

### Part III.—Epitome of Current Literature.

#### Clinical Neurology and Psychiatry.

*Graphomania [La Graphomanie]. (Revue Philosophique, November, 1914.) Ossip-Lourie.*

The majority of men speak with greater facility than they write ; verbal expression is considered easier than written. Between the faculty of expression by writing and the spoken word there exist important connections, but instances of word-deafness indicate that there is no complete equality or association between the two. Interior mental life is often confused when the subjective and objective impressions are too numerous to be anything but vague. During the process of writing perceptions and ideas, both conscious and unconscious, are gathered together, but the number of unconscious ideas is often superior to the conscious. We think beyond what we express. If it were possible to read the mind in writing, many things would be found there which cannot be expressed on paper. Interior thought is often only intuitive. In intuition interior thought appears infinite, immense, boundless, not circumscribed by limits. For it to become distinct it must be exteriorised by spoken and written speech.

Written language, more than spoken, limits the infinite idea, it fixes it more solidly upon the attention. It regularises the interior life, solidifies it, but more, it personifies an impression, a vision, a thought. It exteriorises the *ego*, it expresses or reflects it.

Written speech is normal when it penetrates the ego, when it expresses our affective vibration. To write normally implies a creative effort. The more profound the thought the greater the difficulty of expression. Writers whose originality is incontestable do not possess a great facility for writing. To condense, express, crystallise a thought into a definite form is often to arrest it. Particular faculties are necessary to render it with more or less justice.

Patients in asylums are often afflicted with a mania for writing, and writing in this way often has a diagnostic value, but the writer considers that outside mental hospitals a large number of individuals are afflicted with what may be described as graphomania—a psychopathic tendency to write. It is this disorder with which the paper deals.

Graphomania is a malady characterised by an excessive desire for writing. All writing which does not interpret some positive fact, which is not the result of some experience, which does not materialise an image, produce some idea, which does not reflect the interior life, the personality of the author, belongs to the category of graphomania. It is an impulse to write without any normal necessity or pretext. Such a mania may exist without desire of publication, but the term must be applied to numerous publications, executed without appreciable cause, and which astonish by their futility, strangeness, lack of purpose—literary mania. Other forms exist—letter-writing, anonymous letters, writing on walls, etc., but the writer regards this as the most serious form because it is so contagious.

A number of these individuals may be described as "Graphomania-simulators," who desire to profit from the profession of letters, and "Graphomania-parasites," who make themselves known to a celebrated writer, imitate him, deify him, exist on him as it were. Such types are more numerous than those with a definitely irresistible impulse to write.

The true literary graphomaniac, exhibits certain intellectual defects. He has false conceptions as to the value of his contributions, and as to the social influences of his writings. He abandons himself to his tendency to imitate and copy others. He imagines his writings exhibit creative activity, he thinks he himself is the source of inspiration of his productions. Two forms are observed, the excited and depressed, both often existing in the same individual. The former exhibit immense activity, their output is enormous, they belong to every literary society, they serve on every committee, they are present at every banquet. The combination of their ideas is purely superficial, the imagination is asleep, there is a kind of automatism. In the depressed form, the graphomaniac is sensitive, he attaches importance to detail, neglects his serious interests, mistakes the value of men and things, falls under the influence of the first comer. He is anxious, gloomy, discouraged, fearful, suspicious, lacking in confidence—yet always writing.

The memory for words and phrases is immense, but there is no selection or choice, no attempt to analyse, define or verify. In spite of their memory, they only possess a poor vocabulary, and they cannot find the words necessary to render their thoughts, and usually they employ others in their place. The attention is disturbed, and this explains the mobility, instability, and obscurity of their thoughts. The clearness of an idea depends on the attention paid to it.

The inner ambition of the graphomaniac is one which aims at attracting public attention. All his activities are devoted to this end. The malady may justly be included in the group of neuropathic disorders. It is a form of instability; there is a want of harmony between the thought and the act of translating it into writing. The act of writing is normal when it expresses the personality; abnormal when the ideopsychic forces do not concur in its expression.

