Literature and Science.

THE RISING OF THE NILE.

Now the fleet of Nile craft decreases, and the chaffing of the boatmen is almost hushed. How splendid are the scenes on every side! How they change every mile! The palms, the Arab villages, the minarets and domes of the mosques, appear in slow succession; again the pyramids are in view; and always is heard the sound of the busy shadoof and the dreamy squeak of the sakiyeh. The shores now reveal how Egypt was created, film upon film, layer upon layer. One marvels not that the people who live upon them, even now, look upon the Nile as "The Giver of all good."

It moves on and on before them as gently as the rays of the rising moon. It is always kindly. It gives water and food—gives life. Once a year it rises and widens, and almost entirely submerges the tillable land at its sides. What it does not so reach, it is made to reach by artificial means. The overflow is no misfortune to those whose homes are upon its banks. It is their best blessing. For the Nile well repays for the right of way during the inundation, by leaving a deposit upon the land which is worth its weight in gold. It does not change its habits; it never brings surprise and destruction. It is good to the people who trust in it. The sun always shines for them; and when unmolested and untrammelled their dispositions are sunshiny. They are hospitable, generous, willing to serve the stranger, industrious, religious, misunderstood, brow-beaten, taxed, bastinadoed, and discouraged until their spirit is almost gone. And yet they are good-natured, patient, and seem to be happy!

When the time approaches for the inundation the Arab farmer is all expectancy. His canals are cleared and he protects his home by dikes and walls of adobe. This done, seated at his door, he watches with satisfaction and gratitude the rise and approach of the water which holds his little wealth. It is several months rising to its greatest height, and then as slowly and gradually subsides. Then appears again to his delighted vision the husbandman's farm. His palm-trees seem to rise to a greater reach, and their waving branches add to the sense of calm and content which pervades all. Already his well-filled canals have defined themselves, and his irrigating machinery is at once put in repair. There is no more use for the boats which have served to carry him from place to place during the inundation. They are hidden among the rushes on the banks of the canal. Every available person is now pressed into the service. If the thin deposit of mud left by the departing river is kept moist, its value remains at par. If the hot sun is allowed to play upon it unopposed, it soon becomes baked and curls up into tiny cylinders; then, breaking into fragments, it falls dead and worse than useless. Therefore the process of irrigation must begin at once. The rude sakiyeh and the ruder shadoof are kept going night and day, and give employment to tens of thousands of the people and cattle as well. With these primitive appliances the water is lifted and emptied into the channels which have been dug or diked to receive it. From these larger receptacles the water is led to smaller ones, which, overflowing, cover the fields.

In a little time, then, a Nile farm becomes a rare beauty-spot, instead of a waste of mud; for now the crops are grown. The lentils bend with their heavy load and the fields of grain turn their well-filled heads from side to side that the ripening sun may change their green freshness into gold. What landscape, unadorned by art, can be more lovely than such a farm, narrow though its limits may be, with its grove of palms to fan the breeze and scatter their sweet fruitage into the lap of the happy fellahin? Here no weeds grow to annoy him. No stone-crops are belched to the surface each year to stop the plough. And this is good, for the Egyptian plough has no scientifically curved coulter or subsoil attachment. When the crops are ripened the irrigation must rest a while, for all hands are pressed to help with the ingathering. —*From "The Modern Nile," by Edward L. Wilson, in Scribner's Magazine.*

GENIUS is an infinite capacity for work growing out of an infinite power of love.—*Thring.*

Special Papers.

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

BY A TEACHER.

THE earliest known fact regarding the English language, is that it was spoken by certain barbaric tribes of the Teutonic race, who, after the breaking up of their empire of the west, invaded, and after a protracted struggle, took possession of the greater portion of the Province of Britain, which was then inhabited by Keltic tribes. These invading tribes, called Low Germans, had formerly inhabited the low-lands of Germany, and coming into Britain called themselves *Angles* and *Saxons*. The conquerors possessed themselves of the country, and as a natural sequence, their language predominated. It is supposed that the words of Scandinavian origin found in our language were at this time introduced into it, as the invading bands of Teutons were no doubt largely drawn from the Scandinavian countries, many words from whose language would be brought with their people. This Teutonic people, or the tribes *Angles* and *Saxons*, appear to have recognized the name *Angle* as their proper national appellation, and they both concurred after their establishment in Britain, in calling their common country *Angle-land*, or England, and their common language English.

Thus, then, this language, now so famous, which is spoken in nearly every country on which the sun shines, and in which such great minds as Milton and Shakespeare clothed their immortal thoughts, can be traced to so obscure an origin! The language of these rude tribes was made up of Dutch, Flemish, and the dialects generally of the northern part of what was anciently called Germany, which included the countries now by us called Holland or the Netherlands.

