

BOOK REVIEWS

Literature and Life in the School. By J. ROSE COLBY. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1906. Pp. 229. \$1.25.

This is a little volume of essays on literature in the schools, consisting of these five chapters: "The True Function of Literature;" "Literature and the First Four Years of School Life;" "Literature and the Second Four Years of School Life;" "Method of Handling Literature in the School;" "Literature and Life after the Elementary Years;" and an appended list of books.

The title of the book may not quite fairly be taken as indicating its atmosphere and method, for it is not entirely mystic nor merely discursive. Neither should the opening chapter, which deals with the educational and artistic problems involved in a partial and personal way, be taken as measuring the usefulness of the book. For when we do get into the central chapters, we find most of the judgments sound, and the actual practical advice good. It is clearly to be seen that the author has imbibed much of the wisdom of modern educational philosophy, has seen the readjustments of educational material and the shifting of educational emphases. She has a vision of the fact that we must make provision for the childhood of children. But one cannot feel sure that she has recently taught the actual children, singly or in classes. Both the detailed advice and the generalizations supporting them have an atmosphere of *a priori* theory, so subtly different from that of *a posteriori* practice. The book, title and all, is colored and injured by the doctrine that literature is chiefly useful for producing and deepening what are, after all, extra-literary results—patriotism, for example, or love of nature. The style helps to confuse one as to the usefulness of the book. It is a literary style, whereas it ought to be a scientific style. This gives it a vague and indirect air, where one has a right to expect directness and authority. The book is not one that would be read by people who read general literary essays; it makes its only appeal to school teachers; and when teachers are suffering for teaching as full and as exact as possible, concerning the art of literature, and those elements and specimens of it that they will find applicable and effective, together with somewhat specific directions for using them, it is trying to have to extricate these things, if they are to be had at all, from a chapter of indirect suggestions and "literary" reflections. It is this tendency to write a literary book of reflections about literature and life and education that makes one feel that it will not go as far as it ought—that it really falls between two stools, forsaking the sunny bench of educational and critical impressionism, and yet not attaining the austere seats of pedagogical science.

PORTER LANDER MACCLINTOCK

Rhetoric and English Composition. By GEORGE R. CARPENTER. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1906. Pp. 430. \$1.10.

There is to both teacher and pupil a decided advantage from having the courses in grammar and rhetoric combined as closely as possible. The two textbooks on these subjects prepared by Mr. Carpenter secure this association to

a degree; the grammar giving practice in the art of composition as well as in the analysis of sentences into their elements and in the classification of these; the rhetoric serving to keep the principles of grammar well in mind. Perhaps one may think that in too many instances the errors of speech are pointed out by the use of italics, inasmuch as the ability to detect the error is the more important matter in correcting faults. Again, it may be remarked that there are more ways than one of correcting a mistake, and that it is of first importance that the right way be followed. Take, for instance, the first example on page 44: "I should be astonished if you *succeed* in doing anything of the sort." Here the verb in the condition is the one marked as being wrong. This is upon the supposition that the former verb is correct, but the chances are even that "should" was wrongly written for "shall." When the pupil has learned that in a majority of cases there are two ways at least of correcting a blunder, he will soon form the habit of looking in more than one place for the fault. If the errors are not marked for him, he will become the more skilful.

But this has been said simply for the hint to be taken from it by teachers. Of the volume in hand much may be said in praise. It affords the teacher a good manual of theory and of practice; but no matter how excellent may be a textbook, each class and each member of every class will require individual instruction.

The illustrative examples are well selected with reference to teaching rhetoric. They are chiefly taken from writers of fiction, and these the popular writers of the day. As pupils imbibe a taste for reading from what they read, it is desirable that the very best literature be put before them, that their taste be formed upon correct models. A more informing literature could have been recommended to them by substituting for some of these novelists authors of a higher rank in the literary world. The plan of giving to fiction so great prominence in courses of required reading for entrance examinations has been tried long enough to judge of results. The public may reasonably call for higher standards all along the line of instruction in English.

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Books, Culture, and Character. By J. N. LARNED, formerly Superintendent of Education, and of the Public Library, Buffalo, N. Y., and President of the American Library Association. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1906. 16mo. \$1 net.

In academic circles in his own city the late John Fiske, after he had acquired a national reputation as a lecturer and writer, was always spoken of by the philosophers as "a historian, we understand, of great authority;" and by the historians as "a philosopher, we understand, of high authority." The other day in the same liberal community, a member of the Harvard history department, in an address to teachers, made the generous concession (in reply to queries) that if they had Larned's books, they might use them; but it wasn't much worth their while to get them—"he was a librarian." In the same spirit, they might say of this book that it is a reprint of a librarian's addresses on