

is probably in excess of the facts in this country, it is nevertheless true that obscure epilepsy is alarmingly common.

Concerning the nerve-aura to which these phenomena are attributed, we have the following lucid explanations:—

The subject of nerve-aura is more difficult to elucidate, because less susceptible of experiment. That it is capable of transmission through conducting media, and of acting at considerable distances through the medium of the atmosphere, is proved by the facts of mesmerism and by large classes of facts collected by medical psychologists; and that it is more or less subject to the volition of the organism whence it proceeds, and partakes of volitional properties is equally indisputable.

As to the nature of this element there is little coincidence of opinion among scientific men. That it is not identical with electricity, though correlated with it, with light, and with other forces, Helmholtz has substantially proved, in demonstrating that the transmission of voluntary impulse from the brain to the muscles is far less rapid than electrical transmission, and is perceptibly quickened in rapidity by heat and lessened by cold. It is susceptible of sensory impression and capable of propagating the impulses of the will; but it is also susceptible of unconscious action, as illustrated in the important case of Mary Carrick. The term *aura*, as it relates to nerve-tissue is, therefore, as in the instance of drugs and medicines, appropriated to an emanating atmosphere having the molecular properties, motor and sensory, of nervous tissue itself, though in lessened intensity.

How sensory impressions are propagated and motor impulses transmitted, is a question upon which, again, there is little coincidence among scientific men. In my own case, in one instance of well-marked clairvoyance, though within small periphery, occasioned by fever, I was distinctly conscious of being enveloped in a peripheral sensory aura, and that my impressions of enviroing objects originated in this aura; and in testing or questioning clairvoyant physicians and mediums, three out of seven, who had any recollection at all of what they saw or said in the clairvoyant state, confessed that their impressions seemed to come in this manner, the remaining four asserting that though dimly conscious, they saw and said things as in a dream, and could not distinctly recall them.

It is as nearly certain, however, as the only proximately demonstrable by experiment can be, that all sensations or impressions coming by way of the optic, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and peripheral nerves,

are reflex representatives and equivalents in consciousness for molecular vibrations emanating from the bodies of which cognition is taken, and that the impressions received in the clairvoyant state have the same origin; though in the deeper and more interior order of trance, into which it finally develops, reflex excitability of the gray matter of the brain appears to be responsible for the visions so often described. I have no doubt that this existed in Poe's case, and was the principal element in those unearthly imaginings that occur in his weirder and more spiritual tales, though present limits preclude collation of the evidences tending to establish it; and Dr. J. G. Holland recently called my attention to a strange and spectral painting, executed in an interval of unconsciousness, that betrays similar traits of imagination.

But to return. The part that nerve-atmosphere plays in society and in life is important, though little comprehended. How else is it possible to account for the singular ascendancy that persons of inferior intellect and ability often gain over persons of exceeding intellectual and moral superiority. Upon what other hypothesis can be explained the strange intimacy that subsisted between the intellectual Hegel and stupid Henry Beer, with his thousands of dollars invested in walking-sticks? The idol of Germany with a fool for his Pylades, to the laughter of all Berlin. True that Heyne, with his acute perception of the sarcastic aspects of the intimacy, refers it to another cause, namely, that, Beer being a fool, the philosopher could talk to him without danger of being comprehended; true that Heyne was tolerably well acquainted with Hegel. But yet his observations on this point, as elsewhere, where it is possible to turn a sarcasm, must be taken *cum grano salis*.

Our likings and our antagonisms, our inexplicable antipathies against some, our inexplicable attraction to others, are not subject to considerations of moral or intellectual altitude. I like this man, with no moral or intellectual reason for liking him. I dislike the other, with as little good reason for disliking him. Indeed, the liking often coexists with moral turpitude and unreliability, and the dislike with moral rectitude. I regard these phenomena, though some refer them to intuition, as simple nervous impressions. In the course of a lounge down Broadway, I walk through the nervous atmospheres of a thousand persons. They impress me dinly. This one repels, that one attracts; but, had I the nervous organization of a Zschokke, I would read the souls of these men and women like so many diaries of their daily lives.

I have observed and been impressed by this atmosphere in the persons of criminals to a greater extent than with any other