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RELIGIOUS REVIVALS

METHODS AND MENTAL DISEASES

**RELIGIOUS REVIVALS**

IN RELATION TO

**NERVOUS AND MENTAL DISEASES.**



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# RELIGIOUS REVIVALS

IN RELATION TO

## NERVOUS AND MENTAL DISEASES.

BY

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1860.

# RELIGIOUS REVIVALS

IN RELATION TO

## NERVOUS AND MENTAL DISEASES.

The following is a list of the names of the authors of the papers read at the meeting of the Society for the Study of Nervous and Mental Diseases, held at the Royal Society, London, on the 11th, 12th, and 13th of May, 1887. The names of the authors of the papers read at the meeting of the Society for the Study of Nervous and Mental Diseases, held at the Royal Society, London, on the 11th, 12th, and 13th of May, 1887, are given in the following list.

### J. STEVENSON BURNHAM, M.D.

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE Religious Revival which has arisen in Belfast has now prevailed for many months. In common with those members of the Medical Profession who, like myself, are especially engaged in the care and treatment of the Insane, my attention has, from the first, been strongly drawn to the too probable consequences of the excessive mental excitement so long maintained in the province of Ulster. To us who live amidst daily opportunities of becoming familiar with the circumstances under which each particular case of mental derangement committed to our charge has originated, the terrific spectacle presented by such an universal exaltation of feeling is beyond description. We feel that the people have been subjected to a daily ordeal, such as might have been devised for the purpose of testing the extent of their ability to resist the most effective causes of mental derangement.

The publications which have appeared in succession on the subject of this revival but too clearly show that

our early apprehensions have been fully realized. The more obvious effects of the excitement in question prove to be innumerable cases of nervous disorder; which will, beyond doubt, in many instances, result in permanent inflictions of Hysteria, Catalepsy and Epilepsy. But further, those who have most carefully watched the progress of the excitement, have brought to light the fact that our worst fears were well founded; inasmuch as numerous examples of insanity have been discovered.

Under such circumstances I feel that I require no apology for addressing the Public. Nay, rather is it not incumbent on those possessing knowledge likely to be of service to numbers at any particular crises, to make that knowledge known with the least possible delay? What especially regards the present case, is the information possessed by the medical profession, indicative of the hazard to which the bodily and mental health of a population is exposed, when subjected to the continued prevalence of powerful emotion.

History is full of examples illustrative of the truth of this proposition; and from the records of ancient as well as of modern times, I have selected some of the most striking instances. I have preferred, for the most part, a detail of facts rather than intricate reasonings from general principles. This method of treating the

subject I conceive to be the most suitable in a case which addresses itself more to the Public at large, than to men engaged in the pursuits of science or of literature.

I have exhibited from historical documents some pictures of the direful consequences of ecstatic worship in religion, with the purpose of showing how readily it passes from the profession of what is good to the practice of what is evil. The same instances are pointed to as a warning to the over-enthusiastic, to beware of the dangers of this two-edged weapon, in their attempts to use it for the extension of true religion.

I have accumulated instances to prove that what are termed physical demonstrations of inward emotion are, beyond doubt, real diseases. I have further shown that the immediate effects of high excitement, startling as they seem, are as nothing compared with the permanent evil consequences which they are sure to inflict throughout life upon many sufferers. I have accordingly called upon the well-meaning, but too often injudicious patrons of religious revivals, to pause before they make the religion of Him who, while on earth, went about curing diseases, answerable for the perpetuation of bodily misery during the lives of many unfortunates, especially while there is so little ground



for believing that they can thence derive any spiritual benefit.

I have further endeavoured to make it evident how many minds must be disturbed and plunged into insanity by a continued excitement, such as is implied in a religious revival prolonged through an extended period of time. This part of the subject cannot so easily be illustrated by examples on a great scale, drawn from history; and the cause is obvious. Insanity is not so much an immediate effect of great mental exaltation at any particular moment, as the final result of the unhinging of the mind by such an excitement, after much action and reaction often prolonged through considerable periods of time. Hence insanity, as the effect of religious revivals, does not break out, like hysteria and epilepsy in a number of individuals at once in an assembly subjected to the excitement of vehement preaching. It has its foundation laid by that excitement in as great, or in perhaps a greater number of cases, to burst forth after a time, in the privacy of domestic life, when the immediate witnesses have their attention no longer fixed on the original mental disturbance in which it commenced. History, therefore, does not in general possess facilities for obtaining a record of the number of cases of insanity which may have arisen from any particular public excite-

ment. Thus this department of my plan required to be illustrated more by reasonings than by examples ; more by reference to the character of the excitement to which men of different dispositions are subjected in religious revivals, in connection with the known effects of religious exaltations in the production of insanity. I have referred, however, to one parallel example of an historical description, namely, the well-known effect of the long-continued troubles of the first French Revolution, in raising the average number of the insane throughout France.

I have abstained from any attempt to indicate within what limits preachers should confine themselves as respects the production of emotion in an audience. I have contented myself with stating the proofs of the dangerous nature of the kind of preaching generally employed in religious revivals, to the bodily and mental health of numbers in any indiscriminate public assembly. There can be no doubt that a certain animation is essential to success in preaching. English preaching has often been said to be too logical, too philosophic, and therefore too cold ; but on this point I will only say that the passage in the famous sermon of Massillon on the small number who shall be saved, at which it is said the whole audience rose to their feet with eyes bent on the preacher, seems to me to

touch the extreme limit of what can be considered legitimate preaching, and safe to the bodily and mental health of the listeners :—“ Vous avez beau vous flatter ; vous mouriez tels que vous êtes aujourd’hui.”

I venture to hope that the necessary haste with which the following pages have been put together, owing at once to my own avocations and the urgency of the subject, will excuse any imperfections discoverable in their style or arrangement.

J. STEVENSON BUSHNAN, M.D.

LAVERSTOCK HOUSE ASYLUM,

Salisbury, January 1, 1860.

# RELIGIOUS REVIVALS

IN RELATION TO

## NERVOUS AND MENTAL DISEASES.

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THERE is little doubt that religious revivals among careless people previously destitute of pious feeling are often productive of good; but there is still less doubt that the physical signs of so-called conversion are for the most part delusive. The good that is done consists in arousing, by the contagious force of general example, the sense, till then dormant, of the paramount duty of the habitual practice of religion; and when such a revival spreads far and wide over a district, however well conducted it may be, it can hardly fail to happen that some minds will be unduly affected. Nay, the feelings of some among those, who are afterwards to be most benefited by the new enthusiasm for what is good, may, at first, be extravagantly excited. But when a so-called revival is conducted on erroneous ideas; when the aim of the conductors of the movement is to excite the sensibilities of the susceptible among their audience, and to create a demonstration of what is deemed the physical effects of the operation of the Spirit, nothing can be more mis-

chievous, nothing can be more delusive, and no words can be too strong for its condemnation.

There is a superfluity of evidence that it is easy for unthinking or designing men to call forth in a multitude similar physical demonstrations of internal emotion in the exercise of unholy ceremonies, and the practice of revolting rites in false religions; and hence surely there should be some doubt whether it be warrantable to expose the faith of Christ to the reproach of borrowing weapons, in its warfare against the world, from such polluted sources. If it be not a self-evident proposition that such weapons are forbidden to Christian teachers, the doubtful character of these weapons claims, at least, before being resorted to, that the question should be most seriously considered. It may be that the result of our examination of this question will shew that the excitement of emotion for a good purpose should not be forbidden, merely because the excitement of emotion for a bad purpose may be sometimes resorted to. But there is still another question to be considered:—whether the emotion thus excited in these so-called religious revivals be not in reality a form of disease; and if so, whether it can be consistent with the spirit of that religion—whose Divine Author, while on earth, went about curing diseases—to rivet a malady destructive of all future comfort on the constitutions of many weakly persons, for the sake of triumphantly proclaiming a few doubtful converts.

