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## ARTICLE IV.

## THE POWERS OF DARKNESS.

BY EDWARD M. MERRINS, M.D.

## II.

IN the preceding paper it has been shown that the mental or spiritual disorder known as demoniacal possession has been common in every land down to recent times ; that its manifestations always and everywhere are very similar ; and that its principal feature, an alteration or disturbance of the consciousness of personality, is a symptom common to various disorders of the psychopathic temperament, and is not therefore to be regarded as indubitable evidence, in and by itself, of the subject's being under the influence of an alien evil spirit.

2. Of the other symptoms of possession, involuntary muscular movements ranging in severity from slight tremors to the most violent convulsions probably attracted the most attention. These also are found in the different psychopathies. In the worst forms of hysteria, such as are still to be seen in the French hospitals, convulsive attacks occur for which no better descriptive term has yet been found than "demoniacal." In the less severe forms of this *grande hystérie*, the patient falls to the ground, foams at the mouth, the features become distorted, and there are convulsions as in epilepsy. After a brief period of relaxation, hallucinations seize the mind, and the conduct becomes expressive of the coarser passions, wrath, fear, scorn, lust, etc. ; or there may be meaningless writhings presenting a hideous aspect. In the worst or "demoniacal" cases,

the convulsions are of exceeding violence, and the horror of the scene is intensified by the accompanying piercing screams, provoked by the physical pain of the extraordinary muscular movements, and by the mental torture of the hallucinations. Men are affected as well as women, and the disorder is generally of long duration.<sup>1</sup> The wild outbursts of the Gadarene demoniacs whom it was impossible to tame or bind, may have been somewhat of this nature. To this day in India and other foreign countries, the sight is not uncommon of a frenzied demoniac raving, writhing, tearing, bursting his bonds, until, subdued by the exorcist, he stares and sighs, falls helpless to the ground, and comes to himself.<sup>2</sup>

The demonic convulsions were very severe and prolonged at the time of deliverance. Of the demoniac of Capernaum we read: "And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him."<sup>3</sup> So of the deaf and dumb demoniac: the spirit "having cried out and convulsed him much, he came out; and the child became as one dead; insomuch that the more part said, He is dead."<sup>4</sup> This may explain the petition of the demoniacs not to be tormented: they desired to be free, yet shrank from the agonies of deliverance. No doubt the secondary personality, true to its assumed character of a demon, stood in fear of Jesus as the Messiah, disliked the expulsion from its human abode and the return to its natural and less desirable habitation, wherever that was conceived to be, and so prayed not to be tormented by disturbance, but to be left alone. The threat to inflict physical injury if the demon proved obdurate, which ordinarily formed part of an exorcism, may also

<sup>1</sup> Féré, art. "Hysteria," *Twentieth Century Practice of Medicine*, x. 503; "Hystero-Epilepsy," *Quain's Dict. of Medicine*.

<sup>2</sup> Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, ii. 137; Ward, *The Hindoos*, i. 155; Roberts, *Or. Illust. of Scripture*, 529.

<sup>3</sup> Mark i. 26.

<sup>4</sup> Mark ix. 26.

have made the demoniac afraid; yet, as the violent convulsions were attended by much actual suffering, the prayer may also have been made by the subject in his own proper personality, so far as that was able to assert itself.

During the whole course of the malady the convulsions were apt to be evoked or intensified whenever the subject was thrown into a state of mental excitement, whether self-induced, or caused by the presence of persons or things supposed to be antagonistic to him in his morbid state. Hence he trembled when confronted with an exorcist of acknowledged power, a fact probably alluded to by St. James when he writes: "The devils [demoniacs] also believe and tremble."

The ecclesiastics of the Roman Catholic Church formerly utilized the tremblings and convulsions of demoniacs to determine the sanctity of reputed relics. If, for example, the demoniacs were convulsed when brought near to some disinterred human remains, it was convincing evidence of their sacred value: they must have been those of a saint or martyr. It can easily be imagined that, with such agents, it was always possible to produce whatever effects were desired. Holy water was also accredited with the same perturbing influence. Yet it is a curious fact, and hard to explain if possession be actually the indwelling of a devil in a human form, that, if the demoniac touched holy water without being aware of the nature of his act, there were no convulsions. On one occasion during the Morzine epidemic, a skeptical physician secretly mingled holy water with the wine which was ordinarily drunk by the people at their meals. The demoniacs who drank of it were carefully watched; but, as they were in ignorance of what the physician had done, they remained strictly sober in every sense of the word,—at least they had no convulsions.<sup>1</sup> It is evident the convulsions were often the

<sup>1</sup> "Diabollism and Hysteria," *Popular Science Monthly*, xxxv. 150.

result of auto-suggestion, or else the devil is occasionally tolerant of holy water, despite the proverb which says he hates it.

