

plicity. The quotations we have made show a style far too rich in ornament, and far too elaborate and verbose, to be adapted to the purpose of history. Throughout, his tendency is to use ponderous or high-sounding words and phrases, which would have warmed the heart of the great lexicographer. Instances where this tendency has become extreme are scattered through the chapters. Thus he says, "the wife of Henry VI. of England seems to have *accapitated* the spirit of her father." A few pages later, he speaks of the sunny south "where the heart thirsts for poetry and love, and the palate for alliaceous condiments." Instances as marked as these, it is only fair to say, are rare, but the tendency of the style is always in the direction of such faults. The narrative also lacks clearness. The outlines are frequently given with unsteady hand. The drawing is in many instances indistinct and hazy. He does not always seem to be in complete mastery of the special subject which he is describing. In dealing with some of the great names in French literature, his account, though stated in philosophical terms, seems inadequate and commonplace. An instance of this will appear to any one who will read the pages which he devotes to Descartes. Other instances where his grasp of the subject is lacking in firmness could easily be cited. But while this work cannot be the standard work which its admirers have claimed it to be, it certainly will keep a prominent and creditable place among works on French literature.

The volumes appear to have been carefully published. There is, however, a lack of running dates, catch-words, and page headings which are of so great convenience in all works of a historical nature, and in others which are to be in use as books of reference.

T. F. B.

4. — *The Scientific Basis of Delusions.* By GEORGE M. BEARD, A. M., M. D. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1877. pp. 47.

IN this pamphlet, originally read before the New York Medico-Legal Society, the author presents us with what he terms "A New Theory of Trance, and its Bearings on Human Testimony." By the term "trance," he evidently intends to designate all that he admits as real in those human experiences out of which have grown the various systems of religion, whether true or false, of all ages and lands.

The theory by which Dr. Beard proposes to unify and account for these phenomena in their every form and feature is, that trance "is a functional disease of the nervous system, in which the cerebral activ-

ity is concentrated in some limited region of the brain, with suspension of the activity of the rest of the brain, and consequent loss of volition.' The hypothesis on which this theory is based is contained in a series of propositions running through the argument, very few of which are either clearly or definitely stated. Whether this is a result of carelessness in the method of expression, or whether, having formed his opinions, he has endeavored to satisfy himself of their correctness by careless and inaccurate methods of investigation, and, hence, cannot be definite without exposing his own want of exactitude, it is impossible to say. Certain it is, however, that, if he is familiar with the subject of which he treats, he could hardly have made that familiarity less apparent. With a strong sense of the absurd in any theory that attributes these phenomena to a supernatural origin, or to the agency of disembodied spirits, he has endeavored to find their source in the more probable and better understood conditions of the human constitution. A worthy effort, had he been ready to eliminate from his own method the errors which he condemns in the methods of others. But since, by denying the occurrence of the more important of the alleged phenomena, he confesses the inadequacy of his own theory, provided the phenomena occur, the question becomes one of *fact versus theory*; and, as such, demands demonstration of the one, or proof of the other. Denying that the demonstration is possible, he attempts the proof; but the first step in this effort is to set aside all human experience that in any way disputes his conclusions, to rule out all testimony in evidence of the so-called facts. This is not a matter to be lightly considered in forming any estimate of his theory. What theory, indeed, might not be proven by such a method? Let his own common sense answer. Human testimony is at best but a portrait of human experience. But because the experience is misunderstood or misinterpreted, and consequently misrepresented by the testimony, shall he who would arrive at a correct understanding of human nature, human powers, and human possibilities reject the testimony as altogether worthless? As well might the astronomer throw aside his telescope, or the geologist refuse to study the fossils and strata of the rocks. Who dreams that the testimony of the telescope is truthful as regards the actual condition of "the orbs around us;" or that the testimony of the fragmentary, distorted, and petrified remains imbedded in the rocks at our feet is truthful as regards the actual appearance of the living, breathing inhabitants of that primeval world to which they belonged? Yet, as is the testimony of the telescope in regard to "other worlds than ours," or of the fossils in regard to the ancient forms of life on our planet, so is "average human testimony," however much he may deride it, in re-

gard to the actual experiences of humanity. In no one of these fields have we a truthful record of the actual facts, and he who would secure the truth in any one of them must learn to supplement the testimony by correct reasoning. Of course the better the telescope, the more perfect the fossils, and the more capable the observers, the more accurate will be the testimony. But he who rejects the testimony in any one of these departments rejects the very materials for the basis of a correct theory.

Space allows a critical examination of only a few of the more important points of Dr. Beard's hypothesis, all of which should be examined as well in their relation to each other as to the subject of which he treats; for, if the hypothesis upon which a theory is based be self-contradictory, the theory is very liable to be absurd.

