

## EDUCATION.

ABOUT nineteen months since, some ladies in Boston and its vicinity formed a society, called a society to encourage studies at home, with a view to influencing young ladies in the formation of *habits* of systematic reading. Their object not being to obtain uniform results, but to foster habits which might be of great benefit both to individuals and, in time, to communities, they did not fix upon absolute standards of attainment, but adopted informal methods which have thus far proved exceedingly effective. The rules and mode of operations are these. Any young lady seventeen years of age, or upwards, may become a member of the society by paying two dollars annually, at the beginning of the term, which lasts from October 1 to June 1. Having made known what branch of study she wishes to follow, she is put in correspondence with the lady who has charge of the special subject chosen. Eight ladies of the committee undertake to supervise courses in general history, zoölogy, botany, physical geography and geology, art, French and German, and English literature. The head of each department writes once a month to all the students in her department, giving advice, answering special questions, etc. At the beginning of the term she has sent them a list of works to be read through in the course of the winter, with the request that the reading shall be done as regularly as possible, a little every day. "Even if the time devoted daily to this use is short" (we quote from a circular), "much can be accomplished by perseverance; and the habit soon becomes a delightful one." So far as we can judge from the printed circular of the society, the lists of books are made out with much care and discretion, no attempt at undue cramming being discoverable in them. The intention is evidently to be modest in attempt and thorough in achievement. "It is more desirable to remember what you read than to read much," says the printed letter of instructions which accompanies the programmes of study. And in order to cultivate the memory, a system of notes has been adopted. Each day a concise report of what was read the day before is written out in a blank book. The instructions proceed:—

"Bear in mind, while you read, that you

are to make the notes later, and try, therefore, to fix the important points in your memory. . . . At the beginning of each month, please write to me, stating what book you are reading, how much you have read, and what difficulties you meet with. Inclose a copy of some pages of your memory notes as you first wrote them, or send me your note-book by mail. When you have read a volume, or an important division of the subject, please to review it, and make an abstract of its contents, *from memory*, adding remarks on the subject or on its treatment by the author. These abstracts I wish to see also. The notes should be very brief statements of facts. The abstracts should contain groupings of these facts, with comments."

The committee justly regard this system of notes and correspondence as of the highest importance; and indeed it is not easy to overestimate the beneficial results which it may have, when the field of action of the society gets to be more extended. Finally, at the end of the term, students are invited to send in essays in English, French, or German, "on subjects of their own choice, showing the results of their studies." At the same time a reunion of members is held in Boston, reports are presented, and a few of the essays are read. In this way the vital element of personal intercourse and mutual encouragement is supplied. Two of these reunions have already taken place, the second one on the 3d of June last, and some of the ladies came from distant points to be present at them. Several essays were received, all creditable, and some showing uncommon powers of thought and analysis.

The history of the society's work, thus far, is most encouraging. Forty-five persons began studying in the first term, of whom only two or three failed without sufficient excuse. Sixteen of these continued to work throughout the second term, and sixty-five new students were admitted during the same period. Eighty-one young women, therefore, have enjoyed the advantages offered by the society thus far, and there is reason to suppose that the number of workers will continue to increase. Of those already enrolled some are unmarried, others married; some are themselves teachers, others again have but just left school.



Of course a system of study by correspondence must be limited in its scope; but we think it is clear that, as organized by this society, it cannot fail of a wide and useful application in quarters into which no other instrument of the higher education can penetrate, and a corroboration of this belief would seem to offer itself in the fact to which we called attention last month, in *The Atlantic*, that a somewhat similar plan is now in operation in England. It is too early as yet to make predictions concerning the future of this society, but its beginnings — carried on with commendable reserve and with a noteworthy predominance of action over argument — are such as to lead to the hope that further connections may be formed by it, or other societies called into being by its example. Among its students are residents of thirteen different States and more than thirty-five towns and villages in those States — a suggestive fact. The favorite studies thus far are history and English literature, but the presence of natural science in fair force among the studies offered for choice excites a hope that eventually, and at least indirectly, this organization may advance us toward some of those results the desirability of which we suggested in our remarks on the *Scientific Education of Women*,<sup>1</sup> last year.

—In spite of its somewhat ridiculous name, the *Bona-Fide Pocket Dictionary*<sup>2</sup> is really a useful publication. It not only does what it pretends to with regard to fitting even a small pocket; it has the further merit of being unusually serviceable as a dictionary. By the use of very small but remarkably clear type a great deal is put on each page, making it very full in words and definitions, and the arrangement is such as to insure greater convenience, for the French and English words are on the same page, and not in apparently interchangeable parts of the book, as in most pocket dictionaries. The gender of the French words is indicated by the type; words alike in both languages are

given but once, and then in French, to determine the gender and accentuation. Many examples are given of the possible variations in the use of different words. The completeness with which this has been done can best be shown by an example. Take the English word *catch*. Four French equivalents are given. *Surprendre*, it is indicated, is used in the phrase to catch one sleeping; then follow these expressions, each with its translation into French: to catch the eye; contagion, attention, etc.; the train, the steamer; to catch at a ball, etc.; at the offer; to catch again; to catch cold, fire, hold of; to catch it (colloquial); to catch one's death; to catch up (in the sense of seizing); the same in the sense of overtake; etc., etc. And there are many other words quite as full.

The tables are very numerous. The sensitive philologist will object to that ignoring of his favorite study which enables the compiler to say, for instance, that the perfect indicative, first person singular, is formed in the first conjugation by changing *é* into *ai*; the grammarian does not employ such processes, but the stammering foreigner will find them useful and handy. The comparison between the English and the metric systems is made as complete as possible. There is an outline of the English barometer with all its measurements converted into millimetres; of the Fahrenheit, Centigrade, and Réaumur thermometers; and what has most struck us in the book, at the edge of one of the pages, a real centimetre, which, however glibly it may flow from the tongue, is almost as unfamiliar to the eyes of those who yet worship the yard-stick as is its congener the centipede itself. There are also tables for the comparison of French, English, German, and American coins. In short, Mr. Bellows, by trying to remedy some of the faults he has noticed in other books of the kind, and by letting originality replace servile copying, has made a very serviceable dictionary.

<sup>1</sup> See *Atlantic Monthly* for June, 1874, p. 760.

<sup>2</sup> *The Bona-Fide Pocket Dictionary of the French and English Languages*. On an entirely new System, showing both Divisions on the same Page, distinguishing the Genders by different Types, giving Tabular Conjugations of all the Irregular Verbs,

explaining Difficulties of Pronunciation. By JOHN BELLOWES, Gloucester. Revised and Corrected by Auguste Beljame, Alexandre Beljame, and John Libree, M. A. University of London. London: Trübner & Co.