I was so extravagant as to expend ninepence. One was an odd volume of the writings of Dean Swift. The other contained the essays of Lord Bacon. It is many years since I had either of these volumes in my hand, but, at one time, they were hardly ever out of my hands. I carried them in my pocket, and at all times, under hedges, and in lone lanes, I read, and re-read them ; till my mind was saturated with their contents. And hardly a day passes in which I do not feel their power.

Thus much of the feasibility of self education, and of its quality. It is not however to be denied that the solitary student labors under some disadvantages, disadvantages which it is the object of such associations as ours in some degree to remove. The solitary student has not the stimulus which carries him along who forms one of the many congregated at a great intellectual centre. To use a metaphor of modern date, it is a harder thing for him to " get up the steam." The dryness of intellectual effort is not felt when we daily meet, and converse with those who have a keen interest in our own pursuits. It is pleasant to follow out and easy to remember our studies, when these form the subjects for earnest thinking and the topics for eager talk with our daily acquaintance. A very high place amongst educational influences must ever be occupied by attrition of thought and collision of mind. There are excitements of intellectual activity, and corrective of its vagaries, which we must procure for ourselves as best we may. And even without them we need not despair, where there is a will there will always be found a way. They are stimulants and correctives, but the solid work must still be done within us. If our thought is to be of any value, we must acquire and beget a self sustained and independent capacity for elaborating thought within the recesses of our own minds. And after all, too much reliance may be placed upon external aids and excitements. " Conversation " ; says one,* (who was himself a conspicuous example of informa-

* Gibbon.