On Religious Insanity.

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To

Professor Traill.
On Religious Insanity,
particularly in regard to its Epidemic Manifestations.

The present subject, in addition to the difficulties common to all topics connected with insanity, has many peculiar to itself from its special relation to theology. But its importance is fully commensurate with the difficulty. The investigation of the disorderly workings of those impulses that have rendered devotion of some sort a necessity to all nations in every age, is surely as momentous a task as any in which we can engage, and it is one moreover that the physician is imperatively called on to undertake. For him the subject holds out peculiar attractions, not only from the frequency with which religious insanity occurs in the course of his practice, but also from its connections with history, many of the obscurities of which medical knowledge elucidates. The study of this disease which has produced
such wonderful effects in the history of the world, remarkably exemplifies the necessity of an acquaintance with human maladies for a just criticism of characters and events. Insane fanatics have, equally with sages, left the impress of their minds on the habits and opinions of entire nations—their footprints on the sand of time.

Their authority has retained fading superstitions or substituted others in their stead; has established laws or sanctified wars, and raised or overthrown monarchies. Madness has ever been reckoned one of the most of evils, but the absurdities, crimes, and misfortunes, which this particular form of it has introduced, have been so numerous and extraordinary, as fully to justify the statement of Burton that "This species alone may be paralleled to all other, hath a greater latitude and more mischievous effect; that it more beets and infatuates men than any other whatever; doth more harm, work more distresses to mankind, and hath more crucified the souls of mortal men than wars, plague, sicknesses, death, famine, and all the rest. Many may be deterred from the study of such a subject by the fear of its weakening their belief.
in the truths of Christianity, which the fancies of the lunatic fancies are probably. But as the mythologist sees in legends the confirmation of Biblical records, in the prevalence of certain peculiar hallucinations among the most diverse nations, and in their existence despite of changes in creed or customs, we may evidence for those doctrines of Revelation which they severally resemble. From the shadows cast on the disordered mind we may infer the existence of the light of heaven, and recognize spiritual realities in their fleeting and distorted images.

The adoption of the theory, by which mania and idiocy were referred to the actions of bile and vitriol, instead of to demoniacal influences, was certainly a great advance in mental pathology. But though from the days of Hippocrates all the mad were no longer thought to be possessed, it has only been within comparatively recent times that the insanity of the possessed themselves has come to be established. Demons were fought against whom balsam and no virtues, and whom the priest with his exorcisms but not the physician with his drugs might venture to encounter. We can now scarcely appreciate the benefits conferred on medicine by its triumph over this erroneous notion, for the influence of good and evil spirits was not confined to their own
Spectral atheo-Theomania and Demonomania: it complicated the study of almost all diseases. The charlatan, as Wm. has observed, could always excuse his failures by attributing the malady to Satanic agency, while even learned physicians, like Wm. himself, were to be seen employing their superior knowledge and skill in the difficult task of diagnosing the Devil's veritable presence from ordinary morbid phenomena.

But Religious Insanity, which may be regarded as having, in modern times, entirely passed from the care of the Priest and the province of Theology, has never received from Physicians its due share of their attention. Some of its better-marked varieties have, indeed, been described, but no medical author has attempted a consideration of the whole series of mental disorders developed on subjects connected with religion.

Insanity, as Sir Henry Holland observes, one of those subjects in which the facts are complicated, that truth may conveniently be sought for simply by varying their arrangement; so that we are
justified in grouping together cases for the purposes of
study, in accordance with any marked analogies which
their phenomena present. The present class of mental dis-
orders is sufficiently enough distinguished by the similari-
ity in the character of its hallucinations.

But it has, moreover, as good a claim to be considered
a primary division of insanity as any of those general-
ly recognised: the system of Pinel and allied meth-
ods, inasmuch as they are founded on symptoms
merely cannot be regarded as fully answering
the demands of science, and attempts at arrangement
according to supposed proximate causes, have a-
like been unsuccessful, whether undertaken by the
Somatist or the Spiritualist. It does not seem proba-
ble, if even it be possible, that the pathology of
the nervous system will ever become the basis of
a scientific classification, and one founded on the
mental faculties affected, is only a way of expres-
sing certain analogies, not better marked than those that
characterize religious madness, observable in the
nature of the insane ideas. If indeed the mind were
divisible into actual parts, we might hold with
the Spiritualist that its affections could on-
ly correctly classified in accordance with par-
ticular lesions of this or that portion. The majority of psychologists, however, believe that the mind is essentially one, and that its so-called faculties have no separate existence. But as we speak for convenience sake, of a reasoning faculty, so we may assume a religious instinct to be an organ of our psychical being, for if our thoughts often take the shape we call reason, so by a law of our nature, they must sometimes be employed on the subject of religion, as every one's own experience and the observation of mankind at large, testify.

