

For example, nothing is more common among the insane than "illusions of persecution." The patient believes firmly that all his friends have entered into a conspiracy to rob him of his property, take away his children, and put poison in his coffee. He is not insane, he says, but they have shut him up in the asylum in order to get rid of him. And who has not observed in "sane," people, perhaps in himself, that disposition which leads a man to say, in a moment of despondency, that God and man are in league against him, and he is predestined not to prosper? The world is full of people to whom a "grievance" is a sweet morsel, and without something to complain of life would lose three-fourths of its attractiveness.

Again, nothing is more frequent in asylums than what is known as the "illusion of greatness." One patient gravely informs you that he is the President of the United States; another puts a crown of flowers upon her head and poses as Queen Victoria; another claims to be Shakespeare, or Bonaparte, or Christopher Columbus. I have found George Washington, the Czar of Russia, and the Virgin Mary, all re-incarnate within the asylum walls. One man even informed me that he was Adam himself, and gave me a most interesting and original account of the Fall; which had, however, this in common with the other account, that he laid the blame mostly on other shoulders.

Now this illusion of greatness, is it not, in a somewhat less aggravated form, the commonest phenomenon in the world of "sane" people? To think of ourselves "more highly than we ought to think" is surely the most widespread of all mental disorders. Perhaps no other single object is so universally striven after as this, of appearing well in the eyes of others; and countless are the little artifices and polite fictions to which we resort to attain this end; and it is extremely doubtful whether there is any difference, other than one of degree, between the man who lives beyond his income for the sake of appearances, and that other man, whose persistent assertions that he is a bank president, a millionaire, or a prince, have rendered necessary his incarceration behind the asylum walls.

In the fourth place, the psychologists of the present day are very actively engaged in the investigation of several topics—which I strongly suspect shall yet be discovered to belong together under one great topic, but to which, as yet, no common name has been given—including hypnotism, mesmerism, spiritism, telepathy, clairvoyance, and all kindred phenomena.*

*A recent writer, Thos. J. Hudson, in a work entitled, "The Law of Psychic Phenomena, a Working Hypothesis for the Systematic Study of