

NOTES ON HIGH SCHOOL LITERATURE.

BY THE EDITOR.

MACAULAY'S LIFE OF SAMUEL JOHNSON.

The prescribed edition of this work (Buehler: Longman's English Classics) is an admirable one, and I shall begin by giving some hints as to its use. For the introductory chapters contain such a wealth of information and suggestion, that it is necessary to select from them. And these selections, again, may be adapted by each teacher to meet the needs of her class.

From the very full bibliography, pp. xli and xlii, I would choose for the teacher's reading Boswell's *Life*, to be had in Everyman's Library. (J. M. Dent & Sons, 27 Melinda Street, Toronto) Carlyle's Essay, and the volumes in the English men of Letters series on Johnson and Macaulay. Madame D'Arblay's *Diary and Letters* will furnish entertaining and amusing passages to illustrate Johnson's life.

Buehler says, "When the student has made the acquaintance of Macaulay he is ready to begin the *Life of Johnson*."

I prefer to reverse this order. The essay should be read twice. Read it the first time to find out all that it can tell you about Johnson; the second time, with some consideration of Macaulay.

Do not attempt to have the chronological table of Johnson's life memorized as it stands. Let the class study it with you, answering the following questions: What are the dates of Johnson's life? Under what sovereign did he live? What are the important historical events of the period?

Link with Canadian history; with what names in the contemporary biography column are you familiar? in the contemporary literature column? Was this a time of war or of peace? Of many or few great writers? How old was Johnson when Halifax was founded? When Quebec was taken?

After a brisk and informal discussion of this kind, have the dates of Johnson's life, and some half dozen (not more) of the names in each column underlined to be learned in this connection.

Follow the directions given by Buehler on pp. xxxviii and xxxix. An additional exercise for

testing is to have pupils write on the board in turn sentences giving the topic of each paragraph studied: e. g. paragraph 14. "Johnson wrote his poem "London" in imitation of Juvenal." These sentences may be criticised and the amended forms copied into notebooks towards an analysis of the whole essay.

In class, compare corresponding details of Johnson's and Macaulay's lives, e. g. their parents, homes, financial circumstances, college careers, start in professional life, health, personal appearance, political opinions. This will help the student at a later stage in considering Macaulay's sympathy or lack of it with Johnson. Selections from Boswell and Madame D'Arblay should be read aloud, and, when Johnson's style is the topic, extracts from "Rasselas," "Lives of the Poets" and "The Vanity of Human Wishes." Every effort should be directed towards making the real Johnson live before the pupils. Discussion should be stimulated by comparing passages in Macaulay and Carlyle, Boswell and Madame D'Arblay. Give them as all round a picture of the great man as possible. Let them discuss such questions as, Why he had so many friends; why he preferred town to country; why he tolerated Boswell. (Does Macaulay make this clear?)

A good many of the examination questions given on page xlv are too advanced for the ordinary high school pupil. The following paper was set for a class of girls averaging 16 years of age:

1. State briefly the chief events of Johnson's life?
2. Name not less than five eminent English writers of Johnson's time, with their chief works.
3. Write with some fulness on Johnson's friends.
4. Write a paragraph on Macaulay's opinion (a) of the Dictionary, or (b), of the lives of the poets, or (c), of Johnson's edition of Shakespere.
5. Question like No. 4 in Buehler.

On a second reading, the chronological table of Macaulay's life should be studied in the same way as the previous one, but more briefly. What men *might* both Johnson and Macaulay have seen?

Attention should be given to Macaulay's style. Buehler suggests for study his "diction,