

THE "HALF-INSANE."

An Interesting Book by a French Alienist.

THE SEMI-INSANE AND THE SEMI-RESPONSIBLE. By Joseph Grasset. Translated by Professor Smith Ely Jelliffe. 8vo, pp. 415. Funk & Wagnalls Company.

However convenient and philosophically smooth it may have seemed, the now classical dictum that every man is at least slightly insane in some respect must always have grated upon the nerves of reasonable people. What a relief, then, to know that one of the strongest tendencies of modern psychiatry is to discredit utterly this sombre generalization! Among the most ardent opponents of the latter stands Professor Grasset, professor of clinical medicine at the University of Montpellier, France, whose numerous articles upon the subject of "semi-insanity" during the last few years have precipitated a torrent of friendly and hostile replies from scientists who feel authorized to speak on this dark and tangled problem. Eminent jurists, too, chiefly in Germany and France, have thrown themselves into the debate, realizing the necessity of squaring legal conceptions with medical ones. The main results of all this interchange of ideas among European experts have been brought together in the present volume.

The author has two tasks; the first is to show the existence of a large class of men who are neither wholly sane nor wholly insane; the second is to designate the proper treatment of a "semi-insane" man who has violated the law.

Society knows to-day that if it has any rights in connection with criminals, it has also duties toward the diseased. And, further, in the presence of a misdemeanor or a crime it ought to put the question, should the accused be punished or should he be treated?

The object of this book is to demonstrate that to this burning question the magistrate, assisted by the physician, may make three different replies according to the case in hand: (1) The accused criminal is entirely responsible; he has normal psychic neurons, therefore he ought only to be punished and put in prison. (2) The accused criminal is entirely irresponsible; his psychic neurons are wholly diseased, therefore he ought only to be treated and placed in a hospital. (3) The accused criminal has attenuated responsibility; his psychic neurons are not normal, but are partially diseased, therefore he ought to be both punished and treated. He should be placed successively in a prison and in a hospital.

Briefly, the "semi-insane" are marked off from true madmen by their general lucidity and normal action. The abnormal acts may be such that neither the individual nor society is injured by them perceptibly; even more, they may be the accompaniments of genius. In literature and real life the author finds a host of illustrations confirming the existence of the "semi-insane." Thus, Orestes, Ajax, the Bacchantes, Othello, Hamlet, Macbeth, Lear, Molière's "avare" and "le malade imaginaire," and almost every character portrayed by Ibsen—to mention only a few cases—are, in Professor Grasset's opinion, true "semi-insane." Indeed, the classical novels of nearly every literature, ancient and modern, draw upon this unfortunate social group more than upon the prosaically sane for entertainment, which is natural enough, inasmuch as Professor Grasset's definition of the "semi-insane" brings under this category the most interesting kinds of citizens. "It was semi-insanity that Anatole France wished a little grain of for those he loved. . . . The semi-insane man is often eminently useful, sometimes even a 'super-man.' Many intellectually superior people present psychic defects which make them semi-insane."

Among the greatest semi-insane of history Professor Grasset reckons the following prodigious list: Socrates, Pascal, Auguste Comte, Saint-Simon, Gogol, Tolstoy, Gorky, de Maupassant, Rousseau, Flaubert, Baudelaire, de Musset, Bernardin Saint-Pierre, Voltaire, Molière, Condillac, Descartes, Montesquieu, Buffon, Ampère, d'Alembert, Chateaubriand, Bossuet, Malherbe, Napoleon, Zola, Huysmans, Balzac, Diderot, Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas fils, Tasso, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Swift, Poe, De Quincey, Wilberforce, Coleridge, Haller, Newton, Watt, Cromwell, Goethe, O'Connell, Frederick II, Schiller, Byron, Swedenborg, Darwin, Schumann, Chopin, Wagner, Mozart, Beethoven, Rossini, Berlioz, and so many others that a mere enumeration would convince the reader that the Philistine alone is sane. When we turn to see on what grounds all these estimable persons are given lodging in the halfway house on the road to Bedlam, we cannot fail to observe that the term "semi-insanity" need not be opprobrious, any more than "tuberculous" or "rheumatic" is. Pascal acquires the title simply because he was unable, as a child, to see water falling without falling into a fit of passion, and because he suffered from paralysis and hallucinations all his life. Buffon, Santeuil and Crébillon were always making queer faces. Ampère could not express his thoughts unless he was walking about and keeping his whole body in perpetual motion. If we put him in the class of the "semi-insane," we must also show the same courtesy to all those beloved college professors whose train of thought is coupled up and set in motion only through the assistance of a pencil in the hand, a chair of a certain shape, a very definite illumination or temperature in the lecture room, a key ring twiddled about on the left forefinger, and so on. Whether Professor Grasset would pronounce "semi-insane" a public speaker whose flow of wit was impeded by consciousness that his cravat was slowly climbing up to his ears, we know not. Why not, though? Bossuet earns the name because he used to sit in a cold room with his head wrapped in hot cloths; Napoleon because he believed in presentiments, horo-

scopes and unlucky days; Diderot because he was in the habit of renting carriages and then forgetting all about them; Oliver Cromwell because, once during an attack of insomnia, he saw a gigantic woman appear before him and prophesy his greatness; Beethoven chiefly because he was passionately fond of bathing in cold water and going about bareheaded.

