

Lawgiver, whom we know by His laws; or in the words of the earth spirit in the glorious German drama,

"So schaff' ich am sausenden Webstuhl der Zeit,
"Und wirke der Gottheit lebendiges Kleid."

"'Tis thus the roaring loom of time I ply,
"And weave for God the robe thou know'st Him by."

J. C. B.

Elements of Psychological Medicine, an Introduction to the Practical Study of Insanity, by DANIEL NOBLE, M.D., Lecturer at the Chatham Street School of Medicine at Manchester, &c. Second edition. Churchill, London, 1855, 8vo., pp. 356.

This book is rather a new work than a new edition, indeed, were it not for its title, we doubt whether it could in any way be recognized as derived or developed from the crude publication of a few lectures, upon which we had to comment in an early number of this Journal. We at that time objected to the assumption of a title which the character and contents of the work did not deserve. Dr. Noble has proved in the most satisfactory manner, that our observations however severe were perfectly just, for he has "remodeled the entire work so as to give it the character of a systematic treatise." We are happy to be enabled to state from a careful perusal of this new treatise, that he has not only succeeded in his task of remodeling, but that he has replaced a hasty publication which could do him little credit, by a valuable and most able treatise which is by itself sufficient to establish for him a high reputation as a psychological writer. It is fair to state the author's modest avowal that the treatise is addressed to *students* as "one professedly elementary and not too elevated in its aims and pretensions." It must not however be understood from this that the author undervalues the task of the medical teacher, or that he is in any way unconscious of that high responsibility of instructing students thoroughly and well, which has produced Cullen's "First Lines," and Watson's "Lectures on Physic," with many other of the best works in all departments of medical science. It appears to us that one great merit of

this work consists, in its general simplicity and in the facts and illustrations being adapted to the existing state of information on the subject. The author has entirely removed the objection we formerly urged, namely, that he preferred the statement of peculiar and speculative opinions to the "common-place" utility of simple knowledge. The author has evidently had no inconsiderable amount of personal experience on the subject of which he treats, but he has to a still greater extent, read and appreciated the opinions of the best authors. He is, indeed, in a peculiar degree imbued, as it were, with the opinions and views of three of the ablest men who have written on the subject; Pinel, Esquirol, and Guislain. Consciously or unconsciously writers are apt to make of favourite authors types of excellence, to whose habits of thought and of style, they to a greater or less extent approximate their own. We do not speak of servile imitation, but of that kind of conformity which exists between a man and the leader of his party or sect, in politics or religion; in such a sense Dr. Noble appears to think and to write the plain and sensible views of the three authors whom we have above quoted.

The first chapter is principally occupied with reasons why medical men and students, not devoted to the specialty of insanity, should understand something of its diagnosis and its nature. These reasons are well stated, but we think that the author has overlooked one of great importance, namely, that a competent knowledge of all the powers and faculties of man in a state of health and disease is absolutely requisite to the acquisition of a complete knowledge of any of them; for in what other manner can the practitioner in any department of medicine become aware of what we may call disturbing influences? A physician paying attention to the condition of this or that set of organs or functions, to the neglect or exclusion of others, is in as much danger as a captain of a vessel impelled by steam and sails would be, if he entirely forgot the influence of the latter, and wilfully persisted in calculating the progress and direction alone, which was effected by the former; or another mariner, who in his exclusive attention to the winds, wilfully neglected the tides and currents of the ocean. We believe that strong reasons will always exist which will render the treatment of insanity more than that of any other disease, a distinct and strict specialty; but we are, nevertheless, convinced that the study of insanity, up to a certain point, is absolutely needful for all medical men, for without some

knowledge of its principles, how will they be able to appreciate all the phenomena of hysteria, hypochondriasis, epilepsy, phrenitis, delirium, the puerperal and senile conditions, and the various other states, in which the so-called purely somatic diseases are obviously complicated with affection of the mental functions. Metaphysicians teach us that man, like an oyster, is composed of two distinct parts, body and mind, and as Pantagruel could split an oyster with an arrow without touching either of the shells, so these hyper-acute discriminators can make a clean cut between the psychic and the somatic part of our nature. But the division is soon lost in the mantle of obscurity. The following definitions of insanity are quoted in the work before us as curiosities. The first by an author named Harper:—

“I will take upon me to define and pronounce the proximate cause and specific existence of insanity, to be a positive immediate discord in the intrinsic motions and operations of the mental faculty, exerted above the healthful equilibrium; its exact seat to be in the prime movement, and its precise extent just as far as the nervous power conveys its influence.”

The second by Mr. G. N. Hill:—

“The *causa proxima* of insanity consists of a peculiar or specific change in the power of accumulation and subsequent action of the subtle matter of nervous influence.”

