

INSTRUCTION BY
CORRESPONDENCE.

NE is so frequently asked by earnest students as well as by the curious and incredulous, "Do you know anything about teaching by correspondence?" "Are correspondence classes really

of any use?" "On what system is instruction by correspondence conducted?" &c., &c., that it has been thought well to say a few words on correspondence teaching. The subject has already become one of general interest, and although a few years since instruction by correspondence would have been looked upon with suspicion and as the Utopian idea of some enthusiast, it has now become a recognised system of education in this country. Every educational paper, either by advertisement or otherwise, brings to the notice of its readers some facts connected with correspondence teaching, and there is scarcely an existing examination for which preparation is not offered by these means.

It must be understood, however, from the first that instruction by correspondence is not suitable to the *very* young; it presupposes a certain amount of knowledge and some power to work alone.

The boys and girls of the present day have much to be thankful for; they have better chances of securing success in life than their parents and grandparents ever had. It is impossible to ignore the advantages to both sexes from the improved methods of education among our great middle classes; but the superior advantage remains with the girls. Boys have always had more or less good chances of being fairly well taught, but it is only of late that girls and women have had any important share in these privileges; hence the enormous disproportion which exists between the cultivated men and the cultivated women of our country.

The object of this article is not, however, to lament over what might have been, or to find fault with our ancestors for not having discovered that girls require as good teaching as boys, but steadily to face an existing evil, and to discover and apply the soundest remedy for it. Few will deny that instruction by correspondence steps in here most opportunely. How many girls there are who, having been provided with the best possible education within their reach during their school days, yet find themselves very badly informed on many subjects with which their younger sisters at school are quite conversant! How many of these would gladly fill up the spare hours of the day, or contrive to arrange some time to work themselves and make up for defective teaching, if they only knew *how* to work, what books to work at, what are the special things to notice, &c., if they could depend upon the guidance, sympathy, and hearty co-operation of a well regulated and cultivated mind! Many a one has given up in despair, and with very much regret, a useful and pleasant study from sheer inability to work entirely alone, and wishing most strongly there were some means of getting help. These thoughts are not always expressed, but many a heart will respond to our suggestion. Happily this kind is passing away, the evil has found a remedy; only, unfortunately, all those who would benefit by it have not yet realised, even if they have heard of, its existence. This article is written with the conviction that correspondence classes are of the utmost

value from many points of view, a conviction in which apparently many persons share, otherwise how can one account for their continuous extension, for the recognition they receive from students and teachers of such a variety of subjects, and from their establishment in connection with our universities? Let us examine somewhat the origin and nature of this mode of instruction.

It cannot be doubted that the idea of teaching by correspondence has arisen from the enormous extension of examinations, more especially from the examinations connected with our universities, but outside the universities themselves—those that are known as the Oxford and Cambridge Local Examinations. Candidates for both the junior and senior examinations are generally either at school or under regular home instruction; but then the higher examinations open to both sexes above the age of eighteen years can seldom be said to apply to pupils under regular instruction. As a matter of fact, a large number of candidates presenting themselves for these examinations are either teaching or preparing to become teachers. It is almost an essential now in every good school that the teachers shall give proof of their own culture by the possession of some university degree or certificate.

London, Cambridge, Oxford, St. Andrew's, Edinburgh, and Dublin have each put forth their own schemes for the examination of women; and the certificates of each university have a monetary value, hence the desire to obtain them, and the growing need of preparatory work among those who are no longer schoolgirls.

