

character is at once the measure of its usefulness, and its best justification as a subject of study in either school or college. It is of the utmost importance that we should first know what we have to do. Should we study literature because it is disgraceful not to know something of the lives and works of the great literary men of our country? Should we try to know something *about* literature, or should we strive to get an intimate acquaintance with the thoughts of the best men and women of England, so that knowing their thoughts on many subjects, and pondering them long and well in our hearts they may become a part of every fibre of our being, and may thus refine, elevate, and ennoble our character and life.

I. PROPER AIM.—The proper aim of the highest literature, I take it, is "to crown the true and the good with delight and joy, to clothe the austere form of truth and wisdom with heart-taking beauty and sweetness." This is the very law and life of literature. The realization of this aim must be a very slow process. Its results, among the young especially, are subtle, intangible, impalpable; they cannot be measured accurately in percentages; cannot be recited in class; cannot be talked about; cannot be shown off. Its progress is silent as the dew, but nevertheless powerful as the mighty forces of nature. At first, the young student is almost, if not altogether, unconscious of the enchanting power that is slowly enfolding him in its mighty grasp. Time goes on, and when he does feel its power, he struggles not to release himself. He becomes dimly conscious that he is adding to his soul's wealth.

Who can mistake great thoughts?
They seize upon the mind; arrest and search
And shake it; bow the tall soul as by winds;
Rush over it like rivers over reeds,
Which quaver in the current; turn us cold,
And pale and voiceless; leaving in the brain
A rocking and a ringing—glorious,
And close the soul with Heaven as with a seal.

If I am right in saying that the proper aim of the study of literature is to impart a taste for, if not a knowledge of, what the great and good have thought and written in bygone years; if it be to cultivate big thoughts in ourselves, and to direct our feelings and emotions into proper channels, by making ourselves acquainted with the mighty thoughts of the great souls, who in past ages have been reaching out towards the perfectness of the Infinite, then our second step is pretty clear. It is simply this, how can our object be attained?

II. HOW ATTAIN THE OBJECT.—Before discussing this part of the subject it may first be well to say how I think the object can *not* be attained. Reading biographical sketches of literary men, learning the names of their works; memorizing, parrot-like, criticisms of their books; listening to lectures on the origin and development of literature will never secure the object aimed at. All this may have value as information, but it is not the study of literature; it is second-hand knowledge—most of it—of the most worthless kinds. The aim will never be realized by parsing and analyzing scraps of English classics, nor by using such scraps as convenient pegs on which to hang philological, mythological, geographical and historical disquisitions of great learnedness, but of soul-benumbing tendency. Not by making our classics texts by means of which to study etymology, syntax and prosody, as has long been done in Greek and Latin. These methods, begun and carried on in the name of thoroughness, are false and pernicious. They develop no taste for the grand and noble in literature; but are, on the contrary, most effectual methods of concealing and strangling its very life and soul. Grammar and logic should alike be divorced from literature, except in so far as they rarely contribute to the comprehension of a thought. Nor should