

their own circle, or in the greater world outside them, or any facts which in the course of their daily work or recreation may have left any impression on their minds. To elder boys and girls some incident in history or biography should be given, which they should reproduce in their own language. This exercise of original composition will gradually impart the power of writing good, forcible, idiomatic English, which is a faculty necessary for both sexes. Young persons will thus, instinctively and almost without knowing the exact reason why, avoid solecisms and select the expression which is appropriate in each particular case. Again some people, as we know, have a peculiar difficulty in spelling. Rules do not seem to help them, but the remedy will generally be found in reading. The eye becomes accustomed to the right form, and the writer adopts it without hesitation. As M. Jourdain, in the immortal play, talked prose without knowing it, so many people almost unconsciously write choice English, and speak with perfect grammatical correctness; but these people have read much, and have learned to express themselves on paper. It is also a good plan to give the young a small portion of classical English prose to learn by heart, especially before they are going to compose. The ear becomes accustomed to the proper construction of sentences, and the selection of fitting verbs and epithets. Competent English teachers will derive much personal interest from the correction of the exercises of their pupils, and may rest assured that no part of their labour is more important in the present day than teaching those under their charge to speak and write thoroughly correct and, I may add, where it is possible, genuinely Saxon English.

I am, yours truly,

SYNTAX.

LITERARY DEPARTMENT.

Those who take an interest in such matters always look forward to the able reviews of Continental Literature, given by *The Athenæum* at the close of the year. A summary of these will be interesting. The year of 1880 seems, on the whole, to have been poor, the correspondents from Denmark and Hungary making special complaint. Portugal has, we are told, been very prolific, but this is partly accounted for by the Tercentenary of Camoens celebrated upon July 10th. Somewhat similar was the Pushkin festival held at Moscow in June, and the celebration of the Belgian *cinquantenaire*, which gave an impulse to both French and Flemish literature in that country. But while a good deal of writing of a popular nature was done in Spain, the work that falls within the domain of the fancy and imagination has been decidedly meagre both here, in France and in Holland. The German correspondent complains that no really great historical work has been done and is not enthusiastic about any branch of letters. Philosophy, it seems, of a Pessimistic town has pauperized the imagination this year. This complaint is specially