

Contemporary Thought.

How shocked were one's ears on hearing, at the recent meeting of the American Philological Association at New Haven, man after man, scholar after scholar, get up and read important and edifying papers in every variety of harsh, nasalized, twangy, unmelodious pronunciation, converting all the *u*'s and *eo*'s into double *o*'s (institution, nooze, dooze), and *ou*'s into *oo*'s (oat, hoarse), twisting the final *r*'s into such hideous forms as may be represented by father-*r-r*, omitting the *t*'s after the *w*'s, turning *o*'s into *u*'s (wan't, dan't, stun, hall [whole]), and similar vagaries and eccentricities. There were, of course, exceptions to this manner of pronunciation, but in general the sounds above given were heard in the preponderance. The Western men had their twang, the Eastern and Southern men had theirs: there was no uniformity of pronunciation. The Bostonian could be recognized by his shibboleth—the pronunciation of the word *always*; the New Yorker showed his early associations with the Irish nurse by a certain something which can only be defined as a sort of Hibernianism of pronunciation; the Westerner was perilously near some of the pronunciations which we have learned to characterize as "Hoosier"; and the Southerner was sing-songy. The most elementary knowledge of elocution was often absent in the reading of articles which interested and instructed the audience by their learning, research, or ingenuity. One could not help wishing that these accomplished linguists had cast a pitying glance at their own tongues (if such a physiological antic is possible) and given them half a chance in their youth. One cannot help wishing even now that the rising generation of younger scholars in the multitude of their languages will cease to ignore their own.—"*Philologist*" in *the Nation*.

WE have taken frequent occasion to note the development of meteorology as derived from the work of high-level stations, and particularly that on Ben Nevis, which is very favorably situated for the investigation of one of the great problems of meteorology, viz., the vertical movements of the atmosphere. This institution, under the direction of the Scottish Meteorological Society, has already been in successful operation through two winters. The complete discussion of the observations for this period is in the hands of Mr. Buchan, who has already established many interesting points from the barometric and thermometric readings. The daily variation in the average velocity of the wind is found to be greater at night than in the day—exactly the reverse of what holds good at the sea-level. The observed differences between the direction of the wind on Ben Nevis and at low-level stations appear to give indication whether storm-centres will pass to the north or south of Ben Nevis—a point which, if definitely made out, will obviously be of immense value in forecasting the weather. The hygrometric observations indicate that, during ordinary weather, the atmosphere on the Ben shows a state of persistent saturation, usually accompanied by fog or mist; but occasionally an extraordinary and sudden drought sets in, the temperature rises, and the sky clears, not merely of fog, but often of every vestige of cloud, while at the same time the valleys and lower

hills are often shrouded in mist. This is interpreted as showing that the dryness, coming from above, is not able to penetrate downward to the sea-level. The thorough investigation of these phenomena is one of the most important pieces of work connected with the observatory, and may be expected to throw much light on the question of atmospheric circulation. The rainfall at Ben Nevis is greatly in excess of that indicated by the theories of rain-distribution.—*The Nation*.

"I do not now propose to discuss the scheme (university confederation) in its whole bearings. I simply say this, that when it was communicated to the Senate of the University of Toronto, Mr. Mulock moved, and I seconded its adoption, as a compromise which we asked the Senate to accept as a whole, as the scheme which had been finally adopted by the representatives of all the parties to confederation. Contrary to this the new propositions of Victoria College, and those set forth in Dr. Dewart's pamphlet, set aside the carefully matured terms of agreement, and consequently reopen the whole question. The basis of compromise is violated by more than one of the new demands. I shall only now deal with the first of Dr. Dewart's. He says:—'If University College is wholly supported from public funds, and Victoria pays all her own expenses, is it not perfectly fair and right that the former should be under Governmental control and restrictions that could not justly be applied to a free, self-supporting college?' What the friends of national, unsectarian education complain of is that the proposal that a three fourths vote of the Senate shall be necessary to secure any addition to the staff of University College, takes away the control of the Provincial College alike from the Government and the Senate of the University and transfers it to a little minority, practically composed of the representatives of a single denominational college. Under the scheme accepted at the final conference, if a majority of the Senate recommend any change in University College, it will be for the Government—and, if necessary, the Legislature—to consider and finally determine as to its advisability, in the general interests of higher education. Under the new conditions advocated by Dr. Dewart, a single vote over one fourth could overrule the judgment of three fourths of the Senate, and absolutely forbid the Government even taking the question into consideration."—*Dr. Daniel Wilson in the Globe*.

