CHAPTER IV

ON THE RELATION OF LIFE AND CHARACTER TO LITERATURE

I

THE other day, when lecturing on Miss Brontë, I promised a lecture in regard to certain qualities of creative work in fiction. This is the lecture that I now wish to give; but the subject is one which requires a broad consideration of many other things besides methods. What it really implies you will find indicated in the title of this lecture.

Remember that when I am talking to you about literature I never mean history or science or philosophy; I mean only the great division of that literary art which is the expression of feeling and of emotional life. Bearing this in mind we can proceed.

The three main divisions of literature are poetry, drama and fiction. I want to speak of these in relation to the lives of the men who engage in their production. That is what is meant by the title of the essay. This is a very important subject for every student of literature to consider. Any one wishing to become an author in any one of the three branches of literature that I have mentioned, must ask himself honestly several questions and be able to answer them in the affirmative. If he cannot answer them in the affirmative, he had better leave literature alone — for the time being at least.

The first question is, "Have I creative power?" That is to say, "Am I able to produce either poetry, or fiction, or drama, by my own experience, out of my own mental operation, without following the ideas of other people, or being influenced, consciously or unconsciously, only by the

opinions of others?" If you cannot answer this question with an honest "Yes," then you can only be an imitator.

But suppose that you can answer this first question in the affirmative, there remains another question almost equally important to ask. It is this: "Can I devote my life—or at least the best part of my leisure time—to literary work?" If you cannot be sure of much time to spare, you should be sure, at least, of being able to give, every day of your existence, a short time to one sustained object. If you are not sure of being able to do this, you will find the way of literature very hard indeed.

But there is yet a third question to be asked. Even if you have the power and the time, it is necessary that you should determine this matter: "Must I mingle with society and take my part in everyday life, or should I seek quiet and isolation?" The third question can be answered only according to the character of your particular literary power. Certain kinds of literature require solitude — cannot be produced without it. Other kinds of literature oblige the author, whether he likes or does not like it, to mix a great deal with people, to observe all their actions, and to fill himself with every possible experience of active life.

I think now the ground is swept. We can begin the second section of the lecture.

II

What I have suggested in the above series of questions, must now be dwelt upon in detail. Let us first consider poetry in its relation to the conduct of life.

Poetry is not one of those forms of literature which require that the author shall mix a great deal with active life. On the contrary, poetry is especially the art of solitude. Poetry requires a great deal of time, a great deal of thought, a great deal of silent work, and all the sincerity of which a man's nature is capable. The less that a real poet mingles with social life, the better for his art. This is a well known fact in all countries. It is so well known that if a young

poet allows himself to be flattered and petted and made much of by the rich and mighty, it is commonly said that he is going to be ruined. One cannot be perfectly sincere to oneself and become an object of fashionable attention. It is utterly impossible. The art of poetry requires that the poet be as solitary in his house as a priest. I do not mean that it should be necessary to be an ascetic, or anything of that kind, nor that he should not be troubled with family cares. It is very necessary that he should have a family, and know all that the family means, in order to be a good poet. But he must certainly renounce what are generally called social pleasures. In the same degree that he fails to do this, he is almost certain to fail in his poetry.

Let us here consider a few extraordinary facts about the poetical life. Of course you know that poetry does not mean merely writing verses, no matter how correct the verses may be. It means the power to move men's hearts and minds by verse. Now a Persian poet once observed that no bad man could possibly become a poet. There is a good deal of truth in that statement, notwithstanding some apparent exceptions. You have doubtless read that many European poets were bad men. But you must take such statements with a great deal of reserve and qualification. I imagine, for example, that you will immediately think of Byron. But Byron was not fairly judged; and you must not allow yourselves to accept any mere religious or social declaration about the character of the poet. The real facts are that Byron was unjustly treated and goaded and irritated into immoral courses. Moreover the deeper nature of Byron was essentially generous and sympathetic, and when he follows the inspiration of his deeper nature, he gives us the best of what he has. I might speak of many other poets; you will always find that there was something good and generous in the man, however great his faults may have appeared on the surface. Indeed, I knew only one or two exceptions to this Persian observation that no bad man can be a poet, and these exceptions are not satisfactory. We

find in the time of the Italian Renaissance a few extraordinarily wicked men who made a reputation as poets. I might mention, for example, the name of Malatesta. But when we come to examine the literary work of this cruel and ferocious man, we find that its only merit is the perfect correctness of the verse. Perfectly correct verse was greatly esteemed in that age; but we are much wiser to-day. We now know that no mere correctness qualifies verse as true poetry; and I do not think that the Persian poet would have found any poetry in the love verses of the wicked Malatesta.

