Contemporary Thought.

THERE are thousands of families doomed to indigence, disappointment, misery, through life, that might have lived at least in decent poverty and with self-respect, but to-day are plunged in hopeless ruin by drink, and are sinking out of sight in the quicksand. —*George Frederic Parsons, in the Atlantic Monthly.*

THE unwarranted lengths to which lawyers too often go, under the shield of privileges afforded them by the Courts, in brow-beating witnesses and denouncing those connected with the opposing side of the case, compels most people to sympathize with those who, like the policemen of Loughrea, are stung by injustice into violent manifestations of their indignation. The Bench, under whose protection witnesses are, is governed rather by the feelings and traditions of the Bar in the matter than by sentiments of justice and humanity.—*Montreal Witness.*

THE necessity of secondary and higher schools was enforced by Mr. E. Crossley, M.P., who spoke on Saturday evening at the opening soiree of the Luddendenfoot Mechanic's Institute, held in the Congregational School, Leeds, England. Mr. R. Whitworth, Halifax, presided, and was supported by Mr. E. Crossley, M.P.; Mr. J. B. Slack, M.A., Ripley; Dr. Thompson, Mytholmroyd; Mr. W. C. Barber, Halifax, and several clergyman. Mr. Crossley, M.P., in the course of his speech, said that they would find that their Government would devote a large share of attention to the great work of national education. They were now only in the beginning. To do justice to the education of the country, they must have secondary and higher schools, and make the pathway so that youths might to be able to attain to the highest positions of eminence. That was essential to the prosperity of their country. The education at present was in need of reform. Mr. M. Arnold had, within the last twelve months, visited many continental schools at the request of the Government. The special characteristics of the schools in Germany, Switzerland and France were that they understood better the principles of teaching than they did in England. They had a broader and a wider basis. They cultivated the reasoning faculties, and as a consequence the minds brought under this mode of teaching were strengthened, and when they came to the higher schools they appreciated it. In England there was too much tendency to give children complicated study, too hard for their mental power and capacity. They ought to begin with simple and salient facts, and talk and exercise their thoughts and reasoning powers. When they had thus spent several years, they could proceed with abstract reasoning and refined theory. England's prosperity in the past was great. They had taken the lead in manufactures. He thought it was not because of their subtle minds, but on account of their natural energy, and because they had enjoyed more peace than other nations. They had been making use of their resources to the best advantage, but they were pressed by the German, French, and other continental peoples, and it was by being well informed as to what these people were doing that they were able to keep abreast of them. To do that it was of the highest importance that education should receive a great share of attention.—*Leeds Times (Eng.)*

Bradstreet's contains an instructive article on a half century of sanitary progress. It says one of the most marked characteristics of the present day is the increased attention paid to matters of sanitation, and in no other direction perhaps has more striking evidence of social progress been made in the last half century. Sanitary inspection and regulations is now considered a necessary part of municipal government. It is considered necessary for the public safety and for the moral and physical well-being of the community, and it is no longer left to the voluntary action of each individual. A man has no more right to keep his own premises in a condition to produce disease and death in the neighbourhood than he has to endanger the property of his neighbours by setting his own property on fire. A half century ago the sanitary condition of England was anything but satisfactory. At that time one-tenth of the population of London, and one-seventh of the population of Liverpool, it was said, lived in cellars. In 1848 Parliament passed an act creating a general board of health. Prior to this, however, legislation had been had with a view to encourage cleanliness among the working classes. Steps were taken also to secure a proper supply of water in towns, and proper drainage. The General Board of Health had no inconsiderable power for the construction of dwellings. They were authorized to manage, repair and clean the streets, to cleanse and regulate sewers, and to abate nuisances. Under the law, wherever the reports showed that the number of deaths in the preceding seven years exceeded twenty-three per 1,000, the General Board was authorized to send an inspector to inspect the sanitary condition of the locality. Since 1848 upwards of $650,000,000 have been expended upon sanitary works. The effect has been that the annual death rate of the United Kingdom has diminished 2½ per cent. in half a century. The statistics, however, show that the improvements in towns and cities have not kept pace with the rural districts. It is more difficult to build comfortable houses and provide for the well-being of the poorer classes in towns and cities than in the agricultural portions of the United Kingdom, and we dare say that the same rule applies elsewhere.—*London Advertiser.*

HENRY GEORGE, in the lecture which he delivered in Montreal some time ago, represented work as an unmitigated evil, distasteful to men of every class and condition. He ridiculed those economists and moralists who regard work in itself as a good thing, and he stigmatised those who maintain that men enjoy work as either fools or hypocrites. "I don't like work," he said, "and I don't believer that any one else does." Now, Mr. Henry George is a thinker, a writer, a philosopher and a promulgator of a strange doctrine with regard to the ownership of land, which most people find difficult to comprehend. They cannot see that his conclusions logically follow from his premises, and they find it very hard to believe that most of the evils which afflict modern society are caused by individuals being permitted to have what in reality amounts to an absolute property in land. But those of them who are modest and unprejudiced are inclined to doubt the soundness of their own conclusions; they have their misgivings as to their ability to form a correct judgment on Mr. George's elaborate theories, and fear that if they do not agree with him, the error must be theirs and not his. He has spent almost a lifetime in studying the subject, they have been able to give it only a few hours' consideration, and they naturally feel that it is a little presumptuous in them to place their crude and hastily formed views in opposition to his matured opinions. The subject may be too difficult for them, and the argument too complicated to be readily followed and understood. But when the great land reformer comes to talk about work, he deals with a subject that comes within the range of their experience, and when he boldly and confidently says what they know to be untrue about work, they naturally, and with good reason, conclude that if he makes a gross and palpable mistake on such a simple subject as that, he is liable to fall into error on one that is much harder to understand. We say unhesitatingly that every man's experience tells him that the very opposite of what Henry George says about work is true. Men, as a rule, like work. Man is as much a working animal as he is a "land animal." As soon as he emerges from infancy man delights in the exercise of brain and muscle. How restless children are, and how proud they are to be of use. How long and perseveringly some of them will work to accomplish some object on which they have set their hearts. The purest, the keenest, as well as the most lasting enjoyment, that men are capable of consists in the exercise of mind and body for some useful purpose. Who has not felt that the very act of working, irrespective of the object to be gained by it, is a positive pleasure? Take any man who is worth anything and ask him if he has not enjoyed life more when he has been at work than when he has been idle, and the answer will be in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred an emphatic affirmative. And this is only according to Nature's great plan. Nature never works aimlessly. When she gives powers and capabilities, she also gives the will to exercise them and a delight in their exercise. The strong man rejoices in his strength, be it of body or of mind. What would be the greatest punishment that could be inflicted on a man of such activity of mind and body as Henry George himself? Why, to condemn him to be idle. Work is not merely a habit with such a man. It is a necessity. He not like work? He would be miserable without it. Of course the work which men like must be congenial, and by "congenial" we mean that which a man can successfully accomplish. The work of Sisyphus is torture, not because it is work, but because his labour accomplishes nothing. If he could manage to roll the stone up the hill, no matter how slowly or with how much toil, it would have its compensation and its gratification. We are inclined to believe that the man doomed to ceaseless, resultless work is less to be pitied than one compelled to pass an existence without employment of any kind. Such an existence for a rational being would be simply unendurable. So erroneous are the utterances of Mr. Henry George with regard to this matter of work that the intelligent reader who considers them thoughtfully will come to the conclusion that if the author of "Progress and Poverty" is as far astray on the Land Question as he is on the "work" question, it is not safe to trust him as a guide on great and far-reaching questions of social reform.—*Montreal Star.*