That Professor Grasset sees clearly that his classification does not imply any depreciation of the mentality or achievements of the intellectually superior, we discover in his general conclusions. "Scientifically," he remarks, "only one thing is demonstrated; that is, the frequent co-existence of intellectual superiority and a neurosis in the same individual. When a man is both neurotic and superior, he is neurotic by virtue of one zone of his nervous system and superior because of another. The common trunk which unites superiority and neurosis is a temperament, but is not a disease. Genius is not a neurosis, but neurosis is more often the penalty of genius." This contradicts the famous theories which, starting from Lombroso's startling hypothesis that genius is a form of epilepsy, have recently sought to prove every extraordinary man neurotic. We believe that Professor

LITERARY NOTES.

The splendid collection of reproductions of selected drawings from old masters at Oxford is now complete with the issue of the sixth part. The series numbers 126 drawings in all and has been arranged in three volumes, in order of schools and, so far as possible, in order of date within each school.

Two volumes of miscellanies from the pen of Charles Dickens are to be published next month by Chapman & Hall as part of their "National" edition of Dickens. These miscellanies, gathered from the periodicals to which the novelist contributed them, have never before been included in any collection of his works. A great quantity of the material is now identified for the first time—notably that which comes from the files of "Household Words." In those of "The Examiner" also have been found a number of contributions never identified by previous searchers.

A book on P. P. Prud'hon, by M. Frédéric Masson, is announced by Manzi Joyant & Co. It is one of the series entitled "Les Peintres de Napoléon."

The latest German census of professions, trades and occupations contains what is probably the longest word in existence. This is

a flame" between the swords and urges Sergio to kill. "Wound!" she cries, "kill! kill!" It is Sergio who falls, however, beneath his brother's sword. The crowd shouts with horror and Marco approaches Basiliola to wipe the blood from his weapon with her hair. These are not the worst incidents of the play.

What is the noblest creation of late Celtic art? Mr. T. R. Holmes, in his new book on "Ancient Britain," declares that it is the bronze shield which was lost in the Thames and found after it had lain there some nineteen hundred years. "Oblong with rounded ends," he says, "and gently contracted in the middle, the outline forming an endless curve, it is adorned with three successive circles of repoussé work, a large central one and two smaller, connected by sinuous lines, within which lesser circles are contained. The central piece of each greater circle is a boss inclosing enamelled swastika designs and surrounded by curves, S-shaped and C-shaped, which begin and end with the same mysterious device. Yet, though the beauty of form remains, the glory of coloring is gone."

Mr. Kipling's "Jungle Book," it is reported, is the most popular of all his works. Twenty-four editions have been published and the sales steadily continue.

And speaking of the "Jungle Book," we are reminded that a paper dealing with a remarkable dog is to appear in the next number of "The Century." Roger is a more or less intellectual creature who does extraordinary things in spelling and in mathematics. Personal investigation of his dogship's performances has been made by Mr. R. M. Yerkes, instructor in comparative psychology at Harvard, and to the account of Roger's feats he has added a scientific discussion of his powers.

Mr. Sidney Lee joyfully informs the public that two of the Shakespeare quartos that belonged to the Locker-Sampson library have returned from their American exile, and have become much-prized items of the collection in Shakespeare's Birthplace at Stratford. The two quartos are perfect copies, in admirable condition, of the first edition of "Midsummer Night's Dream" and of the second edition of "The Merry Wives of Windsor."

BURNS AND A CHAIR.

The Queer Behavior of a Poet.

There is a characteristic glimpse of Robert Burns in a lately published book about the Valley of the Rule, an historic strip of British border country. It is the region in which James Thomson, the poet, spent a large part of his boyhood, and wherein the tradition still survives that his father, a clergyman, was killed by lightning while exorcising a brownie. Gilbert Elliot, a country gentleman of Wells-on-Rule, invited Burns to visit him. He had known and was a great admirer of James Thomson, and cherished as a sacred memorial the armchair in which that poet sat when composing "The Castle of Indolence." With a laudable impulse of hero-worship he determined that the chair should be occupied by Burns on the occasion of his visit. Mistaken man!—he did not after all understand the ways of poets:

This chair was made of beechwood, with a high back, and one of the arms was charred by a candle falling against it when Thomson was absorbed in one of his profound meditations. Gilbert had several people staying with him who were impatient to behold the ploughman poet. At last he arrived, and his host received him most graciously. He then asked Burns to sit on Thomson's chair, and declared that since it came into his possession never before had a guest worthy to occupy the seat ever crossed his threshold. This compliment was awkwardly and even somewhat ungraciously received by Burns. In fact, Elliot said so much about Thomson that Burns felt he played second fiddle to the author of "The Seasons," and it was some time before he would sit down in the chair. The young people present were much amused at the confused manner of the poet, and suppressed laughter was heard. In fact, the visit to Wells was not a success.

HEINWEH.

