

LITERARY CORRESPONDENCE.

I.

FRANCE.

ONE COULD NOT GIVE higher praise of M. CHARLES MISMER'S work *Principes sociologiques* than to say that, after eighteen years, a second edition of it has been able to appear without loss of interest. The author has embodied in it some detailed corrections and made some important additions, principally in the second part where he forcibly expounds his idea of the inequality of the human races and draws up a *résumé* of the history of France from a point of view which admits of contradiction but which is certainly novel.

One will doubtless be astonished that M. Mismser has remained almost an entire stranger to the great sociological production of recent years, but his work is original from the start and is the product of his personal experience which was acquired in widely different situations in the course of a life of voyages and adventures. The sociological literature would have disturbed his observations rather than have augmented them, and we must take his book as he has given it to us. What is necessary to "constitute a science"? To show how certain series of facts vary as functions of other series. This statement is true of the sciences of nature and cannot be less true of the sciences of men. The method to be followed consists, then, in studying distinct groups of events which are compared with one another according to appropriate methods, and in formulating the laws of their variation wherever it is possible to grasp them. The result was, when sociology was in its infancy and

when some subject-matter for analysis is to be had, that a generating or causal series was selected or assumed ; for example, the case of Comte who referred the events of history to his law of intellectual evolution. But whatever be the importance that Comte attached to his law of the three stages and to the high generalisation which it embodies, he nevertheless distinctly felt the necessity of penetrating into the details, and he pushed his way in this direction as far as he could for this time.

M. Mismar seeks behind the fact of mental evolution for the principles capable of governing that evolution in its entirety and the social phenomena which are incarnated in it ; and his principles are the principles of *perfectibility* and *solidarity*, which, being compared by him to the law of universal gravitation, would by analogical induction be central features of all existence, organic or inorganic. These principles being established, every new institution, political or social, should then be judged according to the degree of perfection which it exhibits over its predecessors, and its perfection finally would be determined by the degree of solidarity which it realised. It is obvious that these principles can be accepted without peril. But it cannot be denied that practice requires other data, and that the solution of social questions demands the analysis of numerous facts which lie between these broad general principles and concrete reality. M. Mismar does not dispute this, and in his chapters on marriage, universal suffrage, and public instruction, he appeals to considerations regarding social classes and races in particular which seem to dominate all his views of sociology. He also prizes religious organisms highly, such as Islam, and refers them to the natural conditions in which they have taken their rise.

American readers will doubtless be of the opinion that his propositions regarding human inequality have sometimes inspired him with too great a prejudice against the spirit of the new age and an excessive mistrust of individual liberty. But this lies rather in the form than in the essence of his thought. M. Mismar, though he rejects unbridled liberty still constantly appeals to the initiative of man. He knows quite well that one cannot oppose the current of history and that societies are machines which we cannot reverse.

Certain of his conclusions seem to have been first dictated to him by a patriotic concern for the destiny of France.

I would emphasise, moreover, the just principle upon which M. Mismar bases ethics—namely, the sanction of acts by their consequences. He has many beautiful passages upon this weighty question, and I for my part believe that it is impossible that experience should contradict the moral truths and sentiments which it has implanted or consolidated in the human heart. It remains for me, finally, to commend his bold induction concerning the solidarity of the worlds and the existence of a real cosmic ethics which seems to be necessary to the modern conscience.

From whatever side one approaches this work, one cannot refuse to recognise it as a remarkable production, and one has also the feeling that there is behind it a sincere and powerful personality. In the lack of solutions which will satisfy him completely, every reader will find in it ample material for reflexion and discussion, and this is the highest ambition of the author, as the motto which he has prefixed to the volume testifies: *penser, faire penser* (Think and make think).

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M. ÉMILE DURKHEIM gives us a work entitled *Le suicide, étude de sociologie*. His study is exemplary, both for the care which he has taken in collecting the statistical data, and for the penetration and common sense with which he has interpreted them. In the discussion which has sprung up between the sociological school which he represents and that of which M. Tarde has become the herald, I have never hesitated in according my preference to M. Durkheim, while at the same time highly appreciating the merits of his adversaries. The latter, however, are actually beginning to deny sociology. In reducing it to psychology, that is to say, to the unguided struggle of individuals, they have interdicted the conception of any law whatever of historical facts; they have abandoned evolution to the direction of chance, and by a singular contradiction deny the reality of social phenomena *sui generis*, while at the same time making individual psychology still depend upon the existence of society.

If I am not mistaken the study of M. Durkheim is the best refutation of the doctrines of the so-called psychological school according to which sociology has no other rules and no other instrument than "laws of imitation." For the most obvious upshot of the statistics when properly analysed is the influence of external social causes and of antecedent social phenomena, which contribute to determining the present state and hedge the individual in on all sides. Suicide, which appears to be a purely individual act and primordially attributable to a state of disease, distress, etc., appears on the contrary as determined by general causes and by the circumambient moral state. It springs from the characteristic structure of a society, but it particularly marks the degree of disintegration of the elementary groups composing it, and at the same time the dissolution of the moral sentiments upon which it lives and which nourish it.

