

lated by the oracles of empirical education.

I purpose in the present paper to set forth concisely some results, gathered from a varied and changeful career as teacher of English literature. They are offered in no spirit of dogmatism—merely as suggestions for consideration—for scholarly reflection—by no means for necessary acceptance or approval.

First of all, it is the tendency of modern teaching to divorce the literature from its natural cognate and interpreter—the department of history. For literature is the artistic expression of the historic life. The one elucidates and illumines the other; their separation is illogical and empirical. A broad, critical and sympathetic knowledge of the great lines of historic growth, is an essential requisite on the part of every teacher of English literature. It is in the bewildering complexity of modern historical life that this harmony of relation is most perceptible and most impressive, yet it may be traced in the simpler historic development of antiquity—a notable illustration being the advance of Athens to the literary and political supremacy of Greece, under the stimulating influence of the Persian wars. Other instances may be gathered from the elder world, but the modern ages abound in examples and illustrations. Let us select from the rich field at our disposal, elaborating our selections, so as to confirm the truth of the general proposition. The Elizabethan age is a mirror held up to nature, in which is reflected the form and pressure of the historic life. Every phase of its luxuriant and versatile growth, is suggestive of some distinctive feature of its political, moral, or material expansion. The creative form assumed by its literary types, the surrender of its noblest writers rather to impulse than to critical guidance, point to the quickening force of cer-

tain historic influences which we shall now endeavour to indicate.

As a matter of historic record, when Elizabeth ascended the throne in 1558 both language and people were in a disorganized and distracted condition. The sweet strains of English song that had arisen with Chaucer died away almost as suddenly as they had begun, leaving only fitful echoes of their melody during the dreary age that extends from the advent of the fifteenth century to the preluding symphonies of Surrey and Wyatt. The nation had been convulsed by the thirty years' war of York and Lancaster—a struggle involving no grave constitutional or moral principle, but leaving an abiding impress upon the character of English history and of English speech. The introduction of printing stimulated in its first effects prevailing linguistic disorders. The Renaissance and the Reformation followed in its train. Classical learning, at first pursued in accordance with logical and rational methods, soon degenerated into an elegant affectation, and instead of striving to domesticate the acknowledged graces of Greek and Roman artists, strove to engraft upon the simple structure of our language, the complicated periods of the ancients. The acrimonious strife of the Reformation absorbed the minds of scholars, and diverted their energies from the ennobling pursuits of literature. The structure of the language was unsettled, its syntax was fluctuating, its vocabulary not ascertained, its metrical principles and combinations undetermined. Its verbal richness was being steadily increased by translations of the Greek and Latin classics, by the spirit of commercial adventure, geographical enterprise, and knightly daring. For the higher purposes of scholarly composition, the language was had in slight esteem, and Ascham apologizes for employing it, "doubting not that he should be blamed"