

Contemporary Thought.

THERE is no disguising the fact that there is a strong current setting against object teaching. Whether this shall be short-lived or increase its opposition with age depends entirely upon the way the friends of object-teaching develop the system. Unless they remedy the radical defects, it is for a season at least a doomed institution. It is well for them to read with care and profit with caution by every criticism passed upon them.—*The American Teacher*.

THE first thing the student needs to know is that he must be able to give his undivided attention to the subject under consideration. This mind or thought control can only be attained by persistent and continuous effort. After this mastery of the thought has been obtained students should be shown that the only possible way of success is to master the subject by single steps, and each of these steps should be thoroughly mastered before passing to another. This will lead to systematic and intelligent investigation. Whenever this habit has been formed the future studies will be easily and successfully prosecuted upon that principle, and success is assured.—*The Monitor*.

THE latest authority on the vexed question of sleep, Dr. Malins, says that the proper amount of sleep to be taken by a man is eight hours. So far as regards city life the estimate is probably correct. Proverbial wisdom does not apply to modern conditions of social existence. "Five (hours) for a man, seven for a woman and nine for a pig," says one proverb; and a second quoted by Mr. Hazlitt in his "English Proverbs," declares that "Nature requires five; custom gives (allows) seven; laziness takes nine, and wickedness eleven." These conclusions were, however, drawn from observations of country life. Physical fatigue is more easily overcome than intellectual. Men, however, who follow any intellectual pursuit are exceptionally fortunate if the process of restoration occupy less than seven hours. More frequently they extend to eight or nine hours. Kant, I see it stated, took never less than seven hours. Goethe owned to requiring nine. Soldiers and sailors, on the other hand, like laborers, do with a much less quantity.—*New York Commercial Advertiser*.

WHOEVER would teach must learn—and this means that he must continue to learn; he must learn all the time. The teacher's danger lies in his pausing after he is certified to be competent to teach. Too often, with but a slim stock of knowledge on hand, finding himself surrounded with those who know so little in comparison with what he does, he sits down contented; he employs the same material year after year; as it is new to every successive class, he cannot understand why he should do any more study. But men get in proportion to what they give. He is giving little, and the result will be that sooner or later it will be found out. The people feel it in their homes, and dissatisfaction is expressed. He concludes to seek another place or occupation; but to face the foe of his school and his own foe he declines. He teaches as he did last year; at his last place, and all goes smoothly for a while, and but for a while. The only thing for a teacher to do is to resolve that he will be what the great Thomas Arnold

called a "running spring." He demanded the possession of fresh knowledge as a qualification of teaching. And every child and every parent demands the same thing; they are right. Let the teachers then observe, listen, read, and think "still achieving, still pursuing." Such, and such only, can teach.—*N. Y. School Journal*.

No single force has elevated woman so much as the public school system. It was here she first demonstrated her administrative ability. In time past, here and there, women have shown superior talents as rulers of men, but these instances have been supposed to be exceptions to the general law that women cannot govern; but in the school-room the failures of women in this respect have been exceptions, success the rule. Here she has proved that she has an intelligent judgment, and moral courage to exercise it; a fact that until recently the world has not believed. The history of woman's degradation is a sad one, but the modern school system is placing her where she ought long ago to have been,—the educators of the race, and, consequently, the real rulers of the world. Instead of being tortured, burned, or drowned as a witch, if she sees fit to remain single she is now honored, and sometimes paid as much as men. A bright page in her history is the revered place she has occupied in the sisterhoods of the Catholic Church. Protestantism has been eminently masculine. In it there has been no place for woman as a church officer. But while in the Catholic Church she has not for many hundreds of years been permitted to minister at the altar, she has had an honorable ecclesiastical position. A brighter day is dawning! The time will soon come when she will occupy just the position in church, school, and state that her abilities enable her to fill without regard to her sex or her celibacy.—*New York School Journal*.

