

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE.

CÆSAR'S BELLUM BRITANNICUM, with Introductory Notes and Complete Vocabulary. For the use of Intermediate and University Classes. By John Henderson, M.A., Classical Master of St. Catharines Collegiate Institute. Toronto: Copp, Clark & Co. 1881.

THIS text-book is distinguished from most of its class by a *Life of Cæsar* prefixed to the text, of sufficient length and interest to teach the student something more than a bare outline of facts with regard to the great man, a portion of whose writings they are about to study. This "*Life*" is simply and unambitiously written; it gives all the important facts, put together in a manner sure to impress the memory. The view of "*Cæsar's character*," given separately at the conclusion of this brief biography, is an excellent thought; it sums up and points the teaching of the preceding pages. This is followed by a "*Chronological Table of the Times of Cæsar*," which puts the biography of Cæsar and the contemporary history of Rome in a tabular form, together with the synchronous development of Roman literature, given in a parallel column. At page 19 there is a brief account of the sources of Roman history: from the earliest times, with a list of the principal Roman historians, their dates, and chief works.

A singularly "happy thought" on the part of Mr. Henderson has been to furnish a list of the several Roman invasions of Britain. This is well thought of in connection with such a cardinal event in history as Cæsar's invasions of Britain. It is most useful that the student should be able to run his thoughts at a moment's notice over the steps by which Roman supremacy was secured in Britain. No edition of the *Bellum Britannicum*, of all the text-books we have seen, has such ample and well-digested tables as these. The text is fairly printed; the notes are well written, evincing scholarship and an intelligent perception of the needs of pupils.

The vocabulary has the merit of giving a little more etymology than some publishers think good for the youthful mind. A useful feature in this edition is the frequent reference to Harkness's grammar, as also to that which Mr. Henderson does well to commend, the grammar of Messrs. Allen and Greenough.

SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGEDY OF CORIOLANUS, edited, with notes, by William J. Rolfe, A.M. New York: Harper & Brothers; Toronto: Willing & Williamson.

THIS edition is worthy of a place with the others of Shakspeare's selected plays which have been elucidated by Mr. Rolfe. He adheres to his usual method, which indeed could not well be improved, and the manner in which he executes his plan only calls for fresh praise. It is an eminently useful little book, and *Coriolanus* is a play which, despite the simplicity of its motive, requires a good deal of explanation. In one passage we find Mr. Rolfe's notes and text at variance; we refer to Act i. sc. iii. line 42, where he admits Collier's reading,

"At Grecian swords contemning,"

to be "on the whole the best emendation that has been proposed." Yet he follows the Cambridge editors in substituting "sword" for "swords," an uncalled for and ill-judged alteration. It is singular, too, that having very properly placed weight on the use of the word "contemning" instead of "condemning" in the above passage, Mr. Rolfe should have omitted to perceive that the same substitution would remove the difficulty in Act i. sc. viii. line 15, where Aufidius objects to the "condemned seconds" of the Volsces who have interfered between him and Coriolanus.

Rather a curious effect is produced by the illustration of the "hungry beach" whose pebbles were hyperbolically supposed by Coriolanus to "fillip the stars." The artist has made the downward blow of the breaker very actually and positively shoot the stones straight up into the air, quite regardless of the fact that both Shakspeare and Coriolanus describe it as an "impossibility!"