Dr. Noble's own definition is, “that insanity consists in an apyrexial condition of the brain perverting thought and feeling to the destruction or impairment of moral liberty,” a definition which would lead to discussions which could never be terminated until the great question of free will could be settled.

The chapter on the correlation of psychology and physiology is a new example of the confusion which must always ensue upon any attempt to reconcile the truths of physiology with the speculations of spiritual metaphysics. Throughout his work, Dr. Noble bears the strongest and most unequivocal testimony to the fact, that those actions called mental, and which collectively constitute mind, are occasioned by the activity of the cerebral organs: yet he fears to avow his convictions lest they should be thought “to suggest even approaches to materialism.” The following extract will perhaps explain his meaning:—

“In the present sphere of existence, the mind is manifested through organic intervention. A thousand circumstances prove the fact. It is yet no more the case that the material brain is the thinking principle, and the separate parts divisions of the soul, than that the music of the lyre inheres in the instrument, and that the melodies elicited from it by art, are self-produced by the particular strings.”

It may readily be granted that the material brain is not

the thinking principle, but can any one tell what is? We are sorry to observe this unreasonable dread of what is called *materialism* among able writers of the present day; it has arisen from the doctrines of materialism having been made use of by atheistical writers to undermine the doctrines of christianity; but many scientific men of sincere piety now believe that physiological materialism is thoroughly consistent with the doctrines of our holy religion, and to ignore or falsify the teaching of cerebral physiology on account of any *arrière pensée* of this kind, would be to shew distrust of the teaching of God in his revealed word, and in his revealed works. In the infancy of geological science the enemies of religion seized hold of the new truths as arguments against the Bible, and multitudes of persons, whose religious convictions were distinguished by timidity rather than by confidence, attempted to uphold the honour of God by little special pleadings, denials of fact, and abuse of the new science. Even a few of the earlier geological professors consented to speak low and to conceal; but Buckland, and Sedgwick, and other truly great men went boldly forward, well knowing that truth of any kind can never be unacceptable to Him who is the source of light and truth. As for materialism, it should be remembered that metaphysical doctrines of a very opposite character have been made use of by the more advanced atheistical thinkers, and although not so much in this country as abroad, persevering efforts have been made to sap the foundation of christian belief, by *spiritualist* doctrines of the nature of mind.

The third chapter on the Pathology of insanity is excellent. We fully agree with the author in his appreciation of the exclusive study of pathological appearances as they are seen in the dead subject, and in his recommendation that the nature of pathological change should be sought for in the causes producing it, rather than from the gross and appreciable effects it may leave behind; and we think that he apprehends with some justice a re-action against the pathological anatomy which forms so prominent a feature in medical research at the present time. The discussions which take place at pathological societies, already sufficiently indicate that they are not in the right path to discover the true nature of disease; the time of the members is occupied by the inspection of wonderful curiosities and abnormalities, as if one could expect to discover the habits and character of a nation by weighing and measuring its giants, dwarfs, and cripples. If

these popular and well-supported societies, instead of devoting their attention to exceptional cases which never were seen before, and may never be seen again, would divide themselves into working sections for the investigation of the conditions of the commoner forms of disease, they would be likely to advance the real progress of medicine, and to establish their own prosperity upon the sure basis of recognized usefulness. As it is they are in danger of becoming medical "curiosity shops." Dr. Noble states that the records of morbid anatomy lead to the conclusion, that any form or degree of mental derangement may exist unaccompanied by physical alterations recognizable after death. This statement requires to be qualified by the admission, that pathological examinations of the brain have, until recently, been made by most people in a very careless and superficial manner, and that the *records* of them have neither been accurate nor minute; yet, with this allowance, it must be admitted that the early stages of profound disease, and even the latter stages of slight mental disorder, do not constantly leave behind them such changes in the organ as are appreciable by any means of examination at present in our power to employ. That changes do nevertheless exist, although they may escape the recognition of our senses, no one can doubt who recognizes function to be the expression of organic activity, and functional disorder to be the undoubted evidence of organic change. That mental disorders are not peculiar in occasionally leaving behind them no appreciable trace of their existence, Dr. Noble shews in a satisfactory manner.

