

The complaint, we know, is nothing new, nor are teachers generally unaware of the defect which gives occasion to it. Some of them have conscientiously endeavoured to grapple with the difficulty, and various plans have been tried for that purpose. Of most of these we have only heard, so that we cannot speak from experience of their success. But there is one method which we have had the pleasure of witnessing in operation, and which seems to be admirably adapted for the end in view. We refer to the system introduced a few years ago into Mrs. Lovell's "Young Ladies' Institute" [Montreal], and which has already yielded such excellent results. Its basis is the constant direction of training and study to preparation for the actual duties of life and society. The pupil's powers of thought having been exercised by reading and reflection, she is encouraged to express her own ideas in conversation. From time to time discussions are engaged in on matters connected with literature, history, art and the events of the day and, with every fresh effort, new confidence is won and a higher degree of excellence attained. Those of our readers who have been present at any of Mrs. Lovell's *conversazioni* cannot fail to have been surprised and pleased at the happy result of her training. It shews that the "Art of Conversation" can be really taught and made an unflinching auxiliary to instruction in all other branches. It is at once a stimulant to mental application and a test of progress, while it imparts to arduous duties an animation and a satisfaction which rarely accompany isolated study.

As we said, we can only write from personal knowledge of this single instance of an attempt to make school studies of practical value in social intercourse. Living in a large city, surrounded by persons of culture and refinement, several of whom were glad to second her efforts, Mrs. Lovell was able to

surmount some difficulties which, in other circumstances, might have proved a barrier to success. But even with these advantages no teacher need be told that the task was not an easy one. It is an undertaking which demands rare gifts, moral as well as mental. Besides those varied qualifications, without which it would be vain to hope for success, it requires patience, insight and the power of drawing out what is best in character and intellect. Such being the nature of the work, it is an interesting question whether the system could be beneficially adopted in ordinary schools. First of all, it would be necessary to make some modifications in the training of the teachers themselves. For, hitherto, in the course pursued, there has been little opportunity for the development of those powers on whose right exercise success would mainly depend. In fact, expression, as the co-efficient of knowledge, has been sadly neglected up to the present in English education. Elocution, though quite necessary, is a different thing. Debates, of the more public kind, are mostly monopolized by gentlemen, and, besides, skill in debate does not necessarily imply skill in conversation. The latter is a domestic and social art, and calls for a manner, a tone of voice, a logic and rhetoric which are quite alien to the public platform or club-room. Its culture, however, is no less necessary, but rather, as it serves the interests of a larger number, it is of much greater importance. That all educationists will eventually come not only to look at the matter from this standpoint, but to make "oral composition" one of their prominent studies, we have some reason to hope. If those who stand at the head of the profession lead the way, the rest will ultimately follow, and meanwhile it is something to know that one lady has made the experiment with success, and proved the practicability of the system.—*Montreal Gazette*.