

You have made my life more pure
 Than it might have been ;
 You have taught me to endure,
 And to strive, and win.
 With your simple songs of praise
 You sanctify our days,
 And our thoughts to heaven you raise
 From a world of sin.

Come, let's quit the dusty town
 With its noise and strife,
 And seek the breezy down
 That with health is rife.
 Work is good and so is play,
 Let us keep our wedding-day
 O'er the hills and far away,
 Happy man and wife.

JOHN GEO. WATTS.

AN OUT-DOOR UNIVERSITY.

BY CATHERINE OWEN.



IF I were asked, after a long residence among them, what I should consider the leading characteristic of the American people, I should say, not as many would expect, money-making, but a love of improvement, a thirst for knowledge, not always perhaps for its own sake, but because they believe knowledge is power—the power to elevate themselves.

Nevertheless, there are, no doubt, very many who love knowledge for its own sake. I think the proportion of young girls who continue to study after their school-days are over is larger in this country than in any other I have been in. By study I do not mean the perfecting of themselves in accomplishments, but the pursuit of favourite branches of education, a continual effort for culture.

This seems to me especially the case with the classes to whom higher education does not come easily—the young men who have craved a college education without means of attaining it; the girls who want to know far more than the average public school-girl learns—and for such as these the home culture societies of America do a great work.

These societies are so characteristic of this country, speak so plainly of its conditions and aspirations, that some account of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, and the Boston Home Culture Society, may interest English people.

Of these two societies, the first-named is by far the larger and more powerful. Its members number sixty thousand persons of all ages and classes, who live in all parts of the Union; and, to quote from one of the many tracts and handbooks published under the auspices of the Chautauqua Society, it aims to be "a school after school—a college for one's own house."

This society grew out of Sunday-school work. Its founders, Mr. Akron Miller and Dr. Vincent, conceived the idea of an annual gathering of Sunday-school teachers at Chautauqua, on Chautauqua Lake. Such as chose to spend their summer vacation there were enabled to pursue a course of systematic study, not only sacred, but secular, which would fit them for their work through the following year.

So encouraging was the success of the idea, so

enthusiastic its promoters, that year by year new branches of study were added, until it became a veritable out-door university. In connection with the course of study, those who made Chautauqua a summer resort found the usual recreation of a lake-side life—boating alternated with lectures, fishing with philosophy; and then there is the added charm of a tent life—tent life for hundreds of pallid city-bred youths and maids, tied from year's end to year's end to desk, or shop, or needle. What inducement could be greater?

Following on this came the plan of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, more commonly abbreviated into the C.L.S.C., and so spoken of by all its members.

This was a plan for a course of reading and home study, covering the principal subjects of the college curriculum, but I cannot do better than make a few quotations from the Chautauquan handbooks:—

"The Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle aims to be a college for the people who have never been permitted to enjoy advanced educational privileges; to promote habits of reading and study in nature, art, science, and in secular and sacred literature, in connection with the routine of daily life."

"It proposes to encourage individual study in lines and by text-books which shall be indicated; by local circles for mutual help and encouragement in such studies; by summer courses of lectures and 'students' sessions' at Chautauqua, and by written reports and examinations."

"It is for busy people who left school years ago, and who desire to pursue some systematic course of instruction."

"It is for high school and college graduates, for people who never entered either high school or college, for merchants, mechanics, apprentices, mothers, busy housekeepers, farmer boys, shop girls, and for people of leisure and wealth who do not know what to do with their time."

The course of study covers a period of four years, and may be accomplished by reading an hour a day during ten months of the year.

