

THE TEACHING OF CHRONOLOGY.*

BY DOROTHEA BEALE,

(*Late Principal of the Cheltenham Ladies' College.*)

So teach me to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom.
How far this little candle sheds its beams.

It is a much disputed matter how we shall begin to teach history. I think the practical teacher will say there is nothing like the stories of antiquity—of the world's childhood—for the early education of the childhood of to-day. The delightful tales, *e.g.*, of the Odyssey, as related by Hawthorne in his "Tanglewood Tales," or the stories of Arthur and Charlemagne, related with all the little touches which the true artist—one who loves the little ones—knows how to introduce, will form the best groundwork for history to the child; these awaken the imagination and save him from ever becoming a Casaubon, a Dryasdust.

But, on the other hand, there is much to be said for the view recently enunciated by the Emperor William, that children should begin with their own times and read history backwards. We want to give reality to history by showing that it is not something remote, to be found in books only; we want to show that the life of each child forms part of history; then we may lead him on to see that the whole world is different for each man that has lived, better for each noble life, and to feel quite early that God has sent him into the world with some work ready for him, and that his business is to do that work. Not that I would put this into so many words, but endeavour, by bringing the child's life into immediate relations with the history of his own time, to help him to realise this as the reflective powers develop. We must ever

* Reprinted from the number for April, 1891 owing to frequent enquiries as to how History Charts should be kept.

be careful not to stimulate prematurely the moral and religious feelings. "He shall grow up as a tender plant"—this is the ideal for the perfect child, and Frœbel's teaching was a sermon on that text. But the true educator will, in planting the first seeds of thought on any subject, bear in mind the later developments, without actually presenting these to the mind of the child.

The object of an Educational Union to which both parents and teachers belong is, as I understand it, to help us to see better how school and home can work in union and supplement one another. I propose, therefore, to explain a system, long used in our college, but which is even more suitable for home teaching than for the school—at least in its initial stages.

The Méthode Mnemonique Polonaise is much valued in France. It was introduced to my notice more than thirty years ago, and used by me first at Queen's College, London. It can be adapted to various purposes, but I shall dwell now on its applications as a record of time, and show the different ways in which it can be used by little children, though it is equally well adapted for Tom Brown at Oxford (who seems to have used it) and for the mature student of history. It may be made for little ones into a system of object lessons, of hieroglyphics, if you will, which appeal to the childish imagination, and help him to realise something of the proportion of things and, whilst looking at the world, as each of us must, from our own "pin-point," yet see life in relation to the lives of others.

The practice of representing to the eye by means of diagrams the facts of science, physical and social, is becoming more common: we have jagged lines indicating fluctuations in the winds or in the stocks: in an American record which has been sent to me, there are coloured squares representing the thousands of children who are regular in their attendance at school, black squares standing for the defaulting thousands. By such means we can see at a glance what the mind finds it difficult otherwise to realise. Now the system to which I refer is of a similar kind, but adapted to *time*. Since 100 years is about the limit of man's life, and we generally speak of centuries in history, we take for biography, or for history, a square

divided into 100 squares, thus, and it is read as a page of ten lines :—

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39
40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49
50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59
60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69
70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79
80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89
90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99

Now this may represent the life of a man or that of a century. To a little child it should stand at first for the former and as we must proceed from the known to the unknown, for his own life. The first square stands for the time before he is a year old—*i.e.*, the year “nought” of his life ; the second square for the time when he is one year old, and so we mark the squares accordingly. The first line gives the first decade of life, in the second line we have all the tens, in the third all the twenties, and so on ; whilst, looking vertically downwards, we have in the first row all the numbers ending with zero ; in the second those ending with one, and so on. A child very quickly learns to read on a blank chart the number corresponding to any square in the century of squares ; a line somewhat thicker is given down the centre to help the eye, and it is easy to remember that the fifty comes just beyond the central horizontal line and five beyond the central vertical line.