Religious insanity may be defined as that form of madness in which the delusions are on subjects not immediately connected with the present state of existence. Thus, it includes cases where the hallucinations are associated with a depraved, as well as with a morbidly exalted religious instinct, those who danced with devils on the Brocken, as well as those who were favoured with angelic visitations.

The term should not be considered as synonymous with religious monomania, for it comprehends species and degrees too numerous and varied to be included under this head. There is much vagueness in the common application of the name, which it is
made to denote any description of derangement of mind from mania to idiocy, caused by religious excitement. But this is easily shown to be incorrect, for, as Dr. Hume-Combe has remarked, the hallucinations of the lunatic do not always have reference to the subject supposed to have occasioned his madness; so that by adopting this view we would have to include cases where there were no delusions about religious topics and to exclude others in which these existed. Nevertheless, it is true that mental aberrations of this description can in the majority of instances be traced to excited feelings and erroneous views of a similar nature.

The influence indeed of moral causes, and especially of religion, in the production of mental alienation, has been questioned by some authors. Dr. Hume-Combe says that much fallacy has arisen in this respect from considering it as a cause what was really a part of the disease itself; and he believes that such has been especially true in the case of religion, which by a common but very loose mode of expression is frequently spoken of as a cause of insanity. Now, this is doubtless true to some extent; yet when an individual, even though he had previously been predisposed to ins-
sanity, become dangerous. On a topic that has greatly affected him are we not justified in regarding it as the exciting cause of his madness. But the history of psychopathical epidemics shows that moral causes may also act prejudicially on minds of ordinary vigour, for we cannot suppose that the immense number affected at such times have been all constitutionally predisposed to the mental disorders under which they then suffer to a greater or less degree.

By considering those states of mind most conducive to the accession of this disease, we can often account for instances where madness resulting from other moral causes, has assumed its particular type. Affliction, for example, powerfully affects the devotional feeling, and may, therefore, be regarded as predisposing to religious insanity. By great and widespread calamities a similar impulse is communicated to the worship of entire nations and it is during such seasons, very specially that the disease manifests itself epidemically. The plague in cities has been ever accompanied by great agitation about religion, and prophets and fanatical preachers have during the continuance of the evil and for a long time after its disappear-
once, flourished in great numbers. Of this London in 1665 affords a well-known example. Thus, also, the Dancing Mania which, though not notably of a devotional character, yet had in them much of the religious element, followed in the steps of the Black Death. For when men have committed great crimes by which their holier instincts were outraged, and their intuitive dread of a retributive justice aroused, it is but natural that their remorseful feelings should be personified as the messengers of heaven's wrath, as demons, furies, or the ghosts of murdered victims. Stories of this nature are exceedingly common both in fiction and in history. The tyrant of Syracuse sees a Fury sweeping out his house: Theodoric, King of the Goths beholds in a fish's skull at his supper table, the head of the unjustly murdered Symmachus: and Henry IX was haunted by the ghosts of those whom he had shot from his palace windows on the night of St. Bartholomew. It is also a matter of frequent observation, that the most activeious characters are very prone to superstition. Yiberius, as Tacitus relates, refused the honours of divinity offered him by the senate, but was an earnest student of the stars;
and Louis added to his astrology the most devout reverence for the saints.

But more higher mental conditions, likewise, in which the noblest feelings, those nearest allied to devotional impulses, are brought into play, must be looked upon as more or less favourable to this class of delusions. The patriot inflamed with the desire to liberate his enslaved country, imagines himself specially inspired for the purpose, as we see in some of the numerous falseMessiahs of the Jews or in the familiar examples of Joan of Arc and Schamyl. And when the minds of masses of men are wrought up to their utmost capabilities, and patriotism, the love of glory, and the sense of danger, have elevated and purified their thoughts, as in the case of opposing armies, it is nothing very wonderful that a patron saint or some other supernatural personage should be beheld— that St. Magnus should fight for the Scots at Bannockburn, or that the Romans, just before engaging the Alban army, should be visited by the messenger of Pluto and commanded to erect an altar to the infernal deities, the half-warlike, half-religious character of the Crusades, which may well be regarded as epidemic manias, fur-
wish us with a somewhat analogous example. Chivalry, the most elevated sentiment of the semi-civilized nations of Western Europe was naturally associated with their outburst of religious enthusiasm.