Individual dispositions undoubtedly do bring it about that the current of suicide seizes this rather than that individual, but the percentage of suicides remains independent of psychopathical conditions, as it does also of climates and seasons. It varies solely with social happenings, wars, revolutions, moral and economical crises, political or civil institutions, religion, marriage, etc. This percentage which M. Durkheim has succeeded in accurately determining rises or falls with a degree of integration or disintegration of the social elements, or, stated in other terms, according as institutions, religion, marriage, etc., have a more or less firm hold upon individuals. Certain statistical facts are explained on this hypothesis which at first seem very strange. For example, that the number of suicides is greater in Protestant countries and even in the Protestant part of the same country than it is in the Catholic countries; that the establishment of divorce lowers the percentage for wives and raises the percentage for husbands, and that hence an indissoluble marriage is beneficial to the man in this regard and unfavorable to the woman.

It would be curious to know in this matter the statistics of countries in which polygamy is legalised. I regret especially that M. Durkheim has not collected, or at least has not inserted in his

work, the statistics of the United States. It would have substantially aided him in determining whether the more active participation of women in social life is really the preservative for them that he claims it is. His careful researches on the relations of suicide to marriage and celibacy conduct him to highly interesting considerations regarding the respective rôles of the two sexes; but I cannot touch upon these points here, and leave to the reader the task of meditating upon the practical consequences which M. Durkheim has drawn from his studies.

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M. HENRI F. SECRÉTAN in *La société et la morale*, and M. J. J. CLAMAGERAN in *La lutte contre le mal* treat almost of the very same questions and show the same tendency of view regarding the future of modern societies. M. Clamageran, who is one of our most distinguished parliamentarians, seeks to justify individual effort, to define the useful spheres for the activity of the social power, that is, of the State, to show the value of free association under whatever forms, and to emphasise the benefactions of the religious spirit which our time has so mistaken under pressure of the necessity which existed of repressing the ecclesiastical power. His book is the work of a wise and practical man. That of M. Secrétan is rather that of a moralist who proclaims himself worthy of the name he bears. I call attention to such aphorisms as the following: "Is it not a supreme mystery that man can conceive being only as permanent and that this notion is formulated in a consciousness which seems transitory?" Or the following: "To have a metaphysical conviction it is necessary to be restricted or to restrict oneself." His philosophy concludes for union upon the field of action; for "to live is to act."

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M. L'ABBÉ C. PIAT shows greater ambition in his carefully worked out book, *La personne humaine*. The objections which he advances against the modern theory of the soul are not true, but he has cleverly presented them. The chief thing to be remarked is that the battle constantly turns about the question of method. It has ever been so since the *Discourses* of Galileo and the *Organum*

of Bacon. The Abbé Piat particularly reproaches his adversaries with the usage which they make of the "exclusively empirical method" in the problems of psychology. "People have ceased to reason," he writes, "in their effort to observe better." But after the method of pure introspection has furnished all that it could upon the question, is it not proper that we should endeavor to enlarge the boundaries of our knowledge by recourse to experiment, pathological observation, etc.? It is at least a step in advance when men like the Abbé Piat enter the lists. We may felicitate ourselves upon their accepting the services of experimental psychology and in attributing to it a useful rôle, even though they proclaim that the last word is not spoken by it and that there exists "a fundamental psychology which has nothing to do with physiology."

This reservation is partly legitimate, and I can appreciate the bias which has dictated it. But I think that the spiritualists have quite exaggerated fears regarding the dangers to which the adverse doctrines have subjected social ethics. If it be certain that ethics has sprung from the long experience of the human race, or that at least experience has constantly justified the principles of ethics, how can we suppose that the experience of to-morrow will annul the experience of to-day? Its living lessons will remain the same, whatever system philosophers may construct. Of a truth, their quarrels concerning free will, responsibility, sanction, etc., which incessantly recur, recall to mind the piquant scene which one of your most distinguished poets, Theodore Tilton,¹ has recorded as taking place between an old Christian monk and a grave mussulman sage, who at each turning of the moon came together and mutually regaled themselves by discoursing constantly on the same subjects without ever understanding each other:

"And when the same new moon was new once more,
The same old men
Thus met again
And had the same old wrangle as before!"

¹ His *Complete Poetical Works*, in one volume, recently appeared in Paris, London, and Oxford (European edition, Oxford, Blackwell, 1897). The poem mentioned is entitled "A Query for Quidnuncs."

