

new words are tried, and there is a lively competition to read them. No one speaks the new words alone, but each reads the whole sentence in an intelligent manner, as if it were grasped as a whole. As fast as the right answer is given, the pupils return to their seats, till all have answered.

The first class in simple fractions then comes up. It is studying the deep science of wholes and halves, quarters and eighths. The first step is really to see a whole divided into eight parts, and then to study a diagram on the board. The class gather around a low table, and each is given a lump of clay. Each one pats his lump down to a square pancake on the table. The object now is to enable each child to see visible quantities by size and weight, and the effect of division. The cake of clay is divided into two equal

parts, and these again divided, and the portions compared by size and weight. Each experiment with the clay is made the basis of an example of fractions, and must be explained in words. The addition of fractions is studied in the same way. One child's cake is divided into eight parts, and four are taken away, and half a cake added to make a whole cake. The children see the one half and four eighths put together to form one whole, and they speak of it as a real fact, and not as an unmeaning formula read in a book. On the blackboard they draw in white chalk four bands of equal size. Then each is divided by green lines. The pupil sees, by tracing the colours through each band, the exact relation of whole, halves, and quarters.—*The Century*.

(To be continued.)

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE.

THE READING OF BOOKS: ITS PLEASURES, PROFITS AND PERILS, by Charles F. Thwing, author of "American Colleges: Their Students and Work." Boston: Lea & Shepard; New York: Chas. T. Dillingham.

A competent critic assures us that more than three thousand years would be required for the mechanical operation alone of reading all the books which have been, or which are, standard works of literature. This calculation is made upon the basis of one book per week—a very good average. Clearly then it would be the height of folly for any reader, however diligent, to attempt to compass this bewildering mass of literature; and it is only common business prudence to select the best—as Charles Lamb says, "The books that *are* books." Mr. Thwing kindly engages to direct us to those books in each department of general English Literature. To this end he discusses briefly and pointedly the merits of the standard authors and their individual works. His opinions are generally sound, and his conclusions just, although we cannot agree

with him in his high estimate of the *historical novel* and the *handbooks of literature*. Many of his suggestions are highly practical.

A classified list of books is appended, which is not, however, designed as a course of reading. Such is not the design of the author; he merely wishes to indicate what is best, leaving the reader to select.

That "the reader should master books" is good advice, and Sir William Hamilton's apothegm, "Read much, but not many works," is equally good. It would certainly not be gracious, and perhaps it would hardly be just to point to our author as an example of what neglect of these precepts leads to. We do not necessarily look for high literary form in a guide-book—even in a *literary* guide-book; but we cannot help observing that the author's extensive knowledge of books has not made his style perfect, and that many passages bear the mark of haste and loose composition. We will not, however, press this point. Mr. Thwing has given us, in small space, a very good guide