

Brussels, but we may be sure that the satire is aimed at the Paris drawing-rooms. It is a burlesque advertisement, the authorship of which he attributes to one of his literary friends:—

"A gentleman who is at present in Brussels and whose name is Baron Frederick d'A—, has the honour to inform the public that, being endowed with very distinguished conversational talents, reinforced by a course of solid study (a practice becoming more and more rare), and having gathered in his various travels a fund of instructive and interesting observations he now places his time at the disposal of those gentlemen and ladies who receive at their own houses, as well as of such persons as are tired of finding no one pleasant to converse with.

"Baron F. d'A— undertakes conversation both abroad and at home. His apartments, open to subscribers twice a-day are the rendez-vous of a select circle (twenty-five francs per month). Three hours of each morning are devoted to a *causerie*, instructive, but at the same agreeable. Novels, literary and artistic subjects, observations on the manners of the day in which the prevailing tone is a piquancy which has no bitterness, with polished discussions on various subjects, politics being rigidly excluded, form the staple of entertainment for the evenings.

"His terms for conversation parties at the houses of his patrons are at the rate of ten francs the hour. The baron cannot accept more than three invitations to dinner in the week, at twenty francs. (This does not include the evening party.) The spirit and brilliancy of his conversation is graduated according to the liberality of the entertainment. (Puns and witticisms are the subject of special arrangements.)

"Baron F. d'A— undertakes to supply professional talkers, in correct costume, to keep up and vary the conversation, in cases where his employers do not choose themselves to be at the trouble of replies, observations or rejoinders. In the same way he can offer them as friends to strangers or to individuals who are but little known in society." (1)

The professional diner out has become a rarer character in England since dinners have been put off to such a very late hour that there is really little time for conversation at all, and the talk, such as it is, is confined to a few remarks made to the neighbours next to whom chance or the providence of the hostess may have placed you. We have almost come to need the caution which the lamented Miss Jenkins of Cranford so earnestly impressed upon her young friend at a morning call—never to start any subject of sufficient interest to risk its over-lasting the ten minutes.

No wonder that, as a rule, women are the best talkers. There is no need to account for the fact by the uncourteous explanation that they have most of the small change while men hold the weightier and more valuable coinage. The truth is, we can most of us talk, if we are pleased ourselves, and sure of a pleased and sympathising audience. Now of this a woman is always sure more or less: if she be a beautiful woman, only too sure; and hence arises a great deal of that silliness in conversation which is so commonly laid to the charge of the fair speakers, but of which the fault, in nine cases out of ten, rests with the listener. If you will have a woman open her lips at all hazards, you have no right to complain if that which they pour out is what Solomon expected; it is unreasonable to demand a succession of wise parables or sparkling epigrams. But the commonest chivalry and courttesy make men listen patiently, if not deferentially, to anything which a woman is pleased to say; and if she be personally attractive, this endurance is almost limitless. It is not only that the listener finds

"The fairest garden in her looks,
And in her mind the wisest books;"

but the veriest nonsense, interpreted by the light of those looks, passes for wisdom. As was said in a different sense of Jeremy Taylor—"From her lips all truth comes mended;" which is very well, so far; but not so well, when what is very far from

truth comes in such pretty disguise that it is admired and welcomed. Poor Madame de Staël, famous as she was for the charms of her conversation, found to her mortification that this ceased in great measure to attract, when the supplementary charms of youth had deserted her; men failed, she said to recognize in the woman of fifty the wit which they had so admired in her at twenty-five. There was nothing remarkable in the discovery, whatever there may be in the confession.

BLACKWOOD.

(To be continued.)

EDUCATION.

College of Preceptors, England.

Paper read before this body, by G. D. Nasmyth, Esq., Barrister-at-Law, Dr. W. B. Hodgson, occupying the chair, on Popular errors concerning Education, and their influence.

As the title selected for this paper indicates that it is the intention of its author to attack certain prevailing notions and practices connected with Education, it is perhaps but just to preface the Lecture with the statement, that an intimate acquaintance of several years with the internal working and external influence of the College of Preceptors has induced the firm conviction in the mind of the lecturer that, as an Educational Institution, this College does not stand second, in many and in most important particulars, to any in the kingdom; that the impartiality and fairness with which its Examinations are conducted have secured for them a degree of public confidence that is not extended to institutions where the examiner has the means of ascertaining the name of the candidates upon whose papers he is to pass judgment; and that its failings are attributable rather to foreign influence than to native defects.

That those who have adopted Education as their profession, who have resolved to devote their time and energies to the training of youth, and who have therefore foregone the wealth or distinction they might have acquired in other walks of life, may not imagine themselves assailed, personally undervalued, or their labors held in light esteem by the lecturer, it is proper to state, at the outset, that which it is trusted this paper will support, viz., that the main object which prompted its preparation was the desire to do justice to a class whose importance to the State cannot be too highly estimated, and to secure for the educator that position in public esteem that is steadily withheld from him owing to the public misconception of this true province. And while pointing out what appear to be prevailing errors, it is necessary to shew that the blame is not attachable to the individual tutor so much as to the system, for the existence of which he is not responsible. For as in Medicine, so long as the practitioner has recourse to the treatment recognised by his profession for the time being, he is held blameless, even though his patient dies. So must the school master who adopts the best recognized system of his day, even though it result in the ruin of his pupil. A Nelson might dare to place the glass to his blind eye, and, declaring he did not see his Admiral's signal, pursue his own course; but a less man than Nelson might have seen his victory consummated by a court-martial and the loss of his commission. A Dr. Arnold can remould a large public school, and obtain wide-spread and well-deserved fame; where an equally intelligent but less influential man may lose the whole of his pupils through the stupidity of their parents.

If, then, the system, and public opinion, are attacked, let the conscientious and intelligent practitioner rest satisfied that no shafts are levelled at him. The other preliminary observation that should be made is, that as any one of the topics to which your attention will be directed would require more than the time allotted to the whole to discuss it, you will perhaps accept this

(1) "Les Guêpes," IV. p. 41.