

No. 7

# "W O N D E R"

IN RELATION TO

## S P I R I T U A L I S M :

### AN ESSAY

*DELIVERED TO THE LIVERPOOL PHRENOLOGICAL SOCIETY*

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# "W O N D E R "

IN RELATION TO

## SPIRITUALISM.

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NOTHING is more common in discussions upon the mysterious phenomena which have of late years occupied so much attention in Europe and America, and which may be popularly embraced under the general term "Spiritualism," than to hear the opinions of a certain class of observers attributed, not to a fair induction of the facts, but to the influence of large organs of Wonder or Marvellousness.

Now, whether the individuals in question always present the special development imputed to them or not, the attempt to account for their peculiar opinions upon this hypothesis is so frequent, and the coincidence between their opinions and the imputed organization appears to be (at least, amongst those who admit the truth of Phrenology,) so generally recognised, that I have thought it would be neither uninteresting nor uninstructive to devote some consideration to the function and influence of the faculty implicated, and thus endeavour to determine whether, were the premises even all that is assumed, the conclusions drawn from them would necessarily follow.

The following definitions of this faculty, or rather, delineations of its functions and effects, are given by the leading Phrenologists, upon whose teaching it has come to be admitted to rank among the recognised and "established" mental functions of our nature:

"Dr Gall," says Mr George Combe, "observed that some individuals imagine themselves to be visited by apparitions of persons dead or absent; and he asks, How does it happen that men of considerable intellect often believe in the reality of ghosts

and visions? Are they fools, or impostors? or is there a particular organization, which imposes, in this form, upon the human understanding? and how are such illusions to be explained?” [Mark the sceptical assumptions, and the matter-of-course way in which the whole question is begged!] “He then,” continues Mr Combe, “enters into a historical sketch of the most remarkable instances of visions. Socrates spoke frequently and willingly to his disciples of a demon or spirit, which served him as a guide. Dr Gall remarks that he is quite aware of the common explanation, that Socrates referred only to the force and justness of his own understanding; but adds, that if he had not himself believed in a genius communicating with him, the opinion that he had one would have been lost in the twenty-three years during which Aristophanes made it the subject of ridicule, and his accusers would not have revived it as a charge against him.” Reference is then made to the cases of Joan of Arc, Tasso, Swedenborg, Dr Jung Stilling, and others, in all of whom the organ is asserted to have been large. Gall was personally acquainted with Jung Stilling, whom he often saw with the late Grand Duke of Baden, and in whom the organs in question were largely developed. For the developments of the others, of course, there is no more than guess work, from busts and portraits, which may or may not be authentic, or, if authentic, accurate. The fact may be admitted in the case of Stilling, whom Gall personally knew. This distinguished man is described to have been in youth a tailor, “then a tutor, afterwards doctor in medicine, moralist, divine, journalist, illuminatus, and visionary. . . He firmly believed in apparitions, and wrote a book in exposition of this doctrine.” . . “A gentleman, who moved in the best society in Paris, asked Dr Gall to examine his head. The Doctor’s first remark was, ‘You sometimes see visions, and believe in apparitions.’ The gentleman started from his chair in astonishment, and said that he *had* frequent visions, but that never up to this moment had he spoken on the subject to any human being, through fear of being set down as absurdly credulous. Accordingly, from these and hundreds of other cases, Dr Gall concludes that it is at least one of the functions of the organ in question to cause its possessor to see and believe in apparitions.

Dr Spurzheim says, “There is still a sentiment which exerts a very great influence over religious conceptions, and which, in my opinion, contributes more than Veneration to religious faith.

. . There are many disposed to believe in dreams, sorcery, magic, astrology, in the mystic influence of spirits and angels,” &c., &c. “Some, also, are disposed to believe in spirits, and to see ghosts, demons, and phantoms. This sentiment gains credence to the true and also to the false prophet, aids superstition, but is also essential to faith, and refined religion. It is more or less

active, not only in different individuals, but also in whole nations. Its functions are often disordered, constituting one species of insanity. . . . The legislators of antiquity, aware of the great influence of this faculty, made frequent use of it to enforce and to confirm their laws. They spoke in the name of God, of angels, or of supernatural powers.” He adds, “The existence of this feeling is certain. Its organ is situated anterior to Hope, and a great development of the convolutions on which it depends, enlarges and elevates the superior and lateral parts of the frontal bone. It is remarkably prominent in the heads of Socrates, Torquato Tasso, Dr Price, Jung Stilling, Wesley, &c. My observations on it are extremely numerous, and I consider it as established.” (*Combe’s System*, 5th ed., vol. I. p.p. 449-454.)