Akin to possession is the wild, convulsive frenzy of religious fanatics, of which a good illustration is the conduct of the priests of Baal in their contest with Elijah on Mount Carmel. Their religious ceremonies commenced with wild dancing and cries. After a time, provoked by their failure and by the mockery of Elijah, they lost all self-control. "Louder and louder grow their cries, wilder and more rapid their dance, more frantic their gesticulations. At length, when the frenzy has reached its height, knives are drawn from their sheaths, lances are upraised, and the blood spurts forth from hundreds of self-inflicted wounds, while an ecstasy of enthusiasm seizes many, and they pour forth incoherent phrases, or perhaps an unintelligible jargon, which is believed to come from divine inspiration, and constitutes one of their modes of prophecy."<sup>1</sup> To the same kind of mental phenomena belongs the devil-dancing of India, so graphically described by Bishop Caldwell and other writers, and adduced by them as possible proof of the reality of demoniacal possession.<sup>2</sup>

3. Different forms of palsy and paralysis are not uncommon in psychopathic disorders, and the disability may last for many years. In some cases the limbs retain their muscular power, but the patient is unable to use them for such functions as standing or walking; in others the symptoms resemble those of true paralysis, the limbs lying motionless, apparently devoid of all muscular power; in another group the paralysis is accompanied by contracture or rigidity of the muscles, which may be so extreme as to produce considerable deformity. When the muscles of the neck are affected, the head is drawn to one side, as in wry neck. When there is contracture of the muscles of

<sup>1</sup> Speaker's Commentary, 1 Kings xviii.

<sup>2</sup> Contemporary Review, xxvii. 369.

the back, there is spinal curvature.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps this occasioned the deformity of the woman "which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years; and she was bowed together, and could in nowise lift herself up."<sup>2</sup>

As to the precise physical condition underlying the paralysis in these cases, we are ignorant. The most reasonable hypothesis is that the nutrition of the nerves is affected, and this causes their chemical composition to be so altered as to produce irregularity of function. But this theory does not satisfactorily account for the rapid restoration which often occurs. According to the psychological explanation already referred to, the primary consciousness having weakly abandoned some of its functions, the subject is under the control of certain fixed ideas of the subconsciousness, which inhibit muscular action in the parts affected.

The appearance of the paralysis, which generally follows an hysterical convulsion, or a mental or physical shock, is often quite sudden. Its disappearance in response to some powerful incentive to action, or under influences similar to those which induced it, may also be sudden and mysterious. Cases of this kind are very interesting, as they furnish many of the sensational cures claimed alike by Roman Catholics, Protestants, Christian Scientists, and others, as having been wrought by the exercise of simple faith.

4. Disorders of the special senses are among the remaining symptoms. These also occur in the various psychoses, especially in hysteria.

Dumbness may be an affliction of the patient. It is capricious in its appearance and disappearance, is dependent on psychical influences, and variable in duration. "And as they went forth,

<sup>1</sup> For illustrative cases see *Nouv. Icon. de la Salpêtr.*, March and April, 1897; *Amer. Year Book of Med. and Surg.*, 1898, p. 752.

<sup>2</sup> *Luke* xlii. 10-21.

behold there was brought to him a dumb man possessed with a demon, and when the demon was cast out the dumb man spake." <sup>1</sup>

Hearing may be affected, and in some cases the deafness is complete, and accompanied by loss of speech. In the fourth of the ten personalities of the case recorded by Wilson, <sup>2</sup> the girl became a deaf mute and failed to hear loud noises close to her ears, but could speak in deaf and dumb language. Of the epileptic boy healed immediately after the transfiguration, it is said that he had a dumb spirit, and our Lord, in casting it out, addressed it as a dumb and deaf spirit. <sup>3</sup>

The sight may be impaired. In the tenth personality of Wilson's case, the girl was blind and imbecile. She understood nothing, and at times apparently could not hear. But she could draw perfectly though sightless, notwithstanding she had never learned to do so in her normal condition. "There was brought unto him one possessed with a demon, blind and dumb; and he healed him, insomuch that the dumb man spake and saw." <sup>4</sup>

5. Impulsive, automatic, or involuntary speech is a symptom of mental weakness or disorder, and it is a special feature of demonianism. As already explained, it is generally to be accounted for by the intrusion into the primary consciousness of ideas from the subconsciousness; and the subject, unaware of their source, and from lack of self-control unable to keep silence, thinks they come from a being other than himself, and speaks and acts accordingly. In some instances the involuntary speech is evidently due to the inability of the neurotic subject, when in a state of mental excitement, to restrain the expression of his thoughts on whatever has produced or contributed to the excitement. Among semi-civilized people such frenzied speech will be accom-

<sup>1</sup> Matt. ix. 32, 33.    <sup>2</sup> The Lancet (Eng.), April, 1905, p. 869.

<sup>3</sup> Mark ix. 17, 25.    <sup>4</sup> Matt. xli. 22.

panied by acts of bodily excitement. Thus a missionary preaching in a heathen village was suddenly interrupted by one of his hearers falling to the ground in convulsions, and in a frantic manner forbidding the others to listen to the Christian teaching. This man was afterwards converted, and told the missionary that "he could not account for his former exercises, but that it certainly appeared to him as though a spirit spoke, and he must tell what was communicated." Needless to say it was the common belief among the natives of the place that the utterances were due to the influence of an indwelling familiar spirit.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps nothing in modern times is so conducive to a belief in the possibility of demonic possession as the involuntary utterance of blasphemous or obscene speech by pure-minded men and women when under the influence of obsessive ideas. It is a matter of suffering, shame, and horror to them, and yet it cannot be suppressed. The same phenomenon is seen even in innocent children. "I have been most careful in the education of my child," said a gentleman in deep distress to his physician; "she has seldom been out of the house, and has only been allowed to associate with our own limited and select circle of friends and relations, all of whom are morally, if not religiously disposed. I never knew a more pure, delicate, and unsophisticated mind than she possessed previous to her illness; and now, when deranged, she manifests an accurate acquaintance not only with the most corrupt ideas, but with the improper phrases used only by the most depraved of her sex."<sup>2</sup>

"You think that is bad?" said a girl, who was suffering from a violent paroxysm of hysterical mania, to her mother, who was shocked at some words she had spoken: "Well, what do you think of this?" and then she gave utterance to a series of ideas

<sup>1</sup> Mason, *Geistl. Asien*, ii. 414.

