New books

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NEW BOOKS

On Reading Aloud. By MURIEL HARRIS. North Americal Review, September, 1921, vol. 214, p. 345.

Oral reading is an affair of the classroom; it is a subject for educational propaganda. Its center of reference is the physical organ of speech and it connotes scientific teaching endured with patience and applied with practice. Reading allowed, on the other hand, carries with it implications of sociability, leisure, and love of literature. Teachers of speech—and others—must have wondered why so much oral reading produces so little reading aloud.

“Nineteenth Century scholarship read aloud with zest, and nineteenth century scholarship has no mean roll of names. Tennyson used to read his own works down at Blackdown, with its purple crowned heights and its wide view of Sussex Weald. Christina Rossetti read her poems, and charming Grant Allen his stories. At Rye, city of the fairy tales, or at his flat on the Chelsea embankment, Henry James would utter himself to a select few. Old Archbishop Whately educated his “accomplished” daughters by reading to them aloud; while in the families of the Lushingtons, the Hobhouses, the Trevelyans, reading aloud was part of the day’s routine. And you traced idly the roses on the Aubusson carpet, or the hawthorne of the china vase, or—yes, it must be admitted—the plush snake round the bottom of the glass-cased clock, and you watched the lamplight shine softly on a silver head, or light up the “Salve Roma” of a Victorian bracelet; and—yes—there was a perfume, too, of warmth and flowers and leaves of old books and scented leather. And forevermore the stories became inseparable from that golden borderland where perhaps, alone, different generations can meet as one. . . .

"Reading aloud still exists, but so much else exists besides. And so it has fallen away, and some of its magic has gone, and it actually does belong to a period which can never be real again."

This colorful expression of regret ought to equal many lectures in reviving our sensitiveness to the charm of words. If we who profess to interpret the printed page could make our classes want to read aloud—but there are those who do, I suppose. At any rate we are grateful to Miss Harris for saying so well that which we express in the lingo of shop talk.

E. L. H., Ithaca, N. Y.

Educational Dramatics. By EMMA SHERMAN FRY. Lloyd Adams Noble, N. Y. Pp. 88.

"Educational Dramatics" by Emma Sheridan Fry, is an attempt to renew in our minds the necessity of using dramatics for stirring up starved creative impulses in the child and for developing individuality. This field is one which has been very often ignored; hence, any attempt to urge teachers to re-create dramatic instincts in children is welcomed. Perhaps it is because one expects so much in a book entitled "Educational Dramatics," that one feels disappointed after reading it. From the purpose given in the introduction, namely, "to meet the immediate needs of educators doing dramatic work," to help those who are "cooperating with universal instincts to develop the whole human being towards life and citizenship," one should expect something concrete and new.

Instead, the author wastes thirty pages stating in a very abstract, technical, and vague manner the reactions of life processes to stimuli and impulses. Moreover, this is based on the now old-fashioned Delsartean psychology,—that of dividing the body into different zones; an emotional zone, a mental zone, and a vital zone. The author has failed to realize that the body reacts as a whole and not piecemeal. Nothing produces these creative instincts in a more effective way than allowing the child to use an "all-in-one-piece" body. One has only to watch the child react to some stimulus to discover how false a statement is that which says, "a full-chord expression tends to fully animate its own zone, and rouse associate sub-stations."

Chapters 6-9 offer nothing new in material. One finds there a set of very elementary rules for producing plays, given vaguely idealistic turns by the author. There is a certain amount of vim in the style, though it is injured at times by a gushy, feminine touch which often results in rhapsody; for instance, "We are one with the body, as the hand is one with the glove, as the rider and horse are one, as the light is one with the sun, and the scent is one with the rose."

The best chapter in the book is chapter 5, which gives the teacher the practical hints she needs and wants. Here is a concrete, explanatory work which can be of greatest possible help in developing personalities and in paving the way for dramatic activities. Had the book been saturated with such chapters, there would be no doubt of its popularity. The author really strikes the keynote of her title here, but fails to give the reader the substantial food that he is looking for in the rest of the book.

Perhaps, however, we shall find all that we are looking for in the author's promised next book, "The Educational Use of the Dramatic Instinct" especially a development of the principle that "educational profit to the player is the first consideration in all departments of production."

S. E. N., Urbana, Ill.

Eloquence. By E. A. THURBER. North American Review, June, 1921, vol. 213, p. 837.

"The man of rhythms breaks in upon the council, and because he stands well and waves well and booms well, he is listened to, and his advice is assumed as good: nay! the council leaps upon him, draws him to its bosom, and hails him mightily."

Perhaps it would be unfair to mention the rhythm with which Mr. Thurber assails rhythm. Since Plato used his eloquence to confound the orators, rhetoricians have condemned rhetoric. Intelligent men have said with Aristotle that rhetoric should confine itself to seeking such delivery as would cause neither pain nor pleasure. And they have agreed enthusiastically with him that the effectiveness of declamation is owing to the depraved character of the audience." And yet when they speak with the fire of feeling upon them, their speech becomes melodic. Rhetoricians, observing this,

have imitated the forms even when the feelings were absent. When this is unskillfully done we resent it as we resent cant or hypocrisy. But even when it is sufficiently well done to cause our own hearts to beat a little faster we call it eloquence. A cynic might define eloquence as rhetoric that works. And few of us there are who have not been victimized.

It is futile to seek the abolition of eloquence. We might as well cry out against love or hate or music. They, with eloquence, have the defects of their qualities, and neither free verse nor modern prose nor Freudian psychology will abate the power of rhythmic speech.

E. L. H., Ithaca, N. Y.

The Fundamentals of Argumentation and Debate. By J. WALTER REEVES, M. A. D. C. Heath & Company, New York. Pp. 82.

So far as the writer knows, this little four-and-a-half-by-six-and-a-half-inch volume of 82 pages is the most succinct putting of the matter "attempted yet". The author lays claim to naught of newness in content or arrangement. The aim is simplification with a view to quickness of acquisition: the method, condensation in the *nth* degree.

Within the compass of little more than two pages to attempt to treat adequately of that bugaboo, "Deductive Reasoning", is heroic, even though we believe it quite impossible of achievement. While perhaps Mr. Reeves has used brevity to the prejudice of perspicuity, I think that we must yield to him the palm for this: to meet the need for a secondary school treatment of this difficult subject matter, he presents a treatment mechanically attractive, comprehensive in scope, and perhaps quite as clear as may be under the stress of conciseness. In miniature the content of the larger texts is presented under the captions: "Argumentation", "The Subject", "Preliminaries to the Discussion", "Discussion—Evidence", "Discussion—Reasoning", "Persuasion", "The Brief", "Debating". The chapters are closed with helpful summaries and exercises.

In the hands of the teacher trained in debate this little text in my judgment will meet a real need.

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