THE habit of writing and reading late in the day and far into the night, says the *Lancet*, "for the sake of quiet," is one of the most mischievous to which a man of mind can addict himself. The feeling of tranquillity which comes over the busy and active man about 10.30 or 11 o'clock ought not to be regarded as an incentive to work. It is, in fact, a lowering of vitality, consequent on the exhaustion of the physical sense. Nature wants and calls for physiological rest. Instead of complying with her reasonable demand, the night-worker hails the "feeling" of mental quiescence, mistakes it for clearness and acuteness, and whips the jaded organism with the will until it goes on working. What is the result? Immediately, the accomplishment of a task fairly well, but not half so well as if it had been performed with the vigor of a refreshed brain, working in health from proper sleep.

Remotely, or later on, comes the penalty to be paid for unnatural exertion—that is, energy wrung from exhausted or weary nerve-centres under pressure. This penalty takes the form of "nervousness," perhaps sleeplessness, almost certainly some loss or depreciation of function in one or more of the great organs concerned in nutrition. To relieve these maladies, springing from this unexpected cause, the brain-worker, very likely, has recourse to the use of stimulants, possibly alcoholic, or, it may be, simply tea or coffee. The sequel need not be followed. Night-work during student life and in after years is the fruitful cause

of much unexplained, though by no means inexplicable, suffering, for which it is difficult, if not impossible, to find a remedy. Surely morning is the time for work, when the body is rested, the brain relieved from its tension, and mind-power at its best.

OVER-SENSITIVENESS and irritability are the curses of modern life. I question very much whether the modern man enjoys existence to one-tenth the extent that the ancient man did. Steam, printing, French cookery, and gas have had much to do with reducing a once healthy and happy race to morbid, worrying, melancholy, dyspeptic creatures. The man or woman who has a hard heart and a good digestion can still go through life with a certain amount of comfort, but Heaven help the poor wretches with what are called "feelings" and with no digestions at all. To be a mass of nerves, to have a highly-strung nervous organization, to be by nature fidgety and fretful, to have a mental eye which magnifies every danger, to have a conscience eternally at work, to have a constant sense of wrong and injustice—to be, in fact, a poor worried, tormented, ill-treated, and misunderstood victim of surrounding circumstances—that is the fate of three-fifths of the people who make up modern society to-day. . . . I am quite sure that our predecessors in this vale of tears never suffered as we do, or the literature of the period would have brought down to us some signs of it. Nowadays almost every man one meets has a grievance, or a worry or a trouble. Men give way directly, and scarcely attempt a tussle with fate. We are "emotional" where we used to be hard, we are nervous where we used to be plucky, we cry where we used to laugh. The spirit of the age is a spirit very much diluted with water, and the national temper is that of a peevish child who is cutting its first teeth. . . . Those who instruct the public mind should see if something cannot be done to awaken the old fires that must slumber still in the British breast. The press and the pulpit should point out how disastrous it is to a nation's progress for the people to be ever ready to snap and snarl and sulk and wring their hands and weep. It is painful to see the descendants of men who stood the rack without a murmur, and sang a comic song while being broken on the wheel, screaming with agony because somebody pricks them with a needle or calls them a rude name. . . . Still, after all, the nervous, desponding, irritable condition of the sons of Britain is due in a great measure to modern inventions and modern luxuries. We want the old field life, the old early hours, the old rough horse-play, the old simple food, and the old simple faith. Steam, the penny-post, the shilling telegram, the telephone, the morning paper, French sauces, and a gas-and-smoke-poisoned atmosphere have turned the town into one big asylum, in which half the inmates are dangerous lunatics and the other half gibbering idiots.—*George R. Sims. Quoted in The Week*.

EVERY one of us who reads at all can probably name some author of the first rank whose claims his intellect admits, but whom he does not read with pleasure and seldom opens by choice. This is especially the case with poetry and speculative writings. It is too soon as yet for such a test to be applied to Emerson. Our own belief is that he will stand it.—*The Saturday Review*.