But insanity of this description is frequent even in the highest order of minds, since the intellectual are nearest allied to the devotional feelings and desires, and the pursuit of knowledge, in almost any direction, brings the mind into contact with religion. Good illustrations of this we may see in the alchymical theology of the crazy Cézanne, and in the system of celestial science devised by the mad PhilosopherSwedenborg. In its epidemical form, however, religious insanity does not, as a rule, appear among the refined and the educated. Contemplation or deep emotion may unsettle their minds, but, while yet in a state of sanity, they are able to resist the mere excitement beneath which an untrained intellect succumbs.

Had we the clue to the association of ideas in individual minds we might be able to see the connection not only between religion and various mental aberrations, but also between the particular event that disturbed them and the special hallucination that resulted.
It seems impossible to devise any entirely satisfactory subdivisions of religious insanity, since it comprehends cases so diverse in many respects. In some instances there is little more than heightened emotion to be observed, but in others the most intricate delusions exist. Some are possessed by devils, and others divinely inspired; and one may despair of salvation, like the unhappy poet Cowper, while another gloriously beliefs a Fourth Person in the Trinity, as in a case mentioned by Pinel. But at any rate the epidemic form of the disease is deserving of separate notice.

Yet the topics of the various delusions that have appeared are not devoid of importance. Certain of these hallucinations have adhered to mankind through all periods of their history. What nation, for example, has been without its witch? Herod, the best authority on the subject, observes: "Vie bei den kultivierten Gieichen und Römern, und allen kultivierten und unkultivierten Völken des Alterthums, so finden wir auch bei allen neueren wilden Nationen bis zum heutigen Tag, den einmütigen Glauben an Zauberische und dämonische Wunder." And even in minute particulars the similarity is observable. Thessalian witchcraft differs in no material respect from the same trade as
It was practised in Europe during the Middle Ages. The magical pharmacopoeias contain exactly the same articles: the

"Quicquid patet, quae natura sit,"

wherein Lucretian's witch made her preparations, is to be seen in every possible and impossible shape, in the bubbling cauldrons of the witches of Cawdor and their sisters of all European poetry.

The supernatural powers were of exactly the same description in both cases. The witch who was able

"Sistere aquam fluvium et vertere sidera utro,
Noctum quoque ciet manus, munipe videbis
Sub pedibus tremare, et descendere montibus omnis."

was precisely paralleled by Merlin,

"Loke by words could call out of the sky
Both sun and moon, and make them him obey;
Turn land to sea, and sea to mainland dry,
And darksome night the eke could turn to day.

Like host of men he could alone dismay."

And though Spenser might have simply translated Priscus, it is certain that both expressed the belief of their contemporaries.

"It would not doubt be instructive, if it were practicable, to trace how much of his resemblance in the type of various hallucinations is due to imitation, and how much is natural,
That is to say, proceeds from principles common to all men or from a general belief in certain doctrines containing more or less of the element of truth. At any rate, this persistence gives additional interest to the study of such disorders from a medical point of view. Though we are not likely to meet with witches among the mad, nowadays, there are many delusions, just as ancient and remarkable, which still present themselves both in epidemic forms and in occasional instances; and the history of a particular hallucination may perhaps be an auxiliary to the anamnesis of an individual case in which it occurs.

But in discussing the sympathetic type of religious madness we necessarily include examples of every variety of hallucination connected with religion since any notion that a lunatic can devise, may spread by sympathy, however absurd may be its nature. There are doubtless in our modern asylum for the insane, many prophet, apostles, or even gods who only need more suitable spheres to become developed into the inspired leaders of powerful
armies, or into heresiers, the founders of new and
ridiculous religions.

