AIM

If one can assume that no pupil is entirely uninfluenced by a teacher, however indifferent—then all who teach in any English school, even puritans of the Direct Method, have an effect either good or bad on the use of English made by the pupils of their school. This must occur to everyone at least as a possibility; and yet, so far as I know, prospective teachers nowhere receive practical help in the use of their own language, irrespective of their various specialisms. In their period of training, for example, they teach in schools; this is certainly lingual practice, but practice in which too many issues are involved for a student to concentrate on the art of communication as a special study in itself. Apart from this school practice they hear lectures on the theory of education. If they listen to these and if their ears are in the least critical, they may select such material from the lectures as seems suitable and handy for reproducing in whatever examination the lectures anticipate. This process of selection is, certainly, an indirect but rather lame approach to studying relations between words and ideas, in order to communicate them in some way. Besides listening to lectures, they may also write essays on educational topics. Many, perhaps most of these essays, I am inclined to believe, if they had no name on them, could only be assigned to their authors by virtue of their
handwriting. They are usually without distinctive structure, and without distinctive verbal power: they are little more than diligent but undigested accumulations of matter taken from the most conveniently accessible authorities. This may be due to the fact that being specialists in one subject students find it a little hard to adapt themselves to another in a given time, or it may be that they are simply following a tradition of higher studies impressed on them by a university course. In any case, it is not a profitable training in language, and the control of ideas; and however much by these present methods they may become reputable specialists in education and receive a breadth of outlook on their profession, which practice in it alone cannot give, yet they would probably be more effective if they could speak a little more with the tongues of angels and write not always in another's hand; that is, if their professional training gave them such help in the use of their own language as to free them from indifference to general ideas and their apt expression, an indifference which a three years' course of specialised study very often seems to produce.

However,—whether or no a teacher has received a satisfactory training in the use of his own language,—he still shares, whatever his subject, a common responsibility for the standard of English in his school. He who teaches mathematics may feel that he is less responsible than he who teaches English; and it is true that they have not the same function: the mathematician's concern with English being—roughly speaking—concern with a means rather than an end. And the same may be said of other specialists. But this
difference in function does not remove responsibility. Unfortunately in practice it may lead to mutual dissatisfactions; the one specialist complaining that his work suffers from the supposed incompetence of the other; and between the two a semi-literate boy may be the result; also a semi-literate man, prone to every epidemic of false values. There seems to be no final cure for this trouble but the recognition that English is a school subject of a different genus from any other; and that therefore every teacher in a school should be an English specialist: in other words, it should not be the privilege of any one type of specialist to teach it. Some teachers might spend more of their time on it than others; but even the appreciation lesson, circling round poetry, the lesson of all others, which contains the danger of fostering an esoteric cult within a staff, should be the prerogative of the biologist as much as the classic, and the one should be as capable of making a success of it as the other.

I do not select the biologist as being less literate or less accessible to poetic contact than the teacher of any other subject. On the contrary, I am aware that as many teachers of natural science, chemistry, physics or biology are as sensitive to the value of language as those to whom it is supposed to be the peculiar care. They are equally likely to understand how much they can effect by their own apt and able use of the spoken word, by their clarity in writing, by cogent and varied questioning, by simple and attractive narrative, by their skill in sustaining the arrest and interest of a statement or in forming a discussion with a care for exact or attractive expression. And their interest in language
may extend equally with that of the English specialist beyond a sense of its value merely as an effective instrument in teaching. Their special attitude to their subject matter may confine this interest to narrower limits: there is, for example, a difference of treatment, though the matter is similar, in 'Sow'd Cockle reaped no corn' and 'Corn Cockle—(*Agrostemma Githago*, order *Carophyllaceae*) . . . its black testa discolours flour, etc.' But for all that, I have sometimes observed in lessons based on simple chemical experiments more help given towards the understanding of poetry than in many lessons based on poems themselves. The definite conditions of the experiment preclude ambitious vagueness: prevent irrelevant and self-indulgent soliloquies. I have heard an English specialist chatter about Tennyson's 'Brook' as though he had never had leisure enough in his life to sit by a few feet of running water: the result was a verbal oleograph. And I have heard a chemistry specialist, in focussing the observation of a class on a crucible of copper pyrites, slowly heated over a flame, make them choose words so carefully to describe the changes of appearance that, if any boy had latent in him poetic capacity, he was being equipped for its expression. In a manner well within his grasp and stimulated by a purpose he understood, he was learning to be sense-alert, to discern the difference in value of words seemingly similar, to increase his vocabulary for the sake of exactitude, to venture on metaphor as a living experience, and to see those imaginative resemblances which make reality. I do not suggest that verbal precision leaning over a Bunsen burner is of itself a poetic quality; but I would
suggest that as the poet has a higher power of verbal precision than most men, this one of his qualities, at least, may be found near the Science bench. Unfortunately it may not be found there as often as one could wish. A teacher of chemistry, for example, is not above using ‘all’ when he means ‘some’; and even the exact mathematician, by the inconsistencies of his tongue, will give a boy a false impression of equality.

Doubtless, neither of these two delinquents would excuse himself on the grounds that he was affected by the low standard of English among his boys; but he might take refuge in the no better excuse that he was paid to teach chemistry or mathematics, and not English. And owing to the congestion of the syllabus in most schools there is a kind of false reasonableness in this plea. If a history teacher is to cover the period prescribed for the term or year, he cannot spend time dotting boys’ i’s and crossing their t’s, even if he does this to his own; he cannot be responsible for their grammar as well as their dates. Incidentally, he often goes out of his way to force their grammar out of joint, because he insists on too great a quantity of written work, at a time when the boy still has a very clumsy grasp of his pen; and he insists on this because he does not take the trouble to think out more economic ways of probing the boy’s knowledge.

All the same, it is true that under the present organisation of school subjects the teacher of special subjects other than English must rely to a certain extent on the standard of speech and writing provided by the English specialist. The one employs what the other produces. This must not be forgotten in con-
sidering what aims the English specialist should have, as pivots for his work.

