

## **Common mind-troubles.**

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# COMMON MIND-TROUBLES

FAILINGS

DEFECTS OF MEMORY

CONFUSIONS OF THOUGHT

SLEEPLESSNESS

HESITATION AND

ERRORS IN SPEECH

LOW SPIRITS

TEMPERS

&c &c



BY

J. MORTIMER GRANVILLE





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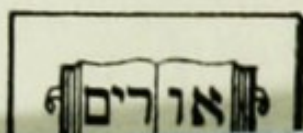
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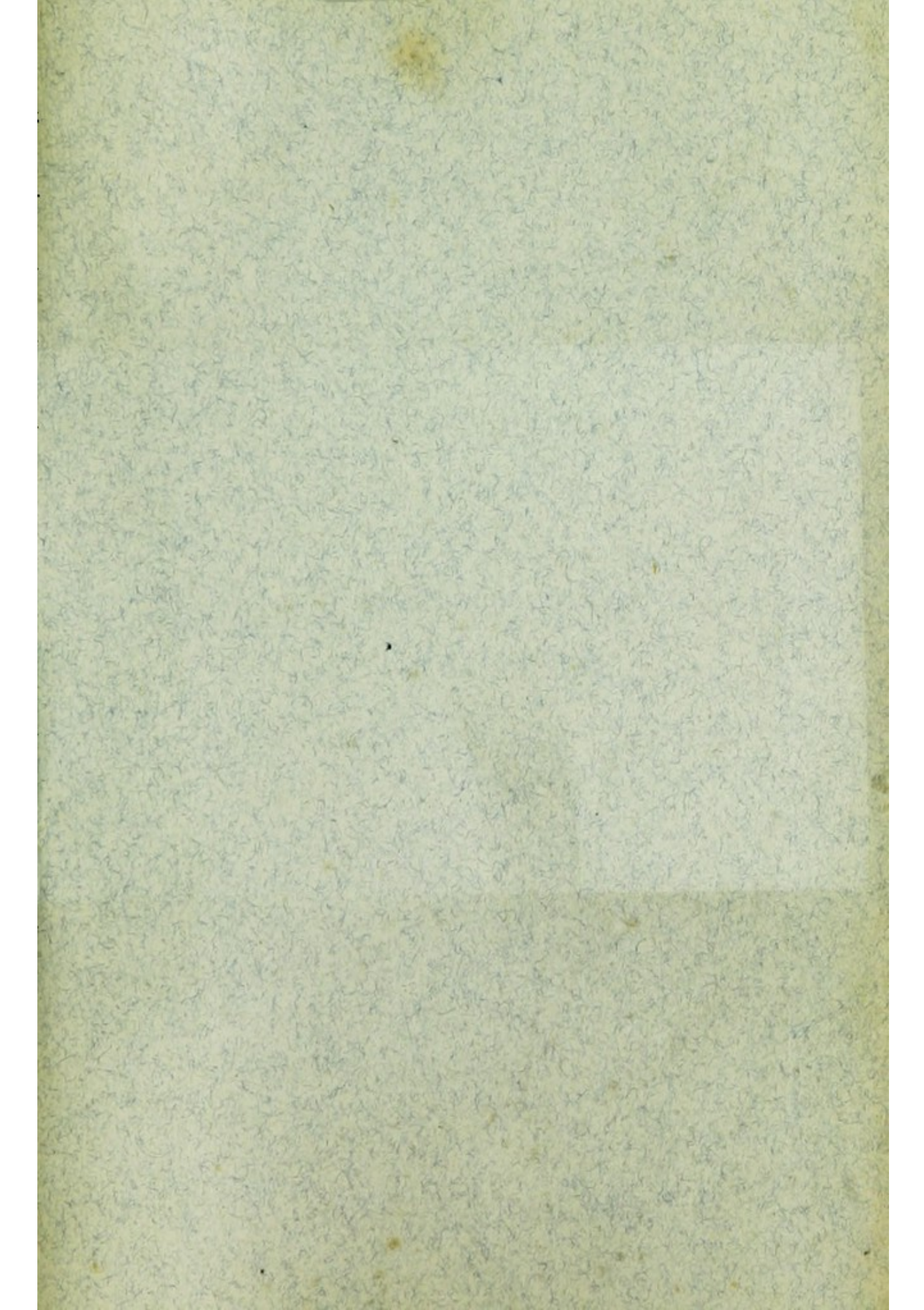




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# COMMON MIND-TROUBLES.

BY

*J. MORTIMER-GRANVILLE.*

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## TO THE READER.

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I AM encouraged by the reception which has been accorded to my previous papers on the subject of mind-troubles, by the press, the public, and the profession, to adventure a further selection. I would only ask the scientific reader, if any such should honour this little volume by his notice, to remember that these essays, like those which have preceded them, were not written for persons who have professionally investigated the phenomena of which they treat. The sole purpose has been to seize on a few salient difficulties and grapple with them, in the interests of *self-help*. The key-note of the theme is the presumption that there is often—if not generally—a stage of conscious embarrassment preceding mental derangement or mind weakness, and while this condition exists there is hope in the power of repair



and self-recovery which exists in the mind not less than in the body. To this belief I must adhere.

J. MORTIMER-GRANVILLE.

*Oct. 1878.*

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#### NOTE TO THE FIFTH THOUSAND.

THE success which has attended this series of papers gives me ground to hope they have been found useful. I have therefore determined to issue a new edition, simultaneously with the appearance of a complementary series under the title "The Secret of a Clear Head." Read together I trust these little books may be helpful in mental hygiene.

J. M.-G.

*April 1879.*

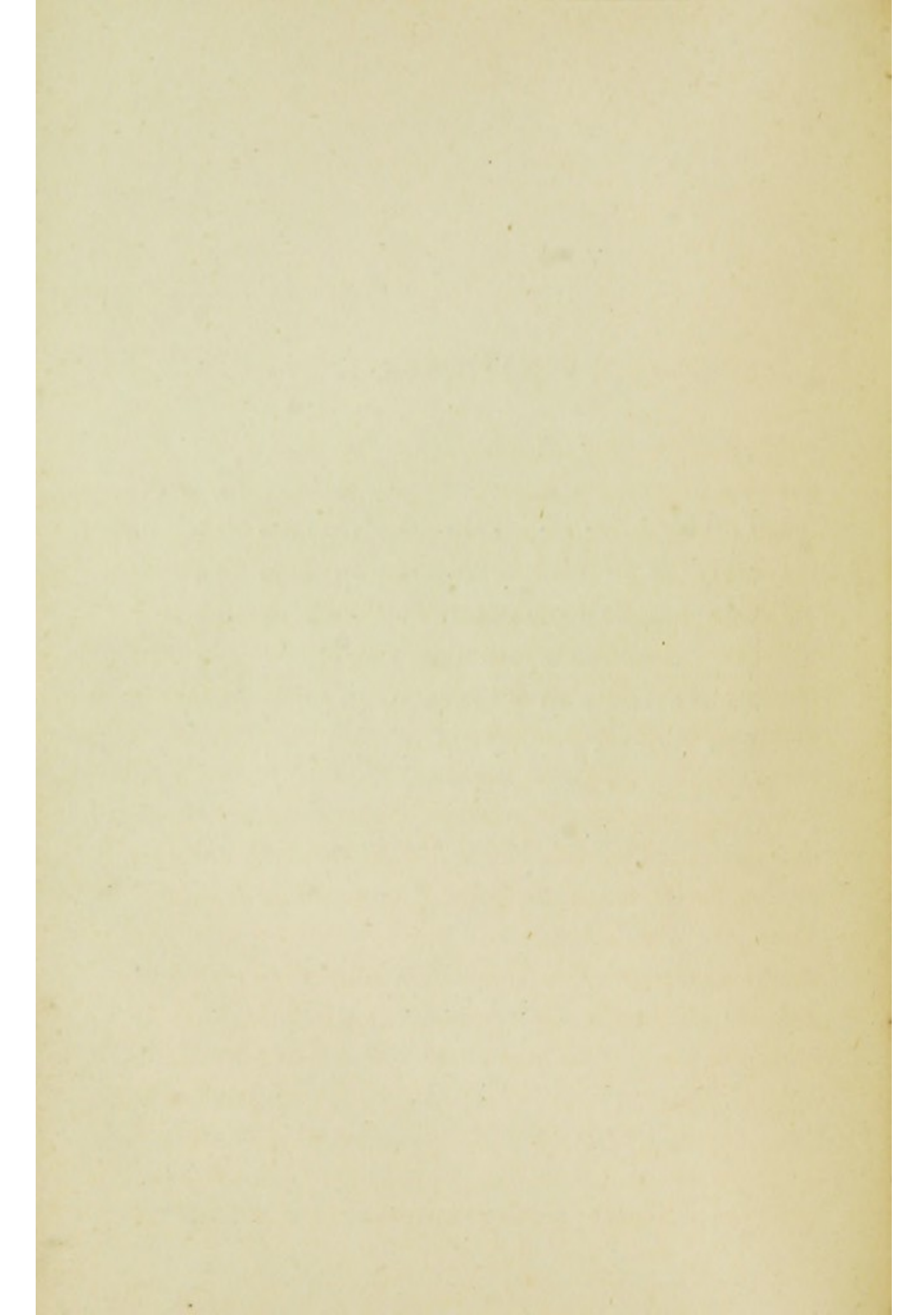


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## FAILINGS.

WE all have our *failings*, and for the most part we regard them tenderly. They do not count as offences; scarcely are they held to be faults. It is always a probable conjecture that an error of omission has been unintentional; not unfrequently it seems possible it was unavoidable. A sentiment of pity for, and even sympathy with, weakness overpowers the sense of grievance; the voice of the inward monitor is silenced, and the self-excused conscience sleeps. Meanwhile failings are the worst and most mischievous, the deadliest and least curable, of the ills to which the moral nature of man is heir. They are the sources of evil whence spring the blackest vices of human character, the false roots that nourish and sustain its parasites, and steal the sap of its inner life. A failing is not merely negative; its sinister aspect is one of positive wrong-doing, wherein some behest of the will is disobeyed, a measure of moral power wasted, a rebel habit formed or fostered. To compassionate failings in others is to beg the



question of fact for the sake of politeness ; to look with leniency on the errors which self would fain palliate, by assuming that they are unavoidable, is to play the traitor to Truth, and let the enemy into the citadel ; whereas conscience is set to guard the nature of man from treachery not less carefully than to protect it against assault.

Failings may be moral, mental, or physical, as they show themselves in the character, the intellect, or the bodily habit and powers. It generally happens that what strikes the observer as a failing is compounded of errors in feeling, thought, and action combined. The practical question is how the overt evil came into existence ; or, if happily the failing should be detected in an earlier stage of growth, before it has betrayed its presence by ugly consequences, we may ask : what are the mischievous forces, where are they at work, how can they be counteracted ? Why has this person the “ failing ” of a tendency to excessive indulgence in drink or the gratification of some unbridled passion ; and that individual a seeming inability to recognise and pursue the right and honest course of conduct in the presence of any so-called “ temptation ” or difficulty ?

A search for the causes, and the conditions which have determined the development, of failings is reasonable, and it will not be profitless. Many of



the shortcomings we deplore as irremediable might be amended, perhaps wholly eradicated, if, with the light experience and science can bring to bear on the subject of human character, the will were charged resolutely to look for the hidden sources of weakness, pliability, subjugation to passion, moral obliquity or seeming lack of principle, together with those less blamed but equally disastrous defects, indolence, want of perseverance, and indifference to truth, which combine to form or are themselves what the weak-minded and the unwise call "failings."

Some of the most regrettable and injurious failings which disfigure and defame the character run through families, appearing in successive generations and seeming to be inherited. This theory of their perpetuation is well founded ; and it has been adduced as conclusive evidence of the truth of the hypothesis that mind, and, of course, character, is the mere outcome of matter. The force of the argument obviously rests on the assumption that nothing more than, or outside, matter can be transmitted from parent to child ; that a particular constitution of brain and nerve centres, a special arrangement or combination of the elements which compose the mind-organ, may be reproduced, and, if it is, a similarity of character will be entailed ; but as for the independent existence of mind, or spirit, that is a pure figment of the imagination, which science



will sooner or later drive beyond the pale of credulity, and to which, even now, only a few thinkers, crippled by prejudices, avowedly cling !