Sympathetic insanity is usually made to
include epidemic and endemic psychoses.
The latter group, however, can scarcely be said
to have a distinct existence, for we see, as has
just been noticed, great types of madness which
may be said to belong, not to any nation in
particular, but to the world at large. Now,
these may constantly occur sporadically in
any part of the globe, or they may likewise rise
and be developed as epidemics. A delusion pecu-
lar to a single race must be very rare, although
circumstances may in some cases modify the shape,
under which the usual varieties are developed
among mankind generally. Lycanthropy, for
instance, is often spoken of as an endemic in-
sanity, yet we find it among the Greeks, Romans,
Arabs, and in Europe during the Middle Ages;
in Germany the werewolves and in France the
Loups-garous abounded. And this most extra-
dinary delusion has been as lasting in time as
it has been widely diffused. Burton informs us
That the madness of Nebuchadnezzar was supposed some to be lyric mania, and the tale of Lycaon testifies to the antiquity of the disease among the Greeks, and it is said to be at this time manifested among the Indians of Brazil. The disease seems to have been a species of religious insanity. As wolves were generally regarded by men, especially those who inhabited regions where these animals abounded, such as Transylvania, as the types of all that is evil, it is not strange that those who fancied themselves in communication with the infernal world, should also conceive that they were metamorphosed into a shape corresponding with their diabolical dispositions.

From the indefinite nature, then, of endemic insanity, it seems better not to attempt any discrimination between the two forms of sympathetic madness, but to treat of it as a whole.

The occurrence of such things as epidemic psychoses has always been explained by the influence of the principle of sympathy. The strange fact that the propensity to imitate may pass beyond the control of the will...
and become a necessity is abundantly exemplified in various nervous affections and particularly in such cases as are developed during epidemics of insanity. But the power of sympathy in propagating ideas seems still more wonderful and inexplicable. Yet the history of mental derangement is full of examples. So crimes have become popular when they have succeeded in attracting public attention, as in the case of the Mileston girls for suicide, the mania of the Roman matrons for poisoning their husbands, or the succession of powder mania that followed or was greatly aggravated by the execution of the Countess de Brinvilliers. In the same way the most extravagant notions of lunatics have become the creed of large sects, as instanced by the Franciscans of Hungary, Brugge-\[\text{il}]ans of Switzerland, Psevdiolites of America, Mormonites, Southcottians, Buchanites, &c.

The feats performed by the animal magnetists are of a somewhat similar character, the mind of the susceptible adopting any absurdity which the operator feigns to believe.
Epidemics of insanity have been generally observed to spread more especially among the uneducated than the educated classes. Sir Benjamin Brodie, however, says that the thoughtless multitudes, who do the bidding of an evil Master are as often well-educated as ignorant, and that instruction may impart knowledge and instil habits of attention but cannot make men reason correctly. But do history and common observation confirm his assertions? Are insane and absurd beliefs propagated with facility among the learned, and does not cultivation of the mental faculties improve their tone and augment their power? It is but natural that an ignorant individual should be particularly liable to be led away by sympathetic delusions, since his opinions must, to a larger extent, than in the case of those more refined, be derived from the society around him, and he has never been taught to practice the habit of discriminating between truth and error. The un-disciplined mind is also both more easily moved to and mastered by excitement, as the motiveless and unbridled fury of mobs demonstrate.

Women and boys too are specially the subjects of these epidemics. The dance of St. John and of St. Vitus and the Wantistow are generally of the fe-
male sex. Hecker, in his treatise on these disorders, refers, likewise, to a case where about a hundred children were seized with a similar dancing mania. It occurred at Erfurt in 1237. Weins tells a story very much of the same nature. Some hundreds and thirty boys, with a few girls, set off from the town of Hameln in Brunswick under the guidance of a flute-player, supposed to be Satan in disguise, and went dancing and skipping along the road, till they came to a certain hill, another Calvary, where they all, with a single exception, mysteriously disappeared. This remarkable phenomenon was witnessed on the 26th of June, A.D. 1034. (Lil. i. cap. 16. 2)

Similarly, we find that the female were always more enthusiastic than the male crusaders, and a memorable example of the liability of the young to suffer from sympathetic manias is presented in the Children's Crusade of 1213, by which many thousands of lives were lost.

This is accountable for on pretty nearly the same principles as in the case of the uneducated masses. The psychical and physical weakness of woman are matters of common observation. Mr. Laycock observes,
By universal consent the nervous system of the human female is allowed to be more affected by all stimuli, whether corporal or mental, than that of the male. This susceptibility of woman, and her less mental and muscular power, are known, indeed, by daily observation. The quotation from the De cyclo of Seneca, which he subjoins to this remark is applicable to the child maniacs.

"Ieri inter seque quae pro legis horridiorias sunt? Praecepsum quisque sub falsis armis, infirum jurem. Tidem mulierum sumt fames, et pueri, levii sententiae."

