

been recognized by European and American universities. It was the refusal of Oxford to admit to the curriculum some few years ago that so disappointed the hopes of Sir Henry Irving, and brought about the head of the venerable institution rather voluble criticism from Mr. Henry Arthur Jones. Another critic of old world repute went so far as to attempt a little by-play on the subject, the substance of which, inextenso, was something as follows:

Oxford was personified by a gatekeeper, and the drama by a full-blown youth seeking admittance.

"Who art thou, (said the porter) so young and fair that knock with such assurance at our gates? Begone, and leave me in peace."

"I am the Drama (answered the youth) and would fain enter, for I bring tidings from the outside world."

"Begone (said the porter, peering through the bars), thou art an intruder—thy presence is a contamination. Thy bones are filled with the marrow of youth. Thine eyes sparkle, thou art radiant, breathing, thou art *alive*."

The words may be a little awry when compared with the original, but the point is, at any rate, fairly well preserved, exaggerating, as it probably does, the Oxford attitude in such matters. It was then, indeed, held to be only a matter of time when the great English university would follow in the wake of others, and come to realize that the national drama of England is not too undignified a study to gain the recognition and the approval of its august assembly.

The importance of an optional study of the drama is easy to define and it is not difficult to conceive why it should be comparatively free from the limitations often incidental to the protracted analysis of one thing. The drama approached as an historical evolution is no proper diversion from the dilettante, but a live and many-sided field of investigation. By means of it there is derived an interpretation of history which is a guiding corollary to the narrative or chronological methods. It is a history of politics, of art, and of social standards. It is a tracery of that gradual fusion of foreign currents of art and opinion with Saxon ideals which records the development of the English mind and all that has made for the stability of British intelligence and taste. It gives the most direct presentation of conduct, action, cause and effect in human life. Approached from the standpoint of form, it is the most virile of all literary expressions. Every element is found unified and vivified under the dramatic method—the epic, the lyric, even the emotional ode, every species of prose, every form of wit, humor, sarcasm, or pathos, all enter into the field and must be approached, not as expository or didactic renditions, but as purely objective, dramatic—full of suggestive force and harmony which meet the student half way, and which further give a live bearing to much of that ordinary analysis and academic deadness, necessarily incidental to a protracted study of any literature. The study of the drama opens up a field of intelligent literary and theatric appreciation which might, for many a student, be kept forever closed. The drama at its best is a pleasing teacher—a persuasive intellectual force in society. It frequently is, and should more often be, a purifier of hu-