Let us examine this proposition at close quarters. It may be stated thus. All we know of mind is expressed, and understood, by physical agencies and in the formulæ of material force. Speech communicates thought, and we think in words. The faculty of forming and employing words is a brain function. If a particular region of the brain be injured or diseased, the power of using language, at least in speech, is *generally* lost. The materialist argues from this and many similar facts that mind is the product of matter. He fails to perceive that the only warrantable deduction from his own data is that mind or spirit, call it what we will, *can only express itself* through the brain as an instrument. As well deny the skill or independent existence of a musician because he cannot play the full score of an opera on a flute, as infer the non-existence of a soul from the fact that man cannot perform intellectual work without the organ of thought—the brain !

The capacity of the instrument doubtless limits the expression, but it supplies no measure of the power or skill of the performer, except in so far as the use he makes of the instrument may be a bad one. This exception is of great significance, and there will be



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something more to say about it presently. Meantime it is evident that, while the range of brain-power determines the *manifestation* of mind, it neither measures, nor affirms, nor disproves the independent existence of mind. The anatomist, the physiologist, and the chemist declare their inability to discover the traces of a soul in the physical organism. That no more proves the non-existence of a soul than the failure to recognise more than a certain number of planets at any stage in the history of astronomy demonstrated that there was nothing further to find.

History and experience attest the folly of denying the existence of the unknown. And it is especially unwise, or unscientific, to assume the non-existence of a psychical power, working in or through the physical nature of man, because it is only upon the hypothesis that such a power exists we are able to understand and explain some of the commonest and most clearly-defined phenomena of mind and character. For example, two individuals are found to have had brains of microscopically similar quality, and of equal weight. They are both highly developed, and any differences they present to the critical observer, armed with the most subtle tests which science can devise, are of a nature which experience has shown to be functionally unimportant. The two individuals have, during life, been surrounded by circum-



stances which throw no light on their idiosyncrasies. Nevertheless the moral character of the one has been wholly bad, that of the other strikingly exemplary. How is it possible to account for this difference except on the hypothesis of a soul?

There is no more wide-spread, but utterly groundless fallacy, than that which strives to associate virtue or vice with particular forms of development. It is true that there are grades of animal excellence, and the lower are likely to be the more brutal; but the higher and most perfect growth is not only compatible, but frequently found in association, with an excess of evil attributes. In short, the most delicate and efficient instrument may be put to the worst purposes. What determines the event? What made this person with the highest intellectual organism an unscrupulous wrong-doer, the enemy of his species, and a discredit to human nature, while that individual with a physical organism so nearly identical that science can detect no difference was distinguished by characteristics entirely opposite? The superficial answer to this crucial interrogatory is: circumstances, education, the influence of example, opposition, health—these, in short, the environments, made the difference. The rejoinder will not stand the test of experience. Let any one turn over in his memory the histories of lives he has observed. The most tenderly nurtured go astray,



while, on the other hand, the neglected and, as it would seem, demoralised by "circumstances," rise above the accident of associated evil influences, to attain the highest moral growth.

The appeal against materialism lies to the instinct of common sense. If mind were the mere outcome of matter, science would long since have discovered some tolerably constant relation between peculiarities of physical development and manifestations of character; whereas every step onward in the progress of research tends to disprove the existence of any certain dependency or connection between morals and matter. Even such links as compose the stock-in-trade of the physiognomist and phrenologist are shown to be illusory, except in so far as they may be the effects, rather than the causes, of character, and are produced by culture—witness the effects of education on facial expression in the case of criminals. The theory of a criminal conformation of cranium has been abandoned like the silly affectation of being able to detect an offender by his "hang-dog" or "murderous" look.

"Failings" must be studied in the light of the lessons these facts and considerations combine to teach. The moral question involved is one of responsibility for the use each individual may make of the brain-power allotted to him. The neglect to employ gifts and capacities is as grave an error, from an



ethical point of view, as their application to a bad purpose. The servant who buried his talent in the earth was held accountable for the failure to use it, and thereby increase its value. The parable sets forth a truth of the highest practical interest. We are responsible for the development, by use, of the faculties vouchsafed to us. If they are allowed to remain in abeyance, or a rudimentary state, we are to blame for the deficiencies and the failings to which this neglect gives rise, and are without excuse. The obligation to act up to the level of known duty cannot be avoided. A "failing" is an act of contempt for the law of development by use. It is disobedience to an understood command. The fact that it is recognised makes a failing an offence. There may be shortcoming in the performance of a good resolve. Few, if any, merely human efforts are entirely successful; but the failure which occurs when an endeavour is made in the energy of a resolute and well-aimed purpose is not so much a fault as an insufficiency. The rising tide reaches its highest level by successive efforts. Self-improvement is effected in the same fashion. The motive power of persistent good endeavour is accumulative—ever advancing like the great tidal wave of the ocean—though the ground is conquered by short and seemingly only half-successful advances.



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Failings, however, as we are now regarding them, are excused faults in the character which the individual makes no serious effort to repair. Some defects, as we have seen, are inherited, and upon them it is the custom to bestow great commiseration and little blame. Now, in truth, these are the least pardonable, because, if they are known to have been transmitted from parent to child, the latter has, generally, the advantage of an example, ever present to memory, by which to correct his personal deficiencies. If the "failing" be a vicious propensity, he can recall its hideousness, and thus stimulate will and conscience to aid him in eradicating the fault. If it be some form of deficiency, as indolence, lack of perseverance, want of principle, or the like, he can study, as in the pages of history, the evil consequences entailed by the defect, and with diligence order his own conduct in better courses. Inherited failings are the least excusable. Even the materialist, who claims them as the fruit of physical peculiarities, must concede that by special culture they can be remedied, the healthy organism being susceptible of increased development in any particular direction when the proper stimuli are intelligently applied with a view to its improvement. The apologist for failings which have been inherited can find no comfort in the philosophy of materialism.



Failings which are peculiar to the individual may be less easy to detect, and the subject of these defects is, in a measure, dependent upon experience and the motions of those around him for the information needed to correct them. This should keep the wise teachable and apt to profit by the lessons life is ever reading for their instruction. A self-reliant spirit is manly, and therefore commendable ; a self-sufficient spirit is unreasonable, and therefore despicable. It is strange how few of us grow really wiser as we grow older. The work of self-improvement is seldom commenced until forced upon the judgment by some awakening experience, and this is rarely vouchsafed until the ductile period of youth has gone by. Early in the adult age of man his habits become rigidly formulated, and failings are then hard to mend. A world of unhappiness and disappointment might be spared the later years of life if the young would be warned to begin the business of training the character before it is firmly set in the mould of circumstances, with all the coarse elements—inherited and contracted—uneliminated, and the errors of inconsistency and imperfect development uncorrected.

It is in the period of youth and adolescence that the mind may be most hopefully cultivated and the moral character intelligently formed. No greater mistake can be made by a young and vigorous mind than



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to treat the faculty of reason and the instinct of moral judgment as parts of the being which may be left to their own devices. The young man bestows some thought on his muscular system—he trains his eye, cultivates his ear, and takes credit for prudence when he strives to develop the vigour and to foster the healthy growth of his body. Is it wise—nay, is it not rather the worst of folly and shortsightedness—to neglect the ordinary development of those higher powers which man possesses in a more exalted degree than any of the lower animals? Taking care for the body while the mind is neglected is the worst of failings—the most calamitous and the least excusable.



## DEFECTS OF MEMORY.

THE faculty of remembering is not one of the higher intellectual powers or functions. Animals far below man in the scale of intelligence exhibit a capacity for recollecting their associations with places, persons, and events after a long interval of time has elapsed ; and even idiots, with slow and imperfect apprehension, are not unfrequently seen to perform what must, in their condition, be regarded as feats of memory. Nevertheless, loss or serious impairment of the faculty will produce grave mental disability ; and when either of these evils occurs, in the case of an individual who has previously given no indication of deficiency or defect, the change may reveal ground for uneasiness, and, in every case, must create anxiety to discover the cause.

Memory, using the term in its popular signification, is made up of two powers or faculties—that of fixing or retaining a subject-thought in the mind, and that of recalling it at will. It is a common experience to feel conscious of knowing a thing—for example, the name



of a person or place, the whereabouts of a missing article, the date or order of sequence of an event—but to be unable to recall the information in detail. Either of these powers may be at fault in a case of “loss of memory ;” and it is of the highest practical moment to ascertain which of the two is defective, not only with a view to repair, if that should be possible, but because a clue may be discovered to the precise nature and cause of the malady.

The retention or fixing of ideas is very much a matter of habit. There are, doubtless, differences as to the strength and clearness of the original perception which will affect the quality of the impression. Some persons do not receive an idea as rapidly as others, and many who display the greatest celerity of apprehension seem satisfied with simply taking up an idea for a moment, and letting it drop instantly afterwards. Those who exhibit this peculiarity do not, in fact, appropriate the object, and convert it into a subject ; they seize on it as a porter grasps a package with which he has no concern—by the cord or corners, or in any way most convenient. Some persons learn by ear, and catch the jingle of word-sounds, not their meaning. Children who have a special facility for picking up verses are seldom really quick in study, or retentive. Others acquire information by the eye ; anything they can picture or dispose in a particular



order or place—for example, a square—is appropriated. Such minds are generally endowed with a lively perception of form and proportion. A third class of learners are dependent on the power of connecting scraps of information for their retention of facts ; they seem to be perpetually making a piece of patchwork, and anything that can be tacked into a notch, or on to the extremity, of the work in hand can be received, while what is not capable of being so placed is sacrificed, however valuable. All these, and many similar, methods are peculiarities in the way of receiving impressions or ideas ; but, speaking generally, they do no more than lodge the subject in the outer chamber of the mind, from which it may be swept by the first rough wind, or roughly ejected on the slightest internal commotion.

When therefore the memory becomes a blank, or seems to have suddenly shifted and lost its cargo, it is necessary, in the absence of any significant symptom of disease, to inquire whether what has happened is not simply the discharge of useless lumber. This sort of experience occurs not uncommonly just as a youth has completed that which is, under a serious misapprehension of facts, called his “education ;” and many a poor fellow has been driven to distraction, hounded on by professional harpies, with the dread that he is suffering from some terrible and life-blighting



defect. What has taken place is the sudden heeling over of a deck-laden craft, with the discharge of her laboriously collected but badly stowed cargo into the sea. If the vessel rights herself quickly, it is no bad thing to have got rid of the incumbrance, although it may be provoking to reflect that it is too late to put back into port and load again. The only expedient is to haul on board some of the more useful portions of the floating wreck and stow them in the hold. A break-down of this nature happens every now and again, and will occur while the practice of "cramming" boys at school and at college for "competitive" examinations continues to find favour. It was a socially and mentally mischievous thought that notion of "competitive tests;" and among the sufferers are not only the many youths and young men who experience the mind-panic to which we are alluding, but the multitude of overtaxed and weakened brains that are abandoned as incapable—among them some of the best for real work—by competitive teachers and trainers of the young, who conform their educational methods to the spirit and fashion of the day.

When loss of memory occurs in the manner indicated, whenever it happens soon after leaving school, on the completion of any great effort, or at the moment when the mind is for the first time brought face to face with the real business of life, instead of



giving way to crazy alarm the victim of this misfortune should set to work to repair the loss caused by the accident, not by repeating the errors of a faulty educational process, but by developing his faculty of retention by honest and patient work in a new and healthy direction. In short, one half the so-called cases of "loss of memory" are simply the break-down of a training which has been unnatural. The circumstance that the faculty of remembering seems to be itself impaired by the catastrophe is not in the least surprising, because, in addition to the immediate effects of the shock, there is the discovery that the power of retention is in truth wanting. The real faculty of memory has not been developed by the system adopted, and the untrained mind has to be cultivated anew. Only what has been thoroughly learned can be perfectly remembered, and no process other than that which brings the natural faculty of *knowledge* into active exercise can perform the true functions of memory, or is worthy to be so called.