Of course when the Persian poet spoke of a bad man, he meant what is bad according to the consensus of human experience. I should not call a man bad only because he happened to offend against particular conventions. I should call a man bad only in so far as his relation to others proves him to be cruel, unfeeling, selfish, and ungrateful. No such man as that can write poetry.

So the fundamental truth of this whole matter is simply that a poet must be born a poet — as the English proverb says, "A poet is born, not made." No amount of education will make a man a poet. Every year in England two great universities turn out about four thousand good men stuffed with all that systematic education can force into them. German universities can do better than that. French universities do quite as well. But out of these thousands and thousands, how many can become poets? Not half a dozen in all the countries of Europe together. Education will help a poet; it will greatly enrich his powers of language; it will train his ear to the charm of musical sound, and train his brain to perceive all possible laws of proportion and taste in form. But it cannot make him a poet. I suppose there are to-day in England alone at least thirty thousand people capable of writing almost any form of correct verse. Yet perhaps not even two of them are poets; for poetry is a question of character and temperament. One must be born with a love of the beautiful, with great capacities for sym-

pathy, with a certain gentleness of disposition, in order to be able to act upon the feelings of men through literature. The qualities that make the poet, belong to the softer side of human nature—hence the proverb that the poet is a man who is half a woman. I think that you have all observed that certain admirable but hard kinds of mind are almost insensible to sentiment in literature. As a general rule—though exceptions have existed — mathematicians cannot be poets; the great Goethe, distinguished as he was in science by reason of his constructive imagination, was singularly deficient in mathematical capacity. It would appear that certain powers of the mind cannot be cultivated except at the expense of other faculties. Everywhere poets have been recognized as more or less unpractical in active life; they rarely make good business men; they never can do certain things requiring insensibility to the feelings of others. Essentially sympathetic, their conduct is ruled in all things by feelings rather than by cold reason, and that is why they very often make such unfortunate mistakes. But they should be thought of as representing in the highest degree what is emotional in man. If the whole world were governed by hard and fast rules, it would become very much more difficult to live in than it now is because of the poets who help to keep alive the more generous impulses of human nature. That is why they have been called priests.

I do not think that in Japan the most difficult form of sustained emotional effort has ever been comparable to the art of poetry in Western countries. It is, indeed, such a difficult thing, to compare the achievements of two countries, that if I were speaking only of poetry as embodied in verse, I think that you would find my remarks decidedly extravagant. But poetry is not confined to forms of verse. There may be poetry in beautiful prose; and some of the very best English literature deserves to be qualified as prose-poetry, because it produces the emotional effect of verse. Now any form of literature that really does this requires all the time and all the power that the writer can spare. And

it is for this reason that the life of the man who writes it must be solitary—a life of devotion to art.

III

Let us now turn to fiction — excluding the variety of it which might be termed prose-poetry. Fiction should be, in these times, the Mirror of Life. What is a man to do who would devote his time and life in this direction? We must stop and qualify.

Although there are nominally so many different schools of European fiction—Classical, Romantic, Realistic, Naturalistic, Psychological, Problematical, etc., etc., — we need not bother ourselves with this variety of distinctions, but simply divide fiction into two classes — subjective and objective. Fiction is either a picture of things imagined, or a picture of things actually seen. Can we make a preference? From the artistic point of view I am not sure that we can; for, contrary to what vulgar public opinion believes, the greatest works of fiction and drama have really been subjective, not objective. I need not remind you that Shakespeare did not see and did not experience the incidents of his astonishing plays, and I need not remind you that the great Greek dramatists did not see the facts of tragedy which they put upon the stage and which powerfully move our hearts. This is an astonishing fact, that the mind should perceive more clearly than the eyes—but it is only when the mind is that of a genius. From the artistic standpoint we cannot, nevertheless, dare to say that one method of literature is necessarily better than the other, merely because the greatest work happens to have been done by that method. In some future time we might find an objective method made equally great. And from the individual point of view, from the point of view of the young author, the young student, a preference is absolutely necessary. It is all-important that he should discover in what direction his literary strength is growing. If he feels that he can do better by imagination than by observation, then let him by all means cultivate

romantic work. But if he feels sure that he can do better by using his senses—by observing, comparing—then he must, as a duty to himself, adopt a realistic method. And the conduct of his life in relation to literature must be decided according to which path he decides to take.

