

Contemporary Thought.

ONE teacher looks at his pupils and sees nothing in their faces but an exhaustive demand on his strength and patience; another sees in each face a mute appeal to all the wisdom, sympathy and love that are in him. So says the *Christian Union*.

It is stated on the authority of an American contemporary that the watercress destroys the toxic principle of tobacco without damaging its other qualities. It is said to be sufficient to moisten the tobacco with the juice of the watercress to deprive the tobacco of its deleterious effects. If this information may be relied upon, it will prove of especial service to beginners, and may help to spare them the pangs of physical remorse which not unfrequently attend the earlier efforts to acquire what is at best an expensive and wasteful habit. It is open to question, however, whether if this end be obtained, smokers would not after all prefer the unsophisticated article; tobacco without nicotine is like certain tectotal beers without alcohol (some tectotal beers are, however, not exempt) which only satisfy when thirst is very urgent.—*Med. Press & Circular*.

WE can no longer shut our eyes to the fact that the American democracy is destined to burdens of which none of its members dreamed five years ago. It must solve new problems for the race, and it must do it, as it has supported other burdens of the kind, soberly, manfully understandingly. It must, then, study anew the art and practice of considering all the circumstances of a case propounded before giving a deliberate judgment. That frame of mind which is shown in going off at half-cock in a hasty verdict of approval or disapproval on a half view of surface circumstances never was so dangerous as now. There is a new responsibility on our newspapers, on our other periodicals, on our public men, on our clergymen and other teachers, and it behooves them to meet it and to carry on the consciousness of it to the generations which are pressing on for the future. Hence alone can we have that sober and trained public opinion without which democracy is a foredoomed failure.—*The Century*.

It may be asked, What harm can result from allowing persons to believe in "faith-healing?" Very great indeed. Its tendency is to produce an effeminate type of character which shrinks from any pain and to concentrate attention upon self and its sensations. It sets up false grounds for determining whether a person is or is not in the favour of God. It opens the door to every superstition, such as attaching importance to dreams, signs, opening the Bible at random, expecting the Lord to make it open so that they can gather His will from the first passage they see, "impressions," "assurances," etc. Practically it gives great support to other delusions which claim a supernatural element. It greatly injures Christianity by subjecting it to a test which it cannot endure. It directs attention from the moral and spiritual transformation which Christianity professes to work, a transformation which wherever made manifests its divinity, so that none who behold it need any other proof that it is of God. It destroys the ascendancy of reason in the soul, and thus, like

similar delusions, it is self-perpetuating; and its natural, and, in some minds, its irresistible tendency, is to mental derangement. Little hope exists of freeing those already entangled, but it is highly important to prevent others from falling into so plausible and luxurious a snare, and to show that Christianity is not to be held responsible for aberrations of the imagination which belong exclusively to no party, creed, race, clime, or age.—*E. r.*

IN these days, however, it is not the fault of the publishers if the present generation is not omniscient. Good books were never more cheap or abundant. A modest sum nowadays would buy almost the whole realm of English literature. One may purchase Bunyan's immortal allegory for a penny, all of Shakespeare's plays for sixpence; while a set of Ruskin, which not long ago was in England held at five hundred dollars, may be bought in a popular library on this side for as many cents. The wave of cheap literature, which for many years past has flung its rich wreckage on the shores of this continent, and swept up its waterways with fertilising power, has now crossed the Atlantic, and is beating with marked impression the white cliffs of Albion. There, to-day, thanks to the enterprise of the publishers and the limitations of copyright, a few pence will buy the most treasured of English classics. The sale of these popular editions on this side is, we learn, unhappily limited. This, we dare say, is owing partly to the fact that the "standard authors," till now, in the main, high-priced in England, have long been accessible to all classes of readers in this country. But is not the limited sale accounted for by the aggressions of contemporary authors—chiefly sensational novelists—whose productions have all but swamped those of the older writers, and the reading of which has in some measure perverted the taste necessary for their enjoyment? Nevertheless, the sale on this side of the Atlantic is not small of the works of what are termed "our best authors"; and though the newspaper and the illustrated periodical are the chief reading of the masses, a large and ever-increasing constituency seeks to be familiar with the masterpieces of the language which have long been our instruction and delight.—*G. Mercer Adam in the Week*.