The fixing of subject-matters in the mind depends directly on the manner in which they are received and dealt with in thought, immediately after they have been appropriated, while the power of re-collecting the ideas or impressions put away in the mind is the outcome of an orderly method of arrangement, and for this reason always susceptible of development.



Just as an orderly but forgetful person may deposit an article carefully in a suitable place and afterwards be wholly unable to find it, so a mind may have treasured up an idea thoroughly and safely, but be at a loss to recover it when wanted in conversation or thought. It is the fashion to assert that in such a case there must have been something amiss in the process of "putting away." There may have been a defect in this stage, but that is not a necessary inference from the fact of forgetting. The fault is quite as often in the manner of looking for an object or an idea as in placing it. Very much depends on the knowledge an individual possesses of his intellectual property. If he is in the habit, so to say, of frequently taking out his treasures of information and his ideas and examining and dusting them, he will probably be able to find them readily when required.

It is doubtless very unscientific to employ such a simile, because, as everybody knows, or thinks he knows, ideas are registered by the combination, or some change in the constitution, of cells in the cerebral tissue of the brain; but for plain folk the notion of "placing" and "finding" ideas at will is more intelligible than the jargon of scientists, and possibly fully as accurate. The one point to make clear is that inability to remember is as often a fault in method as a defect of power; and every sufferer should exhaust



all the milder and more comprehensible hypotheses of his difficulty before he worries himself with the graver and less easily remedied. To throw a few practical hints together, I may jot down the following results of experience and observation.

It is seldom any good to goad the memory roughly in a moment of forgetfulness. Instead of making a violent and distressing effort to find the right word, if it does not suggest itself, think of another that will do as well; possibly the defaulting term will thus be recovered by association; if not, another may be substituted. It is annoying to forget a familiar name or term; but the feeling of chagrin, and the collateral disturbance caused at the moment, are little likely to strengthen the memory. An idea, term, or phrase, which has not quickly responded to the call of the will, should be made the subject of special thought and examined at close quarters—in fact, learnt—when it is found. In this way the memory may be strengthened, whereas by conflict at the critical moment of forgetfulness it will be weakened. It is useless, and worse, to resort to what are called technical memories. The inducement to adopt formulæ of facts or figures is very strong when the pressure of work to be “got up” in a given time is great; but the practice is ruinous to the faculty of thought, because it not only throws it out of use, but cripples it.



The way to fix a subject in the mind is to master it thoroughly under all its aspects, so that the Reason and Judgment may be familiar with it, each in its province appropriating some special fact concerning it. Real knowledge of a subject implies its being brought in detail to the direct cognisance of each of the leading powers or faculties of the mind in turn, so that if one forgets, the others will recall, it. People take only a passing glance at an object, and wonder they cannot recollect it. The faculties differ in their power of retention. In some minds Reason is the most highly gifted with the power of taking in, or perhaps finding, subjects. When this is the case, the individual remembers only what he has reasoned about; and, if he has forgotten anything, he must search it out and recover it by a process of reasoning, or it will be lost. Every thoughtful mind should try to ascertain which of its constituent faculties is the most effective in this work and train it for the purpose. Half the folk who go through life bemoaning their want of memory have excellent faculties ready for the business of recollection, but from ignorance or inattention persist in imposing the task on the most incompetent; for example, striving to remember by the ear when sight is their best remembrancer, or trusting to the special senses when the reasoning faculty has special fitness for the function. Memory is not so much a faculty as



a function, which may be performed by either, or several, of the powers of mind ; but these require to be specially cultivated.

It follows from what has been said that "defects of memory" are of very diverse natures, and need to be closely investigated before any general conclusion is drawn from the mere fact of partial impairment or even total failure. Some of the phenomena of disease are extraordinary. There may be loss of power to remember the occurrences of a particular period of life, near or remote. This form of malady is—in the absence of special brain disease—generally more closely connected with the function of apprehension than with that of recollection ; the least well-appropriated facts are those forgotten. Again, there may be failure with respect to certain classes of subjects—for example, dates and figures—or the defect may be limited even to certain numbers. Often when this happens there has been, in former years, either excessive activity with regard to the particular subjects of thought which are, as it were, effaced from the memory, or they were never thoroughly mastered. Some scientists explain these peculiarities by the hypothesis that certain congeries of corpuscles in the brain have been destroyed. It may be so ; but the circumstance that occasionally the whole blank is refilled, as though by an electric shock, would seem to show that



they are rather thrown out of the vital circuit for a while by some diversion or interruption of the current. The hypothesis of science is obviously susceptible of this interpretation of the facts. Any cause or state which impairs the integrity of the circulation of blood through a part of the brain, or disturbs the rhythm of nerve energy, may impair the memory; and this is why loss of memory or disorder of the function comes to possess grave interest.

It is, however, important to disabuse the mind of the mischievous impression that failure of memory must needs be a sign of disease, whereas it may be the consequence of defective training or overloading. Meanwhile it is necessary to realise that probably no early indication of brain disturbance is likely to be more significant than this mental peculiarity. The way to test the symptom subjectively is to cast about for any possible cause of bodily weakness—anything that is likely to have impoverished the blood, or lowered the tone of the system—such as loss of appetite, or deficiency of nourishment, either in respect of quantity or quality, the abuse of stimulants, or excess of any kind, which produces depression after temporary excitement, loss of sleep, undue bodily or mental labour, constitutional disease, in short anything which will weaken or exhaust. If a cause is discovered, it must, if practicable, be instantly removed, and the effect



watched. If no serious harm has been done, and the real source of the mischief has been discovered and removed, the brain will resume its normal condition, slowly perhaps, but sufficiently soon to show that the true method of treatment has been adopted.

These cases of loss of memory are nearly all amenable to self-help, and while the physician may fail, and the empiricist do dire mischief with his "opinions" and his drugs, the intelligent sufferer can cure himself. The golden maxim of health, and the precept of self-recovery, is capable of expression in one word, "Order." This is the universal law of natural life. It governs society, and it must control the individual. Tested by this standard, all that is right, true, moral, and excellent in conduct will be readily distinguishable from the wrong, the false, the unholy, and the despicable. Life itself, in its integrity, is orderly action, and every defect of life, every form of disease, all failure whether of body or mind—and failure of memory among the multitude of unnatural phenomena—is the fruit and consequence of a lack of order. In its lighter manifestations defect of memory is due to the disorderly management of thought; in its graver forms it is the consequence of disorder in the nutrition and action of the brain.



## CONFUSIONS OF THOUGHT.

To become confused in thinking is a common-place experience, but it is often the cause of great discomfort, and when of frequent occurrence begets the fear of permanent derangement. Sometimes the thoughts seem to crowd in on the mind, like a pack of wolves, with furious rush and almost savage impetuosity, while the consciousness is scared, and helpless to resist the onslaught or re-establish order. In this condition of affairs the mental instrument or organism, the part with which we think, is weakened either by disease of the body affecting the mind, as when a person is struck down with fever or any other malady producing wild delirium ; or by the exhaustion following continuous strain in a particular direction, as when the thoughts are fixed too long on some subject of anxiety or perplexity. This state is also apt to occur when the blood is impoverished, and the brain is pressed to work without sufficient nourishment, or cheated to use up and exhaust, in its ordinary business by the abuse of alcohol and other stimulants,



the strength Nature designs to be stored for a time of sickness or extremity.

The confusion that takes the form of violent disorder of thought is nearly always due to a physical—that is, a bodily—cause, and must be met by measures adapted to the improvement of the general health. Sometimes the evil may be cured by a judicious alteration in the character of the food, and the avoidance of drinks that give energy for the moment at the cost of collapse afterwards. A new order of meals, a totally different, though equally, or more, nutritious, diet; longer, or occasionally *less* sleep, may inaugurate a better state of matters; but often it takes more than this to mend the mischief. Change of scene and complete diversion of thought into fresh channels may be necessary. Nearly always there is some potent, though hidden, perhaps unsuspected, cause at work undermining or disorganising the bodily, and indirectly the mental strength.

In another condition, somewhat resembling that already described, but essentially differing from it, there is an inroad of thoughts, less like ravening wolves than silly sheep, that seem to come tumbling over each other in sheer stupidity. The sensation is rather plaguing than appalling, but it is wondrously annoying, and, if not remedied, may in the long run prove fully as troublesome, and even disastrous, as the



more vehement malady to which we have alluded. In some instances there is a considerable element of the grotesque in this experience, and the possessor of a mind so disordered passes for a wit ; but the humour is maudlin, and the current is uncertain ; he breaks down suddenly in his play of pleasantries, and the watchful observer can detect the signs of conscious weakness and inability to revive the unnatural gaiety of a false state. When there is no conscious humour in the whirl of thoughts, it may be simply worrying or distressing, as when the mind longs to be at rest, "if it were only for a short half-hour ;" or is earnestly desirous of fixing itself on some topic—perhaps one of serious or even solemn concern—but cannot command the attention.

Sufferers from this form of confusion go on for years, harassed and exhausted by the turmoil of living in a crowd and din of thoughts from which escape seems impossible. The disorder—like the rapid passing of scenery as one is borne along a line of railway at high speed, like the ceaseless rush of water, like the swarming of bees—pursues its victim even into the realm of sleep. Of course persons who are so affected *do* sleep, and the brain rests, or they would not be able to go on year after year with impunity ; but they have none of the comforting sensations produced by natural repose ; they feel awake and worried, or be-



wildered up to the last moment of consciousness, and they rise, without any sense of being refreshed, to a state of weariness which ill befits them for the struggles and anxieties of another day.

This is a *mind*-disturbance, in contradistinction to that indicated above, although in a large proportion of instances the state was first established by the irritation set up in the course of some bodily disease; or it has become confirmed—so to say, stereotyped on the brain—by prolonged physical suffering. For the time being, whether it be brief or long, the mind is incapable of acting as its own master, and is practically a mere piece of machinery for making the simplest impressions perceptible to the consciousness, without order or judgment, and with little or no power of distinguishing between the pictures derived directly from the external world through the senses, and those that come tumbling out of the recesses of the memory as though some mental house-cleaning process were on hand, and the whole establishment in the direst confusion. The faculty of “thinking” seems to be in abeyance, and the consciousness is a forced spectator of the disorder on its own premises, powerless alike to restrain or re-arrange.

The cure for this state of mind is generally complicated and too often impracticable. The cause must be removed, and as this is not unfrequently



inseparable from the mode of life, the personal state, and entangling circumstances of the sufferer, to insist on the first condition of recovery is like commanding the rising tide to retreat. That is why so many persons struggle on year after year under this form of confusion ; and, unless relief is afforded by the course of events, weak minds finally succumb to the worry without respite. Anything that will break the monotonous rhythm of a life thus wearing itself away may be the means of recovery. Sometimes domestic calamities are blessings in disguise, and in after-times there is cause to look back with gratitude on what at the moment of its infliction appeared an overwhelming disaster. Of course the pleasurable reliefs are the most to be desired, and they accomplish a cure with the least risk and greatest celerity. Meanwhile it is noteworthy that minds labouring under this peculiar form of weakness, and seemingly ever on the brink of ruin, are not especially prone to be crushed by any great sorrow or to be unseated by a sudden shock. Their peril is that of exhaustion by the worry that haunts them ; in other respects they are as strong as the average of intellects, and hence the good prospect of cure that lies in the path of proper treatment, whenever, happily, that is practicable.

Next to the removal of the cause of this mind-state, and sometimes, though rarely, successful without its



removal, is the inspiration of new vitality into the Will. By a strong effort of the judgment the mind in certain instances reclaims control of its own territory. This is a noble triumph of "self-help" at which all, especially those who are unable to shake off the coil of crushing circumstances, should aim, and upon which the intelligent mind should set and centre its remaining strength. There is a wonderful faculty of self-development in every part of the being of man, whether mental or physical, and each faculty grows by use. The effort which succeeds in restoring order, or keeping the rushing thoughts disentangled if not orderly, does more than passing good; it reconquers some portion of the province of mind from the rebel crew who run riot and threaten to perpetuate the confusion that reigns within.

