

## Contemporary Thought.

THE United States to-day has a very large army of wealthy invalids, an army that seems to be on the increase, too, and one that goes moaning up and down over the land seeking health and finding none. Everywhere you go, where location and climate have anything to offer, or healing waters containing aught of good to assist nature in her struggle to lengthen out the days of those who have more duceats than digestion, you will see the anxious eye and the halting gait of those who have fought the fight for gain, and now, crowned with victory and misery, find themselves in the great national hospital that moves about from Moosehead Lake to Tacoma, to Los Angeles, to Jacksonville, to Duluth, to Denver, to Asheville, to Minnetonka, to Santa Fe, to the Hot Springs and the Cold Springs, to the iron springs and the soda springs, to the dry air of the mountains and the wet air of the sea, with no home that they can call permanent and no sure thing for the future but a will contest and the long, starless nights of death. —*New York Tribune.*

BALZAC'S personality went for something in his day. His was no wandering voice coming from impenetrable groves or speaking under a feigned name. He was *en evidence* throughout, and set full in the light of the sun. "C'este vaste mer," as Léon Gozlan calls him, with his superb dreams of boundless wealth and practical paucity of sous; his luxuriant imagination; his Oriental splendour of desire; his cane; his hair; his rolling walk; his elephantine figure; his powers of work; his eas of black coffee; his mysticism and his analysis, was of a kind to fill the public eye and stimulate curiosity. Always on the point of making a colossal fortune, he was always in some sordid trouble with his creditors; and his actual debts pressed while his potential gains lingered. Henri Monnier's cynical "Avance-moi cent sous sur l'affaire"—which was to be the certain source of millions—crystallizes the whole substance of the romance and reality ruling Balzac's life. The millions, according to him, were as sure as fate. All the same, he did not care to advance five francs on their security, and preferred to pawn his ideas to his friends for a few hundreds. Dreaded by his enemies, adored by his friends, feared and detested by his creditors, Balzac must have been a formidable associate to all those who were bound to him; formidable because of that intense egotism which he had in even larger measure than have most men of genius. He had no sense of the sufferings nor of the rights of others. The picture given of how, six or eight times in the night, he would rouse up his infertile and somnolent collaborateur, Lassailly, and, with a pistol at his head, force him to work at the drama which was to carry Paris—and did not—is a measure of the rest, even when doctored of its patent exaggeration. No wonder the poor fellow left Les Jardies as one fleeing from the wrath to come, and never after spoke of Balzac without a visible shudder and unconquerable terror. —*Temple Bar.*

JUST let us consider what 14 hours of work means. We cannot reckon less than eight for sleep, which only leaves two for dressing and

undressing, for supper, and for going to and from the shop. This absorbs the whole 24 hours, and not a moment is left for amusement or self-improvement, for fresh air or family life, for any of those occupations which cheer, brighten, and enoble life—in fact, we literally say that not only have shop assistants not a moment to themselves, but they are so hard worked that at the end of the week they are fit to drop with fatigue. The whole country would gain if shop assistants had greater opportunities of intellectual, moral, and spiritual improvement. Moreover, the cruel effect of the long hours is considerably increased by the fact that the unfortunate assistants have to stand the whole time. This long standing is a terrible evil. How injurious standing is we may clearly see from the fact that though customers remain in a shop for so comparatively short a time they are invariably accommodated with seats. Considering, however, the relative need of rest as between the assistants and their customers, it must be admitted that the seats are on the wrong side of the counter. Happily, I may say this is no question between shop-keepers and their assistants. There is no such difference. I believe that shop-keepers are almost as anxious to close as the assistants themselves. Perhaps, then, it may be said, why not leave the matter in their hands? Because almost in every case the arrangements for early closing have been rendered nugatory by the action of some very small minority among the shopkeepers. Over and over again the shopkeepers in a given district have been anxious to close, and have all agreed to do so with, perhaps, a single exception. But that single exception is fatal. One after another the rest gradually open again, the whole thing breaks down, and thus a small minority tyrannize over the rest. It seems clear that nothing but legislation can remedy the evil. Voluntary action has been tried and failed over and over again, and the almost unanimous opinion of the witnesses examined before the House of Commons committee was that it was hopeless to expect any shortening of the hours in that way. Such then is the present position of affairs, and, as I have said, the general feeling of the shopkeeping community is in favour of legislation. Even as long ago as 1873 the shopkeepers who came to me with reference to the bill I then proposed, expressed themselves in favour of a general compulsory closing. I then thought this was impossible. Only by degrees have I become convinced how deep and general this feeling is. —*Sir John Lubbock, in Good Words.*

WHETHER a consent marriage is or is not legal at common law has never been determined. When the question was raised in England, nearly half a century ago, the judges of the Court of Queen's Bench were equally divided on the subject, and an appeal being taken to the House of Lords, the six law peers, including Lords Brougham, Denman, Campbell, and Lyndhurst, were equally divided. Simultaneously the question was raised in this country, says the *San Francisco Call*, and by a strange coincidence the judges of the United States Supreme Court were equally divided, and Chief Justice Taney announced that the Court was, in consequence, unable to pronounce a judgment. Since then the States have undertaken to decide the question, and some have decided in

one way, and some another. In California the framers of the code decided that a consent marriage was lawful. It has been urged that there was a reason for this when the State was sparsely settled, and it was sometimes difficult for parties intending marriage to secure the services of a magistrate or a minister. No such reason exists now. There is no part of the State from which it is impossible to reach either one or the other official. In every county magistrates or clergymen can be found to solemnize a marriage if the parties really want to have it solemnized. At abstract law, marriage being a civil contract, any two persons of opposite sexes, and capable of contracting, can make such a contract without the intervention of a third party. But in practice, the consequences of marriage as to conjugal rights, and the rights of heirs, are so momentous that the interests of society absolutely require such intervention, for where it does not take place the woman is placed at the mercy of a man who may deny the consent marriage, and repudiate her, and, on the other hand, men may be blackmailed by female adventuresses, who declare that there was a consent marriage where there was none. No man who really desires to make a woman his wife will object to the solemnization of the marriage; if he does object, he tacitly admits that he intends to cheat her. And with much more force may it be said that no woman will demur when it is proposed to clothe her matrimonial association with the forms of law. The matter commands little public attention, because consent marriages are so rare; families are generally careful enough of their children's honour to see that their marriages are duly solemnized; but if there were but half a dozen in a year, it would be worth the while of the legislature to alter the law so as to prevent even that small number of wrongs. The time will doubtless come when some startling case will rouse the people of the United States to the expediency of stripping the State legislatures of their control over marriage, divorce, and inheritance, and amending the Constitution so as to confer the control of these matters upon Congress. A uniform law, extending its authority over the whole country, is needed. As matters stand, a man may be a married man in New York, and a bachelor, for all purposes of marriage, in California; may have but one wife in Indiana, but two in Massachusetts. A woman may be a lawful wife in one State, and no wife at all in the State adjoining. Her children may inherit in California, but, being classed as illegitimate in Connecticut, may have no claim to property owned by their father in that State. The wisdom of a discreet, well-guarded law of divorce is now conceded by all legislators, but there can be no justification or apology for thirty-eight different divorce laws, each differing from the other as to the causes of divorce, and as to its legal consequences. No transaction in the life of a man or woman is more important than marriage, and its dissolution, either by divorce or death. It is but right that its regulations should not be left to the whim and conceit of State convention, often ill-equipped with minds competent to grapple with such problems. They should be committed for solution to the ablest men in the country, and their decision should be binding throughout the land. —*New York Star.*