

schools for boys where a better plan is in use ; and I could make a list of thirty girls' schools where the work is better still—naturally, inasmuch as so many of our women teachers are trained.

The error of the plan I have been speaking of seems to me to arise partly from the mistaken idea that the teaching of Latin and Greek in our schools is *literature* teaching ; and partly from the endeavour to transfer the method used for Latin and Greek to the teaching of English, without noticing that most of the conditions in the latter case are not the same. But to assume that all pupils who are not preternaturally dull must be able at once and of themselves to understand any piece of poetry as soon as it is put before them, shows an ignorance both of child-nature and of the art of all good poets. A poet, whether he writes for a little clan or for a whole nation, presupposes many things in his readers. He assumes that the materials he uses are either already familiar to them or may be readily understood and imagined by them ; that, inasmuch as he both aims at suggestion and works by means of suggestions, these will be perceived and appreciated ; that the language he uses, his treatment of his subject, and his method of construction are all well within the powers of his readers ; that they possess certain feelings, and that what he sets before them will call these feelings into action. He trusts that the associations which attach themselves to the things mentioned and to the very words and phrases used, will exist for his readers as well as for himself. He counts on his allusions and the particular bearing of them being known and perceived, or they will darken and not shed light upon his meaning. Nay, if the writer be a Milton or a Virgil or a Burke, he will go further, and import into his work,

phrases, lines and even whole passages from well-known sources, with little or no change in them ; and, not fearing the charge of plagiarism, will rely on the very *familiarity* of his borrowings to produce an effect of literary beauty. He expects the descriptive power of his epithets to be appreciated, the graphic force of his metaphors, the beautifying and illustrative effects of his similes, to be perceived and recognized. He appeals constantly to the general experience of humanity. These things, and perhaps others, the literary artist demands from his readers. He will succeed or fail mainly according to his skill in these matters—though, of course, his special singing gift and novelty of invention will also count for much, especially with the highly cultured few. The list I have given is a long one, but of course I do not intend to imply that all these demands are made in every case. We must, however, be prepared for all or any of them being made in any particular poem.

If you now call to mind your knowledge of what children know, what they feel, and the degree and nature of their insight into language, the first result will probably be a disposition to deny that literature is a subject fitted for school use. But a little reflection and some small amount of experience will, I think, cause you to modify this opinion. You will see that, though it may not ever be possible to convey to our pupils the whole of the author's meaning (how many adults ever take in the whole meaning?), it may still be possible to convey enough of the meaning to make the endeavour well worth our while. You will notice that poems and prose works differ considerably in the character, degree and number of the demands which they make on the reader ; and that what is hard under one set of circumstances may be easy