WILL THE PEDAGOGUES LEAVE US NO cozy corners in the house of letters, neither closet nor attic to explore and lounge in unoppressed by some prim guide to the world's best literature? Is there to come a time when no good old book can be reprinted without the editorial meddling of a diplomaed mentor, long on culture but short on "juice de vivre," whose foreword, hindword, notes, and bibliography—quaintly paginated in lower-case Roman—must needs obscure the text they pretend to illumine? These queries are prompted by a recent pedagogical invasion of that last intimate retreat where children might forget the impertinence of school—"Alice in Wonderland." William J. Long conducts this drive, munitioned by Ginn & Co. and reluctantly convoyed by Oliver Herford, who (to do him justice) has no stomach for the sorry business. The illustrator's heart, one conjectures from his prefatory "Apology" in verse, is in Tenniel's boots along with his feet. But the editor is shameless in spoliation of Carroll's province. There he turns things topsy-turvy, installing on page iii a "Finale" and on page 205 a "Foreword." Then he violates the good don's Oxford privacy and pulls from its decent niche the skeleton of Carroll's double life. Meanwhile, inevitably, there have been "notes"—"Notes and Harmonies," announces the editor. Listen to a few of the sweet harmonics with which Mr. Long accompanies Lewis Carroll:

A hookah is a kind of machine or thingumajig which the Turks use for smoking. . . Like most wild sea birds, the dodo was quite tame. Still, he was never, as you might say, a dodomestic bird. . . They call one creature a tortoise because he has crooked feet, and another creature they call a porpoise because he looks something like a *porcus* or hog. And sailors twist the twisted tortoise till he becomes turtle, but they can't twist the untwisted porpoise till he becomes purple.

This is not nonsense; nonsense is always serenely unconscious that it is not the whole sense. Any child will at once recognize this for a stilted, patronizing imitation by a self-conscious "Olympian" and will politely draw away from it, at the same time (more's the pity!) drawing away from Wonderland. Nor is it education, of which our editor spreads a hopeful report:

> Language is queer; there's no telling what some words really mean. . . It's just a fashion of speaking, with no sense to it. . . If a child ate too many [comfits], there might *come fits*. Hence the name, to scare you properly. But you will not find any such reasonable explanation in the dictionary. If you bother with such books, you may *have to learn* [our italics] that "to comfit" means to preserve. . . Nowadays, in proper schools, he [the Mouse] would read five or six history books, all different, and not learn anything in particular; which is, you see, the great advantage of modern education.

Yet, after all, the heinous crime of "Alice's" editor is to spoil transparent nonsense with silly explanations and to rub the bloom off words of glamor which children love because they only half understand them. Criticizing Carroll for parodying "Star of the Evening," Mr. Long quotes a stanza of the mawkish original and adds, "Some things should be let alone, especially things that have the two virtues of being old and being good." They should indeed! THE DIAL bespeaks for this outrage the attention of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. If, while yet in school, its officers had "Robinson Crusoe," "The Pilgrim's Progress," "The Child's Garden," and alas! how many other golden books thus tarnished for them, they will find a way to deal with these insatiable pedagogues.