

## THE STUDY OF HISTORY.

BY B. W. S.

There is a great deal said nowadays about the quantity of trash, in the shape of novels, sensational newspaper stories and magazines, that is read, tainting the mind with evil, weakening its vigor and moral tone, lowering its standards of thought, and preventing real enjoyment in solid literature. That this is true, there can be no doubt; it is a more terrible evil than even appears on the face of it, but there is a remedy which might be applied much more extensively than it is, and which, if in general use, would do away with very much of the evil; and leading to a less demand for this kind of reading, the supply would naturally diminish and the whole tone of society and domestic life be elevated. This lies, not so much in writing and talking against light and worthless books, as in giving early in life a real taste for something better—a taste that shall last beyond the school-room, so that when freedom from tasks is obtained and school-books laid aside, the desire of following the subject and continuing what was there only pleasantly begun, shall remain and grow to be a real enjoyment. What is sought for in these highly wrought stories, is excitement and the desire of enjoying the pleasures of imagination. These lead to discontent with the present station, to longings for adventure, and the surroundings that wealth brings, such as are there portrayed, and so lead on to sin, that these may be obtained. These same powers of imagination can be exercised, and the love of adventure and excitement, as well as the dramatic interest in the actings of personages, be all gratified in a healthy way and with real profit and enjoyment, by the study of history, if it is only properly taught while the mind is pliable and ready to take up anything that presents itself in a pleasing way. It is a very great lack in

many schools all over the country, especially in the public schools, where the studies are chiefly those that will train both boys and girls for their struggle in getting a living. Those studies are eminently useful, and ought to be followed, but they make provision for only one side of the nature; the mind must be fed as well as the body, and very many of these pupils go out to begin the battle of life at fourteen, fifteen, or sixteen, with a thorough knowledge of arithmetic, which is to help them through their business, but an utter ignorance of any pleasant study which might still interest them and yet be no toil after their labor for the day is ended. They cannot pursue their study of natural sciences, even if they had learned the rudiments, for it would be too great a tax on their minds, as well as impracticable for them to reach the means to carry on such studies. What they need is recreation for their minds after a harassing day's work, so they turn to such trash as dime novels and the *New York Ledger*, which feed the mind with slow poison; whereas if they had only had history pleasantly taught them at school they might just as naturally turn to the thrilling adventures of Richard Cœur de Lion and the sorrows of his imprisonment; the touching story of Mary, Queen of Scots; the amusing part Xerxes played in the Persian campaign against the Greeks; the adventures through which the boundless ambition of Alexander led him; the prowess of the brave old Vikings; they might follow good King Alfred through all his wanderings, admire his dauntless courage, rejoice in his final victories and his wise reign; drop a tear of sympathy over the unhappy loves of poor King Edwy and his beautiful wife—Elgiva; delight in the magnificence of the Persian court, or refined beauty of Greek sculpture;