In brief, then, his hypothesis assumes, if it may be said to assume any thing definite, (1) that the brain as a whole is the organ of all the faculties of the mind; that "different parts" of the brain "are the organs of different faculties;" that the will is "the coördinated activity of all the faculties of the mind;" that in the normal state the cerebral force is harmoniously diffused through every region of the brain, thus securing such coördinated activity. It assumes, (2) that the equilibrium of the cerebral force may be disturbed by influences either from within or without the individual mind; that this force may be diverted or withdrawn from the cerebral organ of one faculty to the cerebral organ of another faculty, or may be transferred from the organs of all other faculties and concentrated in the organ of one faculty or group of faculties, indefinitely increasing the activity of the one faculty and diminishing, or even extinguishing for the time, the activity of all the other faculties and senses of the individual; and that this transfer of cerebral force from one region of the brain to another produces "functional disease of the nervous system," or trance. Again and again we wade through the loose and incoherent argument in order to secure these points in the hypothesis, and pause only to be told that "sleep is a normal state, a partial cessation of the activity of all the faculties, a lowering of the activity in all the regions, but not a suspension of the activity of any except the will." But *why* this suspension of the will in sleep? We were told but a moment ago that the will results from the harmonious activity of all the faculties. We are told now that in sleep the activity of all the faculties is still harmonious, but that it fails to result in volition. Evidently, then, the will does not always result from "the harmonious diffusion of cerebral activity." Consequently, loss of volition may result from other causes than the concentration of cerebral force. Nor can it longer be considered a

characteristic of "the functional disease of the nervous system," since he makes it equally characteristic of the normal condition of the nervous system, as in sleep. What, then, becomes of this distinction between sleep and trance, or between this condition of "functional disease" and its opposite, health? Yet this is the only distinction between sleep and trance that his hypothesis admits, all other differences to which he refers being differences in manifestations only. And yet, as he inadvertently confesses, his whole theory rests on the validity of this distinction.

But there is another point in this connection that should not be overlooked, though he has omitted all mention of it; namely, the distribution of cerebral force in cases of insanity. Let it be borne in mind that the will, as he defines it, is "the coördinated activity of all the faculties of the mind," and that this coördinated activity can be secured only by the harmonious diffusion of cerebral force through every region of the brain. It follows, therefore, as a necessity, that either the insane person can have no will, or the cerebral force must be harmoniously diffused. Not even Dr. Beard will be likely to deny volition to the insane, so indomitable is the will of multitudes of that class of persons. Must we infer, therefore, that "the diffusion of cerebral force" is more harmonious in the insane than in the sane?

Nor is this all. Grant for the moment that the concentration of cerebral force in a limited region of the brain — that is, in the organ of a single faculty, or group of faculties — "is a functional disease of the nervous system." Let us see where this reasoning will lead us. The different parts of the body are the organs of different faculties, but by what law of physiology or pathology will Dr. Beard pronounce the concentration of muscular force in the right hand and arm of the blacksmith or stone-cutter, or in the broad shoulders of the woodman, "a functional disease" of the muscular system? And yet such a proposition would be precisely analogous to the one he introduces.

But again. This hypothesis assumes that, when the cerebral force is concentrated in that portion of the brain which is the organ of the intellectual faculties, "great thoughts are evolved" that would be impossible to the brain but for such concentration. And yet, because the evolution of "great thoughts" requires concentration of cerebral force in the region of the brain alone capable of evolving "great thoughts," we must regard these thoughts as the result of "a functional disease of the nervous system!" Are, then, the steam-engine, the factory, the railway, the telegraph, and all the rich fruits of our civilization, but so many evidences of functional disease of the nervous and muscular systems of mankind? All these are results of concentrated cer-

ebral and muscular forces in limited regions of the brain and body, and of corresponding suspension, for the time, of the activity of other regions. Are we, then, to prefer "the harmonious diffusion of cerebral activity," the dead level of an unruffled equilibrium, and the consequent stagnation of thought which Dr. Beard's logic involves, or the occasional concentration of cerebral force, and thus at times the possible evolution of "thoughts that breathe and words that burn?"

E. M. F. D.

## CHIPS FROM MY STUDIO.

THESE lines from Goethe are worthy all men's heeding:—

To recreate the old creation,  
All things work on in fast rotation,  
Lest aught grow fixed, and change resist;  
And what was not shall spring to birth,  
As present sun a painted earth,  
God's universe may know no rest.

It must go on, creating, changing,  
Through endless shapes for ever ranging,  
And rest we only seem to see.  
The Eternal lives through all revolving;  
For all must ever keep dissolving,  
Would it continue still to be.

WHEN Napoleon III. said, "The Empire is Peace," he knew what chord to strike, the one that would vibrate most readily. He touched the lower instinct. Yet since it is there to touch and to respond, it is not to be set aside too impatiently: sufficient if we do not make the mistake of esteeming it as the higher. The peace of the Empire, as also the peace of the Republic, may not always prove a social blessing. At most its power is limited. It cannot re-create social life. It has no such aim. It may easily, as often is the case, lend itself to dangerous repression. It grows timid, more conservative, fixed. We call it "law and order." It is esteemed good citizenship to support it. The lower instinct is intolerant, and will have this "peace" at any price. Measuring itself against all odds, counting its battalions, it proclaims itself the State. It is the State of despotism, with Emperor; or the State with the forms of liberty, with President: but a State all the same, zealous for the shows of peace. It bids us make choice between it and the "mob." It is adroit, and knows how to frighten us. We have the choice of evils, we are informed: the worst State being declared better than the best "mob." That we are not exactly put to such straits,