

## ARTICLE VII.

## THE POWERS OF DARKNESS.

BY EDWARD M. MERRINS, M.D.

## I.

FOR many centuries it was the universal belief of the Christian church that in the course of its earthly pilgrimage the human soul had not only to contend with the pomps and vanities of this wicked world and all the sinful lusts of the flesh, but was also exposed to the more subtle assaults of Satan, and an appalling array of hostile spirits, designated by St. Paul as the principalities, the powers, the world-rulers of this darkness, the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. During this long period the dread of infernal spirits weighed heavily on the minds of men, and multitudes were supposed to be in their thrall. In fact, demoniacal possession was thought to be so very common, it was the custom of the church to exorcise all infants and adults before baptizing them. The Reformation brought little or no change in this respect. Knox, Luther, and Calvin did not wholly reject the Catholic teaching concerning possession, sorcery, and witchcraft. The Church of England in its earliest prayer-book retained the forms of exorcism, and as late as the sixteenth century a canon of the church forbade any minister's attempting to expel devils unless specially licensed to do so by his bishop. Of late there has been a great change in Christian thought. In the Roman Catholic Church exorcism still precedes baptism, but otherwise the ceremony, except in secluded corners of the world, is rarely performed.

Among the Protestants, the opinion that the human person-

ality can be held in thrall in this manner is still held by very many, but it has little influence on the ethical or spiritual life; speaking generally, the belief "has been relegated to the dim, twilight land that surrounds every living faith; the land not of death, but of the shadow of death; the land of the unrealized and the inoperative." A recent and widely commended compendium of Protestant theology makes no reference whatever to Satan or other evil spirits. Seldom do the clergy nowadays venture to awaken repentance, after the manner of Jonathan Edwards, by preaching fiery sermons depicting the terrors and sufferings of souls in hell, for not many could do so sincerely and without mental reservation, and they know that such discourses have not the same power as formerly to move the hearts and consciences of educated people in their congregations. Yet it seems impossible to consign the subject to the limbo of exploded superstitions. There are mental and physical disorders still to be met with, especially in heathen lands, so closely resembling the manifestations of demon possession as recorded in the New Testament, as to compel attention, and make men wonder whether, after all, there are not mysterious evil powers behind them. At the present time, as may be seen from the following caustic comments, the subject is being investigated in India: "An important article in an Anglo-Indian contemporary calls attention to a revival of superstitious methods which some of the medical missionaries in India appear to have adopted. Demoniical possession would seem to be possible with these worthy people, and they have actually asked that particulars of any such cases should be sent for publication. It is necessary to remind those medical missionaries who have taken up this mediæval attitude, that they will lose public confidence in their scientific attainments, as the public of to-day interpret disease as due to physical causes,

and realize the necessity of adopting physical means for combating it.”<sup>1</sup>

Exception is taken to this last statement if it implies that mental and spiritual influences have no part in the causation of disease. Disorder of mental function is not always directly associated with material changes in the brain and nervous system, and that the state of the mind exerts a profound influence over the body and its functions, both in the causation and in the cure of disease, is so well established as hardly to require argument. The spiritual side of man's nature has not yet been fully explored: there are many psychical mysteries. It is surely permissible, therefore, to examine and discuss with a calm and open mind the strange phenomena passing under the name of demoniacal possession, though opinions may differ as to the underlying facts.

In the brief space at our disposal it is impossible to enter into the origin and development of the belief in evil spirits and their power to harm mankind, which was once almost universal; nor is it necessary, as it has already been fully done by numerous writers. It is the purpose here simply to examine the subject from the medical and psychological point of view.

In order to clear the ground, brief reference must be made to some of the current explanations of this curious malady.

1. Certain writers contend that demonic possession has never occurred, in any form or manner, either in ancient or modern times, the phenomena to which the term was applied being nothing more than disorder of the nervous system due to ordinary causes, the apparently demonic nature of the mental and physical symptoms being largely determined by the rudimentary religious ideas of people not yet liberated from animism, and other superstitions.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Lancet*, May 20, 1905.

<sup>2</sup> Tylor, *Primitive Culture*.

Undoubtedly there is much in the religious history of primitive races to support this view, but there is the objection that its adoption without qualification would gravely affect, for many people, the authority of Christ as a religious teacher, for he certainly spoke and acted as if possession in some sense or other was very real. If it were not so, the inference is that the "kenosis" involved his participation in the religious errors of his age.

