Contemporary Thought.

I DON'T see no kind o' sense in all this here talk about teaching the English language in them gramer schools and high schools and in the State Unaversaty. If a man can't tell all he knows without he has studdied four years how to say it, it's because he knows something which ain't worth saying. I never seen the day when I couldn't express my thoughts forcibler and eleganter than them as is making all this row and wanting everybody learnt to speak good enough for a newspaper. And the editor of the *Examiner* he says that's jest the way with *him*. [!]—*The Wasp.*

IF there is any man in England who has the strength of righteous anger, the strength of a piercing analytical intellect, the strength of opulent culture, splendid eloquence and an acquaintance with the aspects of nature that make all the rest of us seem schoolboys—it is John Ruskin. There is not a man living, besides the Master of Brantwood, who could write "Modern Painters," or the "Crown of Wild Olive," or "Unto This Last." Ruskin *is* a strong man; his mind and soul are strong, but his body is weak, and yet not so very weak, either. A man who can publish some sixty masterly volumes, and have material by him for seventy more, can scarcely be called weak. In a recently published London photograph (profile view) you may see a head as massive and finely uniform as Carlyle's or Whitman's. I call Ruskin fully as strong a man as the eternally whining and growling sage of Cheyne Row. Mr. G. W. Smalley related in the *Tribune* at the time of Carlyle's death that Prof. Ruskin had the power of instantly calming and silencing his irate friend whenever in a conversation with others he had lost control of his temper.—*W. S. Kennedy in the Critic.*

AMERICA has its perils, and the one before it now is the peril of *falling into bondage to the uneducated.* We need vigorous high schools to carry the best intellects of the people up into the region where they can comprehend the highest thought. The high and normal schools of this country are stairs by which these may ascend among the educated circles. It is in the interest of the whole country that a means should exist by which a worthy pupil may ascend from the lowest rank in life to the highest level education has reached. Support and extend our high school system. It is not the educated classes that gather in mobs; the uneducated and half educated may do it. Make the higher schools flourish. There never was a time in this country when the need of education was more apparent than to-day. We have men who can read and write, enough of them, but they are led by glib talkers; and the newspapers, desirous of selling their wares, dare not discuss the solid underlying principles of human action. Now we see the need of high schools; they were established with a protest. The high schools and the colleges are going to be our solid help in the strain that is coming. We need thinkers; the mere power to read does not emancipate a man.—*New York School Journal.*

WE have long been used to the spectacle of English novelists turning out their work with all the regularity and punctuality of a machine in good running order. Anthony Trollope and Mrs. Oliphant occur at once to one as authors whose fiction could be counted on every season, year after year; and there was something agreeable in the reflection that one would get his minor canon or small lord, with now and then a bishop and a premier, as promptly and as surely as he got his tax-bill. It is only now, however, that one may count with equal confidence upon the home supply, and through the agency of the monthly magazine one may have his James, or his Crawford, or his Howells, year in and year out. We name these three because they are at present the most distinctly professional novelists in America, and add their books to the annual sum of fiction with a delightful regard for the public eye and ear. Surely, it is no small mercy that, in these days of wearisome readjustment of all earthly affairs, three estimable gentlemen devote themselves with incredible industry and cheerfulness to the task of entertaining their countrymen. They are knights of labour who never seem dissatisfied with their lot, never work less than twenty-four hours a day—it is impossible that they can accomplish all they do in less time—and never seem to be engaged on any strike or boycotting lark.—*Atlantic Monthly for May.*

THE present historical school, which is by far the best, because it is philosophical, and which is now superseding the old, has placed Carlyle's historical writings in the class of romance, alongside the histories of James Anthony Froude, and of Washington Irving. They are all works that we may profit by reading—I mean by reading them *as* romance, not as history. In some of them the King and his court, or one or two other prominent personages, were evidently regarded as the only themes worthy of an historian. To men whose minds have not been dissipated by the reading of historical fiction for history, it is patent that history *ought not* to be wholly occupied with sovereigns and other great personages; but to this idea Thomas Carlyle was a stranger, as were several other historians of his day, and the great body of British historians before his day. With some the people occasionally were seen, but incidentally only—and then either hurrahing the King or meekly petitioning him for permission to live. Buckle, in his great "History of Civilization," completely broke away from the old lines, and though he is not always perfectly fair, entitled himself to the lasting respect of all true lovers of history; but Buckle's "History of Civilization" at first made but slight impression in England, because he boldly ventured to intimate that in his opinion human affairs were not, after all, dependent upon one or two crowned heads, one of these the crowned head of Britain.—"Sartor Resartus, jr.," *in the Halifax Critic.*

THE doctrine of evolution recognizes the fact that the development of social and physical organisms is not an unbroken march of progress. Advancement alternates with pauses, as day with night, or life with death; the phenomena of progressive life roll through the cycles of germination, maturity and decay. In the household of nature every grave is a cradle: the mould of every fallen tree furthers the growth of new trees. Grecian colonies flourished on the ruins of Troy, Persian provinces on the ruins of Babylon, Macedonian kingdoms on the grave of the Persian Empire; Roman legionaries inherited the wealth and the culture of conquered Greece. The conquerors of Rome were the noblest, stoutest, and manliest races of the Caucasian world; freemen, in love with health and nature, yet withal with poetry, glory, honour, justice, and honest thrift. They planted their banners in the garden-lands of the West; and their empires, gilt by the morning light of a new era, were founded under auspices far happier than those of the Arabian satrapies in the worn-out soil of the East. In less than five hundred years after the establishment of their political independence, the civilization of the Greeks, the Romans, and the Arabs, had developed its fairest flowers—industry, commercial activity, art, liberal education, flourishing schools of philosophy, poetry, and natural science. Five hundred years after the triumph of the Gothic conquerors we find their empires groaning under a concentration of all scourges. The day-star of civilization had set in utter night; the proud nations of the West had sunk in poverty, bigotry, general ignorance, cruel abasement of the lower classes, squalid misery of domestic life, systematic suppression of political, personal and intellectual liberty.—*Popular Science Monthly.*

WHEREVER the name Tennyson is a word of music—that is to say, wherever English poetry is read and enjoyed—the news that a son of the Laureate's was lying dangerously ill of jungle fever in India caused sympathetic anxiety and alarm. And we do not exaggerate, we think, in saying that the mournful announcement of his death (which took place in the thirty-third year of his age on board the *Chusan* at Aden, on the 20th ult.) will darken with a deep sorrow not only every door in Great Britain, but every door in that great cordon of British homes which girdles all the seas and all the world. This it is to be the beloved son of the most beloved Englishman of our time; yet it would be unjust to the memory of Lionel Tennyson to suppose that the sole reason why his death demands a word of notice in *The Athenæum* is that he was the son of his father. Had he lived he could hardly have failed to make his mark in the contemporary struggle of literature, severe as that struggle now is. . . . He had for some years held a post in the Political and Secret Department of the India Office—a post for which his intense interest in Indian subjects well fitted him. His report on India last year showed that his practical mastery of details, his power of generalizing heterogeneous masses of facts, were quite as strong as the literary faculty we have been glancing at. The visit of himself and Mrs. Lionel to Lord Dufferin had been a happy and joyous one until the fatal jungle fever crossed his path. He married, it will be remembered, the brilliant and accomplished daughter of one of our most brilliant and accomplished writers of society verse, Mr. Frederick Locker; and it is to one of the children of this marriage that the Laureate addressed a poem which every one knows by heart.—*The Athenæum.* [The late Lionel Tennyson was a contributor to various periodicals, including *The Nineteenth Century*, *The Cornhill* and *The Saturday Review.*]