

answer to this question will show how far the class have grasped the story. One of the main difficulties in reading a play with boys, is to make them see that "all are but parts of one stupenduous whole." In a Greek play, where the amount read is about a fifth, and the textual difficulties are tenfold, this is next to impossible. Even with a play of Shakspeare it is hard enough, and with a junior class I would begin by making them read the play in Lamb's "Tales from Shakspeare."

Secondly, I would try and show them that the song is in character with the speaker. They will already have learnt something of Ariel,—the most delicate creation of Shakspeare's genius—the spirit unchartered as the air which he impersonates, soulless like the Undine whose story he may have heard from his sisters—his service punctual and willing, differing no less from the hated drudgery of Caliban than from the labour of love of Ferdinand and Miranda. What point in his character does the song bring out? It ought not to want much prompting to make an intelligent boy see the elemental impassiveness, the absence of human feeling, in Ariel's song. Contrast the Ariel in Shelley's "To a lady with a guitar." It is a ditty, not a dirge. Compare the song of Guiderius, and Arrivagus in Cymbeline. The motive of both is similar, with one striking difference.

Lastly, there remains the higher criticism of the lyric, which I would only attempt with an advanced form. The poem is not only part of a drama, but a lyric—a picture complete in itself, and coloured by a single sentiment.

What is the picture? A calm sea with crystalline depths, half revealing forests of sea-weed, and with star-strown bottom. Some one in the class will have read Kingsley's "Glaucus," or Gosse's "A Year at the Shore," or bathed off Tintagel, or (excuse the bathos) seen the Westminster or Brighton Aquarium.

What is there modern in the picture? Can you think of parallel in Greek poetry? Some will have read Theocritus, and remember Galatea, "the maid more fickle and light than thistledown, careless of her lover, and cruel as the sea."

What is the difference? A few leading questions ought to bring out the contrast between the definite conceptions, the predominance of the human element in the mythology of the Greeks, and the infinite passion, the mystery, the vague spirituality, of the moderns.

What is the dominant sentiment, the motive of the poem?—A death by drowning.

Has Shakspeare treated the same theme elsewhere in the play? Alonso thinks of his son as "bedded in ooze," and wishes that he may "lie mudded with him."—Account for the difference of tone.

Quote a similar picture from another of Shakspeare's plays. Many will have read Clarence's dream, and some will remember the "ten thousand men that fishes gnawed upon." Mr. Phillpotts here has pointed the contrast; I should have preferred a suggestion. With a picked class I might pursue the subject further, and show how Shakspeare generally viewed death, quote Claudio's "to lie in cold obstruction and to rot," the grave-digger scene in Hamlet, "our life is rounded with a sleep," or the closer parallel of the dirge in Cymbeline.

Lastly, how have other poets treated the same subject? Lessing's "Wie die Alten den Tod gebildet," Shelley's "Adonais," and "Lines written in dejection near Naples." Wordsworth's "A slumber did my spirit seal," Milton's "Lycidas," and Tennyson's "In Memoriam" would supply topics enough. And lastly, I would make them learn Webster's "Call for the

Robin Redbreast and the Wren," with Charles Lamb's criticism—"As that is of the water watery, so this is of the earth earthy. Both have that intensity of feeling which seems to resolve itself into the element which it contemplates." 1

If such a lesson as I have roughly sketched could be worked out in detail, if such criticism could be evolved from boys and not dictated to them, most would allow that a more valuable result had been attained, and that at less cost, than even the power to turn the lyric into Greek anapaests, or to construe a chorus of the Agamemnon.

But, it will be said, you aim at impossibilities; you presuppose a knowledge of English Literature, taste, judgement, and critical power, which no boy possesses. First, I would answer, that the lesson is not a fancy sketch, but was given to a sixth form of average ability. Secondly, the want of knowledge, which I freely admit, may be remedied to a great extent by good notes, or, still better, by hints given beforehand by the master. At the end of each lesson, a class should be told what will be expected of them next time. Let references be given them, let their attention be called beforehand to points which are not obvious, and we shall hear no more of the difficulty of exacting an English lesson, or the want of definite work to be done out of school.

I have only touched on one side of English teaching, and neglected what many would consider weightier matters. An essay of Bacon or Macaulay would of course require very different treatment, and would bring out their reasoning faculties far better than a lesson in Shakspeare. I have shown elsewhere how I think this can best be done.

I fear you will think me very pugnacious; but, before I conclude, I feel compelled to break a lance with my friend Professor Meiklejohn. In an admirable lecture delivered before this College, in 1868, on "What is, and what may be meant by, teaching English," Mr. Meiklejohn quotes a ludicrous specimen of the *caput mortuum* to which Ariel's Song is reduced in a popular book on English Composition, and proceeds from this text to decry "the vile art of paraphrasing." Of course, no sensible teacher would think of setting for a paraphrase a lyric like this, where the beauty consists mainly in the exquisite form and melody. Nor am I careful to defend this, or any other book, on English Composition. But I must protest against his indiscriminate onslaught on what I regard as the backbone of an English lesson. I have found by experience that a paraphrase of such a passage as Shakspeare's "If it were done, when 'tis done," &c., or Tennyson's "So careful of the type," or Bacon's "Essay on Studies," is sure to bring to the top the more thoughtful boys, and prove to the duller what they would not otherwise credit, that they do not understand one little word of their author. Mr. Meiklejohn would, I think, allow that two-thirds of a *viva voce* lesson with an author whose language, grammar, and modes of thought are as difficult as Shakspeare's, must consist in a damnable iteration of paraphrase, paraphrase, paraphrase; and I do not see why the same lesson on paper is any more objectionable, while it is certainly more searching. When Mr. Meiklejohn further asserts that this dissecting process must destroy every germ of good taste, and kill all sense of poetry in a boy, I can only say that I have not found it so, either in my own experience, or that of my pupils. The passages of English poetry that

1. Cuttings have been taken from several flower-beds—J. A. Symond's "Studies of the Greek Poets," and Dowden's "Mind and Art of Shakspeare."