I must confess here that I am tempted to shy at any discussion of such aims and consequent methods, and instead, choose some idle morning and try to describe it, as that yesterday I took a walk by the Cam, and near Baitsbite found a fallen tree and sat there for half an hour. At the back of me was the river, still bearing on its sluggish water the faint whiff of intellectual ferments; beyond it, the towpath, empty of its rowing priesthood; in front across a June meadow, lined with silvery willows, a clump of elms sheltering a huge old roof, one of those fen groups set in spacious levels, which give the mind a calmness of horizon dotted with many serious problems; overhead, skiffs of white and blue, sparkling; a snipe now drumming, now protesting that I should be there; to the right from the bare top of a dying ash, a hawk shooting again and again into the air in the hope of planing to a kill; and when I had drawn the description to its end, add to it, such is the mood I should like to feel in an English lesson, and leave it at that; or to put it all more briefly in a quotation, I would suggest that the aims and methods of the English lesson should agree with Izaak Walton's dictum: 'When I sat last on this primrose bank and looked down these meadows, I thought of them as Charles the Emperor did of the city of Florence: "that they were too pleasant to be looked on, but only on holydays"'. And with this suggestion I would close the whole matter. But a meadowland of aims and methods might not mean much to many people. One is familiar
with the mind, which begs to be clothed in a perfect method, not of its own making; which will wear any cast-off aim, provided that it has a fashionable cut; the mind also, which must move in every particular according to a very definite scheme, for fear it might be lost in a wilderness of thought—a rather illusory fear. I should be sorry to present such minds, even if I could, with what they want. Thoughtless borrowing and automatism should not be encouraged in any school subject; at all costs, what I might call the random element must be preserved: otherwise teaching is death, perhaps a refined death, perhaps with all accessories perfect, but still death. And the random element can only be preserved by the individual venturing thoughtfully on his own aims and methods; and in discussing these matters now, I would as little desire to dictate a pattern as I would resent having a pattern dictated to me. On the other hand, those who resent dictating to themselves a pattern to be followed in their lessons, who prefer to leave aim and method in the unconscious background of their individuality, and trust entirely to spontaneous resourcefulness, I believe to be putting themselves at a disadvantage. They may be extremely skilful, very stimulating and inspiring, but they tend always to be less than they might have been. They may even suffer disintegration. To think out an aim or a method with definiteness, even though each has to be daily modified according to circumstance, is a preservative of individuality: in so far as a man maintains his individuality ' by trying to make sure that he feels what he thinks he feels, that he thinks what he thinks he thinks, that his words mean
what he thinks they mean'.—I congratulate Mr Murry on this activity of verbs.

What is, then, the aim I would propose to myself? In part, it is already fixed by the demands of other specialists. It is necessary for every stage of their work that a pupil should already have a corresponding degree of skill in speech and writing. They do not expect to have to provide this command of English; they may, if it is there, do something to assist it. A history teacher, for example, by clever choice of subject matter and an intelligent grasp of it himself, will exercise a boy’s ability to make a précis and probably add something to his skill; but he will not expect to set about showing a boy for the first time what a précis means. That will be taken for granted as the work of the English specialist. And so with other subjects in the curriculum.

The English course, then, must be in part the learning of a technique, a craft of words such that a boy can make a simple logical statement, relative to various kinds of systematised knowledge. For example, he must be able to express a clear mathematical deduction, from the simple to the more complex, as time goes on: he must be able to describe precisely a chemical action and the conditions under which it takes place: he must be able, given certain historical dates, to express a judgment, in which their main points are co-ordinated, again the complexity varying according to his standard of attainment. It might be thought that a technique as slender as this would be supplied without much effort; but if anyone spent a little time listening to the verbal intercourse in any large class from
the senior years of an elementary to the certificate year of a secondary school, he would notice how little exercise any one boy has in following up a train of ideas in a clear verbal sequence: how much, hour by hour, he is forming a habit of being content with something 'not quite'.

To make a clear and simple satisfactory statement on a concrete topic, such as an event in one's personal experience, is not as easy a process as some rather too confident teachers seem to think. It is certainly easier to make a satisfactory statement on an abstract topic, on which there has already been a good deal of selection and formulation by others, and it is this kind of topic which is the subject matter of the various special branches of knowledge. But even if it were possible to equip a boy for the easier type of statement only, it would be distinctly unwise; and to equip him for the more difficult type means encouraging or training him to perceive intelligently all the potentially relevant details of an object, to select and assess those details essential for his immediate purpose, and as part of that assessment, to co-ordinate them with a pattern of ideas, related to objects similar to the one perceived, to arrange his embryo conception in an order suitable for delivery, that is, to put his ideas in a form in which they can be communicated, and for this a definite point of view with regard to them is needed; finally, to choose words which do not suggest merely a vague impression of what is in his mind but reveal it—if it is to be a clear and simple statement—with due emphasis, economically and without misunderstanding; that is, with a sense of the effect his words are going to have
on others: the whole process, though on any given occasion much of it may be subconscious, yet needing a certain power of resistance to emotional distraction.

I regret that I have not been able to put in a simpler way what, I imagine, are some of the mental processes underlying a simple statement of fact. But I do not think that any simplification could do away with the actual intricacy of the problem facing the teacher of English here. In practice the intelligent teacher solves it with more ease than this analysis might suggest: he solves much of it by apt subconscious reactions. But he will not do that if he thinks that the learning of even a simple technique is a thing that grows and flourishes like a weed without any care. That, however, is a false condition: for he would not then be intelligent.

