

THE CRIMINAL MIND

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The criminal mind by Maurice de Fleury

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MAURICE DE FLEURY

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INTRODUCTION

IT is my purpose to state here, in the simplest and clearest form, the sum of our most recently-acquired and most certain information respecting the structure and the action of the brain of Man, in order that we may ascertain to what extent these new ideas—I mean those which we may regard as finally accepted, and henceforth incontestable—are calculated to modify the received and current ideas upon crime, the criminal, and penal legislation.

For thirty years physiologists and physicians have been engaged, even more assiduously than lawyers and philosophers, in ploughing that old field of human knowledge anew, in turning-up the dry and dusty soil so as to bring the deep mould to the surface, more fresh and fruitful. Why should it be surprising that a doctor should again put in his word.

I do not, however, disguise from myself that the task is not a grateful one.

The modern scientific ideas concerning the criminal brain are displeasing to the great majority of magistrates and jurists, and are most strenuously repudiated by those who have had no leisure to study them otherwise than superficially. These personages have been brought up in a firmly-fixed belief in Free Will, and accustomed from their school-time to regard that faith as fundamental and indispensable to the proper working of civilized society; nothing can be less surprising than their refusal to adopt new theories, which, being accepted, might give encouragement to evil. Let it be observed also that these doctrines seem to tend towards the restriction of the *rôle* of the jurist and the magistrate respectively, and to diminish the importance of their office and rank, by regarding them no longer as judges discerning the intentions of men, and appointed to punish those who have voluntarily chosen the path of evil, but simply as defenders of public order and the civic peace.

Their repugnance is quite natural, and deserving of respect, and it is supported and fortified by popular feeling and the opinion of the greater number.

When the newspapers report a monstrous crime, with a hundred sensational details, a great