

Contemporary Thought.

"AFTER all," says Miss Frances Willard in *The Chautauquan* for May, "it doesn't so much signify what you may do as that you do it well, whatever it may be. For the value of skilled labor is estimated on a democratic basis, nowadays. President Eliot, of Harvard University, the cook in the Parker House restaurant, and Mary L. Boothe who edits *Harper's Bazar*, each receive \$4,000 per year."

FIRST go to the bottom of everything which you have to do. Know all its principles. If it be a trade, know not only its rules, but the reasons for them. If it be merchandise in raw materials, or in one or more manufactured articles, be sure to learn the whole process, from the planting of the seed or the digging of the ore, to the completed fabric. Do this by observation, conversation with the heads of departments, and with workmen in different specialties. This was the plan of the late William E. Dodge. —From Dr. J. M. Buckley's "Oats or Wild Oats."

WHY is the memory of Mrs. Browning loved beyond that of almost any poet who has sung? Because "the cry of the human" is so strong in that wondrous voice of hers. Why is the name carved deepest on the Republic's heart that of its martyr President? Because he gave their manhood back to four millions of slaves, and lived and toiled for his people's sake, "with malice toward none, with charity for all." Why was the lamentation well-nigh universal when under the sea flashed the telegraphic message, "John Stuart Mill is dead?" Because this quiet thinker lived for other men; because he "struck out from the centre," from himself, that pitiful pivot on which so many human wind-mills turn, and measured, in the swift flight of its benignant thought, the long radius between him and the remotest circle of human need; because, more than any other philosopher of his day, he labored for the time when "all men's weal shall be each man's care." —From "The Chautauquan."

THERE does exist another and inexhaustible source of wealth and progress, viz., new knowledge obtainable by means of scientific research. It is upon such knowledge, gained by experiments made to examine natural forces and substances, that we must sooner or later depend as a fundamental source of national prosperity. As fast as this knowledge is evolved by discoverers, it is applied in more immediately practical forms by numerous inventors, and then manufacturers and men of business use those practical realities in the production of wealth. This has been the order of events in the past, and will be in the future; this was the way in which we got wealth out of coal. Persons of narrow views on the subject will consider the above proposition vague and unpractical; but this order of things is a great fact, and unavoidable. We are the servants of Nature, and have no choice in the matter; we might as well hope to live without food as expect to advance in civilization without the aid of new knowledge. —From "A Scientific View of the Coal Question," by G. Gore, in the *Popular Science Monthly* for May.

MARGARET MARIA GORDON, writing from Nice to *The Home Chronicle*, says: "My father,

Sir David Brewster, had a strong dislike to cats; he said that he felt something like an electric shock when one entered the room. Living in an old mouse-ridden house, I was at last obliged to set up a cat, but on the express condition that it never was to be seen in his study. I was sitting with him one day, and the study door was ajar. To my dismay pussy pushed it open, and, with a most assured air, walked right up to the philosopher, jumped upon his knee, put a paw on one shoulder and a paw on the other, and then composedly kissed him! Utterly thunderstruck at the creature's audacity, my father ended by being so delighted that he quite forgot to have an electric shock. He took pussy into his closest affections, feeding and tending her as if she were a child. One morning, some years afterward, no pussy appeared at breakfast for cream and fish; no pussy at dinner, and, in fact, months passed on and still no pussy. We could hear nothing of our pet, and we were both inconsolable. About two years after, I was again sitting with my father, when, strange to say, exactly the same set of circumstances happened. The door was pushed gently open, pussy trotted in, jumped on his knee, put a paw on each shoulder, and kissed him. She was neither hungry, thirsty, dusty, nor footsore, and we never heard anything of her intervening history. She resumed her place as household pet for some years, till she got into a diseased state from partaking too freely, it was supposed, of the delicacy of rat-flesh, and in mercy she was obliged to be shot. We both suffered so much from this second loss that we never had another domestic pet." —From *the Leisure Hour*.

