

foreign subtraction." The nature of their occupation is at once made clear by a small pile of old clothes lying upon the ground near the married daughter, who, needle in hand, is darning a monstrous rent in an aged coat. This garment, upon which she has just commenced to exercise her healing art, is held up to the light for our inspection. It was a brown overcoat once, with a velveteen collar, but its last owner evidently had the most supreme contempt for appearances, and regarded patching or mending as ridiculous attempts to conceal his poverty from the public eye. It was the coat one sees on the back of the professional beggar, and of the men who have lost all hope, and are therefore indifferent to the multitude and diversity of their rags. And yet it was not beyond Mrs. Platt's skill. She showed a not unseemly garment folded in a corner, and shook that out for our inspection. It had, she averred, been "much the worse of the two," and now exhaled a powerful odour of what she called "armonium." But not a rent remained undarned: the cuffs had been carefully turned in, the button-holes re-sewn, and the greasy parts revived with a plentiful application of ammonia. It is true that the buttons were of various sizes and

patterns, but such a point was beneath criticism. And what was the marketable value of this garment?—Mrs. Platt put her head on one side and eyed the article critically. It might fetch eighteenpence, and it might go for a shilling. If it only reached the latter sum, then she would have been paid for her labour at the rate of twopence an hour.

We ventured to ask who buy such garments. Mrs. Platt looked unutterable amazement at our ignorance, as she replied that numbers of people purchase to themselves a complete outfit for such a sum as five shillings, and that there *are* coats to be had for sixpence. And how long will they last? That appeared to her a question conveying an imputation on her skill; she therefore answered by inquiring how long we could expect them to, and at once accepted our suggestive shrug of the shoulders as a very proper solution of the problem. Some experience of Petticoat Lane on Sunday morning enables us to accept Mrs. Platt's figures as correct, and moreover assures us that the occupation pursued by her is one followed by quite a little army of broken-down tailors, seamstresses, and others; whilst it is also very necessary to the comfort of many thousands around them.



A BOSTON (U.S.) SOCIETY.

THE Boston (U.S.) Society for the Encouragement of Study at Home, established two years before the Chautauqua society, is less widely spread, though perhaps not less useful. Its object is that of helping ladies in their studies as "distinguished from reading."

In June, 1873, some papers of an English society entitled, "Society for the Encouragement of Home Study," fell into

the hands of Miss Ticknor, the present secretary of the Boston society, who showed them to Dr. Eliot, and both desired at once to carry out the idea suggested by the title, but with an American difference.

The English society, at least at that time, confined its help to the wealthy classes; the Boston idea was to embrace all classes of women over seventeen.

It was also made as free as possible from all irksome conditions; to quote the secretary's report for 1883:—

"Instead of mere plans for work without correspondence, and the irksome requirement of presence at head-quarters at the end of each year for competitive examination and prizes, we adopted monthly correspondence, with frequent tests of results, desiring to produce intellectual habits and resources, without

competition and without even fostering the desire to reach certain points at certain moments.

"Our committee consisted of ten persons, when it began its existence in the autumn of 1873; and six of its members undertook the entire correspondence with forty-five persons, who entered as students during the first term.

"This committee was formed with only two points of method settled, namely, that there *should* be a regular correspondence, and that there *should not* be competitive examinations."

As I understand it, it is the cordial effort of a number of ladies (188 this year) to help other ladies over the stumbling-blocks that so often come in the way of home students, tripping them up perhaps and completely discouraging them at the outset of some effort to study.

When one remembers the pride and timidity of many young girls, which would prevent them asking help in something they may be supposed to know, from any of their acquaintances—the many cases in which books alone, or at least any *one* book alone, may fail to help—one can appreciate the boon of having the sympathetic guidance of one of her own sex to appeal to, one before whom she need not dread to blush, for she may never see her correspondent.

The stimulus, too, of knowing that a course of reading has been prescribed for her, that she has to make a monthly report of her progress, that she can obtain all necessary books by the payment of half a cent a day and postage, can perhaps only be appreciated by those who have known the weary dejection of desultory

effort, which the obstacle even of lacking a necessary but unattainable book may suffice to extinguish. Of course I am not thinking now of the eager, ardent student whom obstacles only inspire to renewed effort, though these may well appreciate the privilege, but rather of the girl who would like to study; feels it a duty, yet lacks energy to keep to a prescribed course unencouraged. Without going far into details, a short account of the method and studies may be interesting.

