

forest of October laying its colored wreath upon the grave of summer that has just gone; the distant heartless sky. This splendid (except to the soul that is nothing but dead pros:) faculty is heightened by Thomson, Scott, and Longfellow.

For example, human nature is a department subtler than metaphysics. The laws of the heart elude the deepest seer. The novel of Dickens and the drama of Shakspeare are profound teachers of the science of the heart, broadening and enriching the sympathies.

For example, it may sound curious to say that a systematic perusal of certain branches of our literature is at least a helpmeet to spiritual convictions. Nothing can be more obvious however. The great productions that have passed the time of trial and are destined never to die while the mind can think or the heart feel are the highest expressions of human nature in its highest reaches. As the highest sea-wave rolls up along the beach and leaves a long delicate crooked line of sand as a lasting mark which subsequent waves do not obliterate, so lofty poetry is the record of the soul in its sublimest exercise. It fortifies the mind against that malaria of materialism that is abroad by arousing the deeper and more intuitive sympathies. Cowper, Shelley, Wordsworth, Milton, Coleridge, Tennyson, Whittier, may be selected in this respect. Wordsworth hovered in a twilight between the visible that is shadowy and the invisible that is sure; the quiet and the stormy elements of nature were linked to realities beyond. It must be candidly allowed that there was an unconscious tendency to Pantheism, but Pantheism that incorporates the world in God is an infinitely nobler creed than the materialism that blots out the unseen and takes no note of the highest factors in history; indeed there is a form of Pantheism that is quite near the orthodox belief in a distinct Deity; they seem to merge and shade off into each other; but, of a truth, reverent agnosticism is the proper attitude in this lofty but obscure region.

Other lines of thought are started by a careful perusal of English classics, and the inevitable result is that the nature is widened and enriched.

IV. *Proper habits of interpretation.*—In an age when rationalism, like an undertow, seems to undermine our religion, and when scepticism, instead of fastening upon the small flaws of our faith, rather modifies it in order to square with the signs of the time, it is obviously impossible to overrate the function of interpretation; for, during such a critical period partly caused by the growth of science that vows to worship facts and facts only, it is of little avail whether one system of religion is more complete than another; theories can only stand the trial when they are founded upon a proper interpretation of the statements of scripture. A canon of interpretation is perhaps the chief problem in present theology.

Is it possible to overvalue the training in interpretation which an unflagging study of English literature affords? We think not.

Look more deeply! There is a scale in utterance. The piece of plain, passionless, colorless prose can be interpreted with little effort, e.g. a book of history, or a list of scientific facts; the language is transparent and explicit. This is the bottom of the scale; the style of utterance at the top of the scale is altogether different. It is colored, impassioned: it contains allegory, vision, parable, legend: it swarms with hope, joy, sarcasm, despair, anger, sorrow. This is the main style of scripture, and it is tenfold more arduous to gather a system out of it than out of a more prosaic and even work; the exegete must be on his guard lest he unconsciously wrench and torture out of a passage what a legitimate interpretation forbids.