On the other hand, if it be alleged that the Lord knew perfectly well that the belief in possession was founded on ignorance and superstition, but that, in merciful condescension to the weakness of his hearers, and to facilitate the cure of the demoniacs by humoring their disordered fancies, he spoke and acted as if it were true, we are confronted with an ethical difficulty. For when privately instructing his disciples away from the demoniacs and their friends, his position in the matter was not altered; and he associated the cure of the malady with prayer, the holiest exercise of the human mind. It is urged by Neander and others, that belief in demonic possession was not one of those errors which vitally affect the interests of religion; comparatively speaking, it was harmless, and therefore the mission of Jesus did not require him to correct it. Alas! the facts of history point the other way. The abuses and superstitions which have fastened upon this belief, and drawn encouragement from it, have been numerous and extremely baneful. "It is an unquestionable fact that the evangelic history of the demoniacs has given occasion to the most scandalous frauds and sottish superstitions throughout every age of the church; the whole trade of exorcisms, accompanied with all the mummery of frantic agitations, having arisen from thence."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Warburton, *Sermons*, lii. 241.

The ghastly record of the trials, tortures, and executions in Christian lands, for many generations, of ignorant, deluded people supposed to be in league with evil spirits, is very disquieting to faith, unless the manifestations of demonianism as Jesus saw them, were due, in some measure at least, to the subjection of the human personality to evil influences.<sup>1</sup>

As to the device of humoring the fantasies and delusions of the demoniacs in order to effect their cure, it is true this is done by physicians even at the present time, owing to the imperfect means at their disposal for the cure of mental disease;<sup>2</sup> but the practice is not consonant with the holiness of Christ, nor with the supernatural divine power attributed to him in the Gospels.

2. It is held by others that demoniacal possession actually occurred, but it was a spiritual phenomenon confined to the time and country of our Lord. Satan was then loosed with unusual power that the Son of God in his contest with evil could give the world convincing proof of his divine origin and authority, even the devils being subject to him.

It is difficult to see how this can be successfully maintained. In all ages and all lands the belief in "possession" has existed, and the mental and physical symptoms of the disorder are practically everywhere the same. Plutarch tells of a Pythian priestess who was thrown into such an excessive fury when

<sup>1</sup> To take one period alone: In 1848 a commission was appointed by Pope Innocent VIII. for the trial of those accused of sorcery and witchcraft, mostly women and girls. The issue was appalling. Seven thousand persons were burned at Treves; five hundred at Geneva; eight hundred at Wurtzburg; fifteen hundred at Bamberg; a large but unknown number at Toulouse, and worse still in Spain (Michelet, *La Sorcière*).

<sup>2</sup> See Griesinger, *Mental Diseases*, p. 227, for the account of a case where numerous surgical operations were performed on a woman to disabuse her mind of the idea that spiders were alive within her.

inspired, that not only those who consulted the Delphic oracle, but also the priest who conducted her to the sacred tripod and attended her during the divination, were terrified and forsook the temple. Wherein does this condition greatly differ from that of the demoniac who, objecting to the exorcisms of the sons of Sceva, "leaped on them, and mastered both of them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded?"<sup>1</sup> The Bible itself mentions one kind of possession among heathen people. The inspiration of the young woman of Philippi who cried out for many days after St. Paul and his companions, is imputed to the same source as that of the Delphic oracle.<sup>2</sup> The demoniacal possessions of the Hindoos,<sup>3</sup> Chinese,<sup>4</sup> and other races, are said by missionaries and travelers to be identical in their manifestation with Judæan possession. An African missionary writes: "Demoniacal possessions are common, and the feats performed by those who are supposed to be under such influence are certainly not unlike those described in the New Testament. Frantic gestures, convulsions, foaming at the mouth, feats of supernatural strength, furious ravings, bodily lacerations, gnashing of teeth, and other things of a similar character, may be witnessed in most of these cases which are supposed to be under diabolical influence."<sup>5</sup>

3. According to another view, probably the most popular among the rank and file of the Christian army, demonic possession is, and always has been, an actual occurrence; the possessing demon is a real being of a race not human, and of

<sup>1</sup> Acts xix. 13-17.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xvi. 16-18.

<sup>3</sup> Art. "Demoniac Possessions in India and Judæa," *Dublin Univ. Mag.* xxxi. 315; xxxii. 262, 241; xxxvii. 52; Caldwell, art. "Demonology," etc., *Contemporary Review*, xxvii. 369.

<sup>4</sup> Nevius, *Demon Possession and Allied Themes*.

<sup>5</sup> Wilson, *Western Africa*, pp. 217, 388.

a moral nature essentially and irredeemably evil; it can enter and abide within a human being, controlling the human personality but not merging with it; such is its desire for a physical organism through which to express itself, if it cannot be within a human being, it will enter the body of a swine rather than lead an incorporeal existence.

This extremely literal interpretation appears to be gaining strength among certain classes in this country and in England. As a sequel to the recent great religious revival in Wales, instances are being reported, in good faith, of demons passing from the bodies of unconverted persons struggling for spiritual deliverance, into the bodies of those kneeling near praying for them. Thus "the terrible fact has come to light that the evil spirits can fasten upon the children of God as well as enter and possess unsaved souls."<sup>1</sup>

This is indeed a terrible fact if true, but perhaps it is possible to think otherwise without being in opposition to Scripture, or casting discredit upon the facts as reported.