DR. PAUL SOLLIER offers us more exact solutions in his *Genèse et nature de l'hystérie, recherches cliniques et expérimentales de psychophysiologie*. This two-volume work, of which one contains the "observations" only, is quite remarkable, both for the wealth and quality of these "observations" and for the clear and new conclusions which are based upon them. M. Sollier combats with great force the theory which reduces hysteria (Pierre Janet) to a pure psychological state, like the fixed idea, for example. According to him, and I believe he is right, this psychological state is explained by the physiological state, which is characterised by the more or less profound anæsthesia of a larger or lesser number of nervous centres. In hysterical subjects the nervous centres are asleep. All their subsidiary symptoms, all their stigmata so called, are due to disturbances of the sensibility. These patients are somnambulists or vigilambulists, i. e., somnambulists who appear to be awake. The different functions of their organism are disturbed in proportion to their anæsthesia, and these functional disturbances give place to the most varied kind of accidental symptoms according to the region which is affected and the mental co-ordinations which are inhibited. The consequent method of cure which M. Sollier practices with success and pride is to effect an awakening of the sensibility. He most frequently succeeds by employing some command formulated in general terms as: "Feel your heart, feel your head," etc., but never by a suggestion properly so-called. He regards the latter—and I request that his declaration be particularly heeded—as a detestable and dangerous proceeding, especially when the anæsthesia is slight; for in such cases the operator only strengthens and provokes the gravest symptoms of hysteria. M. Sollier restricts himself to giving a start to the phenomena of reaction and does not determine their course. The awakening proceeds by physiological laws, which depend neither upon the hypnotiser nor upon the patient.

These clinical observations also furnish us with further results, the importance of which will not escape psychologists. M. Sollier has discovered the existence, at the periphery, of painful points corresponding to the zone which is affected. The most important

of these are those which lie over the nervous centres (the brain and the spinal cord). Each organism has its own sensibility. It has also its point where the pain is localised, when anæsthesia supervenes. This circumstance, it will be understood, offers a new means for verifying or recognising cerebral localisations, and so M. Sollier has furnished a new demonstration for the localisation of the visual sense in the occipital region (Munk).

We shall also point out another consequence of these studies, relative to the almost exclusive favor which, according to M. Sollier, the motor theory enjoys in present psychology. For him movement is subordinate to sensibility. He attacks, finally, with sound arguments, the duality of the body and the soul. He even formulates a theory for the production in the brain of sensations, and then of images, and finally for the formation of personality.

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The book of M. PAUL REGNAUD, *Précis de logique évolutionniste, l'entendement dans ses rapports avec le langage*, is certainly the work of a learned linguist, but his definitions are frequently wanting in precision and clearness. I shall not take sides, now, between the school which M. Regnaud represents and that to which M. Victor Henry belongs, whose "linguistic antinomies" M. Regnaud vehemently assails. I shall limit myself to an observation touching the exaggerated importance which the majority of linguists and some philosophers attach to the phenomena which have been called "diseases of language." These diseases are said to have given birth to myths. It has been unjustly supposed that the savage is not susceptible of receiving false images through his senses (what of illusions, then?), or at least is not susceptible of interpreting falsely correct images by his reason. To take a name for a being, to take the sacred fire for Indra or for Jupiter, what is it if not yielding to a natural tendency of the mind? Is the truth not this: that man, and especially primitive man and the child, spontaneously conceive things under the form of being, because they find in themselves, in their muscular effort, in their will the type of every action? Add to this to complete the explanation, the passion for fables and the taste for the marvellous. That diseases of language have some-

times furnished, and do still often furnish, a sort of primitive subject-matter for the human imagination, I willingly grant, but that is all.

From the pen of M. H. FIERENS-GEVAERT we have an *Essai sur l'art contemporain*, a non-didactic work which has the ring of a clarion note amid the turmoil of modern artists. From the pen of M. C. R. C. HERCKENRATH, professor of the French language in a college in Holland, we have *Les problèmes d'esthétique et de morale*. The author who is a distinguished man has thought out anew, and sometimes with an original turn of mind, thoughts which are not new. He makes no pretensions to building up a doctrine, but knows how to recast the old doctrines with grace and sense.

From M. J. MILHAUD we have to note a second edition of the *Essai sur les conditions et les limites de la certitude logique*; from M. ÉMILE BOUTROUX, professor in the Sorbonne, a work *Études d'histoire de la philosophie*, a series of essays having for subjects Socrates, Aristotle, Jacob Böhme, Descartes, Kant, the Scottish philosophy and their influence on French philosophy.¹

LUCIEN ARRÉAT.

PARIS.

II.

A NOTE FROM ALSACE.

Your correspondence with Père Hyacinthe in the August *Open Court* last, is fresh proof of the difficulty with which even advanced and liberal Catholics absorb monistic ideas. Catholicism is dualism, and the extent to which the so-called "Old Catholics" of Germany are still Catholics is abundantly demonstrated by the latest declaration of Bishop Weber of Bonn. On the other hand, the modern view of the world is gradually gaining more and more ground in Catholic countries, notably in Italy, and next in France, where Fouillée and others of a more or less monistic cast of mind,

¹All the works mentioned are published by Félix Alcan.