

**ON THE STUDY OF LITERATURE; THE
ANNUAL ADDRESS, TO THE STUDENTS
OF THE LONDON SOCIETY
FOR THE EXTENSION OF UNIVERSITY
TEACHING; DELIVERED AT THE MANSION
HOUSE, FEBRUARY 26, 1887**

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JOHN MORLEY

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The Annual Address

TO THE STUDENTS OF
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UNIVERSITY TEACHING

Delivered at the Mansion House, February 26, 1887

BY JOHN MORLEY

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ON THE
STUDY OF LITERATURE

MY LORD MAYOR, LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN,

When my friend Mr. Goschen invited me to discharge the duty which has fallen to me this afternoon I confess that I complied with very great misgivings. He desired me to say something, if I could, on the literary side of education. Now, it is almost impossible—and I think those who know most of literature will be readiest to agree with me—to say anything new in recommendation of literature in a scheme of education. But, as taxpayers know, when

the Chancellor of the Exchequer levies a contribution, he is not a person to be trifled with. I have felt, moreover, that Mr. Goschen has worked with such extreme zeal and energy for so many years on behalf of this good cause, that anybody whom he considered able to render him any co-operation, owed it to him in its fullest extent. The Lord Mayor has been kind enough to say that I am especially qualified to speak on English literature. I must, however, remind the Lord Mayor that I have strayed from literature into the region of politics ; and I am not at all sure that such a journey conduces to the soundness of one's judgment on literary subjects, or adds much to the force of one's arguments on behalf of literary study. Politics are a field where action is one long second-best, and where the choice constantly lies between two blunders. Nothing can be

more unlike in aim, in ideals, in method, and in matter, than are literature and politics. I have, however, determined to do the best that I can ; and I feel how great an honour it is to be invited to partake in a movement which I do not scruple to call one of the most important of all those now taking place in English society.

What is the object of the movement ? What do the promoters aim at ? I take it that what they aim at is to bring the very best teaching that the country can afford, through the hands of the most thoroughly competent men, within the reach of every class of the community. Their object is to give to the many that sound, systematic, and methodical knowledge, which has hitherto been the privilege of the few who can afford the time and money to go to Oxford and Cambridge ; to diffuse the fertilising waters of intellectual knowledge