

transmit his offspring, except that which carries with it impaired force and defective structure.

It is a startling fact that this is the sin of the age—excess in one or many of these forms in this era of rushing social currents and conflicting destinies, and day by day retribution strikes her knell. One man is paralysed; another is on the couch of a babe with profound nervous prostration; another is epileptic; another falls under the lightning stroke of apoplexy, like Dickens, or dies like Horace Greely, the victim of insanity; while others again slowly drag out an intellectual night like that of the poet, Joseph Rodman Drake (author of the exquisite Culpit Fay, and for so many years past an inmate of an asylum), while others (in the words of a maniac himself) dwell in a land where

“ There is a winter in my soul,  
The winter of despair;  
Oh, when shall spring its rage control?  
When shall the snowdrop blossom there?  
Cold gleams of comfort sometimes dart  
A dawn of glory on my heart,  
But quickly pass away,  
Thus Northern lights the gloom adorn,  
And give the promise of a morn  
That never turns to day.”

Insanity appears to require both predisposing and exciting causes, where it is not the result of overwhelming violence to the brain. The great predisposing cause is left a heritage somewhere in the ancestry of the child. Thousands of years do not obliterate the Jewish nose; the Mongolian eye remains; the fair skin of the Northmen, transplanted eight centuries ago to secluded valleys in Italy, is yet preserved; nay, such a trifle as the Bourbon mouth is retained for centuries. Who does not see the stamp of parentage in expression, in the very shape of a nail, or tone of a voice? Who can doubt that there is at least a similar tendency to transmit the acquired conditions of the brain and nervous system; and the more so as this, of the whole frame, is the most impressible portion?

Just what changes in the structure of the brain invite the access of insanity, it may be impossible to tell. Sometimes there are enormous abscesses within its substance, or areas of hardened or softened convolutions; again, it is

studded with minute points of tuberculous or dead material; or there may be but the faintest blush of inflammation; not unoften the lesion defies the naked eye, and only after the brain has been artificially hardened, and a thin paper-like slice rendered transparent and coloured with carmine, and exposed to long examination under the microscope, do the minute degeneration of its tissue, or the enlargement and false arrangement of its circulating vessels, betray themselves. Yet the difficulties here, as brave and industrious as pathologists are in the struggle to surmount the obstacles, are by no means greater than those which confront us on the threshold of inquiry in many diseases, and indeed in the final recesses of every physiological operation. What we call disease is, after all, but a collection of manifestations we term symptoms, hardly absolutely alike in any two cases.

If I must ask you to follow me through the devious ways of philosophers in explaining the road to the goal I would reach, it is that I am ignorant of other modes of approaching it.

We have spoken of faculties, for convenience sake entitled Perception, Intellect, Emotion and Will. Let us briefly trace the successive involvement of these, in the production of insanity.

Through *perception*, the mind takes knowledge of the objects around, and with the aid of memory, marshals them in their absence into a conception. Unreal perception is illusion—the first step away from just observation and conclusion. This is as common as the affairs of everyday life. Any disordered sense may give rise to it. To a jaundiced tongue all things are bitter; in certain affections of the ear, bells are ever sounding, or waves roaring. We pass along a road at night, and are suddenly startled by a white milestone, which assumes the shape of the white-robed ghost of our childhood. Reason soon assures us that this is a momentary dazzle and disturbance of the sense of vision from its true work. But in some lives, illusions by thousands chequer and disturb the whole course of existence. Let us go patiently on to observe.

A *conception* of an absent object is the revived impression which has been preserved in