

Contemporary Thought.

S. W. POWELL, in *The Century* for March, insists upon the imperative need of schools of forestry in this country as the only means whereby the wasted woodlands may be successfully replenished. "We have," he says, "a great deal of second-growth woodland which, although it may be of value as a means of regulating climate and the flow of water in springs and streams, is producing very little of the timber which we are beginning sorely to need. If we had a forest school with a large track of woodland under its care, it would be easy for farmer's sons to learn in a few weeks of observation, study how to do the pruning and thinning necessary to change these unightly and nearly profitless wood-lots into rich and permanent sources of gain."

LAWRENCE HUTTON in *Lippincott's* for March, has an interesting article on "The American Play." He begins with the assertion that the American play is yet to be written, and is unable to explain the absence of anything like a standard American drama, and the non-existence of a single immortal American play. The lack of American plays, he notes, is very remarkable in view of the fact that the Americans are a theatre-going people, and more journals devoted to dramatic affairs are published in New York than in any European capital, except perhaps Paris. "During the single century of the American stage," Mr. Hutton continues, "not two score plays of any description have appeared which have been truly American, and which, at the same time, are of any value to dramatic literature, or of any credit to the American name."

At a recent session of the Schoolmasters' Club, in Boston, Hon. Edward Atkinson, the economist, himself a man who never enjoyed the advantages of the schools in his youth, took occasion to express his opposition to what is called "practical" education, showing that he was of a mind different from many of those men who, having succeeded in life without the education of the schools, are prone to disparage them. Mr. Atkinson thus stated his opinion: "Ought you to teach a boy book-keeping in order to prepare him for business life? This is what the so-called practical man and the self-taught man often claim at your hands. But I say 'No.' Let not the boy's time be wasted in trying to comprehend the simple art of keeping books before he fully understands the object of the book-keeping. If he has been well taught in the school, and if his habits of observation have been first well developed, he will be capable of clear thinking upon the subjects which he may be called upon to deal with in his business life. He may then learn book-keeping in a day by beginning to keep books."

THE English-speaking people will be the chief factor in the government of the world; and it is our teachers who have to train them for governing. William Von Humboldt, in the darkest hour of Prussia's humiliation, was made Minister of Education, and he recorded in his diary these words: "I promised God that I would look upon every Prussian child as a being who could complain of me before God if I did not provide for him the

best education as a man and a Christian which it was possible for me to provide." What was the result? An eminent German said to me the other day: "Whatever we are in arms, in arts, in commerce, in industry, in political power, whatever may be our strength as an Empire, we owe to German education." And so the future of England depends on English education; and that man who wants to check or lower, or degrade education—to crib, cabin, or confine it—does not understand the destinies of his country, and is hardly worthy to be called by the name of Englishman.—*Mr. A. J. Mundella, in a recent address to the British and Foreign School Society.*

SOME years ago a glass half full of lime water was placed upon the teacher's desk in each of the six rooms of a large school. A single glass was left on the desk of the laboratory as a check. At the end of one hour they were all collected and examined. Had the air in the rooms continued pure, the glasses would have been as clear as when placed upon the desks. But all were somewhat turbid: one had a thick scum; and one had the lime so completely turned to chalk that a stream of pure carbonic acid produced no more precipitate. What did it all mean? Simply that the air in all those rooms was loaded with death-dealing carbonic acid. How would a similar experiment result if tried some clear morning in every school-room in a large city like Chicago? The result would be an interesting study. The simple fact is, few if any of the school houses have any adequate provision for ventilation; many have none at all. Theoretically the air surrounding a pupil must move forward about one hundred feet per minute to keep the air pure. Practically, probably half that rate is amply sufficient. But when the school-room is heated by steam radiators, or by stoves, and no passages are furnished either for the entrance or escape of air, the rooms are little better than "Black Holes."—*The Current.*

NORTH AMERICA promises to be the grand ethnological theatre of the world. Many of the great stocks of the human race are present in sufficient numbers to make the conflict exceedingly interesting for the scientific observer. The Indian question is practically solved, as the final extinction of this much abused race seems to be not far distant. In the south there is the negro problem, which is now engaging the serious attention of many thoughtful Americans. The people of the United States have wisely or unwisely declined the further complication of an unrestricted Mongolian influx. Canada contributes her share in the French question. A recent writer to the *Mail* foreshadows important consequences from the rapidity of increase of the French-Canadians. The effects of the climate and physical conditions are said to be noticeable in the states of the Pacific Slope, where a new native type is rapidly developing. Whether amid the diversity of nationalities the wonderful vitality of the Anglo-Saxon will ultimately prevail in the native American to-be, or whether a maximum of absorption has already or soon will be reached, are questions which will be definitely settled in the near future. The province of the statesman is to remove all artificial obstructions to the fusion of races, and to allow the great processes of nature to have free play, trusting implicitly to the survival of the fittest.—*Varsity.*

THE question of classics *versus* non-classics has again come to the front in Belgium, in Germany, and in France. The chief contribution to the discussion is a book by M. Raoul Frary, entitled *La Question du Latin*. The author is a graduate of the Normal School, and before engaging in journalism occupied with honor a chair in the University of France. Although himself a humanist *par excellence*, M. Frary decides against Latin. Singularly enough, one of the strongest protests against his conclusions appears in the *Revue Scientifique*. The proposed re-organization of secondary instruction in the canton of Berne, Switzerland, reduces the demands in Latin and Greek, and increases those in the living languages and science. The professors oppose the project, which awaits the decision of the governor. In Zurich the majority of the council of education have pronounced in favor of three parallel courses of secondary training, which afford the choice between a classical course, a modern course with Latin, a modern course with neither Latin nor Greek. In 1884 the government of Mecklenburg-Schwerin threw open all courses to the students of the real schools of the first order. The success obtained by several of these students in the university courses, heretofore closed to them, gives a new impulse to the advocates of the "modern course in Germany." If the new "moderations" scheme now under consideration by a committee of congregation of Oxford University be passed, students who wish to devote themselves to natural science will be relieved of the Latin and Greek heretofore required for "pass moderation."—*Education.*

No one doubts the value of lists of books made by men who know books thoroughly; any road through a wilderness, even a blazed path, is a great gain to the ignorant traveller. But every list of books prepared by one person is certain to represent his limitations of thought and sympathy; it will be strong in the books that he likes and weak in the books which do not interest him. Most people who have followed the discussion carried on at such length in the English newspapers over the list of the best hundred books recently prepared for the Workingmen's College by Sir John Lubbock have probably been interested most of all in the disclosures of intellectual range and fellowship made by the various contributors to the debate. Sir John Lubbock's list was quite as notable for the books it omitted as for those it included; it was singularly compounded of the best and poorest books. The Prince of Wales' single addition of Dryden to Sir John's catalogue has naturally given rise to some cynical surprise. Mr. Ruskin's characteristic running of his pen "blottesquely through the rubbish and poison of Sir John's list," and his still more characteristic additions to that list, are of far more value as throwing light on his own mind and taste than on the general subject of the best books. The truth is, that while there are a few books of the very highest rank to which the suffrages of the civilized world would be given under any circumstances, it would be impossible to secure agreement on any list of one hundred books; everything depends on the mental character and point of view of the reader.—*The Book Buyer.*