

BOOK REVIEWS.

Genius and Insanity. (The Man of Genius, by Cesare Lombroso. Contemporary Science Series. C. Scribner's Sons.)

It is curious to observe the crop of sciences and of pseudo-sciences, each claiming for itself special consideration and isolated treatment, which has of late years sprung out of the various closely connected branches of older psychology and physiology. Such sciences are in great part the result of the specializing tendency which has made itself felt in all branches of activity, in part that of the great impetus given to the study of natural science, by Darwin's presentation of the doctrine of evolution. Darwin gave much to his contemporaries in laborious observation and faithful and untiring pursuit of scientific truth, but the great debt we owe him consists in his emphasis of the idea of order and principle running through the natural world, and in the conviction which he transmitted to his co-workers in science that every phenomenon possessed a discoverable cause. This is the true source of the new light that has burst upon our age. On the other hand, amid this light, we suffer from the counterbalancing disadvantages. Scientific progress has become one long and bitter attack upon the miraculous, the supernatural, upon religion itself. We are accustomed, nowadays, in scientific works to find it carelessly or arrogantly assumed that the bases of Christianity have been undermined, that religious faith is a factor which need not be counted with. Nor is it merely the dogmatic tenets of Christianity that have been thus assailed; every makeshift that has been devised within the last two centuries in the vain hope of filling its place. Deism is a thing of the past; Positivism itself must tremble when it beholds its defied humanity, the ideal man of the future, presented as an epileptic madman. For that is the text and conclusion of this volume of the Contemporary Science Series, "The Man of Genius," translated from the Italian of Professor Cesare Lombroso. Professor Lombroso is known in this country, principally, as the mainstay of the new science of criminal anthropology, to which a volume of this series has already been devoted, and here he comes before us ready to maintain that the Man of Genius is brother to the epileptic and the lunatic, and first cousin to the criminal.

Now if this work purporting to be scientific were written in the true scientific spirit, with respect for facts and caution of conclusions, we should have nothing to complain of. One of the lessons that all parties and sects alike are beginning very tardily to learn in this last quarter of the XIXth century, is that Truth can hurt no one and nothing. If again this were a philosophic work, grounded on theory and hypothesis and asking whether the facts correspond or not, we should as little complain. Such theoretical works possess just the weight of the author's genius, and usually serve to reveal him much more than the world of nature. But here we have hypothesis claiming to be the result of strict scientific investigation and reluctant conviction, bolstered up by half told truths, misrepresentations and assumptions.

Misrepresentation is none too strong a word to apply to the statement of Carlyle's relations with his wife, who, in the author's words, "was compelled to be his servant. The idea of traveling in a carriage with his wife seemed to him out of the question, he must have his brother with him; he neglected her for other women and pretended she was indifferent. Her chief duty was to preserve him from the most remote noises. The second to make his bread, for he detested that of the bakers. He obliged her to travel for miles on horseback as his messenger, only saw her at meal-times, and for weeks together never addressed a word to her, although his prolonged silence caused her agony." Observe how skilfully, and at the same time absurdly, all that was boorish and unamiable in Carlyle's demeanor is in the interest of theory exaggerated into the capricious and eccentric, and how isolated incidents are stated as the rule and habit of his life.

Similarly we are treated to an account of Napoleon from Taine, and of St. Paul from Renan, in each case a piece of special pleading, whereby the one is shown to be normally insane, the other an epileptic, subject to hallucinations and becoming ferocious under religious excitement. After this can we be surprised to find Paul's master himself cited as an example of the moral anaesthesia of genius, that is, the want of sympathy for country, friends and family, which is supposed to be frequent in the philanthropist and religious enthusiast?

It is not our purpose to follow out the argument minutely, because the reckless misuse of facts seems, for the most part, to invalidate it. Its lines may be indicated as follows: "Most men of genius have exhibited symptoms which are characteristic of the insane," and to tell the truth, it would be hard to find the man who does not show some of the symptoms which are here pressed into service. "Many men of genius have been insane all their lives." Observe that in these, Professor Lombroso includes Mahomet, Savonarola and Luther as well as Cardan, Rousseau and Rienzi. "Many madmen show artistic taste and in some their abilities are improved during the attack." "Many men of genius have suffered from epilepsy." In regard to those of whom no insanity, no epilepsy, no nervous affection has been recorded, we may assume that either the disuse remained latent, though assuredly present, or that the attacks and symptoms wanted a witness." Hence "Genius is a degenerative psychosis of the epileptic group."

As to the men of genius and of ability in whom there was a clear strain of insanity, there is much that is interesting in this volume. But the reader will soon notice that there is a great deal about little men, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Cardan, Gogol—and very little about the *great men*, Shakespeare, Dante or Goethe. There is absolutely no example of a man of letters of high standing who could with any plausibility be termed insane, except, perhaps, Rousseau. The opinions expressed are sometimes merely absurd, as where Luther is classed as insane, and George Fox and Fourier as "mattoids of little or no genius." The arguments are often puerile, as in the case where we are led from the maniacal tendency to destruction, to the fondness of Gladstone and Bismarck for cutting down trees. Quotations are systematically used without regard to their context or true weight. The whole book might easily be adapted so as to prove that editors are insane, or that physicians are insane,

or, indeed, that any given group of men ought to be within the walls of a lunatic asylum.

Indeed we are strongly reminded of the too familiar monomania for discovering insanity everywhere, which, so far as I know, possesses no peculiar scientific name, but which has been detected once or twice in very distinguished alienists.

There is much interesting information in the book on those who may properly be called insane, and a great collection of facts, a large proportion of which are no doubt correctly stated. These facts mean something; they do sometimes seem to indicate some connection between affections of the brain and certain forms of genius. But the question as to what that connection is this volume helps us but little to solve. It is a bad example of reckless science.

J. B.

Remarkable Collection of Foreign Bodies in the Stomach. By JOSEPH D. CRAIG, M. D., Albany, N. Y. A paper read before the Albany County Medical Society. Albany Medical Annals, 1892.

The history of the case is as follows: A female, age twenty-four, unmarried, a native of Sweden, and a servant by occupation, was admitted to a State Hospital November 24, 1890. On admission patient took but little interest in her surroundings, was confused, childlike and incapable of giving a reliable account of herself. It was frequently impossible to engage her in conversation, and when she was disposed to talk she used such broken English, and was so incoherent as to make it difficult to follow her. Her general health was apparently fair, and she weighed 150 pounds. In the latter part of December she began to fail and complained of colicky pains in the abdomen, and had diarrhoea and vomiting. Under treatment these symptoms subsided, and she was able to occupy herself with light work until March, 1891, (about two months before she died,) when she again complained of pain in her stomach and vomited.

About this time she had three profuse hemorrhages from the bowels, which were very dark in color and attended with considerable griping. A careful examination of the abdomen did not reveal any evidence of a malignant growth. Her chest had been examined several times previously, and there had been discovered some evidence of consolidation of the apices of the lungs.

At this time another examination was made and the consolidation on the right side had increased. From this time on she failed rapidly, became emaciated, had night sweats and cough with profuse expectoration. She did not, however, have any further stomach or intestinal disturbance until April 20th, when she again complained of pain. She had frequent attacks of vomiting, but did not eject anything resembling blood. On May 23d, she had two hemorrhages from the lungs, and also some bleeding from the nose. At this time she took nourishment fairly well and appeared to be free from any distress. On the 25th of same month she was again troubled with vomiting, but had no pain with it. It was necessary to catheterize her for retention of urine. The vomiting subsided in the course of twenty-four hours, and she had no further attack. She died on May 29th, 1891.