

Contemporary Thought.

PROF. BLUNT in a recent address thus discourses to preachers:

No knowledge, however vast; no matter, however scriptural; no creed, however primitive and orthodox; no style, however faultless; no manner, however graceful, can avail without the force of the preachers own character, example, hopes, aspirations, prayers, going along with his sermon.

Why do not these remarks apply with equal force to teachers? asks the *New York School Journal*.

"WHETHER, as mere matter of knowledge, the masterpieces of English literature should constitute a part of the education of every man and woman, whatever his or her calling in life, I will not undertake to say; but I do regard an acquaintance with the English classics as an important if not indispensable means of acquiring the art of putting one's thoughts into good English. This purpose good author's serve, not only directly by providing suitable topics to be written upon, and by increasing one's command of language, but also indirectly by stimulating the mental energies, and by affording the keenest intellectual pleasure. Thus understood, English literature ceases to be a merely literary study, and becomes as useful to the man of science as to the man of letters, to Prof. Huxley and Mr. Herbert Spencer as to Mr. Matthew Arnold and Mr. James Russell Lowell. Literature is no longer a fund of information which may be weighed against information on other subjects, but it belongs to that kind of knowledge which is power."—*Prof. A. S. Hill in Harper's Magazine.*

THE whole civilized world has been marking very carefully the progress of the trial of the Anarchists. The issues of the case are of so important a character that the individuals directly concerned are almost entirely lost sight of. The Judge who presided at the trial bears a name that is known far and wide as the synonym for ability and unimpeachable integrity; and his conduct of this case has only added to his well-earned laurels. The defendants have had their unlimited opportunity of speech. The sentence of the law has been pronounced, and it is very difficult to see on what grounds its execution can be set aside. Sentiment is always pitiful, but pity is not always just. If these men die at the hands of the law they have defied, it will be because the law could not save them. Their death may be in their thought a martyrdom; but if they are martyrs, they are martyrs to plans and theories that were mean and cruel and dangerous. They have sown to the wind, and the safety and well-being of society seems to demand that they shall reap the whirlwind.—*Ex.*

THE heir to a great dukedom can go down to the English manufacturing towns and speak to the people in as plain and straightforward a manner as if he were one of themselves; he can make them feel that he has not been spoiled by the luxuries of Chatsworth and Hardwick Hall, but is still a cool and steady English man of business, with a powerful reserve of genuine English independence in his nature. Notwithstanding all the pride and frigidity that are attributed by foreigners to the

English character; notwithstanding all the vastness of the gulf, which, according to the English themselves, is placed in their country between class and class, it is undeniable that some representatives of the upper classes in England know how to cast a bridge over that gulf, and are able to establish a community of sentiment between themselves and their electors, and a common understanding even as to the details of legislation, that are unknown between the French aristocrats and the provincial urban democracies. — *P. C. Hamilton in the Atlantic Monthly.*

PERHAPS we may imagine the difference between the kind of attention given to dramatic representations by Athenians and by modern Englishmen, if we conceive a child thinking he is to be taken to see Madame Tussaud's, and finding himself among the Elgin marbles. The demand for a story, as we understand the words, in connection with the drama, would probably impress a Greek much as the demand for the accessories of wax-work among sculpture would impress us. It was not that they were wholly without any conception of this kind of interest, there is a great deal of it in the "Iliad." The conversation between Helen and Priam on the walls of Troy, for instance, has much of the vivid expression of individual character which a modern playwright seeks to produce. But this kind of interest must have been deliberately renounced by the great dramatists. They chose that austere simplicity which is, to our taste, so undramatic. The play of various human character is present in the poem which was to them as once their Bible and their Shakespeare, at least as unquestionably as it is in any modern poem, but the sharers in Homer's immortality reject his method, and if we look for that kind of interest in their work, we shall find none at all. The paradox involves the whole difference between the ancient and the modern view of this our human life, with all its issues of right and wrong, sweet and bitter, true and false.—*Julia Wedgwood in the Contemporary Review.*

WHEN we study the history of universities, and consider the forms of knowledge which at successive periods have chiefly engrossed university attention, we find this rule—that in proportion as a subject assumes prominence in the thought of the age outside the schools, in just such proportion does it, after some delay, take prominence in the curricula of the schools. This is true of the scholastic philosophy, for to it the great ancient universities largely owe their birth. This is true of the great revival of that classical learning which so long formed the chief foundation of college curricula. It did not begin in the schools—neither did the great development in later times of physical science, or the recent revival in the study of English classics. These all first assumed prominence in thought outside the university, and were afterwards there adopted.

At the present time, if one may judge from the signs that lie about him, it would appear that the department of social science is reaching such a prominence in thought outside of universities, that its introduction as a subject of study into their walls cannot be much longer delayed. In the widespread and general interest which is being taken in the economic problems of the age, in

strikes, trades unions and tariffs, in the history of our political institutions, in the history of our laws, in the codification of the laws, in all current political events and social questions, and in the wide-ness with which these questions are discussed, from their practical, their scientific, their philosophical aspects, one sees the forerunner of the introduction into the college curriculum, whether rightly or wrongly, I do not say, at any rate the introduction of a department of social science; and looking at the matter from a simple business standpoint, I have no doubt that whatever insitutation in Ontario first supplies this want by founding and maintaining a properly equipped department of social science, will make a tremendous advance, and will attract to itself a large body of students. It is what is required.—*C. A. Marten in Kosmos.*

WITH regard to the changes in the general conditions of society and the advance in human knowledge, think for one moment what fifty years have done. I have often imagined myself escorting some wise man of the past to our Saturday Club, where we often have distinguished strangers as our guests. Suppose there sat by me—I will not say Sir Isaac Newton, for he has been too long away from us, but that other great man, whom Professor Tyndall names as next to him in intellectual stature, as he passes along the line of master minds of his country from the days of Newton to our own—Dr. Thomas Young, who died in 1829. Would he or I be the listener if we were side by side? However humble I might feel in such a presence, I should be so clad in the grandeur of the new discoveries, inventions, ideas, I had to impart to him, that I should seem to myself like the ambassador of an emperor. I should tell him of the ocean steamers, the railroads that spread themselves like cobwebs over the civilized and half-civilized portions of the earth, the telegraph and the telephone, the photograph and the spectro-scope. I should hand him a paper with the morning news from London to read by the electric light, I should startle him with a friction match, I should amaze him with the incredible truths about anaesthesia, I should astonish him with the later conclusions of geology, I should electrify him by the fully developed doctrine of the correlation of forces, I should delight him with the cell-doctrine, I should confound him with the revolutionary apocalypse of Darwinism. All this change in the aspects, position, beliefs, of humanity since the time of Dr. Young's death, the date of my own graduation from college! I ought to consider myself highly favoured to have lived through such a half century. But it seems to me that in walking the streets of London and Paris I shall revert to my student days, and appear to myself like the relic of a former generation. Those who have been born into the inheritance of the new civilization feel very differently about it from those who have lived their way into it. To the young and those approaching middle age all these innovations in life and thought are as natural, as such a matter of course, as the air they breathe; they form a part of the frame work of their intelligence, of the skeleton about which their mental life is organized. To men and women of more than threescore they are external accretions, like the shell of a mollusk, the jointed plates of an articulate.—*Oliver Wendell Holmes in the Atlantic Monthly.*