TESTIMONY is accumulating that the remarkable personage known as the False Prophet of the Sudan is dead. Among the more convincing of the reports which confirm this view is the suddenly-renewed determination of the British Cabinet to conquer the Nubian regions and Kardofan. With the departure from this earth of the Mahdi goes the greatest African since those of whom we read in Roman history. In the nineteenth century Carthage was pushed southward to the fork of the Nile; it was protected by wide deserts rather than by Hannibal, Jugurtha, and the sea. But there has been, in the success of this holy warrior, something fully as wonderful as is afforded by the history of anyone who ever sprang from the people, if we make a half-dozen exceptions. We first heard of Mohammed Achmet about the time of the collapse of the Dual Control at Cairo, in 1881. The False Prophet was then slain about once a month—in the dispatches. A week later news

would come that another town to the southward of El Obeid had fallen. After Tel-el-Kebir, the slaughter of the Mahdi intensified, and the number of towns which surrendered to him and embraced the new faith rapidly increased. Then came the catastrophe of Hicks Pasha, and the world fixed its attention on the new Emperor of the Equator. And the disasters to British arms that followed have justified that interest. Of this Prophet it may be said that, as Lincoln had Grant in his hour of need, so the Mahdi has had Osman Digma. But for his defence of the Red Sea, Wolseley would have gone across to the Nile from Suakin. Yet, above all, the holy rebel owed his greatness to the lack of military genius and instinct in Mr. Gladstone. The ex-Premier stood as much in awe of the mosques and minarets of Khartoum as the devoutest camel-rider of the shoreless sands. Yet it must have been a truly eminent human being whose taking-off so grieves the deserts and delights the Porte and the British Government.—*The Current*.

THE lowest grade of mental disturbance is seen in that temporary appearance of irrationality which comes from an extreme state of "abstraction" or absence of mind. To the vulgar, as already hinted, all intense pre-occupation with ideas, by calling off the attention from outer things and giving a dream-like appearance to the mental state, is apt to appear symptomatic of "queerness" in the head. But in order that it may find a place among distinctly abnormal features this absence of mind must attain a certain depth and persistence. The ancient story of Archimedes, and the amusing anecdotes of Newton's fits, if authentic, might be said perhaps to illustrate the borderline between a normal and an abnormal condition of mind. A more distinctly pathological case is that of Beethoven, who could not be made to understand why his standing in his night attire at an open window should attract the irreverent notice of the street boys. For in this case we have a temporary incapacity to perceive exterior objects and their relations; and a deeper incapacity of a like nature clearly shows itself in poor Johnson's standing before the town clock vainly trying to make out the hour. This same aloofness of mind from the external world betrays itself in many of the eccentric habits attributed to men and women of genius. Here, again, Johnson serves as a good instance. His inconvenient habit of suddenly breaking out with scraps of the Lord's Prayer in a fashionable assembly marks a distinctly dangerous drifting away of the inner life from the firm anchorage of external fact. In the cases just considered we have to do with a kind of mental blindness to outer circumstances. A further advance along the line of intellectual degeneration is seen in the persistence of vivid ideas, commonly anticipations of evil of some kind, which have no basis in external reality. Johnson's dislike to particular alleys in his London walks, and Madame de Staël's *bizarre* idea that she would suffer from cold when buried, may be taken as examples of these painful delusions or *idées fixes*. A more serious stage of such delusions is seen in the case of Pascal, who is said to have been haunted by the fear of a gulf yawning just in front of him, which sometimes became so overmastering that he had to be fastened by a chain to keep him from leaping forward.—From "*Genius and Insanity*" by James Sully, in *Popular Science Monthly for August*.