

by maintaining a defective financial system, and then incur debt to escape the consequences.

When Congress is asked to abolish this system and substitute one more in accordance with our needs, and in accordance also with enlightened finance as practised by the rest of the civilized world, it refuses to do anything of the kind. It not only insists upon retaining the old system, but insists also that we shall pay a far higher rate of interest than is necessary this year upon the debt which we incur to sustain our threatened credit. We paid \$16,000,000 more than was necessary on a single item of this debt in 1895, and are likely to pay a larger sum upon another item. Sooner or later the folly of all this will be recognized by the people, and then we shall have a system of national finance which will be a credit to the national intelligence, as well as an incalculable boom to national prosperity. A system which would remove forever all doubt about our credit by making it absolutely certain that all our obligations would be paid in gold, would send through every avenue of trade and industry a thrill of confidence, a feeling of stability, which would be worth untold millions to us as a people. It would bring among us from Europe vast sums of hoarded wealth which are now eagerly seeking investment, but fear to come to us because of the menace which our present currency system holds over our national credit. What this would mean to our national development every intelligent man can picture for himself. We have not sufficient capital to develop to anything approaching their full extent the extraordinary resources of this country. We need the aid of the idle capital of Europe, and if we could get that, as we should get it with a financial system that was above suspicion, we should enter upon a career of prosperity far exceeding anything we have ever known. Why cannot we develop a race of statesmen who will be able to comprehend this magnificent opportunity and secure it for us?

#### Two Ways of Teaching English.

THERE are few harsher and more melancholy contrasts observable at present than that between the training of French and of American youth in the knowledge of their respective literatures, and between the consequent ways of using language which the public men of the two countries display. In France boys are taught three things of which American school students are mainly ignorant: the political history of their country, the general outline of their literature, and the exact niceties of their vernacular. A Yale or Harvard freshman may know the history of Greece superficially, but he knows it better than the history of England or of the United States; his knowledge of Homer, Vergil, Plato, and Cæsar may be unscholarly, but it is more trustworthy than his knowledge of Shakspere, Milton, and Swift; and whatever the result of his labors may show, he has spent far more time on his Greek and Latin sentences than on his English. Fortunately, public sentiment has become so thoroughly aroused on this subject that just now there is no more interesting educational question than the teaching of English. Recent reports show that the experts are all agreed on the diagnosis; as to the remedy we naturally find the customary divergence.

Two dangers loom up in the path of reform. First, Vol. LI.—100.

that of exalting pedagogical method at the expense of the teacher's personality; second, that of placing mere training in composition superior to familiarity with good literature. The country is suffering at present from an acute attack of pedagogical psychology in its most malignant form; so that some zealous teachers spend more time on the study of method than on two things vastly more important—their specialty and human nature. Nothing is more vicious than to suppose that a man with a «psycho-pedagogical» method can teach either school or college students without a sympathetic and personal knowledge of his pupils. Much of the popular pedagogy of to-day is all moonshine, because the natural-born teacher (and there are many such) does not need so elaborate an apparatus, and the pedagogue who has no natural gift is deluded into thinking that this new-fangled machinery of soul-development is all that is required. There are really only two things the successful teacher needs to have—knowledge of his subject-matter and knowledge of his pupils. The first of these can be gained only by study, the second only by experience. The man who has never been a real child himself cannot effectively teach children; and he who does not know by experience the warm-hearted, exuberant gaiety of school and college boys cannot successfully teach them. Furthermore, the teacher who spends more time on the method of teaching literature than on literature itself is sure to come to grief. Greatest of all forces is the personality of the instructor: nothing in teaching is so effective as this; nothing is so instantly recognized and responded to by pupils; and nothing is more neglected by those who insist that teaching is a science rather than an art. After hearing a convention of very serious pedagogues discuss educational methods, in which they use all sorts of technical phraseology, one feels like applying Gladstone's cablegram, «Only common sense required.»

