

## Contemporary Thought.

"NOTHING tends to check the development of the mind and character of the young so much as what used to be called 'setting down.' Unless people are preposterously conceited, or intolerably forward, snubbing is a bad regimen. You might as well think to rear flowers in frost as to educate people successfully on reproof and constant criticism. Judicious flattery is one of the necessities of life; as necessary as air, food, or water."—*London Truth*.

THE *Lancet*, noticing the increased prominence which suicides have appeared to assume in recent years, and believing that a large proportion of those crimes are the deliberate, conscious acts of persons overburdened with the cares of life or dreading some terror, attributes the increase to the fast rate of modern life. "Boys and girls," it says, "are men and women in their acquaintance with and experiences of life and its so-called pleasures and sorrows, at an age when our grandparents were innocent children in the nursery. . . . Life is played out before its meridian is reached, or the burden of responsibility is thrust upon the consciousness at a period when the mind cannot in the nature of things be competent to cope with its weight and attendant difficulties. . . . Forced education, commenced too early in life and pressed too fast, is helping to make existence increasingly difficult.

A PURELY "practical man," without the logical training, can no more achieve economic success than a railway-locomotive, no matter how great its steam-power, can continue to run and reach its destination without rails. And yet, a bookish and literary economist, without the practical intuitions, can accomplish nothing more than a finely finished and most perfect engine in the hands of an ignoramus who does not know how to get up steam. We here find the explanation of a very common belief among the wide ranks of the busy and successful men of affairs in the United States—a class who have generally had little academic training—that economists are mere "doctrinaires," whose assumptions are all *a priori*, all in the air, and above the level of every day work; who had better make a fortune in pig-iron, or fancy dress-goods, before they set up to instruct the community. Merely making money, however, does not at the same time make one logical. It is as if we should demand that every scientific physicist or chemist should have first put his knowledge into practice by inventing some application of electricity, or a patent medicine, before he is competent to impart the principles of his science to others. The contempt of the practical world for (so-called) "doctrinaires" is as great a mistake as for the speculative writers to set themselves above the men of affairs. As in most things, the correct position lies somewhere between. If an economist is an abstract thinker, and nothing else—unable to verify his deductions—then he justly merits contempt; but in that case he is not a properly equipped man, as we have described him above. On the other hand, it is common to see merchants or manufacturers showing great energy in studying and writing upon economic subjects, who, so long as they confine themselves to the range of facts

within the limits of their own horizon, make most valuable and effective contributions to the verification of principles; but when, without accuracy, logical power, or a grasp upon governing principles they begin to generalize upon their limited data, they are very apt to be less effective and useful than they are dogmatic. He only is truly an economist who, eagerly studious of facts, not in one occupation or place only, but in as many as possible, applies scientific processes to his investigation, and produces that which becomes the world's truth, the property of men of all times—not the petty sum of thought which has grasped only a small fraction of the facts. In other words, when a wide-awake man goes to books, he really goes to get the experience of the best observers of all countries with which to correct himself against false and narrow inferences drawn from his own limited experience. —J. Laughlin, Ph.D., in *Popular Science Monthly* for April.

DR. CRICHTON BROWNE has reported, after examining the London schools, that the evil of over-pressure in them is real, and is working injury upon the children. It is exerted by the "keeping in" after school-hours of children, usually those who are from any cause behind with their work and have to be pushed so as to be ready for the examination, and in the imposition of home lessons. The prime motive of both these impositions is the necessity which exists for forcing backward pupils to the examination level. The very fact that these children are backward is evidence that they are not as competent to sustain the regular school-work as their brighter fellows; yet they are the ones upon whom the additional charges are laid. "The influence of that emotional excitement caused by the approach of an examination," says Dr. Browne, "is really one of the most dangerous elements in educational over-pressure," and the "examination fever," as it has been called, "is now endemic in the metropolis." Many of the London children go to the school partially starved, through having to depend upon food which, though it may be abundant, is innutritious. They "want blood, and we offer them a little brain pills; they ask for bread, and receive a problem; milk, and the tonic sol-fa system is introduced to them. Some come breakfastless to school, because they must be in their places punctually, and they have no time to eat breakfast. More than a third of the children in the elementary schools of London are represented to be suffering habitually from headaches, and these come on for the most part in the latter half of the day, when the brain has become exhausted, and the pressure of the work tells most seriously from it. Many are troubled with sleeplessness, generally caused by their thinking over their lessons, particularly their arithmetic lessons. Parents frequently complain to teachers that the family are disturbed by the children talking of their lessons in their sleep. Dr. Crichton Browne believes that a considerable part of the increase in nervous and brain diseases, and neuralgia and short-sightedness, is attributable to this over-pressure. He found nothing, however, to complain of in Scotland, where the children are vigorous, well fed and clothed and taken care of.

Not much, if any, apology is needed for inserting the following. If it is amusing, none can say it is not at the same time instructive:—

Dr. C. Pittfield Mitchell has published a "Study of the Psychology of the Chimpanzee," which he has made upon a specimen in captivity at the Central Park Menagerie, New York. On being introduced, the animal offers his right fore-hand, and, grasping one of the fingers of his visitor, attempts to put it in his mouth. The extension of the hand, in meeting an acquaintance, is made with a pleased look of recognition, unmistakably the outcome of gratified social feeling, and is often accompanied with a presentation of the back to be scratched. The chimpanzee, seated in a chair at a table before a bowl of milk, grasps the spoon with his right fore-hand, and feeds himself, wiping his lips with a napkin held in his left fore-hand. In using the spoon, the co-ordination of movements lacks precision, but none of the milk is spilled; and when the spoon is taken away, he whimpers to have it returned, but does not seem inclined to drink in the natural way. The outer and visible signs of laughter are comparatively simple; that species of laughter which is caused by the perception of incongruities was never witnessed, although a few attempts were made to evoke it, and although monkeys and dogs are known to be sensitive to ridicule. When disappointed, as when a piece of banana was taken away from him, the animal sulked, became angry, cried, and shook his hands. When introduced to his image in the looking-glass, he seemed fixed for an instant with surprise, then looked to the back of the mirror, and began to bite the frame and pull an attached cord. "Advancing to the front and examining the reflection of his person with evident satisfaction, he commenced, with absurdly sincere intentions, to make effusive demonstrations of love. He repeatedly pressed his lips and tongue to the glass, and, erecting himself to his full height, strutted and grinned, and made obeisance in most ridiculous and amusing fashion. He was once seen to make signs to his image by spasmodic movements of his lips, without uttering any audible sound. He again looked behind the mirror, and again fell to biting the frame. He became still more angry and hit the glass, first with the left fore-hand and then with the left hind-hand, and continued to do so with such violence that we were finally compelled to break the spell. While eating some fruit, he saw himself in the glass, and ran away precipitately, that he might keep possession of his morsel." A colored India-rubber ball that emitted a musical note when squeezed was examined with timid curiosity at first. "At length, he took the ball in his hands, not seeming afraid, and tried by gentle pressure, in imperfect imitation of what he had seen me do, to evoke its note. Failing in this, he commenced to hit it forcibly with the knuckles, and grinned with pleasure when the sound was produced. He then hit it violently, drawing the upper lip up over the upper row of teeth, looking as if delighted in the exercise of his powers. He was allowed to see a piece of fruit put in a tin box or canister, and the latter closed by a firm adjustment of the lid. He very quickly applied the teeth, not the fingers, to remove the lid, and, having succeeded in doing so, extracted the fruit. But, seeing a similar cover on the opposite end of the canister, the previous association of contiguity between an adjusted cover and inclosed fruit forced him unreasonably to remove this cover also."