4. Lastly, there is the agnostical view that neither medical science nor theology, nor the two in combination, can furnish a satisfactory explanation of possession: it is an insoluble problem best left alone. Perhaps in the near future questions concerning the spirit world cannot be thus easily evaded. The rejuvenescence of Oriental nations may lead to a more aggressive opposition to our common Christianity when it is no longer supported by the strength of a superior militant civilization. To many it must have been a great surprise that the extremely clever, progressive Japanese should make public addresses to the spirits of the dead. A powerful incentive to their desperate valor displayed at the siege of Port Arthur was the desire to pacify the unquiet spirits of their countrymen who

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian* (London), November 23, 1905.

had lost their lives fruitlessly in the previous siege. In the hour of victory these were not forgotten. "Standing before your spirits," said Admiral Togo, "I can hardly express my feelings. Your passing from the world has been in the gallant discharge of your duty. Our combined fleet retains the undisputed control of the seas. I trust that this will bring peace and rest to your spirits. I have been called by the Emperor to report our successes to the spirits of those who sacrificed their earthly existence for the attainment of so great a result." It is not in accord with the usual teaching of the Protestant church to defend intercourse of this kind with the spirits of the dead, but if the Japanese, for their part, were to argue that, in the early days of Christianity, it was the common belief that demons were, many of them, the spirits of dead men,<sup>1</sup> it would appear very much like surrender to say the whole subject was beyond our comprehension.

The passages in the New Testament bearing on the subject of demoniacal possession show that it was regarded as a distinct malady, with characteristic symptoms of its own, not as a spiritual complication of other diseases, and not as insanity.

The principal symptoms, continuous or occurring in paroxysms, were an alteration of personality of which the subject was conscious, as in the case of the Gadarene demoniac, who, when questioned as to his identity, replied: "My name is Legion, for we are many"; impulsive utterances, mostly of a religious nature; and violent convulsions, which were very severe immediately prior to, or during, the time the evil influences were being expelled. Other symptoms distinguishing particular cases were paralysis, blindness, deafness, and dumbness.

1. Alteration of personality in various forms is met with

<sup>1</sup> Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, vii. 6. 3.

in many abnormal conditions,—insomnia, somnambulism, hypnotism, dipsomania, epilepsy, insanity, the delirium of fever, and in psychopathic states generally.

(1) Somnambulism probably furnishes the most familiar form of a rift in the personality. Many of the subjects while in this state pursue trains of thought and conduct, of which there is little or no remembrance when they are fully awake, but which are vividly remembered in subsequent somnambulistic periods. Consequently, there are two phases of existence: when the somnambulist is awake, the “ego” in its entirety controls his thoughts and acts; during sleep, it surrenders its functions to a lesser consciousness, as in the somnambulism so powerfully depicted by Shakespeare in the tragedy of “Macbeth.”

(2) In certain forms of epilepsy there is a period, which may either precede or follow the convulsions, in which the patient is in a strange condition somewhat resembling somnambulism, being entirely unconscious of his actions, though apparently awake and intelligent. Serious crimes have been committed in this automatic state for which the patients, before the nature of their malady was understood, had to pay the full penalty exacted by the law. In the *furor transitorius*, a phase of epilepsy, the subject gives way to sudden and violent fury of an appalling kind. The gentle answer, which turns away the wrath of other forms of mania, has no effect upon this; “nay, it may even aggravate the ruthless progress of his uncontrollable, impulsive, paroxysmal violence, which in its fierceness and vehemence is terrific and fiendish.” If the subject passes into convulsions, a calm succeeds, and reason returns.<sup>1</sup> Such exhibitions might easily have been mistaken for

<sup>1</sup> Allbutt, *System of Medicine*, viii. 342.

demonianism in an age when the manifestations of epilepsy were not well understood, and when epilepsy was regarded as a mysterious and sacred disease.

(3) The disorder of personality may consist in the abolition of the latest acquired mental experiences, and the reversion to an earlier personality. Thus, in the dementia of old age, recent experiences are forgotten, and the memories of youth thrust themselves forward with such vividness and persistence as to become the dominant features of consciousness, and the old man literally lives his youth over again. Judging by such cases, it almost seems as if our memories are laid down in the brain in strata, the memory of each successive experience overlying the previous one.

Occasional occurrences in the course of acute disease point in the same direction. Quite recently an old lady in the delirium of fever lived over again the periods of her life in a succession of distinct personalities. On the first day of her delirium she was the little child just arrived in England from India, speaking Hindustani only, a language she had not spoken for sixty-six years, and which she was unable to construct a phrase of when in health, it had been so completely forgotten; on the second day she was the school-girl who had learned to converse in English; on the third, the young lady speaking English, French, and German to the friends of a later date; on the fourth, the matron with children of her own, and so on, until on recovery she once more lived in the present.<sup>1</sup>

The explanation in earlier times of this sudden emergence from the depths of consciousness of forgotten experiences and acquirements, was to impute the utterances to the inspiration of the evil one.

