

HOME AND SOCIETY.

Going Abroad for an Education.

In all ages and in all countries the youth of wealthy parents have been sent abroad to perfect their education at institutions supposed to possess some advantages not to be found in their own land. The young Greek, in the days of Plato, studied in Egypt. In Cicero's time the young Roman was sent to Athens. The young Gaul and Saxon were sent to Rome, and, later, to Padua. Before the Revolution of 1776, most young men of means in the American colonies were sent to England to be educated. As our country prospered and our educational resources multiplied, the need of supplementing them with the advantages to be found in foreign countries, instead of diminishing, rather increased; and at no time in our history has a year or two in Europe, for study and travel, been regarded as a more indispensable part of a young gentleman's education than in this year of grace, 1882.

It is possible that the importance of foreign study for the young is exaggerated; that the number who really profit by it is more limited, and the number on whom it works more evil than good is much larger than is commonly supposed. From time to time the writer has had such questions propounded to him as these: A father asks how much money he should allow his son who is going to a foreign technical school; a mother desires to know what domestic arrangements can be made to protect her son, who wishes to take a course of medicine in Vienna; a young college graduate, who "reads a little German," is anxious to know what conditions he must comply with, to enter one of the German universities, from which he is ambitious of taking a degree.

In reference to the domestication of young American students in Europe, parents should hesitate to send a son abroad to study, unless father or mother accompanies him, or he can be placed under a guardianship quite as watchful and as authoritative as that of a parent. That the lad is modest, and virtuous, and industrious, and has been bred in a healthy aversion to every kind of vice, does not alter the case. He has also been accustomed to domestic and conventional restraints at home, which he will not feel in Europe. Some do not exist there, perhaps, and none would be felt by a young foreigner as constantly or as acutely as at home; and the result would be a gradual relaxation of his standards. Young men should, if possible, have a cheerful and virtuous home to return to at night, and during the day they should feel that they are liable to account for the manner in which they spend the hours away from it. The social instinct at this age is very strong, and the young are apt to fall into the society to which they find easiest access; and the society of easiest access, in the absence of family supervision, is always the worst.

At a European university the relation between professor and pupil is in the strictest sense of the word a professional one; he has no concern with the pupil out of the class-room, nor is it any concern of his whether the pupil studies, or whether the habits he is

forming are good or bad. The student is supposed to come there to profit by the advantages provided for his instruction; if he does not profit by them, that is his affair. A young man should have reached a very considerable maturity of age and of mind to be thus left to himself, with full discretion to use or abuse his opportunities. Unquestionably the most demoralizing feature of our American system of collegiate education is the degree to which it confers privileges of manhood before the student is ripe for the responsibilities of manhood: such as quarters to himself, servants at his command, and the discretionary use of money before he knows its value, and all with no adequate supervision.

There is, perhaps, no more serious mistake which Americans are prone to make with their children abroad than in the matter of money. Some wish their children while abroad to improve their social position, and all wish them to have every possible indemnification for their separation from the comforts of home and the society of kindred and friends. There is nothing supposed to go farther toward such indemnification than money, and therefore American boys are noted throughout Europe for their lavish expenditure. They are apt to arrive too ignorant of the language of the country in which they reside to enter any of the classes, or to follow the lectures for the first six or twelve months with any profit. In their anxiety to master the language they find a pretext for frequenting theaters, coffee-houses, clubs, and other places of public resort where those who spend most freely are always most welcome, and where they are beguiled into social alliances which in the main are to be deprecated. The young men who amount to anything, and who are the pride of the gymnasia and universities of Continental Europe have usually the command of very little money, even if their parents chance to be wealthy. The greater number, however, of the most earnest and gifted students are commonly poor. Such students naturally avoid the society of a young man whose rate of expenditure largely exceeds their own; for they are too proud to accept hospitalities and civilities which they cannot conveniently return. One of the evil consequences of this feeling is that the young American is driven for society either to other Americans as extravagant as himself, or to that of the fast young men of the country, who frequent the university as a matter of fashion, and to lead a life of pleasure; or to that of a baser class of students who are not ashamed to prey upon him. Thus it happens that, with the best intentions in the world, the young American is isolated from the class by whose society and example he might profit, and is innocently thrown into intimate communion with the class whom he should specially avoid. Of course, any natural proclivity to bad company would be aggravated by such exposure.