One item in our aim, then, is to equip a boy with a power of communication satisfactory for various special subjects. In so far as this means that the learning of English is to be a craft, it is sound. To learn a craft has a utility value, intelligible to the boy himself, and so causes interest; and however much English may be a discipline it will be ineffective unless at all points it is fused with interest. But to learn a craft in itself is not enough. 'Those who live for technique are killed by technique.'¹ It is too narrow an intention: it should only be a part of a more important whole. If as a part it dominates the whole, there is a danger that the English course may produce mechanics, skilled perhaps but only within narrow limits, an army of small experts, for whom experience must be reduced to un-

¹ Constant Lambert, Music Ho!
real formulae, before they can exercise their expert skill on it, their skill being confined to the externals of a jargon or terminology: or again, they may learn a trick of structure perhaps excellent in itself, but, like gifted slaves, they are ready to use it in the service of any appetite which cares to employ them. Of this kind are advertisement writers, of the other politicians. I need not give examples of the latter’s skill in terminology: one has only to listen to a home or foreign station on the air, when a commemoration banquet is being held or any other function, at which public service, mostly elderly, is expounding public policy or private virtues. But, to take the more skilful type of verbal expert, I select this example from a newspaper advertisement—I might have made the selection from more exclusive literary source, but on the whole there seems to be more attention paid to form in the more popular kind of advertisement. So I quote: ‘It makes your mouth water even to think of —— flavour. Savoury, zestful, delicious. Every tender mouthful improved by pure olive oil—no scales—no hard bones to spoil your enjoyment. And because they’re so tasty —— so nourishing —— so easily digested, —— are just as good for you as they’re delightful to eat!’

Here there is obvious care for form. In a short space,—every word being well paid for,—the problem has been to make a strong appeal to a dual appetite, health and pleasure. This may be too crude a way of putting it; for one is almost left with the impression that health is synonymous with virtue, and pleasure with beauty—though a little oily. To make this impression, there has been, of course, a sharp choice of
vocabulary; but there has been also a close study of syntactical form, even of rhythm: all very conscious, perhaps, but none the less a study of form, and I would say, a successful study. The general ordering of the words gives each of them its due stress: the structure, though it has strength and mass, has also a certain resilience, and the illusion of being spontaneous. Just enough of syncopated syntax, of the 'broken line', as it were, to be vivid and to show that it is in touch with the most serious of modern literary effort: just enough of the intimate personal vernacular touch, to prove that it is in the main stream of popular consciousness,—I use 'popular' here as a term of serious approbation. And yet with this intimacy and irregularity there is a discrete use of traditional forms, an effective contrast of the romantic and classical. Among those forms most noticeable is the *acervus ex tribus*—'savoury, zestful, delicious', and the threefold stress here, according to some, should put it into the category of verse, but myself I think it remains above any suspicion of such a too compelling persuasiveness. That would be an error in taste. It does its work better as the innocent explanation of prose. There are also two sets of this three-grouping, running parallel in the second and third sentences, expressing an effect by their parallelism, and yet varied enough in detail not to be too obvious and so weaken each other. 'So tasty—so nourishing—so easily digested'—here is also a miniature climax, attained, as all great effects, by simple means, here by the gradual increase of stress in a succession of ideas through the verbal form chosen for each, and incidentally the double theme of the 'good' and the
‘delightful’ is woven into the small compass of the climax. And in that third sentence the ‘good’ and the ‘delightful’ are brought into a contrast of mutual benefit by a true-to-type ‘complex’ sentence,—only complex by definition,—a sentence worth including for its form in any collection of examples for ‘analysis’, cheek by jowl with specimens of eighteenth-century prose. Nor is this an isolated example of the care in technique shown by the advertiser’s craft. ‘Ask any smoker of —— if what I say is more than they deserve’—supple in texture, obliquely potent. ‘The Sunshine Vitamins, the fats which give you energy, the milk which goes to make ——, reach you with their natural nourishment at its freshest, and therefore at its best’—not so clever a choice of words as in the first piece, nor so sure a sense of rhythm, but still structurally Burke;—these are examples found close to the first in casually turning over the pages of a daily paper.

One cannot deny technical proficiency to such writing; but it is a proficiency which, unless controlled by a power greater than itself, is likely to have an unhealthy effect on the language. Mere craftsmanship, as an aim, is not therefore enough. But if instead of producing a craftsman, the school aimed at producing an artist, would that be a sufficient and satisfactory basis for the work of the English specialist? Personally I think that it would. The fact that no institution can produce either artist or poet is irrelevant. It is enough that it should sincerely aim at producing one: the individual will complete the aim for himself or not, according to what is in him; and I think he is more likely to complete the aim if the English room in a
school is a literary studio rather than a literary salon.

The use of the word 'artist' here may seem confusing to some. All I mean is that if you make it your aim to help a boy to express himself to the best of his ability, instead of helping him only to express a set of ideas, of which he is temporarily aware, but which may not be an integral part of him, you are thereby trying to create an artist, as well as a craftsman, craft being included in art. The artist has technical skill, but uses it as a means of combining himself with an object in whatever medium he uses: and in consequence, the object has a distinctive and individual value. The craftsman can write a letter as well as the artist, so far as its external form is concerned; but only the artist can write a letter, in which the form and the matter combine perfectly to give the letter an identity of its own, something original, something with a new value. This difference between art and craft is not negligible, nor are the consequences on the English course, if we take as its aim the growing of an artist.

The phrase 'to help a boy to express himself to the best of his ability' has some implications that might be ignored at first sight. I will go into these in a moment, and try, in disentangling them, to show why I would make this my own choice of an aim in teaching English. But first I would warn anyone from accepting it, just because it may sound a decent and obvious sort of thing to do—helping lame dogs over unnecessary stiles and so forth. A sentimental attitude as an aim is not likely to lead to much vigorous thinking-out of method. Besides, that a boy should receive
help in communicating his ideas and feelings to others as well as possible, is nothing more than his right as a future social being. It is not a matter of any teacher’s charity. In the present anxiety to pack into a boy this, that or the other kind of special knowledge, much of which he will never use later even as a ballast, it is sometimes forgotten that most of his after-life will be spent in meeting situations in which the saying or not saying, writing or not writing of some commonplace word will be the thing most crucial to himself and others. Quadratic equations will not soothe a quarrelsome neighbour, nor the Pragmatic Sanction reduce a swollen official.

Between a human society and an animal herd there would be in many respects little to choose, if man had neither speech nor writing. In this form of language he lives and thinks, in so far as he is conscious of his activity. He is less than man, if he cannot communicate his ideas in words to others: and any system of education which does not give all the members of a state an equal opportunity to learn this basic power must be condemned. To leave a man inarticulate, when he might be articulate within a certain compass, is an anti-social act; but in spite of that, I fear that it has been a deliberate practice on the part of those classes who have from time to time controlled education. In this matter of speech, it has been regarded as natural that those who have been compelled to work long hours from an early age at heavy physical tasks should not have ideas to express, or if they had them, should not have the training of throat and mouth necessary to express them, except to a very limited
audience. Actually, when labour compels a man to long periods of unspoken thought and the struggle for the necessities of life rather than its comforts makes him aware of elemental values in existence, he has ideas which it is important that he should express in widely communicable form. Denied that communication, these ideas obstruct one another, and thus hampered, are put to rout by inferior and second-hand ideas from outside. And the thought of a whole society is less vigorous.

