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THE TEACHING AND STUDY OF HISTORY AFTER THE WAR

THE study of history does not enable us to predict what will happen, but it should help us to interpret the events of the present time. History has always been a favorite study with statesmen who have thought to acquire wisdom from its pursuit, and it has been given a prominent place in all modern education. It is recognized to be the basis of all the social sciences, and historical-mindedness has been called the chief characteristic of the nineteenth century. Yet, as a nation, we have just passed through an experience which indicates that we have not studied history intelligently. Almost all of the leaders of public opinion in this country were completely deceived as to the conditions in Germany and as to the probable conduct of the German people. One of our able diplomats, a man of wide experience and great ability, said to me: "Don't deceive yourself! There will be no revolution in Germany!" Our military leaders had studied German military history, but not the history of the German people, and consequently they were unanimous in predicting a long war.

President Wilson had a clearer vision and understood better the character of the German people, its confidence when buoyed up by victory, its despondency and weakness under defeat and suffering. For his wise attempts to hasten our victory by using this knowledge to weaken the morale of the German people, he was ridiculed and reviled by the

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press and in Congress. It is easy for us to see now, after the event, that history should have given us an understanding of the evolution of the Germans which would have made it possible for us to realize the wisdom of our President. Therefore, in considering the methods to be used in the future in teaching history, we must bear in mind our failure in the past to use history as a guide to the present. This is the first point which necessitates a critical reconsideration of the methods used in teaching history.

The second point is a realization of how comparatively uninteresting we have made the study of history. Probably many will be surprised at this statement. Other departments of teaching have paid historians the sincere flattery of imitating their methods and making their own subjects as historical as possible. One of our professors of English literature, a few years ago, called attention to the fact that ninety per cent. of the courses offered in English literature in the colleges of this country were historical in character rather than literary. With our crowded classes in history and with the general appearance of being successful, we should not have realized how little of the inherent interest of history we were conveying to our students if we had not been given an object lesson by our soldiers and their enthusiasm for learning history. Last winter the National Board for Historical Service was asked to arrange lectures on history in some of the army training camps. This request was due in part to the fact that an examination of the books bought by the drafted men in some of the camps showed that a very large proportion of them were books on history. The lectures, given under the direction of the Board, were necessarily limited in number because it was difficult to find suitable men who were free to do the work. We were surprised to find how many of our professors of

history were called into government service. Some, of course, obtained commissions in various branches of the army or navy; others served in different fields of war activities. Without absolutely crippling the teaching in some of the institutions, which the National Board was unwilling to do, it was found impossible to obtain first-class men for many tasks. I mention this because, as a result of their wider experience, the professors of history will be more receptive to new ideas and more ready to study anew the problems of teaching. Last summer the War Department arranged for brief courses, to be given in the training camps, on "War Aims," which were mainly courses in modern history. At the conclusion of these courses, the students were asked to state in writing what they thought of them. The answers were anonymous and were generally enthusiastic. One illiterate student tried clumsily to tell what the course had meant to him, and finally summed up his feelings by writing that "History is a great thing in the world."

This fall, as you know, the S.A.T.C. has been established by the War Department in some six hundred or more of our universities and colleges. The object was to give to the enlisted men, and especially to the future officers, a clearer understanding of the causes of the war and of the issues for which the men might be called to risk and to lay down their lives. While the S.A.T.C. as a whole has been by no means an unqualified success, the testimony as to the "War Issues" is almost invariably favorable. The students have been enthusiastic; the interest has been keen. The students have realized that "History is a great thing in the world." This is due to the fact that the study has been intimately connected with the vital issues of the day. We must conserve this interest for the future.

In the third place, the study of history has been restricted

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to too narrow a field and to too few phases of human activity. We have followed almost slavishly the traditional methods, and often these methods were made in Germany. When an error in fact or in point of view gets embodied in the text-books it is almost impossible to dislodge it. The classical example is the fable of the year 1000. This was first given currency by Baronius at the beginning of the seventeenth century. It was made popular by Robertson in the eighteenth and by Michelet in the nineteenth century. Vouched for by such authorities, it was universally believed and became a commonplace for poets and novelists as well as historians. Some scholars in the second half of the last century had occasion to examine the truth of the fable, and it was repeatedly proved to be "only a legend and a myth"—by French works published in 1867, 1873, 1878, and 1885; by a German book in 1883; by an Italian in 1887. These all showed that there was not the slightest foundation for the fable; yet it still persisted even at the end of the last century in English and American books, especially text-books. To expel the discredited tale from American works, Professor Burr of Cornell felt it necessary in 1900 to write another refutation for those who could read only English. Yet the fable still persists and "the lie will not down."

