

Contemporary Thought.

THE Educational Department of Ontario is a wide-awake branch of government, and fully appreciates the needs of the hour. The recent issue of a text-book on hygiene, and the pamphlet on school architecture and hygiene demonstrates this conclusively. The book on school architecture and hygiene is copiously illustrated with plans, and is designed for the guidance of school trustees in the erection of new buildings.—*Chicago Sanitary News.*

As a rule, the editor is a very poor newspaper man, not half so versatile in journalism generally as the humblest police reporter. He can wear a full-dress suit with credit, however, and is a good man to apply to when you want something kept out of the paper. Often he is called upon to correct some truthful statement that has been printed by an honest and energetic reporter. This is a task which pleases him immensely, and he does it brilliantly. The more an editor keeps out of his paper the more valuable he becomes to the business department. He is expected to see that the policy of the paper is strictly observed, and to pay close attention to the obituary column. In addition to these prodigious and over-powering duties he is expected to claim all the complimentary circus tickets that come into the office, and to associate himself closely with all public banquets, State conventions, and national political issues. If an ambitious reporter writes an occasional bright paragraph for the editorial page which attracts some attention, it is the editor's duty to admit that he wrote it himself.—*Yenowine's News, Chicago.*

AMBITION, what is it? Webster defines it, an eager desire of preferment, honour, superiority or power. Who of us is not ambitious? Perhaps we may not realize it ourselves, or others may not think it of us, yet it is there, a latent germ that only needs the rousing by proper means, and a development of our mental and moral powers. How bright the hopes, how great the plans formed in the minds of the young in years, with all the possibility of a long life of health and strength stretching out before them. How different the hopes and plans of different people; what would satisfy one would fall far short of another's desire. One must stand on the topmost round; another might be content in whatever sphere he chances to be placed, willing and glad to work for others, making his little corner of the world the better and happier for his having lived in it. Seekers for wealth, and for the high positions in society, are spurred on by their ambitions. The busy student toiling over his books by the midnight lamp, until weary and oftentimes discouraged, is pushed on by his ambition as with a relentless hand that will not suffer him to rest until the object is attained, or till forced by a failing body and over-taxed brain to give over the struggle.—*Ex.*

OUR schools seem to be making excellent progress. Indeed, the work done during the term merits the highest approbation. This is true of every department of all our schools. In such a system as we have it is in the highest sense neces-

sary that the teachers in every grade should be capable, and thoroughly understand their profession. The system is like a great cog wheel, and if one of the cogs be defective or broken there will be a jar in the machinery. Should the teacher of one of the grades be careless or inefficient, and slight the work of his grade, there will be a corresponding blank in the education of the children, which the teacher of the grade above will have to make up, if he or she can, but this is not always possible. It seems to me that there ought to be some better test of a teacher's ability to impart instruction than mere scholarship. The most learned of men have been utter failures as educationists. But under the present rule the teacher who has passed the highest examination gets the highest pay, while a more successful teacher, having a lower class of license, gets less money. The examination should also be more frequent, in order that teachers should keep abreast of the times in educational matters.—*Daily Telegraph, St. John's, N.B.*

THE idea that genius reveals itself early in life does not at once recommend itself to common sense. Observation of nature as a whole suggests first of all, perhaps, that her choicer and more costly gifts are the result of a long process of preparation. And, however this be, there is certainly more of moral suggestiveness in the thought that intellectual distinction is the result of a strenuous adolescence and manhood than in the supposition that it can be reached by the striping at a bound, through sheer force of native talent. And it may not improbably have been a lively perception of this ethical significance which fostered in the classic mind so widespread a disbelief in early promise of great intellectual power. We find a typical expression of this sentiment in the saying of Quintilian: "*Ilud ingeniorum velut præcox genus non temere unquam ferunt ad frugem.*" That is to say, the early blossom of talent is rarely followed by the fruit of great achievement. It is evident that this saying embodies something like a general theory of the relation between rank of talent and rate of development. Where superior intellectual ability shows itself at an early date, it is of the sort that reaches its full stature early, and so never attains to the greatest height. On the other hand, genius of the finer order declares itself more slowly.—*The Nineteenth Century.*

