

THE STUDY OF HISTORY IN SCHOOLS.

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AT the present day, when so many subjects of study have been introduced into our School programmes, different opinions will always be formed about their respective merits. There seems, however, to be a consensus of opinion as to the importance of the subject under consideration. If intelligently taught, history ought to form a very important factor in a sound elementary education. We are, however, forced to the conclusion that the study is very imperfectly pursued in the great majority of our schools. This arises from the fact that it is often improperly treated of in the ordinary manuals; but perhaps the chief cause is the tendency to cram under the pressure of examinations. The latter is a complaint universal in its extent in Ontario, and the only remedy will be to remove the inducements given for cram work by educational authorities. The great end and aim of all education is not so much *what is studied* but *how it is studied*. The formation of correct habits of thought is infinitely more valuable to the pupil than the mere knowledge imparted. To induce and foster this accuracy—to train the pupil to think with precision in forming his conclusions—must be the constant care of the instructor of youth; and he who has not secured this is justified in forming the opinion that there is something radically wrong somewhere. There is nothing more to be deplored than the amount of “nebulous”

knowledge that we find prevalent in our schools in nearly all subjects. The vicious habit of indistinct perception is not shaken off when the school-boy throws aside his satchel and steps out into the world to take his place and fight his way for himself. It clings to him often for life, and has a direct tendency to mar his success and hamper all his efforts. A pupil trained, under such circumstances, must unlearn these pernicious habits if ever he aspires to anything worthy of ambition.

In reading over the report of the Sub-Examiners for the Intermediate, we are not at all astonished to find that history is gradually becoming a subject for cram. It would indeed be a miracle were it otherwise. By prescribing for the lower forms of our High Schools so much to be overtaken, *some subjects* will naturally receive undue attention to the detriment of others, and this is directly caused by the amount of work to be gone over in the limited time that most pupils have at their disposal in preparing for an examination. For the Upper School special periods of history are chosen, while the pupils of the Lower School are assigned the whole of English History. If these conditions were reversed, the result would be beneficial to all concerned. With so much placed on their shoulders, the pupils are not to be blamed if examiners complain of the ludicrous jumbling together of facts, dates, and