

Contemporary Thought.

MANDAL training departments have been added to the high schools of Toledo and Cleveland. The *Journal of Education* says that the cause of industrial education "is now proceeding along legitimate lines and with hearty progress."—*Current*.

THE defeat of the women candidates for positions in the school-board at the recent municipal elections in Boston was not without its consolations for those who are advocating the selection of women for these offices. One of the women received over twenty-one thousand votes, and more women voted than ever before. This would indicate an extraordinary growth of public sentiment in favor of their participation in school management, and it is indeed difficult to understand why a woman, if acceptable as a teacher, should not be regarded equally acceptable as a school-director.—*Current*.

THE list of books prescribed by the Canadian Minister of Education, given elsewhere, seems rather long. There are two in pedagogy, six in science and eight in literature and history—sixteen in all, for each year. This is certainly more than the average teacher will be likely to do well. There is not much value, and may be positive injury, in running the eyes hastily over a large number of pages. The attentive, thoughtful perusal and review of a few good books will be far more fruitful. We trust the members of our reading circles will keep this in mind. The Board of Control evidently had this in view when the Ohio course was arranged.—*Ohio Educational Monthly, on Ontario Teachers' Reading Course*.

THE English peasant is said to live and die with a vocabulary of three hundred words; the Cherokee Indians learn to read their language in eight weeks, some having made the transition from spoken to written language in four days, their problem of learning to read being more easily solved than ours, because their language is phonetic. The striking difference between the vocabulary of the children of five years at the north end in Boston and that of children of the same age coming from the homes of intelligent farmers in Ohio renders our chart, primer, and even first-reader work one of such complexity that only teachers with brains can simplify it for the individual needs of our schools. Until every primary teacher is a genius, therefore, text-books will be in demand.—*The University*.

IT is stated that, during the past ten years, the failures of pupils who have attempted to pass the arithmetical examinations in Scotland have amounted to 47,000 annually, and that the consequent loss of imperial grants has equalled £7,000 yearly. The fault is attributed to Scotch inspectors, who are charged with preparing special arithmetical puzzles for the mystification of pupils and the confusion of teachers. The matter came before the House of Commons in May, and the result is that, in future, inspectors will not be allowed to use any examination cards, either printed or written, except those which are about being issued by the Education Department of Scotland. These cards will contain uniform sets of questions for the nineteen inspectorial districts into which Scotland is divided, and claim to be eminently impartial and reasonable. No questions will be given involving weights, measures, or denominational money no longer in

use. This is a hopeful indication, and points to the prospect of the Scotch Educational Department at length awakening to the fact that the famous three R's are not an end, but a means, in the acquisition of knowledge.—*The Mail*.

THUS shell-money of this peculiar description, composed of small circular discs, perforated and strung together, and used both as currency and also (so far as our information extends) in important public and religious ceremonies, has been traced from the eastern coast of North America westward across the continent to California, and thence through the Micronesian Archipelago to China. In no other parts of the world, except those situated along or near this line (as in some parts of Melanesia), has the use of this singular currency been known. It is possible, of course, that the custom may have originated independently in each of the four principal regions in which it existed—that is, in China, Micronesia, California, and Eastern North America. Few persons, however, will be inclined to doubt that the Micronesian received this invention from Eastern Asia; and, at the other end of the line, the transmission of the usage from one side of the Rocky Mountains to the other will seem equally probable. The only question will be as to its passage across the Pacific. The fact recorded by Dr. Wilson, in his work already quoted, that in 1833 a Japanese junk was wrecked on the coast of Oregon, and that some of her crew were subsequently rescued from captivity among the Indians of that region, will show how easily this transmission might have been made. Nor is this the only instance known. Mr. Charles Wolcott Brooks, in his report on Japanese vessels wrecked in the North Pacific Ocean, read before the California Academy of Science in March, 1876, states that "one of these junks was wrecked on the Queen Charlotte Islands in 1831, and numerous others have been wrecked on other parts of the northwest coast."—*From "The Origin of Primitive Money," by Horatio Hale, Clinton, Ont., in Popular Science Monthly for January*.