Of course, it is not expected that an uneducated person can secure a finished education by merely giving an hour a day to study, but such an amount of time devoted to well-chosen books is an intellectual training which can but make a measure of intelligence and general knowledge very often lacking even in those who have enjoyed liberal educational advantages; while the earnest seeker after knowledge, who will work with zeal and bring to his study the preparation of an ordinary school education, must find in the C.L.S.C. the help and counsel the solitary student craves and needs. This, indeed, seems to be the great advantage of the

C.L.S.C. : that a course of study is prescribed, and the youth who teaches himself is saved the infinite waste of time and labour caused by plodding along in the dark, not knowing, till culture has brought light, the proper sequence, or *how to work*, in fact ; and the knowledge too that he is working with some twenty thousand others towards a definite end brightens his course ; for if he can answer 80 per cent. of the questions in the examination papers, he will graduate and receive a diploma ; and greater than all, if he encounters difficulty's discouragements, he can write to his unseen, unknown tutors, and have his difficulty solved. He can thus count on aid and encouragement at every step.

The course of the C.L.S.C. is so managed that all classes study simultaneously. The studies for the year are portioned out into months "as a suggestion, not a requirement," for the students ; but the subjects are arranged so that all four classes study them during the same year. To quote again :—

"The studies of the year 1881 are the same for all members of the Circle, but constitute the work of the *first* year to one class, of the *second* year to another, and of the *third* year to the class which began in 1878. It is as if a college, seniors, juniors, sophomores, and freshmen, were together in the same text-books, but one class beginning and another ending the curriculum. In a college or school this would not be practicable, since the first year's course is a necessary stepping-stone to the second year's ; but in the C.L.S.C. the work of each year is complete in itself, and does not relate closely either to what has been or what will be studied."

This sounds confusing, but it is said to work well in practice.

The principal feature of the C.L.S.C. idea, however, seems to be to remove the necessity for solitary study by the formation of local centres or circles, and in most cities and towns in the United States such circles exist, sometimes numbering, as in Cleveland, Ohio, three hundred ; at others consisting only of a few members, who meet to discuss their studies, compare notes, and make it also an occasion for social pleasure.

Widespread as I know the C.L.S.C. to be, I was surprised to learn that it numbers several hundred members in Canada, and a few students in England, Japan, and the Sandwich Islands.

But pleasant as may be the plan of study in circles, all referring to, and corresponding with, the chief office, the boon of such help in self-culture must be chiefly felt by those individual students who are far from books, or any library for reference : a hundred miles, perhaps, from any educated person of whom to ask help in solving a difficulty ; and by all who

are eager for knowledge, yet know not where to seek it.

Great as the success of the C.L.S.C. has been, it is in no sense a money-making idea—I mean, it is not remunerative to its principals, as a school or academy would be. The business and correspondence is still carried on in the small country office where it originally began.

I am told every effort is made to keep the course inexpensive, but it was found that even a few dollars per annum for the purchase of books was beyond the reach of some students, and with that kindly thought and respect for the burdens of aspiring poverty which is, I think, characteristically American, many plans were adopted by local circles to overcome the obstacles—a lending library in some cases, and the interchange of one book for another ; but perhaps the measure that most fully meets the difficulty is the publication of a monthly magazine, the *Chautauquan*. It contains many of the required books as serials, and other aids to self-culture, such as some columns devoted to the correct accentuation of the Greek or other names, or unusual words that may occur in the course of study prescribed for the month, and in other ways meeting so far as possible every difficulty likely to arise. How many and discouraging these are, every one who has attempted to teach himself a language or a branch of science can testify.

The fee charged for initiation is 50 cents per annum. This, it must be remembered, is a much smaller sum in this country than the corresponding 2s. 1d. would be in England, because its purchasing power is so much less, and this fee is intended to cover expense of correspondence.

In this short paper I have been able to give but a general idea of the plan of the C.L.S.C. I should add, however, that for those students whose zeal and leisure enable them to go beyond the usual prescribed course of reading, special courses are prepared with great care by competent authorities. For instance, there are special courses in Roman history and literature, Greek history and literature, astronomy, chemistry, &c. There are no arbitrary rules, so far as I can find ; everything seems to be trusted to the honour and good sense of the members. They may avail themselves of the advantages offered, or not. There seem to be no fines, no suspensions, and members can read one year or two, or the whole course. In conclusion, neither sex, creed, age, nor race is regarded.