As I told you, the highest forms of fiction and drama have been the work of intuition, of imagination. Thackeray, for example, no more than Shakespeare, actually saw or experienced what he put into his novels. Yet those novels much surpassed the novels of Miss Brontë, who only wrote what she heard and saw and felt. If you did not know the real facts of the case, you would think that Thackeray was more realistic than Miss Brontë. Great imaginative work is more realistic than reality itself, more apparently objective than the result of objective study. But as I reminded you, it is only a genius who can reach this sort of realism through intuition. However, there are minor degrees of genius. You must have noticed some of these among yourselves. In any gathering of students there are always a few remarkable persons in whom the other students are willing to put their trust whenever any emergency arises. Suppose a thousand students are in a difficult position of some kind or anxious about something; presently out of that thousand, leaders or guides or advisers would come forward. It is not necessary at all that they should be particularly strong or formidable persons; what is wanted in a time of embarrassment or danger is a good head, not a strong arm. You instinctively know, I presume, that he who has the best head among you is not necessarily the best scholar. It is not scholarship that is needed for difficult circumstances; it is what we call "mother-wit," strong common sense, that is what we commonly mean in England by "a good head." Persons of this kind do not often make mistakes. Notice how they act when they come in contact with strangers—they remain quite at ease, unembarrassed, and they know what to do and what to say on meeting extraordinary persons or extraordinary events. Now what

is this power, this "mother-wit"? It is a kind of strong intuition. It is the best of all wits that a man can be born to. If a man have this gift in a very great degree, and if he happen at the same time to have a love of literature, he can be a great dramatist or a great novelist. There is the real subjective worker. He has no difficulty in creating imaginary persons, and making them perform their parts; he has been born with the knowledge of what most kinds of men and women would do under certain circumstances. But a high degree of genius is not often found in this direction; all that I want you to bear clearly in mind, is that for subjective work, imaginative work, you must know yourselves to possess a certain amount of this intuition. Unless you have it, it were better to work in other directions.

The dramatic faculty, this true creative power of which I am speaking, is always rare in the highest degree. When we find it at all in these days, we find it only in minor degrees. Very possibly it exists in varying states in minds that never cultivate it — not at least in a literary direction. For men having this power now-a-days are likely to use their constructive imagination in directions which assure material success much more certainly than literature can ever do. They may become diplomatists, or great men of business, or bankers, or political leaders; their knowledge of human nature and their intuition of human motives can help them equally well in many other directions besides literature, and in most directions vastly better. This is a very different kind of character from the character of the emotional poet. It is much more varied, and it is much stronger. To speak of any rules for the conduct of literary life in the case of such men is useless. They need no counsel. They do very much as they please, and obstacles never dishearten them. It is worth noting, however, that they generally take an active part in social life; it is more interesting for them than a play; it furnishes them with continual motives of inspiration; and it has no terror for them of any kind. They are like strong swimmers ac-

customed to the surf. I suppose you know that while almost everybody knows how to swim more or less, surf-swimmers are not very common. In America or other countries good surf-swimmers get high wages in the Government life-saving service; one must not only have learned from childhood, but must have great natural strength and skill. Now in the great sea of social life, where clumsy people are so easily drowned, the character of which I speak is like that of a strong surf-swimmer. He has nothing to fear from breakers. Observe also that men of this class, as the history of English literature especially shows, always find time to do what they want, and do not trouble themselves much about the "wear and tear" of social duty. Take, for example, the history of Victorian literature. Only one of the four great Victorian poets possessed the dramatic faculty in a high degree — Robert Browning. Tennyson, Rossetti, and Swinburne led lives of solitude and meditation; Browning on the other hand was constantly in society, studying human nature as well as obtaining enjoyment from social experience. Or take again the prose-writers. The great romantic novelists were all solitary men; the great dramatic novelists were essentially social men. Thackeray, for instance, was especially a man of society. Or to take a still later example, Meredith, the greatest of English psychological novelists, is of course a social figure. It was in the life of the upper classes that he found the substance of his extraordinary novels. Not to multiply examples, which would require too much time, it may be said that as a general rule, solitude is of no use to men of creative genius.