Such, then, are the two questions which the discussion of the real character of religious revivals must

embrace; and we have now to determine by what means each in turn can be best elucidated.

First, then, as to how far we are justified in attempting to excite physical demonstrations of mental emotion as a means of propagating true religion.

The revivals to which our attention is here limited, are those in which it is the principal object of the conductors to excite physical demonstrations of mental emotion in their audience. And here the mind at once reverts to ancient times and the priests of Cybele. The worst features of ancient paganism are exhibited in the enthusiastic form of worship. The priests of Cybele, named Galli and Corybantes, ran about with dreadful cries and howlings, beating on timbrels, clashing cymbals, sounding pipes, and cutting their flesh with knives. The manifest purpose of this kind of worship was to induce the physical effects of mental emotion on the audience—to overpower their feelings, and thus more easily to bend the wills of the victims to the wishes of the performers. “The Curetes,” says Strabo, “the Corybantes, the Cabiri, the Idean Dactyli, the Telchines, are either identical, or differ but little from each other; all are distinguished by being seized with a divine fervor, by indulging in dances with armour on, amidst tumult, and the noise of clanking arms, of bells, drums, and pipes, during their sacrifices, so as to impress the minds of the spectators with terror, while they profess to hold forth to them blessings.” “Though these practices,” he continues, “belong to religion, the existence of them is not unworthy of consideration in philosophy.” (Strabo, lib. x.) The frightful course of

wickedness, to which in ancient times, the influence so acquired over susceptible minds was sometimes turned, is too surely indicated in the revolting account given by Livy, the Roman historian, of the excesses proved before the Roman tribunals, against the votaries of the Bacchic Orgies, about 170 years before the birth of Christ. It should be noted that this singular episode in the social history of Rome occurred long before a universal depravity of manners arose. Postumius who brought to light the enormities referred to, was consul before the death of Cato the Censor, or at a period which is commonly regarded as belonging to the virtuous era of Roman morals. The case referred to decidedly falls within the scope of our present argument—for, however great were the enormities practised by the votaries, all was done under the sanction of religious observance; while the scruples of the novices were silenced by such means as create mental emotion, accompanied by outward physical demonstrations. That such a monstrous effect of ecstatic phrensy, under perverted ideas of religious worship, should have spread so far, and enslaved so many minds, would be wholly incredible, but for the authentic evidence on which the facts rest, and the existence of somewhat analogous cases in modern times, under a similar guise of religious observance, such as the ravings and crimes of Agapemony, and the enormities of the Mormonites. The Dionysian orgies, put down by the Consul Postumius, were not confined to Rome. They contaminated the principal cities of Italy, and drew into their destructive vortex, votaries of both sexes, belonging

to the highest families in the land. None were admitted under 20 years of age; and the preparation for admission was proof of chastity for a certain previous term. The initiation was of a kind to impose on the feelings, and strike the mind with terror; while the sequel was pollution of the grossest character—the sense of decency being at each successive step overpowered by new incitements to a maniacal phrensy. The victims whatever might be their repugnance to continue in the course of evil on which they had entered, felt themselves lost; for they were deterred from disclosing what they witnessed, by the dread at once of the vengeance of the god in whose worship the rites were celebrated, and by the fear of punishment at the hands of public authority on account of the crimes in which they had participated. The excesses brought to light by the inquiries of the Consul Postumius, have been, in subsequent ages, charged against the proselytes to new doctrines, however moral their character; and in particular against the early Christians by their pagan persecutors, and against the first disciples of the Reformation by the Romish priesthood.

It would be easy to multiply examples from the records of ancient times, in which religious ecstasy was made subservient to diabolical uses. It is true it is not to be inferred from the proof of the occurrence in past ages of such depravity, that religious excitement, carried even to the extent of inducing physical effects on the bodily frame, may not sometimes be productive of good. It is certain, however, that it is a dangerous weapon. It is certain that, as a rule, the



victims, in the progress of their excitement, have felt assured of the rectitude of their course; but that they have awakened when too late to the discovery that they have been carried onward by the force of a delusion; and found that which commenced in exaltation had ended in infamy. It would be difficult to point out any case in ancient times of this kind of ecstatic worship of the gods which was not of an evil tendency. It was not the sober worship of Jehovah which led the Israelites to dance around the golden calf. It was the priests of Bael-peor, not the sons of Aaron, who ran about the mountain-top cutting themselves with knives to prevail on their god to kindle their sacrifice. There was plainly no such ecstatic proceedings in the worship of Jehovah, although it does happen that Hebrew poetry, in magnifying the power of the Lord in subduing His enemies, calls upon the people to celebrate His praise with music and dancing.

But, if it cannot be absolutely denied that ecstasy may lead to good, this at least can be truly affirmed, that ecstasy, by suspending cool judgment for the time, prevents the victim from distinguishing wrong from right. It is thus that a course begun in ecstasy towards what is right, is often, by trivial events—the victim being the while made helpless by the force of the present emotion—changed to what is utterly wrong. All excessive passion is observed to have anomalous effects. “I’ll take her passion in its wane and turn this storm of grief to gentle drops of pity for his repentant murderer”—so in the stage edition of Shakspeare, is Richard made to soliloquise on seeing the excess of

Lady Anne's grief over the murdered body of Henry the Sixth; and although in this case our sympathy can hardly go so far as to pardon the facility of the lady, the sentiment is undoubtedly true to nature. The excess of her grief on a most warrantable occasion lays her open to the intrusion of the unholy passion, ambition, and blinds her to the enormity of becoming the wife of the murderer of her kindred. While passion reigns, reason, judgment, conscience is silent. Excitement makes way for excitement; and it is fortunate when the new excitement, which succeeds the exhaustion of that which preceded, has an object as praiseworthy as that of the first may have been. May we venture to instance the once famous story of the Ephesian matron? It does not appear in the literature of modern times; nor should we now refer to it, did not our object afford the warrant. The story, severe as it is, has a moral which renders it very suitable to our present purpose.

A matron of Ephesus was distinguished for attachment to her husband. She was a pattern of conjugal fidelity in a city in which that virtue was rare. Her husband fell sick and died. His dead body was placed in a tomb outside the city. His widow was inconsolable. She refused to be separated from the corpse, and passed days and nights with an attendant in the tomb. A Roman sentinel, stationed near the place to prevent the dead body of a recently crucified criminal being carried away by friends, was attracted by the light which the women had struck, after dark, in the tomb. He entered into discourse with them,

and shared with them his supper. The matron's grief gave way to the attractions of the sentinel's society; but soon he came to announce that he must take leave of her for ever—for, during his absence in the tomb, the body of the criminal he was stationed to watch had been carried away; and by the sternness of the Roman law, his own life must be the forfeit. Again was the matron inconsolable. But an expedient struck her. One dead body could not at some height be distinguished from another; and soon the body of her late husband occupied the place from whence that of the criminal had been stolen. Thus was the sentinel saved from a cruel death. Here, as in the former instance, the soldier took the matron's passion in its wane and turned her storm of grief to gentle drops of pity. As with Lady Anne, a new passion replaced the former extravagance of grief; nor can there be any doubt that its sudden rise as much surprised the matron as it did the Corinthian gossips.

