OCCASIONAL NOTES OF THE QUARTER.

The Madness of Rousseau.

The following description of Rousseau's madness is taken from the admirable "Life of Rousseau," by Mr. John Morley, which has been recently published :—

The most prompt and quite the least instructive of the remarks invariably made upon any one who has acted in an unusual manner, is that he must be mad.

This universal criticism upon the unwonted really tells us nothing, because the term may cover any state of mind, from a warranted dissent from established custom down to absolute dementia. Rousseau was called mad when he took to wearing plain clothes and living frugally. He was called mad when he quitted the town and went to live in the country. The same facile explanation covered his quarrel with importunate friends at the Hermitage. Voltaire called him mad for saying that if there were perfect harmony of taste and temperament between the king's daughter and the executioner's son, the pair ought to be allowed to marry. We who are not forced by conversational necessities to hurry to a judgment, may hesitate to take either taste for the country, or for frugal living, or even for democratic extravagances, as a mark of a disordered mind. The verdict that Rousseau was mad, stated in this general and trenchant way, is quite uninteresting, and teaches us nothing.

That his conduct towards Hume was inconsistent with perfect mental soundness is quite plain. Instead of paying ourselves with phrases like monomania, it is more useful shortly to trace the conditions which prepared the way for mental derangement, because this is the only means of understanding either its nature or the degree to which it extended.

These conditions in Rousseau's case are perfectly simple and obvious to anyone who recognises the principle that the essential facts of such mental disorder as his must be sought not in the symptoms, but from the whole range of moral and intellectual constitution, acted on by physical states, and acting on them in turn.

Rousseau was born with an organization of extreme sensibility. This predisposition was further deepened by the application in early youth of mental influences specially calculated to heighten juvenile sensibility. Corrective discipline, from circumstance and from formal instruction, was wholly absent, and thus the particular excess in his temperament became even more and more exaggerated, and encroached at a rate of geometrical progression upon all the rest of his impulses and faculties; these, if he had been happily placed under some of the many forms of wholesome social pressure, would, on the contrary, have gradually reduced his sensibility to more normal proportions. When the vicious excess had decisively rooted itself in his character, he came to Paris, where it was irritated into further activity by the uncongeniality of the surrounding medium. Hence the growth of a marked unsociality, taking literary form in the Discourses, and practical form in his retirement from the town. The slow depravation of the affective life was hastened by solitude, by sensuous expansion, by the long musings of literary composition. Harsh and unjust treatment, prolonged for many months, induced a slight genuinely misanthropic element of bitterness into what had hitherto been an excess of feeling about himself, rather than any positive feeling of hostility or suspicion about others. Finally, and perhaps above all else, he was the victim of tormenting bodily pain, and of sleeplessness which resulted from it. The agitation and excitement of the journey to England completed the sum of the conditions of disturbance, and as soon as ever he was settled at Wootton, and had leisure to brood over the incidents of the few weeks since his arrival in England, the disorder, which had long been spreading through his impulses and affections, suddenly, but by a most natural sequence, extended to the faculties of his intelligence, and he became the prey of delusion, a delusion which was not yet fixed, but which ultimately became so.

" He has only felt during the whole course of his life," wrote Hume sympathetically; " and in this respect his sensibility rises to a pitch beyond what I have seen any example of; but it still gives him a more acute feeling of pain than of pleasure. He is like a man who was stripped not only of his clothes, but of his skin, and turned out in that situation to combat with the rude and boisterous elements." A morbid, affective state of this kind, and of such a degree of intensity, was the sure antecedent of a morbid intellectual state, general or partial, depressed or exalted. One who is the prey of unsound feelings, if they are only marked enough and persistent enough, naturally ends by a correspondingly unsound arrangement of all or some of his ideas to match, and the intelligence is seduced into finding supports in misconception of circumstances for the misconception of human relation which had its root in disordered emotion. This completes the breach of correspondence between the man's nature and the external facts with which he has to deal, though the breach may not, and in Rousseau's case certainly did not, extend along the whole line of feeling and judgment. That some process of nervous degeneration was going on to produce such a perversion of the mental relations to the outer conditions of life, nobody holding the modern theories of the mind will be likely to deny; nor that Rousseau's delusion about Hume's sinister feeling and designs, which was the first definite manifestation of positive unsoundness in the sphere of the intelligence, was a last result of the gradual development of an inherited predisposition to affective unsoundness, which, unhappily for the man's history, had never been counteracted either by a strenuous education, or by the wholesome urgencies of life.

