

sometimes needful for us to grasp the spirit of a nation, or of an age. At other times we must find our solution in the individual character of a writer. It may be, for example, that on comparing the works of Thucydides with those of the almost contemporary Herodotus, we should conclude that the peculiarities of the latter's history are due, not so much to the times, as to the personal character of the author himself. Thus the study of literature becomes the study of human nature under varying conditions. Its fundamental requisite is that the student should escape from himself, his own narrow conceptions and surroundings; that he should sympathize with, so far as to understand (for understanding postulates sympathy) men of very different character, in times and countries perhaps remote from his, with feelings and modes of thought even more remote. In no other pursuit is he in contact with such a variety of ideas, in no other study has he to make them so thoroughly his own. He has not done with them, as the scientific student, when he ascertains that they are false; he must comprehend their genesis, and how, though false, they once seemed true, whether the explanation lies in the writer or in his age. He becomes at home and at ease among ideas, as is the man of the world among men. As those qualities which characterize the man of the world are acquired through intercourse with men of various types, and not through intercourse simply, but through being obliged to use, and to manipulate them; so the analogous discipline of Literature gives the analogous qualities of intellectual openness and flexibility, which in turn beget a tolerance and coolness of judgment especially characteristic of thorough culture. The student of science comes into contact with facts; interrogated nature says that a thing is so

or not so. The student of literature comes into contact with ideas, moulded to the mind which formulated them, intermixed with error and modified by emotion. He is under the necessity of comprehending how the form of a conception is the result of character and surroundings. He learns to do this in books of a more or less remote past, treating often of questions in which he has no immediate interest, and which he can therefore view with coolness and impartiality. Having acquired this habit of mind in a remote sphere, he is rendered capable of maintaining it in examining the burning questions of the day. Here, too, he analyses and makes allowance. He comprehends the relativity of truth, the inevitable limitations of the human intellect, the common obliquity of mental vision which afflicts whole generations. The novelty or apparent absurdity of an idea does not repel him. He is ready to investigate the grounds of an opinion with which he does not agree; and the residuum of truth which forms the basis of most errors, will not improbably serve to render his own conceptions more just. His comprehension of his opponent's position enables him to attack it more effectively, and to hold his own more surely. Were we absolutely fixed in relation to all objects, the visible world would appear to us a flat surface. Not less necessary is it that in the intellectual world we should be capable of assuming different points of view. To the man of undisciplined mind, nothing is more difficult. The presentation of the other side of a question causes him an uneasy feeling of insecurity and irritation. To him moral obliquity seems the necessary source of opinions differing from his own. The men in Gay's fable who disputed about the colour of the chameleon afford a typical example of the state