

Contemporary Thought.

It is now believed that Count Paul Vassili, about whom there has been so much talk in Europe, is none other than Madam Adam, the well known editress of the *Nouvelle Revue*.—*Exchange*.

DEAN BRADLEY has come to the conclusion, I hear, that something must be done with the statues and other memorials inside Westminster Abbey, with a view to providing more space for the monumental requirements of the future. As most visitors to the Abbey know, the space taken up by the existing memorials is usually in inverse proportion to the real importance of those in whose memory they were erected. The larger and more grandiose the monument, the more unknown and insignificant, as a rule, the mortal it is intended to immortalize. The dean has drawn up a list of monuments which would certainly not be missed were they removed *en masse* to the cloisters, but he is naturally careful how he sets about carrying out the desired removals. It is a question, indeed, whether he has the legal power to make the wished for change, and it is not unlikely that the matter may come before parliament ere it can be settled.—*London Figaro*.

THE report of Cardinal Gibbons to the Propaganda at Rome upon the Knights of Labour question has been telegraphed to the *New York Herald*. He is decidedly opposed to their condemnation by "the Church," and refers to the fact that only two out of the twelve Romish Archbishops in the United States are in favour of such a condemnation. He claims that the object and rules of the Knights are not only not hostile to religion in "the Church," but the very contrary. He makes a strong appeal against an action of the Pope, which would tend to make the Romish Church "un-American." The truth is that the Cardinal is shrewd enough to see that Rome cannot resist, and must therefore try to guide the labour movement. There is no doubt that the interests of Rome would suffer were the Knights to be condemned; it would turn, as the Cardinal says, the devotion of the people into "doubt and hostility towards the Holy See." There is one part of the Cardinal's lengthy argument which the Propaganda will, without fail, appreciate, namely, that the opposition of Rome to the Knights "would be ruinous to the financial support of the Church at home, and to the raising of Peter's Pence."—*Evangelical Churchman*.

MR. BROWNING'S recent efforts have been confined to monologues, not always in his own name, which are sometimes imaginative, and always subtle and full of matter, though the meaning has often to be ascertained by conjecture. Opulence in thought and language never fails; and the present volume is, like its predecessors, saturated with fanciful ingenuity. Except Apollo and the Fates, and the inventor of printing, no person is introduced who might not be easily spared. The function of the "People of Importance in Their Day," from Mandeville to Avison, is to be lectured by Mr. Browning on topics with which in their

lifetime they had probably little concern. Any of those who may have had a taste for metaphysical niceties may perhaps listen with interest; but the elaborate solution of problems which had never occurred except to a man of genius, is as difficult as the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's forgotten dream. The modest student might sometimes confess his inability to follow the guidance of his philosophic teacher, if the only result of his labour were the partial disclosure of secrets which had never before excited his curiosity; but, unless he is a novice in Mr. Browning's school, he expects that he will also be rewarded by frequent outbursts of poetical imagination; and his hopes will not be disappointed.—*The Saturday Review*.

IN September, 1796, the tragedy of "Hamlet," translated by Ducis, was acted as a startling novelty, with Molé and Dumesnil in the leading characters, and was listened to with respect if not with any great sympathy. M. Molé was Hamlet, Mme. Dumesnil was Gertrude, the most remarkable tragic actor and actress of their time, for French critics have always held the part of the Queen to be second only to that of Hamlet, and when the tragedy was reproduced at a later date, in 1805, under the direction of the great tragedian Talma, he passed sleepless nights and agitated days in the pursuit of an actress sufficiently gifted to undertake the character of Gertrude. Ophelia was looked upon as a personage of comparatively little importance; she was a passing vapour, a slight incident in Hamlet's life, and her part, never a long one, was subjected to much cutting. Of all the tragedians who have hitherto played Hamlet in Paris, Talma was the only one who made a great permanent success, and this he did in spite of the translator's monotonous conventional verse, and monstrous alterations of the text, in which no Ghost ventured to appear: Hamlet merely dreamed of him, and told his dreams to an admiring chorus; and Hamlet, not Claudius was King of Denmark; Claudius was a Prince of the blood. It was then a wholly different play, yet Ducis firmly believed that he adored Shakespeare, and that he had translated "Hamlet" as faithfully as possible for a French public, while, as Talma's genius carried success with it, French audiences were convinced that they were understanding and applauding the great English poet.—*The Nineteenth Century*.

DIFFERENT conditions of wealth are clearly inevitable so long as labour is attached to its acquisition. If so-called "Socialists" could get wealth equally distributed to-morrow morning it would be unequal again before night. Gratuitous and equal daily supplies from heaven like the historical manna in the desert, could alone feed all alike. We may suppose the intention in imposing labour on acquisition was that the probationary process of this life should be in way of mutual service between richer and poorer—a dovetailing of society—in fact, real Socialism, instead of the selfish individual independence and isolation falsely so-called. But no attempt to alter the existing relations of production and consumption and of supply and demand can be a successful mode of dispensing wealth to the poor. To ask the rich to give more than market prices, or encourage work-people to expect larger profits or wages than their work commands, is a mere delusion. It is proposing to find for inequality a level which is impos-

sible. It is through this very impossibility that the exercise of charity finds play. Charity is something outside laws, otherwise it would cease to be charity. The probation of free will and the making up of any rich man's final account lie in a voluntary and careful dispensing of his means of help to the poor and distressed, and that with pains of personal investigation of opportunities. A remonstrance may be properly directed against wasting or withholding the talents of wealth, whether ten talents or two, so as to fail of the account which can now only be made out by charity, as once by miracle, "that he that has gathered much should have nothing over, and he that hath gathered little should have no lack."—*A Writer in the London Times*.

IT is evident that in the present state of society many are hopelessly worsted in the effort to gain not a competency, but a moderate sustenance. Numerous irrelevant causes and cures are constantly being proclaimed for this glaring evil, leaving the essential causes untouched. The mutterings of discontent heard on all sides have their basis largely in the belief that the fault lies in a friction resulting from an artificial social order. Economic laws are really, at bottom, the outcome of physiological laws and conditions. Assuredly, laws of Nature are fundamental and must underlie economic laws; the latter may be modified, but not essentially altered by artificial social relations. Certain reformers are fiercely attacking our social system as the ultimate cause of misery, entirely overlooking the fact that social conditions are merely the resultant and aggregate of individual characteristics. As long as these remain unchanged, society may be repeatedly disintegrated, but the same abuses will as regularly spring up. Those who are demanding more social equality must first see to it that there is more individual equality. It is a favourite corollary of our political system that all men are born equal. Unfortunately, legal equality is not physiological equality. In fact, there is no such thing as equality. Much of the restlessness of the age is the endeavour to institute formulas and laws of equality while no such real element exists. Two stupendous factors are present in all life, physical as well as mental—hereditary and environment. These all-controlling influences are present, for good or evil, in varying proportions in different lives. With the generation of life hereditary, whose mysterious effects we must recognize without understanding, has done its best or worst for the beginning existence; its potency has been in the past, acting perhaps through long reaches of time. With commencing life comes in the new element of environment, as the complement of heredity, to enhance the evil trait, or perhaps obliterate it; too often to sow the seeds of physical and mental weakness in a constitution that was given a healthy start. To insure correct environment and habit, particularly in the early years of life, is of vital importance to the well-being and efficiency of the individual. This, unfortunately, is not, and in many cases can not, be done. Hence the fearfully unequal physical, mental, and moral equipment of mankind, that allows the minority to have too much, the majority too little, of the world's necessities and comforts.—*Dr. Henry D. Chapin, in Popular Science Monthly*.