

It is the opinion of the present writer that if instead of fragments from a great variety of authors the course consisted of a good deal from one or two, the literature studies in public schools would have an infinitely more practical value in the life of the young student. It is in the highest degree improbable that with the attention dispersed over so wide a field as the study of twenty-four authors, as in the case of H. S. entrance, or of ten, as in the case of P. S. leaving, there can be brought about any permanent interest in literature.

When we read the lives of men who have become eminent in literature, and it is to them as we all know that the mediocre must look for guidance, we find that their chief incentive to read came to them through an interest in some one writer. And it is just this interest that the public schools should look most towards giving. We recall how Scott when a little lad stole out of bed on winter nights to read Shakespeare by the firelight in his mother's room. We remember the young Coleridge lying on his sick bed listening with eager eyes and bated breath while his brother read Homer aloud. We hear the child Macaulay shouting at the top of his fresh young voice the ballads of Sir Walter Scott. Whittier had always his Burns, Longfellow his "Sketch Book." We cannot forget what the "Faerie Queene" was to Keats. From Spenser he went to Chaucer, from Chaucer to Milton; and so on and on, we are told, with ever-widening range, through all our sweeter and greater poets. These were geniuses, and a love of reading was probably born with them. But that they were geniuses only emphasizes the fact that the ordinary everyday child needs something more than scant bits from several authors to awaken in him an interest in literature.

The crux of the difficulty may be

regarded by some to be the choice of an author, or two or three authors, most desirable to form the basis of literature studies for the young student. But, indeed it matters little in what author anyone is interested so that the interest be deep and lasting, and that the author be one of the best. It is of small consequence whether our first love in literature be Scott, or Tennyson, or Longfellow, or Parkman, or Goldsmith, the intelligent appreciation of, and interest in, any one of them brings us nearer to them all.

The present writer is strongly of opinion that the inveterate custom of having a Fourth Book and a H. S. Reader is at the root of this superficial course in literature. These Readers have been compiled from time to time to meet the wants of a certain class. They were designed undoubtedly to make in as cheap a form as possible a golden treasury of bits from the best authors which could be used at school successively by each member of the family, and at home by the older folks as books of general reading. They are really admirable works of their kind but in this age of the circulating library and of exceedingly cheap books, the causes which made their compilation a necessity have now no longer any force. The index of tendency stands towards a radical change in the aims of the study of literature in public schools, and it is highly inexpedient to disregard it.

The school should at every point of its being and action touch the two great, ever present realities—man and nature. It should in its educational work touch every pupil in behalf of physical, intellectual and moral well being. It should, for the pupil's sake, touch nature at every accessible point and exist and act, as fully and well as circumstances will allow, to keep the pupils in friendly and wholesome touch with nature.—*Education.*