

not how rubbishy a book of Natural History may be, for, provided that it be of such a kind as to command a large sale, it must foster a taste for the subject among the million. This is a most pestilent doctrine. If the tares occupy the ground, how can the wheat grow? and the publication of every book of spurious science precludes the publication of a really scientific book on the same subject.

OUR BOOK SHELF

The Arts in the Middle Ages, and at the Period of the Renaissance. By Paul Lacroix, Curator of the Imperial Library of the Arsenal, Paris. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1870.)

A TASTE for art usually comes to us somewhat late in life, because, in nine cases out of ten, the taste is not cultivated or developed till long after school life. We have, in fact, no regular art education in this country, although endeavours are being made at South Kensington to form Art Schools, and to accumulate art students. A love for high art is certainly more common in France and Italy than in England, and this is partly accounted for by the fact that some education in the first principles of the arts is given in all the government schools and colleges. The work before us is well calculated to foster such tastes. It discusses not alone the principal arts:—"We pass in review," says M. Lacroix, "all the Arts, starting from the fourth century to the second half of the sixteenth. Architecture raising churches and abbeys, palaces and public memorials, strong fortresses, and the ramparts of cities; sculpture adorning and perfecting other arts by its works in stone, marble, bronze, wood, and ivory; painting, commencing with mosaic and enamels, contributing to the decoration of buildings jointly with stained glass and frescoes, embellishing and illuminating manuscripts before it arrived at its highest point of perfection, with the art of Giotto and Raphael, of Hemling and Albert Dürer; engraving on wood and metal, with which is associated the work of the medallist and the goldsmith; and after attempting to touch upon playing cards and niello-work, we suddenly evoke that sublime invention destined to change the face of the world—Printing." Although M. Lacroix speaks above of passing in review *all the arts*, we notice at once that he has mixed up the fine and the useful arts, and omitted some of each of them. Moreover, he has chiefly discussed what we call the "decorative arts." Poetry is omitted altogether, and the only account of music is given under the heading "Musical Instruments."

The book itself is gorgeous. It is well printed, and is full of good engravings and woodcuts. Moreover it contains nineteen excellent chromo-lithographs, by Kellerhoven, the most notable of which are the sixth ("Biberon of Henri Deux Faience") and the thirteenth ("The Dream of Life," a fresco by Orcagna). We have no book in our own language which satisfies the want, which must so often have been felt, of a work of this nature. It is a positive art-educator, and what with the appointment of Professors of the Fine Arts at Oxford and Cambridge, and the appearance of a few works of this kind, we may hope before long really to possess in this country some critical taste for all that is beautiful in art.

G. F. R.

Descriptive Travel and Adventures; or Hubert Preston Abroad. By Catharine Morell. Edited by J. R. Morell, formerly one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools. (London: T. Murby.)

WE hope this is not a sample of "The Consecutive Narrative Series of Reading Books," of which it appears to be the 6th volume, for the sake of the unfortunate youths

in whose hands they may be placed. We scarcely know a book which we should take greater pains to keep out of the hands of young people eager for knowledge. It is full of the grossest and most palpable blunders. We will quote the three first we came across, giving chapter and verse, as we hardly expect to be believed without affording our readers the opportunity of verifying our quotations for themselves, if they wish to. When we read (Chemistry, p. 83) that "quicklime is simple carbonate of lime taken from the limestone of your mountains!" we thought we had pitched upon a curious slip of the pen; when we found that "marsupials," (which, by the by, are known as being animals *that jump instead of run*) "are peculiar to Australia," and "*the tiger peculiar to the New World!!*" (Growth of Plants, p. 173) we opened our eyes with astonishment; and when we were told that *the elephant chews the cud!!!* (The Elephant, p. 197). we closed the book in disgust. Surely any boy on the lowest form of any school which the gentleman who edits the book "formerly inspected," would have set him right on all these points. Seriously, it is very sad that at this time of day it should be found possible to circulate such rubbish under the name of instruction in science. If this is what is to come of inspecting schools, the less we have of it the better, till we have trained up a staff of inspectors acquainted with at least the rudiments of science. B.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[The Editor does not hold himself responsible for opinions expressed by his Correspondents. No notice is taken of anonymous communications.]

The Teaching of Science

I AM the principal of a private school. I have long taken an interest in science, and have, by proceeding very gradually and cautiously, succeeded in making Scientific Teaching for a limited time in the week a part of the regular school course. There are many more difficulties, however, in the way of this than some of your off-hand devotees of science seem to be aware of.

Not the least of these is the decided opposition of some parents, who object altogether to any portion of their sons' time being devoted to that, the direct practical use of which they do not see. My school may be divided into three classes; those who are preparing for one or other of the public schools; those who are preparing for special examinations at Woolwich, and those who will complete their education with me. The first two classes cannot afford to lose any time upon any subject that will not tell directly upon the examinations to which they are respectively looking forward, otherwise the result might be the loss of a scholarship in the one case, and in the other the loss of a place altogether. And how utterly void of all chance Science is, in the former case at least, you can well judge. So that until our Public Schools set us the example, it is very little scientific teaching that we can give to this class of pupils at all events. While with regard to the last class, all that parents wish is that their sons should receive a classical and general education; but any meddling with Science I can assure you some of them look upon as simply an amusement of the master's, obtained at the expense of their sons' time. Nevertheless, as I have already said, I have made Scientific Teaching a regular part of the school course for a short time every week, and am only prevented from extending it much further by the causes named above. The subjects we have taken up hitherto have been elementary physiology and chemistry. For the former we have used Dr. Mapother's "The Body and its Health," while one or two of the elder pupils have gone on to Huxley's "Elementary Lessons in Physiology." And when it is considered that the average age of our pupils is only about twelve or thirteen years, I think this is as much as could be expected. For chemistry, we have been very much puzzled to find a suitable text-book; for though there is no want of really first-class books, we have not been able to obtain what we wish. Both Wilson's (published by Chambers) and Roscoe's "Elementary Lessons" are too long, and (considering the objections of parents named above) too high in price for school boys. What we want is something about half the size