As against this, I know it will be claimed that the countryman with his apparently slow mind and rich dialect should be preserved from an enfeebling education and standard speech; that he is the salt of the land as he is; that strong original character of thought and feeling can only survive if he can be kept confined to little local hollows of tradition. This claim seems to be based on the supposition that originality and democratic culture cannot exist in one and the same being: a rather pessimistic point of view. I have heard West Coast Highlanders, whose natural speech was Gaelic, discuss political theories in English which, except for its purity, was indistinguishable from that spoken in a university: in other words, though as strong in local tradition as any dweller in a Devon or Somerset valley, they had the advantage of being able to express themselves on matters outside their parish, as citizens of an equal footing with any in the English-speaking society of peoples. Though I can only write from limited experience, I have received a similar impression from the French peasant, who can turn from a patois to the language he has learnt in school. And
I am forced to suspect the view that the genius of a people depends on its 'natural gentlemen' being half dumb. It may satisfy those who wish to escape from intellectual garrulity into a country they do not know. But, wise as those who work in the silence of the land can be—and I have found them wiser on the soil than in their more tongue-loosened hours in the village bar—yet their wisdom has not prevented English speech being riddled with class values: and inevitably English thought also. It has not prevented those, who have secured by one means or another a certain standard of material power, from selecting a certain manner of speech and vocabulary as peculiar to themselves: so that if anyone without the same material status used it, he should seem to commit a trespass. For these others a dialect is sufficient—not that in tone it has not a greater emotional range and less suggestion of mendacity—and if a dialect speaker aspires to the society of the first class, he is at liberty to train himself in what is known as the King's English, just as he is at liberty to buy a dress suit—both things making a link with a difference between master and servant.

As long as the schools allow this lingual hierarchy to exist, they are educating a caste form of society, however much in theory that society may be defined as democratic. To neglect a child's speech is as much a despotic act as to take away a man's civic rights: or maim him in other ways. On the individual it may impose a taciturnity, or difficulty of speech, for which he suffers unnecessary inhibitions. Within society it sets up unnatural barriers of communication, and so both hinders the flow of intelligent intercourse and
the just appreciation of ideas at their intrinsic value—
for where speech is judged by class standards, so also
is what is said.

In what I have written above, I trust that I have
not given the impression of belittling dialect as such;
I have only wished to assert that inasmuch as educa-
tion is a social claim on the state, the school should
give the opportunity to every individual alike of using
one common medium of communication, a standard
speech.

This in itself is no easy task; it means making in
many a new attitude towards the value of speech. It
is not enough that the individual should regard it as
a standard of correctness imposed from without, the
property of a type of government, as is implied in the
phrase ‘the King’s English’. If he is to have a care for
it, he must feel it as a possession for which he himself
is responsible. Apart from this change of attitude, the
task of reforming muscular habits and remoulding facial
inheritances will not be completed in a day. But,
supposing that speech becomes a more flexible and
artistic instrument, I do not suggest that because speech
poor in delivery tends to be poor in content, the con-
verse is true: that to speak well always tends to in-
telligent thought or even to thought at all. Many an
excellent tongue has worn itself out in an empty head.
Manner without content is somewhat of a ghost.

This brings me back to the aim already stated ‘to
help a boy to express himself to the best of his ability’. In ‘himself’¹ or nowhere is to be found the content:

¹ For practical, apart from other reasons, I assume the potenti-
ality of an individual self.
eventually what is expressed in speech or writing should come out of the individual self, as part of that self, and not merely as a conveyance of unintegrated ideas. In the preparatory stage, that is, school, the self is only in process of coming into being, and so, much that is expressed by the boy can only be the impersonal communication of what he has borrowed from others, without making it a part of himself. He cannot communicate a self which does not exist; but in his own interests, the more that he can express at any stage, which reveals that he is ‘forming’ a distinctive self, the better; and so according to our proposed aim, side by side with helping the boy how to express a self, the teacher of English is concerned with the actual formation of that self also: that is, with the development of an individual. I need scarcely suggest that this concern should not tempt him into forcing a standard content on the boy. He may require a standard speech, but he cannot impress a standard pattern of ideas and be consistent to our present aim. For though he may have his own ideal of what an intelligent human being should be and what such a being ought to think and so express, he will not help to its realisation if he dictates it. Actually, the ideals of an intelligent adult are still themselves continually growing, as he learns more and more from his experience, and the fact that they are not yet complete should make him naturally averse from regarding them as entirely adequate for others or at least from imposing them on others. However, if he does impose them, he might just as well stick artificial roses on a thistle and say that he has grown a rosebud. He might even
be believed at a cursory glance: but deception is not an explicit aim of education. On the other hand, by proper treatment of the soil, at the right stages of growth, a weed may become a valuable plant. But it is the weed which does the growing and becoming. The teacher’s ideas are only valuable as ingredients in the soil, and unless the individual boy does the growing, that is, creates himself in the English course, he might as well spend the time in some section of specialised knowledge.

If he is to be really the centre of his work in English, the boy must have as much opportunity as possible both of using the language, spoken or written, and of providing the content of what he expresses. The word ‘express’ in the aim, stresses the use of language; but the word ‘himself’, though it might pass unnoticed, is intended to stress also the use of his own experiences, in what he expresses. His own experiences, however trivial, what he does from day to day in or out of school, his feelings, moods, judgments, desires, these are to be his material for expression; his attitude to his own language is to be that it is his own to use on what he wants to say or write; and that what he wants to say or write is as important to him as what Shakespeare wanted to say or write was important to Shakespeare: which is of greater value to others, to remain an open question, until he comes to a conclusion about it in course of time. And even though the language of his choice is that of the gutter, and the experiences he wishes to record in it are also of the gutter, these tastes must not be ignored. They are the actual basis of any other standard of
judgment,—and they will probably have vigour. If the boy is to change his taste, it will be through his finding contact himself between his own experience and the experience of others, and this in school will be mainly through the record of that experience in what are known as the classics of the language. For him they are not classics, until through contact of similar experience he discovers and understands that they are: they are merely the records of people who have also attempted to put ideas of a kind down on paper. Obviously this will have an effect on the choice of reading matter of the English course: to force a boy to read, for example, something for which on account of his age he has not the requisite mental development or with which he has no emotional contact, and condemn him for not understanding it, is hardly the way to make a poor growth in taste improve its yield. But more on that point presently.