A case in point is that of the illiterate German servant girl mentioned by Coleridge,<sup>2</sup> who, during her delirium, spoke intelligibly in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. The priests and others accounted for the phenomenal display of learning by supposing her to be possessed by the devil. Her physician thought otherwise. After much patient inquiry he discovered that, some years before, she had been in the service of a learned pastor, who was in the habit of reciting pas-

<sup>1</sup> *Lancet*, June 14, 1902, p. 1686.    <sup>2</sup> *Biog. Literaria*, i. 117.

sages from authors in these languages, which the girl at her daily work could not help overhearing. At the time she paid no particular attention to what she heard; nevertheless it had sunk into her memory, there to lie dormant until it was tossed to the surface during the mental upheaval of her delirium.

(4) After an illness which has severely affected the nervous system there may occur a persistent disintegration of the normal personality, as in the recent instance reported by Wilson, of the young girl who developed no less than ten personalities after an attack of influenza, finally reverting to the sixth, in which she is now being educated.<sup>1</sup>

(5) A loss or perversion of the bodily sensations which enter into the conception of the physical self may lead to a discontinuity of the psychic life.

An old woman who had lost all cutaneous sensation believed that the devil had carried her body away. A soldier severely wounded on the battle-field ever afterwards believed himself dead. On being asked what was the news, he would answer, "You wish to know how is old Lambert? He is no more; a cannon-ball put an end to him. What you see is not Lambert, but a clumsy machine made to resemble him." In speaking of himself, he never said "I," or "me," but always "this thing."<sup>2</sup>

(6) Following an injury to the head or other severe shock to the nervous system, total forgetfulness of the past life may result, so that an entirely new personality has to be formed.

A remarkable instance is that of the young Presbyterian minister, who was under the careful observation of expert psychologists during the whole period of his mental disturbance. Returning home in his carriage one evening in April, 1897, while trying to adjust the harness, he fell head foremost to the ground, and was rendered unconscious. After a few hours he regained the use of his faculties,—it can hardly be said that he came to himself,—and it was then found that the whole of his past life up to the time of the injury, was forgotten so completely that he possessed no more knowledge of himself or of the world in which he lived than the infant just born. He had to commence life anew without the guidance of a

<sup>1</sup> "Double Consciousness," *Lancet*, April 1, 1905, p. 869.

<sup>2</sup> Ribot, *Diseases of Personality*.

single former experience. Yet the old life had not entirely disappeared. In dreams, and in the hypnotic state, it came to the surface, though the subject in his new personality did not recognize it. Two months later a determined effort was made by stimulating his imagination to compel the old personality to assert itself. It did so, for three-quarters of an hour, but it had not the slightest recollection of what had occurred *since* the accident. Then for several days the two personalities alternated in the subject's consciousness, and occasionally they caught glimpses, as it were, of each other. At last the crisis came: there was a struggle between them to capture the self; they confronted each other in his consciousness and imperiously demanded that a settlement be made. But it was impossible for him to choose one and reject the other. Each of them was the "I" of the minister, separate yet not independent; simultaneously they came before him as though proclaiming: "We are one, though different." The only way out of the difficulty was their unification. This was finally accomplished, and the minister's mental constitution is now perfectly normal.<sup>1</sup>

(7) Among the delusions of insanity is that of the transformation of personality. Previous knowledge and experience are not lost except in the worst cases, but reason and judgment are impaired, and ideas are incoherent and uncontrollable. The character of the false personality is determined to a considerable extent by the physical sensations of the patient. When there is a feeling of buoyancy and exuberance, the disordered mental conceptions are also of an exalted kind. He imagines that he is the possessor of great wealth, or of unusual gifts of body and mind, that he is a hero, statesman, king, or even a divine being. When the bodily functions are depressed, as in melancholia, the patient tries to account for his miserable sensations by some external cause, some bodily disease, or moral defect. If he selects the last, his dissatisfaction with himself may pass into a conviction of wickedness or criminality, then to a special form of criminality, and, in an extreme case, to the conclusion

<sup>1</sup> Sidis & Goodhart, *Multiple Personality*, pp. 83-202.

that the "ego" is changed, and that the devil or some other embodiment of evil possesses him.

A recent French author reports having observed fifteen such instances in the space of six years.

One fatal case is thus described: Crying out, "I am damned; my children are damned; save me!" she howled like a wild beast, beat her head against the walls, broke window-panes, and tore her clothes, asking incessantly for drink as if consumed by an internal fire. For three days she was calm, then the same idea returned; with disheveled hair, haggard eyes, and prolonged howlings, she bore a striking resemblance to one possessed. An abundant mucus escaped from her mouth, which she sometimes spat at the assistants; the terror and despair imprinted on her countenance indicated but too clearly the effect of those frightful visions. When her strait waistcoat was removed, she bruised her bosom with blows, and several times attempted to dash out her brains against the wall.

