

incite to a *love* of reading, nor do they contribute to the interest or profit of the instructed. In her own words, she says that they "do nothing toward developing any higher tastes in those who read them, and very little in the way of storing the mind with ideas worth retaining through life." Verily, a grave, and, if true, a depressing judgment! "The Fables of Æsop," on the other hand, she affirms, "are among the classical things of knowledge." "The ideas embodied in them," she goes on to say, "are part of that common stock of culture which it is desirable to make known to everybody; and they are a part of it which children can understand and enjoy." Now, with every desire to extend the circle of admirers of the Æsopian Fable, and to promote a deeper knowledge of the "wit and wisdom" of that and kindred literature, we feel compelled to say that, however much they come within the understanding and the appreciation of the youthful heart and intellect, there are "bread and butter" facts which claim precedence in the curriculum of school studies, before we can allow the palate of the pupil to be cloyed with the sweets of a fanciful imagination, however impressive may be the moral. With like argument we would reply to Miss Christie's proposal that the Second Reader should consist of familiar fairy stories drawn from Grimm, the "Arabian Nights," and Hans Christian Andersen. Similarly, though assenting in some measure to the statement made by our author, that school reading-books ought to familiarize the scholar "with all those great names and great ideas which represent the common stock of cultivated thought and feeling in the civilized world," we premise that it is necessary first to determine the relative importance of those ideas, the prior acquirement of which will be most serviceable to the child-mind. Ascertaining this, and looking to the mechanical work first to be got over in teaching a child to read, we cannot hesitate to dissent from Miss Christie's unpractical theories on the subject, however captivating they may at first appear to the experimental educationist. While affirming

this, however, we cannot but give the reviewer credit for calling attention, even so fancifully, to the necessity of making selection for our School Readers of matter that shall unquestionably interest children. It is quite possible—and Nelson's "Royal Readers" are a signal proof of this—to interest as well as to instruct; and this may be done without divorcing imaginative literature from its due place in the school "Learning Book," or preventing the child from nourishing its mind upon the "common stock of culture." To reverse the order, by relegating serious studies to the home and introducing nursery literature into the school, we feel sure, would not be to promote the interests of education, at least as these are to-day understood. Even were our present methods upset, we doubt whether the "Arabian Nights" or "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" would retain their charm if they had to be learned as a school drill. The mythological stories of Greece and Rome are no doubt rich in ethical teaching, though from a Christian point of view they would necessarily be imperfect. But if the child had to acquire a knowledge of these at the end of the birch, we can scarcely conceive his desiring to make any very close study of them. Retributive justice, the moral of much of classical story-telling, would at least be sure of receiving a frequent and practical illustration. Seriously, however, there can be little advantage in making so great a departure from our methods of book-making as to try an experiment with Miss Christie's theories. In this country, at any rate, though the liberalizing and refining influences that come of familiarity with classical literature would be a gain, our wants are undoubtedly on a lower plane and in a more practical sphere. Here the soil would be unfavourable to Miss Christie's exotics, though her book of patron saints and knighthoods might chime in with not a little of our imported national organizations and transplanted Imperialism. These, however, are not the things we want perpetuated in Canada; and it is one of the weak points in Miss Christie's project to desire to remind us and to