"It is true that in some departments of practical medicine there exists an admirable relation between symptoms and sensible alterations of structure; take diseases of the chest, for example. Nevertheless, in the case of other organs besides the brain, the pathologist who looks for every explanation to morbid anatomy, will be constantly disappointed. The symptoms of disease may, under certain circumstances, be referred to some obvious change of structure that may be detected after death; but then the very same symptoms, so far as an observer can judge, will, under other circumstances, be dependent upon a different condition of the structures. It will sometimes happen that the actual disease shall originate external indications that direct the medical observer's attention far more to the organs secondarily or sympathetically affected, than to those which are undergoing permanent physical change, noticeable after death. Moreover, some very vital structure shall have become so seriously disordered in function as to bring about a fatal termination, and yet no very material alteration in its appreciable characteristics be witnessed upon *post-mortem* examination; and, on the other hand, deep and irreparable changes in the organization will, at times, have advanced to the most destructive lengths, without remarkable change in the physiological manifestations. Cases have occurred in which very decided alteration of the anterior columns of the spinal cord had taken place, without loss of voluntary motion in the parts below, whilst complete and apparently destructive change of the posterior columns has occurred without corresponding lesion of sensibility. Instances are recorded in which the whole

thickness of the cord has undergone softening and apparent disintegration, without interruption of the functional connexion between the encephalon and the parts below the seat of disease. Again, whilst blindness from paralysis of the optic nerve dependent upon recognisable fault in the tissue, or in that of its connexions, will sometimes come on; occasionally, the exciting cause will be the presence of intestinal worms, implicating the visual apparatus only by sympathy. Numerous facts demonstrate the absence of definite relation between functional disorder of the stomach and sensible physical changes. Most troublesome dyspepsia exists; the patient dies of some other apparently unconnected disease; in such cases, occasionally, there is no change discoverable in the stomach. On the other hand, thickening of the gastric mucus membrane, and even ulceration of this tissue, may prevail to an extent producing death; and yet, during life, no unwonted degree of indigestion may have shown itself."

Dr. Noble would explain many of those diseases which have no pathological *remanets*, by a vitiated state of the blood, or by disordered sympathies causing local functional disturbance, without local change. We cannot, however, agree with him in this view, and we believe that organic local changes always exist, although they may have disappeared before examination, or their traces may be of too subtile and delicate a nature to be demonstrated.

The author devotes the four following chapters to the Varieties of insanity, and to their description and classification. He still divides insanity into three forms or classes, the emotional, the notional, and the intelligential; under the first he includes "all those examples wherein there is largely displayed some striking irregularity of the emotional sensibility of a kind to derange the natural current of thought." By the term notional, he designates "examples in which some unwonted and erroneous perception or general idea has secured a hold upon the consciousness so firm as to have become like an actual reality—a notion with respect to which a patient cannot be set right by appeals either to reason or to experience." "Intelligential insanity is a designation applicable to a class of mental maladies, which are characterised by general disturbance of mind, by defect of volitional co-ordination of thought, rather than by fixed delusive notions." There can be no doubt that this classification is founded upon natural varieties, since in most other systems of classification, corresponding divisions have been made, and as Dr. Noble himself points out, his classes correspond to the forms of insanity commonly designated in this country by the terms mania, monomania, and moral insanity. We are not disposed to criticise Dr. Noble's classification, because our objections to it are founded on difficulties inherent to the subject. If we object that, in the realities of practise few examples will be found presenting

in any degree of purity the characteristics of these several classes, and that in the great majority of cases their characteristics are united in the most varied combinations; if we object, moreover, that in the different periods of the progress of a single case, all Dr. Noble's classes are successively represented, we feel that our objections are directed against all classifications founded upon the uncertain and variable phenomena of the disease. We feel the justice of M. Bosquet's remark, elsewhere quoted, that "alienist physicians are never at home in their classifications except in their books."

This unflattering opinion, recently expressed before the Imperial Academy of Medicine of France, is by no means altogether unjust. Perhaps, the only fair excuse to be made is, that the treatment of mental diseases is still far more of an art than of a science, and the various systems of classification have hitherto been founded upon the phenomena, and not upon the causes or real nature of insanity. But the phenomena are so infinitely varied and mixed, that any classifications founded upon them must necessarily be found in practice uncertain and unsatisfactory. Like the artificial botanical systems of Linnæus and Jussieu, they do not tend themselves to become the means of extending our knowledge of the nature of the things classified; they are adopted arbitrarily for want of a better, that is, of a natural system. But is a natural system of classifying mental diseases at the present time possible? We fear that it is not. If Dr. Noble's new designations are adopted, they will have the good effect of getting rid of at least one objectionable term, of a term which has almost become opprobrious to alienists, namely, that unfortunate one of "moral insanity." It is but fair to Dr. Noble to state, that he adopted his terminology without having read or heard of Dr. Arnold's work, and that the employment of the terms used by the latter physician was quite accidental. These chapters contain many interesting and well recorded cases selected from other writers and from the author's own experience, which will amply repay perusal.

The chapter on the Diagnosis of insanity is very good as far as it goes; the subject, however, is so important that we scarcely think the space devoted to it sufficient. The diagnosis of insanity from hypochondriasis, which sometimes presents peculiar difficulties, should not have been omitted. The short chapter on the Prognosis of insanity is well and judiciously written; it concludes with Esquirol's maxims on this subject, many of which we think, notwith-