Now as soon as the child is able to understand it I would rule such a square and put it into a little glazed frame with a

removable back, say a transparent slate ; it would be well to have the frame oblong, so that there may be room along the left side to make a few entries of anniversary days. Then I would put in the events of the child's life. Let me give specimens: Mary is fourteen. On the top of the frame stands " Mary Jones, December 20, 1876." In the first square of Mary's chart is a little yellow star : a new life has come to light, and faint yellow paint covers the first fourteen squares, not yet the fifteenth, which is the one passing away. In the fourth square is another star : Harold makes his appearance, and his birthday is in the margin. In the next square there is a black circle, like a star or sun eclipsed—that is grandpapa's death. The next year school life begins for Mary in the Kindergarten—shall we have a little plant just peeping above the ground ? A ship will tell of the year that papa and mamma sailed for India and left their children ; another, in the opposite direction, will tell of their return some years later.

In the next line Mary enters on her eleventh year ; she is ten years old, and has done with the units. She is to go now to school ; but before she goes, on the first morning, her chart is taken from its frame, perhaps a simple doorway drawn, or something more picturesque, and the day entered in the margin, and a few words of prayer offered that she may there learn things which will make her truly wise ; and each year as the birthday comes round the blanks are diminished, new events are added, over one more square the yellow light extends.

I am sure parents will devise some very beautiful horoscopes, which may take the place of those wonderful framed samplers of old times, which it will be a joy to their children to look at in later life, as they remember the birthday addition each year, the sorrows and the joys there noted down, the prayers of the family for each new-comer, and the marriage days.

When the child has learnt the use of such a chart, he may be led on to fit these private records into the world's history. Now we can begin to speak of centuries. It will be easy for children to think of the century as a man who dies a hundred years old—who dies as the last minute of the year of 99 expires. Then the late Queen's life could be put into the century, and its relation shown to the child's own life. Some would remember the Jubilee. " It was then Mary was ten years old ; she saw

the illuminations." She can count back on the chart fifty years to '37, and there she puts a crown. Then the story might be

					☏				*
☑							☑		
W	W		V	AH		H		☒	
A				☏				V	
	+		W						
							☒		

I put in a few marks to illustrate :—1815, battle of Waterloo, a flag ; 1819, Queen's birth, a star ; 1820, George IV., a crown ; 1830, William IV. ; 1837, Accession ; 1840, Marriage ; V and A linked and another V following—*i.e.* the birth of another Victoria ; W the birth of the Prince of Wales ; and the initials of the other children are marked. The flag marks the Russian War ; the cross the death of the Prince Consort ; the linked letters for marriages. Foreign events could be put in later—*e.g.*, the Franco-German War, &c.

told of the Queen's early life, and all those familiar incidents which give to historical people a personal life (the principal ones are marked in the proper squares) : for instance, the Queen's marriage ; the birth and marriage of the Empress Victoria ; the birth and marriage of the Prince of Wales ; the death of Prince Albert, &c.

Later, what are called historical events, as opposed to biographical, are more prominent—*e.g.*, the Russian War, the Indian Mutiny, the first Great Exhibition, and striking contemporary events. The history of the Queen's life involves that of her predecessor, her sailor uncle William, and so on,

back to the beginning, to George, her grandfather ; the Battle of Waterloo brings in Napoleon, the Revolution, etc.

I venture to think that a child who begins history thus—not at the Creation, nor even at the Christian era, but at his own “nativity”—will get to understand it better than if he tried to survey the world from any other “pin-point” in time.

But when one century has been thus treated, I would place before the child a map, in which the eighteen Christian centuries are brought together thus on a small scale with some characteristic to give it individuality :—

1st Christianity	2nd Good Emperors	3rd Military despotism	4th Constantine	5th Fall of Rome
6th Barbaric Wars	7th Mahomet	8th Charlemagne	9th Alfred	10th Feudalism
11th Hildebrand	12th Crusades	13th Schoolmen	14th Rise of Middle-class	15th Renaissance
16th Reformation	17th Religious Wars	18th Political Wars	19th Revolution	20th

Later, we should make such a chart on a larger scale, and with room for ruling and marking important events. We use charts coloured for various periods of English History—*e.g.*, the Roman occupation, the various Royal Houses. The four periods of five centuries each, form good divisions for Modern History. In the first line we have, roughly, from Augustus to the Fall of Rome, and in England the period of Roman occupation. In the second line we have the period of barbarian settlements—tribes are changing into nations. In the third line we have, speaking roughly, the Mediæval period. In the fourth Modern History.