In the meantime, to some it may seem that the aim I have proposed is leading to the indifference of any and every individual peculiarity or whim; and little can come of it but precocious eccentricities or a welter of vague babble, and unpleasant fungoid growths of self. This might be so, if the aim stopped at the word 'himself'; but it includes also the words 'to the best of his ability'. What if it does?—a critic might say—that is not enough check on individual licence and for two reasons: it only affects the manner and not the content of expression; it seems also rather an artificial addition to the aim and not likely to be of any practical effect. In answer to these objections I would claim in the first place that if anyone tries to improve the
form in which he expresses something, the odds are that he will have a certain discipline also in what he expresses; and further, if anyone is receiving help from another in technique, that help, though directed to the form of speech or writing, is bound to affect the matter also. For example, in examining and comparing the arrangement of idea-groups either in a simple description or a complicated definition, as attempted by various writers, including those in the class-room, the formal element cannot be studied without a study of the material; and as the teacher will probably select the examples taken from books, he will thus have a definite control even if indirectly exercised over the content of a boy’s mind.

In the second place—expression in a class-room will be synonymous with communication. Although it is important for his individuality that a boy should be encouraged to express his thoughts before an imaginary or ideal audience or reader, such compositions will only be communicated to the class, if he sees in the class the imaginary reader of his choice: they are his own private property. But in the ordinary routine work of the class composition will be definitely communication of ideas to the class; and this in itself is a check on mere profusion of rubbish—personally I should always fear poverty of expressiveness more than exuberance. But, anyway, to write something that is to be public to a known set of readers, is writing under discipline; and it is obvious that the change, for example, from boyhood to adolescence will have a distinct effect on the type of matter which a boy is ready to communicate to others. It may be to a certain
extent a limitation in the range of content; but, if that is a defect, it is more than balanced by the fact that what is expressed must be expressed in such a way that it conveys its meaning clearly to a definite known group of readers or listeners. With an imaginary public, one may take for granted that words convey the same feeling, intention and sense to it as to oneself: and to the finished artist this is his proper freedom; but to the apprentice it is fatal. And here the class is a natural correction: it is also thereby a natural inducement to expression according to the best of one's ability.

Now the words 'according to the best of his ability', though they qualify the verb 'express' and therefore refer directly to the technique of communication, refer also indirectly to the object of the verb 'express'—the ideas contained in the self. Before he can achieve a best, the boy must have some idea of what is better or worse both in his ideas and the manner of their communication; and for this he must make comparisons with others in order to find some criteria of value: and this discovery of values in experience, as it so much concerns the growth of the individual, is obviously the most important activity in the English course, and, I would say, gives it a unique character among school subjects. From this activity the teacher cannot stand aloof as a neutral observer. If he exercises any control at all in the class room, the standards of taste which he adopts will affect those with whom he works. He will therefore have to have a literary faith as it were: he cannot remain a non-committal critic, negative, analysing even cleverly the content of expression
into various elements like a chemical compound, and then regarding the analysis as equivalent to a constructive discrimination of values; he cannot be content to regard a boy's mind as an aggregate of reactions or of checks and balances, or any other pseudo-scientific psychological quantum, mechanically deriving values from experience, which will result in an internal harmony, easily recognisable, and all by a kind of spontaneous generation.

Whether he likes it or not, in this matter of discriminating between values, intellectually or emotionally experienced, that is, in what is known as the appreciation lesson, he will either directly or indirectly have to suggest criteria and comparative values. Otherwise the boy whose taste is trivial will age into even greater triviality; and when I referred to the vigour which might be found in the gutter, I referred to it only as a root of experience from which future experience would have to grow, if it was to have life: and one of the teacher's most difficult problems is to transplant this strongly rooted weed without killing it into a soil from which it will eventually draw the substance of excellent fruit. However ingeniously the transplantation is contrived, so that the weed is unaware of what is happening, the soil into which it is put is alive with selected values. Otherwise it would be sterile. However much the teacher of English may disguise it, he is responsible for bringing the minds he works with into contact with criteria of his own choice.

Personally I think this contact can be best made through practising the art of communication—the boy is most likely in that way to arrive at a true taste of his
own, and not a counterfeit: most likely to get a real insight into what is valuable in literature, instead of giving lip-service to values which he only intermittently understands. It seems to me the most natural way of approaching this matter of aesthetic and other appreciation. A child wishes to express his ideas: he seeks ideas from his parents: his interest in what they tell him is utilitarian and therefore strong. He wants help in an awkward corner, in a practical difficulty: a wise parent probably gives that help by a series of questions through which the child appears to have solved his own difficulty. The certainty of a coming solution keeps him interested: the interested effort he has to make in answering the questions may leave, as its residue, a tithe of interest in the manner of the solution itself. It is the beginning of an interested feeling that there may be a better or worse way of dealing with words. When he is a boy among other boys in a class, the process will be similar, except that his attention will more and more turn to questions of form in communication, as in class work the form or how something is expressed has a more general application than the matter or what is peculiar to each individual; and when the boy reaches adolescence and becomes a conscious critic of himself and others, his interest in how to express a thing should be still stronger than the child’s: for having become a conscious critic of himself and others, he should realise the need for gaining a mastery over the means by which he can assert his own judgment; and this interest should extend naturally to finding out how others have expressed similar things successfully; and from that it is an inevitable step to a
voluntary study of what others have expressed in order to gauge its value. In his search, at first subconscious and later more conscious, for values at first simple and later more complex, he comes to other writers, that is, authors, to get help from them in how to communicate an idea of his own; he stays with them to appreciate the content of their ideas. Literature is, at first, something in which to find models for expression; help in the practical problem of equipping oneself with a technique. In studying the work of men who have had to face the same difficulties as himself, the boy may have enough fellow-feeling with them on this score to take what they have written seriously and wish to know more about what they thought and felt; and what relation these things have to beauty, truth and other first principles.

