

EVENINGS AT HOME.

AMERICAN "NOTIONS" AT HOME.

THERE are few towns of any size in the United States in which what is called a "Notion Store" is not found. There is not a bazaar, or a hardware, or a stationer's, or a turner's shop, or any other of a distinctive character, that does not include among its miscellaneous wares an astonishing number of useful devices and patented inventions of a small and exceedingly cheap description, generally classed as "Yankee notions." Should you chance to admire some wonderful little contrivance, from a glove fastener to a patent automatic pudding-maker, your friend will say, "You can get one at the notion store." It is not, however, these commodities I am now going to describe, but some ingenious devices in the way of fancy work done by feminine fingers at home.

There were brought to a house where I was staying some six weeks before Christmas a number of little wall mirrors of various sizes, all well finished and with beautiful bevelled glass, but all in perfectly plain, broad, flat frames, one white, another ebony, a third of maple, and so on. I rather wondered at the tasteless, heavy frames, and for what purpose such mirrors could be intended, but thought nothing more of them until some days afterwards, when I found the daughter of the house at her easel surrounded by the identical mirrors, on whose frames she was busy, and where were bursting into blossom tasteful sprays of flowers. She had sketched in all her subjects, and nearly finished one of them, the black frame, now brilliant with scarlet poppies and white clematis. She had chosen her subjects to suit the colour of the frame—on one clustering convolvuli, on another roses and a lovely trailing vine. The sprays did not extend all round like a stiff wreath, but were massed in one corner, trailing in a natural way along two sides and, here and there, even on to the glass, where a bud or leaf broke the stiff outline, and where a flower, half on the frame, half on the glass, produced the prettiest effect possible. She borrowed her ideas from anywhere—a china vase, a Christmas card, arranging the sprays to suit her purpose, and, if we must not too closely criticise the finish of this rapid oil painting, the general effect was excellent, and the work good enough for the purpose. All girls aspire to paint in oils, which they use from the very first drawing lesson. A girl just in her teens came home one day laden with a number of wooden bowls, from the size of a teacup to one foot in diameter, which, as soon as her back was turned, were relegated to the kitchen. "Where are my bowls?" cried Nessie in tribulation, when she came back and missed them. "We thought mamma had ordered them for the kitchen," explained an elder sister. Why, no; I'm going to paint them," protested the girl; and forthwith they were carried off to the drawing school, to reappear in due time—and a very short time it was—completely covered with paint. In the largest was a landscape with a sunset reflected in a very opaque lake. In another sat a bird on a spray. In a third fluttered a butterfly over a flower, and the toilet table or the library would now find uses for the transmogrified bowls. The numbers of "notions" Nessie would bring home and lavish her paints upon regardless of cost, was a daily surprise. Little fringed fans, horse-shoes and plaques in cardboard pallettes in imitation of ivory to "decorate in oils," and bits of pottery. Anything that could be placed or hung up, or pinned up somewhere found scope for her painting craze.

But another "notion," which is, I believe, peculiarly American, is the "crazy quilt." There are some among us who can remember the astonishing array of patchwork quilts which covered the walls of the United States section of the first great International Exhibition. Until then, no one dreamed of a patchwork quilt being a work of art. But the "crazy quilt" is a new development keeping pace with the luxury of the age. It is composed of small scraps of rich materials of any and every unsymmetrical shape, and from two to five or six inches long or broad; and the art is to arrange and fit together these numerous scraps of curves and angles, and so to oppose or blend the colours as to produce a generally brilliant and harmonious effect. The smallest pieces of silk, satin or velvet are available, and the more irregular they are the better the effect under skilful treatment; if these are fitted and sewn on the wrong side, the nicest work is required. An easier though more laborious method is to lay the pieces upon a foundation of some soft and sufficiently strong material, then tacking the overlapping raw edges. You can better watch the effect this way, only, when every piece is tacked, the joins are to be covered with chain stitch or button-hole stitch in embroidery silk. You can then vary the colours of the chain stitch, and supply a warm or a neutral tint where needed. By the way, it is said that the idea is to a certain extent Oriental, some Japanese picture, in which was a sort of "crazy," tessellated pavement composed of odd fragments, having suggested it. A large undertaking, requiring much time and patience, is a quilt of this kind; but for cushions and smaller articles the work is equally suitable. These are a few of the American notions at home.—*The Queen*.

THE story goes that a certain Anglo-Saxon entered into a Parisian restaurant with intent to eat, drink, and be merry. Wishing to inform the waiter of his hunger he said, "J'ai une femme!" to which the polite but astonished waiter naturally responded, "J'espère que madame se porte bien?" Whereupon the Anglo-Saxon makes a second attempt at the French for hunger, and asserts, "Je suis fameux!" to which the waiter's obvious reply is, "Je suis bien aise de le savoir, monsieur!" Then the Anglo-Saxon girded up his loins, and made a final effort, and declared, "Je suis femme!" to which the waiter could answer only, "Alors madame s'habille d'une façon très-étrange." After which the Anglo-Saxon fled, and was seen no more.