IV

I think I have shown you, or suggested to you, that two great departments of literature — the emotional, as represented especially by poetry; and the creative, as especially represented by drama or the dramatic novels — depend altogether upon character, upon inheritance. You cannot make a great poet or a great dramatist by education, though

education may help. And you have seen that the two kinds of character belonging respectively to romantic literature and to realistic literature are almost exactly opposed to each other. Both are rare. It is not likely in these days that many among us can hope to belong to either class. We generally know whether we belong to one or the other of them at an early period of life. The extraordinary faculties usually, though not always, manifest themselves in youth. It is true that, very rarely, a great talent only develops about middle age—this occurring chiefly in the case of prose writers. But unless we have the very best of reasons to believe ourselves born to great things in literature, it is much better not to imagine that we have any special mission. Most students of literature are more likely to belong to the third class than to either of the classes preceding, and it is of the third class especially that something useful may be said.

The ordinary class of literary men must depend chiefly upon observation and constant practice. They cannot hope for sudden inspiration or for extraordinary intuition. They must find truth and beauty by painfully searching for them; and they can learn how to express what they see and feel only by years of study and application. Education for these is almost, though not absolutely, indispensable. I say "not absolutely," because self-training can sometimes supply all, and more, that the ordinary education is capable of giving. But as a rule to which the exceptions are few, the ordinary student must depend upon his college training. Without it, it is very likely that he will always remain in his work what we call in literature "provincial." Provincialism as a literary term does not mean a country tone, a rustic clumsiness of thinking and speaking. It means a strong tendency to the commonplace, an inclination to dwell upon things universally known as if they were new discoveries; and it also means the habit of allowing oneself to be so unduly influenced by some one book or another, or by one class of ideas, that any well-educated reader recognizes at once the

source of every idea expressed. This is provincialism. The great danger in self-education is that it leaves a man all his life in the provincial stage, unless he happens to have extraordinary chances, extraordinary tastes, and very much time to cultivate both.

The most important thing for the literary student, with a university training, to do at the beginning of a literary career, is to find out as soon as possible in what direction his intellectual strength chiefly lies. It may take years to find this out; but until it is found out he is scarcely likely to do anything great. Where absolute genius does not exist, literature must depend upon the cultivation of a man's best faculties in a single direction. To attempt work in a number of directions is always hazardous, and seldom gives good results. Every literary man has to arrive at this conclusion. It is true that you find in foreign literature cases of men not absolute geniuses, who have done well both in poetry and in prose, or in prose-fiction and in drama—that is, in apparently two directions. I should not instance Victor Hugo; his is a case of pure genius; but I should take such examples as Meredith in England, or Björnson in Norway, as better illustrating what I wish to say. You must remember that in cases like these the two different kinds of literature produced are really very close to each other, so close that one absolutely grows out of the other. For example, the great Norwegian dramatist began as a writer of stories and novels, all of which were intensely dramatic in form. From the dramatic novel to the play is but a short step. Or in the case of the English novelist and poet, we really find illustrations of only one and the same faculty both in his poetry and in his prose. The novels in one case are essentially psychological novels; the poetry is essentially psychological poetry. Again Browning's plays are scarcely more than the development in dramatic form of the ideas to be found in the dramatic poems. Or take the case of Kingsley — essentially a romantic — a romantic of the very first class. He was great in poetry and

great in prose; but there is an extraordinary resemblance between the poetry and the prose in his case, and he was wise enough to write very little poetry, for he knew where his chief strength lay. If you want to see and judge for yourself, observe the verse of Kingsley's poem on Edith of the Swan-Neck, and then read a page or two of the romance of "Hereward the Wake." I could give you fifty examples of the same kind in English literature. Men have succeeded in two directions only when one of these naturally led into the other. But no student should make the serious mistake —a mistake which hundreds of trained English men of letters are making to-day—of trying to write in two entirely different and opposed directions—for example, in romantic poetry and realistic prose. It is very necessary to know in which way your tastes should be cultivated, in which way you are most strong. Mediocrity is the certain result of not knowing. For after all, this last class of literature, like every other, depends for success upon character — upon inborn conditions, upon inheritance of tastes and feelings and tendencies. Once that you know these, the way becomes plain, though not smooth; everything thereafter depends upon hard work, constant effort.

