

to consider not only that it is worldly wise, but that it is also their bounden duty, to examine into the educational values of school subjects, and how these values may be realized; and the proposal to discuss such problems is no longer received with quite so marked an aversion or so very thinly-veiled a contempt. Of course, I am speaking of teachers in general, and not of the members of this College, the very existence of which is a protest against the teacher's ignorance of his work. That we are still a long way from being what we should be, no one feels more keenly than I do. Nevertheless, we have improved; and in no subject is this improvement making itself more visible than in the treatment of English literature—at any rate, in our girls' schools. I do not make this statement at second-hand. During the period mentioned, I have examined, and more than once, nearly all of our best known public schools in this subject; I have also examined great numbers of our high schools for girls, both orally and on paper; and I have given lessons in English literature to great varieties of pupils of all ages. It is on the results of the experience so obtained that I wish to speak this evening.

A little while ago, it used to be thought—and the opinion is, I believe, still held by a few—it used to be thought that the only way to deal with literature in schools was to choose a piece of poetry which one liked oneself very much and give it to the pupils. If they seemed to understand it and to take to it, well and good; if they did not, well, they were hopelessly dull, and there was nothing to be done. You might, perhaps, tell them that you liked the poem, and let your voice tremble a little when you mentioned its name. But beyond that all was sacrilege, mere degradation of the beautiful. To give a school flavour and to fill up the

time, you might require the whole or part of the poem to be learnt by heart; and you could require the notes at the end to be got up. These would explain a few hard words and phrases, and add a few scraps of philology and antiquarianism. Some authorities prescribe spelling and parsing. You ended up the whole with an examination, without which no subject is complete. In the examination you asked whatever chanced to strike your fancy, while at the same time you endeavoured to preserve the appearance of abstruse learning. For the life of me, I have never been able to discern where, in all this, the education came in—at least, if education is to be taken to mean the effects in knowledge, development and skill which one mind consciously produces on another. Nor do I see why we should call the process "Lessons in Literature," any more than we should call breaking stones by the roadside lessons in Geology. Of the two exercises I prefer the stone-breaking; for though, like the lessons in question, it covers you with much dust, while it spoils your facility of movement and the delicacy of your touch, still it does strengthen your arm; whereas the lessons referred to produce no beneficial result whatever. They do not even teach you spelling; nor do they improve the memory, for the memory is hurt, and not helped, when what is distasteful and ill-understood is thrust upon it. Now, I trace progress and improvement in the fact that there is an increase, slow, but steady, in the number of people who not only disbelieve in the plan I have described, but also believe in the possibility of a better plan.

To disbelieve is so easy and so cheap, and at times has almost the appearance of thoughtfulness. But positive belief in something better is the only test of real value.

I could name four of our greater