

persons; but the system that perpetuates and directly aids and abets such a state of matters must be censured. The crude and unscientific answers that we often listen to arise from a dim, hazy perception of the subject. With many teachers, the "be all" and the "end all" of history seems to be a dry narrative of events, strung together with as little connection as the buttons on a little girl's magic string. A detailed account of battles and sieges with the exact number of the killed, wounded, missing and prisoners, the paraphernalia of a grand court, are to them matters of most absorbing interest and of the utmost moment, while the real life of a nation is kept in the back ground or left out of the picture altogether. When Macaulay gave to the world his history, and led men to examine life in the cottage of the labourer as well as in the palace, he taught a lesson too often overlooked. The dependence of one class of the community on another must fully be understood in estimating forces whose outcome exhibits itself in battles or sieges. The events which form the great points in history can be properly read only when we have investigated the causes which led to them. A matter apparently of trifling importance often becomes the nucleus of a system that develops into a great principle in history. The fall of an apple, by an ordinary observer passes unnoticed, but it suggested to Newton one of the deepest principles in philosophy. The minutiae of history in the same way form the key-notes of the great problems that arise from them. Our school histories generally are deficient in this respect, that they often treat of as subordinate, matters that ought to occupy the first place in investigating the life of a nation. The part of English history before the reign of Henry VII., under such treatment, is anomalous and perfectly

inexplicable to the casual observer. One would imagine that no one lived then but mail-clad Knights, whose special duty was to kill and rob indiscriminately. The great change that spread over western Europe during his reign and that of his successor, is unaccountable unless we deal with the contemporary history of the period. The fall of Constantinople, by which the Greek literature of the Byzantine Empire was disseminated throughout Europe, was one of the main causes of the great intellectual strides that were then made. But, strange to say, our histories in nearly every instance leave such facts out of the question. Contemporary history is invaluable as a means of explaining many of the great changes that occur in a nation's career. Again we may also refer to the Crusades as another instance of flagrant omission. The many and varied influences that they had on the national life of England are passed by with a mere reference. Instances of such omissions, which every teacher deplores and laments, might be multiplied without number. Our historians are apt to form theories of their own, which are thoroughly baseless, to explain events, the evident reasons for which, are furnished on merely glancing at the contemporary history of other nations. The isolated character of the nations of the ancient world, or of mediæval Europe, is a thing of the past. Mankind are gradually coming more and more to feel their dependence on each other. The modern inventions of steam and telegraph are assimilating countries that hitherto have been widely different, socially and intellectually. By the great tidal waves of history we gain a comprehensive and enlarged view of the great problems that are being worked in different nations under various circumstances. These are assuredly of much more importance than the death of one king and the accession of another.