

trating the psychic phenomena associated with spiritualism in all the protean aspects in which they are or may be exhibited.

In the majority of these instances I have been able to verify the existence of an hereditary predisposition. So, also, in many cases the psychic phenomena of which are not so pronounced as to be worthy of particular description. Mrs. Isabella B. Hooker, of Hartford, Connecticut, for example, inherits nervous malady from her father. So with the daughter of the late Judge Edmonds—a medium of considerable repute, whose habit of trance-speaking, in languages unknown to her through the ordinary process of study, has been examined *en passant*, and who presents, physically, one of the most pronounced examples I have ever glanced at, of the congeries of symptoms associated with active neurosis of this type. Again, in the case of Robert Dale Owen—by far the most intellectual literary exponent of spiritualism in America—hereditary predisposition plays an important part, as it is evident from keen scrutiny of the career and personal history of the elder Owen.

It frequently happens that an inherited neurotic tendency exhibits itself in a very different form in different members of the same family. In the instance of Mrs. Hooker, for example, occur the ordinary physical exponents of inherited nervous disorder, conjoined to a tendency to vagary and eccentricity, that borders upon aberration of mind; while in her sister, Mrs. Stowe, and in other members of the family, so far as I am able to ascertain, the predisposition expends itself in a well-marked and peculiar mental aura, with psychical and emotional traits *sui generis*. In like manner, in Miss Lamb, the sister of the humorist, the hereditary predisposition manifested itself in periodical attacks of an epileptic nature, while in her gifted brother (Charles Lamb) it was mainly present as an intellectual bias, and contributed its rarest gems to the literature of humor. Indeed, as those eminent alienists, Morel, Moreau de Tours, Dr. Maudsley, and Dr. Anstie, have long since demonstrated, not only are the various neurosis constantly convertible, but hereditary neurosis frequently exhibits itself as an intellectual aura, without pronounced nervous disturbance, though generally coexistent with a moodiness having more or less tendency to periodicity. This observation has been verified so often that it is unnecessary to adduce instances.

In this aspect of the subject, hereditary neurosis of the dormant variety must be regarded as the cause of many of the most wonderful creations in literature and art.

Minute analysis of the biography of Poe discloses the fact that his most remarkable tales and poems exhibit a periodicity of

imaginative production: he himself says that poetry with him was a passion, not a profession. So it was with Coleridge, and so it was with that wonderful boy whose literary forgeries so long baffled criticism, and who called his cantos fit the first, fit the second, and so on—all fits—finally a suicidal fit that ended him. Dr. Johnson was the son of an epileptic. Turner's sunsets, with their sun-shot purples and semi-glooms, are the products of a strange man; and William Blake, the strangest of English painters, painted like a man in a trance. Wellington's epilepsy disappeared on the field, his accumulated nervous force finding a conductor active enough to dissipate it as fast as it was generated.

The career of Robespierre, with his sunken temples, and face eternally jerking, is to be regarded, from the scientific standpoint, as the exponent of hereditary nervous disorder, intensified by deprivation at first, and afterward by the circumstances of the Revolution in France. Mohammed's revelations represent a series of epileptic trances; Swedenborg's confess the same etiology; and, generally speaking, as Dr. Maudsley acutely observes, there is no doubt that mankind is indebted for not a little of its originality, and for certain special forms of intellectual activity, to individuals who have sprung from families in which the neurotic tendency is hereditary. The wonderful mastery of morbid psychology exhibited by writers like Scott, Dickens, Poe, Hawthorne, Heyne and Freytag, Baudelaire and Victor Hugo—and of morbid impulse in its various aspects—thus presents itself as a kind of larvated form of nervous perversion, liable always to transformation into the acute, and often coexisting with it.

In America—at least in the New England States and in New York, to which my observations have been principally limited—I have no hesitation in saying that alcohol has played a prominent part in the production of nervous degeneracy; and, with Dr. Anstie, I am inclined to think that of all depressing agencies it has the most decided tendency to impress the nervous centres of a progenitor with a neurotic type that will necessarily be transmitted to his descendants. That it often produces epilepsy within a single generation, is a demonstrable fact, though alcoholic epilepsy is not yet known to the medical textbooks. Unscientific preparation and insufficiency of food, conjoined to hard work on the part of the women, and harder work on the part of the men, have also been exceedingly active causes, particularly in the New England States, in perverting the nervous organization; and though Niemeyer's estimate, applicable to Germany, that the ratio of epileptics to general population is one to one hundred,