

A BOY'S BOOKS, THEN AND NOW—1818, 1881.—V.

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(Continued from page 387, Vol. III.)

PHÆDRUS, PUBLIUS SYRUS, ETC.

ANOTHER *vade-mecum* of practical wisdom and morals for the Eton school-boy was the "Phædrus" used in the junior forms. My copy bears the late date of 1824, but it represents much earlier impressions of the same book. It is stated in the title-page to be *editio altera, castigata, et prioribus correctior*. The peculiarity of this Eton "Phædrus" is that it has a proverbial heading prefixed to each fable, indicative of the drift of the coming story; and these headings are collected together at the beginning of the volume as a set of mottoes, with a free English rendering of each, generally in the form of a familiar proverb. We have thus placed before us a bouquet of popular aphorisms such as would have been satisfactory to "Sancho Panza" or John Bunyan, and which, I doubt not, have often been selected from by the Eton tyro for the enrichment of a "theme." "Save a thief from the gallows and he'll cut your throat" heads fable 8, book i., "The Wolf and the Crane," as the translation of "Malos tueri, haud tutum." "Brag is a good dog, but Holdfast is better" heads fable 21, book iv. "The Mountain in Labour," as the translation of "Magna ne jactes, sed præsta," etc., etc. In my other old copy of "Phædrus," Amsterdam, 1667, with a quaint copperplate illustration to each fable, the Eton headings do not occur. Johannes Laurentius, the editor, is content with the "moral"

prefixed or appended to each fable in the original. He has, however, with his notes and observations, contrived to expand "Phædrus" into an octavo of 462 pages, plus 200 pages of index-matter.

Following the fables in the Eton "Phædrus" are to be seen the notable "Sententiæ" of Publius Syrus. These consist of a selection of Gnostic lines, chiefly in Senarian iambic verse, taken from the common-place book of a famous satirical mimic or improvisatore at Rome, *temp.* Julius Cæsar—Publius Syrus. They are alphabetically arranged in groups, the lines in each group beginning with the same letter, like the sections of the 119th Psalm in the Hebrew. They contain shrewd reflections on the various relations and situations and experiences in human life. Strangely, in modern times with us English, the interest in Publius Syrus is chiefly, if not wholly, maintained by the quotation from his "Sentences" to be seen on the title-page of each volume of the *Edinburgh Review*. It is found in the "I" or "J" group: "Judex damnatur, cum nocens absolvitur." Sydney Smith informs us that he had ventured to suggest an excerpt from Virgil instead: "Tenui musam meditatur avena"—We cultivate literature on a little oatmeal; but this was too near the truth to be admitted, he says of himself and his friends Brougham and Jeffrey, at the moment when, in 1802, in the ninth flat of Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh, they were concocting their