

amination has always, I suppose, been present to the mind of the teacher when considering the appropriateness of a subject for his pupils.

From the first, then, English literature has been regarded by the teacher as something to be examined in; and from the first this has largely determined the form in which it has been taught. The connection of an author with his own time—how far he has either reflected the deeper convictions and aims of that time, or perhaps only its passing moods and fashions; the obligations of the writer to foreign models, or to the influence of a revived study of ancient literature—these and many such inquiries were seen to be wholesome and instructive ways of studying the author, and throwing light upon his genius and our appreciation of him. And in all sound teaching of the subject such topics have always, of course, found a place. But even here and in the hands of teachers of real and wide scholarship, I think may be perceived the first shadow of a danger which might in time spread and overcast the entire subject. In the hands of a teacher who himself loved and enjoyed the author he was treating of, it would be impossible but that something of his own taste and appreciation should be transferred to the student who listened to him, provided always that the student had in him the germs of taste and appreciation at all. But here again the terminal examination began to cast its "shadow before." How are you to examine upon a young student's *enjoyment* of the "Fairy Queen," or the "Rape of the Lock?" Even though he has learned to feel, and ardently to relish, the exquisite yet wholly different flavours of these two poems, how is this to be tested by an examination paper? Moreover, if a taste for these writers is to be found by studying them—not for the history or archæology in them,

but for their own sakes and for the enjoyment of them—there is no time for this in the class-room, for that time is wanted for the historical and critical questions that arise: and the student at home has no time for that leisurely and deliberate reading that brings about a love for an author, as distinguished from a mastery of his difficulties (if an ancient writer) of language or allusion. And thus the danger might arise, even with the ablest teaching, that the student would leave the study of an author with a considerable knowledge of his language, his allusions, and his relation to other writers, and yet with but a moderate degree of pleasure derived from the writer himself.

And if, even with our ablest and most scholarly teachers at work, there exists this possibility of the writer himself being neglected for the sake of the facts about the writer, how certain is it that the study of our literature in places of education where such scholars are not procurable (and scholars of fine and catholic literary taste do not grow on every hedge) must tend to resolve itself more and more into questions that can be set and answered in an examination paper, with questions of a writer's biography, of facts and dates connected with his writings, of popular quotations from these writings and the like—with perhaps a list of the general and time-honoured verdicts that it is considered safe for any one, not a genius, to repeat in society. We all know what to expect when we take up an examination paper in English literature as set to the higher form of a good school; it is sure to contain questions something after this model:

"Name the authors of the following works: 'The Hind and the Panther,' 'Beowulf,' 'Acis and Galatea,' 'Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay,' 'The Shortest Way with the Dissenters,' and 'Adonais.' Give a brief account