

COMMUNICATION.

For the Columbia Democrat.
LYCEUMS—SOCIAL SOCIETIES.

MR. INGRAM: I have frequently been interrogated on the subject of Lyceums—as to their *object and utility*; and beg leave to reply through the medium of your useful paper. I approve of the plan suggested by Mr. Helbrook, in his discourse on that subject, in which he recommends the formation of "Social Societies," consisting of any convenient number of neighbors: The meetings to be held as frequently as the daily occupations of the members will admit, for the purpose of "talking over" in a social way, (without all the cold formality of rule and order, and without the labor incident to elaborate speaking,) various subjects, calculated to improve the mind. The advantages resulting from societies of this kind are two fold:—First—by furnishing useful topics of conversation and filling the mind with wholesome ideas, it tends to exclude a train of frivolous or wicked thoughts, during the recess of the society. Secondly.—If people, (particularly the young,) are left unemployed, they too frequently resort to places of amusement, to the intoxicating bowl and the gaming table, to fill up their leisure hours. Therefore the formation of "social societies" would be attended with beneficial consequences, even if nothing were gained by these meetings but to prevent worse ones.

But I do not admit that *nothing* will be gained, but on the contrary I believe *much* must necessarily be attained by such meetings: and more will be gained in the *informal* way of treating a subject, than by *incumbering* it with too much formality; because if one person be explaining a subject with which he is acquainted, he may elucidate it very clearly, yet owing to one sentence being misunderstood, or not perfectly comprehended, the whole subject would be *obscure*, or perhaps quite lost. But if no rule be interposed, the audience can clear the doubt instantly by asking the speaker a question, or requesting him to explain, which would be inadmissible under rigid rules. Further, this plan affords better opportunity for examining specimens of art or natural formations, than the more pompous method of declamation—and also lays less burthen on the nerves of the modest and inexperienced lecturer.

The benefits to be expected from these institutions, conducted on any rational plan, are many and great, and amongst them may be enumerated the following in particular.

Suppose the subject of **BOTANY** to be introduced, and familiarly explained, from time to time, both by oral description and specimen; does it not follow that every person who had previously read essays on the subject becomes a *practical* instead of a *theoretical* botanist? And why? Because from books he had learned the virtues of many plants and trees, and the uses to which they may be applied, but for want of a lesson from the living teacher, specimen in hand, he had been rambling amongst these very useful productions for years, without knowing that they are the same which he knew well by name in print. Thus, then, the farmer may in one evening learn to apply to the benefit of his farm the very plant which he had read of as a matter at a distance, but which he thus learns is the product of his own soil.

Suppose the subject of **MINERALS AND FOSSILS** to be discussed, and specimens produced, which had been examined by an experienced geologist and labelled: may not the society derive from a few hours study of this kind, an advantage almost equal (practically speaking) to that derived from a regular course at college? Cannot the members by comparing the minerals they may find, with those which they may (by course of exchange) possess, ready labelled, form a pretty correct opinion of their quality and worth? If they can, they may avail themselves of many of the advantages attendant on profound learning, without the labour of acquiring it. For example, suppose a farmer has read, or became verbally informed, of the nature and uses of lime, both as a manure and as a cement—and is theoretically acquainted with the mode of burning it, but does not know the stone when he sees it: suppose he should receive a number of mineral specimens from an experienced hand, with the names written on them, and that on comparing the one marked "Limestone," he discovers that it resembles the stone on his own farm, over which he has been stumbling for half a century—he tries the experiment, and finds his quarry of

heretofore *useless rubbish*, turns out to be a mine of wealth and fertility, concealed under the name of Lime. Then he knows the value of *Lyceums and Specimens*. Now I do not suppose the discovery of common lime will be brought about in this way, because it is too generally known; but I have merely chosen it as a plain case for illustration. There are, no doubt, many minerals of great value that remain unnoticed, from the very ignorance that I supposed in the instance I have chosen. Infinite advantage would result from the discovery of marl in this vicinity; and I am not certain it does not exist. The same observations will apply with equal force to timber, plants, and every other branch of mineral science. Nor need the discourses and examples be confined to these topics alone. They may be varied to suit the taste and capacity of the audience, or the particular studies and pursuits of the speaker. The mode and time of cutting and seasoning timber for particular uses—the time of planting and manner of treating fruit trees—the mode of grafting fruit trees and method of preserving fruit, and in short a thousand other subjects, are properly within the scope of these social meetings.

