

plastic art. Perhaps the very building in which we stand has been the first to waken in us that elevating sense of beauty and repose which architecture can give. The more need then, in the dearth of other means of æsthetic culture, that we should have recourse to literature, at once the widest, most efficient, and most easily appreciated of artistic forces. Our æsthetic sensibilities form a part of our own nature which liberal culture can by no means afford to overlook. On the individual or nation which neglects or represses them, they exact vengeance in narrowness of intellect or morals. The world's history has more than once shown, that when the higher emotions are stifled, the lower assert themselves, and plunge society into an orgie of sensuality, such as followed the iron rule of the Puritans in England. And not merely for itself is beautiful emotion desirable. Aristotle, long ago, noted its purifying effects on the mind. It cannot, of course, be denied that æsthetic sensibility may co-exist with weak moral character, and that fine feeling does not necessarily lead to noble action. Yet its general elevating tendency is none the less real. The soul vibrating in sympathy with great deeds and lofty character, the soul, touched by the sense of human sorrow and human guilt, whether in nature or art, can, for the time at least, find no pleasure in anything that is ignoble or degrading. And if the study of poetry is an emotional discipline and a moral force, it is no less an intellectual discipline and practical aid. "The highest poetry," Mathew Arnold says, "is at bottom a criticism of life and the greatness of a poet lies in the beautiful and powerful application of ideas to life, to the question—how to live." It is the business of science to attain truth; of poetry, to seize that truth in as far as it is applicable to life; and to give

it perfect expression. Hence Wordsworth has called poetry "the impassioned expression which is the countenance of all science," and again, "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge." It is in virtue of this side of his work that the poet is a philosopher, and comes to the assistance of the thoughtful spirit craving an answer to the great problems of life. Philosophy or metaphysics attempts to solve these, but studies so profound and technical require special intellectual endowments, and must ever remain the sphere of the few; while any solution to which the unaided individual can attain will inevitably be narrow and eccentric. It must be broadened from every source at command, and not least in literature is to be found a treasure-house of aid suggestions, the more stimulating that they are but suggestions, partial solutions the more enduring that they are but partial, and sometimes a complete philosophy implicit where we least expect it. So that in poetry we find not only a fountain of beauty whence we may drain perpetual draughts of joy, but a storehouse of wisdom whence we may draw treasures new and old, and arm ourselves with weapons for the battle of life.

Thus far we have considered the results—the discipline, the knowledge, the enjoyment—which we are to look for in the study of literature. It remains that I indicate succinctly the method by which these results are to be attained. It has been made sufficiently evident, in the previous part of this address, that our studies must primarily and chiefly have to do with the great works of literature themselves, not with facts about them or their authors, nor with the judgment of critics concerning them. If we wish to cultivate our musical taste we must hear good music; if we wish to understand and enjoy painting and