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ARCHIVES AND THE TEACHING OF HISTORY.

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Of all the scientific subjects connected with archives history has naturally to be mentioned first, for, although the former does not offer material only to the latter in the narrow sense of the word, nevertheless it is impossible to deny the frequent points of contact between the historian and his archives. It is not without interest to note how historians have widened their sphere of operations. Hitherto archives have only supplied data to research workers but now they are being drawn more and more within the scope of university studies. The logical development of this process is that the teaching of history in the schools will also be affected by this interest in the archives. Such an interest in the original sources of the texts and their contents is already being taken by teachers of history. The historical reader, a collection of sources, has already found its way, more or less, into all schools. Many teachers now base their lessons on the editions of original documents especially simplified to meet the needs of the schools. Many even go so far as to make the historical reader the corner stone of their teaching ¹⁾, others use it more cautiously.

Regarding the teaching of history in Estonian schools by the historical reader, J. Adamson ²⁾ at the second congress of teachers of history enunciated the following principles: the reader is to be used 1) chiefly as an illustration to make the subject clearer, 2) as a document proving to the pupils that something really happened, 3) in a lesser degree for lessons by the laboratory method, for essays etc.

This is not the place to criticize the separate motives that induce the modern teacher to devote a considerable part of the lesson to the text of documents as given later on in the reader. It is clear that the study of the original text strengthens first of all the interest of the pupils, varies the teaching and makes it more intensive. The teaching of history is on account of its own character inclined to excessive repetition and permits the employment of the basic ideas and methods of the industrial school

¹⁾ W. Schremmer, *Der neue Geschichtsunterricht*. Berlin 1920, p. 87. O. Heinze, *Geschichtsunterricht im Geiste d. Arbeitsschule*. Harz 1922, p. 33.

²⁾ „Kasvatus“ 1927, nr. 10, p. 472.

just as easily as any other subject. The process of getting to know the sources should increase the pupil's own activity; on making acquaintance with the contents of the original documents he is enabled to compare his own deductions from them with what he has learnt or is still learning. These originals awaken the pupil's imagination, force him to be scientific to a certain degree, and develop his analytical and synthetical faculties.

The problem that remains now is the question whether it is possible to put a limit to the text of the reader. Thus it may be possible to press still more authentic material in the form of the original documents themselves into the service of the teaching of history.

The text of the reader is a copy of the original document, more or less exact and more or less freely reproduced. But this is not the important point. The important thing is that the text is in any case an anaemic copy. It is a copy only of the abstract part of the contents. In this way the pupil gets to know only a part of the document, only the abstract portion, being forced to draw his own conclusions. But he has no idea of the whole.

And what he does not learn is very much. This remainder is the reserve of emotional energy hidden in the original.

The spiritual impulses given by archive documents are so much the more far-reaching for the reason that they strongly influence the pupil's emotional life, in which respect they offer greater advantages than the text-book or the historical reader. Genuine century-old documents breathe the very spirit of history which will undoubtedly conquer the pupil, as something that hitherto has been to him only an abstract idea becomes concrete. Such a document also affects his mental life, though in a lesser degree, for, even though it be a single copy or too far from reality, the pupil has till now had no idea of it and it finds him predisposed to absorb the knowledge given, thus enabling the teacher to use it again later on during the lesson. In any case, a sight of the documents and acquaintance with them are most important factors in arousing the interest of the pupils, especially the older ones, in the past.

By means of such emotional stimuli the contents of the archives increase the pupil's knowledge in a positive sense. Many an event, date, historical personage and the story connected with him and similar details fix themselves automatically in the student's mind, making it easier for him to recall the facts than it would be with the help of the text-book merely. Those teachers, who visited the exhibition of German documents of the Reformation times in the German Government archives in 1921, make no mistake when they assert that one such visit is worth many of the usual history lessons³⁾.

³⁾ W. Lippert, *Archivausstellung. Archivalische Zeitschrift* III, 4, München 1928, pp. 110—124.

In special cases, the effect of first-hand acquaintance with archive documents as the raw material of historical research may be the decisive factor in the choice of a profession by a maturer pupil. He not only gets a fairly clear picture of the sort and quality of the material but at the same time acquires some idea of the demands made by historical research. For this reason he is enabled to take a more scientific standpoint for or against history as his future speciality. At the same time he gets a clear idea of the demands the study of history will make upon him, e. g., in languages, and he can begin in good time to prepare himself. Hitherto young students have had a false conception of research work in history, either being terrified at what they consider insurmountable difficulties, or going to the other extreme and undervaluing the hardships to be overcome.