Mr Combe himself does not altogether concur in the views of Gall and Spurzheim respecting the primitive function of this faculty, but reduces it to the “love of the new,” and adds, that “surprise and wonder are the pleasurable emotions which attend its activity, when excited by the presence of unknown objects.” “According to this view,” says he, “Wonder may aid genius by prompting to novelty in all the conceptions of the mind.” And then, in his tendency to characterise anything approaching belief in the supernatural as superstitious, he intimates that “Kepler, Napier, Newton, and Davy, all of whom were fond of diving into abstruse and unexplored regions of science,” and are presumed to have had this organ largely developed, “were inclined to be superstitious.” Whilst, in short, Dr Spurzheim had, from the abundance of the facts pressing all in the direction he indicates, been determined formerly to designate this feeling by the name of “Supernaturality,” adding that it is certain that it is *principally manifested by a belief in miraculous and supernatural circumstances*,” Mr Combe does not recognise any such manifestations as the “legitimate function” of the faculty, but as altogether arising from its abnormal excitement. He adds, “The period when divine power manifested itself by extraordinary means was limited, and is long since past; and philosophy cannot recognise any object or event that occurs in the present day as miraculous or supernatural: a special faculty, therefore, for belief in such objects appears inadmissible. The fact, however, mentioned by Dr Spurzheim, that persons in whom this organ is large have a natural disposition to believe in the wonderful and miraculous is certain. . . . Still, however, this longing for the marvellous appears to be an abuse of the sentiment;” and he reiterates, “Philosophy does not recognise the ‘supernatural’ while it admits Wonder at new and extraordinary circumstances as a legitimate state of mind.” (*Ibid.* pp. 460-461.)

The Fowlers, on the other hand, in their thousand-fold more numerous observations, confirm the original inferences of Gall

and Spurzheim; but, instead of implying, with Gall and Combe, that belief in spiritual existences, presages, &c., is a merely subjective state which has no counterpart in the objective facts and relations of the universe, they vindicate the somewhat timorous conclusions of Spurzheim, and boldly maintain the adaptation of this faculty to a spiritual state of existence, which, without any ifs or buts, they assume to be a reality. In harmony with their experience as phrenological investigators, they set aside the nomenclature of the elder phrenologists in this particular, and call the faculty "Spirituality." In general they are more popular and less precise than their predecessors, (if precision can be attributed to the early phrenological writers at all,) and I am far from trusting in the exactness of their definitions. But there is a general correctness in their analyses of the functions of the various organs, and in the present case they have at least the merit of bringing a large category of facts, which the others ignore or misinterpret, within the range of mental cognition as objective phenomena.

It will be observed that in this the American phrenologists do not trouble themselves with considerations about what is "natural," and what "supernatural." They boldly assume the existence of the spiritual as well as the material in the universe; and as we have faculties for cognising the one, so do they assert we have faculties for apprehending the other. This wholly gets rid of Mr Combe's difficulty as to "Philosophy not recognising the supernatural," though the difficulty itself could easily enough be overcome in a different way, and Mr Combe shown to be disputing about words rather than ideas. Suffice it, that the word *Nature* may be so expanded in its signification as to comprehend, not only all *phenomena*, but also all *causes*, or it may be restricted in meaning to a range synonymous with creation—even *sensible* creation. It is all a matter of definition. Those who use it in the limited sense, logically and necessarily apply the term "supernatural" to everything which transcends the meaning expressed or implied in their definition of nature. Those who use it in the universal sense simply deny themselves the compound word altogether; since Nature, by the express conditions of their own assumption, cannot be transcended, and nothing, therefore, can be correctly termed *supernatural*. In this sense, the supernatural being a nonentity, of course philosophy cannot recognise it. But it is evident that the *same things* may be considered by philosophers of both schools: to the one, spirits and spiritual things are "supernatural;" to the other, they are "natural;" and philosophy, I apprehend, must recognise both. Mr Combe dogmatises in a somewhat narrow spirit, and is inconsistent with himself, when he lays down the law, that philosophy does not recognise the supernatural. At least, it must recognise the

spiritual, as, in fact, all philosophers, except an insignificant fraction, do.

