

alized work in literature itself, but sound general culture and intellectual power, no matter how developed. If this time aim were always kept in view, there would be no danger of over-doing literature in the schools. Whereas it seems to me that there is a tendency to over-teaching in literature and to expecting more extensive literary taste and acquisitions than the nature of boys and girls warrants.

In order to develop taste and instil the love of reading, the first requisite is that such literature should be prescribed as immature minds are in some measure capable of appreciating. It is quite true, and a familiar fact in the biographies of literary men, that great stimulus has often been derived from the perusal of books far beyond the intellectual and emotional range of the youthful reader. But in these cases the reading is voluntary. The reader finds something suited to his individual taste, and troubles himself not at all about that which he does not grasp. Such freedom is not possible when a work is prescribed for examination; there is the felt necessity of mastering the book, and any possible enjoyment is lost in the unsatisfactory effort to grasp that which intellect or feeling are not yet capable of comprehending. I hold, for example, that it is a mistake to prescribe Wordsworth for Matriculation. It is true that in one sense Wordsworth is the simplest of poets; but the thoughts and feelings which he expresses are commonly beyond the experience and sympathy of the ordinary boy or girl. To perceive anything except the merest commonplace in the "Reverie of Poor Susan," or "Hartleap Well," requires a power of appreciating the effect upon the poet of the incidents narrated which comes only with maturity and habits of reflection. Unless the power can be imparted, there is nothing to be taught. The complete appreciation of Shakespeare's "Macbeth" is also

beyond the young student; but here there is much which may interest him, and which may with profit be developed, even though he cannot yet attain that full insight into the play which knowledge of life and maturity of mind alone can give. "Tintern Abbey" is an incomparably finer poem than "Horatius at the Bridge," but the vast majority of High School pupils, I venture to say, prefer the latter; and it is quite natural and proper that they should do so. Teach a boy to read properly and comprehend Literature which has some measure of attraction for him, he is much more likely when he comes to the proper age, to extend his reading to higher literature, than if that higher literature is forced upon him as task-work when he is as yet unprepared for it. We do not think of teaching philosophy in schools; the thought at the basis of "Tintern Abbey" or the "Immortality Ode" is quite as abstruse as philosophy and as little fitted for school work. It is, indeed, not easy to find poetical literature fitted for school purposes; Scott is suitable, Longfellow in an inferior degree, and parts of Tennyson; but, outside these, there are probably no poets of this century who afford any large quantity of verse suitable for the purpose.

If mistakes are made in the prescription, there must inevitably be mistakes in the method of teaching. It is a fact that many mature persons have that taste which it is the aim of our literary studies to develop, who are yet quite incapable of analysing their feelings about literature, or referring them to their sources in the written work. Yet the tendency of teaching is too exclusively towards this analysis—to the analysis of perceptions which, possibly, do not even exist in the mind of the pupil. It is true that this sort of investigation is itself an instrument for developing and perfecting literary taste, but it