

## SOME HINTS ON THE CHOICE OF BOOKS.

As the space for these notes on the choice of books is extremely limited, it will be impossible to do more than to indicate in a general way, the lines upon which a student ought to make a beginning. The advice given is put forward in no dogmatic way, but merely as suggestions, which, it is hoped, will prove useful to our young collegians. The great thing is to develop a love for good reading. When once it comes, the young reader will soon be able to guide himself. Taking in rotation the various departments of literature, let us begin with HISTORY.

We should all know something of the history of our own country. Elphinstone's History of India and its continuation the "Rise of the British power in India" are well worth the careful study of the beginner. In them the student gets a general and yet complete idea of the history of his own country. But Elphinstone begins with the age of Manu and for the earlier history of our own country, in the absence of a better work, Mr. R. C. Dutt's history of Ancient India might be taken as a tolerably safe guide, or in the alternative the recently published work on Ancient India by Mr. Vincent Smith, an erudite scholar to whom the history of our great and glorious past seems a riddle. Nor is the reason why he occasionally slips into these pit falls of Indian history far to seek. Mr. Vincent Smith is a splendid writer and needless to say has a complete grasp of facts but he sadly lacks historical instinct which is so essential to a historian and which makes Mommsen's History of Rome or Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire or Buckle's History of Civilisation in England deservedly the standard works in historical literature. Without it, Macaulay's History of England otherwise a monumental work, has lost all its historical

value as Alison's ponderous volumes are an out-of-date work which interests none but the uninitiated into the science of history. Dr. Rajendra Lala Mitra's great work 'The Indo Aryans' is destined to maintain its historical worth for all times to come, but it is not complete. Though in a sense fragmentary it stands out as an authority to which the student must always turn as his only safe guide in the labyrinthine mazes of ancient Indian history. Coming further down we are not aware of any single work which deals with the Hindu Kingdoms that preceded the Pathan rule in India more elaborately than Elphinstone's History of India; but of Pathan rule in our country we have no authentic record, at any rate in English. There is, however, no dearth of reliable histories of the Mogul period. Our interest in a book like Elliott's History of India as told by her own historians can never fail, any more than in Orme's Historical Fragments of the Mogul Empire. In connection with this period a work of perennial interest is the Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan by Colonel James Todd whose two volumes acquire special importance and value from the fact that the author writes not from the point of view of a critic of Rajput history but with intense sympathy,—a feature which is wholly absent from almost all histories of India written by foreigners. Dow's translation of the Ferishta may well repay a perusal and the insight with which the late Mr. Justice Ranade produced his work on the Rise of the Mahratta power in India is remarkable. There are indeed points of difference between him and Grant Duff (History of the Mahrattas) but in comparison neither loses its pre-eminent worth. Sir Lepel Griffin's Rajas of the Panjab is an able and masterly introduction to the History of the Sikhs but it is in no way superior to Sir John Malcom's History of Central India. There can be no two opinions about the fact that the great

History of the Shikhs is that by Cunningham. I would urge upon every student of history to read these volumes—the first edition of it (1849) and not the later one published in 1852, the reason why, the reader will know, should he take pains to compare the two. Of the history of the British in India there is really a cart-load and more. Some are good, others indifferent and the rest bad. Thornton might very well be neglected but not Mill and Wilson. One who fails to study the ten volumes of this latter work misses a great delight in life. The Rulers of India series is a most valuable one as are also the lives of Sir Charles Metcalfe by Sir John Kaye and Lord Lawrence by Bosworth Smith. Both Bosworth Smith and Sir Herbert Edwardes in his life of Sir Henry Lawrence go fully into the details of the Sepoy mutiny but the standard work on that dark period is the six volumes of Kaye and Malleon. That Malleon was the only historian among Anglo-Indians is indisputable. His Warren Hastings, his French struggles in India and his Clive have not been superseded. Malleon's Warren Hastings is even superior to the three volumes of Gleig. But we must not forget to mention Sir Williams Hunter's Earl of Mayo as an intelligent history of the short reign of that unfortunate Viceroy who, if spared the full term of his office, might have been able to do more for India than many other Viceroys put together. Of smaller histories of India there is not one whose merits call for any special mention. The student may be confident that such a course of reading as we have indicated here will not fail to be recognised as a fairly complete one and the verdict of one who has gone through it on any topic of Indian historical interest will command the highest respect of his countrymen.

In Britain they are more fortunate in having had a writer who has told the story of the nation's growth with deep

insight, full knowledge and in fascinating literary style. A wonderful book is John Richard Green's Short History of the English people. The young man who reads and digests it will not be meanly equipped for the performance of the duties of a citizen. Its study is sure to lead to other studies, both literary and historical. For these studies, admirable references in the way of authorities are given in the book itself, and we are likely to go from it to the study of other English historians—Freeman, Palgrave, Stubbs, Hume, Froude, Gardiner, Lecky, Macaulay, etc. For periods in which we may be specially interested, supplementary reading may with advantage be had in such series of books as the Twelve English Statesmen, the Men of Action and Longmans Epochs of History which will be found easily accessible and very valuable. Carlyle's edition of Cromwell's Letters and Speeches is a book which should not be overlooked. Green's History only comes down to the close of the Napoleonic era (1815). For English history since then, we have to trust to various writers. Mr. Justin Mc.Arthy's History of Our Own Times is accessible and good so far as it goes. The latest edition of Cassell's Illustrated History of England comes well up to date. The growth of the British Empire will be more clearly grasped when the student has carefully read Professor Seeley's Expansion of England and in this connection Alfred Caldecott's English Colonisation and Empire will also well repay careful study.

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