

BOOK REVIEWS.

A STUDY IN PSYCHOSIS.

"The Madness of Nietzsche," by E. F. Podach. Putnam's Sons, London, 7/6.

From the publishers.

Dr. Podach's book, which has been translated from the German by F. A. Voigt, deals with the period immediately antecedent to Nietzsche's mental collapse, which occurred in Turin early in the year 1889, together with some observations on the course of his illness during his treatment at Basle, and subsequently in a mental home at Jena. Although the motive of the book is mainly pathological—Dr. Podach writes always as an alienist, and is primarily concerned with the problem of the correct diagnosis of Nietzsche's mental state during the last phase—there are some interesting passages relating to the poet-philosopher's unhappy association with Fraulein von Salome, and his prevailing obsession with regard to Richard Wagner (who died in 1883), whose wife, Cosima, he seems to have identified with his ideal of perfect womanhood, Ariadne, the mythological daughter of Minos, King of Crete: "He believed that he had gathered enough proofs in the course of his life to show that he had only been running after a will-o'-the-wisp. But there is no doubt that Ariadne continued her existence in the depths of his being, and just because she was denied to him in life, she became more and more essential in his own personal mythology. She is the symbol in which he rhymes and gathers into one all that is fragrant, riddle and hideous chance." This is Nietzsche's 'affirmative to the point of self-justification, even to the deliverance of all by-gone things.' When at the decisive moment it was essential to bind a terrestrial, corporeal representation of Ariadne, Nietzsche liberated from all earthly bonds, straightway grasps at Cosima, his ideal, who had once seemed to beckon to him."

Nietzsche's final and decisive breakdown came very suddenly at Turin, in January, 1889, shortly after he had written the last sentence of his preface to his book "Nietzsche contra Wagner." Until then he had been clear-sighted enough to write (in 1888) of the Franco-Prussian War: "Of all the evil consequences which the last war, the war with France drags in its train, the worst is, perhaps, a widespread, indeed a general error; the error of public opinion, indeed of all public opinions, that German civilisation has also been victorious in that war, and must, therefore, be adorned with wreaths big enough to be worthy of such extraordinary events and successes. This illusion is very harmful, not because it is an illusion—for there are some very beneficial and salutary errors—but because it is capable of converting our victory into total defeat—the defeat, indeed the extirpation, of the German spirit

victory into total defeat—the defeat, indeed the extirpation, of the German spirit to make way for the 'German Empire.'" Here Nietzsche showed a singular prevision, a sane and balanced judgment.

Simultaneously with his collapse, Nietzsche believed himself to be an incarnation of the double Godhead, Dionysos and the Crucified; from this time on he signed most of his letters "The Crucified," whose mission it was to unite and govern Europe, on the principle, one presumes, that one touch of Nature (or Nietzsche) would make the whole world akin. Thus, in a letter to the King of Italy, he addresses that monarch as "My beloved Umberto,—Peace be with thee!" and expresses a wish to see him, "as well as his Holiness the Pope." A sort of international conference, as it were, only—and here Nietzsche's madness shows a strain of sound sense: "The Hohenzollerns are to be kept away from this European congress of Princes"; while Wilhelm (the ex-Kaiser), Bismarck, and all anti-semites are to be done away with. Wilhelm, one gathers, was to be shot, which, had the project been fulfilled, might have saved the world much future trouble. To Frau Cosima, Nietzsche writes briefly, but affectionately: "Ariadne, I love thee, Dionysos." After this there was nothing for it but Nietzsche's removal by his friends to the custodianship of Professor Wille, the head of the Basle Psychiatric Clinic. Wille diagnosed Nietzsche's disease as "progressive paralysis"; and after remaining under observation at Basle for a few days, the sufferer was transferred, at his mother's request, to Professor Binswanger's Mental Clinic at Jena.

At Jena, Nietzsche's condition seemed to improve slightly, so that his friend, Peter Gast, who at times had a vague sort of an idea that he was "only pretending to be insane," was able to write, in February, 1890: "To-day I am enormously strengthened in my belief that we shall have our Nietzsche back again. Yesterday and to-day he was splendid! Yesterday I was upstairs in the ward among the totally insane where Nietzsche usually sits (visitors are not really allowed there at all); from there we proceeded to the music room. I wanted to sit down at the piano and gave Nietzsche the bag with the six doughnuts I bring him every day, but he said: 'No, dear friend, I do not want to get sticky fingers now, because I want to play a little first.' Then he sat down at the instrument and improvised." But, alas! Nietzsche was still preoccupied with his mission: "I have had Caiaphas put in chains. And last year I was crucified in very drawn out fashion by the German doctors. Have abolished William, Bismarck, and all anti-semites. The rest for Frau Cosima . . . Ariadne . . . there is magic from time to time." In March, 1890, Nietzsche was removed from the asylum by his mother and taken to her apartments in Jena. But although he

asylum by his mother and taken to her apartments in Jena. But although he survived another ten years—a lingering death in life—he never manifested any real improvement, and died at Weimar in August, 1900.

The book is illustrated with photographs.