There is nothing, it is true, of a directly devotional enthusiasm in the case of the Ephesian matron; but how easy would it be to supply, from the pages of authentic history, examples, in which an excess of devotional feeling had degenerated into an enslavement to voluptuous enjoyment. Remarking on Elizabeth Barton, the holy maid of Kent, at the era of the Reformation, who was undoubtedly at first a sincere hysteric devotee, the historian says, "Those passions, which so naturally insinuate themselves amidst the warm intimacies maintained by devotees of different sexes, had taken place between Elizabeth and her con-

federates (Hume's Henry VIII., vol. iv., p. 105); and it was found that a door to her dormitory, which was said to have been miraculously opened, in order to give her access to the chapel, for the sake of frequent converse with heaven, had been contrived by Bocking and Masters (Romish priests) for less refined purposes."

Among the most signal examples of the development of physical effects in connexion with mental excitement, in the whole known history of mankind, are the dancing manias of the middle ages. Some of these epidemics were undoubtedly connected with religious enthusiasm; but of the benefits produced on the persons affected, in the shape of moral or religious improvement, no vestige can be traced. Writers on this subject have grouped together under the head of "Dancing mania" the dance of St. John, the dance of St. Vitus, Tarentism, Lycanthropia or Wolf-madness, and the Leaping Ague of more recent times. "The moralist," says Dr. B. Babington, "will view these records of human frailty in his own peculiar light; he will examine the state of society which favoured the propagation of such maladies; he will inquire how far they have been the offspring of the ages in which they appeared, and although he may not be disposed to think with our author (Hecker) that they can never return, he will at least deduce from the facts here laid before him that they originate in those minds, whether ignorant or ill-educated, in which the imagination is permitted to usurp the power of sober sense, and the ideal is allowed to occupy the thoughts to the exclusion of the substantial."

“ That such minds,” he continues, “ are most frequently to be met with in an age of ignorance, we should naturally suppose ; and we are borne out in that supposition by the fact that these diseases have been declining in proportion to the advance of knowledge ; but credulity and enthusiasm are not incompatible with a high degree of civilization : and if, among the educated classes, the female sex is more sentimental than the male, and the affluent are more credulous than those who are dependent on their own exertions for their support, it is to be accounted for by the fact that they usually devote more leisure to the pleasurable contemplation of works of imagination, and are less imperatively called on to improve their judgment by the dry study of facts and the experience acquired in the serious business of life. But there is no class, even in this age of boasted reason, wholly exempt from the baneful influence of fanaticism ; and instances are not wanting in our days, and in this very capital, to prove that disorders (how can we more charitably designate them?) much resembling some of those described in the following pages, may make their appearance among people who have had all the advantages of an enlightened education, and every opportunity of enlarging their minds by a free intercourse with refined society.”—(Preface to Translation of “ The Dancing Mania,” by Hecker.)

It was towards the end of the fourteenth century, coeval with the rise of the Reformation in England under Wycliffe, that the dancing mania first attracted particular attention in Germany. Nevertheless there are

records of minor epidemics anterior to that period. Thus an epidemic of this sort arose among children at Erfurt in 1237, which proved fatal to many; while among those that survived not a few remained affected for life with tremor. It is recorded, also, that in 1278 two hundred fanatics danced so furiously on the Mosel bridge at Utrecht that it gave way, and the entire multitude perished. In 1374 assemblages of men and women were seen at Aix-la-Chapelle who had come out of Germany, and who, united by one common delusion, exhibited to the public, both in the streets and in the churches, the following spectacle: they formed circles hand in hand, and, appearing to have lost all control over their senses, continued dancing, regardless of the bystanders, for hours together, in wild delirium, until at length they fell to the ground in a state of exhaustion. They then complained of extreme oppression, and groaned, as if in the agonies of death, until they were swathed in cloths bound tightly round their waists, upon which they again recovered, and remained free from complaint until the next attack. This practice of swathing was resorted to on account of the tympany which followed these spasmodic ravings; but the bystanders frequently relieved patients in a less artificial manner, by thumping and trampling upon the parts affected. While dancing they neither saw nor heard, being insensible to external impressions through the senses, but were haunted by visions, their fancies conjuring up spirits, whose names they shrieked out; and some of them afterwards asserted that they felt as if they had been immersed in a stream of blood which

obliged them to leap so high. Others, declared that during the paroxysm, they saw the heavens open and the Saviour enthroned with the Virgin Mary, the vision being strangely and variously reflected on their imaginations.

Where the disease was completely developed, the attack commenced with epileptic convulsions. Those affected fell to the ground senseless, panting and labouring for breath. They foamed at the mouth, and suddenly springing up began their dance amid strange contortions. Yet the malady doubtless made its appearance very variously, and was modified by temporary or local circumstances, whereof non-medical contemporaries but imperfectly noted the essential particulars, accustomed as they were to confound their observation of natural events with their notions of the world of spirits.

This dancing plague spread in a few months from Aix-la-Chapelle over the principal cities of the Netherlands. It appeared, also, in the chief cities on the Rhine. The priesthood everywhere endeavoured to put it down, giving out that it proceeded from a demoniacal influence; and to judge by the effects produced by it on the morals of the young people of both sexes who joined in the phrensy, it did not merit any better character. The epidemic of which we have been speaking was called St. John's Dance; and it seems probable that it took its rise in some more than usually extravagant celebration of the festival of St. John the Baptist, on which it appears, from very old times, people were wont to indulge in ebullitions of fana-

ticism, most probably borrowed from the Pagan orgies of Bacchus. It seems that, even at an early stage of Christianity, St. Augustine warned the people against profaning the sanctity of that festival by unbecoming vociferation; and when another dancing epidemic broke out nearly half a century later at Strasburg, the priesthood appear to have exerted themselves with more effect, so as to put an end to its extension in a shorter period, chiefly by the influence in controlling the malady with which they contrived to invest the shrine of St. Vitus. This epidemic was accordingly named St. Vitus's Dance. Those who wish to learn more of these singular forms of fanaticism can refer to the Translation of Hecker on the Epidemics of the Middle Ages, published by the Sydenham Society.

Tarantism belongs to Italy. It reached its height at the close of the fifteenth century, shortly before the commencement of the troubles of the Reformation. The fear of being bitten by venomous spiders every where prevailed. Nothing short of death itself was expected from the wound which these insects inflicted; and if those who were bitten escaped with their lives, they were said to be seen pining away in a desponding state of lassitude. Nothing but the flute or the cithern afforded them relief. At the sound of these instruments they awoke as it were by enchantment, opened their eyes, and moving slowly at first, according to the measure of the music, were, as the time quickened, gradually hurried on to the most passionate dance. The effect of the dance was believed to be to distribute



the poison of the tarantula over the whole body, in order to its final expulsion by the skin. The cure, however, was not always accomplished at once; and in many the symptoms were periodically renewed at the corresponding festivals of the following year, while by sympathy, persons who had not suffered, joined in the dance. Thus Tarantism finally became an annual epidemic in the cities of Italy.

Of the common alliance among the several demonstrations hitherto detailed, there can be little doubt.\*

\* "To whichever page of history we turn," says a recent writer, "we find a family likeness in all the mental manifestations of the human family. The same physiological phenomena appear generation after generation, century after century, and no matter under what form of faith—Pagan or Christian, Jew, Turk, or Infidel. In the wild excitement of the Dancing Dervish we recognise the same spirit as that which led the flagellant to bare his back to the lash, and walk through the market-place with the red blood streaming from shoulder to heel; and in the Assassin of the Mountains, who rushes into Paradise mad with hachisch and fanaticism, we see the twin brother of him who storms the gates of the Christian grave in the distinct belief of saintly direction. It is all the same thing, the same cause, with a slight variation in the manner only of the result. One belief or mental condition we find under every dispensation, and that is the belief in extraordinary religious experiences and extraordinary religious revelations. Prophets and oracles, ghost-seers and visionaries, wonder-workers and miracle-mongers, troop in crowds through the pages of history, and the modern world is beset by the same, with nothing changed but dress and name—broadcloth and tweeds in lieu of padusoy suits and linen ephods; table turnings, spirit rappings, and revivals, in the place of witchcraft, communion with angels, the gift of prophesy, and the power of God. Moral epidemics are as catching as fevers, and creeds and experiences come into fashion after their due seed-time of neglect and derision. But the most singular thing is the persistence with which people call a certain physiological condition by high religious names, though they have branded that same condition as devil's work or imposture when manifested outside the pale of their special church. The Convulsionnaires, who writhed and foamed, and beat their heads against stone walls, and flung themselves into cataleptic fits before the tomb of the Archdeacon of Paris, were quite convinced that

All of them belong to the ecstatic form of religious worship; and moreover, it is very certain that in all there is a great deal more of evil than of good.

