

threatened by the rise of new sciences. History teaches boldness in urging the claims of modern literatures and sciences to full recognition as liberal arts.

The first subject which, as I conceive, is entitled to recognition as of equal academic value or rank with any subject now most honoured is the English language and literature. When Greek began to revive in Europe, English was just acquiring a literary form; but when Greek had won its present rank among the liberal arts, Shakespeare had risen, the English language was formed, and English literature was soon to become the greatest of modern literatures. How does it stand now, with its immense array of poets, philosophers, historians, commentators, critics, satirists, dramatists, novelists, and orators? It cannot be doubted that English literature is beyond all comparison the amplest, most various, and most splendid literature which the world has seen; and it is enough to say of the English language that it is the language of that literature. Greek literature compares with English as Homer compares with Shakespeare, that is, as infantile with adult civilization. It may further be said of the English language that it is the native tongue of nations which are preeminent in the world by force of character, enterprise, and wealth, and whose political and social institutions have a higher moral interest and greater promise than any which mankind has hitherto invented. To the original creations of English genius are to be added translations into English of all the masterpieces of other literatures, sacred and profane. It is a very rare scholar who has not learned much more about the Jews, the Greeks, or the Romans through English than through Hebrew, Greek, or Latin.

And now, with all this wonderful

treasure within reach of our youth, what is the position of American schools and colleges in regard to teaching English? Has English literature the foremost place in the programmes of schools? By no means: at best only a subordinate place, and in many schools no place at all. Does English take equal rank with Greek or Latin in our colleges? By no means: not in the number and rank of the teachers, nor in the consideration in which the subject is held by faculty and students, nor in the time which may be devoted to it by a candidate for a degree. Until within a few years the American colleges made no demand upon candidates for admission in regard to knowledge of English; and now that some colleges make a small requirement in English, the chief result of the examinations is to demonstrate the woful ignorance of their own language and literature which prevails among the picked youth of the country. Shall we be told, as usual, that the best way to learn English is to study Latin and Greek? The answer is, that the facts do not corroborate this improbable hypothesis. American youth in large numbers study Latin and Greek, but do not thereby learn English. Moreover, this hypothesis is obviously inapplicable to the literatures. Shall we also be told, as usual, that no linguistic discipline can be got out of the study of native language? How, then, was the Greek mind trained in language? Shall we be told that knowledge of English literature should be picked up without systematic effort? The answer is, first, that as a matter of fact this knowledge is not picked up by American youth; and, secondly, that there never was any good reason to suppose that it would be, the acquisition of a competent knowledge of English literature being not an easy but a laborious undertaking for an average youth—not a matter of enter-