

Special Papers.

*ON TEACHING HISTORY.

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IN opening for discussion the subject of teaching history to children, I do not lay claim to much originality for the ideas I intend to advance. They are to a great extent methods that I have tried and proved in my own school for the purpose of cultivating a taste for this most interesting study.

That we may teach history intelligently we must first have a clear conception of what history is. According as we define it so will we teach it. If we understand history to be the lives of men and women we will teach it biographically. The biography is the portrait of the individual and the social history of his time is the setting or frame of it. To have the picture complete we must teach both at the same time.

When teaching history what aims should we keep constantly before us?

First.—To give breadth to the child's education that he may more intelligently read current literature.

Second.—To develop and cultivate a desire for historical knowledge and consequently a taste for the highest class of reading.

Third.—To enable him to properly exercise his judgment on the right and wrong of human action.

Fourth.—To fit him to pass examinations.

When the mother or nurse is putting her young charge to bed, the little one asks to be told a story. Which suits it better, something about an animal or something about a human being? Certainly the latter, for it is the human element that pleases. A little one comes to school for the first time. He is frightened, for his surroundings are new and strange. You try to quiet the little one's fears. How do you do it? By telling some simple tale. You gain its love and confidence by telling it history. It is the food that the child's mind craves. You must cater to its tastes and suit your information and language to the child's mind.

Children like to hear the story of our Saviour and are most interested in his babyhood and early childhood.

Is the child not interested in the story of Moses, or of Joseph, or of Samson, or of Daniel? Does he not prefer hearing of the wonderful deeds of Moses rather than what might be told concerning the laws given from Mount Sinai! Is it the names of the eleven brothers of Joseph he wants to know, or about Joseph himself! Will not the thrilling delight at the ingenuity of Samson's method of destroying the standing grain of his enemies be longer remembered than anything you may say regarding the causes, propriety and results of such an act! Is not the miraculous deliverance of Daniel from the lions' den more suited to his tastes than an exposition of the laws of the Medes and Persians! When the story of our Saviour was told him, did the narrator begin at the first chapter of *Matthew*?

Of two children, one of whom received his first historical knowledge of the Bible biographically and socially, the other of whom began at the first chapter in Genesis and labored through the laws, prophecies and all the rest of it, which one will better enjoy reading that book!

You may say and perhaps rightly, that no one when teaching to children the history in the Bible tells of the creation of the world, or the laws of Moses, or of the Medes and Persians, or the genealogy of our Saviour. They know that the child will not understand this and very sensibly pass it over telling only what they know will excite interest and pleasure.

Is secular history so different that it must be taught on an entirely different plan? Should the history of Canada be taught by beginning with the discovery of America and following either topically or chronologically the events through the space of four hundred years; or should the history of Britain be commenced with the invasion of Julius Cæsar and followed up through nineteen centuries, so that we may thereby teach the beginning at the beginning?

How much more rational for the teachers of this particular county to begin Canadian history with

Brock's monument, Stony Creek, and Burlington Heights and by picturesquely describing the events connected therewith, teach the war of 1812.

What better opportunity than this has any one for implanting in the breasts of his eager listeners the seeds of loyalty and patriotism to this noble land of their birth—this Canada of ours—by vividly portraying the heroic fortitude and undaunted courage of those early settlers—our own forefathers—and contrasting it with the chicken-hearted darning of "the bravest nation under the sun." Shall we now sign over this dearly-bought possession—our country—to the very ones who tried to rob us of it?

Then the children all know something of the United Empire Loyalists. Many families have traditions enough to fill a small book. From these stories teach the War of Independence.

The two North-west rebellions are easily taught.

The last one is so recent that their attention is at once gained. The other can be hinged to it. They will be deeply interested with Indian stories. Tell them of the red men of to-day, their mode of dressing themselves, of procuring and cooking their food, their style of architecture; contrast these with our own and compare them with what theirs was in the early history of the country. It will be a strange class that will not ask more questions than the teacher, however well informed, will be able to answer.

Now we may begin to give them a clear notion of our present government. They know the names of their representatives in Parliament, they have perhaps heard of Senator though they know not the meaning of the word, they know who the Premier and Governor-General are, and that the Parliament buildings are at Toronto and Ottawa. Now from these facts which they already know, teach the principles of responsible government. This naturally is followed by the rebellion of 1837 and the Constitutional Act of 1791.

From what they have already learned of the United Empire Loyalists and the American war of Independence, can be taught the Quebec Act, the Conquest of Canada; and the government of the country can be traced to its earliest formation.

