The Crowd. A Study of the Popular Mind. By Gustave Le Bon. The Macmillan Co.

This is a translation of a little volume entitled 'Psychologie des foules,' which appeared in Paris in 1895. The author is well known in the European scientific world as a voluminous writer upon many branches of physiology and psychology, and in recent years more especially as a student of the psychology of races and of mankind as socially organized.

In the present work M. Le Bon devotes his attention to an analysis of the psychological phenomena of masses of men. The substitution of the unconscious action of crowds for the conscious activity of individuals, he tells us, is one of the principal characteristics of the present age. The epoch is one of those critical moments in which the thought of mankind is undergoing a process of transformation. The general destruction of those religious, political and social beliefs which were the elements of an earlier civilization has been succeeded by new intellectual conditions of existence, the product of scientific thought and industrial discoveries In this critical transition period we are witnessing also the transformation of social organization from monarchical and aristocratic forms to democracy. Our author declares that we have entered, or we are about to enter, upon an age that may truthfully be described as the era of crowds. While only two generations ago the opinion of the masses scarcely counted in political affairs, to-day it is the old traditions and the opinions of individuals that are without influence. The voice of the masses has become preponderant.

What effect is this rule of the crowd to have upon civilization? In the past, civilizations have been created and directed by a small intellectual aristocracy, never by the crowd. Crowds, thus far in the world's history, have been powerful chiefly for destruction. Obviously, before we can answer any question in regard to the probable future action of crowds, we shall need to know much more of the psychology of collective men than we know at present. The thoughtful public should be grateful to M. Le Bon for this first serious attempt to analyze the mind of the crowd. One need not accept all of his conclusions to appreciate the value of his work. Its importance consists in the fact that he has clearly stated a large number of problems which merit diligent consideration—problems which hitherto have not been seriously studied as the foundation of political science.

The starting point of M. Le Bon's philosophy of crowds is a conviction that the crowd is always something more than the sum or the average of its individual elements. Our author believes that when men become organized as a crowd they lose many of their individual characteristics and acquire others which, as individuals, they never exhibit. The crowd is always, according to M. Le Bon's observations, swayed by feeling rather than by reason. This is because men differ more widely in intelligence than in feeling. The mental unity of a crowd, therefore, is sympathetic rather than rational. Again, crowds are undoubtedly to a very great extent subject to suggestion and to hypnotic influence. So far as the mental operations of crowds are intellectual they think in images, and are therefore in a large measure controlled by imagination. Like children, crowds are impatient of any obstacle interposed between suggestion and act; they desire to carry a purpose into immediate effect. They are, therefore, intolerant of discussion and of delay.

These truths, M. Le Bon declares, have always been instinctively apprehended by men with a genius for leadership. The imagination of crowds is awakened by whatever presents itself in the shape of a startling and effective image, freed from all accessory explanations. The leader, therefore, will take care to lay things before the crowd as a whole, and will carefully avoid any attempt to justify them on grounds of reason or to explain their origin. No man ever so thoroughly understood this truth as the first Napoleon. "It was by becoming a Catholic," he said to the Council of State, "that I terminated the Vendéean war; by becoming a Musselman that I obtained a footing in Egypt; by becoming an Ultramontane that I won over the Italian priests, and had I to govern a nation of Jews, I would rebuild Solomon's temple."

In general, crowds are powerless to hold other opinions than those which are imposed upon them by example or authority, and are not to be controlled by rules based upon theories of

pure equity or of economic expediency. They are rather to be directed, if at all, by seeking what produces an impression on them and what seduces them. The danger to civilization in this psychology of crowds lies in the fact that the dogmas whose birth we are now witnessing will soon have the force of old dogmas, that is to say, the tyrannical and sovereign force of being above discussion. The divine right of the masses is about to replace the divine right of kings. Nevertheless, M. Le Bon affirms that it would be dangerous to meddle with the organization of crowds, notwithstanding their psychological inferiority. The facts of history have demonstrated that social organisms are every whit as complicated as those of all beings, and it is not in our power to force them to undergo any sudden or far-reaching transformation.

M. Le Bon's account of the general psychology of crowds is supplemented by a detailed analysis of more special characteristics, in separate chapters on the sentiments and morality of crowds, the ideas, reasoning power and imagination of crowds, the religious shape assumed by the convictions of crowds, and the immediate factors of the opinions of crowds. In the latter part of his volume he describes different kinds of crowds, including criminal crowds, electoral crowds and parliamentary assemblies.

The chief criticisms to be passed upon this volume are: First, that the author has not acknowledged, as he should have done, his very obvious indebtedness to the greatest living social psychologist, M. Tarde, whose 'Les Lois de l'imitation' and 'La logique sociale' contain in their original form many of the suggestions which have governed M. Le Bon's thoughts. Second, that he makes rather too much, probably, of what he would call the hypnotic phenomena of crowds, and too little of the absence of personal responsibility which the individual feels when he unites with his fellowmen in collective action.

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Laboratory Practice for Beginners in Botany. By WILLIAM A. SETCHELL, PH. D., Professor of Botany in the University of California. New York, The Macmillan Company. 1897. Pp. xiv+199. Price, 90 cents.

There are already a number of laboratory guides in elementary botany and, judging from the announcements of book publishers and their statements in conversation, there are soon to be several others. Their multiplication only argues that no single outline will satisfy other teachers. No good teacher can follow closely the outlines of instruction laid down by another; each must throw his own personality into the work and the method, and the conditions of time, place and facilities for work will all enter into the problem of how to teach an introductory class in botany. The author of the work in hand recognizes this condition when he says (p. 137): "The ideal way is to teach the student without any book."

The book illustrates what we regard as a false principle of instruction, though one much in vogue, namely, the telling a pupil in advance to see certain things before he has had a chance to look for something himself; this, followed too closely, can only result in preventing the development of any originality in the pupil and tends to reduce him to a mere machine. To illustrate the method followed, we quote from one of the chapters:

"I. Take a piece of stem of the Japanese Quince, which has several leaves attached to it. Examine the leaves and notice that:

"1. They are all borne on the sides of the stem (*i. e.*, that they are *lateral structures*).

"2. They are broad and thin (*i. e.*, they are also *expanded structures*).

"3. Their color is green. (This is not true for all leaves, *e. g.*, examine the leaves of some common red Colias [*sic*] of the garden or greenhouse, in which another coloring-matter is present and hides the green.)

"4. They are all borne at the *nodes* of the stem. (We may consequently separate that portion of the plant above the root into a number of similar parts, each of which may be called a *phytomer* or plant part. Each phytomer will consist of an *internode*, and a *node* with its *leaf* or *leaves*. Sketch a phytomer of the Japanese Quince and label it.")

This criticism is, of course, general, applying to many books of its class that have been