

I will now touch upon the various other points of importance in literature-teaching, taking them as they occur to me, and not meaning to imply anything by the order in which they come; but before doing so I should like to be allowed to restate what I said in 1881 as to what I mean by "literature-teaching." "By the study of literature as literature, I mean the study of a poem or prose work for the sake of its substance, its form and its style; for the sake of the thought and imagination and feeling it contains, and the methods used to express these; for the sake of its lofty, large, or acute perception of things; its powers of exposition; its beauty, force and meaning of its metaphors, its similes and its epithets; the strength and music of its language. . . . My aim is to lead my pupils to appreciate thought as thought, a work of art as a work of art; and thereby not only to enlarge, enrich and refine their minds and hearts, but also to bring them to a knowledge and ability of expressing themselves, when they have something to say, both correctly and well."

The Subject-matter.—By this I mean something more than the mere story of the play or poem. It should also include the ideas dealt with and set forth. In Shakespeare's plays, for instance, there is the exposition of character and of human life; in "Comus," the plea for purity and "true virginity," and the thinly-veiled allegorical reference to contemporary religion; in Blake's "Dream," pity for the little things of this world and the evidence of providential care for them all; in Southey's "Blenheim," the condemnation of war; and so on. These things are often of more value than the story itself—if there be a story at all. Sometimes they are so manifest that we need only call attention to them and pass on. Sometimes they are intricate and elusive, or wholly be-

yond our pupils' range of knowledge and feeling—so that we have to omit them and content ourselves with the story only. What I wish to urge is that, if we omit them, we should do so consciously and for good reasons. We are far too much given to taking it for granted that our pupils have noticed and understood what has been placed before them. Our task as teachers is to attract attention, to aid understanding, to stir feeling, and we cannot do this by silence and indifference. A word or two at the right time will often be quite enough, and commonly this will best come in the introductory talk. We must not forget that most of the literature we have to use was not written for children. We have to adapt it to them, and them to it, to bring them within its range; and this requires care and skill—not very unlike the care and skill required in primary science lessons in observation. Our task is not to force our opinions and refinements on our pupils, but to attract and hold their attention.

I have mentioned the exposition of character as one of the things to bear in mind in connection with a play of Shakespeare's. The common plan is to give our pupils the exposition of some notable critic—Coleridge, or Gervinus, or Dowden, or Mrs. Jameson, or another—and to leave them to get it up. I do not think this plan a good one educationally. It is better than nothing, it is true, and often pays in examination. But that is all that can be said for it, even when we do require (which is not often, I fear) a few illustrative quotations from the play to be added. It distracts pupils' attention from the facts themselves, and brings them into a habit of trying to say things prettily rather than say them truly. Some of the characters have been so embroidered upon in this way by the critics that all the original form and