Other examples may be briefly noted: New England has overshadowed all the rest of the country in our history-teaching until very recently. In our text-books we have been fighting England till 1915. National history has been taught to the exclusion of all others. This was probably due to a series of important events which happened in the space of a few years and greatly emphasized the importance of nationality; for example, our Civil War, the formation of the German Empire, and the partial attainment of Italian unity.

At the International Congress of historians in 1913 about one hundred papers were read on English history, and only one touched on the history of the colonies. It is safe to predict a change in this regard for the colonies because of their gallant aid to the mother country. We may also note, in passing, the German mistake in this respect. The Germans had no idea of the loyalty of the British colonies. In our country this faulty and meager teaching of history has resulted in a lack of knowledge of the questions at issue in the war, and a complete ignorance of the history of the Balkans and of Russia and its constituent parts. It is unnecessary to add that the conditions in Asia and Africa were a sealed book to us.

It would be easy to continue criticisms. But I think the defects noted are the most serious, and if carefully weighed will point the way towards better methods.

First of all, a larger content must be recognized both geographically and in subject matter. Geography, which has been called "one of the two eyes of history," has been woefully neglected. History-teaching has been handicapped by the ignorance of students who know scarcely any geography and have no interest in learning any. At one of our leading universities it was, and may still be, the custom at the opening of the course to give each student in history an outline map of Europe on which he was to put down any geographical facts he might happen to know. As one of the instructors said, most of the maps came back either blank or else filled with ludicrous mistakes. For geography in this country is mainly a grade-school study and is not considered worthy of serious attention in our higher schools. Yet there are few subjects taught in our schools which can be made as interesting as geography when intelligently studied. For geography is a record and explanation of the interrelation

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of man and nature, and its great lesson for us is the necessity of our coöperating with nature if we would be successful. The wars have been our best teachers of geography, and especially this Great War, of which the lessons have as yet been only partially learned. But the extent to which even the lesser wars have broadened our knowledge of geography might be illustrated by a passage from Mr. Dooley, "On the Philippines": "Tis not more thin two months since ye larned whether they were islands or canned goods." To change the figure of speech, Geography and History must be the two faces of the shield to protect us against ignorance.

The subject matter of our historical teaching, up to the present, has included only ancient history, the history of Western Europe, and of the United States; and in the study of these each nation has been confined in a separate compartment, with few attempts to show its relations, other than military, to any other nation. Roman history has been studied apart from Greek history, English history with little relation to the events which were happening on the Continent, the history of the United States with slight attention to the older world from which we drew so much of our civilization, and with no attention to our northern neighbor, Canada. In our study of European history, the larger half of Europe was almost wholly neglected, and therefore questions in which we now have a vital interest were omitted. When the Slavs were studied, it was wholly through German spectacles. Asia, Africa, and South America were left out of account. The British colonies received little or no notice. We have had no guidance from history for many of the duties with which we are now confronted. Only the War has taught us our ignorance. Study of some of these neglected subjects would have given us a more accurate view-point and might have prevented our futile tendencies

towards pacifism and unpreparedness. In many respects we were living in a fool's paradise, oblivious of what was going on in the world outside of our restricted ken.

Even with regard to the subjects in which we were interested, we lacked the information which would have been furnished by a less restricted study. Some years ago Douglas Campbell wrote a book on Holland as a source of our democracy, which had a wide vogue in this country and was favorably received even by historical scholars. Yet Australia, New Zealand, and Canada were democratic to a greater extent than the United States, and they certainly did not get their democracy from Holland. A comparative study of the histories of Australia and of the United States would be, I believe, very informing. My attention was called to this a few years ago by a question from one of the leading men in New South Wales. He asked, "Is not the dialect in Oliver Wendell Holmes' books somewhat exaggerated?" In answer to my inquiry as to the reason for his interest in the question, he said the dialect in Holmes' books was very similar to that in New South Wales, to which he was accustomed. This suggested a fruitful field of inquiry. Another example is the study of slavery and its results, which has been usually pursued in this country without any attention to the parallel history of slavery in other parts of the world.

It is vitally important for us to begin this larger study of history in connection with our problems and duties in the world reconstruction which we are now facing. New responsibilities will come to us, and we are not fitted for them. Some of the Armenians are urging that the United States assume a form of protectorate over the new country of Armenia which they hope will be created by the Peace Conference. What knowledge do we possess to guide us in such

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a task? If we do assume any such relation, either to Armenia or elsewhere, our people must be educated to a knowledge of what it implies, for this is a democracy, and the will of the people must determine our policy.