Arthur Munby, in The London Spectator. Have you not heard of the land where Beauty and Love are eternal, Where from the fulness of life nothing is ever withdrawn, Save that a clear, pure stream, with imperceptible current, Glides through the Lake of Peace into the Ocean of Joy? Here, on this bloodstain'd Earth, that land has never existed: Here is no lake of peace, here is no ocean of joy: And if the rivers flow, they move to their own destruction, Lured into stormy seas foul with the wrecks of the Past. Not in a group like ours, one sun with his hand-ful of planets, Riding obscurely alone, lost in a corner of Space, Nor in such nobler worlds as the gorgeous suns of Orion, Nor in those uttermost orbs ne'er to be noted or known: Not in all these is the land where Beauty and Love are eternal, Where in a dream of delight spirits united abide. For there is never an orb but is moulded of changeable matter, Shaped by the lapse of time, bound to its own little curve, Fused into form after form, one mode succeeding another. But, whatsoever it be, dead as the heart of a stone, These cannot yield us our quest, the limitless life that we long for, These cannot offer a place meet for the souls of the just: Nay, we may search with our eyes through the splendid expanse of the heavens, Roving from star to star, wistfully seeking a home; But there is none to be found, nor can be, in such a Creation, Made but of tangible stuff, drifting like us to its doom. Look to the light of God, the core of ultimate Being, Safe from the thrall of sense, not to be touch'd with decay: There, only there, is the land where Beauty and Love are eternal; There is our haven of rest, there is the home of the soul.



THOMAS WILLIAM COKE IN FANCY DRESS. (From the painting by Battoni.)

Grasset's contention that "not all exaggeration of function is morbid" is best defended by the biographies of all those great men, in every walk of life, whose thoughts and deeds have won for them the name of genius from the public and the title of madman from the Italian school of alienists. In all these men we see that their abnormalities do not hinder normal thinking and acting, but are simply accompanying disturbances, often harmful, to be sure, but not making the sufferers irresponsible, incoherent and dangerous. Strictly speaking, then, Professor Grasset means by "semi-insanity" a state of mind and body in which true insanity crops out at isolated points, but without disturbing the equipolse of the individual. "The semi-insane cannot properly be called either sane or insane; they are both."

The last chapter of the volume is a highly controversial exposition of the legal problems raised by the criminality of the semi-insane. Here Professor Grasset takes occasion to defend his well known theory of "attenuated responsibility," promulgated eight years ago, against the sharp attacks of many eminent alienists and lawyers. It has been urged that the term "attenuated responsibility" is a sheer contradiction; a man is either responsible for a given act or irresponsible, 28 per cent responsibility or any other fractional degree being a logical and moral absurdity. It is an abstruse and intricate situation confronting the bench and bar here at best; all the greater reason, then, that jurists should study the writer's discussion of the matter, the sharp distinctions drawn between the philosophical, medical and legal aspects of responsibility being especially valuable to anybody approaching the subject for the first time.

The Bronx will shortly emerge in fiction. Mr. H. H. Hopkins, author of "The Mayor of Warwick," has written a new novel which Houghton, Mifflin & Co. will bring out in the spring under the title of "Priest and Pagan."

"Eisenbahnbetriebsinspektions - assistenten," a very anaconda of a word. It reveals to the world the useful office of assistant inspector in the railway telegraph service.

A new American novelist, Sara Dean by name, is venturing into print with a story of the San Francisco fire, which she calls "Travers." Miss Dean is the daughter of a Californian rancher.

Mr. Frederic Harrison's book on mountaineering is nearly ready for publication. He calls it "My Alpine Jubilee, 1857-1907," and presents it as by "A Veteran Tramp."

It was stated some time ago that a memoir of the late Dr. Watson, otherwise Jan Macharen, was to be prepared by a member of his family. Now, it appears, the task has been undertaken by Dr. Robertson Nicoll, who appeals to the American friends of the late author for the loan of whatever letters of Watson's they may possess. These letters, if sent to Messrs. Dodd, Mead & Co., will be copied and carefully returned to their owners.

A Paris correspondent of "The Athenæum" says that M. Anatole France, in his forthcoming book on Jeanne d'Arc, "admits without hesitation the divine origin of the saintship of Joan, which none, he thinks, can gainsay or disprove."

A saint, according to him, is the outcome of a certain train of thought—a fixed idea in religion, of the same nature as that which in the world of science has created our modern sages. The question whether religion or science exists or not has little or nothing to say to the matter, for according to the need of the times saints and sages will continue to appear. This point once admitted, then, whether Jeanne d'Arc heard or thought she heard "the voices" matters nothing, for she acted none the less from divine motives. Let us then see in her but a simple country maid, poor in spirit, weak in body, as is common to every messenger of God. For God chooses the weakest weapons to overthrow the strong. Thus David picked three little "pierres blanches" out of the stream to fill the sling with which he killed Goliath.

Signor d'Annunzio's new work, "The Ship," is, if we may credit the description given by the correspondent in Rome of "The London Tribune," a thing of ferocity and cruelty all compact. One of its episodes shows a duel to the death between two brothers, Sergio and Marco, while Basiliola, a demonic beauty, dances "like