Contemporary Thought.

THE teacher or board of education that does not foster goodness by esteeming estimable qualities and merit, by approving meritorious acts, has sadly neglected to perform the whole duty involved, and will eventually have an uncomfortable responsibility to meet.—*N. E. Leach.*

THE man who reads habitually breathes the atmosphere of social human experience, and is so far made to feel the substantiality of social life over mere brute life. He learns to look upon his every act from the standpoint of public opinion. He views all his own industry in its relation to the industry of his fellow-men.—*W. T. Harris, LL.D.*

A CORRESPONDENT of the *Citizen*, of Boston, U.S., holds that "teaching in civics should begin on the day when the child enters school." It may, perhaps, be necessary to premise that the new word "civics" is used to denote the science of citizenship. The school certainly fails in one of its highest duties if the whole course and influence of its training do not tend to fit the future men and women to become good citizens, whatever may be thought as to the desirability of adding a new science, under the name of civics, to the already overgrown curriculum of the public school. —*Schoolmaster (London, Eng.)*

A KNOWLEDGE of sanitary chemistry is an important aid to the preservation of health. Almost anywhere may be found nice houses, well furnished throughout, and occupied by first-class people, where no speck of innocent dust is allowed to find lodgment on chair or table; all seems right about the premises, and the inmates wonder why typhoid fever lurks about the house, why somebody is always sick there. A knowledge of practical chemistry would soon enable them to trace the presence of disease to bad drainage or some other sanitary defect. Chemistry enjoins thorough cleanliness in all departments. It forbids breathing impure air, drinking impure water, etc., or suffering any sources of disease to find permanent lodgment in human abodes. — *New England Journal of Education.*

"CANADA is too young a country." So we are constantly told when one artist (musician and painter) after another has to leave this country for want of support. There is such a thing as the "vice of contentment," and there are people whose wealth consists in the fewness of their desires. Can any country be too young for art? Surely it does not exist merely for the so-called educated people, and those whose riches enable them to spend and exhibit it on art. Being the exponent of imagination, thought, memory, emotion, and the great cultivator of all that is highest, noblest, and best in man, what can be of greater importance? Its influence should be felt in the education of the young, both rich and poor. The love of nature and of the beautiful cannot be too early impressed on a child, helping to endow it with "sensibilities of great preciousness to humanity," and art is the nurse. For heaven's sake let those who realize the value of art in "teaching the young ideas how to shoot" do their utmost to encourage and keep their devotees in this country; for Canada needs all the warm and loving influences of art to raise her above the cold and hardening effects of mere money-making. It is well her sons should grow rich, but let them also grow rich in the love of the beautiful and noble, and not rest in the "vice of contentment."—"*Freder*" *in the Week.*

AN apostle once wrote, "Let love be without dissimulation." Had he lived in our day, he might have thought it quite as important to say, "Let love be without sentimentality." In looking over the reports of charitable institutions—especially purely voluntary ones—we are frequently struck by the utter absence of any attempt to deal in what might be called a scientific manner with the facts that come within their scope. Instead of this, we have any amount of sentimentality and gush, pious ascriptions of thanks to Providence, considerable laudation of the officers engaged in the work of the institution, and long lists of donations, with the names of the donors, of course. Now, we would cheerfully exchange all this for a little information likely to be servicable in a scientific point of view. Say it is an "orphan's home." What we should like to know in connection with the operations of such an institution may be roughly indicated under the following heads:—1. In regard to each inmate, whether he or she is really an orphan or not. 2. If so, how the condition of orphanage and dependence arose. 3. How it happened that private aid from friends or relatives was not forthcoming—whether, for example, the existence of a convenient asylum into which the orpan could be put had anything to do with the child being placed there rather than otherwise provided for. 4. What moral effects seem to flow from the absence of parental affection and influence. 5. What the special influences of the home or asylum seem to be in different classes of cases. 6. What the subsequent course in life of children released from the home has been.—*Popular Science Monthly.*

M. DE CANDOLLE'S opinions respecting the influence of politics and government patronage on scientific pursuits are, in fact, very decidedly expressed. After showing how religious prepossessions, which are usually more positive, more firmly held, and more exclusive than any other kind of prejudices, may interfere with the free exercise of scientific thought, he observes that the incompatibility of political relations is still greater; for politicians defend, not what they believe to be true, but what appears practicable or possible to realize, and are subservient to the authority of chiefs and majorities. Politics agree well with the aims of those whose chief pursuit is that of material gain, for such men frequently have to use the same methods as politicians to succeed; but the person who is seeking for pure truth in history, in law, or in moral, natural, or other science, is out of his place in a political assembly. He would hardly go there except from motives of patriotism, or under a transitory, enthusiastic impulse, and would very soon find out that he did not belong there. How could he lend himself to the manœuvres of politicians? How, for example, could he trade off a principle against a railroad, a charitable foundation for an election? How could he consent to transactions between truth and falsehood, to the barter of opinions, which is the rule in political affairs? Men of science are sometimes found in considerable numbers in political assemblies, but the others always do their best to make them ridiculous, and kill them off by giving them bad names. "As a rule," M. de Candolle adds, "governments too much confound teaching with progress in science. Many of them believe they have done everything when they have created schools and universities. They do not comprehend that they often do more harm than good by restricting these institutions in their methods, or in the choice of teachers. They do not know to what degree science lives on liberty and on the individual work of masters and pupils outside of the lessons.—*From "De Candolle on the Production of Men of Science" in Popular Science Monthly.*

I COME now to speak of the struggle for existence which is constantly going on between languages geographically near to one another and between different dialects of the same language. Unless one of the idioms is especially favoured in the struggle by political circumstances, it is evident that the one which is most advanced in evolution will gain upon those which are less advanced; this fact can be established by many examples. Thus, in the territory which is now France, Latin, introduced into Gaul by a relatively small number of persons, shortly surpassed the Celtic dialects. The French language is wholly Latin, having retained from the Celtic only a few recollections in its vocabulary; but, when the Germans established themselves in a large part of Gaul, instead of giving their language to the conquered population, they abandoned it in the end and adopted the neo-Latin, which afterwards became French; and the French language is no more Germanic than it is Celtic. Natural selection has caused the disappearance of a considerable number of idioms. Languages which come into conflict are like groups of animals that have to struggle with one another for existence. They must gain upon their competitors, or resign themselves to disappear before them. Just as, in the contest for life and development, the best-armed races finally prevail over those which are less favoured, so languages which are best served by their own aptitudes and by external circumstances prevail over those whose evolutive force is less considerable, and over those which historical conditions have less well prepared for the combat. In France, the French, the ancient *langue d'oil* gradually supplanted the *langue d'oc*, the Corsican, the Breton, the Flemish, and the Basque. In the British Islands, English eclipsed the Celtic languages, Irish, Scotch, Manx, and Gaelic., and will shortly have supplanted the Cornish. German has overcome a number of Slavic idioms. Another kind of selection is going on within the language itself with reference to the use of particular forms and words. In reference to this, the study of dialects is of great interest. Dialects should not be regarded as degenerate conditions of literary languages. These languages are simply fortunate dialects, whose rival dialects have been less favoured. We are constantly meeting in dialects forms and words which their sister literary languages have not preserved; and this fact gives dialects an important place in the study of the natural history of language.—*From the "Evolution of Language," by M. A. Hovelacque, in Popular Science Monthly.*