But, to return from this digression, other phrenologists rather incline to the school of Gall and Combe; and as in this country the writings of Combe have formed the chief text-books of phrenology their influence on the productions of others has been marked. Accordingly, the general effect of the phrenological writings on the public mind, in so far as our present subject is concerned, has been to beget the notions that phrenology "exploded" apparitions, visions, and their related phenomena, and completely "accounted for them" by the supposition of abnormally excited perceptive organs under the influence of diseased, or simply "large," Wonder. In a recent discussion in the *Star and Dial* newspaper, this was the line of argument pursued by several of the writers; and in a still more recent discussion, in the *British Controversialist*, an author of some account in the philosophical world, Mr Charles Bray of Coventry, (author of the *Philosophy of Necessity*, and other works,) gives renewed currency to the same notion. His words are, "But the cause of these apparitions is no longer a mystery to the cerebral physiologist, and arises from the involuntary excitement of the intellectual organs, of which numberless illustrations are to be found in the *Phrenological Journal*."

We need not dwell on the inaccuracy of Mr Bray's phraseology. We know well enough what he means; which is, not that the cause of these apparitions arises from the involuntary excitement of the intellectual organs, but that such excitement is itself the cause of the apparitions.

Well, preparatory to writing this essay, though I had read all the papers in the *Phrenological Journal* as they appeared, and was therefore familiar enough with their general scope and tendency, I refreshed my memory by a re-perusal of the leading records and articles on the subject, as well as of several only indirectly related to it, to make sure that I did not misunderstand the "explanations" of the "cerebral physiologists" to whom "the cause of these apparitions was no longer a mystery;" and I must confess to no little astonishment that I could ever (as once was the case) have accepted these expositions as anything approaching to a complete "explanation" of the mystery. Mr Bray and others of his class have apparently remained in the same condition of mind as I was in when these phrenological explanations were given to the world: that is, with only hearsay knowledge of the facts attempted to be explained, or with only a knowledge of a very narrow range of pathological facts which the hypothesis really does cover; and so they continue in the innocent belief that these explanations were full and complete, and left nothing to be desired.

Yet it *is* strange that the question did not arise, supposing the cause of the apparitions did lie in “the involuntary excitement of the intellectual organs,” *what* caused such involuntary excitement?

The merest starting of such a question would have shown that, at all events, the subject was far from having been exhausted. Suppose we had discovered that in some cases, as doubtless we should, the involuntary excitement in question arose from diseased conditions of the bodily organs which would yield to medical treatment, this would still have disposed of only *some* of the cases; and even in some of *them* it would not account for *all* the phenomena. But when we came to consider cases in which no bodily disorder could be detected; in which all the functions of the body, including the brain, were in perfect health, and even rhythmic harmony; in which there was simply a natural temperamental sensitiveness to influences which less exquisitely developed nervous systems could not appreciate; in which demonstrative proof was given of ability to discern objective phenomena, of the actual and not imaginary existence of which there could be no doubt, though they were not perceptible by the general mass of mankind; then, surely, possible, if not probable, causes, exterior to the organizations of the individuals, would have been suggested, which would at least have prevented repose in the merely physiological and subjective hypothesis. In addition to this, which we should find did not really cover a tithe of the facts, our observations would haply have branched out into classes of facts wholly distinct from the apparitional ones, whereby the inference would be sustained, that there ~~was~~ *were* actual, external, invisible agencies, possessing intelligence, affection, and will, and claiming by demonstrative signs to be themselves the spirits of the so-called “dead,” in which event a *prima facie* case would surely be made out in favour of the supposition, that since these agencies can thus demonstrate their presence by the manipulation of physical objects, they may also have power to impress persons in various ways, causing in some presages of impending evil or good, in others dreams, in others visions, in others apparitions, in others simply a consciousness of spiritual presence, in others this consciousness individualized into that of a particular person, between whom and the subject of this experience precise intellectual and affectional intercourse may take place. And thus, when a Socrates, a Tasso, a Swedenborg, an Oberlin, or other such gifted person arises, and out of a sound mind, in perfect health, with complete lucidity and thorough earnestness, and unquestionable integrity, asserts that he *sees* such presences, and knows them to be as real as any other external objects of his perceptions, we shall be capable of receiving the assurance as at least a possible

if not a probable truth, and be no longer prone at once to put the affirmation down as a proof of delusion, or a simple illustration of the "involuntary excitement of the intellectual organs."