Should one seek or avoid solitude in the pursuance of this ordinary class of literary aims? That again depends upon character. It is first necessary to know your strength, to decide upon the direction to take; these things having been settled, you must know whether you have to depend upon feeling and imagination as well as upon observation, or upon observation only. Your natural disposition will then instruct you. If you find that you can work best in solitude, it is a duty both to yourself and to literature to deny yourself social engagements that may interfere with the production of good work.

All this leads to the subject of an extraordinary difficulty in the way of any new Japanese literature, a difficulty about which I wanted to talk to you from the first. I think you know that leisure is essential to the production of any art

in any country—that is, any national art. I am not speaking of those extraordinary exceptions furnished by men able to produce wonderful things under any circumstances. Such exceptional men do not make national art; they produce a few inimitable works of genius. An art grows into existence out of the slow labour and thought and feelings of thousands. In that sense, leisure is absolutely necessary to art. Need I remind you that every Japanese art has been the result of generations of leisurely life? Those who made the now famous arts of Japan—literature as well as ceramics or painting or metal work—were not men who did their work in a hurry. Nobody was in a hurry in ancient times. Those elaborate ceremonies, now known as tea-ceremonies, indicate the life of a very leisurely and very aesthetic period. I mention that as one illustration of many things. To-day, although some people try to insist that the arts of Japan are as flourishing as ever, the best judges frankly declare that the old arts are being destroyed. It is not only foreign influence in the shape of bad taste that is destroying them; it is the want of leisure. Every year the time formally allowed for pleasure of any kind is becoming more and more curtailed. None of you who are here listening to me can fail to remember a period when people had much more time than they have now. And none of you will fail to see a period in which the want of time will become much more painful, much more terrible than at present. For your civilization is gradually, but surely, taking an industrial character; and in the time when it shall have become almost purely industrial there will be very little leisure indeed. Very possibly you are thinking that England, Germany, and France are essentially industrial countries—though able to produce so much art. But the conditions are not the same. Industrialism in other countries has not rendered impossible the formation of wealthy leisure classes; those leisure classes still exist, and they have rendered possible, especially in England, the production of great literature. A very long time indeed must elapse before

Japan can present an analogous condition.

The want of time you will feel every year more and more. And there are other and more serious difficulties to think about. Every few years young Japanese scholars who have been trained abroad in the universities of Europe—who have been greatly praised there, and who show every promise—return to Japan. After their return, what a burden of obligations is thrust upon their shoulders! They have, to begin with, to assume the cares of a family; they have to become public officers, and to perform official duty for a much greater number of hours than would be asked of men in similar positions abroad; and under no circumstances can they hope for that right to dispose of their own time which is allowed to professors or officials in foreign countries. No: they must at once accept onerous positions which involve hundreds of duties and which are very likely to keep a man occupied on many days of the year from sunrise until a late hour of the night. Even what are thought and what used really to be pleasurable occasions, have ceased to be pleasing; time is lacking for the pleasure, but the fatigue and the pain remain. I need not particularize how many festivals, banquets, public and private celebrations, any public official is obliged to attend. At present this cannot be helped. It is the struggle between the old state and the new; and the readjustment will take many years to effect. But is it any wonder that these scholars do not produce great things in literature? It is common for foreigners to say that the best Japanese scholars do not seem to do anything after they return to Japan. The fact is that they do too much, but not of the kind that leaves a permanent work.

Most of you, whether rich or otherwise, will be asked after your university life is over to do a great deal too much. I imagine that most of you will have to do the work of at least three men. Trained teachers, trained officers, trained men of any kind, are still rare. There are not enough of them; there is too much work to do, and too few

men to do it. And in the face of these unquestionable facts, how can you hope to produce any literature? Assuredly it is very discouraging. It could not be more discouraging.

There is an old English proverb that seems opportune in this connection:

> For every trouble under the sun
> There is a remedy, or there is none.
> If there is one, try to find it;
> If there be none, never mind it.