The best method of procedure is to busy the faculty of thinking with some unaccustomed topic—the way to do something, or the cause and reason of an unexplained phenomenon. It is generally useless to try to mend the confusion by a direct effort to control the thoughts. The sovereignty of the will can only be re-established by an exercise of independent authority acting at first in a new sphere. For example; let the sufferer select a subject and manner of thought of which he has no previous experience. The desultory thinker may commence the study of mathematics;



while the mind accustomed to figures should be engrossed with history or fiction. In any case, and whatever the subject selected, the exercise which is to be remedial must be undertaken as a *task*, a certain number of pages set down to be read or transcribed, whether the attention is interested or not. Perseverance, and a renewal of the effort at stated times, say once or twice a day, always as a duty imposed by the will, and enforced by the same authority, generally succeed. If in process of time the mastery is so far recovered that a complete train of reasoning can be pursued without irritation, the gain will be considerable.

The confusion of which we are now speaking may be experienced in any degree, from that occasional loss of the command of thought which begins in desultory thinking or reverie, to an utter lack of any power to do more than lie at the mercy of thoughts which neither are bidden nor can be dismissed. The points to make clear are (1) that the condition is essentially mind-debility, and (2) that it has been brought about either by weakness of the controlling power, or rebellion of those agents of the consciousness whose function it is to perform the duty of impression receivers and carriers, to bring the inner self into relation with the outer world, and inform and affect it with the intelligence of events transpiring around. When these agents are not under discipline,



they come rushing into the presence with burdens of all descriptions—good, bad, and worthless—and heap them on the mind, with no regard to will, order, or memory.

There are other forms of confusion of thought which might be particularised, but they all group under one or other of the two broad classes I have attempted to describe. The confusion may be general or partial, impairing the thinking powers as a whole and in relation to every variety of subject, or relating only to some. It may apply to past events, categories of names and numbers, or only to trains of reasoning in which something has to be “thought out,” and the mind is found incapable. These are points of distinction of great interest to the psychologist, but scarcely worth the attention of a sufferer who is interested to get rid of the burden rather than to examine its intimate nature and construction. Undue anxiety about the subjective symptoms of the malady is to be avoided; and, although to some temperaments it is a relief to understand an enemy, little is likely to be gained by dwelling upon the evil. Better far concentrate effort on the work of self-cure.

Every known cause of weakness must be eradicated from the habits of life; the Will is therefore the first agent in the task of recovery. Regrets are useless, and mere wishes will be vain. “Resolutions” and



“intentions” are generally of no force. The resolves begotten of fear are the least trustworthy of all. If the mind has been weakened by vicious self-management, or by allowing petty annoyances to get the better of the judgment, it is not much good to vow and protest amendment. The simplest and least violent, or demonstrative, processes of persuasion are always the best in dealing with self. Never mind the future, and, as far as possible, forget the past. Man lives in the present, and this matter of self-remedy is an affair of *now*. It is because we find the sorrow of evil courses to be an immediate experience that we try to reform.

The conscious misery of being unable to command one's own thoughts should be enough to make any man or woman anxious to regain the lost, or restore the failing, power of self-control. To accomplish this result, the authority of the master-faculty of mind must be instantly brought into action. “Why is this susceptibility or that propensity my tyrant?” “Why do these troubles so deeply affect me?” “Why am I the slave of a particular impulse?” These are the questions the Judgment must ask itself; and when the humiliating answer comes, “I have neglected to fortify my mind against these annoyances,” or, “I have allowed my inclinations to run away with me,” Will should re-assert its supremacy with the self-respect becoming a faculty which was destined



to command, but, through error or indolence, has sunk to obey.

Those who allow their whole being to engross itself with circumstances, and never rise above the dead level of surrounding and pressing facts, are always likely to be overwhelmed by the afflictions of the life that absorbs them. The road is ever rough and troublesome to those who tread the path with eyes bent on its ruggedness and difficulties. It is sorry work tearing through the brambles without the hope of rest and a compensating pleasure beyond, and, when the eyes are never lifted above the jungle, a man might, for all mental and moral purposes, as well grope his way through one of those dense forests where the light of day never penetrates and the air is stagnant and reeks with wild decay. Those who are void of any hope and comfort in life except that which they can pick up in its dark recesses and on hard flinty roads fall an easy prey to gloomy and plaguing thoughts, which nothing but a better and higher view of the present and the future can amend.

The feelings do *not* become blunted by misfortune ; the faculty that feels grows more acutely irritable as its peculiar function is exercised on trifling annoyances, until at length the whole sensibility becomes morbid and the mind diseased. The like is true of



the effect produced on propensities and inclinations which are allowed to throw off their allegiance to the authority of Judgment and Will. Each act of rebellion confirms the spirit of revolt, and quickly the unbridled instinct or appetite—be it vanity, or the passion for pleasure, or anything else—begins to usurp control of the higher faculties it has deposed. In process of time it obtains the mastery of the mind itself, and the individual becomes insane.

This is the painful and humiliating history of many a ruined life. The evil began in the indulgence of a wanton, because undisciplined, ambition or longing for self-gratification. The licence was repeated ; and, as a spoilt child, the aspiration, whatever it may have been, became importunate. Before long the Judgment ceased to be consulted ; next the Will lost the power to check ; and then, growing with its rebellion, the insurgent instinct succeeded in subjugating the faculties of mind one after the other until all mental power became the slave of the tyrant, and the errant forces fell to destroying each other, or to revolving round a single “fixed idea.”

To avert this mischief there is only one possible remedy, and that is the recovery of *self-control*. Confusion of thoughts is disorder, and the disorderly action of forces which are endowed with the highest



powers of influence for good or evil can never be safe. The wear and tear of mind and of the intellectual gear is self-destructive, and the smallest damage to the supreme power and authority of the Will ought to be instantly and earnestly repaired.



## SLEEPLESSNESS FROM THOUGHT

INABILITY to stop the rush or flow of thoughts often seems to be the cause of wakefulness ; but it may be the inability to sleep that throws the brain into a state of worrying excitement. This last explanation is the more probable, because the thoughts that engross or distress the mind as the head lies sleepless and un-resting on its pillow are more forcible, vivid, and, generally, painful, than those which engross the attention by day. In part, this intensifying of thought by night is due, no doubt, to the exclusion of external objects and impressions. The mind is, as it were, thrown in on itself, and left a prey to its own reflections. There is, however, more in the exaggerated and distorted state of thought, when the brain will not or cannot sleep, than mere isolation explains. If the mind is absorbed or engrossed within itself by day, when there is no question of sleep or sleeplessness, however oppressive or torturing thought may prove, it does not lose the faculty of estimating sorrows



and losses, pains and gains, by comparing them with other experiences ; whereas, it is one of the disagreeable features of sleepless thought, that the most trifling evils and causes of anxiety assume unnaturally vast proportions, so that what would occasion no distress by day, is the source of acute suffering or annoyance at night.

From these and other circumstances and experiences it may be concluded, that what is called "sleeplessness from thought" is, in fact, a state considerably more complicated and unnatural than the phrase implies. It is a condition in which the brain, so to say, stops short on the way to sleep, and the mind, being adrift from its moorings to firm fact, is tossed up and down, and to and fro ; while, ignorant of its position, it still busies itself with the objects on shore, until their bearings and proportions are lost or confounded. This is why those who are habitually sleepless find it good policy to get up and read when the fit of wakefulness comes on. Not only does the act of reading produce drowsiness, but the mind is prevented from passing into a state of turmoil so distressing and injurious as that which too commonly occurs in sleeplessness from thought.

The loss of power to cast off the burden of the day, and find rest in unconsciousness or forgetfulness at night, is one of the greatest of personal afflictions.



Only those who have endured it know how terrible this experience, in its worst form, may prove. There is no escape anywhere, no respite, no—even momentary—lessening of the strain on the mind, when sleep is impossible ; and the worry is increased when the mind, instead of finding ease, falls into a state in which every source of disquietude seems exaggerated. Sleeplessness of this sort is often the prelude—and it may be either the first indication, or itself the cause—of insanity. The condition into which the mind is thrown when endeavouring to sleep is essentially unsound and tends to disease.

Physicians, realising the peril of the position, give their patients a drug of some sort to procure sleep. They do this with the double purpose of breaking the habit of wakefulness when this has been formed, and of rescuing the mind from a condition in which it is unsafe. The method of treatment would be more satisfactory if we could only believe that what is called “sleep” would put an end to mental activity. Unfortunately there is little ground for such a hope. “To sleep—perchance to dream !” The gain will be small if the mental disquietude and disturbance are not relieved by the poisoned and mimic sleep produced by drugs. The danger will be only masked, not removed. Those who adopt this treatment point to cases in which, after a few doses of a sleep-potion, the sufferer



has regained the power of falling asleep naturally. Such patients have undoubtedly been benefited by something, but it is still an open question whether the relief may not be due to mental influence rather than the medicine. However this may be, the point in which we are chiefly interested is the state which precedes and seems to bar sleep. We recognise its perils; in what way or by what means may they be avoided?

Examined closely, the condition of thought-worry preventing sleep will be found to be one in which the thinking faculty is beyond control. We may start a subject, but we cannot either keep the attention fixed, or compel thought to take rational and comparative views of the objects presented to it. There is a tendency to exaggeration, which the judgment is powerless to restrain or correct. There is at the same time another peculiarity, which throws more light on the nature of the condition, namely, an impulse to *repeat*; the mind goes over the same ground again and again. The explanation of this phenomenon is simple and suggestive; there is a perpetual endeavour to sleep, and although the circumstance may not be recognised, each train of thoughts breaks off at the precise moment when it ought to become a dream, and every recommencement is a new departure after a fresh act of wakefulness.



It requires careful notice of the subjective symptoms to perceive the real nature of this experience. The faculties appear to be fully awake and in great activity, but their highly sensitive state is the effect of an arrest of the tendency to sleep. This is the counterpart of what some individuals feel when they are too suddenly awakened. They seem to be conscious, and to recognise the persons and objects around them ; but a sense of apprehension, amounting almost to horror, holds them spell-bound, and fancy colours the scene with hues in harmony with the disordered state of thought. This happens on the way back to perfect wakefulness, when the return is tardy. The condition we are describing occurs on the road to sleep, when the way is barred. The point to make clear is, that it is quite as likely the distressing thoughts of a sleepless person are the consequence of the wakefulness, as that the inability to sleep is occasioned by thinking.

Thoughts, passing through the mind when the brain is falling into a state of sleep, ought to be of a nature to change easily into a dream. They are essentially transitional, half-defined ideas and inferences, like those present to the consciousness of a person slowly awakening, until he is thoroughly aroused. The problem is to carry the mind over the boundary line, and convert what is conscious



but uncontrollable thought into a dream. If this can be accomplished naturally—that is, without the aid of drugs, which stupefy the consciousness and burlesque the state of sleep rather than produce it—the subject of thought will be soon changed, and oblivion, or at least forgetfulness, induced. The solution of this problem may be attempted by either of two processes.

1. A particular thought, or train of thoughts, present to the mind may be seized upon at the moment of their occurrence, while as yet they are manageable, and turned into grotesque, thus preparing them to become the material or centre of an amusing dream. This method is less easy to describe than to carry out; but experience proves that it is abundantly efficacious. Fancy must be directed to play with the thought, and weave a little scene or story out of its slenderest threads. Just enough effort to preserve the connection of ideas is necessary, or the expedient will fail, thought reverting to its former worrying courses. The secret of the method lies in holding the thought fixed, and projecting the train of ideas by fancy on a line which may carry it into dreamland, the dreaminess of thought inducing sleep. This is a perfectly natural and rational process, and it is harmless, whereas the production of stupefaction by drugs is artificial, and more or less perilous to brain and



mind. The one lulls the consciousness to sleep, the other overpowers it with a poison.