Nothing is more common than to hear men complain of the inconvenience arising from "the want of learning"—and to hear them end by saying, "as I know the want myself, my children shall never suffer from the same cause." This is well. But do these persons use all the means in their power to remedy this "want" as they journey through life? I fear they do not. I have often seen such setting idle, or worse than idle, for many long winter evenings; during which, by proper application, they might acquire the very knowledge they are panting after. And do they fulfil the promise made with respect to their children? Here I fear the negative reply is loud. I know many *complainers* and many *promisers* who scarcely ever sit down at home with their families, but leave all to nature and school-taught theory. To such men let me say, if you expect your children to grow up removed from the evils of ignorance, it is your duty, and ought to be your pleasure, to spend your time with them—to explain that which may appear dark—to open that which is closed—to make their studies as *practical* and pleasant as possible—to make them partake of the nature of amusement as much as convenient, and yet more, to show by example, what cannot be taught by precept.

If a father sits down at the close of the day, or for a leisure hour, with his children, for their improvement and his own, what is it but a "Social society" of the most interesting character? Does it not tend to increase the tie of affection, to improve the mind of father, mother, son and daughter? But does it not do more? Does it not tend to imbue the mind of the young with morality, restrain the old from dissipation, promote peace in the family, and strengthen the bond of domestic harmony? Does not the attainment of ends like these make the heart of the mother glad, and support the father in the decline of life? All will admit the propriety of the latter instance. If then social instruction in a family is good, why is not similar instructions in a neighbourhood good? Such instruction or amusement must be attended with equally beneficial results in the latter as in the former case, because it is not every man that is capable of instructing his family. Therefore occasional meetings will throw those not blessed with competent instructors at home, in the way of better abroad.

Before dismissing the subject, I beg leave to remark, that every village and district in the state, contains the elements for a social society, which when formed, will of course act in a sphere proportioned to the competent parts. And here let me add, that the common error is to look too high. In choosing topics of discussion and elucidation care should be taken to avoid technical difficulties and ideal hypothesis. The imagination should be restrained from running after great and mighty things, because the affairs of practical economy are small things. It is of more consequence to the ordinary man to know at what season a particular species of timber should be cut to season clear of worms, than it is to know the number of days in which the moons of Saturn revolve round that planet.

I have nothing to say concerning **SCHOOLS**. If the people prefer schools, supported by public means, and carried on under the direction of public officers, let them be carried on efficiently, with zeal and ability, and I

am one among their supporters. If the people prefer the mode heretofore practised, of supporting schools by private contracts, "go ahead," and I am with you. All I intend from establishing Lyceums, or Societies, is to build up aids or coadjutors to Common schools, let them be taught and supported as they may. In regard to the usual mode of teaching, I may remark that it is not sufficiently practical. Teachers too commonly deal too much in books, and ideas unconnected with visible illustrations, and lead their pupils too much from the daily avocations of life.

In my own family I have tried the social plan, connected with visible demonstrations, and found the benefit. Some years ago I had four, five, or six apprentices and young men about me, and I conceived the plan of a republican government amongst them in the shop. I put it in practice, and during several years I had no difficulty in governing those under my care. They were docile, industrious, careful and moral, inasmuch that I do not recollect ever having occasion to reprimand one of them in six years. They governed themselves by laws of their own making. My plan was in the winter evenings to invite them to meet me in some convenient place and bring with them such of their comrades as they chose; when we all sat down to our studies on terms of equality. I instructed all that came in reading, writing, arithmetic, book-keeping, or any other branch they were desirous of learning, in as familiar a manner as possible. I found that they improved rapidly, that they were always cheerful and good natured, and never had the least trouble on account of their rambling at night.

Here, then, I am convinced that "Social meetings" of master and apprentice were fraught with all good, and no evil consequences. I am well aware that all was not done that might have been done with the same means, because I did not deal sufficiently in *visible* illustrations; but still harmony was promoted, minds were improved, morality strengthened, and affection cemented between me and my household; and I have now the satisfaction of seeing every one who attended my domestic fire-side instructions filling his place in life respectably—and most of them rearing families which I hope will "do likewise."