In the last month of her disease her cries became so incessant that we were obliged to place her in a lonely apartment. There—squatting down, her body blue with the blows she continued to give herself; her eyes fixed, sunken, and bloodshot; her skin cadaverous, yellowish, and wrinkled; with a menacing air, a voice hoarse with crying that she was lost, damned, and that the devil possessed her, tortured her, and prevented her from closing her eyes by his constant apparition,—she presented a spectacle of the most frightful despair.<sup>1</sup>

(8) In those predisposed to nervous disease, the continuous strain of overwork, sorrow, or anxiety may induce the phenomena of multiple personality.

An illustrative case in which the psychological disorder lasted for many years, is that of a highly cultured young lady of Boston. Becoming neurasthenic from overstudy, and ordinary measures failing to restore her to health, hypnotism was tried. This led to the appearance of four personalities, known respectively as BI., BII., BIII., and BIV. The normal personality (BI.) is a proud, reserved person, fond of books and study, burdened with the seriousness of life, religious, and morbidly conscientious. The most interesting of the other personalities (BIII.) is of the opposite disposition, a bright, fun-loving personality, who calls herself "Sally"; who has a dislike for everything serious, including religion, and is inclined

<sup>1</sup> Brierre de Boismont, *Hallucinations*, p. 127.

to regard the world as a huge joke. She hates the normal personality, and is constantly tormenting her.<sup>1</sup>

The three personalities of Alma Z. formed a more harmonious and lovable aggregation. The normal personality was a well-educated, thoughtful young woman, worn with illness and pain. The second, known as "Twoey," was a sprightly child-personality, who used a peculiar and ungrammatical dialect that was very amusing; she was lively and good-natured, was free from pain, and possessed a fair degree of physical strength. The third personality called itself "The Boy": its chief characteristic was shrewd, masculine judgment. Both "Twoey" and "The Boy" were very fond of the primary personality, and did all they could to help her regain her strength.<sup>2</sup>

The source of the malady may sometimes lie in the actual moral guilt of the subject.

A Frenchman named Achille, while traveling on business, committed a grave offense for which he soon began to feel remorse. In his anxiety to conceal his guilt he became gloomy and taciturn; morbid fancies as to his physical condition also preyed on his mind. Then he was seized with the fixed idea that he was dead, and that the devil had come from the abyss and taken possession of his body. He was afterward constantly attacked with convulsions, during which his limbs were thrown into strange contortions, he uttered horrid blasphemies, and gave way to paroxysms of lugubrious Satanic laughter. He kept protesting against his odious outrages on religion which he attributed to the devil inside of him, who made him act against his will.<sup>3</sup>

The opposing tendencies of the alternating personalities in these psychopathic cases, are sometimes very pronounced.

An extremely interesting case is that of the French girl whose parents compelled her at an early age to lead an immoral life. After a time she reformed, and was placed by her friends in a convent, where she stayed two years. But her mental powers were not sufficiently strong to stand the strain of such varied experiences; she could not unify them, and so led a dual existence. In one personality she was Madame Poulmaire, the gay woman of the world, fond of bright costumes, constantly singing and dancing, delighting to practise all the alluring arts and wiles of the women of that

<sup>1</sup> Sidis & Goodhart, *Multiple Personality*, p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 420.

<sup>3</sup> Myers, *Proc. Society Psychical Research*, xv. 304.

class, and at times compelling the attendants to place her in solitary confinement because of her improper language and conduct. In the other personality, she was the gentle, religious devotee, calling herself by such names as Sister Martha of the Five Wounds, Theresa of Jesus, Mary of the Resurrection, etc., conducting herself with austere propriety, and preferring the secluded and somber life of the convent to the gaiety of the outside world.<sup>1</sup>

In apostolic times it is probable that nearly all the subjects of altered personality such as above described, and probably other forms besides, were included in the ranks of the demon possessed. But the instances due to structural changes in the brain substance, as the result of injury or disease, must have been very few, and will not be further considered. Judging by the subsequent history of demonianism, the victims were almost always persons afflicted with the psychopathic temperament,—that strange condition of the nervous system which lies at the basis of hysteria, neurasthenia, latalah, ikota, and allied disorders. No distinct pathological lesion characteristic of the temperament has yet been found, nor of the disorders which spring from it. The latter are therefore held to be functional, rather than structural or organic. But the nervous system of the psychopath is weak and irritable, as if from exhaustion; it is unstable, losing its balance at almost any shock, mental or physical; there is a morbid craving for attention and sympathy, a desire to excite curiosity or wonder, a wish for a certain kind of personal distinction; the power of the will is weak; there is want of self-control; the personality is largely under the sway of the emotions; there is great impressionability to suggestion, whether springing up in the subject's own mind, or impressed upon it from outside, and the corresponding imitative impulses are very strong. Such persons easily fall a prey to those nervous and mental

<sup>1</sup> Ribot, *The Diseases of Personality*, c. iii.

maladies the symptoms of which are of a kind to strongly impress the imagination ; and they are deeply influenced by speculations concerning the present or future state of the soul, especially those of a painful and terrifying nature.

