

Contemporary Thought.

No sooner has the snow disappeared from the ridges, than the hardy Alpine flowers of the Arctic commence with wonderful vigour their short existence of growth, some of them actually rushing up so near the disappearing snow-banks that with the foot they could be bent over against them. I have read of polar travellers who have seen this flora force its way through a thin layer of soft snow in its eagerness to begin existence.—*Lieut. Schwalbe*.

THERE are many in the schoolroom who are very well content to let things go as they are. One such said the other day: "I guess the kinds of schools that educated Daniel Webster and Henry Clay are good enough for me." We don't believe that the schools educated these men; they did very little for them; nature was strong in them and educated in spite of defective schooling; the tendency of nature is to educate. We claim that man should aid, not obstruct, these tendencies.—*Teachers' Institute*.

AMONG the things which thirty-five years ago went to make up the crime of high treason in Italy was the possession of a Bible, which was in the list of revolutionary and forbidden books, and for a man to own it was to subject him to prison, the galleys, and even to death. Now Bible depots are established in every Italian city, and itinerant vendors circulate the book freely. In a conspicuous store in the Corso, Rome, a whole window is filled with copies of the Italian version of the Scriptures. The New Testament can be purchased for five cents, and a separate gospel for two.—*Chicago Herald*.

THINKERS have done more to turn the world upside down than military heroes. Galileo with his telescope gave the world more lasting gifts than Cæsar; Watts' achievements with the steam engine surpass the trophies of Marlborough at Blenheim, or Wellington at Waterloo; and Edison has more thoroughly impressed himself upon the civilization of the age than Napoleon. It pays to train up a race of thinkers. The time is coming when the world can get along without guns or fortresses, but it will never come when it can get along without teachers and schoolhouses.—*American Journal*.

SUGGARS will find solace in the growing belief in the restorative power of sleep, but they must remember that too much sleep is quite as injurious as too little. Dr. Malins, in a recent lecture at Birmingham, said that the brain required twelve hours of sleep at four years old, gradually diminishing by hours and half hours to ten hours at fourteen, and thence to eight hours when the body is full grown and formed. Goethe, in his most active productive period, needed nine hours, and took them; Kant—the most laborious of students—was strict in never taking less than seven. Nor does it appear that those who have systematically tried to cheat nature of this chief right have been in any sense gainers of time for their work. It may be a paradox, but is not the less a truth that what is given to sleep is gained to labour.

THE advance of the ladies is as marvellous as it is irresistible. Here is Miss Dolores Leonarty-Casnovas, M. D., who has just taken her doctor's

degree at Barcelona. She began her university studies at the age of eight, when thirteen she became a B.A., and now, at the ripe age of nineteen, after coming out first in all her examinations, and taking numerous prizes, she is a fully qualified physician and surgeon. Fancy a female B.A. of 13 discoursing on hideous diseases with six-syllabled names, and correctly diagnosing and prescribing for her brothers and sisters! But it is what we have got to expect, and the fair Spaniard is to be congratulated on being the first of her sex to show what can be done in the way of rapid development. Miss Dolores, &c., may be fairly addressed, like her namesake sung of by Mr. Swinburne, as "wise among women and wisest, our Lady of Pain."—*Pull Mall Gazette*.

GOVERNMENT by kings went out of fashion in this country when Charles Stuart lost his head. Government by the House of Lords perished with Gatton and old Sarum. It is possible that government by the House of Commons may equally become out of date? Without venturing into the dim and hazardous region of prophecy, it is enough to note that the trend of events is in that direction. Government tends ever downwards. Nations become more and more impatient of intermediaries between themselves and the exercise of power. The people are converting government by representatives to government by delegates. If a deputy or a member votes against the wishes of his constituents, he is denounced as a usurper, even if he be not cashiered as a traitor. Side by side with this ever-strengthening tendency may be observed a scientific development rendering possible the realization of the popular aspirations.—*W. T. Stead in Contemporary Review*.