If my apprentices were made better and happier by social instruction, is it not rational to conclude that others will be benefited also? Then try the experiment: The trial will cost nothing, and may save much. It will elevate the character of the country where it prevails, advance virtue and piety, and counteract the baneful influence of dissipated society.

CONFUCIUS.

Cattawissa, July 29, 1837.

IMPORTATION OF WHEAT.

At New-York.—From a table which we find in the New-York Farmer, it appears that the whole amount of wheat imported into the city of New-York,

| | | |
|----------------------------|----------|-----------|
| In the year 1835, | Bushels. | 18,200 |
| In the year 1836, | | 493,700 |
| In 1837, to the 19th April | | 854,000 |
| | | 1,365,900 |

At Rochester.—There was imported from Canada to this city,

| | | |
|----------------------------------|----------|---------|
| In the year 1835, | Bushels. | 95,000 |
| In the year 1836, | | 223,000 |
| To this time in 1837, only about | | 10,000 |
| | | 328,000 |

Besides these, considerable quantities have been received at other cities on the seaboard, and more or less must have reached Oswego, Ogdensburg, &c. from Canada.

The 1,365,900 bushels, above enumerated as received at New-York, was imported from the following countries:

| | | | | | |
|----------|----------|---------|----------|----------|--------|
| England, | Bushels. | 552,500 | France, | Bushels. | 35,500 |
| Germany, | | 393,600 | Austria, | | 10,300 |
| Holland, | | 170,800 | Prussia, | | 8,000 |
| Italy, | | 153,000 | Sicily, | | 5,400 |
| Russia, | | 39,600 | Denmark, | | 1,000 |

WOOL.—The Rutland Herald says this great staple of Vermont is now ready for market, and estimates the aggregate crop in that State, at over 3,000,000 pounds, which at last year's prices (about 60 cents) would amount to near \$2,000,000.

The **SUGAR CROP** in Louisiana is said to be in a very promising condition, and should it not suffer from those accidents to which it is always subject, a large return may be expected.

Mr. John Platt, of Poughkeepsie, much embarrassed in his pecuniary affairs, committed suicide by hanging, while on a visit to Syracuse.

THE COLUMBIA DEMOCRAT.



"TRUTH WITHOUT FEAR."

BLOOMSBURG:

Saturday, August 5, 1837.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

"SOCRATES" is laid upon the shelf. He has committed *plagiarism* in the first place, and most horribly murdered the King's English of the original. We would advise him to study the rudiments of language as preparatory to another attempt to palm up an editor as his own one of the chaste productions of Addison.

"THE FAMILY OF TROUT SPRING—No. 2," will appear in our next.

"DELIA" is a very pretty and tender name for a votary of the Muses; but the following stanzas, which precede ten more of similar sentiment and diction will explain the cause of non-publication:—

"My heart is full, my love is strong,
My eyes with tears does flow,
Because to me you won't belong,
You'll craze my mind with wo!"

And high time it was to hallow "tea!"
Such a heart, eyes, mind and tears, are enough to set any person crazy without the aid of love, or any other passion.

We invite an attentive perusal of the article on the subject of **SOCIAL LYCEUMS** from the pen of our correspondent "Confucius." It treats of a matter which is being brought into practical operation in many sections of our state, and which has received the approbation of those who have witnessed its progression and beneficial results. In the language of our correspondent, they are only aids to schools; and it is the duty of individuals to employ their most zealous efforts in promoting an object so laudable to its patrons, and so well calculated to advance the education and interests of community.

THOMAS MCNAIR has been appointed Post Master at Foundryville, in this county, in the room of George Mack, Esq. resigned.

A son of Mr. Jonathan Cooper, of Berwick, aged about 13 years, was drowned in the Schuylkill, at Pottsville, on the 24th ult.

Numerous reports have recently been put in circulation respecting **UZAL HOPKINS**, Esq. of this county, and others, who have undertaken the construction of a rail-road in Louisiana. We take this early opportunity to state that the rumors are without foundation; and that most probably they are the workings of some spirit of malice, who either has an old grudge against Mr. H. or envies the individual prosperity of the company to which he belongs. We extract the following paragraph from the "Louisiana Journal" of a late date, as corroborative of our contradiction; and as the contractors are all Pennsylvanians, we feel a double pleasure in appropriating to our columns such a compliment to their enterprise and industry—coming, as it does, from the vicinity of their operations.