THE *Nation* says: "The labour problem is primarily a problem for each individual man, and it consists in how to wring a living from mother earth. In so far as any individual is unable or unwilling to solve it for himself, he increases the labour of some of his fellows, they being, in the vast majority of cases, just as sorely beset in the effort to make ends meet as he is. Now this disposition to make A solve not only his own labour problem, but B's as well, which is at the bottom of much of our labour troubles, is much encouraged by such sermons as Mr. Newton's. Their tendency is to belittle the industrial value of individual skill, industry, prudence, and self-reliance, and exalt the value of unions, and congresses, and councils, and rules, and grips, and signs, and charity, and philanthropy, and legislation, and all sorts of other contrivances to save men from the natural consequences assigned by the moral government of the world to laziness and stupidity and envy."

This is all true enough, but it does not make plain the other truth, that unions are always composed first of men who have solved their own labour problem. If there be camp-followers, the union does not exist through their efforts. Because of the difficulty of life the labour problem is as hard as 't is. The man who sees the evils while he toils, forgets those evils as soon as he ceases to toil. Doubtless the toilers will always have to groan with weariness, but let us hope the something servile which remains as the rudiment of the sting of the lash shall yet pass away.

WHEN a young poet first enters the lists of song he seldom stops to think that he is running against Shakespeare and Milton, who have two hundred years start of him. It is as well that the bards of our day are so blind, else our woods of poesy would be as still as the forests of winter. But if the philosopher look across the rather prosaic meadows of our latter-day song, he may discover some reasons why our poets do not run a swifter race to fame; and one salient reason lies in the fact that the tableau, as a "property" of verse is used entirely as the be-all of the ordinary poem. "The sun arises," says the aspiring poet, and that is all. What of it? Alas! the poetaster does not tell! The sun of Austerlitz—there is some poetic sense in that! The flowers bloom in the spring in our poems until the satirist cries out "O bother the flowers!" and the whole world goes off into a guffaw. Now the fact is that only the very highest type of intellectual imagination is able to repel the satirist if that malevolent person set on a pure tableau. Milton, almost alone, was enough an artist to hold his tableau separate from the human heart—and everyone knows how few real worshippers the author of "Paradise Lost" commands. "Now came still Evening on" begins a tableau which has no purpose other than description; no heartstring is to be pulled. But how many poets could do as much? In looking over the floating poems of the day, one is impressed with their descriptive rather than their ideal character. A river runs by; a daisy grows thereby; Ah! beautiful river; ah! modest daisy; Now that may be poetry, but it is the raw material. It is only the one end, the little end, of a poem. In true poetry there must be a plainer reason *why* the river runs. And the reason must be as subtly conveyed as is the case in the sun of Austerlitz. "There is a willow grows aslant the stream," begins the *Queen*, and we weep over *Ophelia's* death. "Her voice was ever soft, gentle and low!" wails Salvini in his wonderful act, and we choke and sob to think of the hanging of the beautiful Cordelia who lies in the dying king's arms. "How soft the moonlight sleeps on yonder bank!" coos the lover as sweet as any dove. Could maiden resist such wooing? "Here wast thou *DAYED*, brave heart!" cries Antony at the climax of oratorical effect. "O, limed soul!" groans the wicked *King* in Hamlet. "O, Thou whose hand from solid darkness struck that spark the sun, strike wisdom from my soul!" implores the prayerful Young. Are not these great poets thus constantly *using* their tableaux? Do they not handle the keen tools of trope and metaphor with some skill after they have fashioned the tool itself? This, then, if we complain of to-day's poetry, is its principal fault: It is all implement.—*The Current.*