

Now the two expressions—that of divine inspiration in scripture and that of human inspiration in literature—are governed by the self-same principles, and therefore the analysis of the one is helpful to that of the other.

Take Byron! You have no theory to serve: you decide the force of a figure by the contact without wringing out of it every imaginable petty conceit: you decide the extension of the words "all," "every," "none," "ever," by the temper of the author and the drift of the passage; a vision or a dream or a parable only has a significance which his object of introducing it will sanction. The result is that you fall into a fair and natural habit of exposition, and if the same sensible rules had been conscientiously carried out in every part of revelation, the world would never have been regaled with a few holy quirks, with false views which have been bolstered up on strained verses, with one-sided opinions founded on distorted images, or universal terms construed absolutely: in other words, the honorable because cultured and impartial system of interpretation expounded in our classroom by our venerated principal would, if it had been always acted upon, have rescued theology from not a few tenets which have brought her into bad odium with her sister sciences.

**GENTLEMEN:**—We close the essay with the painful feeling that the subject has been handled in a hurried and shallow manner, which is partly traceable to the short time allotted to us to unfold it. This very circumstance however of the vast splendor of English literature ought to disabuse your minds of the opinion that the study of it should occupy hours of leisure or of jaded weariness. It is an earnest work.

There are, you know, books in which gems of poesy are printed, choice passages from the immortal masters. And some fashionable gentlemen who loathe the drudgery of intellectual application store these passages in their memories. When they propose to write a speech or perhaps a sermon, they hunt these volumes of poetic booty with even more zeal than they search the critical commentaries. When these talented gentlemen go out into society they are very talkative and they are on the keen look-out to recite with gusto and emphasis a passage perhaps from Dante's "Inferno" or Milton's "Paradise Lost": they are not poetic in the least but they are ambitious and they are fascinating in company.

This ludicrous habit is somewhat common, and it is a caricature on proper methods of studying English classics. Labor is involved.

When the fruits of the orchard ripen, it is the worst, although the quickest, policy to shake the boughs and then gather into barrels the apples strewn on the ground: but the apples do not last but rapidly decay when stored away. But sometimes the shrewd nurserer climbs the tree and steps lightly out on the branches and stretches out his arms in order to pluck the single fruit from the very stem. The process is slow and toilsome, but it is thorough, and the juicy fruit keeps its mellowness for many months.

A similar principle applies to this department of culture. When an author is critically examined there must be a kindred feeling, or else appreciation is impossible; there may be a knowledge of the dates of his birth and death, of the dates when his works were published, of the titles of his productions, of the metre and stanza of the argument, but these are mechanical; these are only the incidental chips that float on the surface, while it is your business to sound the deeper current and spirit of the poetry; it is yours to analyze it and to brood over it until it masters you; it is yours to