

NOTES ON SCHOOL READERS.

BY THE EDITOR.

I.

THE LITTLE LAND: by Robert Louis Stevenson.
N. B. Reader III.

This is a good selection to begin with at the opening of term while children are full of memories of summer days in the country. The aims should be to get them into sympathy with the little boy in his escape from loneliness and dulness, and to see the pictures that he saw. It is a lesson in imagination. If you have *A Child's Garden of Verse*, study the section "The Child Alone" and also "Flowers" and compare with the "Little Land" before you teach it. This will give you suggestions.

Begin the lesson with a little talk about the writer. He was an only child and a delicate one, and living in Edinburgh where the winters are bleak and cold, had to stay indoors much of the time. But he spent his summers in the country, where, in his grandfather's garden, he played with his cousins. [See "To Willie and Henrietta" and "The Pirate Story".] Have the first verse read silently, then let the children tell in their own words what is the starting point of the story,—where the little boy was, why he shut his eyes; then, what he saw, as fully as they can. Do the same with the other verses. In the third verse they should notice (a) his return from the "little land," (b) the contrast, (c) his wish. Let them pick out the words that mark the contrast; e. g., "great bare floor." Another contrast is between the round sun "heeding no such things as I" and the "little things" that "look kindly on." Have them read to you, (a) lines that please them by the sound, (b) lines from which they could paint pictures. Here are some suggestive questions:—What can we learn from the poem about the little boy's life? Did he just imagine the little land, or did he remember it? Can you remember one like it? Do you ever play "make believe" games? Can you name any of the "little creatures" in verse 2? The teacher may here connect this lesson with Professor Perry's lesson on animal life in ponds. "The greater swallows;" greater than what? Explain.

"Each a hill that I could climb
And talking nonsense all the time."

How did the boy feel towards the "little people?" Why would he want to come back at night? Why are there no long or hard words in the poem?

An unusual word like "pied" should be fixed in the memory by other lines or phrases containing it. e. g. "The Pied Piper," "Meadows trim with daises pied." Look up the words, magpie, and piebald.

If it comes in naturally, a suggestion might be given about this kind of "making believe" to get away from dulness. Whether it is good for us or not depends upon two things.

First, do we escape into beautiful thoughts, or into ugly and selfish ones? And second, do we let ourselves dream and imagine when we ought to be working? The children who read the poem are probably a good deal older than the little boy, and some of them may have the temptation to idle dreaming. A moral should certainly not be forced, but the thoughtful teacher will surely be reminded how important it is that the child's imagination should be directed to beautiful things, and will recall the words of St. Paul:—"Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, think on these things."

BLACK BEAUTY. Here the child's imagination is called upon in a different way, and with a direct moral aim. He has to imagine the horse's feelings. This extract serves as a good introduction to the book from which it is taken. Here is a good place to master the meanings of the words, *extract*, *selection*, the difference between author and publisher. Who is the publisher of your reader? Of your arithmetic? The author of your history? Name some of the authors represented in this book. Where do you find the author's name? What about the name at the end of "A Far Distant Country" on page 42? What name is opposite "The Lion and the Spaniel" in the table of contents? For what is that word an abbreviation, and what does it mean? What is the difference between biography and autobiography?

Why did Jakes use the bearing rein? Why did the foreman put on too heavy loads? Why did the lady take the trouble to interfere? "My mind was hurt quite as much as my poor sides."