I think you will agree with me that the remedy is for the moment out of the question; and our duty is to "never mind it," as the proverb says. Discouraging for literature though the prospect seems, I think that strong minds should not be frightened by it, but should try to discover whether modern English literature does not offer us some guiding examples in this relation. It certainly does. A great deal of excellent English literature belonging to that third class which I have specified, has been created under just the same kind of disheartening circumstances. Great poetry has not been written under these conditions—that requires solitude. Great drama and great dramatic novels have never been produced under such conditions. But the literature of the essay, which is very important; the great literature of short stories; and a great deal of thoughtful work of the systematic order, such as historical or social or critical studies, —all this has been done very successfully by men who have had no time to call their own during sunlight. The literature of observation and experience, and the literature of patient research, do not require days of thought and leisure. Much of such work has been produced, for many generations in England, a little at a time, every night, before going to bed. For example, there is an eminent English man of letters named Morley of whom you have doubtless heard—the author of many books, and a great influence in literature, who is also one of the busiest of English lawyers and statesmen. For forty or fifty years this man had never a

single hour of leisure by day. All his books were produced, a page or two at a time, late in the evening after his household had gone to sleep. It is not really so much a question of time for this class of literature as a question of perfect regularity of habits. Even twenty minutes a day, or twenty minutes a night, represents a great deal in the course of a couple of years, and may be so used as to produce great results. The only thing is that this small space of time should be utilized regularly as the clock strikes—never interrupted except by unavoidable circumstances, such as sickness. To fatigue one's body, or to injure one's eyesight, by a useless strain is simply a crime. But that should not be necessary under any circumstances in good health. Nor is it necessary to waste time and effort in the production of exactly so much finished manuscript. Not at all. The work of literature should especially be a work of thinking and feeling; the end to be greatly insisted upon is the record of every experience of thought and feeling. Make the record even in pencil, in short hand, in the shape of little drawings —it matters not how, so long as the record is sufficient to keep fresh the memory when you turn to it again. I am quite sure that the man who loves literature and enjoys a normal amount of good health can make a good book within a year or two, no matter how busy he may otherwise be, if he will follow systematic rules of work.

You may ask what kind of work is good to begin with; I have no hesitation in replying, translation. Translation is the best possible preparation for original work, and translations are vastly needed in Japan. No knowledge of Western literature can ever become really disseminated in Japan merely through the university and the school; it can be disseminated only through translations. The influence of French, or German, of Spanish, Italian, and Russian literatures upon English literature has been very largely effected through translations. Scholarship alone cannot help the formation of a new national literature. Indeed, the scholar, by the very nature of his occupation, is too apt to remain

unproductive. After some work of this kind, original work should be attempted. Instinctively some Japanese scholars have been doing this very thing; they have been translating steadily. But there they have mostly stopped. Yet, really, translation should be only the first step of the literary ladder.

As to original work, I have long wanted to say to you something about the real function of literature in relation not to the public, but to the author himself. That function should be moral. Literature ought to be especially a moral exercise. When I use the word moral, please do not understand me to mean anything religious, or anything in the sense of the exact opposite of immoral. I use it here only in the meaning of self-culture — the development within us of the best and strongest qualities of heart and mind. Literature ought to be, for him that produces it, the chief pleasure and the constant consolation of life. Now, old Japanese customs recognized this fact in a certain way. I am referring to the custom of composing poetry in time of pain, in time of sorrow, in all times of mental trials, as a moral exercise. In this particular form the custom is particularly Japanese, or perhaps in origin Chinese, not Western. But I assure you that among men of letters in the West the moral idea has been followed for hundreds of years, not only in regard to poetry, but in regard to prose. It has not been understood by Western writers in the same sharp way; it has not been taught as a rule of conduct; it has not been known except to the elect, the very best men. But the very best men have found this out; and they have always turned to literature as a moral consolation for all the troubles of life. Do you remember the story of the great Goethe, who when told of the death of his son, exclaimed "Forward, across the dead"—and went on with his work? It was not the first time that he had conquered his grief by turning his mind to composition. Almost any author of experience learns to do something of this kind. Tennyson wrote his "In Memoriam" simply as a refuge

from his great grief. Among the poets about whom I lectured to you this year, there is scarcely one whose work does not yield a record of the same thing. The lover of literature has a medicine for grief that no doctor can furnish; he can always transmute his pain into something precious and lasting. None of us in this world can expect to be very happy; the proportion of happiness to unhappiness in the average human life has been estimated as something less than one third. No matter how healthy or strong or fortunate you may be, every one of you must expect to endure a great deal of pain; and it is worth while for you to ask yourselves whether you cannot put it to good use. For pain has a very great value to the mind that knows how to utilize it. Nay, more than this must be said; nothing great ever was written, or ever will be written, by a man who does not know pain. All great literature has its source in the rich soil of sorrow; and that is the real meaning of the famous verses of Goethe:

> Who ne'er his bread in sorrow ate,—
> Who ne'er the lonely midnight hours,
> Weeping upon his bed has sat,—
> He knows ye not, ye Heavenly powers.

