

SUBJECTS AND METHODS IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH.

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(Continued from the January number.)

I HAD intended as an introduction to the subject of methods in the more advanced study of English to review in some detail the new draft curriculum for matriculation issued by the Senate of the University of Toronto, but I have already spent so much time over the Critical Introduction that I fear there is little left for this other part of my subject. What I have to say, therefore, must be said more in the way of hints and suggestions than as a systematic treatment of the question. First, then, I think we must all be grateful, and we have all a common interest in this matter, for the large and liberal lines of study which have been laid down for us in the Junior English Matriculation. Nearly all the great names in English literature of the nineteenth century are represented there, almost all, I may say, whose works we could reasonably expect the young pupil to read with intelligence and sympathy, Longfellow, Byron, Tennyson, Scott, Macaulay, Thackeray, even Ruskin, all the great names of the century are there. I, for one, am so pleased at the wisely liberal spirit shown in this list, that I almost hesitate to ask, Does not the name of Blackmore injure somewhat the symmetry of this array of great names? Do the framers of the list mean that the young scholar is to regard such a work as "Lorna Doone" as at all on a level, as regards power of characterisation, dramatic truth, ethical significance, with Thackeray's "Virginians" or Scott's "Kenilworth"? Let any one note carefully in Blackmore's book the character of the hero's phraseology, which is at one

time naive and artless in its style, reflecting, of course, something simple and bucolic in the Girt Jan Ridd's nature, and at another time is marked by the æsthetic fulness and over-refinement which belong to the latter-day phrasing of Andrew Lang and Stevenson, and again, at another, assumes something of the brisk, malicious, highly self-conscious character of modern "chaff." Let him note a certain incongruity in the elements here, and compare it with the unity of impression which we get from the work of a great novelist, and he will understand the wavering and comparatively feeble power of a third-rate novelist in the creation of characters. And, after all, the ideality of the hero rests mainly upon his gigantic size and strength, which are everywhere the decisive factors in his career, that is, it rests, as it never does in the best work, on exaggeration and unreality. I have no time to say more regarding the very evident marks of third-rate work in "Lorna Doone." Perhaps the framers of this part of the curriculum set it down because of certain ethical value which it may have for young readers in its manner of representing the highwayman, Tom Faggus, and the robber family of the Doones, and it may be also for a pretty bit of idyllic work here and there. For those reasons I might heartily recommend it to a boy for private reading. But it is a very different thing to set it down in the curriculum of a great state institution, from which everyone expects the highest standards in art and literature.

Another work in this list, Scott's