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OPENING ADDRESS ON THE QUESTION, "WHAT
SHALL WE TEACH IN LATIN AND HOW SHALL
WE TEACH?"

AT THE MEETING OF THE N. E. ASS. OF COLLEGES AND PREPARA-
TORY SCHOOLS, AT NEW HAVEN, OCTOBER 13, 1893

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen: I have not prepared any paper, and perhaps I ought to apologize to the Association for not having done so. The truth, however, is that, in view of what I have to say, it seemed to me possible to get closer to the heart of the question, if I avoided the more formal method of treating the subject in a written essay.

You have said, Mr. President, that the subject is an old one; it is a very old one, and for my own part, I approach the discussion of it with a good many misgivings, partly because it is so old, and because it seems to me that almost everything has been said that can be said, or ought to be said. Perhaps I am the least fitted person here to say anything new, because, in scattered essays, in prefaces of books, in books themselves, and in many talks, I have said all that I know, and perhaps more than I know, about teaching Latin. But this Association was formed for the purpose of promoting education along certain lines, and I believe it to be true that progress in education is made quite as much by reviving and revamping our old ideas,

Aristotle is content. He demands, however, that he be capable also of enjoyment and that he shall enjoy. He is not to be in such deadly earnest about virtue that he has no vital energy left for enjoyment, enjoyments of a liberal and elevating kind. Where there are such men, the State as such may be left out of account (we may almost say, although this is to strain Aristotle):—it will certainly, as a matter of course, be cared for wisely. Now this I consider to be a practical formulation of the Attic spirit as opposed to the Doric. It is in the spirit of Pericles' address to the Athenians in which he insists on the claims of the individual which Plato, on the other hand, would subject entirely (as did the Spartans,) to the claims of the State. Aristotle's doctrine is the doctrine of freedom: Plato's the doctrine of despotism.

Note: The translations are taken from Welldon's *Politics*

THE TEACHING OF HISTORY

There is a saying attributed to Napoleon, that "History is but a fable agreed upon." This saying illustrates and emphasizes the central fact that history has as its great end the recording of truth. But what truth? All science aims to discover truth; the basis of every art is conformity to truth; the end of every philosophy is presentation of truth. History looks backward. It is past truth, therefore. It looks backward at the story of the world, and seeks to discover and describe it. But the central idea is man. Geology may busy itself with the earth, biology with the evolution of life, history finds its sphere in the story of man, his origin, his development, his activities. It concerns itself with everything with which man has to do, and it discriminates all sciences, arts, and philosophies according to their relations to him. Moreover, it finds its proper expression in prose. The *Iliad* ceases to be history under this statement, but so also do the various metrical chronicles which even at a late day have been the means of transmitting to us the history of our race. They may contain history, but they themselves are not history. They are the sources of history, but their form precludes their being considered as history itself. Though this fits the ideal of dignity, so dear to Gibbon, and the authoritative demand of critics, I set little value upon this

distinction. Form is of minor importance. The important thing is that history is the narrative of human activity.

I have taken this view, that either prose or poetry may be the form of history, from a strong conviction that history, strictly speaking, is neither poetry nor prose. History is ideal. The history of any period is not to be found in any book. *A* history may be found, but *the* history never. Man's mind is so limited in its grasp, so uncertain in its rectitude, so incapable in its descriptive power, that one will scarcely find the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, not merely in one writer, but in the works of all who have written upon any given period.

Mr. Freeman has declared that "history is past politics." It seems to me impossible that a worse definition could have been devised by so wise a man. In order even remotely to justify such a definition, it would be necessary to indefinitely and unjustifiably extend our idea of politics so as to make it embrace not only what directly affects the state, but all that goes on within the state, and that concerns its people and its commerce. Political history may be past politics, but let us hope that we have long since passed the era when political history is considered a commensurate term with history. We have a far better statement upon this side of the subject from the pen of Paul Boiteau. Seeking to impress the same truth that was in Mr. Freeman's mind, and seeking to be just, rather than epigrammatic, he says: "History is the great school of politics, and no man can be a statesman unless he is not only acquainted with the accounts and testimony of history, but with the history of history itself, and knows how, in the course and progress of ages, history began by being merely an art, and at length became a science; the most philosophic, the most elevated, and the most instructive of all sciences." He might have gone still further and have said that in its ultimate relations, history rises beyond the furthest reach of science, and becomes one of the most splendid of philosophies, second only to that of theology,