Assuming, then, that the spiritual is *in* nature—that, in fact, what we call nature is itself both spiritual and material—we should certainly expect to find within ourselves adaptations to the one principle as well as to the other. Not only so, but inasmuch as we possess faculties which enable us to appreciate specialities—things and their properties—in the material world; in like manner it is to be expected that we shall possess powers which enable us to appreciate specialities—beings and their faculties—in the spiritual world: not only a general consciousness of spiritual existence, but a particular faculty or spiritual sense for the cognition of spiritual influences and beings. Accordingly, we have seen the first phrenologists point out Wonder, or Marvellousness, as the organ of this faculty, and the Fowlers have even given it the name of "Spirituality."

Accepting this to be a generic faculty of the human mind, it must be possessed more or less by all human beings. Those in whom it is highly developed, in quality as well as quantity, are natural seers, or "discerners of spirits" and spiritual things. Those in whom it is only in a rudimentary state are idiotic in this relation. In the mass of mankind the average development doubtless prevails in this as in all other faculties; and then it depends largely on the culture of the individual whether the natural strength of the faculty gets fair play. The unperverted human mind naturally believes in spiritual agencies. But where the education of individuals goes tacitly or openly upon the principle that nothing exists but that which is capable of being seen by the outward eye, and manipulated by the bodily hand, weighed and measured, or, if anything more there be, it is nothing but unconscious force, and that all else is "imaginary," it is evident that nothing like justice can be done to this faculty in them. Instead of being developed harmoniously with other powers, it is entirely overborne, and, in many cases, all but utterly shrivelled up for lack of nutriment. Hence the number of so-called educated men now going about amongst us real spiritual cripples, rendered artificially incapable of using this power, and altogether unconscious of the world of phenomena to which it stands related. Hence, also, let me add, the necessity for some startling proof addressed to their outward senses, of the existence of that which the entire theory of their education has denied, before they can give credence to even its possibility. The faculties which, through their predominant—almost exclusive—culture, have led them astray, must be made the instruments of their recovery; and herein is, at least, a plausible reason for the physical manifestations, to which refer-

ence has already been made. Once through these let us get a demonstration of “the existence of mind unconnected with organization”—at least *visible* organization—or what is understood by that term in this mundane sphere, and then we shall haply become open to the admission of evidence through other channels.

At this point of the discussion it seems appropriate to make a few remarks upon the allegation, with a reference to which I commenced—the allegation, namely, that believers in the spiritual cause of the manifestations alluded to, have either large or preternaturally excited organs of wonder, and that to either cause their belief is to be attributed, and not to a rational induction from calmly and closely observed facts.

Now, in the first place, those who make this assertion do not do so as a matter of observation on their part, for they have had no opportunity of verifying the developments of the persons implicated, but purely as a hypothesis which to them is *a priori* more credible than the counter-statement that the manifestations alleged actually took place before these individuals, and were observed by them, in a sober, unexcited state of mind, as actual matters of external fact. The readiness with which some persons assume and launch this hypothesis affords, in truth, a very simple and obvious reason why they are so prone to impute baseless fancies to others. They unconsciously measure the tendencies of other minds by the habits of their own; and, finding it much easier to suggest plausible suppositions than to encounter facts, they attempt to get rid of the difficulty by the facile imputation in question. Bring their hypothesis to the test of observation, however, and how stands the case? Messrs Fowler and Wells, perhaps the most accurate and extensive observers of cerebral developments living, declare, as the result of their innumerable examinations, that the persons called “Spiritualists” (in the modern use of that term) are, as a body, *not* distinguished for large developments of the organ in question, certainly not more so than the average of civilised human beings, while in great numbers this organ is found really moderate, in some small, and only here and there are individuals amongst them to be found who are possessed of highly marked developments of it. These gentlemen farther explain, that the spiritualists have, for the most part, been made such from *observation*, and not from natural proclivity to belief in marvels.

