

A BOY'S BOOKS, THEN AND NOW—VI.

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THE DELPHIN CLASSICS.

IN our old District Grammar School at York, *hodie* Toronto, a Delphin edition of any Latin author always drew to itself a peculiar, almost a superstitious regard. It was vaguely supposed, quite without reason, I am sure, in most cases, to give its possessor a special advantage; and the class-companion in whose hands it was seen, was eyed somewhat enviously. But it was not often that Delphin classics were found amongst us. When one did appear, it was probably a waif from the early school-days of a father or grandfather, routed out from a pile of half-forgotten volumes in some out-of-the-way corner, to meet the sudden necessity of a son or grandson. The limited stock of school-books on the shelves of the Messrs. Lesslie and Sons, the only booksellers of the place, would sometimes run out, in mid-winter perhaps, or at some other inopportune time; and a Cæsar, Sallust, or Virgil, in the common shape and style, suited to the rough handling of the school-boy, could not be procured, though urgently needed. Then the dust-covered débris of an old settler's home here and there would be re-examined, and a Delphin has been known to turn up, which was immediately put to use by a young school-boy scion of the family as best he could, quickly finding, however, that an edition less pretentious was much to be preferred for his purpose, both on account of

its greater portability, and also on account of its freedom from a mass of matter which, while claiming to be a help, was only an embarrassment to him in his then condition of knowledge.

When I first became the owner of a Delphin classic, I remember I felt rather proud. It was a Virgil given me by an old friend and schoolfellow, George Dupont Wells, son of Col. Wells, of Davenport House, whence our Davenport Hill and Davenport Station have their names. Early biassed in regard to this particular edition of the Latin writers, and somewhat blindly so, too, as will also, no doubt, be seen, I seldom failed, at a later period, when passing a book-stall or other chance assemblage of promiscuous literature, to recognize quickly a volume of that series, and to secure it, when it was to be had for a trifling sum. This will account for the accumulation of eight or nine Delphin specimens in my collection. of a "Boy's Books;" and it is a short survey of these, or rather of the prefaces, epistles-dedicatory, and editorial introductions to these, that I now present, which I hope may have a certain value with the student of educational progress amongst us. As in the brief reviews and descriptions of books already laid before you in these papers, so again now, I make no pretension to new discoveries. But I claim originality and independence in my treatment of the subject, as I do not remember ever seeing an account