

the Central government, when these petty revolutions do break out the necessity for peace which exists in the nation at large is such that an effective force is available to suppress the disturbances, and consequently the latter become less frequent as the prospect of their success is made more remote. The assurances already given by experience in this regard make welcome the new nation as a harbinger of peace and prosperity to Central America.

The interests of our people and government are affected in some degrees, and that favorably, by the change. Many leading American statesmen have displayed a marked concern in a Central American federation, and the present accomplishment results in a large degree from influences originating in this country. While the governments that have been consolidated are of Latin-American peoples, and as such have sympathized to a considerable extent with Spain in the recent war, there is a feeling of strong friendship and respect for Americans, which in the end dominates all outside influences. Besides, the leading statesmen there recognize that the interests and destiny of Central America are linked with the great Republic, and not with any European power. All this invites and stimulates American commercial relations; and with the additional attention at present attracted by the Nicaragua canal project, there should be a marked impetus to American enterprise and trade with the country now under the dominion of the new republic. Success to the new United States!

#### HUMAN NATURE.

Prof. Lombroso, who is regarded as high authority on criminal matters, has recently turned his attention to the study of children. His discoveries, even if originality can hardly be claimed for them, are of special interest to parents and teachers.

The Italian criminologist finds that the true moral sense is wanting in children during the first few years of childhood and that when they are old enough to recognize the effects of actions, their standard is usually whatever the father or the mother permits or forbids. As a general rule, Lombroso observes that the child prefers wrong to right, and that vanity and vice manifest themselves as strongly as in their elders. As the infantile period is passed through by the normal child, and it approaches adolescence, it puts on a new life and moves to a higher plane. But there are unfortunately child monsters who never pass to the higher planes of existence. Such constitute that abnormal class of degenerates who now and then display their innate characters by the commission of atrocities and obscenities which shock all the better feelings of human nature. There is a degenerate criminal type, and this type as found in childhood develops along certain lines into the adult rascals who infest the congested places in cities.

The observations of Lombroso are made substantially by other investigators, too. Perez demonstrated the frequency and the precocity of anger in children, and this is confirmed by observation of babies and small children almost every hour of the day. Eminent authorities testify to the movements of the eyebrows and the real fits of rage manifested by infants when only two months old, and frequently before they are twelve months old they will strike at those about them, make efforts to break dishes, or to throw objects at nannies or nurses, acting precisely as savages do. Michael Mon-

taigne said that lying and obstinacy grow in children just as their bodies grow; and only a few years since, President Stanley Hall boldly asserted that all children are liars.

It is exceedingly interesting to notice in this connection that the contention of some modern philosophers that human beings by nature are good and become inclined to evil as they later on in life are surrounded by corrupting influences finds no support in impartial scientific investigation; nor does Plato's idea that the mind of a child is a blank sheet upon which the educator is at liberty to inscribe whatever characters he chooses. On the contrary, the old-fashioned doctrine of human depravity, humiliating as it may be to the pride of man, is amply sustained by such investigation.

Lombroso points out that there are certain signs which indicate unmistakable criminal tendencies. The duty of the educator should be to study these signs until he knows them and is familiar with their meaning. Then he can act intelligently as a reformer. If for instance a child does wrong, but it has no perceivable special characteristics of the criminal, the teacher or parent may rest assured that the vicious tendency is transitory. There is no cause for alarm. But if the physical characteristics are conspicuous and continue to be more pronounced, and the misdeeds grow more and more serious, ordinary treatment is insufficient. In that case, it may become necessary to separate the child from other children and protect it from all influences that may prove injurious. Especially, the professor says, should such children be kept out of towns and cities. They should be set to work in isolated places, and should they grow worse and worse they should be separated on the same principle as lunatics are, so as to spare society a series of misfortunes.

#### A GEM OF THE ANTILLES.

According to the information brought from Porto Rico by the postoffice commission appointed to report on a plan for the organization of an American postal service on that island, the soil there is as productive as any on earth. But Porto Rico is no place for small farmers. It takes capital to acquire land and to bring it in a proper condition for yielding an abundant harvest. The opinion of the commission is that the island will reach its highest development when large syndicates take hold of the land and go to farming on strict business principles.

The Porto Ricans, it is said, are not good farmers. They are content to get what they can with a minimum expenditure of energy, but even under such conditions coffee plantations cost \$1,000 an acre, and the investment is profitable. Spanish holders of mortgages on such farms get from 15 to 20 per cent profit, and then a handsome profit is left for the planters. It is evident from this that the acquisition of Porto Rico by the United States is one upon which the country may well be congratulated. Spain has cleared over \$3,000,000 yearly on this possession, and that the annual surplus was not much larger is due entirely to her antiquated methods of government.

The chief attraction of the island to homeseekers is, we are told, its unrivaled winter climate. In this regard Porto Rico is spoken of as a veritable paradise. From the middle of October to the end of April the equatorial heat is felt now and then in the early afternoon, but evenings, mornings and afternoons are said to be cool, though

never cold. In December nights the mercury sometimes drops to 55 degrees, but with the rising sun the mists fade away and butterflies again hover about the flowering lianas and the chorus of bird voices is heard in the forests.

This beautiful spot of earth is, according to the contributor to Demorest's Family Magazine, a paradise without serpents. No venomous snake has ever been discovered by naturalists who have explored the jungles in all directions. Nor are there any wolves, foxes, wildcats or weasels; no monkeys to decimate the harvest of the fruit planter and no otters to raid the fish ponds. "Home seekers," this enthusiastic writer says, "who have breathed the perfume of the West Indian woodlands and tasted the waters of the Sierra springs will think southern California a desert and Florida a quagmire." Add to this that the Porto Ricans cordially welcome American immigration and American reforms, and the lovely picture is complete.

#### HOW TO STUDY FRENCH.

The "News" has been asked to call attention to the French school of the "Alliance," conducted by Prof. Muzzarelli in the Templeton building, this city. The school has been established two weeks, and we are told that the attendance is very large and the interest is increasing. Classes for children are now held on Wednesday mornings and Saturday afternoons, while the classes for grown people are held every Tuesday and Friday.

The methods of Prof. Muzzarelli are different from those commonly employed. But we will let the professor speak for himself:

"The ordinary classical method is to read from a grammar words and sentences which the student cannot pronounce, to correct the printed word in one language with another printed word in another language; to perceive the sense of the foreign language through the intermediary of their maternal tongue; that is, by translation instead of by direct association; usually the class exercises given are wholly void of significance, a set of illogical statements having no application whatever to the students' individuality and used solely for the illustration of rules of grammar, the whole process being, therefore, abstract and arbitrary, resting on no foundation except the fancy of the author.

"To this process my method is opposed in almost every particular; the learner has for exercises sentences that always have a distinct and sensible meaning and are true in substance and in fact. These are linked together in logical sequences of the development of their action, and give rise to good literary experience; the learner has the significance of the phrase always called up in his mind before he is introduced to the foreign phrase which expresses it; the association of the foreign phrases is thus not with an English sentence, but with the actual fact or mental conception which the English phrase only stands for and expresses; the student is given the pronunciation orally first and before he sees the practical form; and this several times successively until it is engraven on his memory. Only after he thoroughly knows the meaning and pronunciation is he allowed to see and read the printed lesson. No rule, no word, no phrase, no expression is given in an abstract condition but always as depending on some concrete fact previously known and directly applying to the student's own individuality.

"To illustrate: The class goes through in French the different operations of opening a door. How to move toward the door, how to grasp the knob, how