Contemporary Thought.

THE truth of the matter is, the recent revival in education is due for the most part to the energy of thoughtful teachers who have brought to light the old truths of masters and have faithfully put in practice what others have been preaching about. It has come from the presenting of objects, material or physical, to the pupil's mind, the exciting of his curiosity, the directing of his observation, the fixing of his attention, and assisting him to know these objects, rather than to know about them. It has come from the study of literature rather than the study *about* literature; from the study of science rather than the definitions of science; and of language instead of grammar.—*Ohio Educational Weekly.*

IF people do not learn German, French, and every other language now-a-days, it will not be for lack of "methods," opportunities, and text-books. The panting critic can hardly keep up with the steady stream of publications bearing on language-study. Two new books call attention again to the rival and conflicting methods of teaching modern languages. The drift is irresistible towards oral methods, conversational helps, and instruction by object-teaching. The profound impression which Pestalozzi, Froebel, and others have made on the teaching world by their kindergarten method—which is only another name for the "natural" method—is seen in the rapidity with which this method has been utilized by Sauveur and others in the higher grades of teaching.—*Critic.*

THE *Critic*, in its critique of Froebel's "Education of Man," translated by Josephine Jarvis, (New York: A. Lovell & Co.) writes as follows:—"Every enthusiast delights in being surpassed by his pupils. Froebel himself, whose system is acknowledged the best that has been originated for the education of the young child, would rejoice to know that his methods have been adopted and extended to a degree that makes most of the recent text-books on kindergarten ideas far more helpful than his own. His own book is now chiefly valuable as a curiosity, to show how the ideas originated which have been developed till the kindergarten, in its general tendency, is acknowledged the best possible system yet for the growing child. The error of Froebel's book is the one slight error which is noticeable throughout the system, viz., an over-abundance of what we hardly know whether to call profundity or simplicity, but which is certainly too profound simplicity. There is a great deal which, with all respect for this excellent method, we can but pronounce extremely silly; such as the elaborate philosophy as to a mother's unconscious reasoning for the benefit of the child every time she murmurs, 'Now, bite your little finger!' or, 'Where is the bow-wow?' A little of the good old-fashioned neglect is by no means amiss even in modern improvements on the old systems; and the mother who stops to think, every time she puts on her baby's stocking, what she had better say to him about it, will find in time that she is developing an unmitigated prig."

WE hear much now-a-days about the "natural method" of learning languages, and the phrase is explained as meaning the method by which a child learns. Is the method natural to the child necessarily natural to the man or woman, or indeed to the youth of fairly developed mind? It is natural for a child to creep. Shall the man, therefore, give up using only two legs, and take to locomotion on all fours? It is natural for a child to learn imitatively, at its mother's knee. Must the man, therefore, follow the same way, clinging close to the same famous educational appliance? Is it not an absurdity, in education and everywhere else, to say that the methods natural in the nursery are also natural for adults?

EVERY age and every country has of necessity its own special culture and curriculum of studies. Education is relative only. Some people speak as if they thought a fixed, ideal course of study possible. Nothing is more visionary. What suits one state of society does not suit another. What meets the demands of one age will be entirely behind and insufficient in another. The trouble with most higher institutes of learning is, that they do not recognize a progress in education. They are hoary with ancient thought, method and practices. Their teachers, with some eminent exceptions, are men who work in ruts and are controlled by precedent and ancient authorities. They think that Euclid knew more than Newton, and Aristotle more than Francis Bacon or Herbert Spencer. Their work is overlaid with dead formalities, and lies apart from the living moving world of to-day It is a well-known fact that young men educated under this system once out of school are unfitted for life's duties. Their first work is to train them selves anew for practical life. Such monastic culture will not last—cannot last. The great demand of the age is for a more practical education, and the authorities are beginning to heed it. Industrial schools and special schools and optional studies are coming up everywhere in obedience to this demand. Educators begin to recognize the fact that they must adapt their schools to the necessities of those who are to be educated just as a merchant studies to know what goods are in demand among his customers. A stock of goods that would suit New York City would not suit the average East Tennessee village. In the same way people of different circumstances cannot profitably be educated exactly alike.—*From a paper read before the Tennessee State Teachers' Association at Jonesboro, August 5th, 1885, by Prof. T. C. Karns, Carson College, Tenn.*

WHEN a "higher education" is demanded for any class of persons as women—it means that it has become desirable to train their faculties for more difficult work than that traditionally assigned to them, and also that it is desirable to enable them to get more enjoyment out of any work that they do. The necessary correlative of the possession of powers is the opportunity for their exercise. The existence of a larger class of effectively educated women must increase their demand for a larger share in that part of the world's work which requires trained intelligence. Of this, literature and other art is one and only one portion. The work of the professions, of the upper regions of industry, commerce, and finance, the work of scientific and of political life, is the work appropriate to the intelligences which have proved themselves equal to a course of training at once complex and severe. A person destined to receive a superior education is expected to develop more vigorous mental force, to have a larger mental horizon, to handle more complex masses of ideas, than another. From the beginning, therefore, he must not merely receive useful information, but be habituated to perform difficult mental operations, for only in this way can the sum of mental power be increased. The order, arrangement, and sequence of the ideas he acquires must be as carefully planned as is the selection of the ideas themselves, because upon this order and internal proportion his mental horizon depends. He must be trained in feats of sustained attention, and in the collocation and association of elementary ideas into complex combinations. Since ideas are abstractions from sense-perceptions, he must be exercised in the acquisition of accurate, rapid, far-reaching, and delicate sense perceptions, in their memorization, and in the representative imagination which may recall them at will, and be able to abstract from them, more or less remotely, ideas. Habits of rich association of ideas must be formed, and of pleasure in their contemplation. And very early must be offered to the child problems to be solved, either by purely mental exertion, or by that combined with manual labor.—*From "An Experiment in Primary Education," by Dr. Mary Putnam-Jacobi, in Popular Science Monthly for August.*

The decrying of grammar, in connection with the study of language, at present so common, we believe to be foolish and excessive, and sure before long to produce a reaction. For a mind mature, or approaching maturity, the natural method of studying a language is not by parrot-like imitation, but by looking into the why and wherefore of things, forming some idea of the philosophy which lies at the bottom, reaching a clear comprehension of the rational—in a word, in arriving at a knowledge of its grammar. All who know anything of education know the value of linguistic training as one of its processes, and what is linguistic training but training in grammar? Is it not the case that those who so find fault with the study of grammar would deprive us, if they could, of one of the best means for giving the mind grasp, keenness, power of discrimination? Suppose the student has before him a complicated English sentence which he is to render into German. He questions thus: Of these clauses, which are principal and which subordinate? Of the subordinate clauses, which are adjective and which adverbial? This "before"—am I to understand it as adverb, preposition, or conjunction? This "since"—does it require me to put the verb before the subject, or is it the "since" that throws the verb to the end of its clause? Have I in this verb which I must use a separable or inseparable prefix, and in the connection in which I must place it, is a separation (if the prefix be separable) necessary? These questions of grammar and such as these, which come up in the proper study of German, one cannot deal with without obtaining for the perspective and discriminating power of his mind a most helpful exercise. In putting English into German, as in our example, and in the converse process of putting German into English, with attention to the philosophy of the sentence, the much abused grammar is the basis of linguistic training, than which few things in education are more helpful. For minds mature, or approaching maturity—and such are the minds for the most part, who undertake the study of a foreign tongue among us—we believe that no method is natural which does not have a sharp look for grammatical foundations. — *Literary World.*