We find also as soon readily enough be understood, that hysterical, nervous, and excitable persons are likely to suffer from the influence of morbid sympathies. Hypochondriacs and those with whose notions and feelings prevalent delusions coincide will be predisposed to the evocation of madness during the reign of certain epidemics.

The majority of sympathetic psychoses have manifested a more or less distinctly marked religious character. Perhaps the most striking and common exceptional instances are to be
found in epidemics of moral madness, which, indeed have often prevailed; as in the instances before alluded to, where the thought of a particular crime has prompted many to its perpetration, in spite of the more or less strenuous opposition of their wills.

Certain examples of extraordinary political convulsions are certainly included among the epidemic psychoses. Frenzied sanguinary mobs doubtless the correctness of assigning to such national disturbances a place in the annals of insanity; but when phenomena like those manifested during the French Revolution are observed in a separate individual, no one questions his fitness for the lunatic asylum. A sudden and violent change in habits and character, so that the Parisians even dress shabbily, while objects once venerated fall into contempt; and the commission of crimes the most atrocious and of actions the most extravagant, are as plain proofs of a nation's insanity as they would be of an individual. And in the same way are we not entitled to consider the sudden rise and rapid progress of such holding irrational
doctrines as epidemic insanity developed in questions connected with religion. Here as in all other forms of madness it is often impossible to distinguish between a nonsensical or eccentric, and an insane belief. The limits between sin and moral madness are so ill-defined, that some regard all vice as insanity, while others object to the adoption of a division in which, as Dr. Jefferson says, "all distinction between bad and mad is impossible," and refer all this class of cases to sin on the one hand or to a derangement of intellect on the other. If we believe with Dr. Juschen that madness is never a purely moral disease, but always characterized by organic changes in the brain, and that moral causes to produce it, must always result in some such lesion, we shall have a physical characteristic by which insanity may be known from similar mental conditions. Yet even this cannot be demonstrated in very many instances, on dissecting the brains of lunatics, and during life it is only the psychical manifestations of the disorder that can be observed. How could an erroneous notion, a mere mental deformity, and an insane belief the product
of cerebral disease be distinguished from each other? If the test between the two is to be that insanity springs up suddenly so that in a few weeks or even days there arise the wildest and most absurd beliefs, while eccentricity is of gradual growth, then we must regard the members of sects that have suddenly appeared and rapidly spread as insane, when their confessions of faith are violent and absurd. But it is plain that the gravity of the error will still remain to be estimated. We must, however, consider those men to be mad who so sincerely believe doctrines which appear preposterous to their fellow-countrymen, as to brave ridicule, danger, and death in their defence. Who could doubt the madness of those Jews who attempted to pass through the sea from Crete to Palestine under the guidance of those luciferins, and were consequently all drowned. And the like judgement no one can hesitate to pronounce on the followers of Wilhelmina of Milian, who endured great persecution on account of their notion that this female was the Holy Spirit, or on the Fifth Monarchy Men, or the Anabaptists of Munster, or the disciples of Con d'Etvile, many of whom were brought to the stake in consequence of their firm conviction, that
This individual was Christ, since his name resembled in sound the word *cum*, which occurred in an esoteric formula beginning, "Per cum qui venturus est." A better known instance of insane belief is to be found in the creed of the Buchananites who held that Mrs. Buchanan was the woman mentioned in the Revelations, and the Rev. Mr. White, the man-child destined to rule all nations. They are described by Mr. Train as having all gone out on one occasion with the intention of flying up to heaven; at another time they held Mrs. Buchanan's face illuminated with glory; and once they endured a fast of many days duration, being so sustained by their enthusiasm that "all desire for earthly food," says one of their members, "was taken away and its place supplied by a loathing at the thought of it."

On the other hand, these are, as might naturally be expected, numerous cases in which although the doctrines of the new sects contain a considerable amount of error, yet they are neither so repugnant to common sense nor so much at variance with the beliefs generally entertained in the age and country
as to render it possible to pronounce a decided verdict upon their psychopathical nature. And the same is true of some of those epidemics of excitement about religious questions that have not led to or been occasioned by the formation of new sects. Even in many of the most marked epidemics of religious insanity it is impossible to detect any error in the notion that has given rise to the popular agitation. Thus, the hope of heaven, the desire to be freed from sin, and the expectation of the judgement day, which respectively were the predominant ideas that actuated the minds of the Crusaders, at least during some of the Crusades, the Flagellants, and the pilgrims to Jerusalem in 999, are all in the highest degree reasonable. This may also be illustrated by the Revivals of the present day. So such instances the remark of Dr. Gough about religious melancholy may be applied. Here the insanity lies not in the groundlessness and unreasonable of the predominant belief, but in its affecting the mind in a different way to what it does that of sane persons. Hence it appears that in deciding on the nature of religious epidemics we must take into account the ideas that have
Are we to believe the actions to which these have led, and the emotional disturbance that has been occasioned.