But now, what although we found that in *all* such individuals the organs of “Wonder” were largely developed? Would that be a proof of the mere subjectivity of their perceptions? of the non-reality of the apparent objects or facts? In the cases of *other* faculties do we reason in the same way? Do we adopt

the dictum of idiocy, or even of mediocrity, with respect to the reliability of any of the other faculties? Do we say that the genius for colouring is under a delusion when he perceives delicate shades and distinctions and harmonies of colour, which to the ordinary man have no existence? Some persons cannot distinguish even gross shades of colour from one another, a blue from a green, a yellow from a scarlet, just as some cannot appreciate different tunes, but mistake "Home, Sweet Home" for "The Last Rose of Summer," and perceive no distinction between "Jenny Jones" and "Jump Jim Crow." Are we to say, therefore, that the exquisite relations of colours and tones, and their analogous harmonies and contrasts, have no existence in nature? Is it a fallacy to say that the vibrations which produce discord, and those which produce concord, are distinct objective facts, totally independent of the ability of the human mind to perceive them, and though in their most attenuated degrees, they are appreciated only by the highest organisations? Does genius *create* nature, or only interpret it? Have the objects which excite our sense of beauty, or of sublimity, no existence in nature, because some people, deficient in the related faculties, do not perceive them? Do we not see that in every faculty there are almost infinite degrees of perfection in development and temperament? and as the degrees advance, the range of the faculty advances? and where there is no disproportion, and no abnormal action discernible, do we not confide in the results in proportion to the greatness of the endowment?

If it be so in every other case, why alter our rule in this? Why adopt the standard of mediocrity as the true gauge, and discredit the validity of genius in the perception of things and beings spiritual? Analogy is altogether against the position assumed—as it seems to me thoughtlessly assumed—by the "cerebral physiologist." First of all, if there be a mental faculty which relates us to spiritual causes and phenomena, this very fact, instead of discrediting the existence of such beings and things and events, is the very strongest abstract proof that could be brought forward in favour of their existence. It is so in every other case. We believe in the external world itself, and all its special qualities, simply because we are so constituted as to be unable to disbelieve them, our internal faculties being so related to external objects as to involve belief in the integrity of their perceptions as a primary faith, any disruption of which would produce only confusion and absurdity. Nor does the fact that our perceptions are sometimes disordered in the least degree invalidate our faith in their general correctness, and in the actuality of the objects which excite them. Next, if the faculty be possessed at all, it would be contrary to all reason not to take the results of its highest endowment, other condi-

tions being equal, as more worthy of reliance in regard to the nature of the related objects, than those of its inferior degrees. Consequently, instead of the instances of large organs of wonder in Socrates, Tasso, Swedenborg, Oberlin, Napier, Newton, Kepler, Davy, Shakespeare, &c.—consider these grand names!—discrediting the conclusions of these great minds with respect to the spirit world, they should have precisely the opposite effect.

The reasoning of phrenologists on this subject has been in the highest degree inconsistent. In the case of every other faculty they take the dictum of the highest endowment as demonstrative of the related objects. Large organs of form give the most reliable reports of the configuration of things; as size does of their dimensions; weight, of their gravity; colour, of their hues; number, of their arithmetical relations; locality, of their relative position, and so on; and never would the phrenologist hesitate as to the relative authority to be attached to small and large organs in these primary perceptions. The same rule applies to all other faculties, except, apparently, this one of marvellousness! The genius for perceiving resemblances and differences, congruity and incongruity; for adapting means to ends, and seeing behind and before; in short, *all* the intellectual functions are admitted to be complete in proportion to the size and quality of the organs. Come into the region of feeling or affection, and here again the nature of the function is determined by observation of the organs which are *plus*, not those which are *minus*—except, indeed, by the negative demonstrations of the latter supporting the positive affirmations of the former.

It is a doctrine of phrenologists that the affective organs stand only mediately related to the objects which excite them, and whose existence they imply; thus, philoprogenitiveness, though it implies the existence of children, pets, and helpless objects, does not directly perceive them. As external objects, these beings are observed by the perceptive faculties of the intellect. The same may be said of adhesiveness and friends; combative-ness and opponents; acquisitiveness and property, or things to be acquired; benevolence and objects of pity and human love; veneration and beings worthy of reverence, and so forth. But in all cases though the objects are perceived by the observing (intellectual) powers, and the emotions of the affective faculties are thereby aroused, yet the reflex action of the feelings upon the intellectual powers is such that the latter are impelled to *look* for the objects which excite and gratify the affections; and thus it happens that individuals in whom the relative affection is weak, or organ small (which is but another mode of expressing the same fact), will pass through the world, and seldom, if ever,

