

Contemporary Thought.

IF we are to have American mechanics who cannot only compete with but excel foreign workmen, some systematic plan of instruction must be adopted. The trade school must be as much a part of our educational system as is the professional school, the agricultural school, or the business college. The trade school instruction can be given after the lad has found employment in the workshop, as is the custom in Europe, or, like professional and business schools, it can precede real work. This latter plan of learning how to work at a trade school before seeking employment has, perhaps, advantages which are worthy of consideration. It relieves the employer of much of the responsibility of training the lad. By the instruction he has received at the trade school he has become a source of profit instead of trouble. The school has taught him how to handle his tools and the science on which his trade is based. He has yet to acquire speed of execution and the experience which long practice at real work alone can give, for it is doubtful if it would be advisable, even if it were possible, for a trade school to graduate a mechanic. What is also a matter of no small importance the lad has ascertained if he has any ability or taste for the work he has chosen. He may have been two years in a shop before he has had the opportunity of gaining this knowledge. Two years is a long time to lose; it may be difficult to find other work; so the young mechanic is tempted to continue at work in which he will have no heart and never be likely to do well. The time passed at a trade school would not be wasted if it did nothing more than keep the lad from a trade for which he was unsuited.—*Building.*

HERE are some of my first impressions of England as seen from the carriage and from the cars. How very English! I recall Birket Foster's Pictures of English Landscapes—a beautiful, poetical series of views, but hardly more poetical than the reality. How thoroughly England is groomed! Our New England out-of-doors landscape often looks as if it had just got out of bed, and had not finished its toilet. The glowing green of everything strikes me: green hedges in place of our rail fences, always ugly, and our rude stone walls, which are not wanting in a certain look of fitness approaching to comeliness, and are really picturesque when lichen-coated, but poor features of a landscape as compared to these universal hedges. I am disappointed in the trees, so far; I have not seen one large tree as yet. Most of the trees are of very moderate dimensions, feathered all the way up their long, slender trunks, with a top-sided mop of leaves at the top, like a wig which has slipped awry. I trust that I am not finding everything *couleur de rose*; but I certainly do find the cheeks of children and young persons of such brilliant rosy hue as I do not remember that I have ever seen before. I am almost ready to think this and that child's face has been coloured from a pink saucer. If the Saxon youths exposed for sale at Rome, in the days of Pope Gregory the Great, had complexions like these children, no wonder that the pontiff exclaimed, Not *Angli*, but *angeli*! All this may sound a little extravagant, but I am giving my impressions without any intentional ex-

aggeration. How far these first impressions may be modified by after-experiences there will be time enough to find out and to tell. It is better to set them down at once just as they are. A first impression is one never to be repeated; the second look will see much that was not noticed, but it will not reproduce the sharp lines of the first proof, which is always interesting, no matter what the eye or the mind fixes upon. "I see men as trees walking." That first experience could not be mended. When Dickens landed in Boston, he was struck with the brightness of all the objects he saw—buildings, signs, and so forth. When I landed in Liverpool, everything looked very dark, very dingy, very massive, in the streets I drove through. So in London, but in a week it all seemed natural enough.—*Oliver Wendell Holmes, in Atlantic Monthly.*

