sufficient knowledge of history to trace even in a general way the development of man.

Why so many are uninterested in history may be explained in part by the fact that children are made to memorize without entering into the real study and thus developing a distaste for the branch at the very outset. He is compelled to memorize and rehearse the movements of a campaign when he would not not the difference between a campaign and a cartridge. It is all absolutely senseless to him he does not know for what the leading officer is striving or he may not even know the cause of the war.

The result is that the child is thoroughly disgusted before he has had time to grasp in any degree the true significance of the study. No one can have finished any extended course of study without being thoroughly convince of the absurdity of memorizing a study especially one so extended as history. Of course certain things, principles and important events must be fixed in the mind but in general it should subjected to the reason.

It is doubtful if any one course will do for all as individuals are so different but that method which gives the clearest idea of the study and awakens in the pupil the keenest interest is the true method. The study of history in the past has been open to serious objections and among the the fact that it unlike other branches was not layed out in any direct line. It was taken a little here and there zig zag or in horse shoe bends like the Rio Grande crossing the rockies running around all the steep places.

This is one reason the student loses interest. There should be a direct line of study. The study of history should begin early with the child or rather a preparation for the study.

When the child is young he has a keen interest in stories when they are told in comprehensible language and this may be utilized in preparing for the study.

The parent or teacher should select men and events of history and tell the story to the child in a way that will be interesting and at the same time convey a true conception of the event or thing described. For instance take the battle of Lexington, the capture of Ft. Sumpter, the Affair at Appomattox, Columbus' voyage, the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the like and one can easily interest the child. In years after when the study of history is begun these old stories will be as friends to them and add interest to the study. You have had the same experience I dare say in reading literature. How one feels when he runs across an historical fact that is familiar from previous study. This is a most valuable preparation then for the afterwork since it at once adds interest and does not disgust the child by compelling him to memorize.

A valuable aid in this course of story telling is the use of pictures, they convey the idea that they are talking of something that really has been and does away with the abstractness and adds interest. The story of Columbus may become much more interesting if illustrated by photographs of Columbus as a boy, of the ridicule to which he was subjected as he appeared before the court of Spain, his departure, return, landing, and trouble with the sailors etc. All this adds to the interest and keeps him moving until he sees the study in a light that commands attention without any further stimulus.

Pupils should never be allowed to pass over any part without knowing its true bearing and this demands that the teacher be a person well read.

Few get beyond the high school and thousands never reach it. As much as possible therefore should be crowded in this part of our educational system. It should also be of such a nature as would make intelligent conscientious citizens. Much should be made of the political industrial and intellectual history and a general view of the past should be conveyed. This should be done even though it be at the expense of mathe-

matics or some similar branch for a person will have enough of these branches for all purposes to which a man with a high school education may be called, while history is necessary to him as an intelligent voter upon which the nation depends.

Even in our colleges this subject is sadly neglected and the introduction of the history of industry and science in our college is a great step in the right direction but when we study the development of each branch separately and at the same time take notice of the stage of development of other branches, the study of General History we will be better prepared to know history in her true light.

The universities are fast assuming the proper attitude to this study and as all the best movements are said to start from the high, and slowly filter down we can hope that it may some day reach the common school.

The course of study in Harvard University with its changes represents pretty fairly the relative importance that it was thought to bear to other studies besides showing the development.

Harvard was of course founded to educate the clergy but history has followed nearly the same development as in other universities.

At first they studied nothing but Greek, Roman and Jewish Antiquities. Later there entered into the course history in another aspect but it occupied a very important place.

In Harvards early history the whole day was given to one branch and History was on Saturday. It was characterized as History civilis and naturalis. The one was studied in winter while the other in summer that they might have specimens to study from.

Later they took up studies in U. S. History and a little General History. But as the idea of training the clergy left them somewhat they began to take up history in a truer light. Its connection with political economy was recognized and it was separated into branches and took a more conspicuous place.

A peculiar though most interesting course of history was that in Columbia College a few years after the revolution it showed its connection with Geography and Economics and other branches clearly. It is as follows:

Description of the globe in all general matters, Rise, extent and fall of ancient empires, Chronology as low as the Roman Empire. Present state of the world. Origin of the present states and

Kingdoms, their extent, power, commerce, religion and customs.

When men recognize the fact that our civilization is becoming rapidly more complex and that this demands an increasingly close study of social economy and that history is fundamental in that study it will be less trouble to arouse an interest.

This will probably come when the nation gets into a financial and industrial crisis for it seems that nations as individuals sleep about such matters only to find when they awaken that they now have to do what they should have done years since.

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