To appreciate through the active exertion of trying to express oneself,—I suppose it might be called a synthetic-analytic process,—is a process I feel whereby one is likely to acquire a taste, sensibility and critical judgment more truly personal than by some entirely analytic approach, in which only parts and not the whole of the individual is engaged at any one time. In other words, the making of an artist is the best way to make a critic. This is a dogmatic assertion, I know, without any of the decencies of scientific proof; but educational theory has to live on such statements until the time when psychology can become an inductive science; and even then she will live on such statements. ‘Il est des choses qu'on ne prouve pas.’ But with regard to this assertion, I know that in the arts appreciation is not confined to the practising artist. Anyone can look at a picture or listen to music and say ‘I like that’ or ‘I don’t like it’, 
or 'This is beautiful, that ugly'. These are a criticism of values, a personal estimate; but what the teacher is concerned with is whether such an estimate is worth consideration by others, who are trying to arrive at a standard of taste, and whether he who makes it, by making it, increases the value of his own personality, and how he himself can contribute to such a possible increase by what he does when this critic is still a boy.

A music teacher does not seem to form musical judgment in a pupil who is learning from him how to play scales, nor an art master to instil any appreciation into one who is learning to copy a picture; though it is difficult to say in either case what aesthetic consequence any effort to master a certain medium is likely to have. But certainly there are brilliant executants of the piano, who seem to have no sensitive realisation of what they are doing, and very skilful manipulators of paint, who can only use it to show that they are without artistic appreciation. These are, however, examples of technique attained without reference to the communication of a self; and it is quite easy to see that one would not expect critical appreciation from them as one would from those who, though they may have no special technical equipment in painting or music, yet are by nature sensitive to sound, shape and colour, and by the exercise of that sensitiveness not only make this experience an integral part of their self, but even get an intuitive understanding of the art by which they are affected. Here one has taste without the recognised practice of the art. But even here one might ask whether the appreciation might not be more satisfying to the individual and of more value
to others, if it were more articulate; and whether it might not be a truer estimate of the values contained in the original, if it was made under a disciplined fusion of emotion and intellect similar to that under which the original was created—that is, supposing it to be a work of art.

And even though it could be proved that to be a musician or a painter was no help towards the appreciation of music or painting, one could not argue from this that the same thing applied to the art of words. For it seems to me there is a practical difference between this art and that of music, for example; and one relevant to this problem of appreciation. The difference may be only one of degree, but enough to upset an analogy. It is this: everyone who is not drunk uses words to convey his meaning, but only a few use music. Everyone has to have a certain technique of words. So far as concerns school, that technique should become an art. In an educated world all critics would be artists; and in order to make all artists critics, it would seem an unnatural procedure to develop criticism on a system of its own, when there is already to hand the system by which a certain taste in how to express oneself, a technical taste, as it were, has been formed.

But it may be claimed that music is also a form of communication, in fact a language without the local barriers of speech, and yet to acquire a critical taste in it, some might say, nothing is needed but to listen to its rhythm and melodies, and allow values to arrange themselves through emotional responses. But if this is true of music, it is true because music is not socially articulate; a rhythm or a melody can be perceived
by the individual without the help of socially devised symbols. Verbal language, on the other hand, has a very restricted meaning if the listener has not learned the details of the intellectual pattern which society has given it and is continually giving it. There is certainly some distance between a knowledge of this intellectual pattern and such a thing as poetic appreciation. To know the syntax underlying a poem does not produce a state in which one has a 'heightened consciousness' of reality: but without a realisation, subconscious it may be, of the formal conditions of syntax under which the poem is produced, I do not see how that state is reached. For even in modernist poetry there is great dependence on conventional syntactical forms: on traditional ways of conveying a meaning through word order and grouping. The dependence is there even where traditional forms are changed; for the emotional effect is partly derived from the substitution of a new for an old form. Even so great an individualist in words as James Joyce remains to a great extent a traditionalist in syntax; and I cannot but feel that he would have invented a completely new syntax if he had thought it would add to the artistic value of his work. Another modern writer, D. H. Lawrence, seems, as a poet, to have made his sensitive perception of reality less effective than it might have been by denying it this artistic discipline—one might almost say, social discipline; for a long line of labourers has been at this communal work of making a syntactical bridge between the fixed symbol and the floating idea.

Once again this leads me to favour the practice of the forms of expression as a group approach towards
appreciation; balanced by the liberty of the individual in what he expresses apart from group work—to prevent any tendency to traditionalism for its own sake. This does not mean that I would exclude critical analysis—that would be impossible, and, in any case, inconsistent with my aim, if such analysis is treated as a technique in reading preparatory to expression—nor that I would exclude such analysis in the form known as the 'appreciation' lesson. No teacher of English can afford to exclude any type of experiment. Unfortunately in practice the odds are that he will prefer to do without the lesson of a synthetic type or composition, as much as he can, finding it more arduous because less centrally controlled.

At the present day also he has a further temptation to direct his teaching as far as possible towards analytical literary criticism. If he has never thought very much about the origins of his own way of expressing himself, and if he is not a man of many ideas, he has at hand a whole circle of modern literary criticism from which to borrow ideas. It is partly the facility with which I have found prospective teachers borrow these ideas, and not only the ideas but their terminology, either with or without inverted commas, that makes me feel that those who are going to produce some independence of judgment and genuinely individual taste in others, should try some other method of doing it. This plagiarism is not unnatural, for this haute école of critics themselves tend to follow a circus circle of words, either in obedient succession, or if any move in a reverse direction, still within the ring. In spite of that, they should be read without fail; they
have among them men of taste and intellect; and they can stimulate thought, if the reader himself is also critical, in a way in which books on educational method do not stimulate. At present there are only one or two books, containing a school method, derived from this type of literary criticism.