THE fact is that the reverence for beauty, genuine enough with men like Mr. Ruskin, is superficial with the multitude, whose real worship is one of comfort. Whenever there is a struggle between the things of the past and those of the present, it is easy to predict which will survive; for in this case fitness is always measured by comfort. Perhaps, after all, when the buildings and cities in which people live are concerned, it is unreasonable to wish it to be otherwise. It may be, as Hawthorne says somewhere in the *Marble Faun*, in speaking of the gloom and chill and inconvenience of the stone palaces in Italian cities, that a dwelling-place should never be built to last longer than forty or fifty years. It is probably more important that a house should be healthy and clean and adapted to the physical well-being of men who are to spend their days in it than that it should give mental pleasure to those who merely look at it from without. Workingmen living in the ugly suburbs of London, or in the red brick monotony of Christian and Catharine Streets in Philadelphia, which no man would go out of his way to look at, are doubtless better off than their fellows in Italian towns, though the latter may be settled in two or three large, damp rooms on the ground floor of old palaces which travellers come from afar to see. The few—a losing remnant in this case—overlook the wants of the people. Considering the subject dispassionately, we must admit that many of the changes which are fatal to mediæval beauty and quaintness are not wholly unnecessary or capricious. No one, while the memory of last summer's plague is still fresh, can deny, for example, that it is better to sacrifice the pictur-

esqueness of some of the narrow, dirty streets of Naples than the health and lives of thousands of Neapolitans. The majority of business men in London do not question the wisdom of the removal of Temple Bar, which has made their going to and coming from the city seem so much easier. It must be added, however, that those whose occupations do not lead them cityward wonder what great good has been done by destroying an old landmark, declared to be an obstruction in the street, and then blocking up the way with a new, meaningless monument. —*June Atlantic*.

AT first sight it seems reasonable to acknowledge that large, graded public schools, intended chiefly to force education on the class of minds that do not take to it readily of their own accord must be managed with more "system" and dry-as-dust routine than the kindergarten, and private schools, and academies, and colleges, intended for those who thirst for knowledge and are willing to pay for it and can give to it the leisure to absorb it slowly, thoughtfully, and successfully. But on second thought, it is evident that the other class are precisely the ones who need to have knowledge relieved of its dry-as-dustness—who, to retain a fact, must have it made strikingly picturesque to them. We have seen recently in manuscript a history whose chief recommendation was said to be that it had been "carefully adapted to the use of public schools." Of course "carefully adapted" meant that it had been arranged on the plan of giving only absolute facts, with "questions and answers," arranged to enable the teacher to "hear a recitation" from so many pupils in such a length of time. Of the nobler plan of teaching by topics, or lectures, giving as an insight into the slavery question and emancipation something besides the fact of the date when slaves were first "imported" into the United States and the date when Abraham Lincoln issued his emancipation proclamation, there is felt to be no possibility in large graded schools. But somehow, somewhere, and some time, something of the kind must and will be adopted. At present, interest is secured in the necessary knowledge by a scheme of written examinations perfectly exhausting to pupil and teacher; with results easily showing how "plain facts" are not nearly so clear to the average intellect as what we may call in the language of the day, decorative (not decorated) facts. The pupil taught by "question and answer" will inform you in a written examination that "the Salic law was a law by which no woman and no descendant of a woman, could come to the French throne," and if asked to "sketch the career of De Soto," will draw a map with the Mississippi River careering down the page. These were actual replies in an examination at the Girls' High and Normal School in Boston. That the peculiar cram of statistics thought necessary for a good, common, practical education is not necessary, is shown by the fact that the young lady who passed the highest examination for entrance at that school had received little more than two-years' drill in the "question and answer" methods; her education before that having been of the most desultory kind. She gave 99 per cent of correct answers, only failing in the mark for her handwriting; and it was said that none of her answers were marked anything but "perfect." —*The Critic*.