In the first instance, the greatest prominence should be given to English History, events in contemporaneous history being very gradually introduced. One great good of this plan of laying out a map of history from the parents' point of view, is that the well-read and cultured mother can do excellent

work—can do exactly what the school wants done—without having that systematic knowledge of history which only the school-teacher can be expected to possess. Thus the mother or sister, with the chart before her, may choose the period or episode most familiar to her; the frame-work will prevent the events, which are given out of their historical order, from being shaken together into a chaos. It requires considerable thinking power to understand time-relations in history. “Lord Wolseley,” said a girl to whom his lordship was kindly showing things he had brought from Egypt—“Lord Wolseley, did you know that Pharaoh?” “Please, ma’am,” said a young servant to her mistress, “did you know Queen Elizabeth?” If from the first things are fitted into their places, there will be preparation for the systematic teaching of later school and college life.

Suppose the mother had been reading Stanley’s *Eastern Church*. She might give that dramatic description of the Council of Nicæa, or scenes from the catastrophe of the fifth century, which is specially well described in Shepherd’s *Fall of Rome*, and made vivid in the narrative of Kingsley’s *Hypatia*. In connection with the second line would come the Arthurian, Carolingian, and Alfred legends, the life of Mahomet, the formation of the future European States, ready to become “Christendom,” and able to unite in common warfare against the common foe. Sir James Stephen’s essay on Hildebrand* will give life to the eleventh century; the final settlement of the Northmen in England, as related in the Bayeux tapestry, will interest old and young. Then come stories of the Crusaders. In the thirteenth century we have the history of St. Louis so beautifully related by the Sieur de Joinville. Michelet’s *History of France* gives most interesting accounts of the Albigensian Crusade under De Montfort. Then comes the foundation of the orders of the Friars, the Salvation Army of that date, and the suppression of the Templars. Later, Shakespeare’s plays, Scott’s novels, all will fit in.† White’s *Eighteen Christian Centuries* is invaluable for such lessons, and, above all, it creates an appetite

* Essays in Ecclesiastical History.

† White’s *Eighteen Christian Centuries*. Blackwood. 6s. Beale’s *Text book of History* (2s. 6d.) gives, in a compact form, outlines of General History, contemporary sovereigns, literary works, discoveries, &c.

for more. Gibbon's ponderous style is quite unsuitable for the young, to say nothing of other objections, but there is a useful abridgment. Milman's *Latin Christianity* is most useful. Such books as Miss Yonge's *Cameos*, and *Landmarks*, and many historical tales, will come in useful.

Now for apparatus. For elder children I have had a little book prepared which contains much on which I cannot touch in an article. But to little children I give blank sheets, which they can paint and colour, and for some time we let them mark in important events of English history alone; at first making very distinct marks, and colouring the chart for different periods. Into this framework we can subsequently introduce contemporary events abroad. The child would learn first only English kings, as she would the shape of a constellation.

In France movable beads are used to mark the different events: this I have found an excellent plan for little children at home. Or children can mark in events with the pencil. Then a game can be made by a number of children trying who can set up most quickly the dates agreed on in the model chart—white, black, and other coloured counters representing different sovereigns, etc.; or small chessmen may stand for kings, chess castles for sieges, chess bishops for churchmen, knights for war, pawns for famous men. Older pupils like to make a pictorial chart for themselves. I have one giving the reign of Queen Mary; 1553, her accession, and a picture of the Tower, to which Northumberland and others were sent; 1554, a block telling of executions consequent on Wyatt's rebellion, and a dove with an olive branch to tell of Philip's intercession for Elizabeth; 1555, there is a picture of a martyr at the stake; and a hand in flames for Cranmer; 1557, a scroll stands for the first covenant in Scotland, and a sword for the war with France; 1558, a heart with the word Calais reminds us of Mary's words, and a crown marks the accession of Elizabeth.

For grown-up students, who are reading a short period, we have exercise books ruled on a larger scale, in ten lines, and they simply write in words anything they wish to remember, and thus acquire a knowledge of dates without learning them.