This will also account for the general close connection between the idea of correspondence classes and examinations. Successful examinations require not only the possession of a certain amount of exact knowledge, but also the power of giving out that information in a definite time and the art of expressing one's self in the most clear and concise manner. Now one sees the advantage of regular and methodical work, of forming the habits of writing, in a given time, exact, full, and clearly expressed answers to given questions—a habit which can only be acquired in the majority of cases by continued practice. Let us see what this implies: of course, some general knowledge to begin with; then much attentive reading, some thought, some power to condense, some power to reproduce, &c. Each separate act here means so much time devoted to work, and in the case of those already engaged in teaching this is a great consideration, hence saving of time becomes an important item. Again our correspondence teaching steps in with help. The line of thought is planned for the student, the subject for reading is fixed; it may be sometimes the books, may the very pages in the book which requires reading may be noted down; the time probably to be devoted to the paper, if not actually spoken of to the student, has been so carefully thought over by the teacher that it fits in with that which will be given at the time of examination, and the questions on the subject of study with which the student is provided are so concise, so searching, so pointed that it is impossible to miss the great points to be remembered. The reading for the paper, the writing the paper, the reading of the paper after the teacher has read it and commented on it, perhaps started subjects for reflection on it, can scarcely have failed to produce even on those of medium attainments some lasting benefit.

Special attention has here been given to this system as a method of preparation for examination, because this really is one of its chief uses in the present day, and in the majority of advertisements in connection with

classes one finds such statements as "Pupils have been placed in the 1st and 2nd B.A., and in the honour list of the matriculation," "Most of the students obtained good places in the class-list last year," &c. But examinations are not the end-all and be-all of life; though they have their advantages, they have also their drawbacks; and correspondence teaching must aim at a more liberal and less exclusive work than that of preparing for examinations only.

Let us turn our attention at present to those who, from want of means, delicate health, or other circumstances, are unable to avail themselves of good teaching at classes held at universities, colleges, &c., as well as to those who live in secluded country districts, and are altogether beyond the reach of such lectures. These are the people to whom correspondence teaching supplies a real want. When Mahomet called the mountain to him in vain, his remark to his followers was, "Well, if the mountain will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet must go to the mountain." We fancy we hear someone remark, "Well, it does seem extraordinary, but we do see that it is true. We are unable to go to the university for teaching, but the university teaching can come to us." An article in THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER spoke of the Cambridge professors who teach by correspondence only a short time since.

Country life, too, gives so much more time than town life for carrying on systematic study, especially during the winter months, and it is generally from October to May that the classes work, corresponding with the University term time. Now there seems to be absolutely no reason why every girl should not follow out during the winter some special study. What benefits to herself would not accrue from the steady, continued study of, say, a period of history, the chief works of some authors, either English or foreign, or a natural science? With the help of questions on prepared work, directions as to books, solutions of difficulties, &c., &c., how pleasant and profitable the study may become! *Exactness* of knowledge, and the power to express one's own thoughts in good language, are certainly not the least valuable results arising from such a study.

To those who are not very strong correspondence teaching must be a great boon. One can select one's own time for working—the hours of the day, and days of the week; it seldom happens that papers are sent more frequently than twice in a month, sometimes only once, therefore there need be no pressure or over anxiety.

Then, as to the variety of subjects which may be thoroughly grasped by an industrious and intelligent student; they are so numerous that it would be almost impossible to make an exhaustive list, while of the few subjects for which one feels that other teaching is necessary, so much may be accomplished by correspondence that a few practical lessons from a good teacher will cause difficulties to vanish as by magic.

So far we have dealt chiefly with the practicality and desirability of this method of teaching—a method which we, the most eminently practical people, see to be extending on all sides of us; but to secure success there must be hearty co-operation in the work of teacher and student. Correspondence teachers may be able to do a great deal, may know a great deal, but they cannot work magic, and no student must expect to pass an examination by joining a class a month or two before the examination, or by giving the barest possible answers to the teacher's questions, and expecting knowledge to flow in because a university professor sends questions. Everybody knows that there is no royal road to learning, but whatever is worth

doing at all is worth doing well, and though everything in the beginning is hard, yet patience and perseverance will overcome great difficulties, and no one can fail in any good work who does it heartily. "As much as you can do, as well as you can do it," is the utmost that can be asked of any of us. Now let us try to sum up some good reasons why correspondence teaching may be recommended.

