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MONOGRAPHS:  
HISTORY IN THE  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

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Kendall & Florence Elizabeth Stryker

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**CALVIN NOYES KENDALL & FLORENCE ELIZABETH STRYKER**

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ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**



**Riverside Educational Monographs**

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**HISTORY IN THE  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

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## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

HISTORY is social experience. In so far as it is the experience of a single nation, it consists of the adventures of many generations of ancestors living in a continuous group. We care to know and remember it primarily because it explains what we are and what we are going to be. It is the record of the situations which have permitted and limited our aspirations; it is the accounting of our social failures and successes; it is the story of the evolution of the institutional instruments with which we now control our social life. From it we have taken all our social courages and cautions. It is our book of national lessons in which we search for experience to solve the future.

Timid of the responsibilities which are inevitable in this view of history teaching, and tinged by an academic indifference to everything save impersonal perception of the truth, many of our most respectable and mature historical teachers have disavowed the practical purposes of history. The error of such a disavowal is not grievous in the universities. There the impersonal search for truth is a major business, and the students



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taught are so mature and highly selected that the scientific teaching of history largely fulfills the needs of the situation. It is when these attitudes and methods descend to the classrooms of high and elementary schools that we perceive their inadequacy and begin to realize that a merely scientific aim must be supplemented by practical, social, and civic objectives, and that methods of instruction must be so devised as to make the important events of other generations vital and appealing to the individuals of this. In no other way can the really significant truths of history be individualized and made a common group possession.

Of course it is absolutely necessary that the scientific historian shall discover by a rigid method what our social past has really been. The disentanglement of truths from myths is a serious task and must be accomplished relentlessly. But the acceptance of this obligation does not by any means complete the duty of historians as a class. Since ordinary men cannot and will not know all that historians do, it is necessary to choose that which is the more significant in the interpretation of the historic currents which have swept us into our present and will sweep us on to our future.

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Once in possession of the scientific facts of history, the historian who would make his truths vital in the transmission must pick and reject, emphasize and subordinate, according as the things known have greater or less social significance. Unfortunately, it is too frequently the case that the scientific historian does not readily turn conscious social historian. When he writes, as necessarily he does, he must determine sequences of topics and the relative space to be given each, and these decisions inevitably express his own measure of the worth of events — a measure more or less personal and only half reasoned out. Thus, some writers have emphasized military and political affairs, and others have stressed the economic and social aspects of history. The difference is due to a personal disagreement as to what is the more important knowledge for the man living now and in the future. Among all these variations in the treatment of national experience, the teacher must make his way to some definite choice of important facts. And a difficult path it is that leads to the solution of this first problem.

Once the web of history is re-spun for its experience or living worth, the teacher has another task, that of transmitting the same to the

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younger generation, so that the truths of the rational life clutch the personal life of the citizen as powerfully as experiences that have been directly won. This second is the pedagogical problem — the task of personalizing national experiences so widely among men that a national consciousness of mind arises from common possession.

In the solution of these two difficulties of the schoolmaster, this text will aid. It offers invaluable suggestions for making a functional choice of historic facts and develops in detail the tried and successful methods that will make the travails and lessons of national groups long since dead, vital and useful vicarious experiences to that growing citizen — the American youth.