*notice* objects which to others more highly endowed with the feeling involved are rife enough, and are regarded with marked attention. To the former, these objects are as good as non-existent; and if to one the question were put, whether on any given occasion any of them were there, he would be unable to say, or he would probably add, "I think not; at all events I did not observe them." The callous and self-referring man is too much absorbed in his own affairs and feelings to regard the claims, or even, for the time, the existence of other beings, whether friends or simple fellow-creatures needing compassionate sympathy and aid. The benevolent, adhesive, philoprogenitive man, on the other hand, cannot walk the streets without the related objects of humanity, friends, and children, appealing to him on every side.

Let the two individuals supposed pass over precisely the same ground; the one, on being questioned what he observed, details the cases of distress which appealed to him, the helpless objects he met, the friends and joyous children whom he encountered; the other observed nothing of the sort, would possibly deny that objects of pity, friends, or children, were to be found where the former saw them; but, if his vanity and self-importance were as conspicuous as his humanity was defective (a not unfrequent case), he would probably report having met my lord Tom Noddy, and had a bow from him, or that "that fool Spatterdash" (a rival in *Vanity Fair*), "had passed him in his drag, thinking he was taking the shine out of everybody!"

The negative evidence of the one surely does not obliterate or even discredit the positive observations of the other?

Yet we shall meet with many implications that it really does, and not a few direct averments to the same effect—particularly when the faculty now under consideration is in question. In fact, the phrenological hypothesis which I am now combatting, is little else than an assumption of this kind. The general run of educated persons now-a-days neither see nor believe in ghosts; therefore ghosts do not exist, and those who assert the contrary, no matter on what evidence, are either the subjects of delusion, or only to be found among the ignorant and superstitious. Reversing the ordinary rules of judgment, the general negation overbears the particular affirmation, and because 95 persons have not seen a given phenomenon, or class of phenomena, the evidence of the other 5 in the 100, who have seen it, is to be ignored, discredited, or explained away. The argument, with judicial fairness, may be stated thus:—Because *all* do not see apparitions, and many *never* see them, and only some persons see them occasionally; and because all persons are more, or less subject to illusions of the senses, and some through an undiscovered peculiarity are habitually subject to visions so-called, while others are so from ascertained cerebral disease,

generally traceable to the organs of wonder; therefore all apparitions are nothing more than spectral illusions, and have no existence beyond the brain which sees them.

Now, in the first place, because all do not see apparitions that is no reason for their non-existence, any more than that all cannot see certain colours, or hear certain sounds, is a reason for the non-existence of these colours and sounds. An intimate friend of mine has never heard the chirp of the cricket, or the songs of many birds, though she can readily distinguish much lower sounds. Were the majority of people so constituted, would it abolish the cricket's cheery note and the lark's thrilling melody as objective phenomena?

A much larger number of persons cannot appreciate the harmonies of sounds and colours; but that, again, is no reason for the non-existence of these harmonies—which, in their essence, appear to be nothing more objectively than determinate vibrations upon the senses of hearing and seeing.

A still larger proportion of persons,—in truth, so large a proportion as to constitute far and away the majority of human beings,—cannot see the aura from magnets, or the luminous emanations from other bodies; but that is no proof of the non-existence of these emanations or of that aura.

The demonstration of the objective existence of these phenomena, which above two-thirds of the human race hitherto experimented upon, even under the most favourable circumstances, cannot see, and probably not one in the hundred under unfavourable conditions could see, depends for its validity upon something else than number of observers. That the small proportion who see them actually do see them, and do not create them, may be proven in many ways. To all who would like to see the proof, I recommend the perusal of the works of Baron Reichenbach, the distinguished Viennese *savant*, discoverer of the od force, and other physical elements. And the fact of the disproportion of the seers and non-seers of the polar flames in magnets and crystals is peculiarly important in its bearing upon the present argument. If it be so in the one case without discrediting the actuality of the perceptions, or the reality of the external objects, why not equally so in the other? The argument founded upon numbers, therefore; falls to the ground, and gives no valid support to the cerebral hypothesis under discussion.