I give as an appendix a specimen chart of the sixteenth century. The crown may mark the accession of Henry VIII.,

XVI. CENTURY CHART.*

1500 Columbus Prisoner Jubilee	1501	1502	1503 Julius II.	1504	1505	1506	1507	1508	1509 Henry VIII.
1510	1511	1512	1513 Flodden Leo X.	1514	1515 Francis I.	1516	1517	1518	1519 Charles V.
1520 Soleyman	1521 Diet of Worms	1522	1523	1524	1525 Prussia Teutonic Order secularised	1526 Baber	1527	1528	1529
1530 Death of Wolsey	1531	1532	1533 Anne Boleyn	1534	1535 Fisher and More Executed	1536 Anne Boleyn beheaded Jane Seymour	1537	1538	1539
1540 Jesuits Anne of Cleves Cath. Howard	1541	1542 Cath. Howard beheaded	1543 Catharine Parr	1544	1545 Council of Trent	1546	1547 Edward VI. Henry II.	1548	1549
1550	1551	1552	1553 Mary Spenser born	1554	1555 Persecutions	1556 Cranmer	1557	1558 Elizabeth Ferdinand I.	1559 Francis II.
1560 Charles IX	1561	1562	1563 Guise assass.	1564 Max. II. Shakspere b Henry II.	1565	1566 Rudolph II.	1567	1568	1569
		Massacre of S. Bartholomew							
1580	1581	1582	1583	1584 Orange assass.	1585	1586	1587 Mary, Queen of Scots beheaded	1588 Armada.	1589 Henry IV.
1590 Faerie Queene 3 books	1591	1592	1593 Shakspere's Poems.	1594 Hooker's Eccles. Polity.	1595	1596	1597 Bacon's Essays Shakspere's first Plays	1598 Edict of Nantes	1599

*In the children's charts there should be no dates and pictures or symbols in those places when there is printed matter. There should be no writing in the spaces, but the date must be read by the position of the space, and the event, by the picture or symbol.

Edward VI., Mary, Elizabeth ; here we have portraits. There is Henry's divorce in 1533, after which follow in quick succession, in about eleven years, five marriages, two executions of queens, and those of Fisher, More, Cromwell, and others. In Elizabeth's reign the Armada, the battle of Zutphen, and and Sir Philip Sydney's death ; and in the last line an important literary decade—the first publication of the three books of *The Faerie Queene* ; Shakespeare's first poems and first plays ; Bacon's *Essays*, and Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*. The Fleur de Lys marks the French Kings, Francis I., Henry II., the husband of Catherine de Medicis, and her three sons. Lastly, the accession of Henry IV.

The Maltese cross marks the accession of the holy Roman emperor, Charles V., and his successors. The crescent, the advance of Mahomedan power in Europe under Soleyman the Magnificent, and in India under Baber. The daggers point to the assassination of Guise, Massacre of St. Bartholomew, and the assassination of William of Orange, followed soon after by that of Henry III. In Church History the crosses mark the Diet of Worms, the sanction of the order of Jesuits by the Pope, the Council of Trent, and the Edict of Nantes, which marked the temporary pacification in France.

How valuable some such tabulated knowledge is as a basis of historical teaching, all who have tried the system are agreed. The chief advantages of this system over every other *memoria technica* are—

1. That it forms a framework, which from the first saves events from getting shaken into disorder in the memory : and the frame can be made large or small, filled but scantily at first, and gradually expanded.

2. It can be adapted to any purpose—political history, church history, literary history, the progress of scientific discovery.

3. It shows at a glance the contemporary history of different countries, yet

4. It is compact in form, so that it can be easily remembered.

5. Even if the precise date of any event is not retained, yet the general position becomes as familiar to the mind as the relative positions of places in a map of Europe.

I am sure those who have once learnt in their youth to use

the chart will never discard it, and will, as they go on to think about the philosophy of history, find that the way in which events present themselves to the mind's eye is most helpful and suggestive. The day of *Magnall's Questions*, *Brewer's Guide*, and *Pinnock's Catechisms* is gone by in the work of education, and we have learned to feel that the chief work of the educator is not to give facts, but to order them so that they can fit into the "forms of thought."

In the beautiful myth with which more than one poet of our day has made us familiar, we read that the forlorn Psyche in the course of her wanderings came to the temple of Aphrodite, and there the goddess assigned to her the task of sorting out and arranging innumerable seeds, and to her dilligence and obedience was granted at last the vision which she had lost through her faithless impatience—the vision of the God of Love. Is this, perhaps, one of the teachings unfolded in the myth—the supreme joy is to know love, but the vision of God is to be attained only by the patient discipline, by the ordered knowledge through which that which seems chaos is transformed into a Kosmos, and we are able to think God's thoughts after Him?