THE PERIODICALS.

WE have received the first number of *The Art Union*, the organ of the newly established American Art Union, which, during the few months that have elapsed since its organization, has already done so much for artists and the fine arts in America. Incorporated May 11th 1883, the society has held two exhibitions, and has disposed of American pictures to the value of \$17,000. The periodical before us, to which we extend our heartiest welcome, will commend itself to all art-lovers. This issue comes accompanied by an etching by Farrer, very broadly and effectively treated. To subscribers to the *Union* will be given a proof on India paper of Walter Sherlaw's large etching, from Eastman Johnson's painting, "The Repri-mand."

ST. NICHOLAS for February opens with one of Mr. Elbridge Kingsley's exquisite wood-cuts engraved from nature. It is called "A Midwinter Night." An article by Mr. W. L. Fraser entitled "An Engraver on Wheels," tells about Mr. Kingsley and his novel methods of work. The second of Miss Alcott's spinning-wheel stories is a delightful one, with the title "Tabby's Table Cloth." No. 14 of Clara Erskine Clement's readable and valuable "Stories of Art and Artists" deals with Albert Dürer, and is very finely illustrated. Mr. W. O. Stoddard continues his story "Winter Fun," and Mayne Reid's "The Land of Fire" grows more and more absorbing. There are poems by the venerable poet Christopher P. Cranch and by E. Vinton Blake. Of course there are also valentines, the best of which—and it is exceedingly good—being that by R. T., entitled "To My Valentine, Aged One." A good story for girls is Margaret Sidney's "Griselda's New Year's Reception." One of those interesting and practical papers for which this magazine is noted is "Pigmy Trees and Miniature Landscapes," by Mr. John R. Congell. E. S. Brooks contributes No. I. of a series on "Historic Boys," the subject of this sketch being Marcus, the boy magistrate, who afterwards became the Emperor Marcus Aurelius.

BOOK NOTICES.

THE REPORT OF THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION FOR 1883.

PARLIAMENTARY Blue Books, as a rule, can hardly be termed "light reading"; but the Annual Report of the Minister of Education ought to be an important study to those who follow the administration of education in Ontario, with interest in the work of the schools rather than with interest in education as a political question. It is to be regretted that a report so valuable to the public and to the teaching profession should contain no later statistics than those appertaining to the year 1882. Surely the statistics of 1883 might be compiled and presented fresh to the House within six weeks of the following year. But with the statistics we do not propose here at any length to deal, so we shall not dwell on the staleness of the Departmental returns; nor have we occasion at present to comment on what used to be the stock-criticism on this report, that though compiled and printed, the wont was to hold it back from the public until, in the evolution of official etiquette, the legislature was called together, the state ceremonies had been gone through with, and the House had settled down to its normal condition of dull decorum.

For a moment, however, let us look at those statistics in which the public are presumably concerned, as they affect either the pockets of the taxpayer, or have an influence, more or less direct, on the efficiency of the Provincial educational system. And first, let us call attention to the relative cost of the education of the pupil in the Public and in the High Schools, and to the expense to the Province of the teacher-in-training at the County Model and Normal Schools. In the Public Schools the cost per pupil, averaging the whole expense of the educational machine in the rural districts, cities, and towns, is \$6.42: in the High Schools and Collegiate Institutes it is \$27.56—a contrast sharp enough to incite the disbeliever in higher education to rebellion. The cost of the professional training in the Normal Schools, so far as we can make out from the report, is in the neighbourhood of \$50 per pupil, an amount, it is to be feared, far higher than the character of the work and service rendered is worth.

In connection with this matter of the training of teachers one point is here worthy of note, viz.: the disproportionate number of third-class certificate holders, whose interest in their work is either very slight, or their desire for increased pay, which the possessor of a higher grade certificate can always secure, is undeveloped. The number teaching under new County Board third-class certificates is 3471; the number teaching under Provincial certificates of the second-class is 2169; the number holding a first-class certificate is only 246. Of the character of the work done in the schools, served by this large contingent of third-class certificate teachers, the intelligent reader is in a position to judge for himself. We are accustomed to beat the big drum of glorification over the achievements of our much vaunted educational system. In presence of the fact we have mentioned we have need to be more modest.

The salaries paid to our teachers in recent years, it is pleasing on the other hand to state, are on the increase, though the average on the whole is still low. Male teachers in counties, receive \$385 per annum; female teachers, \$248: in cities, the former receive \$742, the latter, \$331: in towns the former receive \$576, and the latter \$273. In this wealthy Province, it is not creditable that the rewards of educational service are such as the figures denote. In many establishments the uncertificated cook is better paid.

A gratifying fact is noted in the Blue Book, in the improved condition