The history of such demonstrations of a pseudo-religious character is far from being here exhausted. A mere specimen has been afforded of the extravagance to which such proceedings, under the guise of devotion, can be carried. How far frantic acts of ecstatic worship are carried among the Mahomedan and Brahminical votaries, even in our own time, is well known to all who are conversant with the numerous works which daily issue from the press, on the manners and customs of the Eastern world; and we have only to inspect the works in which the usages of various religious sects in Europe and America are detailed, to discover numerous almost incredible examples of a like ecstatic worship among people calling themselves Christians. "I myself," says one of these writers, "happened very accidentally to be present at a meeting which terminated in jumping. It was held in the open air, on a Sunday evening, near Newport, in Monmouthshire. The preacher was one of Lady Huntingdon's students, who concluded his sermon with the recommendation of

catalepsy was a divine condition, and that the great mysteries of Heaven were best revealed by strong hysterics. The nuns of Loudon, who had gone through the same experiences before them, were equally sure that their state was due to witchcraft and the devil. Urban Grandier had bewitched them; and the handsome, clever, dissolute priest had to pay with his life the penalty attached in those days to the hysterical mania of unmarried young women. The whole story of the bewitched everywhere is only a diary of catalepsy or epilepsy, hysteria or scrofula, with a great deal of ignorance and superstition superadded. These are truly and literally the tap roots of all the supernaturalism extant."

jumping; and to allow him the praise of consistency, he got down from the chair on which he stood, and jumped along with them. \* \* \* \* About nine men and seven women, for some little time, rocked to and fro, groaned aloud, and then jumped with a kind of frantic fury. Some of the audience flew in all directions; others gazed on in silent amazement. They all gradually dispersed except the jumpers, who continued their exertions from eight in the evening to near eleven at night. I saw the conclusion of it; they at last kneeled down in a circle, holding each other by the hand, while one of them prayed with great fervour, and then all rising up from their knees departed. But previous to their dispersion they wildly pointed up towards the sky, and reminded one another that they should soon meet there and be never again separated." (Evans' "Denominations of the Christian World," p. 260, 261.)

The following paragraph is from an account of the Shakers of America, dated October, 1820. "Their worship, which I had not an opportunity of seeing, is said to be less extravagant than formerly; their dancing is still practised, but with more moderation, and for a good many years they have ceased to dance naked, which was formerly practised, and even with persons of different sexes."

The following extract is taken from an account of an American revival in the early part of this century, and is introduced at this place as being accompanied with dancing:—

"In these camp meetings there assembled, in the

opinion of spectators, from four to ten or twelve thousand, and at one of them eight hundred fell down under religious impressions, and five hundred communicated. The falling down exercise needs no description, as it is presumed every reader will understand what is meant by it. There was also in these meetings, what was called the rolling exercise, which consisted in a person's being cast down in a violent manner, turned over like a log, &c. These rolling disciples often met with mud in their way, and got up from their devotions in a sorrowful plight. Dancing was a very common practice; many pleaded they could not help it, and others justified themselves from David's dancing before the ark, and other passages of Scripture. The most singular exercise of all was the jerks. Nothing in nature could better represent this strange and unaccountable operation, than for one to goad another with a piece of red hot iron. The exercise commonly began in the head, which would fly backward and forward and from side to side, with a quick jolt, which the person would naturally labour to suppress, but in vain; and the more any one laboured to stay himself and be sober, the more he staggered and the more rapidly his twitches increased. He must necessarily go as he was stimulated, whether with a violent dash on the ground, and bounce from place to place like a football; or hop round with head, limbs, and trunk twitching and jolting in every direction, as if they must inevitably fly asunder. And how such could escape without injury was no small wonder to the spectators. By this strange operation, the human

frame was commonly so transformed and disfigured as to lose every trace of its natural appearance. Sometimes the head would be twitched right and left to a half round, with such velocity that not a feature could be discovered, but the face appeared as much behind as before; and in the quick progressive jerk it would seem as if the person were transmuted into some other species of creature. Head dresses were of but little account among the female jerkers. Even handkerchiefs bound tight round the head would be flung off almost with the first twitch and the hair put into the utmost confusion. \* \* \* \* \* A Presbyterian minister heard that a congregation of his brethren, which he highly esteemed, had got to jerking. He went to persuade them out of the frantic exercise, but in conversing with them he got the jerks himself. On his return home, his people assembled to hear the result of his visit. While he was describing how people appeared with the jerks, he was suddenly taken with them, and the whole assembly soon caught the distemper."

"Wicked men were often taken with these strange exercises, and many would curse the jerks while they were under their singular operation. Some were taken at the tavern with a glass of liquor in their hands, which they would suddenly toss over their heads or to a distant part of the room. Others were taken with them at the card table, and at other places of dissipation, and would by a violent and unaffected jerk, throw a handful of cards all over the room."

"These accounts were taken from people of unques-

tionable veracity, and no doubt can be entertained of their correctness. These jerking exercises were rather a curse than a blessing. None were benefited by them. They left sinners without reformation, and Christians without advantage. Some had periodical fits of them seven or eight years after they were first taken, and I know not that they have got over jerking yet.

“There was among these enthusiastic people one more exercise of a most degrading nature called the barks, which frequently accompanied the jerks. Even persons of considerable distinction, in spite of all the efforts of nature, as it was said, were forced to personate that animal whose name appropriated to a human creature is counted the most vulgar stigma. These people would take the position of a canine beast, move about on all fours, growl, snap the teeth, and bark in so personating a manner as to set the eyes and ears of the spectators at variance. Some might be forced to these degrading exercises, but it is certain that many turned dogs in a voluntary manner. A minister in the lower parts of Kentucky informed me that it was common to hear people barking like a flock of spaniels, on their way to meeting. There they would start up suddenly in a fit of barking, rush out, roam around, and in a short time come barking and foaming back. But enough has been said of these frantic scenes. The above accounts are not fabulous tales, but they are real and melancholy facts. In the upper counties in Kentucky, where the revival was the greatest among the Baptists, they were not at all affected with these delirious exercises. In the Green

River country and in East Tennessee, they prevailed considerably amongst them. With the Methodists they prevailed generally. The Presbyterians were divided respecting them; some opposed, while others encouraged them. Some of these exercises seemed really forced upon the subjects of them by some invisible power, whether good or bad the reader must judge for himself; but dancing, barking, rolling, shouting and so on were undoubtedly for the most part works of choice and imitation, which were hypocritically played off by a set of deluded, mistaken people. Where these frantic exercises were opposed, they were least prevalent. Those ministers who encouraged them had enough of them to attend to." ("A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America and other Parts of the World," by David Benedict, A.M., Baptist Pastor, Pawtucket, Rhode Island.)

These extracts will suffice to show, that the modern encouragement of ecstatic religious worship is as little likely to bring forth good fruit, as in ancient times and the middle ages.