Emerson has uttered very nearly the same idea with those famous verses in which he describes the moral effect upon a strong mind of the great sorrow caused by the death of the woman beloved:

> Though thou love her as thyself,
> As a self of purer clay,
> Though her parting dim the day,
> Stealing grace from all alive—
> Heartily know,
> When half-gods go
> The Gods arrive!

That is to say, even if you loved that woman more than yourself and thought of her as a being superior to humanity,

even if with her death the whole world seemed to grow dark, and all things to become colourless, and all life to lose its charm; that grief may be good for you. It is only when the demi-gods, the half-gods, have left us, that we first become able to understand and to see the really divine. For all pain helps to make us wise, however much we may hate it at the time. Of course it is only the young man who sits upon his bed at midnight and weeps; he is weak only for want of experience. The mature man will not weep, but he will turn to literature in order to compose his mind; and he will put his pain into beautiful songs or thoughts that will help to make the hearts of all who read them more tender and true.

Remember, I do not mean that a literary man should write only to try to forget his suffering. That will do very well for a beginning, for a boyish effort. But a strong man ought not to try to forget in that way. On the contrary, he should try to think a great deal about his grief, to think of it as representing only one little drop in the great sea of the world's pain, to think about it bravely, and to put his thoughts about it into beautiful and impersonal form. Nobody should allow himself for a moment to imagine that his own particular grief, that his own private loss, that his own personal pain, can have any value in literature, except in so far as it truly represents the great pain of human life.

Above all things the literary man must not be selfish in his writing. No selfish reflection is likely to have the least value; that is why no really selfish person can ever become either a great poet or a great dramatist. To meet and to master pain, but especially to master it, is what gives strength. Men wrestle in order to become strong; and for mental strength, one must learn to wrestle with troubles of all kinds. Think of all the similes in literature that express this truth — about fire separating the gold from the rock, about stones becoming polished by striking together in the flow of a stream, about a hundred natural changes rep-

resenting the violent separation or the destruction of what is superficial.

Better than any advice about methods or models, is I think the simple counsel: "Whenever you are in trouble and do not know exactly what to do, sit down and write something."

Yet one more thing remains to be said, and it is not unimportant. It is this: "A thing once written is not literature." The great difference between literature and everything included under the name of journalism lies in this fact. No man can produce real literature at one writing. I know that there are a great many stories about famous men sitting down to write a wonderful book at one effort, and never even correcting the manuscript afterwards. But I must tell you that the consensus of literary experience declares nearly all these stories to be palpable lies. To produce even a single sentence of good literature requires that the text be written at least three times. But for one who is beginning, three times three were not too much. And I am not speaking of poetry at all — that may have to be written over as many as fifty times before the proper effect is attained. You will perhaps think this is a contradiction of what I told you before, about the great value of writing down, even in pencil, little notes of your thoughts and feelings. But the contradiction only seems; really there is no contradiction at all. The value of the first notes is very great —greater than the value of any intermediate form. But the writer should remember that such notes represent only the outline of the foundation, the surveying and the clearing of the ground on which his literary structure is slowly and painfully to be raised. The first notes do not express the real thought or the real feeling, no matter how carefully you try to write them. They are only signs, ideographs, helping you to remember. And you will find that to reproduce the real thought faithfully in words will require a great deal of time. I am quite sure that few of you will try to do work in this way in the beginning; you will try

every other way first, and have many disappointments. Only painful experience can assure you of the necessity of doing this. For literature more than for any other art, the all-necessary thing is patience. That is especially why I cannot recommend journalism as a medium of expression to literary students—at least, not as a regular occupation. For journalism cannot wait, and the best literature must wait.

I am not sure that these suggestions can have any immediate value; I only hope that you will try to remember them. But in order to test the worth of one of them, I very much hope that somebody will try the experiment of writing one little story or narrative poem, putting it in a drawer, writing it over again, and hiding it again, month after month, for the time of one year. The work need not take more than a few minutes every day after the first writing. After the last writing at the end of the year, if you read it over again, you will find that the difference between the first form and the last is exactly like the difference of seeing a tree a mile off, first with the naked eye, and afterwards with a very powerful telescope.