

we can make the pupil realize that every word has a history. What a broad vision he will have, when once he sees the beginnings of English in a little tribe of shepherd-farmers among the hills of Asia!

But, important as is the subject of English literature, it seems to me surpassed in importance by the second requirement of the University—essay-writing.

The benefits of essay-writing are so evident that it is almost incomprehensible that it should have been so neglected. That it should be the most prominent subject in our system of education will be evident on the following grounds: It unites in itself the benefits of every other subject in the curriculum. It affords a logical training and mental discipline, by demanding concentration and consecutive thinking. As the material of the essay should be within the range of the pupil's observation it will afford an admirable training for his observing powers, and an admirable stimulus for a wider and deeper observation. Then, just as no one enjoys music like a musician, or a painting like an artist, so he, who with more or less ability, can write English will so much the more appreciate literature. And, further, in cultivating his own powers, he will be led to observe with greatest benefit the writings of our best intellects. More still, the young writer will have in the essay a training in originality of thought that our present system does little to favour. But most of all, he will gradually become possessed of a faculty which, whether we consider it in the direction of a business despatch, or of a letter to a mother, or of strong words in public defence of the weak, or in the hundred other ways in which

the pen plays its part in our civilized life, is simply of inestimable value.

I have said nothing so far of grammar. It is because I attach little importance to the subject. What we are most concerned with is to infuse our boys and girls with the literary spirit, to give them wider conceptions of life and its objects, a heart more sympathetic and helpful, a grander view of the beauty and wonder of the universe. And what can the dust and ashes of a mummified grammar do for us? Perchance furnish the material for the keen satire of a *Bourgeois gentilhomme*! Were it not for a faint hope that it may afford a definiteness in the consideration of the proper use of language, I would not hesitate to advocate its entire abolition. For of all the wrongs which an ignorant pedagogy has inflicted on a suffering childhood in the name of education English grammar is the most flagrant.

Nor have I said anything about the countless books on errors in English, etc., in which so many practical teachers have taken refuge. The kind of teaching involved in them should be entirely subordinated to that outlined above. They mark, it is true, the dangerous shoals, but they are themselves devoid of stimulus or motive power; and buoys on a sea that is never sailed are somewhat superfluous. Our main aim is to make the pupils write; when that is secured, we shall be able to make proper use of the charts.

The need of the general adoption of some such scheme as the one here advocated seems absolute if our schools are to fulfil their mission. It demands, however, as teachers, our most earnest and cultivated thinkers. Does it demand too much? Is not the teaching profession to be the ministry of the future?