

under another set. For instance, it is one thing to use "John Gilpin" with little London children, and quite another to use it with, say, children in a country village in Devonshire; while, again, a poem about ants and beetles and glowworms will be more readily imagined by country than by town children. I need not go into detailed argument in this matter. You will, I know, agree with me that a choice of pieces suitable for educational use may be made; and that to meet the various degrees of progress and development of our pupils the pieces chosen may be arranged in a properly graded series, according to the character, degree and number of the demands which they make on the reader. What I want more particularly to urge upon you is that, when making your choice and when about to give your lesson, you should carefully observe and consider what the demands of the piece in question actually are; whether any of them can be met by what the pupils already know and feel; whether the children can be helped to know and to feel what is wanted for the rest; and, if so, how. If you consent to consider these points, it will not be necessary for me to lay any stress on a fact of my experience—and probably also of yours—that the difference in result is immense between leading our pupils through a carefully graded course, and plunging them (as we too often do, especially in Latin and Greek) headlong into literature, the greater part of which is wholly outside their sympathies, and much beyond their powers to imagine and to understand.

One of the first and most important things, then, which call for our attention in literature-teaching is the introductory lesson, or rather talk, which is to prepare our pupils for the demands about to be made on them; the recalling and brightening up of the material already possessed and which

is now needed, the imparting of the fresh material required, the glimpse at the kind of construction which is to follow—which will often mean the bringing in of a rough model of some kind, *e.g.*, a football match to introduce a battle, modern emigration to introduce the coming of the Danes, pictures of people and places, etc.—the attuning of the feelings, the awakening of interest; or, as I have sometimes more briefly expressed it, the putting the child in the right place, turning his face in the right direction, and striking the keynote. If the poem be very short, all this can be done at once; if it be long, then this preparatory work should be done in easy stages, introduced just when they are wanted. Do not think that I am recommending anything elaborate and grandiose. You will not, of course, like an Italian peasant, build a large and imposing gateway to lead up to the merest scrap of a cottage. Everything should be in proportion and harmony, both with the subject and with the children. Even we grown-up people know in our own persons how, at times, a little preliminary chat on the subject will put us in the right tune for a picture, or music, or a play which, otherwise, might have found us somewhat cold and sluggish and irresponsive. Some years ago I published in the *Journal of Education* two specimens of such introductory talks as I mean ("Training of the Constructive Imagination," July, 1885, and "Training of the Æsthetic Sentiment," Sept., 1887), and you will find a very good one, of a somewhat similar nature, by Mr. H. C. Becching, in his excellent little edition of "Julius Cæsar." As a rule, editors of English classics for schools give us instead a biography of the author and a discourse on dates and originals—useful for getting up with a view to marks. I do not know any other use they can have in schools.