It need hardly be said that instances of alteration of personality met with in these days are seldom or never accounted for by the theory of demon possession, except in religious circles, even though the subject's utterances are amazingly blasphemous or obscene. The patient and scientific work of recent years has thrown a great deal of light upon many ill-defined and obscure disorders of the mind.

According to recent psychology, the development of consciousness, in line with the Spencerian formula, passes from an indefinite homogeneity to a definite, coördinated heterogeneity. It begins with the simple irritability of the lowly organism in which there is no differentiation of physiological function. With the ascent of life in the scale of being, marked by the development of the nervous system, there is, *pari passu*, an increasing dispersion of the physiological functions in the bodily organism, and the consciousness becomes more complex because of the more numerous and varied sensations which the brain has to coördinate. In man, personality reaches a high state of development and becomes self-conscious, the idea of the ego being superadded, but it is far from being perfect: even in the best and most highly gifted, there is want of complete coördination and stability. For the consciousness is not a simple entity ; in its totality it is composed of all the memory-images of the past ; it is the aggregation and coalescence of all the groups of perceptions, instincts, and directions of the will, which at various times have represented the ego ; it is the entire individual character with all its aptitudes, sympathies, antipathies, virtues and vices ; in short, it is an aggregation of

many minor personalities. So far as these are welded into an unity which is harmonious with the perfect human ideal: when, from the Christian point of view and in the words of St. Paul, every thought has been brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, then is the personality complete; the subject is not a double-minded man (*dipsychos*, James i. 8), nor a multiple-minded man, unstable in all his ways. On the other hand, when the controlling power of the will is deficient or impaired, the tendency to the disintegration of the complex human personality is very great.

It is obvious that self-consciousness at any particular time can only concern itself with a small part of the subject's entire personality; the greater part is hidden, inactive, subconscious. In accordance with this conception of a subliminal region of consciousness, the unit of the mental life is not the single idea with its definite outline, but the entire wave of consciousness, or field of objects, presented to the thought at any moment, which it is impossible sharply to outline because of its relation to other phases of the subject's consciousness. The center of the field is occupied by whatever engages the attention most strongly. Concurrently, and in addition to what may emerge from the underground of all past experience, the subject is aware, dimly or subconsciously, of other impressions coming from the outside world. These are said to occupy the margin of the field. With change of thought the central and marginal impressions do not vanish, but sink into the mental depths in which lie all the thoughts and experiences of the past. The range and complexity of the contents of this subliminal region are therefore very great. "In it lie all our momentarily inactive memories, and it harbors the springs of all our obscurely motivated passions, impulses, likes, dislikes, and prejudices. Our intuitions, hypotheses, fancies, superstitions.

persuasions, convictions, and in general all our non-rational operations come from it. It is the source of our dreams and apparently they may return to it. In it arises whatever mystical experiences we may have and our automatisms, sensory or motor; our life in hypnotic and hypnoid conditions; our delusions, fixed ideas, and hysterical accidents, if we are hysterical subjects; our supra-normal cognitions, if such there be and we are telepathic subjects. It is also the fountain-head of much that feeds our religion."<sup>1</sup>

This region has, as it were, a mental life of its own independent of the primary consciousness. A common illustration of its activity is the successful solution of problems during sleep, which the subject had not been able to solve when awake.

Occasionally this subconscious cerebration is suggestive of the supernatural. Thus an English general in India, commissioned to put down Thuggery, was accompanied on his various expeditions by his wife. One evening the tents were pitched on a very lovely spot in the jungle. The next morning the lady implored her husband to have the tents moved elsewhere, as she had been haunted all night by the sight of dead men. The same day the general received information that caused him to examine the ground where the tents had been pitched. There were found the bodies of fourteen people the Thugs had murdered.<sup>2</sup> The natural explanation of this incident is that the odor of the dead bodies reached the lady and suggested the dream, the details being worked out subconsciously. In a different age it might have been regarded as a supernatural revelation.

Subconscious cerebration also occurs during the waking state, as when a person unable to recall a particular name, thinks for a time of something else, and eventually the name comes to remembrance. In persons of psychopathic temperament, in whom the subconsciousness is abnormally developed, incursions from it into the ordinary consciousness easily and

<sup>1</sup> James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 484.

