

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE.

EDUCATION AS A SCIENCE. By Alex. Bain, LL.D. (Volume 25, International Science Series.) London: C. Kegan Paul & Co.; Toronto: James Campbell & Son; also, New York: D. Appleton & Co.; Toronto: Hart & Rawlinson and A. Piddington. (*Second Notice.*)

Perhaps, to the practical teacher, the most important chapter in this work is that on Methods. It will afford him much food for thought, and if this leads to self-examination, many instructive lessons will be derived from it. Our author thus introduces the subject:

"The Teaching method is arrived at in various ways. One principal mode is experience of the work; this is the inductive or practical source. Another mode is deduction from the laws of the human mind; this is the deductive or theoretical source. The third and best mode is to combine the two; to rectify empirical teaching by principles, and to qualify deductions from principles by practical experience."

He lays down the correct method of teaching the manual accomplishments of Drawing and Writing. First let children, as in the kindergarten, learn to mould objects from plastic material, then to cut figures out of paper; this leads to the making of regular figures in drawing, and finally the formation of the irregular characters of writing easily follows. The writing should be a plain, passable hand as "It is not the school-master's business to carry writing to the pitch of a work of art." p. 237. Mr. Bain further says, and we quite agree with him, that as perfection in any one aptitude should not be aimed at in the beginning of education, the drawing of symmetrical forms and designing should be kept in strict subordination to the general aims of education until the scholar has advanced far enough to gratify, with

safety, any special bent he may show as an artist, a designer, or a skilled musician. We cannot agree with our author, however, in excluding all notions of perspective from the pupil's curriculum, for the power of representing solid objects is one that is in frequent requisition in the daily walks of life. He views with indifference what is called in this country the phonic method of teaching reading, remarking that "after a few preliminary steps the old and new methods come to the same thing." This opinion is not fortified by any argument, and is consequently of little weight beyond what Mr. Bain's authority may give it. The new method has not been long enough in use to test its merits by results, but it must be confessed that the arguments in its favour are cogent. He has little faith in any short method of teaching spelling, believing rightly that good spelling results from careful reading, writing to dictation, extensive practice in writing under correction, and he might have added careful transcription of the work of any good author.

He would have the first lessons in reading taught principally for the sake of the words and with little or no regard to the meaning, believing that scarcely any composition excels both in teaching language, and in teaching knowledge. But why should not the principle that Mr. Bain so frequently insists upon, that separate subjects should have separate lessons, be recognized here; by making a reading lesson first a "language lesson," and subsequently a "knowledge lesson?" Above twenty pages are next devoted to an investigation of Object Lessons. He warns the professional reader against wasting time upon things children already know, and insists upon proceeding carefully in these lessons from the Known to the Un-