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STRAY THOUGHTS ON HISTORY.

THERE has been for some time a standing dispute between those who take a somewhat abstract scientific view of history, as a purely disinterested study of facts, without regard to practical issues, and those who incline to the view that 'history is philosophy teaching by example.' The school, however, if it may be called such, which undoubtedly has the largest following among those who aim at definite results and care little for the refinements of learning, is that which regards the value, and indeed the duty of history as consisting almost entirely in promoting a vigorous form of patriotism. To the intelligence of such people nothing appears to be more obvious, than that the history which is permitted to be studied in the educational institutions of one's country, must contain nothing which can in any way reflect upon the ancestry, either personal or institutional, of any section of the community. On the contrary, a soundly written history must prove to the youth of the country, as well as to all others, that its past has been invariably of a noble and progressive character.

In history, as in other wholesome and attractive works of art, things should always work out successfully for the hero, which is, of course, the

nation to which one happens to belong. The villain, on the contrary, being of necessity the nation with which we have most intercourse, must as inevitably turn out badly. Otherwise, where should we get our *corpus vile* upon which to demonstrate the evils of other systems than our own? Once admit serious defects in our development, or any important virtues in that of other nations, and all standards of national honour and self-respect are confused, and the youth of the country can never be certain as to the fundamentals of true patriotism.

Doubtless it is very painful to discover that rival nations are apt to shamefully pervert the history of our country, and as brazenly vaunt that of their own, from the most unworthy motives of self-glorification. But then what can we expect from foreign states with such a tainted national heredity as is invariably the curious fate of the natural rivals of the best nations?

One may not have the temerity to seriously question the principles of the large and popular school of historical method which is here represented. But one may, with more safety, critically consider for a moment the attitude of one at least of its minor rivals.