But what philosophy gains in sweep it loses in exactness. Philosophies of history will always be fragmentary, incomplete, always stretching forward towards the destiny of man, but as they must read that destiny only in what has been, always losing themselves in inconclusiveness and vain speculation. Thus Macaulay says: "History, it has been said, is philosophy teaching by examples. Unhappily, what the philosophy gains in soundness and depth, the examples generally lose in vividness." That is to say, history ceases to be a remote account of what has been, and becomes a great preceptor of mankind, warning him against the evils of his race, inspiring him with the nobility of his ancestors, reminding him of his duties and obligations, confirming him in his rights and liberties. It is the philosophy of the past, and should lead us to the practice of the future. But general traits are not so potent as personal influence, so when history philosophises too much it loses the spell of its personal character. It becomes us, therefore, in using history as a means of instruction, not to deal with it too much in the mass, but to hold fast to the details. It must not lose its human interest.

When we come to consider for what purpose we teach history we find ourselves following the same line of reasoning. We may broadly say that teaching is directed to two great ends: First, the *development*, and, secondly, the *information* of the individual. Training of the mind must always be antecedent to the greater part of the work of instruction. The great question with regard to all elementary branches is therefore,—What value have they as disciplinary studies? History may have great value as a disciplinary study, but it does not primarily nor as usually taught, present anything like the possibilities that are to be found in other branches taught in our lower schools. Mathematics and the languages are essentially disciplinary; history only secondarily so. But history can be made, and should be made, first a disciplinary study. Not that it is necessary to the enjoyment of historical literature that a man should be made to undergo a historical drill, but no person can

properly teach, or properly understand history, or the history of any country, time, or department of human activity, without at least a brief introduction to the fundamental principles of history as a science, an art, and a philosophy. The first principle upon which this statement rests is the unity of history. It is unfortunate that the unity of history is commonly overlooked, frequently denied, and always a little obscure to certain minds.

Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, rose above the historians of his day through the philosophical attitude which sprang from his self-appointed position as an apostle of this doctrine. Mr. Freeman flew into a fine frenzy when anyone even remotely suggested that there was a hiatus between ancient and modern history, and regarded as a special bugbear the tendency of certain historians to treat the Middle ages as a sort of purgatorial interregnum in history. One of the consequences of this view is the very unpopular, but important, fact that the history of the United States cannot be properly understood without a knowledge of the history of Greece and Rome. Not merely the history of the United States, but the law daily administered in our law courts is unintelligible without an understanding of the law of Rome. This is one of the reasons why a certain class of lawyers so helplessly flounder in efforts to make justice injustice; but the blame is laid upon the law instead of the lawyer. The sin, of course, relates back to the neglect in the early education of the barrister. In the second place, there is no surer discipline than that to be gained by tracing the logic of events. Formal logic, as applied to the processes of reasoning, is next to mathematics and language, recognized to be the greatest discipline for the human mind and the logic of events, is not inferior, perhaps, even, superior, as a training, because of its complexity. Human life is full of contradictions and paradoxes. It is impossible to refer any human action, as illustrated in any public event, to a single motive, or any simple combination of motives. It is as true of politics as of physics that every thrust is the resultant of a large number of variously acting

forces. We must have a parallelogram of forces in history as well as in physics. There is a discipline quite as efficient in teaching the youthful mind to trace the direction of such forces, to analyze their composition, and to calculate their results, as in the sister domain of physical energy. Social dynamics act according to rule. There is a political as well as a natural gravity; and the free will of man no more overturns the purposes of God in history, than in nature. A man may for a brief time pursue a brilliant and wicked career by the exercise of his free will, just as he may for a time overcome the action of gravity by lifting a stone from the earth. But the stone will no more surely fall when he releases it, than his works will bring their own reward when his career is ended.