<sup>2</sup> Forbes Winslow, *Obscure Diseases of the Brain and Mind*, p. 213.



of so obscene a character, and in language so vile, that her poor mother rushed in despair and horror from the room. "I thought that would astonish the old lady," said the patient with great satisfaction, "but that is nothing to what I could do if I really tried. Now bring me my Bible, for I want to read a chapter, and say my prayers." <sup>1</sup>

No wonder a parent is perplexed as to where and how such immoral knowledge was acquired, and perhaps echoes the words of the Syro-Phoenician woman: "My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." But it is possible to account for the deplorable exhibition apart from immediate Satanic influence. The pernicious example and suggestions of servants of whose true character the parents were ignorant; bad words and phrases repeated by little companions not aware of their meaning; the reading of books and stories of immoral tendencies; newspaper reports of scandal and crime; the unavoidable sights and sounds of the streets;—these are some of the sources of the vicious impressions which reach the minds of children, becoming a part of the subliminal consciousness and lying dormant as long as the controlling power of the will is normal, but finding expression during mental excitement, weakness, or disorder. This explains also the vicious utterances of virtuous adults. Such incidents forcibly illustrate the words of Jesus as to the necessity of guarding the avenues to the soul. "For nothing is hid that shall not be made manifest, nor anything secret that shall not be known and come to light. Take heed therefore how ye hear." <sup>2</sup>

The following instance of the demonic possession of a child, though it can be explained in a similar manner, is almost sufficient to persuade the most skeptical that the malady is of infernal

<sup>1</sup> Hammond, *Treatise on Insanity*, p. 490.

<sup>2</sup> Luke viii. 17, 18.

origin; any one may be pardoned for finding it hard to believe that such involuntary wickedness emanated entirely from within the child's own consciousness.

Margaret B., aged eleven years, a pious child of lively disposition, was suddenly seized with convulsions while apparently in good health. During the attack she rolled her eyes, made grimaces, performed all kinds of curious movements, but seemed to be unconscious of outside impressions. At the end of two days she assumed a deep, bass voice, and kept repeating the words, "I pray earnestly for you." When she came to her senses she felt exhausted and said she had been dreaming. Soon the attacks returned. She then began to speak in another tone of voice, occasionally interjecting in the bass voice the words, "I pray earnestly for you." The second voice spoke of the patient objectively, as if it represented some one distinct from her. Its language was coherent, and it answered questions logically, or evaded them skillfully. But that which principally distinguished its utterances was their moral, or rather immoral character. They expressed pride, arrogance, mockery, and hatred of truth, of God, and of Christ. The voice would say, "I am the Son of God, the Saviour of the world,—you must adore me," and immediately afterwards rail against everything holy,—blaspheme against God, against Christ, and against the Bible; express a violent dislike against all who follow what is good; give vent to the most violent maledictions a thousand times repeated, and furiously rage on perceiving any one engaged in prayer, or merely folding their hands. The voice said it was the voice of a devil, and whenever it began to speak, the countenance of the girl immediately and very strikingly changed, and presented a truly demoniacal expression.

A week later, at the very hour which, according to her testimony, she had been told by an angel was to be the hour of her delivery, she uttered the words, "Depart, thou unclean spirit, from this child! knowest thou not that this child is my well-beloved?" Then the attacks ceased, and she returned to her normal consciousness.

Five days afterward, the same condition returned. Gradually several new voices appeared, until the number had increased to six, differing from each other partly in their tone, partly in their language and subject; therefore each seemed to be the voice of a separate personality, and was considered as such by the voice which already had been so often heard. At this period the violence of the fury, blasphemy, and curses reached their highest degree; and the lucid intervals, during which the patient had no recollections of what had occurred in the paroxysm, but quietly read and prayed, were less frequent and shorter in duration.

On the day which had been announced to her as the day of delivery, as on the previous occasion, this most lamentable trouble came to an end. After she had spoken the words, "Depart, thou unclean spirit! This is the sign of the last time," the girl awoke, and since then has continued well.<sup>1</sup>

The knowledge displayed by the demoniacs of the Messiahship of Jesus was not necessarily of supernatural derivation, as claimed by certain writers. From the exclamations of the blind, the lepers, and others who came to our Lord for relief, it is evident that his person and reputation were well known, and therefore the demoniacs' recognition may likewise have been based on a previous personal knowledge of him, or on what they had heard of his power in expelling demons and curing disease. And what they said, so far as reported, was not evil. It was not the demoniacs who mocked and reviled Jesus and his apostles. The speech of the Philippian maiden publicly proclaiming St. Paul and those working with him to be "servants of the most high God, which proclaim unto you the way of salvation," was surely of unimpeachable orthodoxy. "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" said the demoniac to the sons of Sceva, and then chastised them for using the name of Jesus in their exorcisms. No condemnation is expressed of this rough and somewhat humorous administration of justice, either in the text, or by commentators. The only recorded impulsive utterances of a blasphemous nature were those spoken by the members of the Corinthian church reproved by St. Paul, and the offenders are not called demoniacs.<sup>2</sup> May we not suppose that Jesus declined to sanction the demoniacs' acknowledgment of him as the Messiah, not because it was the utterance of devils of the underworld, but because it was made by human beings whose minds were disordered, who therefore did not

<sup>1</sup> Kerner, *Geschichten Bessener*, Stuttg., 1834, p. 104; Griesinger, *Mental Diseases*, p. 243.

