

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE.

BOOKS.

One of the most useful books to the student of French is the "Dictionnaire complet illustré de la langue française," by Pierre Larousse. The book is divided into three parts. The first part, comprising 804 pages, forms the dictionary proper, and contains, as the author claims, "une nomenclature très complète de la langue."

This is a French dictionary for Frenchmen, with the definitions and all the rest given in their own language. This is an advantage to foreigners, as in looking up the definitions of words, they are obliged to read the French phrases, and thus become more familiar with correct French idioms. The explanations given are good, and in the case of important words full and explicit. In addition to this, the explanations are accompanied by illustrative sentences, so that the correct use of the word can be ascertained. Take for example the word "rompre." There are noted nine different significations of the word taken in a literal sense, and with a figurative meaning eleven or twelve more, with short French phrases illustrative of each separate definition. About the same number of definitions and sentences are found under "recevoir."

A prominent feature of the work is the pictorial illustrations it contains. Every teacher knows how much more easily an explanation is understood if the subject under discussion can be represented to the eye by a figure. There are in the Larousse Dictionary more than thirty full-page illustrations, besides hundreds of smaller ones. To show the value of these illustrations it is necessary to refer to one only, that of "La Maison," in which the various parts of a French dwelling-house from

"cave" to "comble" are indicated. The interior of one room is also shown and the parts named, "foyer" "plafond," etc. No one after seeing this illustration need be at any loss to know exactly what is meant by "rez-de-chaussée" and "premier étage."

Part II. contains between thirty and forty pages, and is a collection of expressions, mostly Latin, with literal translation into French, and a short explanation, also in French, of the origin and application of these expressions. This will be found a useful and convenient dictionary of reference, especially as the Frenchman's familiar Latin phrases are far from being those in current use among Englishmen.

There are two editions of the Larousse Dictionary, in both of which Part III. forms the most distinctive feature, being, as the title page announces, "un dictionnaire illustré historique, géographique, biographique et mythologique." It is really a small encyclopedia. In the Paris edition this latter part contains 624 pages, comprising a large number of very valuable historical and biographical sketches of persons and places celebrated in history, and also short articles on some of the most important works in French literature. Of course, within the compass of a work of this size, it is not to be expected that exhaustive descriptions can be given. Indeed, the chief value of these articles consists in their conciseness. Only the prominent facts are touched upon, and these are arranged in such a way that the busy teacher can, without waste of time, procure the necessary information. When we add that this part of the dictionary is illustrated by 750 portraits of famous historical personages, and is revised every year, all the articles being corrected up to date, it will be seen that