

clusion that many who oppose minute criticism think such work has to do with the grammatical vivisection of poetry. Now I know I speak for most of my colleagues when I say that *grammatical questions are never mentioned in literature classes*, and that any who oppose our methods on the assumption that we parse and analyze words and sentences, may rest in the assurance that the last eight years' work in this province has entirely banished that outrageous system of instruction. When we speak of minute criticism, we mean a close and searching investigation of the meaning (intellectual and emotional) of the poet, and an endeavour to follow the mental process by which he pursued his subject and clothed it in words.

Under the impression that nothing would do more to convert our friends who oppose minute reading than a familiar acquaintance with our work, I shall endeavour by a few examples to illustrate what I understand by a term which has been much discussed.

The best way of learning to love and appreciate flowers is to study them. "Ah, yes," says one, "but not to pull them to pieces, to cut and split and destroy them!" Now this is a nice question, which perhaps we cannot decide for any but ourselves. Is it not possible that a man of scientific mind finds an *æsthetic* delight in scientific process—even *his* highest delight? In that man the analytic and the *æsthetic* are one, reconciled. Some have told us that art has nothing to do with morality, yet there can be no question that in some natures the *æsthetic* and the moral are reconciled, identical in fact. But remember no one now advocates tearing a poem to pieces in a merely botanical spirit: to study a flower may be to gaze at it tenderly but closely, and to many cultivated natures only the poem that will bear the most critical scrutiny will bring the com-

placent pleasure of *æsthetic* satisfaction. Many even doubt their own good taste, and refuse to gorge themselves with what they suspect to be delicious only, because of a coarse palate. Certainly the top gallery applauds a crude piece of platitudinous moralizing or a tinsel sentiment, while the parquette smiles at the playwright's trick, if some cherub up aloft gets it into his head that the playwright is making a fool of him, why should he go on applauding? Now in school we are engaged in convincing pupils that they must learn to look closely, learn to see the flaws and crudities, not to take mere Brummagem for jewels of the rarest quality. Which of us can be sure of taste? Are you quite certain you couldn't be imposed upon by rubbish if it had the forgery of a great name attached to it? This, then, is what I mean by minute criticism—such a method of reading as will enable us to tell the difference between precious and worthy poetry, and verse of a commonplace or flashy kind. Grammar has nothing to do with this. Indeed this best work in literature can hardly be tested by examination papers of any kind. Honest study will bring different conclusions in different minds: indeed if there were no spurious admiration the *quot homines tot sententiae* principle would be most strikingly illustrated in art. But examinations will test familiarity with prescribed texts and careful balancing of expressions, though perhaps very little more.

Let us compare the minutely critical method as generally understood now, with the broad and general method on the one hand, and with the perfunctory time-killing, parsing-and-analysis method on the other. At present I shall take only a short extract or two and ask questions on them in the three methods. In another paper I shall endeavour to show how the minute method may be ap-