

## Contemporary Thought.

MAJOR BAGNOLD and a party of the Royal Engineers began the lifting up of the great statue of Rameses II., which has lain for centuries on its face in the deep ditch that its own weight has tended to make for it among the palms of Mitrahine, the modern site of the old Memphis. The vast colossus of the King is of fine-grained limestone, about 38 feet high. The monolith looks as if it had been built into a propylon or gate wall, and then sculptured *in situ*. It was discovered by Caviglia and Salt in 1820. It lies face downward, almost due east and west, with head toward Sakkara. It was erected by the king as a thank offering for escape from a treacherous death by burning at Pelusium. In Strabo's time it stood alone in the anterior court of the great Temple of Ptah at Memphis, the said court at that time being used for bull fights. The head wears the "pschent" with the Uraeus snake. An artificial beard is attached to the chin. On the breast is a pouch, prototype of those worn by Jewish priests. In the centre is the King's name, "God of the sun, mighty in truth, approved by the Sun." The interest of the fallen Rameses, now soon to be raised to his feet, is this—that his features, which have never been fairly seen full in the face, will now be visible, and we shall be able to compare them with the features of the mummy unwrapped and visible in the Bulak Museum. The face, as seen partially, is strongly Semitic. — *The Academy*.

UNDER the most favourable conditions, the results of English composition as practised in college are, it must be confessed, discouraging. The shadow of generations of perfunctory writers seems to rest upon the paper, and only here and there is it broken by a ray of light from the present. I know no language—ancient or modern, civilized or savage—so insufficient for the purposes of language, so dreary and inexpressive, as theme-language in the mass. How two or three hundred young men, who seem to be really alive as they appear in the flesh, can have kept themselves entirely out of their writing, it is impossible to understand—impossible for the instructor who has read these productions by the thousand, or for the graduate who looks at his own compositions ten years after leaving college. Perhaps the most potent cause of this deplorable state of things has been the practice of forcing young men to write on topics of which they know nothing and care to know nothing—topics, moreover, that present no salient point for their mind to take hold of. An improvement—for improvement there is—has been noticed since students have been given greater freedom in the choice of subjects, have been encouraged to choose a topic which has already engaged their attention for its own sake, and have been told to limit and define the topic they choose so as to keep themselves strictly to one line of thought—whether in defending or attacking a proposition clearly stated, or in arranging facts in accordance with some principle of method, or in telling a story or describing a scene in a coherent and vivid manner. — *Prof. A. S. Hill, in Scribner's Magazine*.

THE revised translation of the Old Testament may not take the place of the authorized version

in popular estimation; but it may be fairly expected to clear up many infelicities and obscurities in that version which puzzle the ordinary reader. The "unicorn," which never existed outside the "English Bible, will at last be killed, and the "wild ox" substituted in its place. The "Book of Tasher," will be changed to the "Book of the Upright." Sunday-school children will no longer be troubled by the doubtful ethics of the Israelites in borrowing jewellery from the Egyptians, and then running away with it. The revised translation will rightly state that they asked for gifts, not loans. Joseph's many-coloured "coat" will be a "tunic." The celebrated passage in the Book of Job, "Yet in my flesh shall I see God," will be changed to "Yet out of my flesh," etc. "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet," will read, "I will make judgment for a line, and righteousness for a plumb line." In Psalm vii. the passage "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels," will be, "Thou hast made him a little lower than God." In Psalm xxxvii. the passage, "Fret not thyself in anywise to do evil," will be changed to "Fret not thyself; it tendeth to evil." And in Psalm lxvii. the passage, "The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those that published it," will be made to read, "The Lord giveth the word, and the women that bring glad tidings are a great host." These are fair samples of many of the changes which will be made. The aim of the translators has been to reproduce the meaning of the original as closely and accurately as possible. It is pleasant to know that this object will be attained without affecting any of the great dogmatic statements contained in the authorized version. The revision will simply clarify the present venerable translation. — *Pennsylvania School Journal*.

THE acceptability of the new departure in literature has already been reflected in the theatre. Perhaps one of the reasons why the stage is so full of trash to-day, is that the public has wearied of plot, and as nothing better is forthcoming, has taken to burlesque and the kind of dramatic hash served up by rough-and-tumble variety actors, who have had plays written for them. Let the dramatic author turn which way he will, he can find nothing in the way of a plot that is radically new. He merely uses old material and freshens its interest by putting into the hands of new people. When the lover has been stiling about in tights and spouting blank verse, and his innamorata has responded in silks and hexameters, it changes the situation to put the pair in rustic costume and make their talk colloquial. The only way to make a new plot is to drop love out of it, and the dramatist has not appeared who has dared to do that thing, although the eager reception of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" shows that a story can run into popularity without the customary enticements of embraces, vows and osculations. But that dramatist will make himself known in time. He will write a play without a hero who is all goodness, without a heroine who is all gush, without a villain who is bad from no other motive than natural "cussedness," and without a comedian who is merely a clown. The plays written and acted by Edward Harrigan are unworthy of consideration as dramatic literature, yet they are more popular in New York than anything of Sardou's, because they are a reflection of the times and a

class of the people. The class is recognized and hailed with surprise and delight as really interesting from a dramatic standpoint. Denman Thompson's "Old Homestead" is the veriest framework of a play, and a rickety framework at that, but everybody has had an Uncle Josh Whitcombe, everybody recognizes and loves him, and nobody thinks or cares a straw for the procedure of the drama while watching his home made antics. In English melodrama the heroes, heroines and genteel villains, low villains, light comedians, and low comedians are turned on the same lathe, and moved to and fro by the same set of impulses. People grow weary of their repetition. A demand will shortly be voiced for a drama of character and incident rather than of evolution. — *Brooklyn Eagle*.

IN my judgment, the work of an instructor in English composition is, indeed, limited in range, but is very important within its range. His office is not so much to provide his pupils with matters for thought, or with machinery for thinking, as to show them how to communicate their thoughts to others in the clearest, strongest, and most effective manner. To this end he should strive in the first place, to stimulate their minds so that they may put forth their full powers when they write, and put them forth naturally, and with the force of their individuality; and, in the second place, he should, so far as in him lies, remove the obstructions which ignorance, half-knowledge, bad training, mannerism, self-consciousness, imitation of poor models, the thousand and one forces that fight against good English, place between the thought and its free and natural expression. Over some of these obstacles a student's mental energy will, if roused to its full power, carry him by its own momentum; for, as every one knows, a writer is less likely to make egregious errors in spelling or punctuation, for instance, if he be so absorbed in the matter of what he is writing as to give no conscious attention to forms of words or construction of sentences. The more firmly, moreover, his mind grasps the subject in hand, and the more rapid the movement of his train of thought, the more likely he is to hit upon the best words and the best arrangement of words. If a teacher, then, is able to interest his pupils in what they are writing so fully that they put their best selves into their work with the pen, he will succeed not only in giving to it continuity and individuality not otherwise to be attained, but also in diminishing the number of errors and defects. Those which remain should be dealt with firmly but considerately. The student should be made to feel that they are removed in order that the free flow of his thought may be unimpeded, and that they are of no account as compared with lack of life and of unity in the composition as a whole. Every teacher will decide for himself how to stimulate his pupils. The means are as various as the conditions of life and the idiosyncrasies of human nature. What is one man's meat is another man's poison. What is successful with a small class will fail with a large one. In all cases and under all conditions the one thing needful is that the teacher should have the power to awaken interest and inspire enthusiasm. If he does not throw himself into his work, the minds of his pupils will be cold and sluggish. They must catch fire from him. — *Prof. A. S. Hill, in Scribner's Magazine*.