ONE great means of securing religious knowledge in the public schools, would be the offering of prizes by such a body as this, or by the board for proficiency, to be tested by periodical examinations, for which arrangements could well be made by permission of the trustees. There is an interesting example of this in what has been accomplished in the City of London, England. Mr. Francis Peak and the Religious Tract Society, began the good work by offering some thousands of Bibles and Testaments as prizes for Scripture knowledge, tested by examination in the Board School. In the City of London, besides the church and denominational schools (there are some 1,034 schools under the school board for London, with some 250,000 pupils). All the children are eligible for this competition, but the attendance is voluntary, and it is encouraging to find that, while there is no obligation to attend this examination, the proportion is so large as practically to amount to the whole number at school. In 1884, out of 237,876 children at school, 192,149 came up for examination, the difference being almost entirely accounted for by the number in infant classes not eligible for such a test. The public school course there is in six standards, corresponding in some degree to forms or classes. In 1884, I find that in the lowest or first standard there was prescribed for the examination seventeen verses from Exodus and seventeen verses from St. Matthew, to be in substance committed to memory, and for study there was prescribed the early lives of Samuel and David, with outlines of the life of Christ. For the second standard they had for memory the same, with two Psalms added; and for study the life of Abraham. For the third standard, there was added to the foregoing seventeen verses of St. John to be learned, and for study the lives of Jacob and Joseph. For the fourth standard, there was added for study the life of Moses, the fuller life of Christ, with the parables and discourses, and eight chapters of the Acts. For the fifth standard there was added for repetition the 15th of St. John, and for study the lives of Samuel and David, the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke, and the first twenty-four chapters of the Acts. For the sixth, or highest standard, there was added for study the lives of Elijah and Daniel, and further knowledge of the Gospels and the Acts, especially as to St. Paul. I am not aware of anything of the kind being attempted here, but why not? Most of the children examined were about ten or eleven years

of age, an age when we lose them in Sunday School.—*From an Essay by Alex. Marling, Esq., read before the Toronto Church Sunday School Association, in the Chapel of Holy Trinity Church, Toronto, Feb. 10th, 1887, and contributed to the "Evangelical Churchman."*

AGAIN, consider the teaching of Professor Huxley. With whatever rhetorical ornaments he may guild it, what is its practical outcome but materialism? I am well aware of his opinion that the question "whether there is really anything anthropomorphic, even in man's nature," will ever remain an open one. I do not lose sight of his recognition of "the necessity of cherishing the noblest and most human of man's emotions by worship, for the most part of the silent sort, at the altar of the Unknown and Unknowable." But, on the other hand, I remember his positive declaration that "consciousness is a function of nervous matter, when that nervous matter has attained a certain degree of organization." I remember, too, his confident anticipation that "we shall sooner or later arrive at a mechanical equivalent of consciousness, just as we have arrived at a mechanical equivalent of heat." And I do not forget that singularly powerful passage in his "Lay Sermons"—who that has once read it can forget it?—in which he enforces what he deems "the great truth," that "the progress of science has in all ages meant, and now more than ever means, the extension of the province of what we call matter and causation, and the concomitant gradual banishment, from all regions of human thought, of what we call spirit and spontaneity"; that "as surely as every future grows out of the past and present, so will the physiology of the future gradually extend the realm of matter and law until it is coextensive with knowledge, with feeling, with action." Once more. Let us turn to a teacher more widely influential perhaps, than even Mr. Huxley. I mean Mr. Herbert Spencer. He, too, recognizes "an unknown and unknowable power without beginning or end in time." He tells us expressly in his "Psychology" that consciousness can not be a mode of movement, and that if we must choose between these two modes of being, as the generative and primitive mode, it would be the first and not the last which he would choose. These sayings certainly do not sound like materialism. I think, however, that if we closely examine his writings, we shall find the persistence of force his one formula. With that he will bring for you life out of the non-living; morality out of the unethical; the spiritual out of the physical. The persistence of force? I trust it will not seem to exhibit an unappreciativeness, which I am far from feeling, of the high gifts and unwearied self-devotion of this eminent man, if I say that he has always appeared to me to belong to a class of thinkers aptly described in one of Voltaire's letters: "Des gens que se mettent, sans façon, dans la place de Dieu: qui veulent créer le monde avec la parole." But this autotheism is really materialism in disguise. If all beings, all modes and forms of existence are, but transformations of force, obeying only mechanical laws, the laws of movement—and that is what Mr. Spencer's doctrine amounts to, if there is any meaning in words—what is the universe but a senseless mechanism?—*From "Materialism and Morality," by W. S. Lilly, in Popular Science Monthly.*