<sup>2</sup> Cor. xii. 3.

fully comprehend what they were saying, and whose support of his cause would have done more harm than good?

It is also very noticeable that the ideas expressed by demoniacs invariably reflect the mode of thought and current beliefs of the time and place in which they lived. This can be accounted for if it is understood to be purely human utterance, but is hard to explain if the speech was uttered or directly inspired by demons possessing a precise and extensive knowledge of all matters pertaining to their own particular spiritual world. The Delphic oracles, supposed to have been inspired by Apollos Pythorius, were in accord with Grecian mythology, and, though often clever and shrewd, there was nothing in them to indicate supernatural origin: neither in form nor matter were they of divine excellence or of diabolical perversity. In India, at the present day, the blasphemous cries of the devil-dancers—religious devotees who, with the aid of music and dancing, work themselves into a state of frenzied excitement or ecstasy—are in accord with the degrading conceptions of the spiritual world which ordinarily occupy their minds, and their gods and demons are those which are best known in the immediate neighborhood. So it was with the Jewish demoniacs. The general and ardent expectation of the coming of the Messiah; the references in the Jewish Scriptures, canonical and apocryphal, to angels and demons; popular beliefs and superstitions, indigenous or borrowed from other nations, were all influential in determining the contents of their frenzied speech. When the Gadarene begged that his demon or demons might not be sent out of the country,<sup>1</sup> nor into the abyss,<sup>2</sup> he probably had in mind the familiar story of Tobias, who, with the help of the angel Raphael, succeeded in driving away, to the confines of the known world, the demon who had brought to a tragic termination the lives of

<sup>1</sup> Mark v. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Luke viii. 31.

those who had previously been betrothed to Sara, the daughter of Raguel. This evil spirit fled into the utmost parts of Egypt, where the angel bound him.<sup>1</sup> According to ancient Egyptian lore, all that part of the world that lay beyond the land of Punt was a shadowy region, a kind of intermediate boundary land between the world of men and that of the gods, where the living came in contact with the souls of the departed. In the book of Enoch, and in Talmudic writings, the erring sons of God who consorted with the daughters of men, are said to have been led to a mountain of darkness, and there bound in iron chains which stretched to the middle of the great abyss.<sup>2</sup> When the demoniac replied that his name was "Legion," he may possibly have alluded to the thousands of soldiers forming a Roman legion, but quite as likely he was referring to the rabbinical tradition concerning the legion of demons called *lilin*, the followers of *Lilith*, the weird legendary creature mentioned by Isaiah, who abode in desolate places with the wild animals.<sup>3</sup> So great was the dread of this demon and her cohorts, that, according to one of the Targums, the common priestly blessing became: "The Lord bless thee in all thy business, and guard thee from the *lilin*."

The petition of the Gadarene that the demons possessing him might be permitted to enter the bodies of the herd of swine feeding upon the mountain side, may be explained without having recourse to the uncanny notion that evil spirits so intensely crave a bodily organism through which to express themselves, that, if they cannot enter or remain within a human body, they will enter the bodies of the lower animals, rather than lead an incorporeal existence. The speedy destruction of the swine is not

<sup>1</sup> Tobit viii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Book of Enoch, x. 6, 15; The Midrasch Ruth (quoted as a marginal note in Zohar, ed., 1559, col. 184).

<sup>3</sup> Isa. xxxiv. 14.

consistent with this demonian desire, unless, as some hold, they did not anticipate what happened, which does not exalt their intelligence; and there is the further objection that ideas of this kind open the door to unclean superstitions such as at one time were common concerning succubi, incubi, and other evil beings.

The incident of the demoniacal possession of swine is certainly unique; there is nothing like it elsewhere in the Gospels; it is the only occasion on which our Lord exercised, or coöperated in the exercise of, preternatural power for the destruction of animal life. Perhaps there is no great harm in saying that if the passage referring to the destruction of the swine should be proved later to be of doubtful authority, there would be no widespread regret. That unauthorized details were occasionally and very early added to the record of miracles of healing, is evident from the statement about the angel at certain seasons troubling the water of the pool of Bethesda, in which paralytics and other sick folk found healing.<sup>1</sup> It has accordingly been suggested that the story has not reached us in its earliest form, and that the departure of the legion of demons into the half legion of swine is a secondary element.<sup>2</sup>

The order of events in the healing of the Gadarene demoniac, —for the sake of clearness one only will be referred to,—is not quite certain. Apparently the demoniac came running to Jesus in a state of wild excitement; but, as he drew near, his fury became restrained in the divine presence, and he fell, awestruck and worshiping, at the feet of Jesus, who then commanded the unclean spirit to come out of him. As in other instances of demon possession, the cure was not instantaneous. With weird cries and in the throes of physical convulsions, beseeching Jesus not to torment him, yet longing to be free in spite of the agony of deliverance, and with eyes open to anything that could further

<sup>1</sup> John v. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Art. "Swine," *Encyclopædia Biblica*.

help him, the work of his spiritual emancipation proceeded. Meanwhile, his appalling cries, heard with startling distinctness in the mountain solitudes, frightened a herd of swine feeding within sight, and in their terror they stampeded down the cliffs into the sea and were lost. The demoniac saw the swine rushing to their destruction, and, with certain religious ideas in his mind, begged that the demons might pass from him to them. To this request, Jesus responded with the single word "Go." With the destruction of the swine the man felt his cure was complete.

