

HISTORY IN THE SCHOOL.

BY S. S. LAURIE, UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

LANGUAGE and literature are not more closely connected with the humanistic in education than history is. And this for obvious reasons. It is the introduction of the young mind to the record of the past of the race to which he himself belongs and whose traditions it will be his duty to pass on to the next generation. It would be to waste words to endeavor to show how closely the study of this record is associated with moral training and with that kind of political instruction and humane learning which best fit the rising generation for the discharge of their social and political duties as citizens. It strengthens the sympathy of man with man and binds more closely the social bond. By the study of past greatness we learn to strive to be worthy of our forefathers, and, by the understanding of the causes which have led mankind astray, we learn to understand better the questions which arise in our own time and to act during the brief period assigned to us on the stage of life with circumspection, and under a sense of responsibility to those who are to succeed us.

To discuss here the importance of history in education would accordingly be superfluous. Opinions, however, may vary as to the age at which it ought to be studied and the method of instruction which ought to be pursued. It has been too much the habit, I think, to speak of history as a school subject from the point of view of the adult and cultivated mind, and to forget that, if the young are to enter into the life of the past and to become familiar with the sources of their own lives, the teaching of history must be adapted to the age of those whom we are teaching. The

childhood of history is best for the child, the boyhood of history for the boy, the youthhood of history for the youth, and the manhood of history for the man. A similar misconception has existed with regard to most other subjects; and hence the attempt to convey adult conceptions to young minds in almost every department of instruction, a mode of procedure which, so far from promoting the growth of the subject taught, checks growth and destroys interest. And, as educators, we must admit that, if the result of our teaching be not to stimulate the activity of mind and to plant in the young an interest in the subjects taught that will outlast the school and influence the whole of life, we have failed.

History is a very large and various study and to deal with it is an educational instrument in all its bearings would occupy a volume. My chief interest is in history for the young as a vehicle of moral training, a means of cultivating sympathy of man with man and of so strengthening the social bond as to lay the foundations of a virtuous political life.

When, now, we ask for a method in teaching history we are first under obligation to explain to ourselves what we mean by history.

If history be the story of man's words and acts, the British Museum could not hold the history of a single day. By common consent the history of mankind is limited to an account of the words and deeds of men as members of a co-operating society of men, words spoken and deeds done in the interests of the progress of the community as a whole. The record of the past is full of many minor histories, *e.g.*, art, science, education, all