

as that 1895 deep-blue, gilt-stamped edition of Tennyson's poems.

There is only one objection that I am obliged to make to our school editions: they do not contain all the poems that I should like to place before the pupil. When the pupil, unaided by the teacher, would read more—our *Olivers* always ask for more—the selected edition is found wanting. I have never yet been accused of extravagance, when, in these days of cheap books, I have asked that each pupil provide himself with a complete edition of the author.

The annotated edition certainly provides valuable material, which the pupils and the teachers appreciate, I hope, proportionately to the annotator's expenditure of time and energy. If a lexicographer, as Dr. Johnson puts it, is a harmless, necessary drudge, much more so is the annotator of school classics, for his is solely a work of love. If he does not love the poet, it is not often that chill penury forces the work.

The teacher's position is not the same: the author is now *a* favorite, now *the* favorite, and now not valued. Well, there is a recognized authority to choose the poet for study. It is inevitable that the works chosen are classic, and just as inevitable that there is much good derivable from a humble, reverent study of any classic poet. Moreover, it is the pleasure, the privilege, the duty of every teacher to make his pupils see mainly only what is best, with the aim of cheering, of refining, of ennobling. Yes, "if you look on the ground you must see dirt." As a rule, take a glance downwards to avoid puddles and mud, but otherwise keep the eyes off the ground. Here is a case of which I know. I quote from a High School pupil's letter to me: "We have a new teacher in Literature, and he has made me feel better; he loves Tennyson, and makes me love *him*, too." [I suppose the "him" is Tennyson.] "Our former master disliked Tennyson, and kept telling us how much better somebody else did the same thing. We did naught but grumble. How much happier we are!"

As I read that letter I asked myself again, "Why can't we all be optimists?"

Of course, a feigned love of a poet on the teacher's part and on the pupil's part must be discounted. We trust that if a sufficient number of intellectual beings see good in an author, good there is in him, even if we cannot detect it. Indeed, it hurts a man's pride to say "I do not know." Yet that man knows that too often a dislike arises from prejudice or from ignorance. The case reminds me of Locke's words: "To be rational is so glorious a thing that two-legged creatures generally content themselves with the title." Alas and alas! some two-legged creatures are teachers. The syllogism is easily completed.

Thinking that the members of this association would like to know from Junior Leaving pupils what is one function of English poetry, at Christmas time, on a Literature paper I asked, "What importance do you attach to the study of English poetry in comparison to your other studies?" I choose citations from a few answers.

A girl wrote:—"Poetry plays a very important part in our studies. After working hard at a mathematical problem, how restful it is to turn to the pleasant subject of poetry!"

A bright boy:—"In comparison with other studies, it may not be of such practical value in most walks of after life, though in oratory, whether in the pulpit or at the bar, or in the House, it must needs be of great value. Then it imparts a tone, a finish to one's conversation. I want to be a good conversationalist. Poetry makes me observant of little things that make life happy. Even in mathematics it helps me, for it teaches me to think, and from one wee, unobtrusive clue, to follow out a whole train of profound reasoning."

Another bright pupil:—"The importance attached to a study depends a great deal upon the use of that study to you in after life. But with regard to poetry, it seems to me different; for, whether one's future life lies in the realm of law, science, theology, or even in a prosaic business life, we can hardly over-estimate the value of poetry to us. On account of its beauties of thought, its refining influences, its great moral truths, it should always hold first place."

Another boy concluded:—"Then, too, I find that the memorizing of a choice passage of my liking helps my powers of memory in a large degree."

A girl reminded me that her aim was to be an

elocutionist and so the study of poetry was her chief delight.

The Senior Leaving and Honor Matriculation form is the pride of every High School and of every High School teacher. True, the pride is occasionally in proportion to the success expected at the coming examinations, but there is a nobler pride founded on the intellect of the pupils. In English Poetical Literature the mind is concerned with Chaucer and with Shakespeare.

Chaucer has paid only a short visit to our High Schools, and next year he is not to be studied by High School pupils. It is not in place to question the wisdom of the withdrawal. It is supposable that those who have the matter in charge are acting wisely. But, since we are considering the function of poetry in the High School, it is relevant to say that Chaucer has done much to inspire. His artless simplicity—as fresh as is the month of May—has won many admirers; his picture gallery has been intensely amusing and suggestively instructive. But my greatest pleasure came from a boy-pupil's translation of the whole of the Prologue into good, modern English, iambic pentameter, rhymed couplets. Others have tried special portions, with more or less success. Singing Chaucer seems to inspire with a longing to turn a verse.

It is in this highest form that a whole play of Shakespeare is minutely studied for the first time. Much special treatment depends on the nature of the play selected, but the love of the special masterpiece means the A B C of future dramatic study. When a pupil has grasped a Shakespearean unit, he is ready to graduate from our schools in English Literature. It is extremely interesting, psychologically, to watch a scholar project himself by turns into each of the persons of the play, and to hear him weigh the why's and wherefore's of different actions. Provided a pupil is taught to believe his own opinions and deductions are to himself more valuable than are then to him valuable the remarks of, it may be, Gervinus, Hazlitt, or Dowden, it is most gratifying to listen to the various translations of persons and circumstances; to note the quick perceptions of what is extravagant or unnatural; to mark the ready appreciation of what is worthy of commendation.