<sup>2</sup> Carpenter, *Mental Physiology*, p. 589.

constantly occur. When the subject is ignorant of their source, they take for him the form of unaccountable impulses to act, as in the phenomena of post-hypnotic suggestion; of inhibition of action, as in the functional paralysis of hysteria; of hallucinations of sight, as when visions are seen; of hearing, as when ghostly voices are heard. The impulses may also take the direction of automatic speech, the meaning of which the subject may not himself understand, a phenomenon which has considerable bearing on oracular, demonic, and spiritualistic utterances. The subject may also be harassed by obsessive ideas, certain catchwords or refrains haunting the mind for hours or days and then vanishing. Thus John Bunyan was for a time greatly distressed by the constant repetition of the words: "Sell Christ for this, sell him for that, sell him, sell him!" which would run through his mind a hundred times together, and in the lives of many of the saints are recorded similar obsessions. It is not surprising that in times when people were not aware of the depth and occasional insurgency of the subconsciousness, such involuntary and wicked ideas and utterances were thought to have been prompted by the devil.

The drift of such cases is toward a state of double consciousness or personality either temporary or permanent. The primary consciousness in its weakness becomes less and less able to cope with the multitudinous impressions continually pouring in; many are ignored, or relegated to the background of consciousness to the continual augmentation of the subconsciousness, and the further weakening of the higher personality owing to the surrender of its functions. Finally the scission is complete. There occurs "the splitting of what ought to be a single complete self into two parts, of which one lurks in the background, whilst the other appears on the sur-

face as the only self the man or woman has. The *size* of the second self depends on the number of thoughts split off; the *form* of it tends to personality, the later thoughts pertaining to it remembering the earlier ones and adopting them as their own. These secondary selves form therefore conscious unities, have continuous memories, speak, write, invent distinct names for themselves, or adopt names that are suggested."<sup>1</sup>

When the secondary self is aware in its own peculiar fashion of its unnatural status in this world, it often places its being in the world of discarnate spirits.<sup>2</sup>

The frequency and length of the periods of mental aberration during which the sense of personal identity is in confusion vary in different cases, and the same variation is observed in demoniacal possession. In this particular disorder the attacks were generally brief and of light degree. The demoniacs lived in their own homes and were amenable to the directions of their friends; they were permitted to walk freely in the streets even when possessed; they attended divine service in the synagogue. The possession was occasional, paroxysmal, occurring only when the mental equilibrium was thoroughly upset. In those more grievously afflicted, as the Gadarene demoniacs, the attacks were severe, prolonged, and necessitated the separation of the patients from the rest of the world. In the psychopathic affection among the Samoyeds known as "ikota" the variations are somewhat similar. In its mildest form the principal symptom is the utterance of inarticulate sounds whenever anything repugnant is seen, or if the subject is teased about her peculiarity. In its more severe form the patient becomes temporarily maniacal.

The circumstances which most commonly provoked demonic

<sup>1</sup> James, *Psychology*, p. 227.

<sup>2</sup> Boris & Goodhart, *Multiple Personality*, p. 54.

seizures were the presence of religious teachers, professional exorcists, and other persons known to have the power of expelling the evil influences; the sight of other demoniacs exhibiting the symptoms of their disorder; scenes of religious excitement. The seizures could also be self-induced with the aid of wild music and dancing, as still practised by the devil dancers of India, and other religious fanatics.<sup>1</sup>

With regard to the termination of these disorders of personality, the aberration in some cases is of brief duration, disappearing when the occasion which called it forth has passed, the subject then returning to his normal personality for a long period. In others, the mental life is more evenly divided between the struggling personalities, but the issue may be complete recovery. In a minority, the abnormal personality eventually assumes complete and permanent control.

For obvious reasons, it is in countries of backward civilization that we find the strangest and wildest psychical disorders, short of actual insanity. The dark and terrifying superstitions of the people; their ignorance of natural law and consequent reference of everything not understood by them to supernatural agency; the constant dread of disaster from every imaginable quarter; the stagnant isolation of small communities; in the individual, the greater strength of the emotional over the intellectual life, with the attendant extreme susceptibility to suggestion, and the consequent tendency to imitate any mental or physical disorder that strikes the imagination,—all are factors in explaining the wide prevalence of various forms of mental aberration. The contrast between the numerous cases of demonic possession in former times and their rarity now in civilized lands may be thus explained, without

<sup>1</sup> Caldwell, *Contemporary Review*; Nassau, *Fetichism in West Africa*, p. 73.

insisting that evil demons in a particular age were granted unusual powers and liberty to work harm to the human race.

But it is a question whether this malady has not been just as common in comparatively recent times wherever the belief in demonic possession is firmly and sincerely held, as ever it was among the Jews in the time of our Lord. Conversely, when the belief in the possibility of its occurrence vanishes, the malady tends to disappear.

