

Notes on High School Literature.—I.

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[Under this heading there will appear, each month, a set of hints and questions on one of the pieces of literature prescribed for High Schools in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. They will not attempt to be exhaustive, nor to supersede the notes in text books, but the writer hopes they will be found suggestive and useful. She will be very glad to receive and to try to answer any questions on these subjects sent to the REVIEW. The notes in the October issue will be on "Tom Brown's School Days."]

It is so important that a class should be interested in the piece of literature they are studying, that no set method of reading a play or poem should be laid down, to be used with every class. I find it necessary to vary with different classes not only the way in which a class as a whole studies a play, but the different lines of study that I set for different pupils. Children who are used to reading for themselves, and can read aloud fluently and intelligently at sight (alas! how rare these are), can be set to read a play through rapidly, without interruption for explanation, in three, or at most four lesson periods. This gives them the movement of the story, and is the best substitute for seeing the play acted. Nothing can really approach that in value, but if they try hard to picture the characters in action as they read, something of the effect may be gained, and at any rate the whole story is known before detailed study begins. With a duller class, or one that is unevenly matched in knowledge and enjoyment of literature, I find it a good plan to read the play rapidly through to them, while they follow carefully, and ask questions if they need help in grasping the story. Then they are able to read it with some intelligence for themselves. Parts are assigned, and each pupil is expected to prepare her own part, *i. e.*, to know the pronunciation and meaning of all the words, and to read it clearly and intelligently. Before beginning a second reading, there should be a discussion of the plot, bringing out clearly the different connected stories. The *dramatis personae* should be learned by heart and so that they can be assigned to their several stories. Some lines should be memorized for every lesson. These may be set, or a number of suitable passages may be suggested for the pupils to choose from, each for herself. It is not wise to set children new to Shakspeare to wander at will through the play and choose their own lines. They only waste time. So far, I

should do very much the same sort of work with every play and with every class. For detailed study, try to find out what interests your class, either as a whole, or in sections, and then set them to work *hard* on it. I have yet to find a class who cannot be brought to like a play of Shakspeare at least well enough to be keen about reading another.

In setting home work, or topics for composition, I divide the class into groups of from three to six, grouping them according to their interests and abilities. To each group I give one question or subject, or more. Those who have access to a complete Shakspeare and to other books, may have questions that involve comparisons with other plays or other authors; while those who are limited to their text books will find abundant material in the play itself. I try to set one question on the plot, one on character, one on the use of words, and one on versification, each time, to get variety and prevent one-sided study. About half the lesson time is given to discussion of the set questions, the rest to reading. The lines committed to memory have been written out and collected in the first five minutes.

The following questions and suggestions may be added to and varied almost indefinitely:

"As You Like It."

THE PLOT. How many different stories in the play? Where does each story begin? end? What is the most exciting point in each? What story forms a sort of frame for the others? Name the characters that belong to each. Write out the story of Sylvius and Phebe. The love story of Oliver and Celia. Is there any story that you can leave out of the play without spoiling it? How many stories do you know whose subject is, hatred and injustice between brothers? What other play of Shakspeare has this theme? Did Celia and Rosalind have any conversation between Scenes II and III in Act I? (See II, 2.) What other allusions can you find to scenes not put upon the stage? Did Orlando and Adam come to the forest of Arden on purpose or accidentally? Why did Celia and Rosalind go there? Did they carry out their purpose? How many other pairs of girl friends does Shakspeare give us? How many other girls who disguise themselves as men? (Remember that there were no women actors in Shakspeare's time.)

THE SCENE. Write a description of the forest of Arden, keeping strictly to the information you get from the play. Compare it with the forest in the "Midsummer Night's Dream." What is the beauty of the forest of Arden to the minds of all who talk about it? What is the first thing that we hear said of it? Who was Robin Hood, and what would seem enviable in his life? [Remember that Shakspeare's audiences would be very familiar with his story.] Note the last line in Act I, and trace this idea, of freedom from law and convention-