To a Jew, the transference of human infirmities, moral and physical, to the lower animals, was not incongruous with his religion. He was familiar with the yearly ceremonies of the great Day of Atonement, when the sins of the people were laid upon the head of the Azazel goat, which was then led away into a solitary land. According to Jewish tradition, this goat, after being sprinkled with the blood of its fellow that had been sacrificed, was driven forward, and flung over a precipice called Zuk, as a symbol of pardoned sin. Would not the falling of the frightened swine over the cliffs into the sea be very suggestive of this ceremony to the mind of the demoniac? May he not have regarded their loss as a sacrificial substitute for himself? His private history is unknown to us, but it may well be that his disorder was brought on by remorse for some great sin. At any rate, rightly or wrongly, as the subject of demon possession, he must have felt his moral guilt was exceptionally great. He would therefore feel deeply the need of atonement, of pardon and deliverance, and would long for some outward, symbolic assurance of his forgiveness and permanent moral freedom. In the destruction of the swine he found all the assurance he desired.

This line of argument is strengthened by reference to the rites of exorcism practiced by the ancient Assyrians and Babylonians,

which were no doubt quite familiar to the heathen people among whom the Gadarene lived. It was their religious custom, when a demoniac was to be exorcised, to provide a young pig or goat, which was killed and placed near the patient during the exorcism, to absorb the demonic influence, and be his substitute. The ceremonial directions were as follows: "Cleanse thou that man with pure water from the Deep, and wash him clean; and bring near him a censer and a torch; twice seven loaves cooked in the ashes, against the shut door place; and give the pig in his stead, and let the blood be as his blood, and let him hold it; let the heart be as his heart (which thou hast placed upon his heart), and let him hold it."<sup>1</sup> Similar ceremonies are practiced in Oriental countries at the present time.<sup>2</sup>

It is certain the demoniac was cured and the herd of swine perished. The psychological difficulty of the miracle lies principally in the assertion that evil spiritual beings of another race passed from the bodies of human beings into those of the swine. If such a phenomenon actually occurred, it is not to be explained by present knowledge: it belongs to a world beyond our ken. Probably, as many learned and devout Christian scholars hold, the impression that such a transference actually took place was simply an inference of the bystanders from the extraordinary combination of events. Evidently it was they, and they alone,

<sup>1</sup> *The Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia, Semitic Texts and Translations*, ii. 19. The following, from the *Malqu Series of Tablets*, is a specimen of the words of an ancient Babylonian incantation:—

"I raise the torch, I burn their images,  
The images of the demon, the evil spirit, the phantom, the spectre,  
The female oppressor, the ghost, the vampire.  
The male demon of the night,  
The female demon of the night,  
The maid demon of the night,  
And any evil which seizes a man.  
Totter, melt and vanish!"

<sup>2</sup> Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, ii. 123, 130, 404.



who undertook to explain the miracle. "And they that saw it declared unto them [the people of the district], how it befell him that was possessed with demons, and concerning the swine."<sup>1</sup>

As to the frenzied utterances of the demoniacs in general, their peculiar character and close correspondence with local customs, traditions, and beliefs furnish a strong presumption against their direct inspiration by supernatural, evil intelligences. It has been urged, however, that it would consort with their Satanic character for the demons to assume, chameleon like, the particular shade of falsehood happening to prevail in each time and place, and give it strength; so that the spirit which spoke in the Greek pythoness as Apollo, in the Mohammedan as Sultan Mahomed, in the Hindoo as the goddess Devee, or the devils Vetalu or Cheda, would speak in the Jewish demoniacs in accordance with Jewish tradition, beliefs, and anticipations. But the simpler, and we think the truer, explanation is that the demoniacs, though under evil influences, spoke only their own thoughts.

According to the view thus far expressed, demonic possession is a malady with mental and physical symptoms closely resembling those of hysteria and other psychopathic disorders in which the subject is, or may be, conscious of a divided personality, the peculiarity of this affection lying in the conviction of the patient, that the secondary personality is an evil spirit which holds him in bondage.<sup>2</sup> The qualifying terms used in connection

<sup>1</sup> Mark v. 16.

<sup>2</sup> While the first part of this article was being printed, a careful study of a case of double personality, in which the two egos hold the field of consciousness at the same time, appeared in the *American Journal of Medical Sciences*, March, 1906. The patient is absolutely convinced that he is composed of two beings: number 1 and number 2. The latter is inimical to the first in every respect; suggests wrong acts, interferes with his life, even dictates to him bad language when he talks to others; briefly, number 2 is always for "the bad part of life." It is constantly in him, cannot be sepa-

with the word "spirit" or "demon" in the Gospels, refer therefore to the effects produced by the malady, not to the inherent qualities of spirits of the underworld dwelling in a human form. An "evil" spirit is the secondary personality more aggressively evil than the normal personality; a "spirit of uncleanness" is a personality that induces the subject to incur the reproach of uncleanness: ceremonial,—as when he haunts the tombs; moral,—as when he is impure in speech or conduct; physical,—as when he neglects personal cleanliness. A "dumb spirit" is one that inhibits the faculty of speech, and so with the other demons of the special senses. When "the demons believe and tremble," it is when the subject acknowledges with fear and trembling the spiritual power of some person or object which he believes is antagonistic to him in his morbid state. Other allusions to demons and spirits are to be interpreted in the same way.

