

Contemporary Thought.

THE colored people of Georgia pay taxes on six million dollars' worth of school property, the sum thus derived being nearly sufficient to maintain the colored schools of the State. This is one of the reasons why Georgia is called the "Empire State" of the South.—*Current*.

THE authorities of Princeton College this year took very prompt and decisive measures to suppress the practice of hazing. They agreed upon ignominious expulsion as the punishment for the offence in the case of old offenders and suspension for a year in the case of others.

AN effort is making in Boston to take the school entirely out of municipal politics, and to this end separate elections are urged. The complaint is made that local politicians use positions in the school-board simply as stepping-stones to places in the council, the result too often being that the members of the school board are men who have no intelligent sympathy with the cause of education.—*Current*.

THE Board of Trustees of Cornell University have passed a university statute whereby every professor who shall have served seven years at the institution may have a year's vacation on half-pay. This action cannot fail to result in great good to the cause of education. It is a declaration of a body of business men that the efficient teacher is not only worthy of his hire, but that he must not be worn out in the treadmill of the lecture-room; that he is, in short, worth preserving. It is a recognition of the teacher's dignity and importance that cannot fail to have its effect upon the profession generally.—*Current*.

FORGERY in connection with educational affairs is, happily, a thing of very rare occurrence. A notable case has happened lately in Ireland, which may very well be quoted as a terror to evil-doers, being, it is believed, the first case of the kind. J. B. Thompson, a medical student, from Belfast, pleaded guilty, last Wednesday, at the Winter Assizes for Ulster, held at Omagh, County Tyrone, to the charge of uttering a forged certificate of matriculation in the Royal University of Ireland. Baron Dowse sentenced him to six months' imprisonment, with hard labor; and the reasons for this comparatively moderate sentence being the state of the prisoner's health, and the fact that he had made important disclosures to the Public Prosecutor.—*The Schoolmaster*.

INDEED, it is pertinent to enquire, if, except in a few minor and exceptional particulars, the first part of the statement with which technical grammar opens is true: "English grammar teaches us how to speak (and write) the English language correctly." Rather, "our associates teach us how to speak the English language," correctly or incorrectly according to their own use of it, and the division styled "Etymology," including parsing, has an effect on the pupil's use of the language of the slightest character, chiefly in the points of forming plurals, composing adjectives and distinguishing their use from that of adverbs, in the agreement of verbs and in irregular verbs. The names of several of the parts of speech do not convey

even a remote idea of their uses: as adjective, adverb; *interjection*, an utter misnomer for a word which is not only not *placed between*, but *disjoined* from grammatical connection or relation.—*The University*.

POOR students are by no means unknown in England, and are sufficiently common in Scotland and Ireland; but nothing like the extreme destitution which prevails among the humbler class of students in some of the German universities is (as the *St. James' Gazette* points out) to be found in the very poorest of our seats of learning. M. A. Martha, who contributes a paper on the German pauper students to the *Revue Scientifique* states that the number is largely on the increase, and is causing much uneasiness to the university authorities, Professor Billroth in particular having frequently drawn public attention to the danger with which this large influx of starving students menaces the universities and society. As examples of the straits to which these hapless hungerers after knowledge are reduced, M. Martha quotes from a Berlin paper the application made some time ago to the municipality by a university student who asked to be employed as a night-sweeper; a post which, however modest, would not interfere with the prosecution of his studies. In the Galician and Hungarian universities poor students sell matches in the streets, or, if they have a musical gift, eke out existence by singing or playing in the *cafés* and *brasseries*. Many of them, for want of books and leisure to study, never manage to pass the examinations, and settle down at thirty to the very humblest occupations; while not a few take to evil courses and swell the army of crime.—*The Schoolmaster*.

SOON after the death of Galileo the telescope was further perfected by Huygens, who, in the first place, invented the form of eye-piece which still bears his name, and gives a large, flat field with very sharp definition. Many variations of form, but no improvement in the seeing quality of telescopic eye-pieces, have since been made, so that from this time all improvements in the telescope have been necessarily confined to the object-glass. Huygens next enlarged the single-lens object-glass to its greatest possible power. His largest telescope had an object-glass five inches in diameter, and a focal length of one hundred and twenty feet; this enormous focal length being absolutely necessary to reduce the blurring effect of the prismatically colored fringes, as well as spherical aberration, to such moderate limits that a magnifying power of upwards of two hundred diameters could be employed. To have watched Huygens at work with this telescope must have been an amusing sight. Its great length precluded the use of a tube, and therefore an assistant was obliged to slide the object-glass up and down a vertical pole, one hundred feet high, by a cord, while Huygens pointed the eye-piece at the object-glass by sighting along a string connecting the two, meanwhile steadying himself by resting his elbows on a two-legged wooden horse. A more difficult and unsatisfactory contrivance to use can hardly be imagined, yet, with this telescope, in 1655, he discovered the rings of Saturn, and one of its satellites.—*From "The Refracting Telescope," in Popular Science Monthly for December*.

STROLLING one day in what is euphemistically termed, in equatorial latitudes, "the cool of the evening," along a tangled tropical American field-path, through a low region of lagoons and water-courses, my attention happened to be momentarily attracted from the monotonous pursuit of the nimble mosquito by a small animal scuttling along irregularly before me, as if in a great hurry to get out of my way before I could turn him into an excellent specimen. At first sight I took the little hopper, in the gray dusk, for one of the common, small green lizards, and wasn't much disposed to pay it any distinguished share either of personal or scientific attention. But, as I walked on a little farther through the dense underbrush, more and more of these shuffling and scurrying little creatures kept crossing the path, hastily, all in one direction, and all, as it were, in a formed body or marching phalanx. Looking closer, to my great surprise I found they were actually fish out of water, going on a walking-tour, for change of air, to a new residence—genuine fish, a couple of inches long each, not eel-shaped or serpentine in outline, but closely resembling a red mullet in miniature, though much more beautifully and delicately colored, and with fins and tails of the most orthodox spiny and prickly description. They were travelling across-country in a bee-line, thousands of them together, not at all like the helpless fish out of water of popular imagination, but as unconcernedly and naturally as if they had been accustomed to the overland route for their whole lifetimes, and were walking now on the king's highway without let or hindrance.—*Grant Allen, in Popular Science Monthly*.

FROM these sources we learn that, when weighed shortly after his birth, the infant Frank was found to be heavier than the leg of mutton provided for the family dinner of that day; and that a birch-tree was planted in honor of his arrival, the taste of the twigs of which he learned to know well. His early years, as described in his mother's journal, reflected in miniature his character in maturer life. For facts, especially of natural history, he had from childhood a most tenacious memory. At four years of age he began collecting specimens, and at seven he commenced a journal. Earlier than this, at two and a half years of age, "he would have gone through all the natural history books in the Radcliffe Library without making an error in miscalling a parrot, a duck, a kingfisher, an owl, or a vulture." When he was four years old a clergyman brought to Dr. Buckland, from a considerable distance, some "very curious fossils." They were shown to the child, who, not yet able to speak plainly, said, "They are the vertebræ of an ichthyosaurus." At three years of age his mother could get him to learn nothing by rote. His mind was always at work on what he saw, and he was very impatient of doing that which was not manifest to his senses, yet he was not considered premature. He excelled in apparently strong reasoning powers, and a most tenacious memory as to facts. He was always asking questions, and never forgot the answers he received, if they were such as he could comprehend. And he was always wanting to see everything done, or to know how it was done; and was never happy unless he could see the relation between cause and effect.—*From "Sketch of Frank Buckland," in Popular Science Monthly for January*.