THE number of a man's ancestors doubles in every generation as his descent is traced upward. In the first generation he reckons only two ancestors, his father and mother. In the second generation the two are converted into four, since he had two grandfathers and two grandmothers. But each of these four had two parents, and thus in the third generation there are found to be eight ancestors—that is, eight great-grandparents. In the fourth generation the number of ancestors is sixteen; in the fifth, thirty-two; in the sixth, sixty-four; in the seventh, 128. In the tenth it has risen to 1,024; in the twentieth it becomes 1,048,576; in the thirtieth no fewer than 1,073,741,834. To ascend no higher than the twenty-fourth generation we reach the sum of 16,777,216, which is a great deal more than all the inhabitants of Great Britain when that generation was in existence. For, if we reckon a generation at thirty-three years, twenty-four of such will carry us back 792 years, or to A.D. 1093, when William the Conqueror had been sleeping in his grave at Caen only six years, and his son William II., surnamed Rufus, was reigning over the land. At that time the total number of the inhabitants of England could have been little more than two millions, the amount at which it is esti-

mated during the reign of the Conqueror. It was only one eighth of a nineteenth-century man's ancestors if the normal ratio of progression, as just shown by a simple process of arithmetic, had received no check, and if it had not been bounded by the limits of the population of the country. Since the result of the law of progression, had there been room for its expansion, would have been eight times the actual population, by so much the more is it certain that the lines of every Englishman's ancestry run up to every man and every woman in the reign of William I. from the king and queen downward, who left descendants in the island, and whose progeny has not died out there.—*Rev. Henry Kendall, in Popular Science Monthly for January*.

Lippincott's Magazine for January contains George Eliot's criticisms on her contemporaries originally published in the *Westminster Review*, as one of the editors of which she began her literary career. These writings have so long been overlooked that they now are new to the public. Of Tennyson she said: "As long as the English language is spoken the word-music of Tennyson must charm the ear; and when English has become a dead language, his wonderful concentration of thought into luminous speech, the exquisite pictures in which he has blended all the hues of reflection, feeling and fancy, will cause him to be read as we read Homer, Horace and Pindar." Of Dickens and Thackeray: "The fact that Mr. Thackeray has succeeded so well in drawing Rebecca Sharp and Blanche Amory, the representatives of two classes, so like yet so different, without exaggerating the peculiarities of either, would alone prove him to have the most intimate acquaintance with human nature of any writer of the day. Mr. Dickens generally solves the problem in a different way; his characters, even when they are only of the *bourgeois* class, are nearly always furnished with some peculiarity, which, like the weight of a Dutch clock, is their ever gravitating principle of action. The consequence is, they have, most of them, the appearance of puppets which Mr. Dickens has constructed especially for his present purpose." Of Carlyle and Kingsley: "Carlyle's great merits Mr. Kingsley's powers are not fitted to achieve: his genius lies in another direction. He has not that piercing insight which every now and then flashes to the depths of things, and alternating as it does with the most obstinate one-sidedness, makes Carlyle a wonderful paradox of wisdom and wilfulness; he has not that awful sense of the mystery of existence which continually checks and chastens the denunciations of Teufelsdröckh; still less has he the rich humor, the keen satire, and the tremendous word-missiles which Carlyle hurls about as Milton's angels hurl the rocks." Of Ruskin: "Now, Mr. Ruskin has a voice, and one of such power that, whatever error he may mix with his truth, he will make more converts to that truth than less erring advocates who are hoarse and feeble." Of Robert Browning: "We admire his power, we are not subdued by it. Language with him does not seem to spontaneously link itself into song, as sounds link themselves into melody in the mind of the creative musician; he rather seems by his commanding powers to compel language into verse. He has *chosen* verse as his medium; but of our greatest poets we feel that they had no choice; verse chose them."