How far then does it appear from the historical sketch now given of ecstatic demonstrations in religious services that the first question proposed at the outset can be settled, namely:—as to the admissibility of such modes of proceeding in the propagation of the faith of Christ? Surely the facts before us prove that the excitement of physical effects in religious worship is a dangerous instrument; that it is a two-edged weapon—powerful for evil even if it should be

conceded that it may at times be productive of good. To refer such effects as we have described to the operation of the Holy Spirit is little short of blasphemy. But let us call such demonstrations the result of mere enthusiastic feeling—and put the question whether such a state of enthusiasm may not some times open the way to a reformation of life, in persons before neglectful of the common duties of religion and morals. Such consequences plainly are not impossible. But if the sum of such cases be but small, and the great majority of those who exhibit physical demonstrations of a highly excited kind turn out to be merely hypocritical pretenders, or persons whose conversion is typified by the produce of the seed which fell upon stony ground—an effect quickly to perish—how small must be the actual residue of good?—or rather, how much must the necessarily concomitant evil of such demonstrations exceed the good? The balance must obviously be very far in the wrong direction. We feel sure, then, that we are right in pronouncing, that when the sole aim of the conductors of a religious movement is to excite the sensibilities of the highly susceptible among their audience, to create a demonstration of what is deemed the physical effects of the operation of the Spirit, nothing can be more mischievous, nothing can be more delusive, and no words can be too strong for its condemnation.

It is not intended, however, to include in this condemnation all attempts to create an enthusiasm on the part of a body of people in behalf of religious belief. It may be perfectly possible to conduct religious



revivals within such bounds of moderation as that the good shall greatly preponderate over the evil. Our condemnation, for the present, applies only to such vehement demonstrations as stand on a level with those we have hitherto exemplified from the history of ancient times, the middle ages, and the practices of some modern extravagant sectarians. But before we attempt to lay down the limits within which religious enthusiasm in revivals ought to be confined, we have a question referred to at the outset, still to consider:—namely, how far the emotions excited in so-called religious revivals, are, or are not, in reality, a form of disease; and if so, whether it can be consistent with the spirit of that religion—whose Divine Author, while on earth, went about curing diseases—to rivet maladies to the destruction of all future comfort, on the constitutions of many weakly persons, for the sake of triumphantly proclaiming a few doubtful converts.

It is an important fact which should never be lost sight of in the discussion of questions of the kind before us, that human emotions and passions are intimately connected with particular changes in the bodily organism. It is familiar to every one that each emotion and passion has its own proper expression; that is, has its own proper effect on the organs and actions of the corporeal frame. Thus anger violently excites the whole body. The person affected with anger, if sitting, starts to his feet, and moves towards the object of his resentment; if he abstains from actual violence, he nevertheless feels an irresistible impulse to continue in motion, and to throw many muscles of his frame into

action, particularly the muscles of the upper extremities, and of the face. The forehead and face become turgid, the eyes glisten, the bloodvessels throb, the chest heaves, the voice is loud and shrill; and if the fit of anger has been severe, there is soon a sense of exhaustion, marked by paleness of the countenance, cold perspiration, and panting for breath. Such then, is an example of the effects of an exciting passion. Other passions of an exciting kind present analogous effects; while in some of these the subsequent exhaustion or depression is more rapid and more prominent and enduring in its character. Thus love, jealousy, ambition, terror, despair, all agree in a period of excitement, followed after a time by a more or less decided state of depression. Fear may be taken as an example of a depressing passion. In fear, the breathing is arrested—there is a cold sweat, and the countenance becomes pale; while in quick succession the heart beats and the whole body trembles.

These last effects are an attempt at reaction; but that reaction is often quickly followed by so complete an exhaustion, that fainting takes place.

The effects just referred to as the expression of passion are merely its outward indication—there is within, for example, in the state of the vascular system, of the nervous system, and of the organs of secretion, a great amount of deviation from the ordinary play of the bodily actions. Hence, when the causes of emotion and passion are applied for long periods, or are often repeated, they become a most efficient source of bodily disease; because the ordinary actions essential to health

are thereby disturbed and prevented from performing the offices assigned to them in the animal economy. Even the most robust constitution will at last yield to the continued influence of overstrained emotion. There is indeed a very striking contrast between the power which a robust constitution has of resisting the prejudicial consequences of excessive affections of mind, and that possessed by persons of a more excitable habit of body. It is, then, among persons of excitable habit, that diseases dependent upon violent or long-continued affections, are most numerous. But it is not to be concluded that it is among those only that mental emotions create great ravages. It is incredible to what an extent mental causes operate among all ranks of the community to the destruction of health. Anxieties of all kinds in both sexes pave the way for general disorder of the system. Such disorder is the foundation of organic diseases, and is the complication by which acute diseases, which would otherwise have been cured, are rendered fatal. Moreover, mental emotions and the derangement of health traceable to them, are often the immediate temptation to the indulgence in alcoholic liquors, by which, in the United Kingdom, so many lives are every year prematurely lost.

When such is the general relation of mental emotion to the health of the community, surely some reserve should be exercised in tampering with a part of the human constitution, from which, when rudely dealt with, evils of so destructive a nature may spring. But more than this—there are persons concealed in every crowd of human beings, who are specially disposed to

particular diseases. These diseases, though not apt to be immediately fatal, are of the most distressing kind. They often continue, through long periods of time, to embitter the life not only of the unhappy victims, but that of every one domesticated with them. Take for example, epilepsy, popularly known as the falling sickness. This disease is apt to be produced for the first time in those predisposed to it, in crowded assemblies, particularly when any source of powerful mental emotion there exists. It is a disease which having once occurred under such circumstances, is liable to be reproduced after an interval by very slight excitement; and thus a person who has been even but once subjected to a violent mental disturbance, may be thereby rendered for the rest of his or her life a victim to this distressing malady. If it be said that an infliction like this, under such circumstances, must be of particularly rare occurrence, our answer is that the conclusion will be allowed to be rash, when it is remembered that epilepsy has no other common name in the language of ancient Rome but "the Comitial Disease," (*morbus comitialis*) or the disease which was known to occur in the assemblies of the people. No doubt unusual attention was drawn in Roman times to the occurrence of this disease in these assemblies; because such an event being deemed of bad omen, was the cause of the meeting of the Comitia, for whatever purpose assembled, being adjourned to another day. The epileptic constitution is not less common in our days than in the days of ancient Rome. It is indeed by no means rare. Nay, further, there is perhaps no

person who is not in so far predisposed to this disease that, provided the mental emotion to which he is subjected be of a kind violently to agitate the mind at the moment, another victim may be added to the number of those who already suffer. Under this view, the majority of mankind escape the epileptic attack only because they are not during life exposed to a cause sufficiently powerful to call it forth. Whence it would follow that no one is secure against the occurrence of epilepsy in his own person; and that, therefore, it is the part of prudence to guard sedulously against exposure to such violent mental emotions as are known to raise the predisposition into activity. One thing, at least, is certain, that among those who actually become affected there is no knowledge of the existence of the predisposition, until an attack has in effect come on. But though the epileptic tendency probably exists in a minor degree in all mankind, it is certain that it is discoverable in a higher degree, on close observation, in a great many more than are known really to suffer from the attacks of the disease. The epileptic constitution, even when it has not yet been subjected to an exciting cause sufficient to develop the actual disease, connects itself with the more severe forms of incubus or night-mare; with somnambulism or sleep-walking; with the tendency in dreams or reveries to impress a conviction of reality on the mind; with a facility of converting common sounds into the sounds of articulate speech, even bearing reference to the circumstances of the individual at the time; with a proneness to deceptions through the sense of sight; and in parti-

cular to a belief in the reality of spectral illusions. When any such tendencies occur it will be well to take warning—to rest content that there is a fault in the nervous system, and to adopt measures to correct that fault, and prevent it leading to serious consequences. All these tendencies increase by indulgence; and there can be no more prejudicial course than to make them the subject of frequent experiment for our own gratification, or for the gratification of others. The proper mode of dealing with such tendencies and to prevent their worst effects—among which mental derangement is conspicuous—is undoubtedly to check them, and to endeavour by disuse to bring the senses and the imagination to produce such phenomena only as occur to those whose trains of thought assume a more tranquil channel. Many a sad tale can be told of the effects of an opposite course. Fanaticism and mesmerism, as well as a great many analogous follies, have much to answer for as regards the conversion of this mental tendency into a source of bitterness for the rest of life to many an unsuspecting victim. It is among persons possessed of such constitutions that the fanatic finds materials the most available for his purposes, and that the mesmerist discovers instruments most fitted for his deceptions. In short, to tamper with what has been just described as the epileptic constitution in the way of experiment or exhibition, for the mere sake of discovering how far its peculiarities may extend, or how many surprising effects they may be made to produce, is to pave the way for the advent of some of the most serious calamities to which human life is exposed.

