

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE.

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN THE
CHIEF COUNTRIES OF
THE WORLD.*

THE volume whose title we give below is the second annual edition of a very useful and highly interesting book on the contemporary history of Elementary Education throughout the world. It gives, in a very readable form, an outline of the present state of education, and of the most recent changes in the intellectual progress of all the countries in Europe, and of most of those in the other parts of the globe. It is a Blue Book on "Education in 1879," but not overweighted with useless statistical tables or dry irrelevant reports. The Germans, possessing already several excellent and systematic handbooks on the History of Education, such as Raumer, Stracks, and others, have naturally turned their eyes from the past to the present, and entered upon the stage of contemporary history. In England, we do not yet seem to have approached the first stage, for a good general history of education in an English dress remains still a desideratum.

The present volume contains some 500 pages, half of which are taken up by a *catalogue raisonné* of the school literature published in Germany during the last year. The articles on the different branches of education are contributed by men of note in the scholastic world in Germany, and the whole is edited by Herr Seyffarth, Member of the Prussian Chambers. The key-note of the introductory chapter, on the general march of education during the past year, is not one of exultation. Nearly everywhere in Europe the two antagonistic forces of Ultramontane Catholicism and Protestantism on the one

side, and Secularism on the other, have joined issue as to which shall guide the course of national education. That in a strife so bitter the original starting-point is often lost sight of, and that the means are mistaken for the end, will astonish no one. The clerical party has the advantage of knowing what they are aiming at, whilst their opponents only know what they are not aiming at, so that the latter present many a weak spot of their armour to the full-tilted lances of the former; but such will forever remain the vantage-ground of those who take their stand upon what is sanctioned by time and custom. During the past year the victory in many countries has been with the reactionary party. In Prussia, in Bavaria, and in Baden, they have driven their opponents from the field on several important questions, whilst their recent defeats in France and Belgium are looked upon by them, and by many impartial spectators, as but the signals for a renewed attack upon their antagonists at no distant date. From the statistical tables and other data, we find that Prussia, Holland, Switzerland, and Sweden are the most highly educated countries in Europe; that is to say, in them the general level of education is higher than elsewhere. Whether greater excellence and higher talent will be found in these countries, because their level of education is higher, is quite a different thing, and remains an open question.

No fewer than eighty-three periodicals devoted to educational matters are published in Germany at the present time—a formidable array indeed, compared with their number in other countries. This alone may be added as a convincing proof of progress. The training of teachers becomes more and more an object of care with the State, and we find that the number of training schools is rapidly increasing.

* "Allgemeine Chronik des Volksschulwesens.—1879." Von L. W. Seyffarth. Breslau: E. Morgenstern. 1880.