The English language, although derived from the same stock, is quite distinct from what is now known as German. Our modern English would scarcely be recognized as that brought into Britain some thirteen hundred years ago. The language during these thirteen centuries elapsing since its introduction, has suffered many changes, but so gradually did they take place as to be almost imperceptible to the age in which they transpired. We can, by historical aid, readily trace them in five distinct forms of the language. The first of these may be called the old Anglo-Saxon. It was that brought into Britain by the Angles and Saxons, and remained in its pure state until 1100 A.D. About this time the Danes and Normans invaded, conquered, and possessed England, and, bringing with them their national language, the old Anglo-Saxon speech was somewhat modified. This second period is called Late Anglo-Saxon, and lasted until the middle of the fifteenth century. The next period, which is known as *Old English*, extended from 1250 A.D. to 1350 A.D., and exhibits a continual weakening of the old forms, owing to the influence of Norman-French, the royal house of England being then Norman. The fourth stage, called *Middle English*, in which the Anglian part of the language predominated, terminated with the fifteenth century, when the modern English took its place. And may it long keep it! The period of this stage of the language witnessed the old Anglo-Saxon revived to a great extent as a theological weapon, and, at a later date, for literary pursuits. The leading authors of that day gave expression to their thoughts through it, deeming its simple purity preferable to the later style resounding with French accents.

The modern English also consists of many classical words, derivatives of the so-called dead languages, Latin and Greek. A large number of these had been brought into the language by the Romans some nineteen hundred years ago when they came into Britain as its conquerors and rulers. The Normans also brought Latin words Normanized, with their establishment in the land. And again, owing to the theological researches which were begun with the sixteenth century, many classical words were brought into use, for the study of this work necessitated a study of the dead languages.

Looking into modern English we find many words which a lexicographer would not assign to any previously mentioned origin. These have taken their place one by one in the language. They are the result of the extensive intercourse which the English speaking people have maintained with countries connected with them in commerce. In this class we find words borrowed from all important languages, and relating to natural productions, works of art, and social institutions.

Thus it has come about that the two chief constituents of modern English are classical and Anglo-Saxon words mixed with a small proportion of miscellaneous ones. The Anglo-Saxon words differ somewhat from their originals, owing to the many changes the language has passed through since it became the speech of Britain. As a general rule we find the words relating to common natural objects, to domestic life, to agriculture, and to the common trades, are of Anglo Saxon origin, while the classical words are used in relation to the higher functions of life—religion, government, law, and war; to matters connected with art, science, and philosophy. Those who wish to give eloquent expression to their thoughts sometimes resort to these ponderous classical words. Dr. Johnson was much given to expressing himself by these "heavy-armed warriors from the Greek phalanx and the Latin Legion." His friend Goldsmith once said of him "that if the Doctor were to tell a fable of little fishes he would make the little fishes talk like whales."

With all the changes it has undergone it is no wonder that the modern English effects chaos in the school-boy's mind. I am inclined to believe that after being its student for a short time he pronounces it "confusion worse confounded." But having became its master it reveals itself to him as a language perfect in its power of expressing the most delicate shades of difference in thought—a property in which no other language, living or dead, can equal it.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE.

(BY A MODEL SCHOOL STUDENT.)

[We have it "under consideration" to offer a handsome reward for the discovery and apprehension of the perpetrator of the following which found its way surreptiously to the editorial table during our absence. To aid in the detection of the culprit, and at the same time to show the kind of stuff we are sometimes expected to print, we insert the doggerel, but do not of course expect or ask our patrons to read it.]

I'LL teach the kids, from day to day,
And any man who comes to bray
Against my style I'll calmly flay,
Or pummel most unmercifully.
Be he Inspector or Trustee,
'Twill make no difference to me:
For I will let the natives see
The proper way to worst a bully.
I first will jerk him o'er a seat,
Or two, then tramp him 'neath my feet
(Meanwhile, his corpus I will beat);
And if, while thus the crank I treat,
He once for help to halloo rises,
The exercises I'll repeat;
Till he, subdued and quite discreet,
Repentantly apologizes.

But if an energetic dame,
With visage flushed and eye aflame
And Amazonian physiog,
Comes in, asserting that I did
Unjustly treat her darling kid,
And seems prepared my ears to flog,
I'll rush away o'er fields and floods
(Nor even wait to get my duds),
Till at the Gulf of Mexico;
And there by power of will and brain
I'll strive the mustang to restrain,
And let the frantic female reign
In what was once my proud domain;
And, from that date, her kids to train
The pedagogue that likes can go.

THE following is the C.L.S C. list of readings for 1887 88:—History of the United States, American Literature, History of the Far East Literature, Physiology and Hygiene, Physical Culture, Home Life and Manners. Forty minutes a day for nine months in the year and four years will enable persons to complete the entire course.