Next to Epilepsy, in the same catalogue, ranks Hysterical Disease. The slighter forms of hysteria are of common occurrence, and frequently interfere but little with the general comfort of life. They are often subdued by the mere improvement of the patient's bodily health, or by the exertion of her strength of mind when she perceives how prone such slighter indications of the disease are to increase, and to become aggravated, by indulgence. With too many the result is not so fortunate. If the bodily frame be feeble and excitable, or if the mental control be without strength, hysteria may at length render life a burden, or pave the way to mental derangement and all its terrible consequences. To withstand its first beginnings, to improve the well-being of the entire system, and, above all, to avoid the causes by which the hysterical excitement may be awakened, are the only modes by which we can guard against such calamities. The indications of hysteria almost defy enumeration; but the following quotation will show from what slight causes the less durable forms of this disease may originate:—"At a cotton manufactory, at Hodden Bridge, in Lancashire, a girl, on the 15th of February, 1787, put a mouse into the bosom of another girl who had a great dread of mice. The girl was immediately thrown into a fit, and continued in it with the most violent convulsions, for twenty-four hours. On the following day, three more girls were seized in the same manner; and on the 17th six more. By this time the alarm was so great that the whole work, in which 200 or 300 were employed, was totally stopped, and an idea prevailed that

a particular disease had been introduced by a bag of cotton opened in the house. On Sunday, the 18th, Dr. St. Clare was sent for from Preston; before he arrived three more were seized, and during that night and the morning of the 19th eleven more, making in all twenty-four. Of these twenty-one were young women, two were girls of about ten years of age, and one man who had been much fatigued with holding the girls. Three of the number lived about two miles from the place where the disorder first broke out, and three at another factory at Clitheroe, about five miles distant, which last and two more were entirely infected from report, not having seen the other patients, but like them and the rest of the country, strongly impressed with the idea of the plague being caught from the cotton. The symptoms were anxiety, strangulation, and very strong convulsions; and these were so violent as to last without any intermission from a quarter of an hour to twenty-four hours, and to require four or five persons to prevent the patients from tearing their hair and dashing their heads against the floor or walls. Dr. St. Clare had taken with him a portable electrical machine, and by electric shocks the patients were universally relieved—without exception. As soon as the patients and the country were assured that the complaint was merely nervous, easily cured, and not introduced by the cotton, no fresh person was affected. To dissipate their apprehensions still further the best effects were obtained by causing them to take a cheerful glass and join in a dance. On Tuesday, the 20th, they danced, and the next day were all at work,



except two or three who were much weakened by their fits." ("Gentleman's Magazine," March, 1787).

Here is a case in which there was no admixture of religious enthusiasm; and the similarity of the symptoms to those produced by the designed excitements of fanatical preachers, may serve as a warning to them to consider, whether they are not blaspheming when they attribute to the operation of the Holy Spirit, symptoms capable of originating in so trivial a cause as that to which the disease in the foregoing account owed its commencement.

It would be wearisome to multiply cases of this kind: some owing to religious fanaticism, others to causes of a wholly opposite character, might easily be extracted from works devoted to such subjects. The following short passage from Hecker sums up the moral to be derived from such accounts:—"Similar fanatical sects exhibit among all nations of ancient and modern times the same phenomena. An overstrained bigotry is in itself, and considered in a medical point of view, a destructive irritation of the senses which draws men away from the efficiency of mental freedom, and peculiarly favours the most injurious emotions. Sensual ebullitions with strong convulsions of the nerves appear sooner or later; and insanity, suicidal disgust of life and incurable nervous disorders, are but too frequently the consequences of a perverse, and indeed hypocritical zeal, which has prevailed as well in the assemblies of the Mœnades and Corybantes of antiquity, as under the semblance of religion among the Christians and Mahomedans."

To the same catalogue with epilepsy and hysteria belong some singular affections of the nervous system, like them communicated by imitation, and resembling some of the forms of ecstatic religious worship in past ages. These have been considered as more connected with chorea than with hysteria. They are mentioned here as serving to throw light on the religious dancing manias. The following quotation refers to what has been termed the leaping ague, a disease endemic in some districts. It is occasionally observed in the Scotch county of Forfar; and hence it has also obtained the name of the Forfarshire ague. "Those affected with it at first complain of a pain in the head or lower part of the back, to which succeed convulsive fits or fits of dancing at certain periods. During the paroxysm they have all the appearance of madness, distorting their bodies in various ways and leaping and springing in a surprising manner, whence the disease has derived its vulgar name. Sometimes they run with astounding velocity, and often over dangerous passes, to some place out of doors, which they have fixed on in their own minds, or perhaps even mentioned to those in company with them, and then drop down quite exhausted. At other times, especially when confined to the house, they climb in the most singular manner. In cottages, for example, they leap from the floor to what is called the baulks, or those beams by which the rafters are joined together, springing from one to another with the agility of a cat, or whirling round one of them with a motion resembling the fly of a jack. Cold bathing is found to be the most effectual remedy;

but when the fit of dancing, leaping, or running comes on, nothing so much tends to abate the violence of the disease as allowing them free scope to exercise themselves till nature be exhausted. No mention is made of its being peculiar to any age, sex, or condition of life, although I am informed by a gentleman from Brechin that it is most common before puberty. In some families it seems to be hereditary; and I have heard of one in which a horse was always kept ready saddled to follow the young ladies belonging to it when they were seized with a fit of running."—(See "Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal," vol. iii. p. 434.) The same Journal contains other accounts of similar diseases of more recent date.

In the instances of the leaping ague, which have been recorded, there appears to have been no admixture of religious enthusiasm.

When the cases now reviewed are duly considered, it seems certain that there is a complete identity of character between the effects attributable to such diseases as epilepsy, hysteria, and chorea, under the influence of ordinary causes altogether irrespective of religious excitement, and the effects which the supporters of religious revivals, accompanied with physical demonstrations, ascribe to the operation of the Holy Spirit. The evidence in favour of this identity is beyond all contradiction. It is, however, still left to the patrons of such revivals to say, that, even if these physical demonstrations are really diseases, such sufferings may not be the less instrumental in the conversion of sinners to faith in Christ. This confession

would be an admission that the point of inquiry with which we set out is conceded in the affirmative: namely, that they seek to induce morbid manifestations as a means of conversion. But our opponents can have no answer to what the view we have taken unequivocally proves: namely, that the diseases which they strive to induce as a means of conversion are of a kind which must, in the case of many sufferers, lay the foundations of misery for life. Here, then, are their procedures incompatible with the spirit of the religion of Jesus; and here their deviation from the example of our Lord. They inflict incurable diseases on many members of their flock. He went about curing the diseases of all who believed in His name.