The argument that "demon" is but another name for a secondary personality of which the subject is conscious, does not conflict with Scripture, for it is nowhere unmistakably taught that a demon is an evil spirit with distinct personality of its own; nor does the argument imply that our Lord did not speak to a real personality when he addressed the possessing spirit of a demoniac. According to the New Testament, the immaterial part of man is formed of soul and spirit, the soul being the seat rated from him, controls his actions, and never leaves him for a moment. The patient has a full knowledge of right and wrong and resists, therefore, the evil influence of number 2. Most of the time he overcomes it, but sometimes number 2 overpowers number 1 and takes full possession of the latter. When number 1 loses the battle the patient enters into a state of unconsciousness. In his judgment number 2 is not a material being; he does not see or hear it, he only feels its presence. The patient is intelligent, industrious, attends to his work correctly, never makes mistakes. He is an engineer, does responsible work, and never falls in doing his duties. His previous history is negative. It is regarded by the physician as a case of epileptic psychosis.

of the human affections, the spirit the seat of the religious affections, and the two are often included under the one term of spirit (*pneuma*), as in the verse describing the raising of the daughter of Jairus from the dead: "And her spirit returned, and she rose up immediately." "Spirit" and "personality" have therefore practically the same meaning. Further, in many passages relating to demons, the words *daimon* and *pneuma* are used synonymously, as in the verse: "When even was come they brought unto him many that were possessed with demons, and he cast out the spirits with his word."<sup>1</sup> So also when the seventy disciples returned with joy from their missionary journey, saying: "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in thy name," Jesus, after stating that he had beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven,—incidentally it may be noted that neither the term *daimon*, nor any of its derivatives, is ever applied to Satan or to his angels,—said unto them, "Howbeit in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven," thus substituting the word "spirits" for "demons," the word used by the disciples.<sup>2</sup>

If the terms "spirit" and "demon" were thus used interchangeably in connection with, and for, the human personality, it follows that when Jesus spoke to the evil spirit of a demoniac, he was really dealing with a human personality, i.e. the man's secondary, and for the time dominating, personality: he was not addressing an evil being of uncertain or mythical existence, nor was he humoring the whims of a disordered mind.

The terms under discussion are sometimes used in a more limited sense to indicate moral qualities, or moral qualities personified. There is the spirit of the world, of uncleanness, of impurity, of bondage, of slumber, of fear; and the opposing

<sup>1</sup> Matt. viii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Luke x. 17, 20.

influence of a spirit of holiness, of truth, of meekness, of faith, of wisdom. The man with an unclean spirit who cried out in the Capernaum synagogue, was, literally, *in* an unclean spirit, the word indicating, as it were, immersion in an unholy spiritual influence.<sup>1</sup> The word *daimon* is similarly used in an abstract sense. His Jewish contemporaries honored John the Baptist as a prophet, yet they said he had a demon, meaning he was one who, in their judgment, gloomily and morosely withdrew himself from the cheerfulness of social life. When the Jews said to our Lord, "Thou hast a demon: who seeketh to kill thee?" they probably meant nothing worse than "Thou art possessed with strange and melancholy fancies; thou yieldest to idle fears." Even where the charge has a more sinister meaning, the sense may not go beyond that of irrationality.<sup>2</sup> The "spirits of demons"<sup>3</sup> seem to denote wicked doctrines or principles prevalent at a particular time; so in the Old Testament passage: "I will cause . . . the unclean spirit [of false prophecy] to pass out of the land."<sup>4</sup> There is the same general meaning in the little parable of the restless spirit that returned with seven other spirits worse than itself, to the swept and garnished human tenement from which it had been expelled; for the address containing the parable was primarily spoken, not to an individual, but to those of "an evil and adulterous generation which seeketh after a sign," and its concluding words are: "Even so shall it be also unto this evil generation."<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, it was an early religious conception that spirits dwelt in, or controlled, all natural forces and objects. According to the Old Testament, the winds are God's angels, flame

<sup>1</sup> Mark i. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Westcott, Comm. on John vii. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. xvi. 13, 14.

<sup>4</sup> Zech. xlii. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. xlii. 39, 45.

and fire are his ministers.<sup>1</sup> "As God himself in a sense clothes his ineffable glory in the outward garment of light and of the visible creation, so his angels at his command, may put on the outward form of Nature's elements, and execute his bidding as fire and flame, storm and tempest." In the development of this belief, everything which brought woe to man was said to be an angel of evil. The Psalmist, in accounting for the plagues which came upon the Egyptians at the time of the Exodus, states that God "cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, a band of angels of evil."<sup>2</sup> The deuterocanonical Jewish scriptures are more explicit still. "There be spirits that are created for vengeance, which in their fury lay on sore strokes; in the time of destruction they pour out their force, and appease the wrath of him that made them. Fire, and hail, and famine, and death, all these were created for vengeance; teeth of wild beasts; and scorpions, serpents, and the sword, punishing the wicked to destruction. They shall rejoice in his commandment, and they shall be ready upon earth when need is; and when their time is come, they shall not transgress his word."<sup>3</sup> In the New Testament, the backsliding member of the Corinthian church was delivered by St. Paul "unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved";<sup>4</sup> Hymenæus and Alexander met with similar chastisement;<sup>5</sup> and, though it was sent simply to inhibit the growth of religious pride, St. Paul speaks of his own thorn in the flesh as being an angel of Satan.<sup>6</sup>

If all the passages of Scripture on the subject be collated and compared one with the other, it can hardly be maintained on textual grounds that the "demons" of Scripture are "devils"

<sup>1</sup> Psalm civ. 4.      <sup>2</sup> Psalm lxxviii. 49.