On the other hand, from the point of view of the archives, it is desirable to make them accessible to as many pupils as possible so that they can acquaint the broad masses of the public with the real worth and importance of these old documents. What could be better than to instil into the minds of the growing intelligentsia the idea that great spiritual riches, which offer exhaustive material to the interested research worker and which must be treated with the utmost care as they are irreplaceable, are hidden in archive documents? This idea has not yet become common among the educated classes. The importance of archives is not publicly denied — that would be to confess oneself an ignoramus — but it is difficult to aver that the average educated person is convinced in his heart of their true worth.

Of course, these are only special cases, cited in order that the public at large may truly estimate the necessity of preserving archives, and although it is just these special cases that are most important, nevertheless it must not be forgotten that the real appreciation of the worth of archive documents is a guarantee of the growth of respect for family papers and is favourable to the formation and care of family archives.

Hitherto school-going children have made acquaintance with the archives in two ways. a) By visits under the supervision of the teacher to the archive library where an employee has shown them the most interesting objects. b) By visits to the various archive exhibitions which are being organised by the Central State Archives' establishments, where again an employee has given explanations.

It is to be noticed that the teacher plays an absolutely passive role, being replaced by the archivist, who does not know the level of the pupils' intelligence, who has no idea of their concrete knowledge and who has not the faintest conception of what the teacher has been emphasizing during his lessons. Owing to these circumstances he can only rarely direct his explanations into the right channel. These class excursions do nothing to systematize or deepen the pupil's knowledge. In going from room to room the

pupil only sees documents of various periods unconnected with one another. Besides this, crowded as the children are between the shelves, not every pupil succeeds in getting a sight of the documents, but is forced to content himself with a view of the titles on the backs of the volumes till it is time to depart. The impression left on his mind is that there may be something interesting in all this mass of paper but nothing more. He does not carry away with him any positive knowledge which might be exploited later on in his lessons. The emotional impulses given by the sight of the documents die out for lack of fuel. No doubt such excursions cannot do any harm to the teaching of history, and in default of anything better it is necessary to resign oneself to them, but their positive results are very small.

The matter becomes a little more complicated if we look at it from the point of view of the archives. In the first place the excursion attains its objects better — it gives a certain though very superficial idea of the archives, of their range and the most important objects of the collection. But the matter also has its undesirable side. The too frequent taking out and putting back of the documents in the course of a long time are very detrimental to them and might perceptibly ruin them. Further, losses might occur owing to the difficulty of control when all the visitors are not gathered together in one place. Finally, it must not be forgotten that it is undesirable to let the public at large know the exact location of some of the more important documents.

The second method of acquainting pupils with archives, viz, excursions to archive exhibitions, is better. Here the pupil is given a firm selection intended to increase his knowledge and awaken his interest. The difficulty lies in the fact that it is impossible to arrange such exhibitions frequently. From the teacher's point of view it is impossible to rely on them as they are still special events. On the other hand, such exhibitions are always meant for larger circles of people; they cannot be arranged only with an eye to the special needs of school children. They find here things connected with the periods which interest them and which they have been learning; the contours of the subject are not changed. But the great number of exhibits wearies the pupils, and the objections stated above apply in this case also to the demonstrator's explanations. Therefore, even if exhibitions meant for the general public were more frequently organised, they still would not, from the teacher's point of view, offer so much as they might. Consequently it is necessary to organise exhibitions to which none of the abovementioned objections would apply.

That means the organisation of special exhibitions for school children with the single purpose of aiding the teaching of history, making the exhibition at once both more illustrative and more comprehensible. But in order to obtain the best possible results, the exhibitions must fulfil certain conditions.

A *sine qua non* is the active participation of the teachers themselves in the exhibition, all the explanations being given by them. For this reason they should first acquaint themselves with the exhibition before taking their pupils there for a visit. Some teachers have already used this method and have obtained good results. We might go still farther and say that the teachers should assist in organising the exhibition, in the work of co-ordinating the theme and the exhibits. The active work, of course, should be left to the archivist, but the teachers should give their opinions about the material, registers, etc. and call attention to omissions before the exhibition is opened.

It is not necessary to go at length into the reasons why the teachers should be the only lecturers. The thing is self-evident, for only in this way can the visit to an exhibition acquire the broader characteristics of the history lesson.

