

as living formulas, they have not carried men to the highest levels of moral and intellectual and physical achievement. All are agreed that the aim of education is to interpret life, and to enable the individual to live with the greatest possible benefit to himself and his fellows. It is when we ask what is understood by life and what is the relative value of its various aspects that we are met with every shade of opinion. The educational world seems to be divided into hostile camps. There is a conflict between literature and science. As to literature, and its instrument language, the battle between ancient and modern, humorously described by Swift, rages along the whole educational line, and German and French are pitted against Greek and Latin. Even among the sciences themselves all is not peace. The so-called concrete sciences, which have made such remarkable progress in recent years, are striving to diminish the ground long occupied by pure mathematics in the educational world. The outcome of all this turmoil no man can foresee; perhaps discussion will never cease; perhaps, as Sainte Beuve somewhere says, there will come an age when people will write no more.

And now let us turn to some of the ordained agencies for teaching, and see if the results in English, for instance, are what they ought to be. Not long ago the newspapers gave a piece of information which disclosed an extraordinary state of things. Some educational vacancy had to be filled in Ontario, and many of the candidates who applied for it were unable to spell correctly. Of course, severe reflections on the method of teaching English in schools and colleges followed. To the popular mind, Universities are places where the defects of elementary education should be remedied, and scarcely anything more. But they were not remedying these defects. They were allowing men to take a degree without requiring that standard in orthography which schools, even of a low grade, ought to attain and to exact. By some writers comparisons were made between our system and those of other nations. A boy taught at Eton or Rugby was credited with ability to spell English correctly in virtue of his classical training. The attention he had to give to verbal forms and shades of thought, as well as to scholarly translation and to prose and verse composition, was the cause of his being able to write his own language respectably. It was maintained, on the other hand, by those who look on classics with distrust, that the time spent in acquiring a perfectly useless knowledge of Latin and Greek was precisely the root of the whole evil. All the fault findings and attacks, however, seemed to converge in a demand for the teaching of more English composition—too much English composition was impossible.

I repeat that this is an odd state of things and an unpardonable one. That colleges should permit men to graduate who cannot spell words which belong to the ordinary vocabulary of our language admits of no excuse. Bad spelling is the one sure mark of the illiterate. Now and then geniuses spell badly, as a student once reminded me when he was trying to excuse some glaring blunder he had made; but gen-

uses are not the chief concern of academic legislation. Why colleges do not take a firmer stand in regard to this question might well be asked. The reply would likely be made that the fear of unpopularity and diminished numbers following on increased requirement had induced existing leniency. And, truly, the constant reference made to numbers is wearying; the prominence given to them when higher things ought to be spoken of is undignified. If a University takes care of itself, if it develops its power in the light of all that is best and soundest, guards its intellectual life with jealousy and does not waste it, watches keenly what is taking place elsewhere, and does not languish in an atmosphere that fails to invigorate, the numbers will take care of themselves. Two diametrically opposite causes produce the same result. A degree that is very easy to obtain will be obtained by many—a degree that carries its weight with it, the world over, will be sought by many. But before the first step can be taken towards that degree, the average man should be required to show that he can write his own language intelligently and grammatically. Indeed, the very leniency of which I spoke just now may be due to the feeling that the simple practical use of English is, after all, an affair of the school. And let me add in regard to entrance at college, that one of two courses must be followed strictly. On the one hand, the old custom of the Scotch Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, for example—a custom which they have recently and most wisely forsaken—might be adopted and no entrance examination required, of the general student; or, on the other hand, if an entrance examination is required, there should be no loopholes by means of which ignorance can enter and get itself established on a regular academic footing. Better that a palpably weak portion of the general academic body should be got rid of than that it should depress the vitality of the whole, even though numbers might be diminished for the time or the exceptional cases in which ignorance is not due to inability be left to shift for themselves. What is exacted of the matriculant at present, average ability can soon acquire.

But to return to the lower ordained agencies for teaching—the schools, and to the teaching of English, which belongs to the living formulas of modern systems of education. In some respects old times and old methods, older than many persons imagine, are being reverted to now. In one respect the modern world differs entirely from the intellectual centre of the ancient, so far as education is concerned. A Greek youth was never asked to trouble himself with any language but his own; Egyptian or Thracian did not enter into the Greek curriculum. The languages of barbarians—and barbarians were called barbarians on the ground of speech merely—were left to barbarians. If barbarians wished to hold converse with Greeks, they had to learn sufficient Greek for the purpose. And thus it came to pass that men, who spoke one of the most subtle and powerful tongues which any nation ever used, were not good linguists. At any rate, there is evidence to show that when in the course of history the Greek had to make himself familiar with Latin, he