But singularly enough, the argument based upon disease is likewise, by the experiments of Baron Reichenbach, placed in a similar predicament. For disease in some of his patients quickened their perceptions, and enabled them to distinguish the light and its peculiarities, and this ability declined, and in some cases finally expired, as convalescence became re-estab-

lished. This, on reflection, is really not surprising. Who, that has any experience in the sick room does not know that this increase of faculty does take place in nervous diseases, both as regards hearing and seeing, and in some cases even the whole of the senses. The least noise is a disturbance to the sensitive ear, as the least light is to the sensitive eye. The objects perceived are not *created* by these organs, they are simply *recognised* by them, in their temporarily exalted condition, and cease to be recognised as the organs become blunter by restoration to health. Analogously, disease may so quicken the brain and nervous system generally as to render the patient sensible to subtle influences of other kinds, which in ordinary conditions pass entirely unnoticed. May not also the organ we are more particularly treating of, and its related system of nervous connections, become so exalted as to enable the individual even to *see spirits* and have real communion with them, without its following that these spirits are mere subjective creations, and not as real objects as were the sights and sounds of the sick room?

What, then, remains? The facts, that all persons are more or less subject to illusions of the senses, some habitually so, and others so from traceable disease.

Here again the conclusion is not necessarily contained in the premises.

That illusions may occasionally happen to us all is true; but we can generally discover the illusion, and if the senses lead us astray, they also bring us back again. By means of one sense, we often correct the fallacies of another. But the apparitions to be accounted for resist every effort of this kind. They do things which leave their mark behind them, and instead of one sense dissipating the fallacy of another it confirms its truth. This liability, therefore, properly goes for nothing, beyond suggesting circumspection and caution in coming to a conclusion.

Upon cases of habitual tendency to "illusion of the senses," I have a few words to say. Some cases are put into this category which I should assert do not belong to it. To put the cases to which I now refer into it, is, in fact, to beg the whole question—a vice the writers on "cerebral physiology" and phrenology have been very prone to. Such are the cases of the Socratic and Swedenborgian type, where no disease can be traced, and no *proof* of illusion given. But there are real cases of spectral illusions on record, which may be placed legitimately in this category, and of them a few remarks.

Mr Combe cites a case of this kind, in which a person, 38 years of age, in sound health, remarkably intelligent, and by no means liable to extravagance in sentiments or ideas, saw visions.

of *natural* objects. On one occasion, he was in the streets of Glasgow, and saw a log of wood being carried along upon the usual kind of axle and large wheels. On getting home to his residence in the country, a vision of the same appeared before him in all its details, and seemingly as real as the original scene. On another occasion he had the vision of a *funeral* which he had seen previously. Mr Combe states that this person had wonder “decidedly large,” and his perceptive organs were larger than his reflective. Mr C. refers his tendency to these illusions, to the influence of his “decidedly large” wonder, but he gives nothing to justify the inference. It appears to have escaped his notice, moreover, and certainly the notice of those who rely upon it and similar cases to support their notion of all apparitions of spirits being merely subjective spectra, that, although the visions which this person saw were actual illusions, their *prototypes were realities*. It may readily enough be conceded that *some* apparitions of spirits are merely spectral illusions as these were, but analogy requires that *their prototypes* should also be *realities*, and the legitimate conclusion, therefore, is not against, but in favour of, the actual existence of spirits, and the occasional appearance of ghosts. It is not claimed by the spiritualist that there are no illusions; he knows perfectly well the contrary; but it is claimed that *all* apparitions are not illusions. The Ancient Book says, “not every vision faileth,” which at once asserts that some fail and some do not; exactly the position of the spiritualist in this argument.

A singularly happy illustration of the external reality of some apparitions is supplied by a phrenological combatant, who fails, as is not unusual, to see its application. In the Phrenological Journal, vol. v. p. 211, the case is recorded. It is that of a gentleman, himself an utter disbeliever, who had one night a vision of a deceased female friend. “When he shut his eyes or turned his head, he ceased to see the figure; by interposing his hand he could hide part of it, and it was shown like any mere material substance by the rays of the fire which fell upon and were reflected from it.”