But here comes the question: What is a suitable allowance? A parent, who can afford his son better accommodations, does not wish him packed into a room with four or five other students—the not uncommon fate of the poorer class of German university students,

and they, often the hardest workers; neither does he wish his son's health to suffer from an impoverishing or unwholesome diet; neither does he wish him in his dress and mode of life to neglect any of the refinements of good society. Certainly not; nor should he. The question is simply how much can a lad be trusted to spend judiciously at a Continental seat of learning like the mining school at Freyburg, or at any of the universities of Germany, Austria, or France. We do not propose to go into details of the expenses at different universities of Germany, or of any other country, but to give a standard by which an approximately accurate judgment may be arrived at by the reader. A friend of ours, wishing to fix the allowance of a son whom he proposed to place at a Saxon university, consulted a German gentleman of rank who had taken his degree at Bonn, and whose father at the time held a high official position. His reply, in substance, was:

"Because I was the son of an ambassador, and had many acquaintances whose line of expenditure was generous, I was allowed six hundred thalers, or say, five hundred dollars a year. Add to this whatever I required to spend during vacation, for I usually managed to get rid of my allowance during term time."

"But," said the American, "that was some time ago, when money went farther than at present."

"Not for students," he replied; "they can live for just about the same money now as in my time. You will find they pay, for their rooms and for board, nearly the same prices now as then."

"Then you think," the American continued, "that if I should allow my son a thousand dollars a year, it would be enough?"

"Ample," he replied. "More would only attract to him a predatory acquaintance, and the envy of those who were too proud to prey upon him. A thousand dollars should suffice for all his wants, if his object is to work. Less would suffice for a German, for he can buy to better advantage than a foreigner, and he is accustomed to less indulgence than an American."

Bonn being about as expensive as any, and more expensive than most, of the universities in Germany, what would answer for a student there would answer for a student in any part of Germany, or, we may add, at any university on the Continent. The experience and the fortunes of nine-tenths of the young Americans who have gone abroad to study will confirm the conclusion to which we have reached, that whenever the student is spending at a faster rate than a thousand dollars a year he needs looking after at once, and will probably be found in a condition to be benefited by an entire change of residence and associations.

It is no very uncommon thing for the better class of schools in Germany to refuse to receive American boys; and the reason is, that their lavish use of money unsettles the native boys, distracts them from their work, impairs the discipline, and tends to lower all the standards of the school. We think, however, that this statement applies to Spanish American boys, rather than to lads from the United States.

The conditions upon which a young man "who reads a little German" can take a degree in a German university are: a perfect familiarity with the language;

five years in the gymnasium, or the ability to pass an examination in all the studies prescribed for the five years' course at the gymnasium; and annual examinations at the university till the course is completed. In other words, it is hardly within the range of possibility for a graduate from an American college, even if he "reads a little German," to be graduated at a German university. We hear a great deal about Americans taking diplomas at German universities, but these diplomas are nothing more, as a rule, than certificates that they have pursued certain studies at those universities. Such diplomas would be of no use to a young German as evidence of fitness for stations in which the university degree is required. Mr. Bancroft is one of the few American students who have been properly graduated at a German university. It would be very difficult for a young man to pass the final examination of a gymnasium without pursuing the course from year to year, for the work of each year is quite as much as can be properly and safely undertaken by any lad, however gifted. All, therefore, that the American graduate "who reads a little German" could undertake to advantage would be to pursue certain special studies at the university and obtain a diploma simply for what he had done.

But for this he should, if possible, be perfectly equipped with the language before he enters. The practice of attending lectures for the purpose of learning the language is to be discouraged. A student soon tires of listening to a professor whom he imperfectly understands. He is in danger of acquiring a disgust for the study upon which he expends so much time and labor unprofitably; he soon comes to the conclusion that whether he attends or stays away from the lecture is of too little consequence to interfere with any more agreeable engagement that may offer, and he must have rare firmness and resolution if he does not finally subordinate his university duties to such social entertainments as seem to offer him greater, or at least more agreeable, facilities for acquiring the language. When he has reached this point, his career as a student may be considered as ended, and the sooner he is recalled the better for him.

There is a disposition in America to exaggerate the importance of knowing foreign tongues. For those who propose to follow literary pursuits and the higher walks of the sciences, it is important to have easy access to the literature and science of other lands; but, for the great body of Americans, the time necessary for the acquirement of a foreign tongue could be much more profitably employed in mastering what is to be learned from the literature of his own. This remark is especially applicable to the female sex. There are more good books in their own language than they can ever hope to master, and as much good society among English-speaking people as they can turn to any account. A knowledge of foreign tongues will rarely render them more attractive except to foreigners who have never paid their language the compliment of learning it, and whose acquaintance and society ought more frequently to be discouraged than cultivated. Nine persons study foreign tongues from vanity, for one that resorts to them for a key to unlock the stores of knowledge which they contain.