

as of the west : it ought to be hard for us to be vulgar. And perhaps it would be if we tried to mould ourselves on that tradition instead of on the rootless mushroom mannerisms of the lower types of modern journalism. It should not be difficult to be simple and direct, to aim not at highflown journalese but at a solid workman-like English. We can at least try to be sober and modest (these are moral virtues) and so to be truthful, for without these there is no truth. The result would be very unlike a newspaper? Quite; and thank God there are some catholic publications of this sort, to show us that it can be done. No doubt they have a small circulation; but there is a parable about the seed growing secretly. It is these which, being simple and unassuming, have truth and wisdom in them, and are in the great tradition of catholic literature. We should pray God to bless them, and keep them alive: truth is sometimes a hard mistress, and to serve her faithfully is to invite enmity and abuse; moreover it is seldom a very sound commercial proposition.

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## THE STUDY OF HISTORY IN AMERICA

THE *New York Times* in June 1942, published the '*Charted Results of a Survey on College Study of U.S. History*,' with a commentary by Benjamine Fine under the heading: '*U.S. History Study is not required in 82 per cent. of Colleges*,' and again, a sub-heading: '*72 per cent. do not list it as an entrance prerequisite.*'

For a European like myself, brought up in the cult of history, Italian and foreign, ancient and modern, this seemed so strange as to surpass belief. I asked myself, if this was what happened to the history of the United States in United States colleges, what must be the unhappy fate of the history of other countries, and ancient and classical history.

The '*Results*' have naturally amazed Americans too, leading to an animated discussion of the problem.

As easily happens, the general, educational problem was made to slide at once to that of war morale. The young man who does not know his country's past cannot appreciate its institutions, cannot love its great figures, cannot be thrilled at the national name since the nation is unknown to him in its birth and development. It is easy

to exaggerate on this theme, whether in order to show that history is necessary or to assert, as some have done, that it neither adds to nor detracts from patriotic feeling.

History thus envisaged can become something very foolish. And there has been no lack of wise warnings from those who fear the use of history to stir up pernicious nationalisms and re-awaken old imperialism.

There have also been Socialists to note that history is an instrument of a ruling class, bourgeois or military, and that it would be better to study the 'social sciences,' a term for a sociology reduced to a pro-proletarian economics, or to the study of particular social problems like housing, banking, population and so forth. It never entered the heads of those who contrasted history with sociology that there can be no true sociology without history, nor any true history without sociology.

What, however, has seemed the capital argument in regard to the study of the history of the United States in colleges and universities has been precisely the criterion of *liberty*, or, as they say here, *democracy*, confusing the two terms as is the current custom. The student, they say, must be free to choose the subjects he wishes to study. If he does not choose history (of the United States) it is because he feels that he does not need it, either for his culture or for his profession. To make such a thing compulsory would be to alter the conception of life of the United States; thus the history of their own country is for most colleges not a prerequisite nor a necessary subject for the formation of general culture.

A reaction against this *anarchic* conception of education is beginning, under the sign of patriotism. Even 'Business men back history teaching'; the National Association of Manufacturers of Denver, Col., last June organised a meeting with the National Education Association to this end. In the University of Stanford, California (which is always in advance of other States in higher education), a State-wide conference of history professors has been held, in which they recommended courses of study '*covering the political and economic history of the country from the discovery to the present.*' The conference ended by deciding to create a loose organization open to all Californian colleagues of the teachers and writers of the United States who were present. The professional character of such an enterprise in no way diminishes its significance.

No one, however, has shown any concern for the *religious* history of the United States, to be merged with *political and economic* history. Only a soldier or so has regretted that the *military* and

*naval* history of the United States is neglected. I have read nothing in regard to *literary, artistic, cultural* history, as a section separate from the rest, to be treated by specialists. All this has made me ask myself if the educational function of the study of history has been really understood. History should before all else give us a sense of relativity; therefore no national history stands by itself, enclosed within limits of time and space. History, moreover, should make us understand the present in which we live, for the present is what the past has created and moulded; finally, it must open the door upon the future, which is what we, the living, prepare and shape.

Americans are to-day fighting on at least seven fronts. They have or have had commercial relationships with the whole world. The United States is the leading country of the American continent, and to-morrow, together with their Allies, and perhaps to an even greater degree, will be responsible for the order of the world. How then is it possible that Americans should remain ignorant I do not say of their own history (which is unthinkable) but of that of the nations with which they are in so close a relationship?

It is true that history is full of the names of kings, emperors, generals, reformers, heroes, saints, which a poor student cannot be expected to remember. But is this really how history should be learned, and not through the most salient events, the great transformations, the most important moral and political undertakings, the most significant figures, the imperishable achievements, all that has fecundated our present civilisation? If to-morrow we want a world unified in a peaceable and progressive order, we must know one another for what we are and for what we represent. Thus not historical nationalism, nor historical hate, nor historical contempt, but historical appraisalment will give each people the place that it deserves.

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