From the Louisiana Journal.
LOUISIANA IMPROVEMENTS.—The Rail Road Bridge, across the Bayou Sara, is now completed, and is passed over daily by wagons, horses and pedestrians. It is a structure, composed of a single arch, 310 feet in length, resting upon wooden abutments, and is the longest rail road bridge in the United States. It has every appearance of being a well built and substantial structure, and reflects much credit upon the enterprising contractors for the construction of the West Feliciana Rail Road, Messrs. M'Cord & Co., who overcame no small difficulties and inconveniences, in completing this improvement.

The firm of Messrs. M'Cord & Co., consists of Messrs. M'Cord, Hopkins, J. Cummings, jr., C. A. Snyder, Colestock, and Thompson.

The ragged appearance of the shiplasters now in circulation is a premonitory symptom of the determination of the Banks to resume specie payments. They certainly were only intended originally as a temporary species of circulation; and we hope that the good nature of the community in submitting to the illegal proceeding, may not be changed by the infliction of a new issue of these dirty slips of paper—none of which are redeemed with specie unless by legal proceeding.

EDUCATION.

From the report of the Secretary of the Commonwealth on the subject of education by common schools, we glean the following facts in respect to the cost of primary schools in Pennsylvania, as estimated by him for the present year.

From annual State appropriation, to accepting common school districts, (being four fifths of the whole number,) \$160,000
From taxation in the same districts, including the city and county of Philadelphia for the support of Lancasterian system therein, 400,000
Annual expense of teaching poor children in the non-accepting districts, (being one-ninth of all the districts in the State,) under the old law for educating the poor gratis, 25,000

Total amount of one year's public instruction in primary schools, \$585,000

Including the payment of \$400,000 of the \$500,000 appropriated by the legislature at its last session, he estimates that \$1,000,000 will be expended this year for the purposes of education in primary schools—\$600,000 of which will be paid by the state, and the residue by taxation. In estimating the cost of educating all the children in the state, he sets down the whole number between the ages of 5 and 15 years at 620,000—of whom he calculates 220,000 will attend three quarters in each year which at \$1 25 per quarter will make the annual cost of primary education \$660,000. This calculation is made on the supposition that the system will be accepted in all the districts of the commonwealth.

On Tuesday next the "ninety days of Bank penance" will expire, and the people soon after acquire correct information in regard to the intentions of these monied monopolies. Will the Whigs and Anties, in order to prevent them from supplying the wants of community, and redeeming their solemn pledge, make a rush upon the Banks for specie, and thus induce another suspension? We know that forbearance will characterise the demands of the opponents of these institutions—they will ask no more than is really needed for the purposes of business; and if the Banks only act prudently, or do not exhibit a pre-determination to oppose specie payments, we feel confident that most of the Country Banks will redeem their bills as heretofore; and that Shin-plasters will no longer be requisite for the purposes of change. A few more days will advise us of Bank integrity, and give a pointed direction to the course of this paper. While evils are endurable we submit to their infliction; but when they emanate from a disposition to oppress and enthrall the people, we shall "hang our banner on the outward wall," and commence the warfare with all the zeal and enthusiasm that should belong to a freeman.

The "all-sorts-of-party" in this county have advertised for Township meetings, and, for form sake, threaten to nominate and support a ticket of their own. They choose delegates on the 9th, and assemble in convention on the 11th of next month. Their success in establishing a *shin-plaster currency* has raised their spunky demeanor, and, it seems, has emboldened them to try all kinds of "experiments." There will be some difference in the contests. The shin-plaster system needed no other countenance than *wealthy leaders*—but their Ticket will want supporters amongst the *rank and file*—a scarce concern in that quarter. However, they seem determined to fight like *officers* should do when there are no "common soldiers;" and they have already declared that "if we perish, we perish—but not without a struggle!" How they frighten a body!!

Our opponents assume the name of Democrats. Horrible! most horrible! They are generally the *oldest* kind of **FEDERALISTS**—something approximating to the spirit of **TORYISM**, which prompted them to oppose the last war against Great Britain; and offer the enrolled militia certain bribes to remain at home. Gentlemen, appear under your *true colours*. If you are either Federalists, Aristocrats, or Tories, don't be ashamed of your cognomens unless you change your principles.

BRIGHT PROSPECTS.—The people of Susquehanna county, Penn., are looking forward for a copper currency, out of the mine said to have been discovered at Brooklyn!