

Accordingly, the request may be conceived to express, on the part of the demoniacs, a fear lest they should be forced to quit their haunts and be plunged into some unfathomable experience of misery, and at the same time, perhaps, a delirious hope that, if they could not be left undisturbed by Him who was now the object of their dread, their existence might become merged in that of the animals which were feeding peacefully on the mountain side. As to the occurrence which is related to have immediately followed the liberation of their minds, who will assert that it is precluded by any known law of nature? Certainly, if occult spiritual influences may be instrumental in modifying the thoughts of human beings in the flesh, it is conceivable that, under suitable conditions, they may operate similarly upon minds in the brute creation, and may affect them with abnormal experiences of terror. Were it necessary in this case to suppose any intermediate physical agency, the brief narrative, so far as I can see, leaves room for the conjecture that the unearthly, malignant influence in quitting the demoniacs may have found entrance into the herd of swine through cries proceeding from the men, or acts done by them, in some terrific paroxysm of fury just before their restoration to soundness of mind. In assuming, however, the possession to have been somehow effected, and to have wrought the destruction of the animals, we may read in the fact a profoundly valuable lesson ; for it opens up to our mental view abysmal possibilities of brutish degradation, loathsome depths into which intellects, noble though they once have been, impotently sink their exalted powers if they engage in a struggle with Almighty God.

Whether Demoniacal Possession is to be recognised as having in these days a place among abnormal mental conditions, is a question which must needs remain in abeyance unless it can be decided by an investigation of cases. The considerations I have adduced clearly favour the presumption that this form of mental derangement does sometimes occur ; and I am not aware of any *à priori* arguments which cautious reasoners could accept as conclusive proof that it does not. But the reader who has followed me thus far will