Several forceful objections will be made to my suggestions, especially by conservatives who are hampered by tradition. It may be well to enumerate these objections and to evaluate them. First some will say, "There is no time to include anything else in our already overcrowded curriculum." And they will urge, "Let us do something thoroughly, instead of dissipating our energies to an even greater degree than we now do." These objections are always voiced by the opponents of any kind of change, and the people who use them are probably correct in both of their statements: the curriculum is overcrowded and lack of thoroughness is the great fault of our educational system. It is for these very reasons that we urge a reform in history-teaching and that we suspect that a similar reform is absolutely necessary in the other fields of study with which we are not so familiar. At present in history the student too frequently has brought to his attention some of the important facts, many of the unimportant, and the whole mass without any logical nexus, so that each fact must be learned as an isolated bit of memory knowledge. This is clearly apparent to any one who has had occasion to read many examination papers. The pupils apparently have not anywhere in their course learned to use their powers of reasoning. They must possess them entirely unimpaired, and it is one of the tasks of history to induce the pupils to employ this latent faculty. This can be done by discarding all the traditional material which is without value, choosing only the necessary data, and binding the whole together logically so that the pupil will understand the course of events. In this way he will learn

the facts more quickly and more thoroughly, the curriculum will not be any more crowded, and the pupils will have had an example of thoroughness in one of their studies which may react upon the other contents of the curriculum.

Second, some will say that if such a method is followed, history will be made utilitarian and not taught for its own sake. This bugaboo of utilitarianism is often used when there is any suggestion of making teaching more practical. Many have quoted with approval the remark of a great mathematician who, after a brilliant demonstration of a difficult problem for which his students applauded him vigorously, exclaimed, "Thank God! No one can ever make any use of that!" Such people contrast unfavorably the spirit of the students in professional schools with the quest for culture followed by the students in the so-called liberal courses in college, and insist we must train the students for life and not for making a living. As a result of this policy on the part of the college authorities, too often it is true that the "side shows have swallowed the circus," that the extra-curricular activities take up most of the so-called students' time and are considered vastly more important, even by some of the faculty, than the studies. Since it is true that the professional student is interested in his studies and works far more intensively than the college boys, our greatest need is to introduce some of this professional zeal into our colleges and to have the collegians realize that they are not being trained for a life to come, but are actually alive in a world in which they have duties and responsibilities. The ideas of detachment from the world's interests and of training for the future have kept some of our colleges in a backward state and have given a bad reputation to the college graduate, who is generally thought of as a callow youth with all his real education before him. Only as we have adapted

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the methods of the workroom or laboratory, and to this extent have heeded the plea of utility, have the college courses been made really interesting and valuable. This is the great reason why the teacher ought to be capable of research, or at least of understanding its methods. He must adapt, and not adopt, the methods of the laboratory; the beginner is not fitted to do research work. Until the professional spirit finds a home in our institutions of learning such as it has in those of France, we cannot hope to eliminate the waste and to furnish a satisfactory product.

A third objection is more weighty. There is danger lest the stress be laid wholly upon the most modern history, and this danger is very apparent in the work of some of our colleges. This is due in part to the narrow range of their historical outlook, which embraces only a few of the nations—England, France, Germany, and the United States. Their outlook will be broadened if a wider range is given to the study of history, so that we really attempt to explain the present-day conditions. Peoples whose fate must be considered at the Peace Conference are now living in every stage of civilization through which we have passed in historic times. A well-rounded account of our historical evolution can be illustrated and made vital by present-day examples among other peoples. The influence of historical institutions can be traced not exclusively in the "musty past," but among our contemporaries; for example, the effects of feudalism among the Junkers and in Russia or Japan. The historic tendency of any Mesopotamian power to seek an outlet on the Mediterranean can be illustrated abundantly from the past, and is a factor of very real importance in determining the disposition to be made of the various sections of the Turkish Empire. Many another problem which is now important is not entirely modern; other societies have

faced it, and their experience is available for our instruction. Just as our forefathers studied federal institutions in Greece when they framed the Constitution of the United States, so to-day it is imperative that any one who is interested in a League of Nations should study the fortunes of similar undertakings in the past.

There is a danger of reading a modern meaning into ancient conditions. An extreme example of this is furnished by our historical novels, in which usually a Roman or Greek hero has the psychology of his creator, and the heroine, whether Egyptian, mediæval French, or negress, typifies the ideals of the novelist. Some historians, including many of the Germans, follow much the same method in attempting to analyze the characters of historical personages. We have been solemnly advised, in studying history, "never to debase the moral currency or to lower the standard of rectitude, but to try others by the final maxim that governs your own lives, and to suffer no man and no cause to escape the undying penalty which history has the power to inflict on wrong." Just as we make allowances for children, so we in history must make allowances for backward peoples. A little thinking will clarify our ideas, and we shall realize that the differences between conditions in the Roman Republic and in the United States must be studied and given as much weight as any resemblances; and this is, of course, true universally. The solutions of the problems raised by these various objections can be found mainly by the selection and presentation of the important data.

