

## Contemporary Thought.

GENERAL S. C. ARMSTRONG, who has had seventeen years of experience in teaching the Industrial School for negroes at Hampton, writes, "There is now a large class of negro mechanics in the South, carpenters, blacksmiths and bricklayers. The proof of the capacity of the negro for skilled labor is, I think, ample. I fully believe in it. The great difficulty is their lack of opportunity to learn. They have less chance to learn now than in the days of slavery, which, in a crude way, was a great industrial school. I have seen so much evidence here of the negro's desire to learn trades, and have had such satisfactory experience of the race as mechanics, that I consider its success a question of opportunity only."

SPECIAL devices for adding interest to school work are well enough, but nothing of this kind can ever take the place of an honest purpose and an earnest spirit in the teacher. Artificial devices, like shavings, may serve a good purpose as kindling, but they do not last. The honest purpose and earnest spirit of the teacher are like the light and heat of the sun. They are constant, enduring and efficient. The teachers that are most respected and loved by their pupils, and that live longest in their memories, are those who are most efficient in the proper work of the school, not those who are most fertile in expedients for the amusement or entertainment of their pupils. So true is this that pupils will come to tolerate and overlook grievous faults in teachers, in whose honesty of purpose and efficiency they have confidence. —*Ohio Educational Monthly.*

SCIENTIFIC observation is observation of the relations between things. But, before any attempt be made to study these relations, the things themselves should be firmly and clearly apprehended. The different degree of grasp possessed by different minds depends largely upon differences in the degree of vividness and fervor with which they are impressed by individual objects, which leave so many persons in the most limp indifference, while exciting in others an absorbing and even passionate interest. When the individual impressions are so clear, distinct, characteristic, and interesting as to be quite unforgettable, they soon force upon the mind, after prolonged contemplation of them, suggestions of their multiple relations, and the knowledge which was at first simply picturesque becomes, sooner or later, scientific. The mental power which arrives at this is largely innate, and beyond the capacity of any education to bestow. But if any educational method can increase and develop it, it is that which most nearly imitates the spontaneous habits of fertile and original minds, apart from all systematic intention. —*Dr. Mary Putnam-Jacobi, in Popular Science Monthly.*

CRITICAL study of our protective institutions would surprisingly show in how many respects the hygienic reforms of the last two hundred years could have been anticipated by the simple teachings of our senses. For the warls of instinct a temperance sermon would be as superfluous as a lecture on the folly of drinking boiling petroleum, for to the palate of a normal living being—human or animal—alcohol is not only unattractive, but violently repulsive, and the baneful passion to

which that repugnance can be forced to yield is so clearly abnormal that only the infatuation of the natural depravity dogma could ever mistake it for an innate appetite. In defence of the respiratory organs, nature fights almost to the last. The blinded dupe of the night-air superstition would hardly assert that he finds the hot miasma of his unventilated bedroom more pleasant than fresh air. He thinks it safer, in spite—or perhaps because—of its repulsiveness. "Mistrust all pleasant things" was the watchword of the mediæval cosmogony. Long before Jahn and Pestalozzi demonstrated the hygienic importance of gymnastics, children embraced every opportunity for outdoor exercise with a zeal which only persistent restraint could abate. —*Dr. Felix I. Oswald, in Popular Science Monthly for February.*

At a meeting of School Superintendents, held in the City of Washington, the Austrian Minister, Baron von Schaz-Sonborn, was present, and spoke of the educational advantages and influences of expositions. "You remember, gentlemen, there was an old European General by the name of Montezuculi, who said, that if you are preparing for war, and wish to become victors, you must have three necessary things: first, money; secondly, more money; thirdly, much more money." Now, I think every teacher is a general; that is, he is a combatant of ignorance and of superficiality. Now, I think that the want of knowledge is the root of all the evils that exist in the world, and that they can be only successfully combated by three things. These three things are, first, education; secondly, more education; thirdly, much more education. I think, too, that the education of a people must begin in the family circle, and that then every man, every woman, every village, municipality, and corporation, and every State, government, and the general government itself, must aid and contribute to the accomplishment of this vitally important object. —*Quoted by Prof. J. H. Barlow in the Penman's Art Journal.*

AN eminent French chemist, under examination in a court of justice concerning the effect of minute doses of a certain poison, was asked by one of the attorneys derisively: "Could you tell us, professor, the exact dose of this medicine which could be safely administered to a fly?" "I think I could," he replied, "but I should need to know the particular fly under treatment. I should want to know his size, age, state of health, habits of life, whether he was married or single, and what had been his surroundings in life hitherto. All these bear on the size of the dose to be administered in any given case." It would be well if teachers had a modicum of the Frenchman's caution in administering to their pupils. Each individual pupil needs to be known before he can be taught and trained intelligently. The age, state of health, natural disposition, capacity and attainments, tastes and desires, habits of thought and modes of action, characteristics and tendencies, and home surroundings of each pupil must be known to the teacher before he is at all prepared to give to each his portion in due season." Each new pupil is a new problem for the teacher's study. The teacher that never visits the homes of his pupils neglects one of his greatest opportunities. —*Ohio Educational Monthly.*

THE English journals are at the present time very anxious to prove that the American free school system is a failure. Statistics are brought forward showing the alarming amount of illiteracy in some parts of our country, therefore free schools have never done here what pay schools have done in Europe. They overlook the fact that we received from England at the time of our independence a slave system whose stronghold was illiteracy. For more than a century we have been the receptacle into which the refuse population of other lands have been freely poured. We have received from Europe tens of thousands who are among our most enlightened and enterprising people, but with these thousands have come other thousands who have been sent by public funds to the new world. It is a wonder we are not worse off. In New York City there is a class who belong to the very off-scouring of the earth. They came as they are, from foreign lands, and now because they cannot read and write, and because their children are vicious and will not go to school, are we to conclude that the American free school system is a failure? The colored people are learning to read as fast as possible, but the intellect of the average Englishman will have it that because we do not work miracles, and bring up into some sort of education all the Spaniards, Italians, and negroes within our borders, at once, therefore our free school system is of no consequence. —*N. Y. School Journal.*

If there is nothing new under the sun, there is at least something new around it. For the last two years close observers of the sky have noticed that the noonday sun has been surrounded by a corona of dusky, coppery, or reddish light, as it has been variously described, the circle of most distinct color having a radius of about fifteen degrees, and inclosing a brilliant, silvery or bluish glow close around the solar disk. A similar appearance of much less intensity has been occasionally noticed around the full moon on very clear winter nights. The most experienced observers of sky-colors are agreed that this corona was not visible before the latter months of 1883. Von Bezold, of Munich, who was considered the most competent meteorologist to prepare a schedule for observations on the colors of the sky for the recent German Arctic Expedition, says that, in spite of the close attention he had previously given to the appearance of the usual whitish glow around the sun, he had never till recently seen the dusky ring. Thollon, of Nice, who had made a special study of the sky around the sun for a series of years, declares confidently that a change occurred in November, 1883. Backhouse, of Sunderland, who has a careful record of parhelia for twenty-five years, confirms this opinion. We may, therefore, safely accept the conclusion that the change of color from the blue of the open sky to the intense glare of whitish light close around the sun, was until lately effected without the appearance of any reddish tinge in the transitional area. The new corona, to which the name of "bishop's ring" has been given after its first observer, has never been a very conspicuous affair, and therefore has not attracted the popular attention that it deserves; but it could easily be seen every clear day last winter, and has repeatedly been noticed since then in the latter months of 1885. —*William M. Davis, in Popular Science Monthly for Feb.*