

sculpture, we must see good painting and sculpture. And it is both logical and natural to acquire some interest in, and acquaintance with literature, before we enter the history of literature. Yet it is no uncommon practice in the teaching of this subject to begin with the names and dates and authors of books of which the student has perhaps not read a word, and in which consequently he has no intelligent interest. He is made to recite glibly criticisms of whose justice he can form no possible judgment, lacking the first of all requirements—acquaintance with their object. On the other hand, if we follow the natural method, we cannot go wrong; and it is a fact that men of aptitude for literature all acquire their love and knowledge of literature in the same way. They become interested in certain books; then their curiosity is awakened with regard to the authors, and the circumstances amidst which the books were produced. They are led from the study of particular works to the study of writers and periods, *i.e.*, to the history of literature. The development of interest and understanding, however, is the earlier, the more difficult, and by far the more important task. If a teacher is successful in making a student conscious in some adequate measure of the excellence of a single great work—"Hamlet," or "Lycidas," or "Waverley," or "Tintern Abbey," he has done infinitely more for that student than if he had made him a complete encyclopædia of the facts with regard to all books in the English language from Caedmon to Tennyson. The man who has in any adequate measure been made sensible of the beauty and power of any great work, has had the love of literature kindled in him, and has learnt the secret of literary interpretation.

It is at this stage, when we have the works before us, that we can

first make profitable use of the criticisms of others. Such criticisms are not dogmas to be adopted, but helps to the directing of our own eyes, and the awakening of deeper insight into that which we have already read. In making use of critical helps we should be on our guard against the common error of losing sight of the whole in the study of the parts. Too often the main end, the enjoyment and comprehension of a great work, is lost sight of in the excessive explanation of allusions and phrases. It is of course essential to accurate scholarship and honest thinking that the meaning of each word and phrase as used in the author should be understood. It is not however essential that the history and etymology of a word should be explained, except in so far as light is thereby thrown on the use of the word in the passage under consideration. The mature mind prefers that its facts and ideas should be acquired in large masses of logically connected material. The miscellaneous information obtained in notes remains in the student's mind till an examination is passed, and then, for the most part, gradually evaporates. Having warned you against this Scylla of literary study, let me caution you on the other hand against the Charybdis of slovenliness and inaccuracy. The student of literature, perhaps, more than others is tempted to diletanteism, too apt to be satisfied with a species of passive enjoyment, prone to overlook the claims of accuracy and thoroughness. Experience in my own case, and observation in that of others, have taught me that it is a great mistake to study in a subject just what we care for and what is pleasant to us. Thoroughness and completeness lend interest in time to the driest subjects, but slovenliness and self-pleasing are fatal to it. We owe a debt of gratitude to examinations, though it is the fashion