

Über Familienmord durch Geisteskranke [*On the Insane who Murder their Families*]. By Dr. P. NÄCKE. Halle: Marhold, 1908. Pp. 140, 8vo.

Dr. Näcke believes that no attempt has hitherto been made to investigate in a comprehensive way the insane who murder their families, and here attempts to fill that *lacuna*. He has been the more moved to undertake the task since he considers that such murders are constantly becoming more frequent. He excludes from his field of view all murderers who cannot fairly be termed insane in the most complete sense, though he fully admits the vagueness of the term "insanity." Even, however, when doubtful cases have been eliminated, Näcke estimates the probable number of cases published in psychiatric literature at some thousands. He bases his work on a series of 161 unselected cases (110 men and 51 women); the histories of 63 of these cases, belonging to Saxony, have not before been published, and are set down at the end of the book.

A distinction is made between complete and incomplete family-murder, according as the whole family is killed or only one member, the latter being much the more frequent form. The complete form sometimes includes the suicide of the perpetrator, and Näcke agrees with Cramer that every patient with a tendency to suicide must be regarded as dangerous. Environment is a factor in family-murder that is often under-estimated, though Näcke refers to Mercier as having given in his *Sanity and Insanity* perhaps the best account of the influence of this factor.

The usual age in these cases is between twenty and forty, and the usual occupation is some form of manual labour; family-murder is very rare among the better social classes. The men in 66 *per cent.* cases attack their wives, but only in 10 *per cent.* cases their children; the wives, on the other hand, in only 6 *per cent.* cases attack their husbands, but in 76 *per cent.* their children. The more remote relations are also more frequently attacked by the wife. It is notable, however, that not in a single case is the mother-in-law the victim.

With regard to motive, the data are not always sufficiently precise to enable reliable conclusions to be drawn. It is clear, however, Näcke concludes, that in most cases strong emotion following a quarrel or worry has been the cause of the act. Delusions were present or probable in 46 *per cent.* men and 10 *per cent.* women. Delusions caused by jealousy were specially frequent, and by no means merely in the case of drinkers. A frequent motive is of altruistic character, the children being killed in order to save them from poverty and shame; most complete family-murders by "normal" persons belong to this class, and not a few of those committed by the insane. Hereditary degeneration appeared to be probable in about 75 *per cent.* men and 95 *per cent.* women, this high proportion, especially in the case of women, not being unexpected in view of the abnormal character of the act.

With regard to the form of insanity, chronic alcoholism was stated to be the cause of the psychosis in 25 *per cent.* men, but in none of the women; epilepsy was present in about 14 *per cent.* of both sexes. (Näcke wisely disregards "psychic epilepsy.") In order of decreasing

frequency, chronic alcoholism, paranoia and epilepsy were the prevailing forms in men ; while melancholia, paranoia and dementia præcox were the prevailing forms in women. It should be added that, while recognising the evils of alcohol, Näcke is sceptical regarding statements about "chronic alcoholism," on account of the difficulty of determining where alcoholism begins, and (while speaking very highly of such workers as Sullivan) he protests against the unscientific exaggerations so common in this matter. He has much of interest to say in regard to the relation of the various psychoses to family murder.

A final section is devoted to prophylaxis. Näcke is not prepared to agree with Toulouse that the patient need not be confined until he has shown signs of being dangerous, and thinks that the possibility of his becoming dangerous must be viewed from a more comprehensive standpoint. It must also be remembered that the family is often an acute cause of irritation to the patient. Delusions or hallucinations involving ideas of persecution or jealousy concentrated on the family should furnish warning indications, and the character of the patient, rather than the form of the insanity, should determine the mode of procedure. As regards social prophylaxis, early marriage should be discouraged and divorce rendered easier. It is necessary, also, to teach stringently the undesirability of marriage between the neuropathic and degenerate of whatever class. In such cases Näcke is, moreover, in favour of castration in the form of vasectomy, on the ethical ground that every child has a right to be well born. With reference to infanticide, Näcke advocates the increased protection of the mother and the establishment of homes for pregnant and suckling women, as well as for illegitimate children. He would have an absolute equality of legitimate and illegitimate offspring, as being demanded not only by reason and morality, but by the State's need of good citizens. Some of these demands, it is obvious, although they are gaining ground in Germany, will not meet with universal approval, and in any case medicine alone is impotent to carry them into practice.

It is scarcely necessary to remark that the author shows throughout his usual care and precision, as well as his extremely wide knowledge of the literature of his subject ; he is equally familiar with what has been done in Anglo-Saxon and in Latin lands. At the end of the volume the main facts concerning the cases dealt with are conveniently arranged in a tabular form.

A monograph of this kind inevitably raises the question as to the relationship between insanity and criminality. Dr. Näcke briefly discusses this relationship, and reaches the temperate and reasonable conclusion that, while the criminal and the insane appear on a common ground of extremely degenerate heredity, they are not identical, although related.

HAVELOCK ELLIS.

Guide to the Clinical Examination and Treatment of Sick Children.
2nd Edition. By JOHN THOMSON, M.D. Edinburgh and London:
Green & Sons. Demy 8vo., pp. 650.

We are pleased to see a new and enlarged edition of this most useful book. Dr. Thomson has shown rare skill in the description of