1. Because our education must continue as long as we live, and after a certain period of school life we must teach ourselves for the most part.

2. Because, however much we may desire to teach ourselves, we shall work much better, that is, with more profit to ourselves and with less waste of time, by putting ourselves under the guidance of a good teacher.

3. Because we are not likely to know all the best books on the subject we wish to study, or the special parts of certain books which require the most careful reading.

4. Because we may prepare ourselves for the examinations for women which are held in connection with most universities now, and so obtain certificates which are valuable in every case, but particularly useful if we are teaching or wish to become teachers.

5. Because of the real benefits to be derived from the discipline of a regular and systematic course of study—a far more valuable result even than the getting of a certificate.

6. Because we can work for our correspondence teacher without infringing in the least on our household duties.

7. Because the habit of expressing one's-self in the best and most concise way, though always admired, is not easily acquired without practice.

8. Because though we may be living in a most retired and secluded district, we can by this means avail ourselves of an advantage almost, if not quite, equal to that of being able to attend the university lectures.

Self-improvement then is the great object which correspondence teaching chiefly aims at; let us use it as a stepping-stone to obtain that which is *best*.
J. P. M.

WOOL CROCHET.

COTTON crochet answers very well for ornamental purposes, but wool crochet is preferred by the weak-sighted and the real matter-of-fact worker. With wool the steel hook is replaced by a long bone or wooden one, sometimes tipped with a knob, but of that more anon. As to the stitches, we may divide them into two great classes: those similar to the stitches employed in ordinary crochet, and special stitches which vary very much. With the first kind articles are made such as shawls, square and half square, comforters, cuffs, hoods, and dolly's smart dresses, &c. Not very long ago I was surprised, whilst in a large linendraper's, to watch the ready sale of little socks in open square crochet, sold at the trifling price of 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pair. I at once closed with such a bargain, and handed over my purchase to a poor woman, who has since told me how useful were the new socks to her baby—the very thing for the summer; so light and airy; and the best of all, too, they washed and dried in no time, without shrinking.

However, among all the plain stitches the triangular treble is decidedly the favourite, and with it almost any article can be shaped. To work it, you may either crochet in straight rows, in slanting ones, or in a square, starting from a centre hole and setting the corners by working two groups of trebles into one stitch. In the same way shape also the point of a half square shawl.

The slantwise method being, perhaps, the least familiar, I have chosen this for the first illustration.

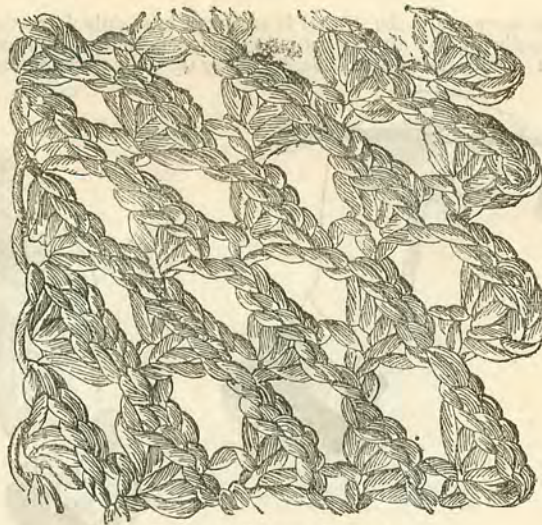


FIG. 1.—SHAWL STITCH.

A glance at it will show you that the triangular stitch is made up of doubles instead of trebles, and that the groups are worked between each other and separated by one chain. Commence by a single group, increase at every row until you have the required width across, then decrease in the same proportion till there is but one group again, thus forming the square. At the end of every row make one chain to serve as the foundation-stitch for the group worked into it above. Continue one chain, three doubles, into the next separating chain beneath; crochet back by a row of single to the point whence you first started, and make one chain to commence the next. This row of single crochet, by doubling the line at the top of the groups, adds great strength to the work, and renders it very suitable for a sofa blanket.

