

## Contemporary Thought.

GREAT improvements have taken place during the past few years in methods of teaching industrial drawing. Interest in objective methods of teaching has had its effects on drawing as well as on other studies. It was seen that the printed examples were the result of other people's observation; that pupils were copying them blindly, often with but little knowledge of underlying principles. The whole subject is now regarded as based on the study of Form.—*Charles M. Carter, Boston.*

UPON what ground is Carlyle called a "great" historian? His much-lauded historical writings are to a great extent court-circulars. All his theories about hero-worship are vitiated by a toadish spirit. The idol-breaker is himself an idolator. He condemned all extremists, but is himself doggedly dogmatic. His thoughts may have run in deep grooves, but they were certainly narrow. He was indeed a great writer, but great principally as a translator. He was undoubtedly a master of languages, but the depth and soundness of his philosophy may well be questioned. Of all his writings only a few translations and one or two essays will survive. No empirical criticism, no amount of unreasonable eulogy can revivify a literary corpse. "*Sartor-Resartus, jr.*" in the *Halifax Critic*.

THE most readable articles in the two volumes (V. and VI. of the "Dictionary of National Biography") are those of Mr. (Leslie) Stephen on the Brontës and Boswell. The lives of the three Brontë sisters and their brother are so closely interwoven that Mr. Stephen has found it more convenient to deal with the whole family in a single article. The result is a most agreeable biographical sketch, which, short as it is, gives a tolerably complete summary of all that is to be known on the subject. Mr. Stephen evidently does not sympathize with recent attempts to whitewash Branwell Brontë, whom he describes as the worthless and degraded wretch he evidently was. Elaborate criticism and detailed analysis of character he carefully eschews; but as usual he contrives to interweave with his concise narrative a good many acute remarks on books and authors.

Mr. W. Hunt has contributed no better article to the "Dictionary" than his elaborate memoir of Lord Brougham. The biographer of Brougham, like the biographer of Pope, has to thread his way through a cloud of misrepresentations which the subject of his studies has raised round himself. Mr. Hunt has performed his task with care and discrimination, but it seems to have left in his mind a sensation of hearty dislike for the versatile Chancellor. The fact is, Brougham, as Mr. Hunt says, was "an unamiable man," and with all his wit, social talents, and surpassing intellectual vigour, he made few friends and many enemies. Mr. Hunt, however, while bringing out Brougham's vanity, selfishness, and lack of moral balance, does full justice to his extraordinary powers of mind, his tireless energy, and his almost miraculous capacity for hard work.—*The Athenæum.*

TEA exerts a powerful retarding influence on salivary digestion, coffee and cocoa a compara-

tively feeble one. Sir W. Roberts estimates the medium strength of the tea usually drunk at four to five per cent.; strong tea may contain as much as seven per cent., weak tea as little as two per cent. Medium coffee has a strength of about seven per cent., and strong coffee twelve to fifteen per cent.; cocoa, on the other hand, is generally weaker, not more than about two per cent., and this, he thinks, may be one reason why it is more suitable to persons with feeble digestions than tea or coffee. Tea exercises a powerful inhibitory effect on salivary digestion, and this appears to be entirely due to the large quantity of tannin it contains. It appears that tannin exists in two conditions in the tea-leaf. One, the larger portion, is in the free state, and is easily extracted by hot water; but about one-fourth is fixed and remains undissolved in the fully exhausted tea leaves. *Some persons have supposed that by infusing tea for a very short time—only two or three minutes—the passing of tannin into the infusion would be avoided. This is a delusion; you can no more have tea without tannin than you can have wine without alcohol.* Tannin, in the free state, is one of the most soluble substances known. If you pour hot water on a little heap of tannin it dissolves like so much pounded sugar. Tea infused for two minutes was not found sensibly inferior in its retarding power on salivary digestion to tea infused for thirty minutes. In order to diminish as far as possible the retarding influence of tea on salivary digestion, it should be made weak and used sparingly, and it should not be taken *with* but *after* the meal. There is another means, mentioned by Sir W. Roberts, of obviating the retarding effect of tea on salivary digestion, and commended by him to the dyspeptic: *it is to add a pinch of bicarbonate of soda to the tea when it is being infused in the tea-pot.* He found that ten grains of soda added to an ounce of dry tea almost entirely removed this retarding influence. The infusion thus made is darker than usual, but the flavour is not sensibly altered, nor is the infusion alkaline, for tea infusion is naturally slightly acid, and the soda, in the proportion mentioned, only just neutralizes this acidity.—*Nineteenth Century.*