<sup>3</sup> Ecclesiasticus xxxix. 28-31.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. v. 5.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Tim. i. 20.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 7.

in the modern sense of the word ; in other words, demon possession, as construed by the popular imagination, does not rest on clear scriptural authority.

In objecting to the theory that demons are real, independent, spiritual beings, it is not implied that maladies such as demoniacal possession do not lie within the realm of the powers of darkness ; on the contrary, we think they are subtly and intimately connected with moral evil. "When we recollect the long course of ages which have by turns witnessed the reigns of magic, astrology, sorcery, divination, presages, invocations, augurs, auspices, necromancy, the cabala, oracles, the interpretation of dreams, pythonesses, sybils, manes, lares, talismans, the presence of demons in corporeal form, incubes, succubes, familiars, vampirism, possession, lycanthropy, ghosts, shadows, spectres, phantoms, hobgoblins, sylphs, fairies, urchins, will-'o-the-wisps, the evil eye, enchantments, etc., can we help sighing at the facility with which man receives error, and almost fancying that we are destined to live in a world of illusions, *unless we trace it to the sad consequences of a false education, and of a forgetfulness of morality and religion?*"<sup>1</sup>

These psychopathic disorders are the expression, as it were, of a sick, troubled, or terror-stricken soul, for the physical symptoms are generally of secondary importance, and tend to disappear when the spiritual disorder is rectified. Thus the curious symptoms of the "latah" of the Malays are said to be the exhibition of inherited mental and physical peculiarities formed when their remote ancestors were in bondage to dark and terrible superstitions. Among the common causes of hysteria are fright ; unpleasant sights ; grief over the death of friends ; the failure of cherished plans ; the trials of poverty ; family or business anxieties ; an unhappy marriage ; ill-treatment by rela-

<sup>1</sup> Cerise, des Fonctions et des Maladies Nerveuses, p. 463.

tives or employers; the ennui or disappointment of a purposeless or misdirected life; unhealthy spiritual excitement. There must be something abnormal in the condition of the soul when the ordinary changes and chances of this mortal life produce the effects of disease.

So with demonianism; it is fostered by the spiritual depression induced by morbid fears. It has always prevailed most extensively among the ignorant and superstitious who cower in terror before the invisible forces of nature and the weird creations of their own imagination. In the Christian world it has been most common when political and social calamities made men's hearts fail them for fear, and the life of the church was at its lowest ebb. The instances of "possession" among Protestants which we hear of in the present day, apparently never occur except during the prolonged religious excitement of a great revival, and under teaching that inspires an intense fear of the power of evil spirits over man both in this world and in the next. The victims, it may safely be said, are either persons of weak mind unable to assimilate such teaching and to adapt themselves to changed spiritual conditions; or else religious workers of morbid imagination who prove unequal to the strain of acting as the confessors and guides of sinful souls seeking salvation. The brighter and more hopeful a religion, the less do we hear of demoniacal possession.

These remarks are applicable to the Jews in the time of Christ. Their religion was true, but it was overlaid with ceremonialism and other accretions, and did little to brighten the lot of the common people; it was a burden which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear. The hopeless struggle to fulfill the requirements of the law was of itself a heavy strain upon the spiritual nature. Added to this was the strong undercurrent of excitement over the immediate coming of the promised Mes-

siah and the national deliverance he was to accomplish; it was "Lo here," and "Lo there," as one pretended Messiah after another appeared, and marvelous portents were constantly happening or being reported. Men of weak mind religiously inclined, brooding over these things, would easily fall victims to strange disorders of the soul.

The religious experiences of men in every age have many points in common. The descent from a state of spiritual exaltation to one of extreme despondency, from the comfortable assurance of salvation to the certainty of damnation, is perilously easy. In modern times when a Christian of the evangelical faith breaks down under the weight of grief or anxiety, he thinks in his despondency that he has committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost, and is therefore a hopeless outcast from the kingdom of God. So we may imagine that a pious but not strong-minded Jew, anxiously expecting the coming of the Messiah in whose glory he was to share, when his mind weakened under the strain of religious excitement, would pass from one extreme to the other; in his despondency he would then identify himself with the foes of the Christ, of whom the demons of the underworld, according to his notions, were the most active. Under the influence of current beliefs he would soon conceive himself to be in the power of these demons, intermittently or continuously, according to the severity of his case. The disorder would spread among those predisposed to it, either by way of imitation, or by passing through similar mental experiences.

