

NOTES ON NEW BRUNSWICK HIGH  
SCHOOL LITERATURE.

GRADE IX.

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Several requests have come in for notes on the literature for grades IX.

The REVIEWS for August and September, 1914, have very full notes on *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, including an analysis of the story, suggestions for teaching it, and a number of test questions. Later numbers have articles dealing with Dickens, and especially with *A Christmas Carol*. We cannot give the same space to these lessons again so soon, but will offer a few general suggestions in answer to the definite questions in one letter, whose writer asks: "1. What points should be taken up? 2. What passages should be memorized? 3. Will you give some questions such as might be asked in examinations?"

The first thing to consider in taking up any piece of literature is, What is the writer endeavoring to set before us? The answer, in the case of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, is—a story in verse, the first thing to be secured, then, is a firm grasp of the story. This story, like most fictitious narratives, begins with a complication, or difficulty. The interest lies in following the course of events by which this difficulty is at first complicated, and finally solved. The problem is,—Given a death feud between two families, how are they to be reconciled, and especially, how are the two lovers to be united? It is set forth in Canto I, stanza 8, "Can piety the discord heal, etc.," and in the words

Well she knew, her mother dread,  
Before Lord Cranstoun she should wed  
Would see her on her dying bed.

The mountain spirit says that there will be no peace.

Till pride be quelled and love be free.

And the words are echoed by the Ladye.

For pride is quelled and love is free.

How is this change brought about?

Again in *A Christmas Carol*, the story opens with the picture of a man who, through his devotion to self, and love of money, has separated himself from his fellows, and stands alone in the world. The problem is,—Will Scrooge be brought back into love and fellowship, and by what means?

The incidents which make up the narrative are the steps by which the problem is solved. They should be clear in each student's mind, with their relative importance, and their connection with each other.

Some devices for securing this knowledge are these: 1. Summarize the incidents in each canto, e. g. Canto I. The Ladye overhears the dialogue between the spirits, 12-17. She repels the suggestion of yielding, 18. She sends William of Deloraine for the magic book, 19-24. Deloraine rides to Melrose, 25-31. [Note that stanzas 1-11 are largely descriptive and serve as introduction to put us in possession of the situation. The events recorded in 9 and 10 are antecedent to the opening of the story.] 2. Tell the story orally round the class, as briskly as possible. 3. Give a list of incidents in the wrong order and have them arranged as they are given. 4. Ask such questions as: Could this or that incident be omitted without spoiling the story? What difference would it make? Which incidents make for the healing of the death feud and which hinder it? 5. Give a list of the principal characters and tell what part each plays in the story.

[Note that the complication is cleared up in Canto V. and that Canto VI is a kind of post-script.]

These devices may be used in studying any narrative. In the case of the *Lay*, particular pains should be taken to see that dull pupils do not confuse the *Lay* itself with the setting, which tells the occasion on which it was sung, and many details about the minstrel.

*A Christmas Carol* was written, as Dickens tells us, with the express design of teaching a lesson. So if we are to be fair to the author, we must have the moral, as well as the incidents, firmly grasped.

WHAT TO MEMORIZE.

In assigning passages to be learned by heart, choose those that are in some sense complete in themselves. For example:—1. Each of the ballads in Canto VI is complete in itself, depending not at all upon the context. 2. The famous passage "Breathes there a man with soul so dead," has a much stronger effect when we read it as the Minstrel's proud answer to the suggestion that he should desert his own country for a richer one, than when it is taken by itself. Still, even with-