I will now explain to you quite a different mode of making this stitch, which perhaps you will find quicker. Crochet a chain of twenty-five; this will give you the depth of a nice border. 1st Row.—Raise all the loops, as in crochet *tricoté*. 2nd Row.*—Draw the needle through five of the loops at once, make five chain; repeat from * four times. The line finishes by five loops taken together; add five chain to replace the five stitches pulled into one at the commencement. Thus you form the bias. 3rd Row.—Raise twenty-five loops, like in 1st row; repeat 2nd row, and so on.

Another way of reproducing open and dense

crochet is shown in fig. 2, where balls alternate with holes, giving the effect of raised square crochet.

To make the balls, proceed thus: crochet a foundation chain with any even number of stitches, turn and, missing four, twist the wool round the needle and pierce it into the fifth; draw the wool through, twist it over, and draw through again; twist and draw through for the third time, leaving seven loops on the needle; bring the wool through all these at once, and set the ball by one chain, another chain to separate the balls, then begin the next one.

Balls are still more effective on opaque surfaces, such as the one given in fig. 3.

For this make one row of double crochet, break off the wool and commence again for the first line; * five double crochet into the sixth; work one treble, three long trebles (winding the wool twice round the needle), one treble; repeat from *. You have now a row of spaced scallops, each separated by five double crochet. Break off the wool again, and in the second

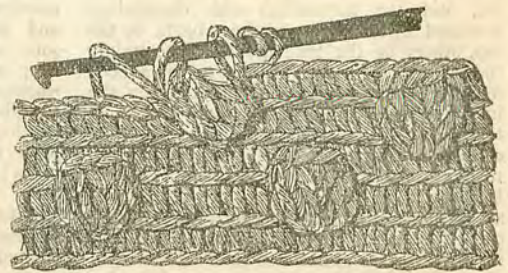


FIG. 3.—SPOTTED CROCHET.

row set the scallops into balls thus: make double crochet until the first one is reached, then take the first and last chain of the scallop on the hook, and draw the wool tightly through these as well as the loop on the needle; the scallop then doubles into a clump or ball. Five more double crochet; set the next scallop in the same way, and so on to the end. In the third and every alternate row work a scallop into the centre stitch of the intervening five chain. A closer and richer-raised work is obtained by making balls at every fourth instead of every sixth stitch; this is the kind adopted for reproducing the diamond and other designs on squares or stripes for quilts, sofa and carriage blankets, bassinette covers, borders for vests, hoods, babies' and ladies' boots, &c.

This kind of crochet is sometimes called ribbed crochet, but the real ribbed, or Russian, is more furrowed and alike on both sides. It is worked like double crochet, pricking the hook each time in the back of the chain—*i.e.*, the part which rests on the forefinger of the left hand whilst holding the work. Each row is turned with one chain to avoid losing a stitch, and this change of sides causes a ridge and a hollow at every pair of rows. Indeed, ribbed crochet is a capital stitch for every

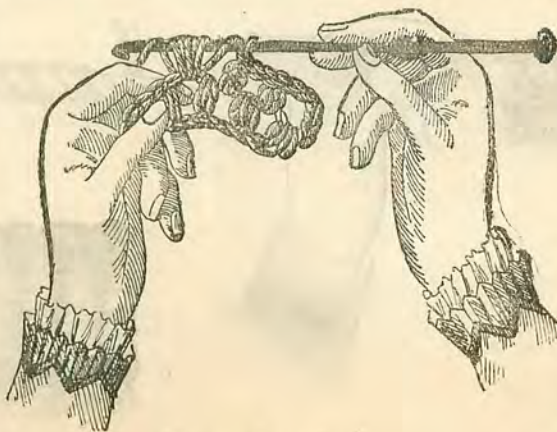


FIG. 2.—BALL CROCHET.