The same difficulty in preserving the spiritual balance is present to those who habitually surrender themselves to ecstasies and profound reveries, as proven in the lives of St. Anthony and other Christian hermits. With the mind weakened by being withdrawn from the channels of normal human relationships,



and confined to the consideration of the spiritual state of the soul, and with the body weakened by fasting, exposure, incessant vigils, and disease, the hermits easily fell victims to various psychopathic disorders. It was difficult for them to distinguish between the real and the unreal; between objective facts and subjective sensations; they were easily agitated by impulses of spontaneous and ungoverned feelings, and the imagination and the emotions were given a free rein. Consequently their inner life became a feverish dream, usually alternating between prolonged contemplation of religious mysteries beyond human comprehension, and terrifying contests with tempting demons. Even in this materialistic age the mystic experiences of those individuals for whom the things of the soul are the sovereign realities of life, are not devoid of danger to the soundness and unity of the personality. Thus Amiel writes: "I find myself regarding existence as though from beyond the tomb, from another world; all is strange to me; I am, as it were, outside my own body and individuality; I am depersonalized, detached, cut adrift. . . . I do not hide from myself that such experiences weaken the hold of common sense, because they act as solvents of all personal interests and prejudices. I can only defend myself against them by returning to the common life of men, and by bracing and fortifying the will."<sup>1</sup>

As possession is essentially a moral disorder, the means of restoration must be moral also, not physical alone. It is not asserted that the demoniacs fell into their deplorable condition because they were voluntarily wicked to an unusual degree; they were certainly in bondage to evil influences, but not of their own free will. The man who deliberately abandons himself to evil may be called a "devil" (*diabolus*) or a child of the devil in the

<sup>1</sup> *Journal Intime*, p. 275.

New Testament, but never a "demon" (*daimon*).<sup>1</sup> The main trouble with the demoniac lay in the weakness of his true personality; it had surrendered its functions to a lower consciousness, and, as Amiel observes, the free being who abandons the conduct of himself yields himself to Satan; in the moral world there is no ground without a master, and the waste lands belong to the Evil One. To restore such an one to spiritual and physical health, the true personality must be roused to regain its rightful functions, and this can only be accomplished by imparting some moral or spiritual impulse. This is evident from the remarkable and genuine cures of psychopathic disorders which have followed exorcisms; visits to shrines; contact with the relics of saints; anointing with oil, and various other religious ceremonies,—measures apparently dissimilar yet essentially the same, as their virtue consists in the strong appeal to the religious nature. Where there is want of faith in the means employed, the appeal is not effective, and consequently there is no cure; indeed, ineffective measures may cause an exacerbation of the disorder, such as followed the exorcisms of the sons of Sceva.<sup>2</sup>

Conversely, where the faith of the subject is strong, men and measures having in themselves no particular virtue or power may work marvelous cures. To these practitioners belong the exorcists to whom our Lord referred when he said: "By whom do your sons cast them [the demons] out?"<sup>3</sup>

There are other cases where the trouble is very deep seated; where appeals to the higher nature have no effect, because the nexus between willing and acting is broken. The patient says, "I cannot"; her friends say, "She will not"; the truth is, "She cannot will." Faith in such cases is inoperative: it can-

<sup>1</sup> John vi. 70; viii. 44; 1 John iii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xix. 13-18.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xii. 27.

not save. It is noteworthy that in healing the demoniacs, Jesus called for no declaration or act of faith, as he did when he healed other diseases; he healed them by the direct exercise of his own spiritual power. And when the disciples came to Jesus baffled by the case of the epileptic boy who was also a demoniac, he told them the worst cases could only be healed by those whose own souls had been touched to fine issues by constant prayer.<sup>1</sup>

For those who are skeptical whether one mind can thus influence another, the following passage from a recent address to a congress of medical men by one of the foremost living authorities on the pathology of the mind, is well worth respectful consideration: "What is the nature of the subtle transfer of energy between the active and the recipient mind whereby the former excites the latent belief and energy in the latter? . . . Considering what is implied by the human brain with its countless millions of cells, its complexities of minute structure, its innumerable chemical compositions, and the condensed forces in its microscopic and ultra-microscopic elements—the whole a sort of microcosm of cosmic forces to which no conceivable compound of electric batteries is comparable; considering, again, that from an electric station waves of energy radiate through the viewless air to be caught up by a fit receiver a thousand miles distant; it is not inconceivable that the human brain may send off still more subtle waves to be accepted and interpreted by the fitly tuned receiving brain. Is it, after all, mere fancy that a mental atmosphere or effluence emanates from one person to affect another, either soothing sympathetically, or irritating antipathically? Think in this relation on the extraordinary (so-called) magnetic personalities which some persons possess, and again, on the contagious fire of emotion which

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xvii. 21.

spreads quietly and gathers volume in a crowd of people.”<sup>1</sup>

To conclude: according to the views here expressed, demoniacal possession does not consist in an alien evil spirit, a devil, entering into and abiding within a human being, and controlling all his functions as if they were its own. It is a malady in which the personality of the patient is disordered and divided, and he regards his secondary, abnormal personality, at the time of its ascendancy, as a spiritual being foreign to himself whose impulses and behests he must obey. As to its origin, a weak, unbalanced state of the nervous system predisposes to it, but essentially it has its roots in such things of darkness as ignorance, superstition, and faithlessness. These hold the soul in bondage. Upon deliverance from this thralldom, the rightful personality is enabled to assert itself, the demoniac thus returns to his “*right* mind,” and the subordinate mental and physical symptoms disappear.

<sup>1</sup>Maudsley, Address in Medicine, British Medical Association, Lancet, July 29, 1906, p. 274.