

## INFLUENCE: ITS MODES OF TRANSMISSION.

This word is used in physiology to designate the action in living bodies of one organ on another. In ordinary parlance it signifies the power exercised by one being over another. Thus a man may have influence over or be obeyed by his fellow creatures from his rank, his eloquence, his power and fortune; or because he is beloved and respected. There are different kinds of influence, as that of the heavenly bodies which shed their light upon the earth, or fluids that act like attraction upon living beings; also the influence of the magnetic, electric and galvanic fluids upon different bodies, whether animate or inanimate.

The subject offers a rich and vast harvest to research and discussion upon the nature and agency, real or supposed, of all these influences, their mode of impression and transmission, and the manner of using them. But in this age, as few persons believe in ghosts and goblins, we must examine into the nature of things, certain or established by experience, respecting the influence of individual over individual, principally the human species.

Man possesses a sensibility almost altogether exterior, which causes him to live, in a great degree, outside of himself and contract a numerous acquaintance. Our minds, attached to so many different objects on the earth, as by so many cables, are affected and pulled about in every way. While yet in the world, we die in part, when those perish who are dear to us. Rendings of the heart, regrets in losing all in whom we lived; carrying to the tomb a portion of the sentiment of those who love us; all show that we possess community of life.

All the weak and feeble attach themselves to those who are strong. The more a child is troublesome to its mother, the more she throws her soul into it; the more she feels for it. Maternal love overflows more in proportion to the delicacy and feebleness of the child that warms itself in her lap and bosom. Woman has received a superabundance of man's soul to pour it again into the heart of her child. Children are thus the charming tie of human bondage between man and wife, and woman is the intermediary knot that collects the ends together.

Let us examine more closely how minds and bodies are united by mutual influences. The vital element distributed among the nerves, whatever it may be, flows equally among all the organs which are in an analogous condition. It is thus that arthritic and rheumatic pains pass from one member to another in the twinkling of an eye. When the members are in equal tension, or affinity, they experience in community the same pains and pleasures. Similar individuals, in equal circumstances of age, sex and condition should necessarily unite, since the animating principle can be transmitted from one to the other, as heat is distributed throughout all parts of the body.

The more these characteristic qualities are found to be equal, the more they are voluntarily sought after; hence it comes that things that resemble one another, unite. We love but little in others that we do not find in ourselves; they seem to be our own flesh and blood. From this primitive connection of our soul and body, brothers who have been separated and unknown to each other for a long time have a mutual feeling when they meet, and seem

to guess each others thoughts. Lambs discover without mistake, in the midst of a numerous flock, the sheep that gave them milk, guided by the influence of consanguinity or similitude of form. Twins have been known to resemble each other so much as to be mistaken for one another, who could not live apart, nor differ in their will; they lived in unity and died together. There is established between two married persons who have lived long together, such close union and perfect vital equilibrium, that they feel inseparable; disease or death of one carries the other with it. There is, so to speak, only one *I* in two beings. What stronger proof can we require of the reality of sympathetic influences?

If their existed between such individuals a simple imitation only, without the transmission of vital influence from one to the other, these assimilated bodies would resemble clocks that strike the same hour at the same instant, but there would be no union between them; none of them would influence his neighbor. It can be shown, on the contrary, that there exists a sort of transfusion of the sensitive principle among living bodies. Without speaking of noxious contagions that propagate themselves by the touch, such as small-pox, itch, venereal infection and different skin diseases, how many others are communicated by miasma, as typhoid fever, pestilence, and all epidemics!

Exhalation of the sensitive principle being stronger in summer, and in warm countries, all nervous communications among individuals are then very contagious; diseases propagate so rapidly that we are obliged to isolate them. This extreme dissipation of the nervous powers makes all the other faculties languorous, and motion loose and effeminate. On the contrary, moderate cold restrains this loss, renders us less inflammable and less impressionable. Epidemics and nervous affections, instead of spreading, are mitigated, concentrated, confined and healed, as if by a cold bath, an astringent or a tonic. Heat and warmth produce vital expansion and facilitate the transmission of influences. Soul is never attracted but by soul. We cannot unite ourselves to the social ethics of a being unless he is warm and enthusiastic, opens himself to us and returns love for love. Without this, there is the insensibility of a dead body, whose coldness repels and congeals us.