The second danger which threatens the progress of reform is the supposition, very generally accepted in some high circles, that the pupil, in order to write good English, may profitably neglect literature, if only he steadily write compositions. We are told that the way to become a good writer is to write; this sounds plausible, like many other pretty sayings equally remote from fact. No one thinks that the way to become a good medical practitioner is to practise; that is the method of quacks. The best way, indeed, to become a good writer is to be born of the right sort of parents; this fundamental step having been unaccountably neglected by many children, the instructor has to do what he can with second- or third-class material. Now a wide reader is usually a correct writer; and he has reached the goal in the most delightful manner, without feeling the penalty of Adam. What teacher ever found in his classes a boy who knew his Bible, who enjoyed Shakspere, and who loved Scott, yet who, with this outfit, wrote illiterate compositions? This youth writes well principally because he has something to say, for reading maketh a full man; and he knows what correct writing is in the same way that he knows his friends—by intimate acquaintance. No amount of mere grammatical and rhetorical training, nor even of constant practice in the art of composition, can attain the result reached by the child who reads good books because he loves to read them. We would not take the

extreme position taken by some, that all practice in theme-writing is time thrown away; but after a costly experience of the drudgery that composition work forces on teacher and pupil, we would say emphatically that there is no educational method at present that involves so enormous an outlay of time, energy, and money, with so correspondingly small a result. To neglect the teaching of literature for the teaching of composition, or to assert that the second is the more important, is like showing a hungry man how to work his jaws instead of giving him something to eat. In order to support this with evidence, let us take the experience of a specialist who investigated the question by reading many hundred sophomore compositions in two of our leading colleges, where the natural capacity and previous training of the students were fairly equal. In one college every freshman wrote themes steadily through the year, with an accompaniment of sound instruction in rhetorical principles; in the other college every freshman studied

Shakspeare, with absolutely no training in rhetoric and with no practice in composition. A comparison of the themes written in their sophomore year by these students showed that technically the two were fully on a par. That is weighty and most significant testimony.

If the teachers of English in secondary schools were people of real culture themselves, who both knew and loved literature, who tried to make it attractive to their pupils, and who were given a sufficient time-allotment to read a number of standard books with their classes, the composition question would largely take care of itself. Mere training in theme-writing can never take the place of the acquisition of ideas, and the boy who thinks interesting thoughts will usually write not only more attractively, but more correctly, than the one who has worked tread-mill fashion in sentence and paragraph architecture. The difference in the teacher's happiness, vitality, and consequent effectiveness is too obvious to mention.



## OPEN LETTERS

### The Century's Printer on The Century's Type.

THE first number of this magazine (November, 1870) appeared in a modernized old-style type which was then something of a novelty. It had never been used in any similar publication, and it gave distinction to the page. It had authority in its favor, as the outgrowth of a style introduced by William Caslon of London about 1720, and then so pleasingly cut that it broke down every attempt at rivalry. For seventy years it was commended as incomparably the best cut of type,

**abcdefghijklmnopqrstuv**

STYLE OF THORNE.

**abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyzM**

STYLE OF DIDOT.

**Quousque tandem abutère, C**

STYLE OF BODONI.

**abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyWLNCMI**

A FAVORITE FRENCH STYLE.

The Poetic style is more condensed, with more of sharp hair-line.

**abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxy**

A LIGHT-FACE STYLE.

**abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyZIB**

A SCOTCH-FACE.

**abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyMH**

STYLE OF THE FIRST CASLON.

but it went out of fashion. At the beginning of the present century readers complained of its angularity and grayness. They demanded new styles, and type-founders provided them in profusion: the Thorne fat-face, of prodigious blackness; the Didot round-face, not quite as black or fat-faced; the Bodoni face, with round letters and sharp hair-lines; the French poetic-face, compressed to the extreme of tenuity; the so-called Scotch-face (really devised by the late S. N. Dickinson of Boston, although first cut in Edinburgh); and worst of all, the skeleton light-face, with its razor-edged hair-lines and needle-like points at the ends of stems. The types in fashion during the first third of this century were properly stigmatized by Hansard as disorderly, heterogeneous, and disgraceful: readers tired of them.

When Pickering and Whittingham revived the Caslon old-style in 1850, using the identical matrices of the old master, the connoisseurs said, «Now at last we have returned to simplicity and beauty: this is perfection.» Yet it was admired by bibliophiles only; dainty readers did not approve of its angular letters and its disproportioned capitals. Accepted for reprints of old books, it was rejected for modern work. To make it palatable to the general reader, type-founders devised a «modernized old-style,» in which harsh features were modified and new features of greater delicacy were added. So changed, it became a more salable letter, but it never found marked favor with the ordinary newspaper or the book publisher. Critics said of it that the strong features of the Caslon face had been suppressed, and that the new features were no improvement; that it had been made lighter, sharper, and broader, until its true character had been cut to pieces. Bibliophiles still prefer the cut of Caslon; with all its admitted faults, it is blacker,