

chapters in which he unfolds his arguments, but we may recommend the perusal of them to those who hold fast to a faith in metaphysics, and who, therefore, will not regard any of the discussions as empty disputes.

It is proper to add the opinion that scientific truths are not adequately recognised nor represented in the book, and that Mr. Doubleday does not seem to have realised how much the aspect of the problems submitted to metaphysics has been altered by the progress of science. It may be justly questioned, too, whether he has given a just representation of Berkeley's opinions, whether he has not, indeed, in some instances, greatly misrepresented them. Did Bishop Berkeley do more than deny the existence of a hypothetical material substratum, which was alleged to exist beneath the properties of which our senses give us cognizance as qualities?

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*On the Writing of the Insane, with Illustrations.* By G. MACKENZIE BACON, M.D., Medical Superintendent of the Cambridgeshire County Asylum. Churchill and Son. 1870.

The object of Dr. Bacon in this little book is to call attention to the value of the study of the writing of the insane, and that in a twofold aspect, viz., the subject-matter and the manner in which it is conveyed, that is to say, the handwriting. He has endeavoured, in fact, to place before his readers a series of pictures of insane minds as painted by themselves. Of the three modes of communicating ideas that human beings possess, as he well observes, viz., speech, gesture, and writing, the last one has received the least notice. If, however, we consider deeply what are the requisites for this mode of expression, and what complicated processes are involved in an act seemingly so simple, it will appear that we have yet much to learn by the study of even so commonplace a phenomenon. There are, first, "the mental conception, then the volitional impulse and its transmission along the proper track, and then the muscular effort. All this implies a brain capable of originating the idea, and a sound nervous system to carry it out; and any failure in one or the other mars the execution of the purpose. For instance, certain changes in the brain would alter the modes of expression, showing an incoherency or perversion of idea;

or disease in the nervous track might debar a person from expressing the idea really formed and substitute another; or certain muscular defects might impair the execution of the purpose, making the written words shaky or badly formed," &c. Clearly, then, the study of a person's writing, whether he be sane or insane, from the twofold aspect of its subject-matter and of the method of execution, must have its psychological value, as an indication of character, of health, or of disease.

In accordance with this view of their importance, Dr. Bacon gives a few examples of the letters of the insane, presenting them under the following heads:—

1. As illustrating chronic insanity.
2. As illustrating acute attacks.
3. As (rarely) the sole evidence.
4. As a sign of convalescence.
5. As indicating an on-coming attack.
6. As illustrating the phases of cases of ordinary mania.
7. As showing the changes the handwriting undergoes in general paralysis.

There is one point on which the author lays great stress, viz., *the diagnostic value of the handwriting in general paralysis*. "I cannot find," he says, "that anyone else has before called attention to the alteration the handwriting undergoes in this disease, and it strikes me as so distinctive as to demand consideration in the observation of such cases." He illustrates by plates the striking peculiarities of handwriting in this and the other forms of insanity; and we cannot do better, in concluding this brief notice, than refer our readers to the volume itself, which, though small, will well repay attentive perusal.