The contents of the historical study must be not only broadened but also changed to some extent in order to be included in the new points of view. Any one planning a change in the traditional methods of teaching history must study historiography in order to have an intelligent back-

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ground for his work. History at first related only the doings and wars of kings and their associates. The king's mistress often held the center of the stage. Only a little over a century ago, mainly through the new interests aroused by the French Revolution, was there any considerable attention paid to constitutional history. Gradually, in France especially, the theme shifted from the monarch to his subjects, to the members of the third estate. In the last half-century the tendency to study the history of the people has been more marked, but it has been mainly the history of man as a "political animal," neglecting all the other important phases of his activity. There has been some recognition that this was a faulty method, and many histories have contained sections on art, philosophy, literature, etc.; these have seldom been connected with the body of the work, but instead have usually been placed in tight compartments so as to keep them dry.

In our teaching of history we must include the various activities of men and their ideals as illustrated by the arts, or reflected in literature, or government, or warfare, or philosophy. Most important of all, we must observe what ideas were coming in and what ideas were going out of vogue. If we do this, we shall not fall into the method of attempting to explain history by any single method of interpretation, whether it be economic, geographical, geometrical, or theological. All these various attempts at interpretation have neglected the human element, reducing man almost to an automaton whose activities are determined by external factors. Far more nearly correct was Michelet with his dictum: "Man is his own Prometheus."

In such a presentation we shall use literature as an historical source to a much greater degree than in the past, and we shall cite the various details of the schemes of gov-

ernment as illustrative material in much the same fashion as we tell of achievements in agriculture or the arts. We shall call attention to the sportsmanship and love of fair play in England, and cite the treatment of South Africa after the Boer War as an example. We shall show the German neglect of competitive sport except in duelling, and thus explain why they have been such "poor losers." We shall draw the contrast between the idealization in this country of Washington and Lincoln as heroes and the exaltation of a Bismarck as a national exemplar. We shall discuss the United States as a "melting-pot," and cite the German mistake in believing that "the twenty millions" of German descent in this country would continue loyal to their fatherland, rather than to the country of their adoption. An anecdote of a Wisconsin boy in the present war will show the extent of the German error. One of his comrades saw him standing over a German trench with hand-grenades ready, but delaying to throw them, while he harangued the occupants of the trench. In excellent German, his mother tongue, he explained to them just how shameful the conduct of Germany had been, and how in the public opinion "it had gotten every German of this country in wrong." Then he threw his hand-grenades.

The faulty teaching of history in the past has made it difficult for us to understand the conditions in which we are living. The extent of the idealism in this country has been a complete surprise to us. Most of our leaders thought General Crowder was wrong in his belief in the readiness of our people to respond to the draft. Fortunately, his idealism was allowed a trial, and you all know how wonderfully the people responded in every section of our land. President Wilson, by his idealism, has made himself the

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spokesman of our people and has led us steadily to higher planes of conduct.

A while ago a Belgian scholar, who has been a resident in the United States for four years, surprised me by a statement that we were the best disciplined people in the world because we were self-disciplined. He proved his statement by instancing our behavior not only in the draft and in our other sacrifices for the war, in the voluntary curtailment of our consumption of wheat,—in which the people of Texas have set such a remarkable example,—but also in our daily life; *e.g.*, in the orderliness with which we line up before a ticket-office, each one respecting the rights of others.

It is very hard for us to grasp the real facts of our own age, which we see at too close range. It is easier to teach students to analyze the events and tendencies of an earlier age, where their passions and interests are not involved, before taking up the more recent past and present. This is the function of history-teaching in training our boys and girls to become useful citizens of this democracy.

As already stated, the teacher, in order to do this, must be a scholar, a lover of research. There has been a general failure to recognize this until very recently. Lately there has been an encouraging recognition of the importance of history by the Government. The army and navy have staffs engaged in the preparation of the history of their activities during the present war. The same is true of many of the other departments of the Government, although too frequently the men charged with the preparation of the material have no training for their task and are historians only by fiat. The collection of material is being actively carried on. We may secure a building for our historical archives, and thus remedy a condition in which we are more backward than any other great power. We are as a nation becoming

historically conscious. This is proved by our numerous State societies, even when a large part of the energy of the members is directed only to genealogical study.

To carry on research successfully we must coöperate and organize the work. International organization is imperative for the larger tasks. The old international societies, which were largely controlled by the Germans, have ceased to exist. We must create new ones. The presence of the British Mission here is a hopeful sign of the closer union in educational work which will exist between the two great English-speaking peoples. A French mission with similar objects is already in this country, and soon the three great allies will be united in peaceful pursuits as they have fought side by side in war. Such a union can best be achieved by interest in and work for common objects. As they have worked together to win the war, let us hope that they will coöperate cordially in framing the conditions of peace and in forming a League of Nations. At all events, the peace and security of the world can best be maintained by the mutual understanding and the close coöperation of the leaders in the three great democracies, Great Britain, France, and the United States.

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