

lete, but I'm afraid it is not. Many of the readings and recitations and oratorical contests that are still inflicted upon a long suffering public show that the crime of committing culpable elocution upon English Literature has not yet been stamped out.

Don't imagine that I object to good reading, if that is what "elocution" means to you. The very best reading is none too good for the best writing. If your understanding can comprehend the thought of a passage and if your heart can beat in sympathy with the feeling in it, then, if you happen also to be gifted with a fine voice and have cultivated its powers and got it under perfect control, I shall be delighted to hear you recite the passage and will bless you for the pleasure you give me. But even a fine voice, finely cultivated, produces only pain and disappointment instead of pleasure when the manner of reading or reciting shows that the performer is thinking not of what he is reading but of how he is doing it. And when—as so often happens with those who call themselves elocutionists—when there is not only no sign of heart or understanding but also nothing pleasing in the voice nor artistic in the management of it, then we have about the sorriest and silliest exhibition that a man can make of himself.

There are schools again, where literature is treated merely as raw material for exercises in parsing and analysis and is subjected to other grammarmongering indignities. I'm not quite sure whatever that this is, on the whole, more disgraceful or less disgraceful than the spout and rant method of study which has just been considered. In one way it is less so, for one really must have some brains and some slight deftness in using them to be good at this sort of thing. But what a dreary and useless thing it is. To spend an hour with a class in professed study of some important passage from one of our literary masterpieces—a passage most likely teeming with material for quickening the thought and brightening the fancy and thrilling the soul—and to do nothing during that whole mortal hour but jabber away about subjects and predicates and enlargements, abstract nouns and conjunctive adverbs and qualifying adjectives, verbs of incomplete predication, the optative use of the subjunctive mood and a lot of other such dry-as-dust rubbish. And it is not the teachers who are to blame for this? I have seen examination papers headed with the title English Literature and under that the names of certain standard works that had been prescribed for study, and have found in the papers not a single question requiring any of the works to have been read in order to be able to answer it. There would be parse, analyse, correct, parse, correct, derive, analyse, parse and perhaps paraphrase. So long as that kind of paper is set so long will English Literature in the school-room occupy the degraded position of a mere bond-slave to the school grammar. Perhaps the most outrageous feature of this method of studying literature is the giving of sentences from the makers and masters of our language and literature to be "corrected" (as the grammar-mongers have the cheek to call it) by school boys and school girls. I served my apprenticeship to that kind of thing and came out of it with the impression that Shakespeare's plays and Milton's poems and Addison's essays and the authorized version of the Bible were chiefly remarkable as literary pro-

ductions for the number and the grossness of the grammatical errors in them.

These are ways of how *not* to study English literature. Unnatural mouthing and ungainly gesticulation, even though dignified with the name elocution, will do little to make us "know the best that has been thought and written;" and there isn't much "instruction in righteousness" to be got from a mental tussle with the optative use of the subjunctive mood.

Never a word as yet, at least formally, on how to study the subject, and this was the one sole thing that I should have confined myself to. I have avoided it as long as possible, partly because I dislike even the appearance of assuming to dictate on such a matter to such an audience, and partly because the proper method of studying literature appears to me to be so obvious and so altogether exactly the same as the proper method of studying anything else, that it seems unnecessary to say much about it.

But there may be some young teachers or students here who might be benefitted by a little of what it pleases me to think is common-sense advice on the subject, and for the possible benefit of this probable section of the audience, I shall go on a little longer.

When St. Philip found Queen Candace's treasurer reading the prophet Esaias he said: "Understandest thou what thou readest?" When Bartle Massey lost his temper over the delinquencies of his arithmetic class he set himself to scold the offenders in this style: "You think all you need do to learn accounts is to come to me and do sums for an hour or so two or three times a week; and no sooner do you get your caps on and turn out of doors again than you sweep the whole thing clean out of your mind. You think knowledge is to be got cheap; you'll come and pay Bartle Massey sixpence a week and he'll make you clever at figures without your taking any trouble. But knowledge isn't to be got with paying sixpence let me tell you; if you're to know figures you must turn 'em over in your own heads and keep your thoughts fixed on 'em. I'll not throw away good knowledge on people who think they can get it by the sixpenn'orth and carry it away with 'em as they would an ounce of snuff. So never come to me again if you can't show that you have been working with your own head, instead of thinking you can pay for mine to work for you."

You might read volumes on methods of study and methods of teaching—dreadfully dry reading they generally are, full of hard words and pompous platitudes, and solemn nonsense, tending to produce dyspepsia and profanity; you might read volumes of such stuff and not get as much insight into the business as may be got from Philip's question to the eunuch, and from old Massey's growl at the pupils of his night school. (1) See that what is read is understood; and (2) see that it is understood, not in that shallow and ephemeral way that comes from merely listening to the talk or reading the words of somebody else who understands it, but in that only sure and lasting way that comes from setting to work with your own head at it, from turning it over and over in your own mind, from keeping your own thoughts fixed upon it. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets of the arts of teaching and learning.

Suppose it is one of Shakespeare's plays that is to be read, and suppose the teacher has the good fortune to be untrammelled, or the determination not to allow himself to be tram-