

philosophy teaching by experience. By means of it we pierce our way through the vistas of the past and look up the aisles of the future, we hold communion with the dead, and sit in council with an offspring yet buried in the womb of time. How rapid is the winged flight of imagination! Yet the foot of history is as fleet. With what celerity does the page of history picture to our minds the sovereignty of the Garden of Eden in its primitive greatness! We have scarcely beheld Noah and his family enter the ark until we behold the arc of God's covenant span the heavens. Thus history hurries us along through the different periods of the world's existence. We accompany Moses through the promised land, and stand with him upon Mount Sinai as he receives the Divine commands. The spirit of history bears us along through the ages of empires—

"Greece, Rome, Carthage, where are they?"

Each nation rises before us, then fades away like the mist before the morning sun. Each sovereign rules his hour and then departs, bequeathing his sceptre to another. There is no interregnum in the great sovereignty of the world. The deeds of warriors are scanned and then surpassed. Each age is arrayed in more glistening armour. The sword gleams still more brightly in the hour of danger, and peace reigns more supremely when it comes. Conquest and loss, hope and fear, joy and mourning ring through the universe, and the heart of mankind beats and throbs to its varied and never-ceasing measure. Yes, the true import of history is found in the government of thought and action. He who would tell us only of camps and courts, and the drilling and killing of soldiers, does not merit the title of historian. He forgets that the great and mighty tide of thought and action is rolling through a world of existence, and it is this tide of thought and action that shapes and influences a nation. There must then be a real spirit in history through which its characters live and move and have their being. "History," says Carlyle, "is a mighty drama enacted on the theatre of Infinitude, with suns for lamps and eternity as a background—whose author is God, and whose purport and thousand-fold moral leads up to the Throne of God." Here we have a sublime definition of history. Let us place it side by side with that of Voltaire, who said that history was merely a parcel of tricks that the historians played with the dead. How can we expect to understand the characters of those who lived two thousand years ago, when many of us are at a loss to understand ourselves. This, however, need not imply that the historian should be a character trickster. And what did Napoleon define history to be? He said it was simply fiction agreed upon. With fiction we always associate the idea of unreality. Now truth is real, and real history is truth; therefore history is neither fiction nor unreality. History by some is considered to be merely story-telling. This definition would hold good were there nothing else in the subject but narration. Nearly every person is more or less a story-teller, and consequently an historian. Yes, such a definition may pass muster with children who are more interested in the adventures of a Robinson Crusoe or the astounding feats of Jack the Giant Killer, than they are in the growth and development of a nation; but it can never be accepted as the real and true import of the term history. Froude says that history is like a child's box of letters, with which we can spell any word we please. We have only, says this historian, to pick out such letters as we want, arrange them as we like, and say nothing about those which do not suit our purpose. It is to be feared that the great English historian has too closely followed his definition. Half of our histories are but mere romances, containing neither spirit nor lore. To turn their pages would be but a useless task. They do not speak of the inward life of a nation. The kings pass before you just as in some play toy, distinguished from each other only by the armor on their masks.

Certain it is that history is a book with seven seals, and what we call the spirit of the past ages is but the spirit of this or that worthy gentleman in whose mind those ages are reflected. I remember having read some time ago an article in the "Canadian Monthly" entitled "A Quarrel with the Nineteenth Century," in which the writer complained of the difficulty of reaching truths through the medium of history. Well, it is a task, I must confess. Like our newspapers, on political subjects each has a mission to fulfil, and it is a question if all our histories together state certain facts intrinsically right. Each historian has his idol, before whom he bows down and offers incense. Read one history and you will learn that Queen Elizabeth was a most amiable personage, and fully justified in putting her cousin, Mary Queen of Scots, to death; while another represents her as a cruel-hearted and tyrannical monster. Even Henry the Eighth, ensconced within the circle of his six wives, comes in for a share of fulsome praise at the hands of James Anthony Froude; while Macaulay, who was well-nigh infallible as an historian, and could not write partially forsooth, wades knee deep in blood through the massacre of Glencoe in order to exonerate his favorite hero, William the Third, from all blame in the matter. And thus goes on the warring of historians, with truth and fiction I suppose arrayed on both sides. There is one thing certain, that we look for something better in histories than the mere chronicling of events. It is of little importance to know that the Magna Charta was signed by King John at Runnymede, A.D. 1215, if we do not know that it was the great bulwark of English liberty. The mere fact that we dined yesterday at precisely 12 o'clock, is not nearly so important to the welfare of our bodies as the food which we disposed of during the event. The life-blood of a nation is not nourished by dry facts and dates. The inward condition of life and conscious aim of mankind constitute much of the reality of history. It very often happens that we are wont to consider events ushered in by the thundering of cannon, the war of musketry and the bloody carnage of the battle-field, as the great landmarks of history. This is a mistake. "When the oak tree is felled," says Carlyle, "the whole forest echoes with it; but a hundred acorns are planted silently by some unnoticed breeze. Battles and war tumults, which for the time din every ear and with joy or terror intoxicate every heart, pass away like tavern brawls; except some few Marathons and Morgartens are remembered by accident, not by desert." History has been considered to be the written and verbal message which all mankind delivers to man. It is the communication which the past can have with the present, —the distant with what is here. "The perfect man in history," says Carlyle "would be he who understood and saw and knew within himself all that the whole family of Adam had hitherto been or done." Such a person we do not expect to find; hence we must bear with the imperfections of history. Let us read the premises of history and draw our own conclusions, not follow the coloring of the historian; but view facts through the lens of our own minds. And now I come to the question, Is history a Science? My reply is, yes. A subject is said to have entered the scientific stage when phenomena are no longer isolated experiences, but appear in connection and order; when, after certain antecedents, certain consequences are uniformly seen to follow; and when, with facts collected, we form a basis by which we can, in some degree, foresee the future. But we must ever remember that there is something else in history besides the marvellous and the wonderful, that the true purport of history is not to amuse, but to instruct. It is the great emporium of knowledge, in which all can be shareholders. We can all sit at the footstool of history and become learned. In former days, the office of historian belonged, in a great measure, to the minstrel.—