

The day when the routine of the public school was largely a series of memoriter exercises has, it may be hoped, gone by for ever. But it is possible that in this, as in other things, the reaction may be carrying us too far towards an opposite extreme. There is a legitimate and most salutary exercise of the memory to which every child should be accustomed. All should be taught from their earliest years to learn and repeat gems of prose and poetry. In this way the mind and heart may be early imbued with noble thoughts, tender and elevated sentiments, and sterling principles for the government of conduct. Our literature happily abounds with aphorisms and couplets, paragraphs and poems, which are excellently adapted for this purpose. Choice poetical selections will be found as a rule more easily learned and remembered. The Germans lay much stress on the beneficial effects of teaching poetry to young children. Its uses are manifold. "The taste for harmony, the poetical ear," says Miss Aiken, as quoted by an exchange, "if ever acquired, is so almost in infancy. The flow of numbers easily impresses itself on the memory, and is with difficulty erased. By the aid of verse, a store of beautiful imagery and glowing sentiment may be gathered up as the amusement of childhood, which in riper years may beguile the heavy hours of languor, solitude and sorrow; may enforce sentiments of piety, humility and tenderness; may soothe the soul to calmness, rouse it to honorable exertions, or fire it with virtuous indignation." Some of the American educational publishers are sending forth packets of cards, containing gems of thought, sentiment and truth, graded to suit the capacities of school children at every stage of progress. We believe it would be difficult to overrate the good effects of having the mind in the impressionable years of childhood and youth thus saturated with the best thoughts of all ages in their noblest forms of expression. The Bible is, of course, the richest storehouse of such treasures, but, as has been said, English literature abounds with them. We shall make it a point to collate memory gems from time to time for the columns of the JOURNAL, and hope that teachers will not fail to avail themselves of them. The learning and recitation of such passages will make one good method of varying the Friday afternoon exercises.

THE NEW PUBLIC SCHOOL HISTORY.

BY J. M. HUNTER, M.A., LL.B.

This history possesses what recently authorized histories have lacked, an attractive external appearance. It is, besides, low in price, and is printed in clear type on good paper. The weak point in its mechanical execution is the engravings. The maps are very fair, but some of the portraits are hideous. Cromwell's famous "Paint me as I am" scarcely gives sufficient warrant for the likeness on page 76. Poor Charles II. suffers still worse (page 83), and the climax seems to be reached in the likenesses of William and Mary (page 89). (In this connection, we suggest as a stock examination question—Which is William and which Mary? Give reasons for your answer.)

On turning to the text, we are at once struck with a new and valuable feature in a public school history: we mean the "Hints to the Teacher" and the "References" which are prefixed to every chapter. By this simple expedient teachers are made to feel that their work is not done when they have heard a recitation. More

than this, scholars are shown that when they have learned the facts to which this manual is necessarily confined, there is something more beyond! The curse of history teaching has been that the book in the pupil's hands was the be-all and the end-all of the pupil's knowledge. If the teacher cared nothing for the subject (as must necessarily happen in many cases) the pupil had nothing to awaken in him a hunger for further knowledge, and no guide to point out where the hunger could be satisfied.

The style of the book is good. The authors state in a simple, clear way the main facts. Collier's work, although liked by the pupils, had really a bad effect on them. His glowing periods fastened themselves on their memory, and were faithfully reproduced at examinations. The effect was, in many cases, ludicrous. The epoch series, on the other hand, is written in almost too childish a strain. The authors of this book seem to have struck a fair medium.

In the grouping of the facts the influence of Green is very manifest. This is not undesirable. Although a greater definiteness in the matter of time was gained by the old method of arranging in reigns, yet that method afforded small scope for pointing out the real succession of events. Of what use, for instance, is it to arrange the facts of the Anglo-Saxon period in reigns? Only one reign of the period deserves prominence—that of Alfred. Most of the other kings of the Saxon period are mere names. An author puts the historical emphasis in the wrong place when he calls attention to them.

Upon what should the historical emphasis be put in this period? Let this question be considered as illustrative of the success of the authors in writing this book. The following points appear to require to be set in the best light possible. The English people—who were they—whence did they come? The nature of the English conquest—the formation of the petty monarchies—their consolidation. The institutions brought over by the English—the influence of the conquest upon these institutions—their development up to the Norman conquest. The language and literature during the pre-Norman period—the introduction of Christianity—the social life of the people.

We turn to the book. We do not find all we expect, but we find most of it. It is difficult, certainly, to put the essential features of this period into simple, clear and interesting language. But what is difficult is not impossible. The authors of this book have done well, but with time and thought they might do better. Take one or two points. One of the things to be carefully guarded against in teaching this period is the precise and definite idea apt to be conveyed by the use of the term Saxon Heptarchy. The common conception is that of seven kingdoms, established as the result of the English conquest,—each kingdom having its boundaries well-defined, and its government definitely established. How far this is from the fact, any one acquainted with the period knows. It is hard to put in brief and clear form the indefiniteness that characterised the territorial subdivisions of that period, continually changing as they were, and still harder to convey, especially to the young scholar, a correct idea of the rudimentary nature of the government in its early stages. Yet to be true history that is what has to be done.

Would it not be well, also, in writing the story of this period, to emphasise the slow nature of the English conquest? By so doing the physical and other difficulties with which the Angles and Saxons had to contend can be indicated. By a conflict of a century and a half against wild nature and wilder men the foundations of the English nation were laid.

Is it not desirable, even in an elementary work of this kind, to indicate the broader movement of which the Saxon conquest is but