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This contentment did not last long. The snow kept him indoors. The excitement of composition abated. Theresa harassed him by ignoble quarrels with the women in the kitchen. His delusions returned with greater force than before. He believed that the whole English nation was in a plot against him, that all his letters were opened before reaching London, and before leaving it; that all his movements were closely watched, and that he was surrounded by unseen guards to prevent any attempt at escape. At length these delusions got such complete mastery over him that, in a paroxysm of terror, he fled away from Wootton, leaving money, papers, and all else behind him. Nothing was heard of him for a fortnight, when Mr. Davenport received a letter from him, dated at Spalding, in Lincolnshire. Mr. Davenport's conduct throughout was marked by a humanity and patience that do him the highest honour. He confesses himself " quite moved to read poor Rousseau's mournful epistle." " You shall see his letter," he writes to Hume, " the first opportunity; but, God help him, I can't for pity give a copy; and 'tis so much mixed with his own poor little private concerns, that it would not be right in me to do it." This is the generosity which makes Hume's impatience and that of his mischievous advisers in Paris appear so petty, for Rousseau had behaved quite as ill to Mr. Davenport as he had done to Hume, and had received at least equal services from him. The good man at once sent a servant to Spalding in search of his unhappy guest, but Rousseau had again disappeared. The parson of the parish had passed several hours of each day in his company, and had found him cheerful and good-humoured. He had had a blue coat made for himself, and had written a long letter to the Lord Chancellor, praying him to appoint a guard at Rousseau's own expense to escort him in safety out of the kingdom where enemies were plotting against his life. He was next heard of at Dover (May 18th), whence he wrote a letter to General Conway, setting forth his delusions in full form. He is the victim of a plot; the conspirators will not allow him to leave the island lest he should divulge in other countries the outrages to which he has been subjected here; he perceives the sinister manœuvres that will arrest him if he attempt to put his foot on board ship. But he warns them that his tragical disappearance cannot take place without creating inquiry. Still, if General Conway will only let him go, he gives his word of honour that he will not publish a line of his memoirs he has written, nor even divulge the wrongs which he has suffered in England. " I see my last hour approaching," he concluded; " I am determined, if necessary, to advance to meet it, and to perish or be free; there is no longer any other alternative." On the same evening on which he wrote this letter (about May 20th—22nd) the forlorn wretch took boat and landed at Calais, where he seems at once to have recovered his composure and right mind.

On the Decline of the Moral Faculties in Old Age.

Dr. George M. Beard, of New York, has delivered lately a lecture on this subject, in which he lays down some propositions in a rather startling form:—

The lecturer began by giving a *résumé* of papers previously read before the Society, on *Young Men in History; an Inquiry into the Relation of Age to Work.* He stated that from an analysis of the lives of 1000 representative men in all the great branches of human effort, he had made the discovery that the golden decade was between thirty and forty; the silver between forty and fifty; the brazen between twenty and thirty; the iron between fifty and sixty, and so on. The superiority of youth and middle life over old age in *original* work appears all the greater when we consider the fact that nearly all the positions of honour, and profit, and prestige—professorships and public stations—and nearly all the money of the world are in the hands of the old. Reputation, like money and prestige, is mainly confined to the old.

Very few young men are greatly famous, for fame is a plant of slow growth—first the blade, then after a time the ear, then, after many years, perhaps not till long after death, the full corn in the ear. Men are not widely known until long after they have done the work that gives them their fame.

Portraits of great men are a delusion; statues are lies. They are taken when men have become greatly famous, which, on the average, is at least twenty-five years after they did the work that gave them their fame. The statue of Morse in the Central Park represents a most excellent gentleman, but not the discoverer of the Telegraph. Morse at seventy could no more have conceived and completed his great discovery than he could have reached out his hands and brought the planet Jupiter from the skies. He insisted on the distinction between *original* and *routine* work, claiming that the former was best done by those under forty-five, the latter might be as well or better done by those in advanced life, or by the very young.

Original work required *enthusiasm,* routine work *experience.* In society both forces are needed; one makes the world move, the other keeps it steady.

If all the results of the original work done by men under forty-five were annihilated, the world would be reduced to barbarism. Men are