The connection of religious enthusiasm with the production of mental derangement is too well established to admit of doubt; and this fact should never be lost sight of in estimating the means employed to awaken the indifferent to a sense of religious truth. But it is further to be remembered that there are vast differences among individuals in respect to the susceptibility to such feelings, emotions, and passions, as may, by their temporary or permanent effect, overturn the balance of the mind. It may be assumed as certain that no human being has ever lived who might not have been thrown into madness by moral causes of highly-wrought intensity. The difference in this respect among individuals consists solely in the amount of intensity required in each case to give them efficiency. We are

indeed accustomed to say that in such and such persons there is a predisposition to insanity :—an observation which seems to imply that there are other persons in whom no predisposition of this kind exists. But when we look more closely into the circumstances under which insanity originates, we find that the tendency referred to in those described as having a predisposition to that malady, is merely of that nature which renders them more prone to become affected under slighter exciting causes than are required to give origin to the same state of disease in the majority of the human race. Persons predisposed to insanity, in the ordinary acceptation of the term “predisposition,” generally show, throughout their previous life, unmistakeable marks of a peculiar excitability, or at least of eccentricity of character. But it is a fact too well known that many become the victims of this terrible infliction without having previously betrayed any such peculiarities of disposition. It is not to be affirmed, then, that moral causes produce this baneful effect only in a certain proportion of individuals endowed from their birth with a morbid temperament. It is too certain that not only moral causes of highly-wrought intensity, operating with unusual frequency, in the privacy of domestic life, but that disturbing influences of general operation, spread over large communities, such as great political occurrences and crises in the history of nations, swell, to a very remarkable extent, the numbers of the insane.

In illustration of this point, the following passage, from a work by Sir Alexander Morison, the late physi-

cian to Bethlem Hospital, deserves quotation: "The predominant ideas of the times, whether religious or political, have great influence in the production of insanity. Thus at the time of the Crusades, many cases of disordered mind occurred. The celebrated novel of Cervantes was written expressly to ridicule the insanity of knight-errantry prevalent about the time he wrote. There were also, it is said, many persons afflicted with religious insanity at the time of the Reformation.

"This has, of late years, been well exemplified in the first French Revolution. According to Esquirol, the striking events occurring during the progress of that extraordinary convulsion, were generally accompanied by an increase in the numbers of the insane, so striking, that a sort of history of it might be compiled from the description of the cases of insanity occurring in its progress. He gives the following list:—

The persecution of the priests.

The destruction of the Bastile.

The National Assembly.

The Temple of Reason.

The trial of Moreau.

The detention of the Pope.

The murder of the Duc d'Enghien.

The conscription.

The expedition to Moscow.

The murder of the Duc de Berri."

The additional victims in such cases are unquestionably from among those who are exempt from the ordinary predisposition to insanity. The same impor-

tant truth, that moral causes of highly-wrought intensity, augment the numbers of the insane, independently of predisposition, is illustrated by the kinds of occupation which furnish a greater or less proportion of victims to this dreadful disorder.

We may set aside the observation that artists, musicians, actors, and poets, are particularly subject to insanity; since in these classes of persons, the disease is due to special causes connected with their habits and tone of mind. We may also dismiss, on similar grounds, the remarkable fact, that among kings the proportion of the insane is as one in seventy. But when we find that among merchants, who, as respects their mode of life, are models of sobriety and regularity, the amount of insanity is much above the average, owing doubtless to the trying moral solitudes to which they are subjected; and that among the members of the legal profession, who live amidst excitement which does not affect their personal feelings, the number is below the general average, we discover how true it must be that men, originally of the soundest mental constitution, may be plunged at once into the calamitous state of insanity, by exposure to moral causes wrought to great intensity.

It belongs to our present subject to remark that among the moral causes of insanity those connected with religious feelings stand in the very foremost rank. The following passage from a work already referred to seems especially applicable to the kind of inquiry in which we are engaged:—"In regard to the influence of religion in producing insanity, I may ob-

serve that religious principles of one kind or another, are imprinted on the mind of man from the cradle, and seldom abandon him whilst life remains ;—it is not then to be wondered at, that religion should exercise a most powerful influence on the mind. Like excessive passion, it operates more powerfully and more permanently than any other moral cause whatsoever. In Roman Catholic countries, however, it is said to have less influence in the production of insanity, than in countries where latitude of religious opinions and practice are permitted.

“Dr. Halloran remarks, that in the Cork Lunatic Asylum, where the Catholics are in proportion to Protestants, as ten to one, no instance from religious enthusiasm has occurred of mental derangement among the former ; but several dissenters from the established church have been so affected. The reason for this difference, says he, is obvious. The ministers of the Romish Church will not permit their flocks to be wrought upon. Catholics, therefore, are preserved from those doubts, which when once engendered, generally end in conversion. The moment of danger is, when ancient opinions in matters of faith are wavering. And to this danger every Protestant is more particularly exposed ; especially in a country where toleration in religious opinions is allowed ; for there excess of fervour is most likely to be awakened. Although I am not prepared to deny that excessive devotion, or reading upon doctrinal divinity (leading to a distorted view of the genuine principles of Christianity) may occasionally lead a weak or melancholy person to in-



sanity; still I believe that in by far the greatest number of cases of madness, originating in religious ideas, the individual's mind has become bewildered amongst conflicting opinions—a state of morbid sensibility has been induced, accompanied by false notions, more connected with mere feelings and emotions, than with calm reflection, and in this way reason has been overturned.

“When insanity is the effect of a religious cause, it does not always therefore assume a religious character: on the contrary, the patient may become exceedingly impious; and those on the other hand who, previously to their becoming deranged, were indifferent about religious matters, may become very pious.” (“Lectures on Insanity,” by Sir Alexander Morison, pp. 316, 317.)

But to return to the two propositions which led to the statement that there are vast differences among individuals in respect to their susceptibility of intense moral feeling; and that no one, however strong in mind, is exempt from the danger of mental derangement under the influence of highly wrought moral causes. When such is the state of the case it is very evident how incumbent it is on those who address large audiences, to deal tenderly with men's minds, when the subject is such as strongly to excite the feelings. A preacher who delights in exhibiting the terrors of his subject in the most glowing character may do irreparable injury to the mental health of not a few among his audience. He may by a rash mode of picturing even the truths of Scripture excite emotions which no efforts can subsequently allay. He

may banish sleep from many an anxious breast until the brain whirling, night after night, with dizzy excitement, finally breaks from the control of reason. If he reply that it is his mission to wake the dormant soul from a supine security; then he forgets in his answer that his Great Master tempers the breeze to the shorn lamb. Preachers who delight in the exhibition of the terrors of religion are generally men of no natural acuteness of sensibility; they are men of iron nerves, who know nothing of feeling beyond the words in which a sentiment is conveyed; they are men who have no conception of that maze of action and reaction of soul which belongs to sensitive natures. Were general encouragement given to such a race of preachers in times like these in which we live, the catalogue of the insane would swell beyond all precedent.

There are no doubt many minds to which religious enthusiasm is like Balm in Gilead; and to such men, a highly-coloured discourse is a treat like a well cast drama, or skilfully performed music. On the other hand there is a larger number of people who look upon religion in a very serious, but very calm light. Having their minds impressed with the great truths of Christianity, they do not look for evidences of their firmness in the faith, to extraordinary experiences, or to outbursts of enthusiasm, in answer to the vehemence of a preacher. They rather regard the greater and greater cheerfulness with which they feel themselves conforming to the precepts of the Gospel; and the increasing ease with which they determine the path of duty, amid the distractions offered to their course, by

the ever-growing complications of an advanced state of society. In our days, a good man must not only be resolved, with the Divine aid, to do his duty, but must often study earnestly to discover what the path of duty is.