2. The alternative mental method by which sleep may be sought, consists in giving thought a monotonous task in the way suggested by those who can win sleep by counting, repeating, and the like expedients. This is more difficult in really bad cases of "sleeplessness from thought" than that first described—in which an idea, or train of ideas, already present to the mind, is converted into grotesque. The mind is not easily taken out of itself when engrossed with worrying topics, and, though fancying corn-fields and rising tides, or counting and piling up packages, or smoking an imaginary pipe, and watching the clouds of tobacco-smoke rise over the head—so as to direct the eyes upwards as in sleep—are good enough devices, it is not always practicable to shut out distressing or plaguing ideas, and concentrate the attention on these meaningless conceptions for the full success of which the sleep-wooer needs a vacant rather than a harassed mind. It is an effort quite as great as the wakeful, but worried, can make, to turn a troublesome thought into grotesque imagery; but this is easier than to call up a wholly new and incongruous idea.

It may be worth while to try the connecting and monotonous imagining method familiar to everybody,



but when that fails, as it generally does, recourse should be had to the artifice I have suggested; and as a rule it will be found to succeed, although at first, if the mind be possessed by unpleasant broodings or bodings, the effort to think grotesquely will be grim and resented. For instance, a man plagued with distressing circumstances, and dreading ruin, should force his mind to pursue the train of thought until the comic side of a reverse of fortune becomes apparent—following out the straits to which he will, perhaps, be reduced, some new phase of life upon which he may be compelled to enter, the strange acquaintances he is likely to form, the wonderful scenes he will witness, and the remarkable places he may visit. The element of probability must be disregarded, and the mind allowed, or rather compelled, to work out the idea. The effort will, at the outset, be laborious and uncongenial, but unless the mind be wholly devoid of humour, the severity will relax, and with relief will come sleep.

“Sleeplessness from thought” is, as I have tried to show, not unfrequently wakefulness induced by physical conditions, and thought as a consequence. It is quite as easy to carry exertion beyond the limits of a natural longing for repose, and past the point at which the brain readily finds relief in sleep, as to stop short of the necessary but undetermined and ever varying



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measure of exercise required to favour sleep. The majority of persons who suffer from persistent wakefulness, are addicted to excess of activity rather than indolence. They work hard and exhaust themselves, though not in the right way. Some are too much engrossed with pleasure, and dissipate their strength ; others are so absorbed with work, that they cannot shake off its obligations in the time set apart for rest.

Perhaps the most general cause of sleeplessness of the kind we are considering, is the habit of carrying work over from day to day, instead of parcelling it out so as to create natural breaks in the enterprise, when the mind can rest with the consciousness that duty has been discharged, and a task accomplished. Nothing so much conduces to sleep as the feeling of contentment, and this feeling can generally be produced by giving the mind a tale of work in the morning, which may be completed before the time of rest. When the obligation has been fulfilled, the mind seeks, and generally finds, repose as the recompense of its toil. To break off suddenly in the middle of labour, and expect to command sleep at call is unreasonable. The relations of body and mind are intimate, but it is seldom that the physical part of man's nature can be so subjugated that he shall sleep instantly at will. Regularity is essential to orderly and harmonious working, and not mere



punctuality as to the measure of time, but the fulfilment of the day's duty within the time allotted for its performance.

It is a common mistake to plan the business of the following day at night. This is like turning over a new page, when the book should be closed and laid aside. The task of laying out schemes for the future ought to be the first duty on waking, and if it were then discharged, many mischievous dreams, and much of the feeling that a whole night has been spent in dreaming, would be avoided. The fatigue of a reluctant waking, with no immediate purpose present to the mind, often undoes the effect of rest in sleep. When people begin to toss on their pillows, they should rise ; or if that be impossible, then begin to arrange the work of the coming day. Each night should see the book of life closed with the feeling that the account has been duly made up. It is the task of the morning to carry over the debit or credit, and start afresh. No one who is wise will risk the peril of carrying over the balance before sleep. There are fifty physical and mental reasons why the balance of the day's work should not be even struck at night, but one is all-sufficient. Sleeping on resolves for self-improvement is a mistaken policy ; in the interval of sleep the motive-effort subsides, and the evening and morning story seldom agree. Better far finish



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the work of the day, close the record, and seek rest. When the consciousness returns, examine the situation, lay plans for the future, and while the impression lasts, act on it.

We are too fond of moralising at night, and of resuming the business or pleasures of life in forgetfulness of the lessons taught, and the resolves suggested by reflection, after the lapse of memory which sleep even in its lightest forms supplies. Sleeping and waking are states which are mutually dependent, and must succeed each other in orderly sequence if health is to be preserved. Life is very much an affair of rhythm, and a sound mind in a sound body can be secured only by concord, method, and orderly self-control, by the Will.



## HESITATION AND ERRORS IN SPEECH.

SPEECH is, in a practical sense, more than the mere instrument of thought. It is so far an essential part of the faculty or function of "thinking," that little beyond a simple recognition of the impressions received through the sensations can be accomplished without the aid of language—at least in one of its elementary forms. Thought and speech are so connected, that it is impossible to separate them. It is not a necessity that speech should be articulate and audible. It may be set in any key, from the loudest voice-utterance to the mere self-conscious conception of certain sounds, as when a person *thinks* the pronunciation of a word, clearly marking its peculiarities in his own mind, but in a manner imperceptible to any one else. If the performance of this act—pronouncing a word in thought—be closely examined, it will be found that there is an impulse, as it were, to move the lips and tongue, but so restrained, that commonly no obvious muscular action takes place.



There are exceptions to this limitation which not only prove the rule, but show how intimately thoughts and actions are connected.

In sleep, during dreams, and in the case of some persons, especially the aged and feeble-minded, when awake, the lips move with nearly every thought, though no audible sound is emitted. When the restraint, normally exercised, is less forcible, or the impulse stronger, the thinker involuntarily speaks his thoughts; and comical stories are told of persons who have betrayed their real sentiments inopportunately by this process of thought-speaking. Faults in speech are, therefore, likely to be due to defects in thought, the two faculties being mutually dependent; or the reverse may be the case, and impediments and errors of speech react mischievously on the mind. Much interest and importance attach to the conclusion arrived at with respect to the real cause of the hesitation or error which marks the utterance of any particular sufferer.

First, make quite sure that it is not ordinary confusion of thought, consequent upon a slovenly habit of thinking or the miserable practice of allowing thoughts to drift, which has produced the faltering or mistake that occasions anxiety. Many persons permit their minds to become overrun with tangled scrub, so that nothing short of the most acute or agile powers of



way-finding can carry a thought safely through the domain, and then they complain of the difficulty of thought-driving! Clear away the jungle that renders the mind impassable, and thought will no longer be found to wander by circuitous paths, and too often be irrecoverably lost. The only measure by which this self-improvement can be accomplished is one of culture; the degree of labour required will vary from that of a settler in the backwoods, who finds it necessary to clear and dig every square yard of the land he would convert to useful purposes, to the ordinary weeding and breaking the clods which may suffice to repair the results of a single season of neglect. In any event, however great or small the task may be, the cultivation must be accomplished, or this, the most troublesome and inconvenient cause of speech-blundering, a weedy, tangled, and lumpy state of mind cannot be remedied. We are not now concerned with faults of the motor apparatus or mechanism of the voice; and, excluding these, it may be asserted that, of all causes of hesitation or error in speech which lie, so to say, deeper than the surface, the neglect of self-control in thought is the most common and, in many senses, the most mischievous.

If a person who has previously been an easy and fluent speaker begins to hesitate in his utterance, there is generally reason for anxiety. Supposing the



general health to be good, and nothing specially notable to have happened in the life of the individual which might have produced what is commonly called a "shock" to the mind or the nervous system, there is probably some physical or mental disorder in the background, to which attention should be directed. If the cause be physical, the attempt to speak will generally be accompanied by trembling or twitching in the muscles of the mouth, the lips, the nose, or the jaw. Should any such symptom be perceptible to friends, or self-detected, it will be wise to seek medical advice without delay, because it may be produced by conditions the most important, or comparatively trivial, and no one except a skilled practitioner can determine from which of several sources the agitation springs ; whether it indicates mere weakness or serious disease.

Commonly, when there is none of this trembling or twitching, and sometimes even when these are present, the hesitation is mental. Either the mind is too busy with a crowd of thoughts to maintain proper command of the word-finding function, or that faculty is so enfeebled that it seems incapable of any reasonable activity in the service of the Will. It is quick enough in the response to influences which have no right to usurp control, but when the master-spirit of thought, the Judgment ruling by the Will, issues a mandate, the faculty is powerless to obey. This comes of a



riotous or vicious habit of thinking. The mind-weakness which results from the terrible error of mental dissipation, whatever the direction in which the thoughts are permitted to disport themselves, is one of the most perilous conditions of exhaustion into which the faculties of a still sound brain can be allowed to sink. It is a state of which the mind in danger is itself conscious long before any indication becomes recognisable by others. Hesitation in speech is one of the earliest external symptoms which indicate this malady, but when that occurs, the weakening power has generally been in secret operation for a length of time sufficient to accomplish serious mischief. It is not, as a matter of fact, too late to mend matters ; but the individual who has permitted his mind to pass into this condition has incurred a great peril.

This is a point on which it is necessary to speak plainly. Habits of musing, brooding, or conjuring up mental pictures and scenes in which the thinker is himself an actor, and into which he gradually brings his faculties of imagination, and even his sensations, are the overlooked, the unconfessed, perhaps the unrecognised, causes of by far the larger number of attacks of "insanity." And, though it seems cruel to say so, the great majority of poor creatures, especially the younger and middle-aged persons, who with wrecked minds drag out weary years in lunatic



asylums have themselves to thank for the experience. Any one of a score of existing causes may overbalance the mind or occasion the outbreak and determine the particular form the mind-malady ultimately assumes; but the predisposing cause which renders the disaster possible and entails all the evil consequences is the morbid habit of allowing the thoughts to wander uncontrolled, at first innocently, then in forbidden paths, and finally wherever the haunting demon of the inner life, a man's worse nature, his evil self, may lure or drive them!

The habit of preoccupation which sometimes shows itself by hesitation in speech is less dangerous than weakness, but it should not be neglected. Having "too much to think about" is not so bad as having exhausted the power of voluntary thought, but it is an evil. "Too much" does not always mean more than the mind *ought* to be able to receive and deal with. It is quite as often too much for the defective discipline of thought maintained, as really more than a due quantity for the mind engaged if the business of thinking were properly conducted. There is a marked tendency in modern education—and it increases each year—to neglect the training of minds. The subjects which were principally useful for purposes of mental development and exercise are being eliminated because they do not commend themselves to the com-



mercial instinct of the day as producing marketable information. Greek, Latin, mathematics, and the like, are not possessed of a high value in the mart of commerce or on 'Change, and they are therefore lightly estimated.

We are beginning to reap the fruit of this time-serving policy in education, and it takes the form of a general break-down of young minds when set to any duty which involves dealing with a crowd of thoughts at once. The untrained and disorderly thinker cannot choose his words, he has "no time" to arrange them, and can seldom find them when wanted. He is "thinking of something else." It has come to be thought rather clever to be "abstracted," and "so engrossed," "with many things to think about!" These are the pitiful excuses offered by a generation of incompetent and confused thinkers when their speech betrays them. A clever talker will often bridge over the gap between two right words in place of interposing a wrong one. It is amusing and, in a certain sense, interesting to notice how admirably this is done by self-possessed though confused speakers; but the evil of disorderly thought lurks behind, and may be detected through the flimsy, though ingenious, artifice.

The remedy for a growing hesitancy in speech, when not the result of serious mind-weakness—and



the person affected is generally secretly conscious of the cause—is a better method of thinking. The first effort must be to preserve greater calmness: the second, to be more orderly in thought. There is a process in thinking which is the counterpart of dotting the *i*'s and putting in the stops in writing, or of knotting the thread and “fastening off” securely in needlework. If this be neglected, as it commonly is by what are called rapid—another word for careless, reckless, or impetuous—thinkers, entanglement and confusion in thought, showing themselves in hesitation and errors of speech, are inevitable.

