

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE.

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WHEN the first number of *Education* reached us, we felt it our duty to criticise on its merits this magazine which came into the world with somewhat of a flourish of trumpets, and at a cost of four dollars a year—beyond the means of most teachers. We are glad, therefore, to tell our readers that we notice great improvement in *Education*, whose current issue contains a number of essays of which we are glad to give some account to our readers. The first is an article covering twenty pages, on the functions of the American Public School as a political, social and moral educator. The writer shews how the radical conceptions which imply Freedom, Equality and Brotherhood, are involved in the existence and conditions of Common School life. He has some valuable remarks on the possibility of a non-sectarian religious training as a basis for moral teaching:—

"The delicate question of the relation of the instruction in school to the inculcation of principles of morality and natural religion, to say nothing of revealed religion, must not, therefore, be passed in silence. Between the conception of a purely theological basis for the Common School, and a proposed foundation which excludes Bible, prayer, and allusions to the soul's alliance with its Maker, there lies for the average citizen the middle ground of opinion, which is a standing-place for those favouring a reasonable degree of religious teaching, the clear enunciation of morality, and devotional exercises which are not the expression of doctrine so much as a setting forth of the feeling of dependence on God, and the need of asking for his aid. The immutable distinction between right and wrong—where is greater reason for the declaration of it than among the young characters who are to taste and are tasting of the bitterness of wrong-doing, and the content of minds conscious of recti-

tude? It would be a narrow and perverted view that would oppose the simple ethical instruction which the child will find of lasting advantage."

Such reasoning shews the relation between moral teaching (on a religious basis) and rational discipline; it dwells on the need of some more intelligent system of teaching, with a large prominence given to the study of nature. The next paper is "On the Application of American Education to the Needs of American Life," a thoughtful essay which does not shrink from owning what is unhealthy in American society. One instance (according to the author) is want of reverence; another is sensationalism. Both ought to be met by the earnest effort to teach a true morality, just political ideas, and a humanizing and enlightening art and literature. On the need of the latter, surely much stress ought to be laid in Canada, where the Government education-mill turns out batch after batch of machine-made teachers, with textbooks of arithmetic and manuals of mathematics inserted as by a surgical operation in their brains, and not a sympathy cultivated that could enable them to educate in any true sense of the word.

We quote from another essay a pregnant condemnation of the present Arithmetic-worship, which a vicious system of routine maintains amongst us, and will maintain until there is a change in our educational administration. What we want is a good *English* education, embracing the history of our race, the nature of the world around us, and especially of our own country, and an appreciative knowledge of some of the noblest thoughts which our great writers have put into the noblest language. But a mere summing machine is incapable of anything of the sort. It is quite out of his line. Says the author, at page 143 of *Education*:—