Judging by these and their sources, I should say their chief danger is that they build a superstructure of taste on insufficient foundations. There is a too conscious outlook on everything, for there is no gradual provision from one stage to another of a subconscious background. Even when expressly framed for school use, they do not take enough account of the fact that a boy is not an adolescent, nor an adolescent a man, and between the first and last there are differences of mental growth and experience. This disregard of the human element is likely to tend to intellectual forcing of the immature; and what is meant to be a genuine attempt to produce independence and sincerity of taste may become merely the dictation of half understood clichés. Present an adult with two poems, the authors' names withheld, and ask him for a critical comparison of their value to him; and you may reasonably expect him to give a judgment of his own, if he is widely read and his habits of reading have long formed an integral part of his experience, and also if his judgment is asked for under natural conditions,—but I do not think you may reasonably expect this of a boy of sixteen. Actually, even with the adult this method of testing appreciation is not as likely to produce as truly personal a judgment as might be thought. To face him with two anonymous poems, as though with two unknown
chemical salts under laboratory conditions, may seem satisfactory to those who wish to guard literary criticism from the odium of being unscientific. But in the effort to get a really scientific analysis, free from sentimental prejudices, stock responses and so on, the result may quite easily be that there will be no genuine emotional response at all, or that the mood for the appreciation of one poem may be much more difficult to feel under such selected conditions than the mood for the other. If that is so, the judgment given will come most conveniently from an intellectual response, a conscious gymnastic, a solemn exercise in an unreal balance room.

Such conditions applied to a school class may produce some genuine first-hand criticism among a small number of boys. It is also likely to spread a dependence on dogmatism as complete as any which it is attempting to supersede. Again, with adults who have been scientifically trained in criticism, there is a tendency to adopt dogmatic formulae: as though being presented with a tabula rasa had made them all the more ready to accept the first positive opinion that came to their ears. This fault I feel is caused to a great extent by the lack of an ordered approach to the critical test, and I fear the same result in school for the same reasons. And judging by the only evidence yet available I should say that the teacher who adopts this method will not fail to be dogmatic. It may flatter a boy of sixteen to avail himself of suggested comments such as ‘the taut insistent style of —— is relatively convincing’, ‘Cogent in rhythm and imagery’, ‘profoundly significant’, ‘inevitable and personal’, ‘the subtler and more indi-
individual poem’, ‘magnificent in rhythm and palpable expression’, ‘a good specimen of the naïve-profound’, ‘so dropsically loaded with abstractions that anything said is effectually muffled’, ‘—— prose’, (the blank denotes a literary magazine not in favour with the critic) and so on. But I doubt whether this terminology will be an advantage to him, as an arbiter of his own tastes, or will make one more member of a critical public able to recognise genius when it appears in-cognito. It is dangerous to become a premature critic of poems born out of adult emotions; and of these there are quite a number.

My own bias is towards a teacher of English who can replace the teacher of classics: in fact, I feel that the English course can only attain to its due influence in a school if it can supply to a greater number what classics supplied to a few; and perhaps with greater vitality. Saunderson of Oundle criticised the classics as forming an oligarchic tradition of culture, suited to a dominant and acquisitive class; his criticism was valid and to the point. Valuable as they were as a training in English language and thought, they made during the nineteenth century a convenient barrier to the new scientific and democratic outlook. They opposed by interpretation a static to a changing world: the length of time needed for their study limited their advantages to the comparatively few; they were the accepted means of educating established power. In the present century they have lost much of their cultural prestige; and considering their tradition, one can but sympathise with the modern school, which prefers to make a selection of their clear thought through translations.
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and spend the time saved on other studies. But in doing this, it loses something still irreplaceable—the verbal discipline, the feeling for language,—one might almost say, compelled by the classical method, when that method was under the control of an intelligent scholar. The value of that method did not lie so much in the brilliant imitations of Greek and Latin authors achieved by the elect few, but in the efforts made by the much greater number of the less successful. In the making of even an indifferent translation or composition these had been compelled to observe the forms of their own language, to sift its vocabulary, to become sensitive to its idiom; and all in contact with a wider range of ideas than any other subject, as taught in the past, allowed.

It is true that pedantry was also a very common atmosphere in the study of the classics. With a dead language that may be inevitable. English, as a living language, should be less liable to that disease. It should also suffer less from that waste of dullness, caused by driving unacademic minds through the mechanical obstacles of a language with which they could feel very little in common. But if English is to provide for the boy leaving at sixteen something of what the classics provide for the boy continuing to a university, it must give him that discipline of thought which comes from such mental exercises as are needed for 'translation' and 'composition'. I would even venture the belief that until English teaching evolves a method as strict as the classics, it will never be an attractive subject to the average boy. In the past both teacher and boy have been choked by the surfeits
of a drab unappetising plenty. The boy, no matter what his age, has very often been gorged on a memory routine of grammar, literary museum pieces, and essays which were beyond the scope even of an anxious parent. He has been asked to write three or four pages on a subject of which he had no direct experience, when he could not write one sentence which satisfied him as an expression of what he meant to say: much less connect half a dozen sentences in a cogent order. And, but, however, so, then, nevertheless, he distributed over his paper according to some obscure law of proportion; the natural guide to their use, that of sense, was absent. Before he could express a group of ideas in a simple form in a dozen words, he was straggling through a tangle of ill-adjusted clauses overgrown with ambiguities. And the teacher has often enough wasted years conscientiously correcting the confusion he has encouraged—endless written corrections which the boy may have read, but only out of a sense of duty—probably a mistaken sense of duty. The fetish of much writing, I believe, still continues: even though there has been a passing from the essay to something closer to the boy’s experience, such as the description of what he may have seen or heard. But in spite of the change, old attitudes have not died. The teacher, who has nothing of the artist in his aim, still tends to ignore the fact that the composition of a complete whole is not the way to practise experimentally the better expression of its details. Michelangelo, for example, did not use the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel to learn his particular treatment of anatomy. He used a small piece of paper; and if necessary, concentrated there on an elbow.
Cézanne may seem to have used wholes more experimentally; but to master such elements in detail as are contained in 'Landscape with Bridge', he did not use that canvas itself, but others, in which, as it were, careless of the whole he could treat successfully some part of it. The teacher of English, however, even in descriptive work is still inclined to respect the essay tradition, and for him the essay means a set piece of composition, not a sketch, a certain quota of writing, not an effort to translate an idea to paper. The result is that subjects are chosen for the number of words they will extract from the pen: so they carry the boy well beyond the limit of his impressions of what he has experienced. He avoids shortage by vague borrowing; and the vague thus becomes as useful to him as the clear. Further, the teacher who is not himself in the habit of composing is not always aware of the difficulties which quite a simple descriptive subject may present. To him an essay on 'Might is right', an account of a railway journey, and a description of a dog may all seem to be of equal difficulty—it may not occur to him, viewing the matter from the end of a blue pencil and naturalised to its stock responses, that a boy may hang on some simple sequence of time and place in a railway journey, but that looking at all parts of a dog simultaneously he may be at a loss to say which comes first: the muzzle or the tail. And again confusion of idea leads to confusion of statement; and the value is taken from a fruitful type of writing, description: the fault a failure to prepare the parts before attempting the whole.

