

Contemporary Thought.

THE attempt to induce a large class of young teachers to imitate the experience of others can only end in failure. However varied the form which knowledge may take, the methods of instruction are personal characteristics. — *La. School Journal.*

EXPERIMENTATION in this field (psychology) is extremely difficult. Nevertheless, we must expect that the next great advance in science will be in this field. The new methods of study taught by the evolutionary theory will be applied here, and the very blossoming of the physical sciences will be found in psychology. Much physiological work yet remains to be done before any great work can be accomplished. Investigators are rapidly supplying the demand created by this new science. Societies, also, for psychical research, in England, Germany, and the United States, have been at work, and though only a few of the results so far have been in the highest degree satisfactory, they will doubtless bring to light some occult powers of the nervous system and unnoticed mental processes. These reveal the trend of much of the keenest investigation of the future, the results of which must be of intense interest to all students of the mind, to all educationalists and philanthropists. — *Kosmos.*

THE most earnest measures should be taken by the friends of the young to protect them from the pernicious effects of vile literature. In New York a step has been taken by the opening of a reading-room and circulating library, in the very heart of a district most needing such assistance, where children of both sexes, under fourteen years of age, can be provided with safe and profitable literature. The library is entirely unsectarian in character, the supervising committee being composed of representatives of the Catholic, Protestant, and Hebrew faiths. What has been done here can and should be done elsewhere. There ought to be four hundred such reading rooms in this city, and at least one in every small village throughout the length and breadth of the land. A communication to Edward L. Chichester, 334 West 124th Street, New York, will bring in return an account of a method of organization which may serve as a model for similar societies in other places. — *New York School Journal.*

THERE is no better illustration of the reserve; the passionless transparency and *naïveté*, of the classic style of narrative than that which is given us in the Acts of the Apostles; not the work of a recognized classic author, but beautifully classic in its pure objectivity, its absence of personal coloring. In that wonderful narrative of Paul's shipwreck the narrator closes his account of an anxious night with these words: "Then fearing lest they should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day." Fancy a modern writer dealing with such a theme! How he would enlarge on the racking suspense, the tortures of expectation, endured by the storm-tossed company through the weary hours of a night which threatened instant destruction. How he would dwell on the momentary dread of the shock which should shatter the frail bark and engulf the

devoted crew, the angry billows hungering for their prey, eyes strained to catch the first glimmer of returning light, etc. ! All which the writer of the Acts conveys in the single phrase, "And wished for the day." — *Frederic Henry Hedge, in the March Atlantic Monthly.*

THE *Boston Transcript* comments as follows upon the remarks made by President Eliot at a late meeting of the Unitarian Club: "He presented very fairly and very forcibly the difficult problem which our community especially is at this time facing, as to the connection of religion with our system of public school education. The suggestions made by Mr. Eliot as to the methods for dealing with the very perplexing difficulties which now present themselves are certainly very generous, but are they practical? One of these suggestions was, that according to the number of pupils, the children of parents of each of the different religious denominations, teachers respectively attached to these denominations should be set over the schools in proportionate ratio. The other suggestion was that an hour in each day's school session should be set apart in which the scholars should be distributed in separate apartments, there to receive such religious instruction as their parents respectively may desire them to listen to. Would it be possible in the nature, exactions, and conditions of things to bring about such arrangements as these? We can but drop a suggestion of our own on this subject without attempting to follow it into details. Why can we not best find relief in rigidly keeping to one of the fundamentals of our institutions—the entire separation of the affairs of church and state? Our public school teachers might be selected by the committees with no reference whatever to their religious denominations, but with a strict regard to their qualities and abilities, character, example, influence, and instructions, to advance the moral training of their pupils, and then throw the whole responsibility of their religious education upon their parents and ministers. The state and municipal governments cannot in any way recognize religious denominations, nor provide for any classification of school apartments, teachers or pupils by sectarian instructions. The embarrassments, disputes, controversies, and annoying responsibilities that would be involved in any such attempted scheme would be endless, and would be sure to result in strife and disaster. It is a scandal and grievance to many persons—an evidence of something very wrong under our present enlightenment—that our houses of worship should be known by so many sectarian names. But it would be deplorable if the tablets on our school houses bearing the names of our civic worthies should be removed in order that sectarian designations might be substituted. The state must resolutely cling to its original, traditional, and noble fundamental of providing for the elementary education of all its children. It cannot assume the office of training them in denominational religion."

AT last we have a declaration from the eight clergymen who fathered the Scripture Readings issued by the Education Department. In it they say "That the volume of selections was intended to be thoroughly representative of every portion of the Scriptures, whether of a moral or doctrinal character, and it is believed that a slight examination of the book will make this clear." Now,

were not these gentlemen tampering with the non-sectarian character of our school system in recommending, and the Education Department going beyond its duty in accepting, anything of a doctrinal character at all? If the Bible is to be used in our schools it is as a guide to right conduct, not for the purpose of instilling doctrinal opinions, whether of the four denominations to which the signers of the memorandum belong or any other. But a "slight examination" of the book shows us that at best it is but a thing of "shreds and patches." Take, for instance, the lesson on page 22, that professes to give an account of Pharaoh's dreams. It begins thus: "And it came to pass at the end of two full years that Pharaoh dreamed, and in the morning that (?) his spirit was troubled." The "orderly sequence" claimed for these lessons does not appear here, when it represents Pharaoh dreaming that his spirit was troubled. The truth is that the jumble has arisen from a clumsy attempt to join together parts of the first and eighth verses of the forty-first chapter of Genesis, from which the lesson is taken. What "orderly sequence" is there in making the thirtieth Psalm succeed the fifty-first, or the sixty-fifth follow the hundred and third. The most important lessons for use in our schools are to be found in the Proverbs, and in those taken from this book we find the strangest liberties taken with the text. One of the most instructive chapters is the twenty-second, yet it is mutilated by the omission of the fourteenth and seventeenth to the twenty-first verses, which are quite as pregnant with instruction as some of those introduced. Why should the following words be omitted from the lesson on page 162, which is taken from the twenty-fifth chapter of Proverbs, "By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft answer breaketh the bone. Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it"? Was it because the compiler had not the same experience as Solomon that he omitted from this lesson the following verse; yet it contains a wholesome truth that the girls of our schools should be made acquainted with: "It is better to dwell in the corner of a housetop, than with a brawling woman and in a wide house"? What poetic taste can he have to omit the following beautiful words from the next lesson, which is taken from the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah: "Who are those that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows"? One would think that of all the parts of the Bible the Sermon on the Mount would escape untouched, yet the compiler thought he could mend even this by omitting a number of verses. We have here given the results of a slight examination of the "Scripture Readings"; what a minute examination would lead to is left for the reader to infer. The eight clergymen say "That it was the strongly expressed views of the conference that such volume of Selections should be in the hands of the children as well as of the teacher." Had the conference viewed the matter in a practical aspect, it would have known that parents would not go to the expense of providing such a text-book for their children when they had the Bible at hand, and that the Education Department would not risk its popularity by prescribing it for use, nor going to the expense of supplying it free to scholars as it has done to teachers. — *"Censor," in The Week.*