One of the chief functions of this dramatic poetry is to foster originality, to make the pupil conscious of his innate strength, before he mingles with wider, greater life. The imaginary struggle—of course, as it is imaginary, it is less than the real—of different men and women, prepares, in a passive, pleasurable way, for what must be met in active form. There is need only to rouse that inborn strength of character

At the beginning of a school year, I asked this highest form of pupils to suppose they visited our school, twenty years later, and were allowed to address, for fifteen minutes, the pupils in attendance; to write a synopsis of the address. Thirty out of forty pupils sketched the usual, now almost trite, remarks about log schoolhouses and cold rooms and cross masters. On enquiry, I found that not one of the thirty had ever been in a log schoolhouse, but older persons had been heard to expatiate on the great differences between the now and the then.

Older persons are heard on many other topics that affect younger minds. The law of laziness is easy to obey. Rather than think for himself, the younger often allows the older to obtain results which he finds an indemnity in quoting as the conclusions of the more learned. If the older were the wiser—it ought to follow, too, still the thinking should be done by young and old—there would not be much harm in the quotation of opinions as truths.

One notion I heard amazed me: "I never read Milton with pleasure, because I studied him at school." I asked for the reasons and was then reminded of Falstaff's words, "Give you a reason on compulsion! If reasons were as plenty as blackberries, I would give no man a reason on compulsion." For my own part, every poem I studied at school is thrice endeared—by the poem itself, by my classmates, by my teachers. The associations awakened by a perusal are satisfactory. May such continue to be! But, older pupils, do not continue to say, even in jest, what is not true; for some younger minds in their innocency take it—your fashionable fad—for truth that poems studied in school are spoilt.

Another somewhat antiquated notion, found at times by derivat or by inheritance in our highest class, is that you cannot understand English poetry,

say Shakespeare, familiarly quoted as knowing little Latin and less Greek, or Tennyson, without a knowledge of Latin and Greek. I do not mean to argue. Yet a word. All knowledge is relative, and the more one knows of every other branch of learning, the better he understands and appreciates his special study. Each branch is a perfect part of a perfect whole, and seldom, if ever, does a mortal arrive at a correct solution of one part. Can't I taste perfectly a peach unless I know the taste of a pear? Must I taste all species of apples to know the taste of one species of apple? Enough! To advance the study of our pet branch of learning, we couple it with that which seems best to advance the interests of one or of both. It is fashionable to know this or that and so the infection spreads. However, the student of English poetry knows that by it his mind is broadened in proportion as he studies it and all else.

I cannot conclude this paper without expressing a wish that more adequate facilities may soon be afforded for the study and the official recognition of our own mother tongue. It is not easy to understand how one can excel in dead classics, in live mathematics, and be indifferent to the parent speech; how, knowing little, and caring less, concerning the habits of our language, he wishes to claim the privileges of citizenship in a British community; how, scarcely able correctly to address an envelope and to pen a letter, he can sleep at night.

We send our High School pupils to the universities, when only the elements of our lordly language is theirs; when they have but tasted of the Pierian springs of English letters; and how gladly we should see them able to graduate in their mother tongue! This is no new striving. Listen to DeQuincey: "If there is one thing in this world that, next after the flag of his country and its spotless honor, should be wholly in the eyes of a young poet, it is the language of his country. He should spend the third part of his life in studying this language, and in cultivating its total resources. He should be willing to pluck out his right eye, or to circumnavigate the globe, if by such a sacrifice, if by such an exertion, he could attain to greater purity, precision, compass, or idiomatic energy of diction." Now, a third part of one's life is surely worth an honor degree in our best university.

Once more, the function of English poetry in our High Schools is to cheer, to refine, to ennoble, to make men and women, whether university degrees are acquired, or in whatever path life leads. Assuredly, "sooner or later that which is now life shall be poetry, and every fair and manly trait shall add a richer strain to the song."

#### THE WASP AND THE BEE.

A wasp met a bee that was just passing by,  
And he said, "Little cousin, can you tell me why

You are loved so much better by people than I?"

"My back shines as bright and as yellow as gold,  
And my shape is most elegant, too, to behold,  
Yet nobody likes me, for that I am told."

"Ah, cousin," the bee said, "'tis all very true,  
But if I were half as much mischief to do,  
Indeed they would love me no better than you.

"You have a fine shape and a delicate wing,  
They own you are handsome, but then there's  
one thing  
They cannot put up with, and that is—your  
sting.

"My coat is quite homely and plain, as you see,  
Yet nobody ever is angry with me,  
Because I'm a harmless and diligent bee."

From this little lesson let people beware,  
Because, like the wasp, if ill-natured they are,  
They will never be loved, if they're ever so fair.

A Christian school is made by the atmosphere, the general tone, the surrounding objects, the character of the teacher, the constant endeavor, the loving tact, the gentle skill by which the light and spirit of Christianity—its lessons for the head, for the heart, for the whole character—are made to pervade and animate the whole school life of the child, just as the good parent desires that they should animate his whole future life in all his manifold duties and relations as man and citizen.—*Rev. J. J. Keane.*