In judging of the cause of these things, the nervous affections to which it may have given rise, must also be considered. If such disorders have been manifested to any great extent, as they were, for instance, among the Convulsionnaires of St. Hedard, we shall be justified in concluding that the excitement, which was powerful enough to produce them, was psychopathic, even though there might not have been displayed any such plain evidences of lunacy, as the prophetic powers of the Convulsionnaires or the miracles wrought at the tomb of Deacon Paris.

Such nervous disorders of a severe description should be frequently developed during religious epidemics, and cannot be wondered at, when we remember the importance of the topics by which the minds of men are during such seasons excited. But dancing, howling, are excitants as well as consequences of the paroxysms of religious mania. Dancing, like music, has very frequently been employed from in ancient and modern times as an adjuvant to elevation, and by excessive indulgence in this or any other kind of violent muscular motion, or by
otherwise simulating the fury of a madman, the mind may be worked up to the greatest possible pitch of frenzy. We see this exemplified in the or- 

gies of theManadals and the wild cries and dieter-

culations of the Pythonsse, in the religious ceremo-

nies of very many savage tribes, and in civilized 
countries and the practices of various sects such as 

the Dancing Devils, the Chasidim, Jumpers, 

Shakers and Barkers. By exactly the same means 

the witches and everymen of different times 
and countries have been wont to reach the oppo-
site state—wata of demoniaical possession. Dr. Med-

Irnot thus describes the method of making 
an everyman, as he witnessed it among the Tao-

seets in China. After the performance of certain 
ceremonies, a horn was blown over the individ-

al's head, whereupon, he began to move his fin-
gers, hands and arms; then his knees and legs, till 
his whole body became convulsed and he sprang 

up and danced round the room like a mad-

man. By this process he was brought into an 
entranced condition, during which his muttering 
were held to be oracular.

That religious epidemics are worthy of the name
Etron's careful study must be evident even to those
who do not regard them as instances of insanity, and
even the less serious ones, scarcely psychopathical
in their nature, tend to pass, in numerous individu-
al cases, into confirmed mental derangements.

The consideration of the present subject demonstrates
the necessity of an acquaintance with the relation,
which the realities of religion bear to various delu-
sions as their causes, their topics, and their fitting
correctives. Such a knowledge is requisite for the
adaptation of the proper curative agent to various
hallucinations; for the psychical treatment of
religious insanity must always, as Feuchtersleb
benses remarks, be conducted on the basis of reli-
gion. The correctness of this plan must be ap-
parent, for minds which any particular subject
powerfully affects are evidently readily suscepti-
tible of influences of a kindred nature, and here
we have it in our power to suggest thoughts, cor-
rective of, though in harmony with, the disorder-
ed emotions, and directly antagonistic, though
nearly allied to the morbid fancies.

But, if religious, like every other kind of truth,
may be moulded into the most insane delusions, or may even act as the exciting cause of madness, the errors that have been mixed with it are still more likely to produce mental disorders. The prophet, for example, of a sect holding doctrines like those of the Irvingites or their prototypes, the Montanists, must be regarded as labouring under a temporary fit of insanity while delivering his prophetic utterances. Another and a better instance is afforded by the erroneous notion that self-inflicted torture is meritorious, and that by the abnegation of all that is human, absorption in the divine nature, may be obtained. Christian asceticism has its long list of saints lunatics, from Anthony and Hilarius of Egypt to such as John and Ignatius of Spain. In the female sex the insanity connected with this notion takes a particularly disgusting shape, from its association with nymphomania, as we see illustrated by the biographies of individuals like St. Theresa, St. Clara of Assisi, or St. Angela of Foligno. Among the Hindoos the same ascetical doctrine results in the insane actions of the fakirs and of various other Indian sects, such as the Sam-
years and years seeking absorption into Brahman, or of the Jains striving to attain Nirvana, i.e. Annihilation.

Thus it behoves the physician to investigate the effects of systems of belief, whether true or false, on the hallucinations of religious insanity, nor can the study of what so materially influences a disease which medical skill is expected to relieve, be considered as beyond the legitimate province of medicine.

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