

Contemporary Thought.

It may be said in apology for many of the books of poetry which are printed nowadays, that their authors are deluded with the belief that the volumes would bring in money, irrespective of their poetic value. The authors, in every case, lose a hundred or a thousand dollars. The unbound copies are used as wrappers for cook-books.—*Current.*

LET the American people now begin to ask themselves these questions: "Why do not we have parcel posts, postal savings, postal telegraphs, and governmental railways, as other nations have such things? Is our boasted progress all a mockery? Is a machine the only thing we can invent? Are our corporations depriving us of the advantages which are enjoyed abroad.—*Current.*

LUCK is ever waiting for something to turn up. Labour, with keen eyes and strong will, will turn up something. Luck lies in bed, and wishes the postman would bring him the news of a legacy. Labour turns out at six o'clock and, with busy pen and ringing hammer, lays the foundation of a competence. Luck whines; labour whistles. Luck relies on chance, labour on character and energy.—*American Art Journal.*

NOW the condition of affairs between Church and State in both France and England has this in common, that religion has little or nothing to do with the matter in either case. In England it is a social, and in France a political question; consequently in both countries the real and genuine religious hatred which belonged to the old spirit of enmity between Catholic and Protestant has given place to a newer and less virulent kind of antagonism. It seems likely, therefore, that the separation of religion from the State will be accomplished in both countries by the ordinary processes of legislation, probably about the same time, or with the interval of only a few years; and there is no reason to apprehend any civil war about it except the war of speeches and newspaper articles.—*September Atlantic.*

LET us take the airiest, choicest, and sunniest room in the house for our living-room—the workshop where brain and body are built up and renewed; and there let us have a bay window, no matter how plain in structure, through which the good twin-angels—sunlight and pure air—can freely enter. This window shall be the poem of the house. It shall give freedom and scope to sunsets, the tender green and changing tints of spring, the glow of summer, the pomp of autumn, the white of winter, storm and sunshine, glimmer and gloom—all these we can enjoy as we sit in our sheltered room, as the changing years roll on. Dark rooms bring depression of spirits, imparting a sense of confinement, of isolation, of powerlessness, which is chilling to energy and vigour; but in light is good cheer. Even in a gloomy house, where the wall and furniture are dingy brown, you have but to take down the dingy curtains, open wide the window, hang brackets on either side, set flowers-pots on the brackets and jivy in the pots, and let the warm air stream in.—*Ex.*

AMONG naturalists, examples of well marked precocity are to be met with. Linnaeus as a boy showed so decided a bent to botany that, through the advocacy of a physician who had remarked

the early trait, he was saved from the shoemaker's shop, for which his father had destined him, and secured for science. At the age of twenty-three we find him lecturing on botany and superintending a botanical garden, and at twenty-eight he begins to publish his new ideas of classification. Cuvier's history is similar. A poor lad, he displayed an irresistible impulse to scientific observation, and by twenty-nine published a work in which the central ideas of his system are set forth. Humboldt, again, showed his special scientific bent as a child. From his love of collecting and labelling plants, shells, and insects, he was known as "the little apothecary." At twenty he published a work giving the results of a scientific journey up the Rhine. In medicine, Haller is a notable instance of precocity.—"*Genius and Precocity*" by James Sully in *Popular Science Monthly* for Sept.

ONE of Lord Macaulay's letters has just found its way to a public institution. It bears the date October 24, 1748, and is interesting as giving the writer's estimate, a few weeks previous to publication, of his "History of England from the Accession of James II." "I work," he says, "with scarcely an intermission, from seven in the morning to seven in the afternoon, and shall probably continue to do during the next ten days. Then my labours will become lighter, and in about three weeks will completely cease. There will still be a fortnight before publication. I have armed myself with all the philosophy for the event of a failure; though Jeffrey, Ellis, Marion, Longman, and Mrs. Longman seem to think that there is no chance for such a catastrophe. I might add that Macleod has read the third chapter, and though he makes some objections, professes to be on the whole better pleased than with any other history that he has read. The state of my own mind is this: When I compare my book with what I imagine history ought to be, I feel dejected and ashamed; but when I compare it with some histories which have a high repute, I feel reassured."

A CERTAIN very young girl living in Middlesex county decided last summer to try the Harvard examinations, in the autumn, with a view to entering the regular course of study in the Annex. She betook herself, therefore, with a trunk full of books, to a secluded home in the country, and settled herself for ten weeks' hard work reviewing her high school studies and conquering Greek enough to pass for college. Two young gentlemen presently appeared upon the scene determined also upon secluded preparatory study. When they learned that the pretty girl with the Titian hair was "digging" for Harvard too, they tried to laugh her out of her ambition. One of them, with the wisdom of twenty years, told her it was really a sin and altogether against nature for a seventeen-year-old-girl to try to read Greek alone or to think of taking a Harvard course. The other youth declared that it didn't matter, she'd never "get through the exams anyway," and tried to persuade her to take rides and boating excursions. But still she studied faithfully and crammed her self taught Greek until the examinations came. Then she went down to Cambridge and passed her examination triumphantly, while both of the young men failed dismally, and found themselves obliged to study another year before getting into college.—*Boston Record.*

"WRITES badly, does he?" "Oh, that doesn't matter; I've generally found that boys who could write well were little good at anything else." So spoke the head master of a large public school, when discussing the penmanship of a favourite pupil, who was a prodigy in the matter of Latin verses and Greek roots, but whose writing would have been unworthy of a small boy in a preparatory school. What with letters of all shapes and sizes, some sloping to the right, some tumbling over one another to the left—his exercises looked very much as though a spider had contrived to fall into the ink pot, and then crawled over a sheet of paper until he had got rid of the ink that covered his body and legs. And with the head master's dictum to encourage him in his carelessness, it is no wonder that matters did not improve as the boy passed from school to college, and from college to professionalism. He had been taught to consider bad writing a sign of genius, and the result was that he wrote plenty of clever letters and essays, which no one but himself could decipher. And is not this typical of hundreds and thousands of cases at the present day? Partly because handwriting is not taught so carefully and industriously as in by-gone times, partly because of the headlong speed which characterizes most of our daily transactions, whether in private or public life, there seems to be some fear lest penmanship may become almost as much a lost art as letter writing.—*Cassell's Magazine.*

IT is customary with the reactionary parties in France to look to England as the model of everything that is stable; and as their ignorance of English affairs prevents them from seeing what is going on beneath the surface, they conclude that what they believe to be the British constitution is invested with indefinite durability, whilst the French republican constitution is always about to perish. In calculating thus, the French reactionists omit one consideration of immense importance. They fail to see that the very presence of old institutions, unless they are so perfectly adapted to modern wants as to make people forget that they are old, is in itself a provocative to the spirit of change, and that it excites a desire for novelty, which has never been more common than it is now. The old thing may quicken the impulse to modernize, when a new thing would have left that special passion unawakened. In many European towns old buildings have been destroyed, not because they were either ugly or in the way, but simply because they were old, and because the modern spirit did not like what was old, and wanted to put it out of sight. Changes have therefore been made in these towns that would not have been thought of in some new American town, where there is nothing to irritate the modern spirit. It cannot be denied that the presence of some old institutions in England does just now excite the desire for change. Great numbers of the English electors and many of their representatives are animated by the same tendency to destroy and reconstruct which used to be very active in France. It does not require any special clearness of vision to perceive that, so far from having closed the era of great changes, Great Britain and Ireland have only entered upon it.—*Philip Gilbert Hamerton in the Atlantic Monthly* for September.