THOUGH we think the plan of Mr. Longfellow's book a mistaken one, yet we may own to have read it with great interest and pleasure. It has been inexpressibly refreshing in these bustling, angry, many-sided times to read the story of this simple tranquil life, devoted to one aim, one business, one desire; of this good, sincere, gentle soul, who, as he was unstirred by any high imagining, so was unvexed by any dark distractions, doubts, or fears. And as we have compared him for his personal popularity to Sir Walter Scott, so in another way did he resemble him; he resembled him in his utter freedom from all the little jealousies and meannesses, the ignoble cares and humours which are so sadly apt to taint and hinder the literary life. He envied no man; he disparaged no man; if others spoke ill of him he never answered them. If he was destined to no great mastery in his art, at least none who ever practised it loved it with a more sincere, simple, disinterested love. Once more we may go back to his own verse to find a fit tribute to this fine side of his character. We may go back, as we have gone before, to his "Tales of a Wayside Inn," where the Poet is thus praised:—

A Poet, too, was there, whose verse  
Was tender, musical, and terse;  
The inspiration, the delight,  
The gleam, the glory, the swift flight  
Of thoughts so sudden, that they seem  
The revelations of a dream.  
All these were his; but with them came  
No envy of another's fame;  
He did not find his sleep less sweet  
For music in some neighbouring street,  
Nor rustling hear in every breeze  
The laurels of Miltiades.  
Honour and blessings on his head  
While living, good report when dead,  
Who, not too eager for renown,  
Accepts, but does not clutch the crown!

If all the gifts of song this Poet owned were not Longfellow's the moral gifts were pre-eminently his among all poets. And as they brought him honour and blessings while he lived, so shall they bring him good report now that he is dead.—*Macmillan's Magazine.*

THOSE good people who are wont to take their opinions at secondhand, and hence have come to regard George Eliot as anything but a teacher of sound morals and orthodox dogmas, will doubtless be slightly startled at the discoveries of the late John Crombie Brown, as set forth in his little book, "The Ethics of George Eliot's Works." He examines in turn each of her novels, and her "Spanish Gipsy"—which, by the way, he places above every poetical or poetico-dramatic work of the day—and finds in all, as the central and vitalizing idea, "the doctrine of the Cross"; not indeed as theologically formulated, but "as the symbol of that spirit and law of self-sacrifice, or self-giving, which merges the individual life in universal ends." He finds, moreover, that this thought, and the specific purpose of this teaching, have never been absent from the writer's mind, and are evinced with continually increasing force throughout the whole series of her works. As Mr. Brown marshals before us character after character, and, with rare discernment and keen appreciation, points out traits, and motives and relations, it is quite impossible not to share in his enthusiasm, and agree, in the main, with his conclusions. One wonders that none of the novelist's many admirers has undertaken such a work before. Apart from its own intrinsic worth, the volume derives additional interest from the fact stated by Mr. C. G. Ames, in his pertinent introduction, that George Eliot herself more than once spoke in terms of commendation of the views here advanced. It was a matter of regret to her that she had never met the author, for it would have been a great benefit and stimulus to know that her work "was sanctioned by the sympathy of a mind endowed with so much insight and delicate sensibility." If, therefore, Mr. Brown's interpretation is the correct one, as both his thorough analysis and the author's own admission make evident, many of our self-assured critics must revise their opinions, at least, even if they hesitate to accept, in full, his conclusion, that, among all our fictionists, George Eliot "stands out as the deepest, broadest, and most catholic illustrator of the true ethics of Christianity; the most earnest and persistent expositor of the true doctrine of the Cross, that we are born and should live to something higher than the love of happiness; the most subtle and profound commentator on the solemn words, 'He that loveth his soul shall lose it; he that hateth his soul shall keep it unto life eternal.'"—*The Critic.*