We must be allowed to doubt whether much permanent good, to balance the evil of the kind above referred to, will result from the attempt to persuade people in ordinary circumstances of life, to conform to the sentiments we are about to quote from one of the supporters of the Irish Revival. "I have known for twenty or thirty years, highly respectable people, country people—some of them farmers, some of them tradespeople—industrious men, such as you have, I doubt not, about here, minding their business on the week days, and going to church every Sunday. Their neighbours had no charge against any of them. We had no charge against them. They paid the rents of their lands and houses; they paid all their dues, and bore very respectable characters in the neighbourhood. Some of these people told me last week that they had made a discovery. They had found out that that they had been living without God all their lives. Although going to church every Sunday, they had found out that going to church was not religion; that a moral life was not religion; that these things could be done without having any companionship with God. Now they found out, for the first time in their lives, that religion was companionship, fellowship with God. That is a discovery I should like to be made here upon a large scale—that going to church is not Christianity, though Christianity will always lead

to it; that a moral life is not religion, though religion will always produce it; that you may be regular church goers, and moral livers, and pay all your debts, and do all that society requires of you, and yet be utterly Godless and Christless. My friends, that is a discovery you must each of you make. It is the heart and soul of the revival of religion, shewing the difference between religion in name, and Christianity in reality. May God carry that discovery to your hearts." —(Dr. M'Neile, quoted in "The Revival," by the Rev J. Baillie, p. 87.)

Our author would desire exciting sermons to be preached to great bodies of practical people, to persuade them to abandon a sober and righteous course of life, exemplifying at every step the heart-felt influence of the Gospel of Christ, the fruits of faith and Divine Grace; and instead of that calm unobtrusive piety, to learn to affect intensity of feeling on the most commonplace occasions, and habitually to pour forth ejaculations in which, but too often, the name of GOD is taken in vain. Our author tells us that a great body of men were exemplary in their religious and moral duties, and had lived in that uprightness of conduct unremittingly for twenty or thirty years; and yet that these men, by the fanatical outpourings to which they had been subjected, had been persuaded to believe that they had previously been living without any companionship with GOD. Had our author told us that he had known men who for twenty or thirty years had gone regularly to church, and had professed an enthusiastic admiration for the preachers they there heard, in proportion to

the fanaticism of their oratory ; but who nevertheless were noted for hard-hearted selfishness among their neighbours, knowing no rule in their dealings but what the law could compel them to perform :—then, according to our view of the matter, he might truly say that these men had no companionship with GOD. But what does his actual statement amount to? That such a love of GOD as enables us to keep His commandments and to preserve ourselves unspotted from the world ; and such a love of our neighbour as enables us to treat him as ourselves, are not marks of companionship with GOD. How little does this accord with the answer of Christ to the lawyer who asked what he should do to inherit eternal life—to whom after he had recited the law—thou shalt love GOD with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself—the answer was given, “ This do and thou shalt live.”

In what part of Scripture is it laid down, that a man shall not enter into life unless he shall have learned to work himself up to an ecstasy of enthusiasm in his devotions, and practise himself in an offensive familiarity with the name of GOD and the name of Christ? On the contrary, the words of the Saviour are, “ Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven ; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven.”

That man, unaided by Divine Grace, is unable to keep GOD’S commandments, is everywhere inculcated in the New Testament ; and not less clearly does the Divine Volume show forth that the death of Christ

was an expiation for man's offences against GOD. But in that volume it nowhere appears that it is the will of GOD that man should be continually raving about his own inward experience of His favour; while, on the contrary, against such inward convictions of sanctity, the prayer of the Publican is held up to us as an example in preference to the vain-glory of the Pharisee: "GOD be merciful to me a sinner." In a word, the whole spirit of the Gospel of Christ is, that the proof of fellowship with GOD is a sincere trust in His mercy through Christ, and a humble and lowly obedience through Divine Grace to His commandments; while ecstatic worship by demonstrations akin to fanaticism is wholly discountenanced.

To make true companionship with GOD to consist in a succession throughout life of violent, incoherent states, is to cut off at once the great majority of mankind from any participation in this fellowship. The great majority are not adequate to such a strain on their moral natures; some because they are of so phlegmatic a temperament that their feelings refuse to be thus excited; others, and the number is great, because they have become aware that their susceptibilities too readily rise above control, when allowed their own sway; and that they have learned the necessity of checking in its bud every unusual elevation of feeling. Still both these large orders of men are perfectly fitted to receive the truths of religion with a humble spirit, and to practise its precepts with a sober reliance on Divine assistance. But let loose the fury of fanaticism on these two great orders of men, and trace the con-

sequences. The first class views its exhibitions with unmitigated disgust, being unable to comprehend how anything short of positive madness could suggest such ravings to the human mind; while its final effects among them, and more particularly among the younger members of their families, are very detrimental to the cause of true religion, as tending to shake their confidence in their previous convictions of the truth. If any of this class are persuaded to assume the language so current in the demonstrations of fanaticism, so current in the history of revivals, it may be set down as purely hypocritical. The second class, if exposed to the phrensy of fanaticism, is sure to supply many victims to its worst consequences. The fanatical representations break through the restraints which these over-susceptible persons had endeavoured to place on their own emotions, and in the struggle many must be plunged into hopeless insanity.

Those who have carefully studied the accounts hitherto published of the present Revival in Belfast and its neighbourhood, will not fail to see throughout its progress the same general characters which have distinguished other revivals on both sides of the Atlantic, in as far as a history of these has been preserved. A sympathetic fervour has spread through a wide district of country. Sermons, which on other occasions would have had no particularly marked effect, have created strong, in some instances, perhaps, lasting, impressions on persons previously held to be indifferent to religion. Advantage has been taken by ambitious preachers to signalise their discourses by a supposed

number of sudden conversions, which conversions have been estimated by the occurrence of physical demonstrations in the persons concerned. These physical demonstrations are manifestly symptoms of hysteric disease, of exactly the same character as the symptoms we have referred to, as having occurred in crowds of people, where no religious feeling was in question. These morbid symptoms have been multiplied by sympathy or imitation, so as to have extended even to those who had not seen them, but had only heard of them, as in many recorded instances of former times. The propagation of these hysteric symptoms has been strained to the uttermost, by the attention given to the persons affected, under the idea that the convulsions and the like were the result of the operation of the Holy Spirit. There is no evidence of any attempt to check these morbid indications by appropriate means, so as exhibit their real character; and hence the malady has grown by indulgence to the frightful extent so clearly described. It does not appear to have been suspected how strong an incentive to give way to such symptoms is afforded by the desire to create a sensation in one's own behalf; in proof of which, one young woman is mentioned of having boasted of having exhibited such demonstrations thirty times on different occasions. It does not appear to be known that a pious minister of a Shetland Parish, in the last century, had successfully stopped such demonstrations, when they had gone to an unusual extent, by providing attendants every Sunday, ready to carry the first who showed any such disposition to a neighbouring lake for instant immersion.



The features of similarity in the Irish epidemic to epidemics of the same sort elsewhere being so striking, it is easy to predict how it will terminate. It will exhaust itself in no long time. It will leave some good; but much evil will follow in its wake. It will, perhaps, teach some of those who have witnessed its course that humble, unostentatious piety is better than rampant fanaticism. It can hardly fail to leave some part of the population improved in their habits, and perhaps sincerely and permanently attached to God's Word. But there can be no doubt that the great majority will relapse into their former careless and dissolute habits. And as to its worst effects, it will leave many for life a prey to maladies, destroying the comfort of existence, and not a few the victims of mental derangement.

