

means of education is not attained. The end and object of all the notes and note-makers, of Mr. Wright and Dr. Abbott, of all editions and all editors, of all critics and commentators, is to make the writers they deal with more endeared, because more intelligible, to the reader.

The great end, then, I submit, of English literature as an element of education is to *give pleasure*. I well know what opposition—even what contempt—is likely to be excited in some minds by this avowal. The image, already referred to, of the lazy boy reading “Ivanhoe” on the sofa for his amusement is sure to rise before the mind’s eye of many, and to such persons the image is one of mere waste of time. “After all, we were right,” will exclaim the schoolmaster of the old pattern, who from the first was suspicious of the introduction of English authors side by side with those of Greece and Rome, Germany or France. “We were right; this new education is another name for shirking work—at least, for mere dilettantism.” I remember once maintaining this position, that the highest object of the study of literature was to make us the happier for it; and a little later in the conversation a young lady remarked, “You know, Mr. Ainger, you said just now that we were to read chiefly for our amusement!” I knew this was said only in fun, for the speaker was a very thoughtful and accomplished woman; but I treasured up the retort just because it illustrated a real confusion that exists in the minds of many. To the unthinking, “joy,” “happiness,” “pleasure,” “amusement,” are words that perhaps convey much of the same idea. But it only needs that those who *do* think should recall the kind of pleasure that they have derived from some great writer—from Shakespeare or Milton, Jeremy Taylor or Sir Thomas Browne, Gold-

smith or Lamb, Coleridge or Wordsworth—to understand that to speak of that pleasure as *amusement* would be a profanation and an indignity. I am not saying that if the study of literature only succeeded in providing its disciples with a larger field of amusement, it would be wholly thrown away. Better to find amusement in the authors it has to deal with, than in the myriads of ephemeral works that are no part of literature at all. Better to read “Ivanhoe” on the sofa—to find the merest amusement in the genuine romantic vein of Sir Walter, than in the pinchbeck-romantic of—, and —, and — (for I dare name no names), whose books seem to be hardly in existence a month before they are in their two hundred and fortieth thousand. But I need not before this audience waste words to prove that by joy, or pleasure, I do not mean amusement, but something differing from it *totò caelo*. And it is through pleasure—high and noble pleasure—that almost every good and perfect gift must ultimately work out for us its mission.

To make us happier by introducing us to sources of pleasure hitherto unexplored, and to render more intelligible and interesting the notable works that we had failed to draw pleasure from before—these are the primary objects of teaching literature. And therefore to add to our knowledge of everything that can make these writers give up to us their fullest meaning and spirit—to remove all obstacles in them, and in ourselves, which hinder us from enjoying them, is among the first duties and privileges of the teacher. The lecturer on Shakespeare has to help his pupil to understand Shakespeare; but he has done this to no purpose, or rather he has not done this at all, unless he has deepened the pupil’s admiration for, and thus helped him to gain pleasure from, the poet. The aspir-