In 1857, in the secluded mountain village of Morzine in France, of about 2,000 inhabitants, there occurred an outbreak of demonism which lasted for years. It attracted wide attention, and required the combined forces of church and state to suppress it. Two little girls were the first victims, and from them the disorder spread to scores of others. The afflicted were said to have possessed superhuman agility and strength, the gift of tongues, knowledge not acquired by ordinary means, and the ability to reveal the secret thoughts of others.<sup>1</sup> Mingled with the exhibitions of supernatural power, were outbursts of blasphemy and obscenity. One sensation they all acknowledged,—the presence of another body within their own, at times moving softly and swayingly, at other times wriggling furiously up to their throats, choking and trying to strangle them. (This subjective sensation was, of course, the familiar "globus hystericus.") The epidemic lingered on, rising and falling, until 1864. In that year the Roman Catholic bishop visited the village to administer the rite of confirmation. The

<sup>1</sup> According to the Catholic ritual of exorcism, the indicia of being possessed by an evil spirit were these: 1. The faculty of knowing the unexpressed thoughts of others; 2. Understanding languages not known by the possessed; 3. The faculty of speaking unknown or strange languages; 4. Knowledge of future events; 5. Knowledge of events passing in distant places; 6. The exhibition of preternatural strength; 7. The ability to keep the body suspended in the air a considerable time.

scenes that followed are best described in the following letter of an eye-witness:—

“I went after all on the first of May to see the celebrated possessed at Morzine, and I can assure you I have not lost my time. My imagination could never have conceived such horrible sights. I was at Morzine early in the morning, the ceremony beginning at seven o'clock. I had not been five minutes in the church when a poor young girl fell at my feet in horrible convulsions. She struck the floor with her feet, her hands, and her head, as fast as the roll of a drum. Then two others were seized and again others. The church became a perfect hell. Nothing was heard but ories, blows, oaths, and blasphemies that made one's hair stand on end. It was the bishop's entrance that set them going. Blows with the fist, kicks, spitting, horrible convulsions, handfuls of hair and caps flung about, torn clothing, bleeding hands, met everywhere my ears and eyes. The worst moments were at the Raising of the Host and the benediction of the Holy Sacrament. The victims of the epidemic, above one hundred in number, seemed to fall into almost simultaneous convulsions, and without any warning. The noise was perfectly infernal, and most of the spectators were in tears. The greater number of the afflicted were young girls and women from fifteen to thirty years of age; there was a child of ten, five or six old women, and two men. The bishop confirmed some of them whether they would or no, and as soon as he came in front of them they were seized, but by the help of the gendarmes and some men who assisted, he put his hands on them, even in the midst of their fearful convulsions. “Damned carrion of a bishop,” they cried, “why dost thou come to torment us?” and they tried to strike and beat him, and to tear off his episcopal ring, and they spat in his face. But it was remarkable that when he touched their heads in confirmation, they sank down and remained in a stupor that seemed like deep sleep. Near me was a young and pretty woman of eighteen, married about a year ago. After being confirmed, lying in the arms of her father, husband, and mother, who were all weeping bitterly, she cried out: “Ah, damned carrion of a bishop, thou makest me depart, I, who was so well in this woman's body. Now I must return to hell.”<sup>1</sup>

In 1727 there died in Paris a priest who had taken a prominent part in the ecclesiastical controversies of the day. People flocked to his tomb, and soon it was reported that mira-  
<sup>1</sup> “Demonopathy in the Nineteenth Century,” *Belgravia*, lxxiv. 358.

cles occurred there. "Men and women were seized with convulsions and tetanic spasms, rolled upon the ground like persons possessed, were thrown into violent contortions of their head and limbs, and suffered the greatest oppression." At one time over eight hundred were thus affected. The saint's opponents interpreted the spectacle as the work of Satan.

In the Dancing Mania which spread over Europe in the fourteenth century, the men and women affected appeared to lose all control over their senses, dancing for hours or even days in wild delirium, until they collapsed from sheer exhaustion. When well developed, the attack commenced with convulsions resembling those of epilepsy, the subject falling to the ground apparently unconscious, panting for breath, foaming at the mouth. Suddenly springing up, the dance would begin with strange contortions. "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, during the paroxysm, saw the heavens open, and the Saviour enthroned with the Virgin Mary; according as the religious notions of the age were strangely and variously reflected in their imaginations." The exhibitions everywhere excited astonishment and horror. No one entertained the least doubt of their demoniacal origin. The priests had recourse to exorcism, and endeavored by every means in their power to allay an evil which threatened so much danger to themselves; for the possessed, assembling in multitudes, frequently poured forth imprecations against them and menaced their destruction.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hecker, *Epidemics of the Middle Ages.*

In this manner, outbreaks of demonic possession can be traced back to the apostolic age and beyond, the manifestations in one period, *mutatis mutandis*, not being greatly different from those of another.

Viewing the examples of disordered personality, above described, just as they stand, without reference to theological or other considerations, it is difficult to see wherein lies the distinction between demoniacal possession in the apostolic age, and the malady that has passed under the same name since; nor does it seem possible to draw any hard-and-fast line, apart from the singular nature of the obsessive idea in demonianism, between the exhibition of disordered personality as seen in the demoniac, ancient or modern, and the same phenomenon as observed in other psychopathic disorders. In the concluding paper, will be considered the other symptoms of possession, and its origin, proximate and remote.

[TO BE CONCLUDED.]