

LITERATURE.

A PRIMER by C. W. Knudsen. Golding Brothers, South Norwalk, Conn., 1887. 24 mo. price 25 cents.

This well bound book of about 100 pages has an explanatory appendix, and altho the last in order of appearance, is first in a series. The others already published and ar Esop's Fables, Mark's Gospel, and a Pronouncing Dictionary of 405 pages. The Primer having fulfilled its elementary purpose, Esop and Mark can be used as reading books. After them, the pupil can readily pass to ordinary print without transition reader, as the orthography found in the series is so like the old. It is then semi-phonetic rather than strictly having a sound for each sign. This appears proper for an Educational Stage. In the dictionary the words ar found in order of their pronunciation: the latter being non, it gives the old spelling, so that, noting the sound, the pupil can find its common form. The series is well adapted to teach reading. The truth is children can (and should) be taught to read by this or any similar series better than in the old way. It is not essential which series is used. This is the best series we no of now. That it can and will be improved is certain. Knudsen is a moderate, not an extremist. The type is large and it is well printed. Getting the forms cut so well must have cost Mr. K. "a pretty penny." Five modifications of vowel letters ar used. On examination, each will find a few points he will consider weak—no one has yet produced a faultless primer.

DROPT H'S AND DROPT R'S.—The history of *h* and *r* in modern times is an instructive instance of how pronunciation may be controlled by a changing spelling. It is certain that if English had been left to itself the sound *h* would have been as completely lost in standard language as it has been in most of the dialects. But the distinction between *house* and *'ouse*, altho in itself comparatively slight, being easily marked in writing, such spellings as *'ouse* came to be used in novels, etc., as an easy way of suggesting a vulgar speaker. The result was to produce a purely artificial reaction against the natural tendency to drop *h*, its retention being now considered an almost infallible test of education and refinement. The weakening of *r* into a vowel, and its absorption into the vowel that precedes it, altho really quite as injurious to the force and intelligibility of the language as dropping *h*, not being easily marked in writing, passes unheeded, and, indeed, few people realize the fact that they make no difference whatever between such words as *father* and *farther*.—SWEET in *Handbook of Ph.*, p. 124. Few people, I fear (or, rather, hope) relish total dropping untrilled *r*, confusing *father* and *farther*, *arms* and *arms*, *nor* and *gnaw*.—Prof. Passy.

CORRESPONDENCE.

DOWN WITH DIGRAPHS—EXTEND THE ALFABET.

SIR,—If "new letters ar right in principle," (E. Jones) why fight them? Is it harder to learn a distinctive new character than new combinations of old ones? Nay, verily. With Joel Myers, I say, "Half-way alphabets will never succeed and never o't to." Enlarging the alphabet is correct. For brevity, retain *x*; for clearness, *k*, omitting *c*. Let us have single signs for the diphthongs *I*, *ou*, *oi*. For the first diphthong, tailed *i* (*j*) is best, looped *i* (*b*) isn't bad, a stroke in place of the dot is good, but "oi" never. For vowel in *ooze*, *u* is good enough. Why not adopt tailed *n* for *ng*, which it is impossible for the most conservative to object to, and thus forge another link in the chain of brevity. Please call public attention to certain improved spellings now in vogue: *program*, *Eskimo*, *catalog*, *mosketos*.

Dakota.

A. J. PIERCE

W AND Y,

SIR,—The main point is to settle on an alphabet and use it in a good paper to stay. I have not changed my views on *w* and *y*. Every author consulted allows long *u*, as in *tube*, to be a diphthong. Webster says the sounds are *oo* preceded by the consonant *y* or the vowel *ee* or *i*. This shows that to him these three sounds were so nearly identical that it made no difference which should be employed. I have chosen *i*. Now, if in this case *i* can be used, why not in every case. [Our correspondent spells *yet* *iet*. In like manner, he contends that the vowel in *put* and the first sound in *will* ar indistinguishable and he would represent them both by one sign (*w*)] Canyon City, Col.

A. B. PIKARD.

HE PRACTISES IT.

SIR,—I am not wedded to any set theory but think the "survival of the fittest" will yet be practically demonstrated. I have written in Simplified Spelling for twelve or fifteen years to relatives and intimate friends, tho I use "common spelling" in writing to those who do not do me.

Middletown, N. Y.

J. C. MULLISON.

INTERMEDIAT STAGE.

SIR,—Your Intermediat Stage, as exemplified in your last, is most excellent. Send your journal, at my expense, for 4 years to that poor Alabama clergyman.

Toronto.

R. TYSCN.

SUPPORTING A JOURNAL—MODIFIED LETTERS.

SIR,—There are phoneticians enough to support well a journal devoted to Amended Spelling IF they would put their shoulders to the wheel and support it by not only subscribing for it themselves but getting others to do so.