Any lady over seventeen, wishing to join the society, can send for a circular containing the rules and subjects in which she will be assisted.

After she has selected the subject she wishes to study, she pays her fee for the year, three dollars, to cover expenses of postage, office, &c. She then receives a letter from the head of the department, asking a few necessary questions to guide that lady in her selection of a correspondent.

In the usual way no further correspondence takes place between the secretary and the new student, although every month a formal report is received at head-quarters from each lady correspondent, giving items about each of her students, which items are carefully recorded, and can be referred to at any time; meantime the head of the department has sent to the new student the name and address of the lady assigned to her as correspondent, with printed directions for her mode of work.

If she desires it, the first book is sent to her from the Lending Library, and she begins to study, with the practice of making *memory* notes. The student thenceforward is expected to write at the beginning of each month to her adviser, enclosing a specimen of her memory notes. To this monthly letter she receives a prompt reply. From time to time she will be asked to write an abstract, or answer examination questions—on honour, without referring to books—for the simple purpose of fixing the facts in her memory and insuring her progress.

The subjects studied are twenty-four, included in six departments, with sections and sub-sections, of which the following is an abridgment:—

1st Course.—HISTORY, divided into four sections.

- Section 1st.—Ancient.
- „ 2nd.—Medieval.
- „ 3rd.—Modern, beginning with the sixteenth century.
- „ 4th.—American.

2nd Course.—SCIENCE, in three sections.

- Section 1st.—Botany, Zoology.
- „ 2nd.—Physical Geography, Geology, Mineralogy.
- „ 3rd.—Mathematics, Astronomy.

3rd Course.—ART.

- Section 1st.—General.
- „ 2nd.—Ancient Art.
- „ 3rd.—Painting.
- „ 4th.—Architecture.
- „ 5th.—Sculpture.
- „ 6th.—Engraving.

4th Course.—GERMAN LITERATURE.

5th Course.—FRENCH LITERATURE.

6th Course.—ENGLISH LITERATURE, in two sections.

Section 1st.—General.

- A. { 1st Period, Language and Literature before 1550.
- 2nd „ 1550—1688.

B.—3rd Period, 1688—1800.

C.—4th „ Nineteenth Century. English-American.

Section 2nd.—Shakespeare.

A.—History of Dramatic Art and Literature.

B.—Plays of Shakespeare, Commentaries and Critical Study.

Whichever of the above courses the student may choose to study, the best standard books at each stage are prescribed, and if unattainable at home, forwarded at nominal cost. If, as has been said, “knowledge is of two kinds, what we have and what we know where to find,” the mere fact of having the right books in proper sequence pointed out, is of itself an invaluable aid to any student.

I have spoken of the Boston society differing in “an American way” from the English one of the same name, and, although it has not to do with the matter in hand, I would like to say something about that remark.

It is very frequently asserted and believed that in America all classes are equal. Before the law they are so, but socially there are distinctions as in any other country; perhaps it always must be so, and nature is above politics in this. The word “master” is abolished, but the thing exists in much the same way as elsewhere; but, though social lines are tightly drawn, there is among Americans a hearty desire to help the aspiring, of no matter what degree, and to help in such a way that the self-respect of the one aided never suffers. The fact of aspiration seems an appeal, and the American feeling is shown again in the removal of all arbitrary rules (except what the honour of the pupil imposes), conspicuous in the two societies treated in this paper, which is the abstract recognition of the right of individuality, and which gives rise, no doubt, to the fiction that in America social equality reigns. Freedom reigns, but equality reigns only in theory.

Before quitting the subject of this home study society, I must not omit to mention one important feature.

A health tract is sent to each student, inculcating the responsibility of women for the health of the home, and the value of household activity as a balance to intellectual work. It is a reproach thoughtlessly thrown on those interested in the higher education of women that they will be unfitted for home life. The little tract issued by the society emphatically teaches that woman’s first duty is to her home, and that she can perform it better by keeping in health herself. And, as many err from ignorance, the tract gives in a few words so much hygienic information as will enable her to care wisely and well for herself and family; especially does it dwell on that much-neglected and contemned branch of woman’s work, *cooking*. “The provider and the cook are the *life-makers*.” “Women are the house-keepers, they provide and prepare the materials of life; we are in their hands to make us what they can and will, ‘strong or weak, quick-witted or dull and torpid.’” These are some of the wise words addressed by this society for the encouragement of culture to its students.