

STUDY AND STUDIO.

A WOULD-BE CHRISTIAN.—We feel very deep sympathy with you in your difficulties and trials. By all means persevere, and fight against the feelings of depression that are so natural in your circumstances. Your very troubles may, and doubtless will, be made the means of purifying and strengthening your character. We are glad that the "Talks in the Twilight" have proved so helpful to you. Without knowing a little more about you we could scarcely answer your question as to confirmation. Could you not consult your clergyman? Certainly you may write to us again, and if you like to put your troubles into definite words we will do our best to advise and comfort you.

G. H.—You should remember the advice which Matthew Arnold gave to a lady, never to pass a day without reading *something*. Even half an hour, well spent, will suffice to keep the flame of intellectual interest alive. From your excellent handwriting and clear way of expressing yourself we are sure that you would quickly improve. We should advise you to procure French and German reading books and go through them by the help of a dictionary. The text-books for the Oxford and Cambridge local examinations are the best, as they are usually published with notes, etc., and you could ascertain what these are for the current year by inquiry of J. N. Keynes, D.Sc., Syndicate Buildings, Cambridge; or, H. I. Gerrans, Esq., Clarendon Buildings, Oxford; at any shop where educational books are sold, or at a good school. We are glad you are fond of reading the ancient Greek legends, and should advise you to read Kingsley's *Hercules*, or Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Tanglewood Tales*, also Butcher and Lang's translation of Homer's *Odyssey*. Would you like to join the National Home Reading Union, Surrey House, Victoria Embankment? A book we have occasionally recommended here, *What Shall I Read*, by Lily Watson, would help you. We wish you all success.

GERTRUDE.—1. Charles Dickens had ten children, seven sons and three daughters. None, so far as we know, have attained literary distinction except the eldest daughter, Mary Angela Dickens. —2. The specimen of writing you enclose is very good indeed. You do not mention the little boy's age.

PANSY.—Send a note to the publishers of "The King's Daughter," enclosing a post card for reply, asking which book is the sequel to it, and you will probably get an answer by return of post.

A NEW READER.—1. We have written to B. M.'s publishers for her actual name, but have received no reply, which, from the terms of our letter, is equivalent to a statement that the name is not for publication. Even in Frances Ridley Havergal's *Life*, this authoress (her friend) is addressed and spoken of only as "B. M." The book *Eschiel and other Poems* by B. M. can still be procured, net price, 2s. 7d. —2. We have inquired for your recitation elsewhere.

GERTR.—1. Whether you could ever attain any degree of proficiency in playing the pianoforte after the age of twenty-one depends entirely on the amount of previous teaching and practice you have had. As you began at the age of nine and are anxious to resume the study, we should strongly advise you to take some lessons; you would soon see what progress you were likely to make, and whether it were worth while to go on working. Of course many people much older than yourself take pianoforte lessons, and profit by them, though we should consider twenty as a rule too late an age for any one who had never touched the piano, to begin. —2. Your writing is rather cramped, both letters and words being too close together; it is also too pointed. You would improve if you selected some good copies of "running-hand" and practised writing for a short time daily.

M. P. (Runcorn).—We never undertake to answer letters by post, so are afraid our reply will be of little use. Consult this column for amateur reading societies; *e.g.*, apply to the "Queen" Reading Club, Miss Isabella E. Kent, Lat. Rectory, Little Abington, Cambridge, or to Miss E. L. Langye, the Elms, Redruth, Cornwall. We frequently recommend The National Home Reading Union, Surrey House, Victoria Embankment, London.

RETSIE.—Capital! It is very pleasant and unusual for us to be able to give warm praise twice consecutively. Your story is fresh and touching, and well constructed. You need, as you say, to study your technique. There are occasional errors in composition, but these would be rectified by study. You should get Dr. Abbott's little book *How to Write Clearly*. By all means persevere.

MARIANNE (Franco).—Your story in its substance is far above the average of those we receive for criticism. It is very charming and graphically narrated. There are a few errors in expression which greater familiarity with the English language would prevent, *e.g.*, "in midst" instead of "in the midst," etc. But these are trivial blemishes, and we can honestly congratulate you on your work. We doubt whether there are many of our English readers who could write so good a French story.

CHARLOTTE DE STANCY.—You choose rather melancholy subjects for your verses. At the age of sixteen your thoughts should not be occupied with autumn and bereavement. "On the Death of my first Love" is irregular in metre, and incorrect in rhyme so far as the last verse is concerned. Your letter is modest, but we can never answer a question as quickly as you suggest, because we go to press long before you receive your magazine.

MISCELLANEOUS.

ADA.—Of course you will marry him, but he must use the name by which he was registered, not only because it is right but because legal difficulties might arise in the future as to his identity. For instance, if money were left him it would be difficult for him to claim it. Of course he can change his surname by advertising in the papers, which we understand would be sufficient proof of identity.

READER SINCE '82.—We are sorry to say that you are still legally bound.

A LOVER OF THE "G. O. P."—Gardening is capital work for the health. Different plants need different soil, but you should read Robinson's *English Flower Garden*, a most useful and delightful book. **PORRY SABLE.**—The specimen of lace enclosed has no special value.

MAIDENHAIR.—Persian cats are more delicate than others and need care in the winter. A little meat, cut up very small, once a day would do them no harm. When washed, roll yours in an old shawl or piece of flannel, and let her get thoroughly dry by the fire. The long hair will need occasional cleaning, especially if you reside in London or any manufacturing locality.

IVY-LEAF.—1. We do not know of any home forecaxty the kind of invalid you describe. But you might get her into St. Luke's Hospital, Old Street, London, E.C., at from 14s. to 30s. a week. In any case, we recommend you to inquire there, stating the nature of the case. Should the invalid prove eligible you had better visit the hospital and see what sort of accommodation she would get for either of these payments. Otherwise, you might make a private arrangement to have her boarded and attended in some respectable house where you could visit her and see that she is properly fed and cared for. —2. You should state the quality and compass of your voice at one of the large Music Publishing Companies in London, and they will supply you with the studies for its training suitable for it. What would be desirable for a strong voice and large compass would overstrain and destroy a feeble one, and what would suit a soprano would be quite the reverse for a contralto.

RAFFLING.—Whatever may be considered to be of the nature of gambling is to be avoided. This is what was intimated by the writer of the story to which you refer.

EXCELSIOR.—The fanciful meanings attached to flowers and shrubs date back to very long before travelling in the high Alps became common, and their flora familiar. Thus it is not surprising that any flowers native to those, at one time inaccessible, altitudes should not have been included in the list supplied in the little books dealing with the "Language of Flowers." The giving of a language to flowers originated in the East, and La Mottraie (the companion of Charles XII.) introduced the pretty idea into Europe. Eastern women used to send a letter expressed by means of a bouquet, according to Lady Mary W. Montague. But it was almost formed as we have it by Aimé Martin; and English writers have much altered the original definitions, and enlarged the list.

SIPPY-SILLY.—At all libraries you will find a copy of Burke's Peerage. Back vols. may be found at second-hand book-shops and stalls. A note written direct to the Publishing Office, 50, Pall Mall, Messrs. Harrison, would obtain an answer as to the date of the first edition issued; and perhaps you could obtain an old copy there at a reasonable price.

HUMBER K. C.—A "60 gear," or even less, would be advisable. Should she learn to mount by standing on the off pedal before seating herself, she will then be able to have her saddle raised high enough to suit her when riding. The Dunlop road-racing tyres are very good; a little narrower than roadster tyres; and they are rather more apt to catch in tram-lines.