Verbal blunders are generally due to confusions of thought, but sometimes to disease. It is important to distinguish between the two varieties of this fault. The former is a matter for self-improvement, the latter will require medical aid. If the mistakes made seem to follow no particular line of error—if they are, so to say, general or capricious, the wrong words substituted for what it was wished to say being taken at random, perhaps from some other sentence at the moment darting across the mind—the “confusion” may be safely set down as one to be cured by mind-discipline. If, on the contrary, particular words, previously familiar and ready at hand, are forgotten, certain numbers dropped out of memory, and a sort of method seems to determine the occurrence of faults



in speaking or writing, the matter may be more serious, and advice should be sought. It is a curious feature of the early forms of speech-disorder springing from physical sources—for example, incipient disease of the brain—that particular elements of knowledge seem to be effaced, and special processes of thought or reasoning can no longer be performed, although the great mass of mind-work goes on unimpaired.

A world of trouble would be saved if, in all mental derangements, apart from brain-disease, persons who feel things going amiss with them (and I am convinced this premonition of mind-disorder is a common experience), whether the sensation be one of “irritability” or of “confusion,” would undertake of their own free motive, to cure the evil by subjecting the consciousness to a regular course of training. The best plan is to set the mind a daily task of reading, not too long, but sufficiently difficult to give the thoughts full employment while they are engaged. This should be performed at fixed hours. Perfect regularity is essential, because the object is to restore the rhythm of the mind and brace it up to higher tension. When, as in the class of cases we are considering, hesitation and errors in speech are the characteristic symptoms of a break-down or impaired vigour of mind, much good will often be done by reading aloud for an hour or more daily to the family.



It is not only useless but harmful to read aloud when alone; the mind conjures up an imaginary audience, and this habit of "conjuring up" things is one of the short cuts to insanity which should be carefully avoided, more particularly by those who are most expert in the exercise—the highly imaginative. Another drawback consists in the fact that when a person reads aloud, without a real audience to engross that portion of the thoughts which will wander from the subject, the mind becomes engaged with the sound of the voice through the faculty of hearing; and this paves the way for other mischief. It is by gradually substituting in fancy, and then mistaking, their own voices for those of other beings that the weak and morbidly-minded become impressed with the notion that they are honoured or plagued, as the mood may determine, with communications, super or extra-natural—which are in truth the echoes of their own imaginary utterances.

By reading aloud any healthy and improving work which is so interesting as to engage the thoughts, the strained connections between thought and speech will be relieved. Properly employed, this is one of the most patent and effective of remedies for disorders of the faculty of speech; but it is essential to success in the experiment of self-cure that the book read should be of a nature to interest, and sufficiently difficult to



hold the attention. In some cases the exercise is rendered more effectual by reading aloud in one language from a work written in another—for example, a French book to an English audience. This gives practice in the choice of words, and brings the memory into play, the two faculties it is desired to develop and strengthen. Hesitation and errors in speech are of great moment, view them as we may. In their less serious forms they demand a vigorous effort for self-improvement; in their more grave varieties they portend the existence of perils to brain and mind.



## LOW SPIRITS.

THERE is enough in the daily experience of life to depress the feelings and rob the mind of its buoyancy, without having to encounter lowness of spirits as a besetting mental state or malady. Nevertheless, it so frequently assumes the character of an affection essentially morbid, attacks individuals who are not naturally disposed to despondency, and gives so many unmistakable proofs of its close relations with the health of the physical organism, that it must needs be included in the category of disease. The constitutional melancholy which distinguishes certain types of character and development, is a setting in the minor key rather than depression. Within the compass of a lower range, individuals of this class exhibit as many changes of mood as those whose temperament is, so to say, pitched higher, and who therefore seem to be capable of greater elation.

It is important to ascertain at the outset whether a particular person upon whom interest may be centred is not naturally characterised by this restrained or



reserved tone of feeling! Unhealthy conditions of mind are generally to be recognised by the circumstance that they offer a contrast to some previous state. The movable, excitable temperament may become fixed and seemingly unimpressible, the self-possessed begin to be irritable, the calm, passionate. It is the *change* that attracts attention, and when low spirits come to afflict a mind wont to exhibit resilience and joyousness, there must be a cause for the altered tone, and prudence will enjoin watchfulness. Mischief may be done unwittingly by trying to stimulate the uncontrollable emotions.

There are few more common errors than that which assumes lowness of spirits to be a state in which an appeal should be made to the sufferer. We constantly find intelligent and experienced persons, who show considerable skill in dealing with other mental disorders and disturbances, fail in the attempt to relieve the pains of melancholy. They strive by entreaty, expostulation, firmness, and even brusqueness, to coerce the victim, and prevail upon him to shake off his despondency. They urge him to take an interest in what is passing around, to bestir himself, and put an end to his broodings. This would be all very well if the burden that presses so heavily on the spirit simply lay on the surface, but the lowness of which I am speaking is something far deeper than



can be reached by "rallying." It is a freezing of all the energies; a blight which destroys the vitality, a poison that enervates and paralyses the whole system.

It is no use probing the consciousness for the cause while the depression lasts—as well look for the weapon by which a man has been struck senseless to the earth, when the victim lies faint and bleeding in need of instant succour. If the cause were found at such a moment, nothing could be done to prevent its doing further mischief. Supposing it be discovered that the malady is the fruit of some evil-doing or wrong management of self, the moment when a crushed spirit is undergoing the penalty of its error is not that which should be selected for remonstrance. It is vain to argue with a man whose every faculty of self-control is at its lowest ebb. The judgment and the will are dormant. The show of feeling made by the conscience in the hour of dejection is in great part emotional, and the purposes then formed are sterile. The tears of regret, the efforts of resolve, elicited in the state of depression, are worse than useless; they are like the struggles of a man sinking in a quicksand—they bury the mind deeper instead of freeing it.

The state of mental collapse must be allowed to pass; but here comes the difficulty; the moment



reaction takes place, as shown by a slight raising of the cloud, it will be too late to interfere. The mind will then have entered on another phase not less morbid than the depression which it has replaced. There is no certain indication of the right moment to make the effort for the relief of a sufferer from this progressive malady. The way to help is to watch the changes of temperament narrowly and, guided by time rather than symptoms, to present some new object of interest—a trip, an enterprise, a congenial task—at the moment which immediately precedes the recovery. The soul lies brooding—it is about to wake ; the precise time can be foreknown only by watching the course of previous attacks ; whatever engrosses the rousing faculties most powerfully on waking, will probably hold them for awhile. It is a struggle between good and healthy influences on the one hand, and evil and morbid on the other. If it be earnestly desired to rescue the sufferer, the right method must be pursued, and wrong and mischief-working procedures—among which preaching, persuading, moralising, and rallying are the worst and most hurtful—ought to be carefully avoided. When the thoughts are revived and the faculties rebound, they must be kept engaged with cheering and healthful subjects.

There is no greater error than to suppose good has been accomplished when a melancholic patient has



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been simply aroused. The apparently bright interval of a malady of this class is even more perilous than the period of exhaustion and lowness. The moment the mind resumes the active state, it generally resumes the work of self-destruction. The worst mischief is wrought in the so-called lucid interval. The consciousness must be absorbed and busied with healthful exercise, or it will re-engage in the morbid process which culminates in depression. The problem is to keep off the next collapse, and this can be accomplished only by obviating the unhealthy excitement by which it is commonly preceded and produced. Healthy activity promotes nutrition, and replenishes the strength of mind and body alike; all action that does not improve the quality of the organ acting, deteriorates it and tends to pervert normal function.

The continuous morbid state of melancholy is progressively built up of successive attacks of lowness and despondency. It is in the intervals of seeming relief, while this deadly work is in progress, that the cause may be discovered, and probably removed. In most cases the sufferer is conscious of the way the depression has been brought about, or of the train of reflections by which it has been ushered in; but it is vain to hope, and a mistake to try, to elicit the fact by questioning. The existence of any known cause will be repudiated. Unless the patient becomes



his own physician, there is little chance of a direct cure.

The mind commonly varies in mood with the state of the body, and when energy is exhausted, the impulse or flow of the animal spirits is checked. Depression often springs from a physical cause, and if no mistake were made in dealing with it, small mischief would result. Unhappily, serious misconception prevails. It has been discovered that by the use of a stimulant the reserve of nervous strength which nature has designed to act, not merely as a resource in emergency, but as the foundation stock of energy, the basal cause of resilience—as the contained air of a bagpipe—may be pressed into the service of the passing moment; and careless of the ruinous impolicy of this resource, stimulants are administered, and the excitement produced is mistaken for healthy action. The exhausted brains, irritable nervous systems, impaired intellects, incapable of any useful work, and the blighted lives, of those who resort to this pernicious palliative for low spirits, should warn the sufferer inclined to try the expedient, and act as a deterrent to friends searching for a remedy. Lowness is exhaustion, and anything which tends to use up the reserve of strength, must ultimately increase the evil it is meant to cure. By stimulating instead of nourishing the brain, the mind is, in process of time, reduced to



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a condition of lasting incompetency, whereas, without such mistaken assistance, it would, probably, recover its buoyancy.

There is always danger of converting a mere temporary suspension of function, dependent upon recoverable debility of an organ, into permanent incapacity by pressure of excitement, while the lapse of power continues. The peril is especially great in relation to functions of the brain. It is therefore a measure of common prudence to treat the state of low spirits as one of temporary exhaustion, and to give time for recovery by the process of brain nutrition. If a mind is conscious of having passed through one cycle of elation and depression, it should avoid the cause, whatever that may have been. It is always a wretched, and generally a ruinous bargain, that a debased judgment makes with self for the purchase of a transient pleasure. The prudent will not thus barter mental strength and sanity for a passing distraction. It matters little what the dissipation may be, except that some forms of self-gratification ruin body and mind together: however unnatural, or untimely, or inordinate, excitement is brought about, it acts in the same pernicious way, impairing, and at length destroying, the vitality.

It would be difficult to name any state or mood so commonly deplored and little understood, as this we



are considering. Men and women may drag out weary existences in sorrow and difficulty, enduring that most poignant of pains, the heartache, without suffering from this malady. The depression they experience is rather that of crushing and pressure than *exhaustion*. The mind makes an instant effort to rise when a gleam of hope, however weak and evanescent, glints across the path. It is astonishing how elastic are the healthy spirits, and with what ready energy they recover when relief comes. Meanwhile, the loss of resilience which supervenes on repeated exhaustion increases with each attack. The truth about this lowness will never be known, unless its real nature is recognised. Alienists speak of "rotary mania," in which paroxysms of excitement and periods of melancholy succeed each other. This is only an intensified development of the state we are speaking about. Periodic attacks of low spirits—call the mood by what name we may—are morbid manifestations of the same kind, though less in degree, and as yet unformulated.

Let those who suffer from this infliction beware ; let them above all things, recognise the nature of the malady, and foresee its issue. Let them also realise how completely, at the outset, the prevention of the evil lies within the scope of their own powers of self-help. When once the disease has passed



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beyond this early stage, it rests with others to help ; and if they will ponder the hints here thrown together, they may be able to avoid doing mischief, and perhaps lend lasting aid. Two opposite extremes are to be avoided with equal care—doing too much, and doing too little. The error of interference in cases where meddling must be mischievous must be great ; but the fault of standing by idly while poor folk drift into hopeless melancholy or dementia is greater. It needs extraordinary patience and a large share of natural intelligence to determine when and how to interpose. I have tried to show that the time must be judged by the period of the attack rather than the symptoms ; and it follows from what has been said that the endeavour must be to lead the mind back to health by new paths which shall awaken new sentiments and call up fresh impulses. The two most deadly perils to be avoided are despondency and quackery. There is always hope in Nature *loyally obeyed*, and despair in “special” treatment, however sagaciously applied.