The writer would like to draw the attention of the reader to the fact that such visits have their negative sides too. Just as a botanical garden in spite of its size is unable to give a picture true to nature in every respect, or a zoo a representation of the wild animals in their natural state, so an archive exhibition does not give a picture of the period it deals with in its historically correct proportions, even though the deviation from the truth may be unimportant. The small number of documents and their accidental preservation put their seal on the incompleteness of the exhibition. The character of the material itself, reconstructing the period on the basis of documents, is like a mosaic, composed of varicoloured pieces of stone; and as the latter cannot, in spite of its many hues, be compared with an oil-painting for clarity of impression, so an exhibition composed of single documents cannot convey an idea of the period in question with the same exactitude as a description in words. Some incidents are inevitably emphasized while others are passed over in silence. An unenlightened and uncritical hearer can easily come to wrong conclusions. The principal problem of the lecturer, therefore, is to see that he does not overstep the historical truth, as the teacher is the one who knows the extent of the pupils' knowledge and their manner of thinking and only he has any idea of what may mislead them.

As regards the contents of the exhibition, it should be kept in mind that the pupil should be given an opportunity to assist intellectually by translating some of the exhibits, which ought to be of the period which he has just been taught in school and of which he has already acquired a certain perspective, although some teachers recommend acquaintance with the archives first.

The document, treating of familiar events or personages, rouses associations in the pupil's mind and heightens his interest in that part of the archives which has been unknown to him till now. The pupil should be given an opportunity of acquainting himself pretty thoroughly with the documents, for which purpose he should be supplied with a catalogue to which explanations and

translations might be added; the pupil can read the easier texts for himself. In analysing the contents the teacher will have many favourable opportunities to arouse the attention and activity of the pupils and to direct the latter into the proper channels. Therefore it follows that the exhibition should not be too-overpowering, too kaleidoscopic or too tiring. *Non multa sed multum!* The size of the exhibition depends a great deal upon the time to be spent in seeing it. Judging *a priori* the number of documents on view should not be much over thirty. The importance of the contents should also be taken into consideration as some must be dwelt on longer than others and may have longer translations. In such cases the number of exhibits should be reduced. The objects should be set up separately so that they are visible to all the pupils at once and enable the latter to concentrate their attention.

Some of the most vital questions are these: for what schools is the exhibition to be organised? For the primary or middle schools and secondary schools? If the latter, is the exhibition to be for the lower or the higher classes, or both?

Let it be said at once that the organisation of an exhibition for primary schools is not worth while as the pupils do not know enough history or any foreign language. For these reasons their interest is not great enough, besides which the documents appeal neither to their intellects nor their feelings. The older pupils may be influenced by one thing or another and can compare their abstract ideas with the concrete as exemplified by the archive documents, whereas to the younger pupils, thinking only in concrete terms, the documents mean no more than any other object.

The organisation of such exhibitions for the lower classes of the middle schools and secondary schools is also beset with difficulties. The paucity of the material and its onesidedness makes the value of an exhibition questionable. An exception may be made in favour of Tallinn, where material about the Middle Ages is fairly abundant in the Municipal Archives. The older documents suffer from two drawbacks — illegibility and unintelligibility, although a good catalogue might help a great deal. Although the Tartu Municipal Archives do not lack old material, yet the quantity is so small that continuous exhibitions can be organised only from the archives of the Swedish era. In the smaller towns of Estonia the position is still more difficult, as the archives do not go further back than the foundation of the town. In Narva or Pärnu it might still be possible to illustrate the Swedish era, but elsewhere a beginning has to be made from Russian times if the exhibition is not to be limited to a single document of the earlier times. In short, we come down to the fact that the organisation of archive exhibitions is of greater success when arranged for senior classes of secondary schools — especially for the humanitarian section.

W. Lippert ⁴⁾ thinks it undesirable to demonstrate the periods

⁴⁾ Lippert, op. cit., pp. 110—124.

of stagnation. It might be true, generally speaking, but we need not pay so much attention to this statement as they do in Germany, more especially from the exhibition point of view. We have enough hidden drama in our periods of stagnation which it is easy enough to discover with the help of the reading-pieces. Lippert's opinion is comprehensible because it not only emphasizes the instructive side of the archival exhibition but also the need of arousing a patriotic sentiment in the onlooker. He therefore tries to bring to life just those epochs which are favourable to the growth of national feelings. Although the purpose is praiseworthy, it is necessary to be careful in the choice of the means. We might be misled, as is clearly proved by Lippert himself, who found it possible in his exhibition of the Thirty Years' War to retaliate on the French for slandering the Germans in the Great War of 1914 on account of the atrocities committed in Belgium.