THERE is less difficulty in German girls of the middle class finding suitable partners for life than is the case in the same class in England. German girls, as a matter of course, take their share in household work; this does not prevent their being frequently very accomplished, often excellent musicians, but it does prevent a great deal of restlessness and vague discontent. A young man who marries in that class knows that he may reasonably expect his bride to be a good housewife. If he is in the upper middle class, for instance a shopkeeper, his wife often keeps the accounts of the shop. I have wondered at the close attention to business details shown by women who might have expected to be spared such exertions; but I was assured they preferred to be thus occupied, partly in order to save for their children. It seemed to me that the master and mistress in most shops were on friendly terms with their assistants, who were permitted to rest at intervals during the day in a room behind the shop.—*The National Review*.

THE sad recital of deaths from drowning which have occurred at various parts of our coast during this summer may well impress upon us the need, too little regarded, that every capable member of the community should learn to swim. We have gone so far as to advocate the inclusion of swimming as an essential branch of education. Some perhaps, may think that our view is an extreme one; they may tell us that fatalities from drowning do not, after all, greatly swell the registered death rate, unless, indeed, we include those due to shipwreck, and that physical education may be

regarded as an optional form of training, for which taxpayers would object to become responsible. From such a line of argument we feel obliged to differ. When we consider how great a portion of our population live at the coast, how many of these follow a seaman's calling, to what exigencies even the dwellers in inland districts may be exposed, and are often fatally exposed, by the chances of an occasional sea voyage, or by the customary visit to the sea side, it appears to us at least highly expedient that swimming should be included in the compulsory school course. It must be remembered that the time or trouble involved in teaching this art is nothing in comparison with that required for intellectual study. The further steps of practice proceed without tuition. Admission to baths is not costly, the habit acquired is never lost, and the gain is invaluable.—*London Lancet*.

"THAT which surprises and perplexes all those who interest themselves in the so-called Nihilists is the incomprehensible contrast between their terrible and sanguinary methods and their humane and enlightened ideas of social progress—a contrast that is suggested most forcibly by their personal qualities." We might remark that the personal quality has nothing to do with assassination. "Be my brother, or I will murder you," was a frequent cry during the French Revolution, and as to that, the sweetness of Robespierre appears in its prettiest light, when, seeing a lady step on her spangle, Robespierre said to her: "Madame, have you no feelings?" It is impossible not to agree with Stepniak that the Government of Russia is one ill suited to the present age, that there is corruption in all its departments, but at the same time the efforts of a corrective character, as employed by the Nihilists, are of the most illogical and horrible nature, and if successful would lead to chaos. If Stepniak is to be credited, we are to put down the Nihilists in Russia as some 15,000,000, and the number "always increasing." He does not attempt to lessen the danger hanging over the head of the Nihilist. The "illegal man"—that is, the conspirator in Russia, who has no status with the police—does not expect to live more than two years. "Man," writes Stepniak, "is altogether a creature of habit. . . . By merely having it every day before his eyes, he may become so used to death that he will not think of it." That the struggle has not ceased in Russia Stepniak insists upon: "As things are at present, nobody but a fool can feel certain as to the tranquillity of a country any more than one can sleep peacefully in a house under which a barrel of dynamite is concealed." To-day, as in their commercial relationship all countries are inter-dependent, so the political conditions of one state have their effects on another. Because great wrongs have been inflicted on Russians, Poles, Bohemians, these men in their desperation have become crazed. Unfortunately for us, unable to understand those relations which exist between the people and the Administration of the United States, whose officers are chosen by the people, these foreigners have brought to this country their mad ideas. A Stepniak will never bring about a happier Russia, but from his teachings he produces such infamous creatures as a Most and a Parsons.—*From "The Russian Storm Closed; or, Russia in her Relation to Neighbouring Countries," by Stepniak*.