## TEMPERS—GOOD AND BAD.

BAD temper, or, more accurately speaking, want of temper, is one of the most regrettable and the gravest defects of character. The explosive irritability that makes a man "boil over," as the saying is, "like milk" when heated by the slightest provocation cannot be set down as by any means the most serious form of fault. It stands in the same relation to real malignity as, what is commonly called, "nervousness" to cowardice. The man who starts at the cracking of a piece of furniture may not flinch before the onslaught of a deadly foe; trembling at an unexplained sound or shadow, he may stand with a face of flint when known danger has to be encountered. In the same way the superficially excitable are often the most self-controlled and imperturbable when the first outburst of passion has, so to say, cleared the atmosphere. Such temperaments may not conduce to the easiest relations and the smoothest intercourse in domestic or social life, but they are incomparably more compatible with the requirements of genuine



friendship than many of the placid and inscrutable mental constitutions not so readily understood.

Temper of mind and character is something akin to the tension of strings in a musical instrument, or the temper of steel. If the stretch be equally distributed, the sounds produced, or the cohesion and elasticity possessed, are well formulated and trustworthy. If there be faults in the quality or character, the vibrations fail to emit a true tone, and the strength is treacherous. In short, temper is an outcome of personal constitution in which the separate qualities and the mutual reactions of mind and body play a conspicuous part. To grasp the subject in any scientific sense it would be necessary to take into account more of the mental and physical properties than can be comprehended within the limits of a brief paper. Let us rest content with a cursory glance at some of its more practical phases.

The emotional part of man's nature seems to lie near the surface, and responds most readily to those external impressions which act superficially. This is why "feeling," in its popular sense, affords no certain measure of the inner and deeper qualities of sympathy and benevolence. The sentimentality expressed by the emotion may be great when there is little or no real interest or kindness. The surface is stirred by the passing breeze, but the depths are sullen and still,



On the other hand, a deep current of genuine feeling beneath may impart so much motion to the whole that the surface will be less responsive to external influences, just as the flutter of a falling leaf may ripple the mirror-like pool, while a stone hurled into the strongly running stream will scarcely disturb it.

The annals of crime curiously and painfully illustrate the value, or rather worthlessness, of what is called "feeling." Not a few of the most malignant and cruel murders have been perpetrated with remorseless ingenuity, occupying months or even years in elaboration, by men and women of highly emotional natures, and exhibiting traits of acute sentimentality and quickly responsive feeling. Some of the notorious poisoners have been persons of almost preternaturally sensitive organisation. Nothing therefore can be inferred from the mobility of a temperament as to the qualities of heart that underlie the demeanour. Nevertheless there ought to be a general accord between the upper and lower strata of the character, and, if the psychophysical constitution be well grown and tempered, there will be conformity.

Tempers are "good" or "bad" as they hold the qualities, the properties of mind and body in unison. It is too much the practice to judge temper less by the general character than by its accidental peculiarities. If the temper always, or even commonly, reflected the



character, of which it is only a quality, this rough and ready method might be permissible ; but that is rarely the fact. The majority of mankind have been, so to say, beaten into shape and moulded by associations. The result of this education by circumstances is found to be a heterogeneous rather than a perfectly consistent character, and without homogeneity there cannot be an accurate and equable temper. “Hasty” tempers are the product of an irritability that often, if not generally, lies on the surface. The fault is nearly always due to some want of conformity in the relations of mind and body ; one is weaker than the other. The weak of body are irritable because their physical powers do not instantly and adequately fulfil the behests of the mind.

Perhaps there is no more persuasive evidence in support of the belief that the brain is only the instrument, not the source and factor, of mind, than the impatience with which the Will overrides, and the intolerance with which it treats, the brain-weaknesses and incapacities of which the mind is self-conscious. Take, for example, the irritability begotten of a sense of humiliation and vexation because it is impossible to encounter the ills of daily life with greater equanimity—a common cause of irritability, which is seldom understood, and for which few persons make allowance, though it is extremely painful to the sufferer.



What is this temperament but a mind irritated by the weakness or imperfection of its own brain-power? The individual is irritable because he is irritable. Cause and effect are confounded, and the consciousness is embarrassed by the inability to extricate itself from the tangle. Those who are worn by pain or worrying distress of body or mind know by bitter experience how terrible this irritability is ; and how small is the sympathy to be expected from those around. A most painful self-consciousness of this kind is that endured by persons in seeming health but of weakly physical constitution, and those who are the victims of secret suffering. The struggle to be calm, to exercise self-control, to blunt the sensibility to petty annoyances, to oppose a bold and courageous front to circumstances, is exhausting, and matters grow worse instead of better, despite the effort and wasted strength. It may be some consolation, and even helpful, to those affected with this form of irritability to know that their peculiarity is not wholly unrecognised, and that it arises from *bodily* causes, although the experience is mental.

The weak or small of mind, on the contrary, suffer less inconvenience from their irascible tempers than they inflict on those who are exposed to their fury. The full-blooded and passionate have generally more animal force than they know how to keep under



proper control. The superfluous energy must find a vent, and, provided always that this can be accomplished harmlessly, the explosion, though unpleasant, is not to be regretted. Vigorous constitutions caged by local disease or disability are especially prone to this form of outbreak. In the case of prisoners it is often developed to the dimensions of a periodic malady, and, the storm being misunderstood, is too frequently punished as a new crime or intentional act of rebellion, whereas it ought to be treated as an explosive disease.

The remedy for this last-mentioned form of "temper," whether the mind be healthy but small, or morbid or unoccupied, which is much the same in effect, should be sought in work. The physical force needs to be utilised, and it will be well if it can be turned to account with some worthy purpose and result. If the "Bengal tigers," and the passionate folk generally, of all ages and conditions of life, who storm and rage through the world, to the discomfort of those with whom they are brought into contact, could be supplied with congenial occupation, and a vent for their energy in some useful physical enterprise they would be spared many regrets, and those around them much needless annoyance, and even injury. The self-cure of this temperament should take the form of exercise, of sufficient quantity and



kind to give the body more work, and the mind better command of the organism and machinery for which it is responsible.

The reverse order of temper—the sullen and unimpressible—is generally to be regarded with distrust or anxiety. There is a certain stolid temperament, the complement of stupidity, of which no judgment can be formed except from the character as a whole; it may be either the fruit of general inertness, or a lack of quick sensibility, under which lurk the vices of pure animalism. When, however, we find a cold immovable exterior with indications of quick intelligence behind, there is reason to mistrust appearances, and cherish some fear of the reserve maintained. It would not be universally just, but it is generally true, to say of these mysterious temperaments, that they are dangerous. The moral nature seems hide-bound. The inner being, the “heart”—call it what we may—is not in natural relations with the outer world; companionship, in any real sense, is difficult, and confidence, unless it has been engendered by long observation of conduct, is impossible. The temper *may* be stable, but it is not trusted, because it lies beyond the reach of ordinary social tests, and affords none of the familiar and accepted indications of character. It is like a barometer with the face covered. The mercury may be duly affected by the



external conditions, but there is nothing to show that it is, and the individual is a moral sphinx.

When an immovable temperament is allied to a kindly and honest nature, the individual is at first regarded with suspicion, if not dislike; and if, in process of time, he comes to be understood, he is respected rather than loved. There can be no question that this frigid, insensible exterior, with an unimpassioned character, is to be regretted. Those who feel themselves dissociated, as it were, from those around them by the lack of average sensibility, will do wisely to cultivate the emotions, at least so far as to obtain command of the faculty of expression. It is a misfortune to be so reserved that confidence cannot be inspired, even when the real feelings are genial and benevolent. Sometimes this reserve is simulated rather than actual. An acute sensibility may be repressed by the spectacle of emotional display, and conduct known to be at variance with the actual character, in others. The observer represses his own "feelings," and by degrees they become immovable.

Occasionally the like effect is produced by contact with natures uncongenial or insincere. The man with a seemingly cold and insensate temperament has in self-defence, or under the influence of a strong feeling of aversion, retired into himself, and is henceforth apparently immovable, though not really unmoved.



In the study of individual character, it is necessary to take all these possibilities into account, and make due allowance for every factor contributing to the general result. The complexity and delicacy of the task naturally render misconceptions probable ; and not a few of the characters and tempers we encounter are what mistake has made them. 'The honest and sturdy mind will struggle against the force of circumstances, and break down the barriers accident may have raised around it. In this work of correction faults of temper may be amended, while false impressions are removed.

The *really* sullen temper probably no sort of treatment, addressed to the mere remedying of surface defects, can improve. It is the almost constant counterpart of an unsympathetic nature, selfishly intent upon its own secret ends and purposes. The isolation at the surface is the reflex of isolation at heart. The lack of response to appeals from without is due to the fact that their force is not felt. There is no expression of feeling because there is none to express. The self-consciousness is engrossed with its own concerns, and unmoved by those considerations of regard for the outer world and its affairs which give shape to the anxieties of hope and fear that stir the emotions and influence the conduct of less obdurate beings. The combination of a sullen temper with an intelligent



mind argues thorough selfishness of the lowest type, which no mere change of manner can transform. It does not follow that the inner nature with its motives and impulses must be malignant, but they have no direct relations with the surroundings of the individual, and are neither responsive to the mute appeal of suffering nor sympathetic with the sorrow or happiness of others.

It would be wrong to say that the world lays too much stress on mere peculiarities of "temper," but it cannot be denied that the prevailing method of forming an estimate is unsound. Idiosyncrasies of temperament are not immediately under the control of the will, and it is well that this should be so. Direct attempts to reform vices of temper are therefore commonly unavailing. The aim should be to amend those defects of the inner character out of which the faults of manner and method spring. Irritability should be cured by attention to the physical health and avoidance of habits of thought which leave the mind a prey to the caprices of fortune, or render it the creature of circumstances. To most minds the cultivation of emotional sensibility is a mistake. Unfortunately the conventional developments of taste, especially that of the dramatic instinct—which all highly sensitive natures possess—give impetus to the growth of sentimentality, and, unless the "heart" be



as tender as the "feelings" are acute, there is a perpetual peril that the outer temperament will cease to represent the inner consciousness, so that the emotions no longer express the deeper sentiments ; and, when this happens, irritability of temper and insincerity of character are quickly established.

True temper, in the best and only worthy sense, implies perfect truthfulness and consistency. If the heart be right, the temper may be improved by acquiring more complete control of the emotional nature ; but improvement must begin *within* and work outwards. If the outside of the cup and the platter be cleansed while the interior is foul, the pretended improvement will not only be unreal, but it will consist in the assumption of a fictitious calm more mischievous than the wildest vagaries of the uncontrolled mind. Temper is a quality of order and self-management, which to be natural must spring naturally from an orderly and well-disciplined nature ; and, unless it be thus produced, it is not *temper* at all, but the counterfeit presentment of a quality ; worse than valueless because false, and fostering insincerity. Strong and deep feeling will generally seek warm expression in telling tones and vigorous deeds. The glamour of judgment which enforced restraint casts over a nature practised in self-control is only excellent when passion is ruled by reason rather than



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curbed by policy or a cold passionless sentiment of self-interest and esteem. The expert novelist endows his consummate scoundrel with perfect temper, while he credits the guileless hero with an impulsive and generous emotional nature which hardly brooks control. In the main, the principle embodied in this method of portraiture is true to nature, albeit the artifice is somewhat hackneyed and apt to be exaggerated in detail.

The Supreme Ideal of Perfect Humanity presents entire sincerity as the first feature of excellence, and a faithful expression of the deeper traits of the character completes the picture. The moment consistency is marred either by excess of seeming emotion on the one hand, or by artificial restraint on the other, harmony and every claim to respect for integrity are destroyed.



## “CREATURES OF CIRCUM- STANCE.”

THERE is a humiliating, though apologetic view of human nature and life, which regards men and women as “creatures of circumstance.” Every philosophy must recognise that both mind and body are influenced in a remarkable degree by their surroundings, and that the conditions of growth determine, or at least largely qualify, their development; but this is far short of saying that man is not only by accident, but by design, simply what the influences at work around him and the forces that operate on his physical and mental organism combine to make him. The hypothesis crude Materialism propounds represents mankind as constituted of lumps of clay cast into the midst of a scene where everything—except the plastic being man—is hard and exercises a moulding power over character, while human nature alone is passive and impressible.