Besides the quantity of material, another factor in the choice of themes is the number of times the pupils of any given class can visit an exhibition. Several variations are possible — with frequent visits the themes may be more specialised; with rarer visits they should be more general. These rarer visits which might be made at the end of the school year could be so arranged as to give a general view of the period studied if the condition of the archives permits, while the number of exhibits should be increased. More frequent visits would give the pupils an opportunity to absorb more knowledge. The exhibition would be the culminating point of the year's work, forming a framework into which the other parts of the course would fit themselves.

The Central State Archives have made possible a number of different exhibitions dealing with the Swedish times. We might mention in passing such themes as: The Position of the Peasants in Swedish Times; the Relations of the Swedish Government to the Peasants; the Reduction of the Estates; Military Affairs of the Swedish Period; the Northern War in Estonia; Serfdom in the XVIII Century; the Emancipation of the Serfs; the Russification of Estonia under Alexander III; the Question of Education in the Estonian Language during the Russian Era, etc.

The combined problem of the Estonian Cultural Archives and the Central State Archives should be the demonstration of documents relating to our renaissance, though we really come into contact with literary history here. The teachers and superintendents of the archives should co-ordinate their activities in order to avoid parallelisms. It should also be possible to arrange exhibitions dealing with civics and economics.

In order to further the aims of the exhibition and avoid gaps, the organizer might permit himself greater freedom in certain respects. He might insert among the exhibits law-books, seals, models, engravings, etc., and even prepare graphic schemes of judicial processes, office arrangements and so on. Of course,

these last should not be numerous as they would otherwise spoil the general effect. One should be especially careful with the engravings and models as they might easily push the archive documents entirely into the background. It would, perhaps, be better to put them into an entirely separate room if one cannot do without them.

Three elements play an important part in the organisation of such exhibitions — documents, arrangements and premises. We have already discussed the first of these. The centre of gravity in the second of these requirements is whether the teachers of history find the educative exhibition desirable and whether they agree to play an active role in it. As regards the rooms the archive authorities themselves should choose premises to answer all the requirements of the occasion.

To sum up. It is no secret that the organisation of educational exhibitions is connected with difficulties, but these are not insurmountable. Success is worth striving for both by archivists and teachers; and although it may seem to be beyond the scope of the former, who, if not the archivist, should be more interested in uniting the past with the present? What could be a more suitable form of investment of the spiritual capital accumulated on the dusty shelves of the archivist than the development of the mental capacities of youth?

Arhiiv ja ajaloo-õpetus.

Seni on arhiiv pakkunud andmeid ajaloo uurimisele. Kõige viimasel ajal võib tähele panna, kuidas arhiiv rööbiti sellele astub üha enam ka ülikooli ajaloo stuudiumi teenistusse. Protsessi loogiline areng on, et järgmises faasis ka ajaloo-õpetus koolis huvi hakkab tundma arhiivide vastu.

Moodsas ajalooõpetuses on seni allikmaterjalina rakendamist leidnud trükitud ajaloo-lugemikud. Kohtades, kus see võimalik, tuleks abiks võtta ka autentseid ürikuid. Viimastel on lugemikuga võrreldes see lisaväärtus, et nad suudavad õpilast emotsiooniliselt rohkem mõjutada ja õpetust konkretiseerida. Arhiivaalide nägemine mõjutab õpilase tunde-elu ja äratav temas peiteeti algupärase ürikmaterjali kui seesuguse vastu. Muidugi rikastab arhiivaali sisu õpilast vahenditult ka uute positiivsete teadmistega.

Õpilaste tutvustamine arhiiviga arhiivi magasiiniruumide külastamise näol pakub õpilastele ajaloo-õpetuse seisukohalt vähe, kuna siin seletusteandjaks on arhiiviametnik, kes lähemalt ei tunne õpilaste teadmiste taset ega nende mõttekäiku. Samuti ei ole eriti tulemusrikas üldiste arhiivaalide näituste külastamine õpilaste ekskursioonide poolt, kus seletusteandjaks on samuti arhiiviametnik.

Ajaloo-õpetuse seisukohalt tuleb soovitavaks lugeda koolide jaoks eri näituste korraldamist. Nende korraldamisel peaksid

eksponaatide valikul ja regestide valmistamisel kaasa töötama ka ajaloo-õpetajad, kes oleksid ka seletusteandjaiks õpilasile näituste külastamisel — igäüks oma õpilastele.

Sellised näitused võiksid aset leida kuni 2 korda aastas ja oleksid mõeldud eriti gümnaasiumi viimaste klasside õpilastele. Nende korraldamiseks ei puudu reaalsed väljavaated eriti suuremates linnades.

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