THE most momentous intellectual conquest of our day is, perhaps, the discovery of the great law of the unity and continuity of life, generally styled the law of evolution. Not only are the remotest branches of knowledge—as, e.g., physics and psychology, or chemistry and politics—connected by it into a systematic and harmonious whole; but by it also has been realized that union between science and philosophy for which the clearest minds of former ages longed in vain. The secular feud between idealists and materialists ceases on the solid ground of the evolutionary doctrine, where every science becomes philosophical without surrendering to any metaphysical or *a priori* conception; while, on the other hand, our psychological and ethical inquiries acquire a firm basis and scientific precision and accuracy as soon as they are touched by the vivifying spirit of this theory. Since we admit the unity of life, and since we consider cosmic phenomena, in spite of their amazing apparent diversity, only as various manifestations or consecutive degrees of one evolution, we are compelled to infer that our methods of political or

historical knowledge ought to be essentially identical with those generally prevailing in physical or biological researches. Metaphysical speculations on social matters, in which the greatest philosophers of former centuries delighted, lose their hold upon the skeptical mind of our age, and even the economic empiricisms of Adam Smith, Malthus, and Ricardo grows inadequate to the modern demand for positive knowledge of the natural laws pervading the evolution of human societies. Sociology, i.e., a strictly scientific statement of these laws, is considered nowadays as an integral part, as the necessary "*couronnement l'édifice*" of a methodical conception of the world.—*From "Comte and Spence on Sociology," in Popular Science Monthly for November*.

AND here I am tempted to allude to an old cry which seems at present to be reiterated with more than usual zeal, that we are over-educating the people, and tempting the rising generation to forsake the desk, the forge and the plough for the learned professions. There lies at the foundation of this the mischievous error which confounds mental and moral culture with professional training. The aim of all true education is mental breadth, moral elevation and such a mastery of the great truths that furnish the best antidote to sloth and ignorance as shall awaken the dormant intellect and kindle it into living power. Of all the educational solecisms of our day this cry of over-education seems to me one of the most foolish; as though the hope of Canada's agricultural future depended, like that of Egypt with its degraded felahs, or of Cuba with its praxial negroes, on the ignorance of the tillers of the soil. . . . Let us not discourage the idea that in the world's future, and above all, in this centre of freedom and industry, the good time is coming; though, doubtless, for us of the older generation at least,

"Far on in summers that we shall not see,"

when intellectual capacity shall not be thought incompatible with mechanical toil; when another Burns, dowered with all that culture can lend to genius, may "wake to ecstasy the living lyre" while following the plough; another Watt or Stephenson, trained in the mysteries of statics and dynamics, may revolutionize the economic service of mechanical forces; another Hugh Miller, rich in all the latest revelations of science, may interpret more fully to other generations the testimony of the rocks. Meanwhile we may look forward, without any dread of the fancied evils of "over-education," to a widely diffused culture, broad and thorough; with its few eminent scholars and specialists rising as far above the general standard as the most cultured of our own day excel the masses. . . . We need be in no fear that Canadian Bacons and Newtons, Porsons and Whewells, will multiply unduly; and for the rest, we may safely leave the chances of an excessive crop of lawyers, doctors or teachers to the same law of supply and demand which regulates the industry of the manufacturer and the produce of the farm. But of this we may feel assured, that in the grand struggle of the nations in the coming time the most widely-educated people will wrest the prize from its rivals on every field where the value of practical science and the power which knowledge confers are brought into play.—*Dr. Daniel Wilson in a speech at Convocation*.