

Contemporary Thought.

AN official resolution is published in India on the subject of infant marriages and enforced widowhood among the Hindoos—a question which has been much discussed by the native press. The resolution states that the opinions of local governments having been asked, all deprecate any official action; and it adds that the Viceroy agrees that reform in this matter must be left to the people themselves.

It was said fifty years ago that whenever this new German political departure occurred it would be attended by a truly great revival of national literature. Gervinus, of Heidelberg celebrity, had predicted this in one of his soothsaying utterances. Many people besides him were convinced that the generation which achieved German Unity must also be a generation of great writers and great poets. The prophecy, if destined to be true at all, has not, alas! been fulfilled hitherto. Undoubtedly, the average writing in this country is better than it was 50 years ago; historical books have lost their terrors for an ordinary reader; even the fruits of scientific research are made palatable, and to a certain extent digestible, in lectures and essays that are found upon everybody's table. In this vast field, as in the case of art, talent is by no means scarce or the public supercilious. Never were the works of popular writers more extensively printed, bought, or read; never were names more universally honoured than among the dead, those of Geibel and V. A. Scheffel; among the living, that of Gustav Freytag. Each novel in prose or verse by Paul Heyse, each story by Spielhagen, is expected and greeted as an event in town and country through the entire length and breadth of Germany. There is a rush to the theatre whenever Ernst von Wildenbruch places on the stage one of his vigorous, though as yet humorless and insufficiently pointed, dramas. Several reviews, like Rodenberg's *Deutsche Rundschau* and Paul Lindau's *Nord und Süd*, have a large sale, and they rarely publish anything that would not pass muster, for style or thought, in French and English periodicals of the same class. And yet a feeling of impatience sits brooding over the nation, as if greater and more successful efforts were wanted and expected of its writers. Some say that the genius of literary production has been dwarfed by the one-sided modern expression of greatness in this country; or quenched by the fury of party contests; or flurried by the uncertainty of coming European events; or deflected from its legitimate and God-given path by pessimism, to the great expounder of which, Schopenhauer, a statue is about to be erected in Frankfurt. All, or any, or none, of these explanations may be right. But the fact remains.—*George von Bunsen, in Murray's Magazine.*

It is then of vital consequence to us that our short weekly hour shall be used in the most efficient manner, that we shall put into it as much as it is capable of holding, and so gain the utmost result which can be got from it, in making sure that the children, so far as they are capable, shall be well instructed Christians, with a knowledge of distinctive

Church doctrine and its practical bearing on their duties, and on their daily lives. Now we know what satisfactory progress can be made in the too rare instances where children come to us who have had some careful teaching at home from a good mother, or from a school where a good teacher has had the opportunity of influencing them in these matters. Such a pupil receives your lessons with so much greater interest and capacity. He already knows much of the Scriptural precepts, characters and narratives, and some of the great lessons to be learned from them can be the more readily enforced. Now it seems worth our while to enquire whether we cannot secure in the large majority of the children this greater preparedness, which is now only found in the few, to enter upon your special instructions, and in this way to render the weekly lessons still more prolific of good results than it is now; and whether you cannot see that a greater amount of such teaching is provided for those who, from whatever cause, are neither gathered into the Sunday Schools nor taught at home. Let us then bear in mind the fact that the great majority of the children we are specially interested in our Sunday Schools, are also pupils in public schools. These schools, like our Sunday Schools, are everywhere, and are teaching the same children. So far as schooling goes therefore, you and the public school teachers are operating on the same minds. Is it not desirable to ascertain whether the public school teacher and the Sunday School teacher can, without going beyond their respective spheres, work in harmony, and how far this co-operation now exists? It is hardly necessary for us to discuss at this time any question involving an alteration of the general school system of the Province. There are other times and places where such matters may be properly and usefully debated. My object is rather to assist, as far as may be, in directing attention to what is possible now, and under the present conditions. It may be as well, whatever ideal any one may prefer and may advocate, not to let slip the opportunities for good that lie at our hands. We need not wait for changes or improvements which may or may not be attainable before doing what we can at the present moment. To those who desire fundamental changes in the public school system, I may say, "Your object will not be promoted by neglecting the means at present available." The more intimate one's practical acquaintance with what is now attainable, the more intelligently would one be able to propose something better.—*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, 1877, and contributed to the "Evangelical Churchman."*

IN the discussion of the education estimates useful reference might have been made to the introductory part, just published, of a special report on industrial and high art education in the United States. . . . The editor of the volume, Mr. Isaac Edwards Clarke, uses the copious evidence of the backwardness of art instruction in the States as an excuse for American industrial shortcomings. He pleads for an educational reform as the sole way of redeeming American manufactures and life from their present reproach. . . . Art education is to be encouraged in the United States, as elsewhere, for

higher reasons than an escape from an imaginary thralldom to alien manufactures. Drawing, as the reporter on public school portfolios at Philadelphia observes, is a most efficient instrument of school education. It furnishes a discipline at once of mind, eye, and hand. Mr. Clarke is far from forgetting the nobler arguments for the promotion of art education, though his protectionist learning occasionally leads him astray. He appends to his compilation of statistics a series of eloquent essays, in which he inculcates the need of it as an indispensable element of general culture. He reminds his countrymen of the peculiar danger attending the neglect of any part of the apparatus of civilization in a republic based on universal suffrage, with an actual ingredient of two million illiterate voters out of ten. He upbraids them with the utter disproportion between American and British expenditure on art education during the past thirty years. The result, he confesses, is that America now occupies the place at the bottom of the list of prosperous communities without taste which, a generation ago, belonged to England. England, from the rag-end of the list, has mounted aloft, so that French public men complain of a victorious invasion of French markets by English art wares. Mr. Clarke, very rightly, will not concede that American artistic inferiority comes from absence of indigenous capacity. He can point to a multitude of proofs of mental ingenuity in proof of the improbability that the defect is due to natural incompetence. The gross neglect by the State in America, on which he dwells, of appliances such as are employed in Great Britain for the development of artistic aptitude offers itself to him as ground for hope of a remedy. American education, he shows, has hitherto given no chance to native artistic instincts. With proper help he sees no cause for doubt that at least as rapid progress might be made on his side of the Atlantic as on this in investing the admirable raw American material and technical workmanship with the grace they hitherto have wanted. . . . He knows that his countrymen, the rich even more than the poor, remain the dupes of much false art in painting, decoration, and furniture. But he sees signs of better things. . . . A school of architects is now arising which has executed several noble works, and may be expected in time to transform the face of American cities. Mr. Clarke enumerates a score of buildings, selected by leading American architects at the invitation of a professional organ, which deserve to be admired for other qualities than mere prodigality of outlay and costliness of material. . . . Mr. Clarke notices with pleasure the growth, too, of a brick school of architecture, originated by a genius named Telfit, who died young. He very wisely singles out for encomium, as well as capitols and cathedral-like churches, embodiments of a sense of grandeur and nobility for less exalted purposes. He has fallen deeply in love with a portal to a dry-goods store, and a shop-front in Bedford street, Boston. We wish sincerely that English shop-builders would furnish Londoners with as good an apology for enthusiasm. American architects will earn as warm gratitude from Englishmen as from American educationists if they condescend to discover a style of shop architecture with something of an idea it.—*The Times (London, Eng.).*