In contrast, no boy would be expected to attempt a
Latin Composition before he had had detailed practice in forms of expression and in arrangement of ideas, likely to be used later in the continuous piece. Of course, this procedure is due to the difficulty of the language. Without the practice of exercises in which single points are segregated, the boy could not get enough grip of the Latin to transfer into it a complex of ideas from the English. However, the fact remains that throughout the whole of the Latin course there is progressive organisation of detail with a view to combining it for the clear transference of greater and greater complexities from one language to the other.

Naturally a method, suitable if one is adapting ideas to words through the medium of a dead and living language, cannot be imposed on the process of adapting ideas to words through the medium of a living language alone. But I would suggest that the teacher of English might at least study that method with profit.

To object that copying of the classical method would lead to excessive formalism, is irrelevant. I do not propose mere imitation. To object that too strict a method would be death to imagination, is only relevant where a teacher does not realise the implications of the aim I have suggested. If a teacher is servant of his method, the boy will suffer in imagination. On the other hand, imagination does not grow out of vague strugglings of thought and expression. However, as I certainly fear the readiness of many teachers to sell their souls for the hire purchase of any stock method,—I should say that the more any suggested method for an English course was merely a tendency to method, the better. To object that any stress on composition
in English will increase the burden of corrections already heavy, is to misread what I have intended. Stress on composition is intended to mean stress on quality, not quantity of written work. There will probably be less written work, and more of oral; but the written work will be much more of a kind which the teacher can correct, as it is written, straight away before the class—and so correction will be both more economical and more efficient. If no other means are of avail, I would go so far as to limit the size of the scraps of paper on which much of the composition was done: so that a teacher could take up half a dozen of them as a class was working, and because their contents had a definite sharp focus, see at a glance what point needed emphasis and have a clear index there and then of whether his treatment of the matter had already been defective or not, or how he must vary it. Such clues would save much ineffective breath. The teacher himself, like the boy, would have something definite to guide his words. It is one thing to be wise before the event, another to be wise after the event: but what helps both parties is seeing eye to eye during the event. However, this is to anticipate; and I will leave the matter there until I come to consider method in more detail.

There is one last, and I think, important stress to make in an aim, in which, if there is anything novel, it is, after all, only new stresses on what is familiar to most. The teacher himself should be an artist as well as a critic. As a critic he can inform the intellect: make one cognisant of merits and defects in one’s own and other’s work, and if his criticism has the suggestive
power of personality, it will stimulate to creative effort in the boy; but to sustain that creative effort, to assist its successful delivery, he must also have been through the adventure of creation himself; otherwise, even if he has imagination, he will not be able to diffuse its synthetic power: not having experienced either the pain or pleasure of creation, he can neither give strength in the one nor recognise the other, when it is present in the class-room. He is liable to dictate, where reticence is needed: to be explicitly personal, where the most fertile hint is an impersonal suggestion. His analysis never becomes another's synthesis. So far as he is concerned, other and self remain for the boy self and other without end, and even the chances of a slight originality are lost.

This may all sound like a counsel of perfection. And it may be said, it is a waste of time proposing any aim if it cannot be carried out without postulating an exceptional man. What faces the school is mostly an average man, who with the best intentions in the world is neither skilful artist nor intelligent critic. Is it in the power of any aim to turn him into either?

No aim, consciously achieved, will without further help produce a Keats or a Coleridge or an Arnold; but I would suggest that, given average capacity, a desire to achieve the present aim would make a man at least a better craftsman in his use of English before and with a class, and through that improvement what intelligence he had as a critic, would be best adapted to those whose literary judgments were still adolescent. I might quote the three poets I have named as instances in which, apparently, art has made a sound introduc-
tion to criticism; but, as a nearer comparison, I will take the average teacher of classics. He has been, perforce, a craftsman; where his technical skill has become to some extent an art, he has developed a helpful appreciation of the formal elements, at least, of language. This development, it is true, has more rarely extended to the substance expressed by the language. But one would expect that. By the difficulties of an ancient language the man of average capacity is too much confined to a criticism of words, where he should be a critic of reality. He suffers too from this further difficulty: that the content of experiences found in that past with which he usually deals is different from the experience familiar to him as a social, economic, psychological being; in fact, it is a trying past to live up to and he compromises by accepting a traditional version of it, and becoming shallow and pedantic in critical outlook.

If the average teacher of English were under the same responsibility to master a technique of expression, having less hindrances to embodying his own experience in the content of what he expressed, he should be more of an artist in words. If his authority with a class—in the most liberal sense—depended on his being able to make a 'fair copy' of a descriptive piece, for example, which the class was attempting, in having to make an original venture, and not merely appraising that in which another had taken the creative risk, in thus involving his whole self and not only his least vulnerable part, the intellect, he would have had the emotional experience necessary to constructive criticism.
It might be said that if average teachers were thus to become just marginal artists and marginal critics, the English course would finally become merely a nursery de petites pensées arrangées en jolies phrases, embryo members of an English Academy. If class work only produced the charming arrangement of ideas, I should be satisfied to let the individual revolt against their pettiness: as Shakespeare against Holofernes. Holofernes helped him for all that.