

Contemporary Thought.

THE adoption of the elective system has, says President Eliot, produced a great increase in intellectual intercourse and spontaneous association for intellectual objects among the students, and young men who find themselves associated in the pursuit of the same or kindred studies, talk and work together over them.

WHAT is this quality in the sad tones of Russian writers, as in all Turgeneff's stories, for example, so different from that of any other people? The sadness of the German, in literature, often appears weak, self-indulgent, sentimental; the sadness of the Frenchman is a little too neatly expressed; the sadness of the Englishman or American is oftenest only a dramatic and imagined one, for his own genuine sorrows he is not apt to express, openly and directly. In the Russian mournfulness there lies something heavy, oppressive—terrible in its reality, and in the simple, honest expression of it; as if the dark mood were the natural air of the country, that all men breathed, and that no one need be reticent about; as if some weight of national wrong and hopelessness were added to all individual sorrow, so as to make it the common experience, and even the common bond. Turgeneff seems to me one of the greatest figures of our time, and in all ways the most mournful figure. A friend of mine, while on his travels, wrote me some years ago from Paris: "The biggest thing I have seen abroad is Mont Blanc, but the greatest is Turgeneff." Then he referred to the sober existence of the man, and how he spoke pathetically of his own perennial interest in birds and beasts, and affirmed that except for this he did not know how he could get on with human life at all. —*February Atlantic.*

Now that our universities and colleges are introducing pedagogics into the curriculum, and appointing professors of the sovereign art of instruction, any suggestions as to the fit method of handling such a department are in order. It is pretty evident that the mere delivery of a course of lectures, or an occasional recitation from a text book, through the year usually devoted to this study, useful in a sense as this may be, is no fit outcome of so important an enterprise. A most valuable part of such instruction should be a history of pedagogics, so taught that it would leave upon the mind the distinct impression that teaching is the highest of all professions and the soul of all others save itself: that this profession has a great history in the past, and is developed under peculiar and most interesting conditions in our own country. The most difficult point to manage is the practice department, which, under ordinary circumstances, cannot be had in a proper practice-school in a college. An expedient which we noticed at the State University of Missouri impressed us favorably. After a term of lectures, connected with the study of a good text-book, the members of the class spent several months in observation of the recitation-rooms of the heads of the several departments of the university, studying carefully the most successful methods used by the superior instructors in every branch which they will be called to teach. This training is especially valuable

when we remember that college graduates are often called to the most difficult posts of instruction, where they so often fail from absolute lack of experience, having never even observed the methods of their own teachers with any view to future use.—*New England Journal of Education.*

IT should be borne in mind that one is not dealing with school-boys, but with young men who, if they are as ignorant of biology as school-boys, have, however, learned other things, and whose development, obtained from studies at school, so far from making them better able, has, in the majority of cases, made them only the less fit to take up biological studies. If they have much to learn, they have also something to unlearn. They have been taught to rush at a fact as a bull rushes at a red rag—for the purpose of tossing it away immediately. The position of the instructor is not an easy one. He is under constant restraint, as he must not tell the student, but must, if possible, make the student tell him, the structure of what lies before him. He is in the position of a boxing-master, who might easily floor his pupil by a single blow, but who must, by the exertion of great prudence and skill, contrive to let the pupil hit him. By a judicious series of questions, suggestions of possibilities or alternatives, the student may be kept in the right track and yet do all the work of advancing toward the truth himself. Under no circumstances should an instructor let a student, who is a beginner, discover what his own views are about a point to be studied. Although they may be wretched observers of natural objects, it does not follow that students are not good judges of human nature. Without any instruction they manage to become adepts in that direction. They often hope, by the exercise of ingenuity in detecting allusions to what they are studying, in remarks carelessly made by the instructor, to find out what his pet ideas and theories are. And where is the instructor who is not pleased to find his own favorite opinions ardently, and, as it seems, independently indorsed even by a student?—*From "Biological Teaching in Colleges," by PROFESSOR W. G. FARLOW, in Popular Science Monthly for March.*

ANOTHER difficulty is the almost universal habit which students have of using technical or semi-technical terms which, in reality, convey to them no idea whatever. They think they have comprehended the thing when they christen it with a high-sounding name, and they do not stop to ask themselves whether they understand what the name means. The student who called a hole in a cellar-wall a bioplast was quite pleased with his achievement until he was asked what a bioplast was. The suggestion that a hole might, without any great violence to the English language, be called a hole, was timely if not pleasing. Evidently, for an educated man, the art of calling a spade a spade is difficult to acquire. Day after day, one is obliged to ask students to translate their lingo—I don't know what else to call it—into English. Frequently they can not. At length they begin to see that they are only deceiving themselves by using words which they do not comprehend to describe structures which they do not understand. It frequently happens that, after a student has described an object under the microscope in what he considers fine scientific language,

he admits that he does not understand the structure of the object at all, but, on making him start over again, and describe it in plain English, he finds that it all comes out clearly enough. It is evident, for instance, that, so long as a student thinks he must call all round bodies in cells nuclei, he will soon have such a stock of nuclei on hand that he will be hopelessly confused, and the matter is not much improved if, as a last resort, he indiscriminately calls some of his superfluous nuclei vacuoles and others bioplasts. The tendency to use meaningless words is not, by any means, confined to biological students, but, in a laboratory where one is examining something definite, the evil should certainly be checked by frequent demands for English translations of verbose rubbish.—*PROFESSOR W. G. FARLOW, in Popular Science Monthly for March.*

It may not generally be known that the alumnae of the more important centres of female higher education in this country have an organized inter-collegiate association for the promotion of woman's education and the study of questions regarding her training. This association has justified its existence, if justification were necessary, by the inquiries which it has made regarding the health of those women who have pursued college courses. The importance of the results thus obtained has led to their incorporation in the "Current Report of the Massachusetts Labor Bureau." For the first time the discussion is taken from the *a priori* realm of theory on the one hand, and the haphazard estimate of physician and college instructor on the other. The returns have the value of all good statistics: they not only enable us to come to some conclusion upon the main point discussed, but they are so full and varied that they suggest and mark the way toward the discussion of a large number of other hardly less important questions. The figures, in short, call up as many problems as they settle, thus fulfilling the first requisite of fruitful research.

Pursuing this line, we shall first state the general character of the investigation followed and conclusions reached; and, secondly, isolate a few special problems for more detailed though brief treatment. The result may be summed up in the words of the report, as follows: "The female graduates of our colleges and universities do not seem to show, as the result of their college studies and duties, any marked difference in general health from the average health likely to be reported by an equal number of women engaged in other kinds of work. It is true that there has been, and it was to be expected that there would be, a certain deterioration in health on the part of some of the graduates. On the other hand, an almost identical improvement in health for a like number was reported, showing very plainly that we must look elsewhere for the causes of the greater part of this decline in health during college-life. If we attempt to trace the cause, we find that this deterioration is largely due, not to the requirements of college-life particularly, but to predisposing causes natural to the graduates themselves, born in them, as it were, and for which college-life or study should not be made responsible."—*From "Health and Sex in Higher Education," by JOHN DEWEY, in Popular Science Monthly for March.*