As regards the ætiology of graphomania, the whole course of education tends to foster its growth. Copying, dictation, essays on subjects chosen by the teacher, and the writing of theses suggested by others, are all methods which inhibit personal expression in writing. Spelling and writing are automatic acts, in which the *ego* does not participate, and the content itself may readily become automatic. Publicists and journalists often hardly know what they are writing. The subject is one of indifference so long as something is produced. Many graphomaniacs at the moment the pen is in their hand are quite ignorant of what they wish to write. With facility in writing gained by practice, the act tends to become increasingly automatic.

Imitation and contagion are amongst the chief psychic causes of graphomania. The ætiology arises in the basis of society, it resides in its customs. All social life co-operates in producing the psychopathic conditions which produce in the subject the mania for writing: the commercialisation of literature, literary prizes, diminution of criticism. It increases with the advance of civilisation. The feverish activity of

some, the morbid laziness of others, unbounded desires, the discredit of manual work, the continual effervescence, increase amazingly the ranks of the graphomaniacs. H. DEVINE.

*Psychoses Associated with Diabetes Mellitus.* (*The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, December, 1917.) Singer, H. D., and Clarke, S. N.

The writers report two cases in which there is evidence of toxic brain disturbance—restless apprehension, with sense falsification—associated with disturbances of metabolism in diabetic subjects.

In the first case the appearance of acute toxic mental symptoms was associated with a diminution of sugar in the urine. The acute mental symptoms subsided rapidly with the reappearance of sugar, so that these two manifestations appeared more or less in an inverse relation to one another.

In the second case the acute mental symptoms were noted more in association with therapeutic measures than with actual diminution of the amount of sugar excreted. With the resumption of a full diet the patient returned to his average mental state within a few days. H. DEVINE.

#### Part IV.—Notes and News.

##### THE MEDICO-PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

THE QUARTERLY MEETING of the Association was held at 11, Chandos Street, W. 1, on Tuesday, May 28th, 1918, Lieut.-Col. David G. Thomson, M.D., R.A.M.C., President, occupying the chair.

The following signed their names in the book as having been present at the meeting or as having attended meetings of committees: Sir G. H. Savage, Lieut.-Col. Sir Robert Armstrong-Jones, Drs. H. T. S. Aveline, Fletcher Beach, David Bower, J. Carswell, James Chambers, R. H. Cole, Maurice Craig, A. W. Daniel, J. Francis Dixon, E. L. Dove, T. Drapes, R. Eager, F. H. Edwards, E. L. Forward, C. F. Fothergill, A. H. Griffith, H. E. Haynes, John Keay, D. G. Lindsay, A. Miller, Richard Miller, J. M. Murray, H. J. Norman, E. S. Pasmore, J. G. Porter Phillips, Bedford Pierce, E. Prideaux, J. N. Sergeant, G. E. Shuttleworth, R. Percy Smith, J. G. Soutar, T. E. K. Stansfield, F. R. P. Taylor, C. M. Tuke, John Turner, H. Wolseley-Lewis, and R. H. Steen (Acting Hon. General Secretary).

*Visitors:* Drs. K. Haslam, E. M. Herford, J. D. Symon, and F. W. Thurnam.

*Present at Council Meeting:* Lieut.-Col. D. G. Thomson, M.D., R.A.M.C. (President), in the chair, and Drs. H. T. S. Aveline, A. Helen Boyle, James Chambers, R. H. Cole, Thos. Drapes, R. Eager, John Keay, J. N. Sergeant, T. E. Knowles Stansfield, G. E. Shuttleworth, H. Wolseley-Lewis, and R. H. Steen.

Dr. J. G. Soutar attended on the invitation of the President.

Apologies for unavoidable absence were received from: Drs. C. C. Easterbrook, R. R. Leeper, John Mills, H. de M. Alexander, Graeme Dickson, L. R. Oswald, T. S. Adair, G. N. Bartlett, Donald Ross, J. R. Gilmour, and James M. Rutherford.

The minutes of the last meeting, being printed in the April number of the Journal, were approved and signed by the President as correct.

##### BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE COUNCIL MEETING.

The PRESIDENT said his first duty, under this head, was to report to the meeting that the late Dr. Maudsley had bequeathed to the Association a sum of £2000. He thought there was no need for him, on this occasion, to enlarge on the