

HISTORY AND ITS STUDY IN OUR SCHOOLS.

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IN these days of warm discussion, when what to teach and how to teach are questions claiming so much space in our educational journals, it is remarkable that so little attention should be given a subject so important as the study of history. Almost every variety of topic has been presented for consideration, almost every scheme ingenuity and thought can suggest for smoothing the path of the learner has been put forth; but that one branch, though carrying with it all the experience of the past, and a thousand lessons for our daily guidance, lies nearly or wholly neglected. At a few—a very few—of the county conventions papers have been read, calculated to bring the necessity of properly teaching history before the public. It has never, as far as I am aware, been considered of sufficient importance to claim the slightest attention at a meeting of the Provincial Association, nor do I remember seeing more than a chance article on the subject in any of our educational journals. There seems on the contrary a marked determination to have nothing to do with the subject. Again and again comes up the cry from our teachers: "Spare us from History." In consequence, the classes in all our schools are taking the impress, as in nine cases out of ten they will do, of the feelings of those to whom they look for instruction, regarding this branch of the curriculum with something like the sentiments with which an orthodox Christian looks upon Satan—as a necessity to be dealt with as little and

in as summary a manner as possible. Why should this be the case? Looked at from any point of view, history is not of second rate importance. Regarded as a mere exercise in strengthening the memory, if properly taught, it is unsurpassed. If we look at it as an instrument in developing the reasoning powers, in the hand of a skilful master, it is scarcely, if it all, inferior to mathematics. As a moral educator it perhaps stands first on the list of our present school curriculum, while as a means of furnishing the mind with a store of information, useful and applicable at all times and seasons, beyond doubt it is far above other topics. History is a map of the blunders and failures, the triumphs and success, of those who have gone before us, and as such forms the principal guide for ourselves and our children. Why then does this study excite so little interest? In the first place, of one thing we may rest assured: no hope can be entertained of ever improving matters in this respect so long as teachers themselves fail to throw enthusiasm into their work. Without some interest on their part it is vain to expect any from those who listen to them. Can there be nothing done, no suggestion made, by which this defect may be remedied and the subject assume its fitting importance in the school-room and in life? That this is not at present the case it needs only a glance at the answers given by candidates at any of the regular examinations to thoroughly convince us. Perhaps there is just