

melled by the demands of a cram examination, or by the whims of a rhetorical reading inspector, or by the crotchets of a parsing and analysis examiner. One of the first things to be considered is what edition of the play to get. As a general rule I don't care a rap what it is. The teacher, of course, should have access to some of the very best critical editions, and if he is faithful to his duty he must groan for many a weary hour under the burden of perusing the multifarious contents of them. As to the pupils, I prefer that the younger and more inexperienced pupils shall have nothing but the bare text, and for that any of the common editions of Shakespeare that sell from one shilling up will do; but I don't object at all to the older ones and those who have had some previous training at the work—I don't object to these getting editions with notes, etc. And it is a very decided advantage, supposing there are half a dozen such pupils in a class, that each one should have a different edition. With half a dozen different editions, each with its own set of explanatory notes and illustrative and critical matter, the class is of course in a better position for understanding the play than if all had the same edition. But that is not the only advantage nor the chief one. Young folks, and old folks too for that matter, are all too apt to accept as authoritative any statement they find printed in a book, and especially, in the case of young folks at least, the statements they find in prescribed school-books. The older one gets and the more one learns the more he comes to see what a very bad habit this is. Perhaps it would not be true to call it "soul-destroying," as we are told some doctrines are, but it is certainly thought-strangling. A single edition in the hands of all the students tends to strengthen this habit; the use of several editions tends to weaken it. For in Shakespeare and in all our great writers there are many things on which it is possible to hold more than one opinion. There are different readings in the text itself, different meanings to be got out of its words, different interpretations that may be put on the passages; different estimates may be made of the characters in the play, and the relations of the several parts of it to each other and to the central idea, and the central idea itself. On all these things and on many other things there is always room for more or less difference of opinion; but in small school editions there is usually room for only one opinion, and this one is of course the one that the editor thinks the right one. That may be all right so far as the editor is concerned, but it is not all right that our young people should be trained to adopt one-sided views of matters that have several ideas. If they learn to do so in school they will carry the habit with them into life, and so prolong the age of narrow-mindedness and intolerance and Philistinism generally. Therefore I prefer that pupils who are old enough or far advanced enough to know how to use an edition with notes should not all be required to get the same edition, and should be encouraged to study and compare the different views taken of the same thing by different editors, and to weigh for themselves the evidence for or against each.

As to the younger and untrained pupils I have said that I prefer that they shall have nothing but the bare text. I prefer this because I have found that when they have notes the notes get far more attention than the text. This works evil in several ways besides begetting an altogether wrong idea of the relative importance of text and notes. Note-makers are never all infallible and are not always wise. They sometimes supply information that is not correct, they often supply information that is not necessary, still oftener they supply in-

formation that the pupil should be left to search out for himself, and very often they supply what the pupil takes for information or explanation but which it would be nearly as bad as lying to call so. When a simple-minded and unsophisticated pupil reads about "divers woes" and finds his note telling him that that means "various calamities," or when he finds "a trick got up between them," explained as "A stratagem devised by them"—I didn't make these up, they are bona fide specimens of annotations culled from a school edition which contains many more such gems—when a pupil new to the study of literature finds things like that in his notes he may laugh at the absurdity of such explanations, or he may use strong language about the fraud of palming off such stuff as explanation, but I am inclined to think he will do neither of these things. Such a pupil, if left to himself, will be far more apt to accept word-mongering rubbish of that sort as real explanation, and that I think is a very perilous state of mind for any boy or girl to fall into. But even when the notes give something that really does explain the text, they often do harm in an educational way and for this reason—they smooth down a difficulty before the pupil has felt that it is a difficulty, and they thus spoil the mental training to be got from the study of literature and at the same time spoil one of the highest pleasures of the intellect.

Most of what I have said in connection with choosing an edition, or choosing not to choose one, might have been said just as well in connection with the actual class-study of the work. Of course the general principles to be kept in view are the same all through, and these are those already laid down—that the student should understand what he is reading, and that he should get his understanding of it by his own labor, by the sweat of his own brain. It is always easier and it is often pleasanter for the teacher to do the observing and thinking and working himself, and then to tell his pupils what he has observed and thought and worked out; but that is not teaching. And it is not teaching to let the pupils get into the habit of depending on the notes in their book for all the help they need to understand what they are reading. When they want information in after life they will not usually find it in school books, and if they have been trained to rely only or chiefly on these they will often be badly handicapped.

The average pupil won't take the trouble to work at literature any more than at anything else unless he has or can be induced to acquire an interest in the subject. To start this interest and to keep it up when started the teacher should be ready to seize on anything whatever that crops up during the lesson, no matter how small or trivial, which he can use as a peg on which the pupils may hang knowledge that they already possess on some subject in which they are already interested. There are lots of opportunities for this in studying literature. Some will be interested in the spelling and meaning and pronunciation of words and the changes which their reading and observation show them have occurred and are still occurring in these; others will be interested in the various rhetorical and metrical devices by which writers seek to please the ear and stir the heart; others in the casual illusions to historical events and natural phenomena; others, in noting resemblances or contrasts between the matter of form of what they are now reading and the matter of form of something previously read; and so on through all sorts of minor and secondary matters up to the one or two specially thoughtful students who are interested in the management of