In this way the history of Canada will have for the children all the charm of "Robinson Crusoe" and the "Swiss Family Robinson," with the additional pleasure of feeling that these things really happened to their grandfathers and grandmothers. If we could but make the characters live and move with their own costumes and their own manners in our instruction, the interest of every child would be at once absorbed in this branch of study. Is it then the history itself that is uninteresting or is it our treatment of the subject that makes it so? Do you blame the child who dislikes to be fed on pickled bones and dry crusts supplied to him from the larder of our text-books?

Make the history at the beginning entirely biographical and social. The social history of the early settlers will be rendered all the more interesting by reading to the pupils parts of Longfellow's "Evangeline" and the "Courtship of Miles Standish." The recital of the play "Laura Secord" will add to their knowledge of the war in 1812. Parkman's histories are intensely interesting and furnish the teacher with a never-failing supply of information that the children are now ever ready to receive.

Picture to them the kind of houses the people lived in, what these dwellings were made of, the style of clothing the people wore, what materials these were manufactured from; enter into the minutiae of the "trivial round, the common task," and by the aid of illustrations the children will have a vivid picture of those olden days, and should a carnival or old time tea-meeting be in prospect they will have little difficulty and much delight in suggesting appropriate costumes for themselves or older members of the family.

The same principles underlie the teaching of British history.

Disabuse the pupils' minds of the idea that Rome in the days of the Cæsars was limited to the Rome of to-day. Show the extent of the great Roman Empire, how near Britain is to Gaul, that they are the descendants of these same Romans of whom we read in the New Testament. Compare Britain *socially* to-day with what it was before the Christian era. Teach only the social history of the country, always contrasting it with the present and

comparing it with the past, giving only such biographies as can at present be made interesting.

Now the great turning points—the Norman Conquest, the Wars of the Roses, the Reformation and the Revolution may be taught. These too are biographical, sandwiched with some political history. Then the links of the long chain connecting these events may be forged, each receiving its due share of the craftsman's art.

By following this course we attain our first three objects, namely:—"The more intelligent reading of current literature," "a taste for the highest class of literature," and "passing right judgments upon human actions," though the latter will be of slower growth than the other two. But do we accomplish our fourth aim "to pass examinations." From experience I know that we shall.

The children's early impressions of history were pleasing. When you mingled the necessary amount of political history they took it as a sugar-coated pill. They will never lose their first love for this delightful study and an examination is but a means of enabling them to express what they already know and instead of "dropping buckets down into empty wells and growing old and drawing nothing up" the supply will be so copious that the danger lies in their not being able to limit within reasonable space what they desire to tell.

In teaching upon this plan certain principles must be observed.

Compare and contrast the past with the present.

Do not teach a fact because it is such unless associated with what they already know, or unless it can be attached to something of interest.

Have a constant supply of information on hand so that when an occasion presents itself, the truth can be driven home with double force.

Be full of the subject yourself. This fulness can only be attained by reading much historical literature, thinking more, and thinking deeply, and forming clear mental pictures of what you read. Then reproduce these mental images to your class.

What text-book would be best to use? Certainly not the one authorized at present. I learn that the Minister of Education says that history has never been better taught than now. That is easily accounted for. The teachers finding it impossible to teach from, or be guided by the present authorized text-book, are thrown upon their own resources, have adopted rational methods, and the credit is given to the new Public School history. Nor do I think that this subject can ever be properly taught till our text-books are compiled on *rational principles*. Rather than have one text-book where everything is introduced only to receive a passing nod, have a series of text-books in which the first numbers deal exclusively with social and biographical history and the more advanced volumes are suited to the developed and enlarged faculties of the child.

In conclusion, if my remarks shall be the means or stimulating to greater effort and better work by my fellow-teachers, and if the royal road to historical knowledge be more evenly graded, some of the stumbling stones being removed from the path of the Canadian school-goer, I will consider myself amply rewarded.

A MAN may pass good muster as a philanthropist who makes but a poor master to his servants or father to his children.—*Maurice*.

THE boy that by addition grows,
And suffers no subtraction.
Who multiplies the things he knows,
And carries every fraction;
Who well divides his precious time,
The due proportion giving,
To sure success aloft will climb,
Interest compound receiving.

—Dr. Ray Palmer.

SEVEN is the perfect number, and if the following seven rules were faithfully observed they would do something toward making a perfect man.

Before thou openest thy mouth think:

1. What thou shalt speak.
2. Why thou shouldst speak it.
3. To whom thou art about to speak.
4. Concerning whom or what thou art about to speak.
5. What will result therefrom.
6. What benefit it can produce.
7. Who may be listening.—*Boston Gazette*.

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