There is always value in a doctrine or view of life which has survived the test of ages, and there can be no question but that there is truth in the dogma of



Materialism. Let us see what the measure of that truth really is. We know that as to his physical nature man is, in fact and experience, largely influenced by the food he eats, the air he breathes, and the conditions which compel the development of certain parts of his organism, while they allow others to lie dormant. The savage, who lives principally on the game he hunts, will be essentially animal in his type, and, while those powers and faculties which are called into action by his pursuits are vigorous, others, not so immediately useful, will be neglected. The like is true of the dweller in cities, who has his food brought to him, and in whose dietary gross substances are to some extent replaced by more refined and less animalising elements of nutrition ; he can scarcely vie with the savage in quickness of eye or fleetness of foot, but he surpasses him in powers better adapted to the needs of civilised life and a higher mental development. The brain is just as amenable to the laws of development as any other part of the body, and the character is, in large measure, the outcome or moral reflex of the brain.

Again, the whole being of man is influenced by the associations amid which he is placed ; the sounds, the sights around him are factors in his personal development. The type of humanity found on the sea coast differs from that encountered in inland districts, and



every characteristic form of *locale* produces its special results. Not only does the habit of life affect the organism, but the impression wrought continuously by external objects exerts a controlling formative influence by directing the thoughts into certain channels and, so to say, making grooves for, and giving certain turns and twists to, the mind. It is easy to see how widely different the sympathies and emotional nature must be in the case of a being brought up amid the wild associations of a boisterous clime, and in that of one bred under the silent suasive influences of a scene seldom disturbed by the stronger forces of the physical world, and therefore presenting only its milder and more genial phenomena.

Peculiarities of development wrought by the operation of external circumstances on individuals may be reproduced by inheritance in their offspring, and in this way what were at first personal traits come to be family and even national and racial characteristics. These, in process of years, are modified by surrounding influences, changes of scene, and contact or mingling with other types of character, so that at length stock features of development in body and mind are blended or confused, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to trace them back to their several original sources. Thus far we see men and women may be, and in truth *are*, "creatures of circumstance."



The student of nature finds, as he traces the development of body and brain, in the animal kingdom, increased perfection of special organs, side by side with the appearance, or improvement, of certain faculties. For example, as the eye, the ear, the nose, and the tongue and palate are more constantly and perfectly developed, the special senses are found to be present in higher form. In the same way, though not quite so directly, the development of certain portions of the brain is parallel with the exhibition of faculties which constitute the phenomena of mind. The observer is fully justified in reasoning by induction, and assuming the connection of the physical and mental facts as cause and effect; but he is not justified in pretending to be able to decide which are the causes and which the effects. No law is more clearly embodied in nature than that which makes the development of an organ dependent upon its use.

Well-meaning but short-sighted persons have gone astray and done mischief by rejecting the teachings of Darwin. The doctrine of Evolution finally disposes of the fundamental dogma of the materialistic philosophy by showing that no organ continues to be developed when it has ceased to be used, and none is wanting when there is a need for it. The blacksmith develops the muscles of his arm by use in his trade. The spur of the cock has dwindled down to the mere



rudiment of an organ of defence since the animal has been domesticated. The history of life and organisms shows beyond question that the lower animals have in a very marked degree been, in this way, creatures of circumstance, losing what they did not require, and developing organs adapted to their special needs. The simple reasoning of analogy explains that what has happened with the body has happened with the brain. Man has received a highly-developed brain *because* he has also received a mind to use it. Brain has been suddenly developed to a high degree of perfection, for the service of mind, instead of mind being nothing more than the outcome of brain. If the latter were the fact, the chain of development would have been perfect ; as it is, scientists search in vain for the "missing link." Spirit and mind have appeared suddenly.

If mind were the mere outcome of matter in the form of brain, every one with a large and healthy headpiece should be intellectual. The children of well-disciplined and virtuous parents ought to be docile and virtuous ; unless compelling circumstances made them otherwise, and even then the hereditary leaning to virtue would be evident. We know this is not the fact, and the conviction is forced upon us that brain is not the essence of mind, but only its agent. Meanwhile the mind has no other instrument of expression than the brain ; so that, even if a man with a small or imperfect



brain happens to have a large and powerful mind, he cannot *show* himself the possessor of an intellect in excess of his brain-power. The study of cases of idiocy throws much interesting light on this subject. It is found by experts in the treatment of this most pitiable class of human creatures that by discovering an avenue to the mind the intellect may be educated ; in process of time, the results obtained in the way of enlightenment are very remarkable. The instrument existed, but the power behind, which should have brought it into action, was dormant.

Science has nothing to teach which should tend to unsettle the faith of any man in the belief that there is a soul or a mind—call it what we please—behind the veil of the flesh, and to which the physical and mental faculties of humanity are the means of expression and intercourse with the outer world. The more perfect the instrument, the wider its compass, the better its tone, the higher in point of excellence will be the function it performs ; but neither the range of the performance nor its character can be a certain measure of the power behind ; the defects observed may be either the fault of the instrument or the deficiency of the moving energy.

We are “creatures of circumstance ” up to a certain limit, and circumstances exert a powerful influence on both our bodies and minds ; but this fact neither



explains nor excuses the faults of individual character—still less does it lessen the weight of personal responsibility. Those who seek refuge from an accusing conscience—reproachful for neglect—in this hypothesis, are looking for protection where none can be found. It is the bounden duty of man to emancipate his being from the thralldom of surrounding influences. It is fortunate when these are good ; but no merit can then arise from the effect they produce on his character. The noble part to play is to “get the better of circumstance” and triumph over depressing and distracting forces which war against the interests of the soul.

The infinitely humiliating figment that man’s nature is wholly plastic is one which should be repudiated by the instinct of self-respect. We know and feel in our inner consciousness that we can buffet the waves, and struggle long and valiantly for life, even if we cannot reach the shore. Much mischief has been wrought on weak minds by the craven plea that man is the creature of circumstances. It is time to fling that sinister aphorism to the winds, and replace it by one of bolder and more pregnant import. Man is the *master* of circumstances. Those he has not himself created he can subjugate, and employ as means to his own noble and honest ends.



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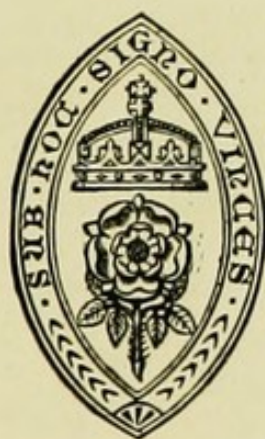
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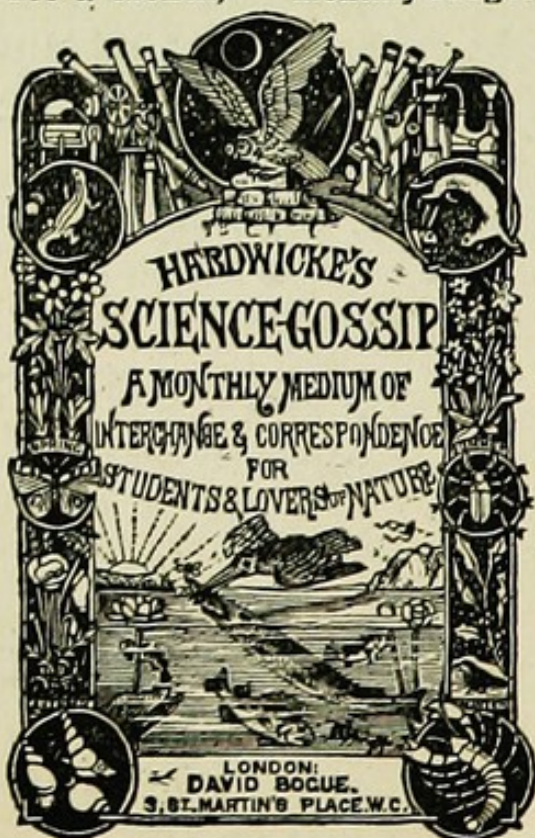
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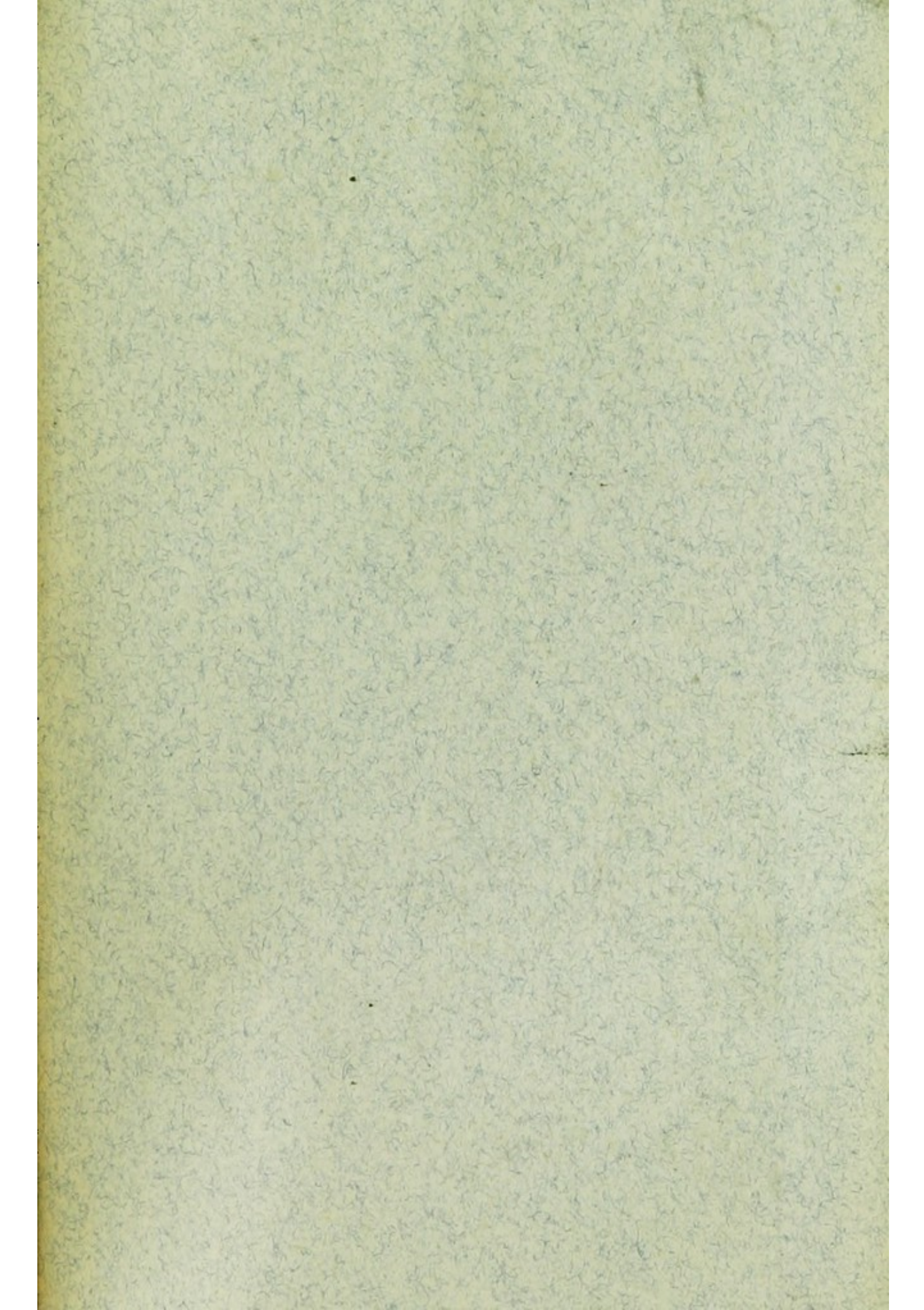
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