In the third place, there is a great deal of education to be gained by a careful study of the mere form in which history is presented. The difference between testimony and proof is a standing puzzle alike to those who have made no study of law or of history. An incorrect or prejudiced narrative is regarded by many as discrediting the event which it claims to describe. Half a dozen incorrect partial or prejudiced narratives many men would suppose sufficient to throw complete doubt upon an event incorrectly reported by all of them, and yet both the historian and the lawyer of patience and perseverance will be able in some cases to reconstruct a substantially accurate account of the event from half a dozen or more substantially false narratives. The fact is, an eye witness only sees one phase of an event. Half a dozen partisans viewing an event from different points of view, even if intentionally prejudiced in their narratives, will throw a greater amount of light upon the event as it occurred, than the most honest witness usually does from his one point of view. Of course this is an extreme case, and yet human history when most reliable is almost certain to be incomplete. And when once on our guard we can make allowance for fraud, prejudice, and partisanship, almost as well as for ignorance and credulity. It is astonishing when half a dozen books treating of the same subject are consulted to see how

different is the point of view and how very different the effect produced on the mind by equally faithful narratives drawn from the same sources.

Now the processes by which these conclusions are impressed on the youthful mind are quite as important, as mere training, as any other department offers. Hence, even for young students, I would strongly recommend the use of two books upon the same subject, the one to succeed the other, rather than a single large and compendious book. There is nothing more fatal to the successful teaching of history than to teach a child to believe that any one book contains the entire history of any given thing—yes, even more—than to teach a child that the facts contained in any given book are perfectly complete and reliable. We must awaken young minds to an early and strong conviction that neither teachers nor text-books are infallible, and particularly that the newspaper and the periodical press are very uncertain guides.

When we have reached this point we are prepared to go one step further back and accentuate the important distinction between primary and secondary sources of information. A great many people never learn the difference between historians and historical writers. An historian makes use of the original sources, the statements of actors, the letters and documents of actors and their contemporaries, the newspaper accounts of the day, the written narratives of contemporaries. The historical writer relies upon antecedent historians. Let it be understood, therefore, that the original sources alone should be taken as evidence of what happened at a given time or place. The statements of historians is history; the statements of historical writers, as a rule, can rarely be trusted on mooted points. If any one were to quote an historical writer in any serious discussion as authority, he would deserve, in ordinary cases, only ridicule.

Now, there is no true knowledge of historical method, no real critical insight, possible, without a careful training in the nature and use of "sources." Even in casual reading it is indis-

pensable that the reader understand how to weigh and estimate the citations of authorities usually found in the foot-notes.

History can be taught almost everywhere by taking the student directly to its sources. There are sources in this country of local history and biography which could easily be utilized, and which would stimulate a taste for historical study beyond that attainable in any other way. For this purpose brief *essays* should be used from the first. Then the German seminar method, finally theses involving both investigation and critical judgment should be given.

II. Information. Passing to the other side of the subject, history presents material for more information beyond any other science, not even excepting the natural sciences. "The highest study of mankind is man," if not actually true, is sufficiently so to accentuate the value of historical study. With each step the student should be encouraged to widen his outlook,—to grasp not merely the unity of history, but the brotherhood of man, to see the essential oneness of all peoples and of all times. There is nothing more striking than to compare the highest thinkers of the great nations of the world, and to see how completely each is the peer of the other, how remarkable is the fellowship of noble minds,—how Alexander, Charlemagne and Napoleon, Pericles, Hampden and Washington, Plato, Augustine and Calvin, Sophocles and Shakespeare, Theocritus and Tennyson meet upon a common plane, and how the great masters of poetry and of art, and even of mechanics, stand together in the general completeness of their mental equipment. Different times and different peoples have their peculiar excellencies. If to-day we know more of physics than did the Greeks, they knew more of sculpture than do we. If the Italians of the Renaissance surpassed all the world in painting, it was reserved for Elizabethan England to produce the man whose pen should most excel in depicting human nature.

Not only does history present before our eyes the story of man's life, but by the application of the principles of science

produces narratives laying before us, as upon a map, the comparative histories of each people and of every time. Not only does it by its inimitable art make men long since dead move before us as upon the stage, stirring us with issues long since determined, and making us tremble with terrors long since satisfied of their prey ; not only does it by its philosophy show us the hand of God slowly, but surely, bringing men to a better and a higher manhood, but it also presents to us histories of art, of philosophy, of mechanics, of agriculture, and every element of human life. And to-day it conditions everything that man does, for there is scarcely a department of human effort in which the historical method is not largely used both in instruction and in the application of new methods and in the investigation of new forces.

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