There is no more striking example of this mutual incorporation of souls than in a well disciplined army marching to combat with firm and equal step, animated by the spirit of its General. As iron rubbed by the loadstone becomes magnetic and transmits this property in return, so habitual frequentation causes an intimacy that warms us up and moves us reciprocally even to enthusiasm. One single soul may breathe over a whole multitude, when its emotion passes from one to another, as in an electric chain, every link receives and transmits the igneous fluid. Even a stranger feels himself irresistibly transported without other cause than this animating power. When a demoniac issues from a cabal of enthusiasts inflamed by a domineering fanaticism, he scatters his ideas about him, like a Leyden jar charged with electricity, impressing its concussion upon every one that touches it; the demon that inspires him gives him no rest until he upsets his surcharge upon those who are in turn transported with it.

Exalted patriotism; that love of the

public good so imperious among the ancient republics, attributed to each people a tutelar genius for their inspiration. Citizens united as brothers against a common enemy, as the Maccabees among the Jews and the Spartans at Thermopylae. The Athenians and Romans, in their greatest dangers, rose to deeds of unheard of valor; it seemed as if a god had poured upon them a prodigious ardor, such as was promised to the Hebrews: *et effundum spiritum meum super omnem carnem*. One could believe that each individual lived only for the republic, since he aspired to the honour of sacrificing himself for her. Do we not observe the same among bees and other social insects, and has not nature bestowed upon them a communal rather than a solitary life for the accomplishment of their ends?

Men are held together by intellectual as well as material bonds. Animals yield to physical impulsion only—we are more susceptible of moral contact and union. It is our species that composes the vast bodies of the human race of, which each nation is a diverse member; holding to the same radix of life; living in their fellow creatures as they live in us; no human occurrence being indifferent to us:—*Homo sum nihil humani a me alienum puto*.

Is there an invisible and transmissible vital fluid that operates on individuals? Every one recognizes the influence of caresses, and surely the hand of a friend produces a different impression than the hand of a stranger. In society, the strong exercise an influence over the weak. When reaction equals action, everything remains the same; men endowed with energetic minds, eminent and expansive faculties, can dominate over their fellow-men, and over beasts. Simple and credulous people, old people of both sexes, are prompt to submit to the yoke of the strong, the courageous and the valiant; weak minds are struck with fear, respect, astonishment and admiration at the sight of a potent genius. The mere impression of a look may fascinate a child, or wither its tender susceptibilities. The presence, the touch or the words of a man, distinguished by his moral character, or the sublimity of his intellect, have a singular influence over inferior minds by transfusion of his superior genius.

We love what warms and amplifies our being. An orator or an actor communicates no emotion to his audience if his soul is not grand or strong enough to move himself; but he who possesses rapture and enthusiasm, attracts, penetrates and charms us by a magic power. So Mahomet, sallying forth after fifteen year's retirement, breathed into the breasts of his followers the impetuous fanaticism with which his burning brain had been impregnated.

After the preliminary statement it is not difficult to explain what is called animal magnetism. The medicine of incantation and touch existed for a long time before Mesmer and his successors. Numbers of distinguished persons from the remotest ages practiced the laying on of hands to heal diseases through some peculiar influence. What is this pretended, active and transmissible fluid which is neither mineral magnetism, nor electricity, nor galvanism, properly so called, nor caloric, all fluids whose effects can be submitted to rigorous proofs? The most reasonable and intelligible advocates of hypnotism agree that it does not act upon all individuals. Only one in ten, perhaps, is sensible to its influence. The conditions precedent on the part