

for pupils to have in possession throughout the course in literature. Histories of the literature, like Ten Brink's, Taine's, Morley's, Shaw's, Collier's, should be in the reference library, not in pupils' desks as text-books. A young student broods and muses over his book, and imbibes it without reference to the lessons assigned. As material for this rumination he should have the best and worthiest literary productions. No one has made, or will make, a text-book of literature good enough to be read in lieu of literature, or, I will say, good enough always to pitch the key of interest and expectation in which great writers should be approached. I make little account of any study of authors through intermediary books or lectures. We must contrive to deal with a considerable number of writers and to come into contact with the writings themselves.

Necessity has in this case been the mother of invention, and we have learned to break away somewhat from the custom of dealing with English texts in the slow, plodding manner we at first caught from the methods of the Latin and Greek classes. It remains, however, a good plan to read a few choice things in the thorough, intensive, stataric way. Best adapted for this purpose I have found, any one or two of Macaulay's literary essays, a poem of Scott, the minor poems of Milton with passages from the greater ones, and, say, four plays of Shakespeare. Macaulay's wonderful memory and his tact for summoning the items of his knowledge to do duty by way of illustration make the study of his prose an excellent lesson in general literature. Scott stirs young imaginations with his vigor of expression and keeps the reader's mood up to his own level by means of his grand poetic diction. In his reading of Scott the young student may first be lead to consider the significance of poetic motives and

forms. These studies [of poetics will connect themselves, but far more profoundly, with Milton; and here the learner will test all he knows of history and of the Scriptures, or can fathom of spiritual and religious truth, while he searches for the meaning of Comus and Lycidas, or traces the career of Satan through *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. In Shakespeare the literature course culminates; for in Shakespeare is every element of intellectual and artistic greatness. No discipline so abounds in spiritual satisfaction as the study of our great dramatist. No habit can be brought from school more precious than the habit of reading and re-reading those immortal poems.

The other way of conducting the school reading is the cursory, the rapid, the extensive or comprehensive way. Pedagogic art should strive to make the most it can of this resource. For instance, give a pupil a school week for reading a certain novel, or play, or poem, or a vacation week for reading two or three times as much; and then let him make a five minutes report, orally, or from manuscript, if he prefers, to the class, under injunction to have his report interesting and terse, and his English good. In thus prescribing reading it is necessary, above all things, to avoid giving out pieces which, however classical will to the pupil be heavy and hard, and which, by embittering his leisure hours, may shake his loyalty of devotion to the study of literature. The mature student will delve and plod through anything, with an eye perhaps to honor or profit; but the youth must be humored. There is good reading for every age.

The best way is to encourage pupils to read from the promptings of their own tastes, or under such spurtings as their private experience supplies,—always, however, to be ready, when called on, to announce, or, perhaps,