Had this been a merely subjective creation—a simple result of spontaneous cerebral excitement—it is clear that it would have turned when the observer turned; that the interposition of his hand would not have covered part of it, and that it would not have reflected the rays of the fire. Yet such was the dominating influence of a mere hypothesis in the mind of the writer of the article and in that of the subject of the narrative, that neither allowed these irreconcileable facts to affect their conclusion. Apparitions *are* merely spectral illusions; the reality of ghosts is simply an ancient superstition; the appearance of a spirit, purely an impossibility; evidence to the contrary was

totally needless, could not be appreciated, or even so much as entertained! And actually at this hour we are referred by writers on the same side to those very documents, as affording complete "explanations of the mystery!"

A reflection on the very interesting case now before us may be here interposed, though for the moment it suspends the main argument. Conceding the *possibility* of the continued existence of human beings in a spiritual state, and their continued affection for those they have left behind here, nothing surely would be more natural than that they should desire to communicate with those whom they love, and give them assurance of their existence and affection. Conceding also the *possibility*, that spirits might discover means of occasionally manifesting themselves so as to afford proof of their identity; what must be their feelings to find, after all difficulties have been surmounted, and they have succeeded in incorporating themselves for a time in physical elements sufficiently gross to become perceptible by the bodily sense of the friend whose affection and belief they wish to influence: what, I say, must be their feelings to find that all their trouble has gone for nought? that, though they succeeded in their earnest efforts, the avenue to the convictions of their friend is absolutely closed —shut up by a presumptuous hypothesis which determines the possibilities of the universe, and hermetically sealed against all access of reason or of faith? What, to find, as before now has often been the case, not merely themselves treated as phantoms of the brain, but their friend so absorbed by the notion of their non-reality that, instead of even dwelling with affectionate remembrances of their mundane life, which *might* be suggested, one would think, even by a phantasmal imagination of them, he, to prove their non-existence, shies an old shoe or a pillow at them, which passes through their ethereal organisation, and, of course, to his own satisfaction, at once dispels his vision and demonstrates his theory! Methinks they are not likely to trouble such persons again, unless their charity is more fully developed than this quality is in general amongst those they have left behind.

But to return to the main argument. Before dismissing the hypothesis of "involuntary cerebral excitement," not disease, permit me a word, in the form of a query or two. Can the supporters of this hypothesis tell what is "involuntary excitement"? Can they legitimately affirm that what is so-called *never* arises from the action of invisible intelligences upon our brains? Do they know *all* the causes that affect our cerebral organs? Are they *quite* sure that even spectral illusions, strictly so-called, may not sometimes have their cause in the action of invisible beings upon us? We know that the human spirit

while in the body can biologically cause such illusions in submissive subjects: why may it not have an analogous power when disembodied? Is it not far too premature, in the present state of our knowledge, to assert that the cause of such apparitions is to the cerebral physiologist "no longer a mystery"?

But now let us take the cases of ascertained cerebral disease, and see what are the legitimate inferences to be drawn from even them.

This has been considered the impregnable fortress of the cerebral physiologist. Has he not by the scalpel shown the diseased structure of the brain, and singular to say, in the very organs allocated to wonder, in persons who in life were afflicted by the apparition of spirits? Have there not been specialities in the spectres corresponding to diseased conditions observed in other organs? What better proof could we have that ghosts have no existence except in the abnormal excitement of this part of the brain? This conclusion has been held by these reasoners to amount almost to a Q. E. D., and their dogmatism has been proportionably intense.

Yet does not a little reflection make its fallacy apparent? Do we reason thus on the disease of any other organ? Ghosts of other things appear besides the ghosts of persons or spirits. Do we thence conclude that these other things do not exist at all? The ghosts of them may be illusions, but the things themselves are not thereby conjured out of existence. Diseased philoprogenitiveness in a mother may give rise to illusions or delusions about her children, but does it affect our belief of the children's actual existence, or the existence of children in general? The pathology of the various parts of the brain has afforded some of the most convincing proofs of the truth of phrenology, with respect to the functions of the parts involved, but not in any other case has it been taken to imply the non-existence of the related objects. In most other cases the fallacy would have been too grossly apparent. If, however, disease in the organ of wonder should always have for its concomitant belief in the reality of the spirits its abnormal activity excited the perceptive organs to conjure up, why should it be differently treated? Why should the general inference be, that such beings are non-existent altogether, rather than only that the special effects of the disease are illusory, while the existence of the world of spirits remains unaffected thereby? Would there be an organ in the brain whose abnormal action brings out this belief in its intensest form, giving rise even to spectral appearances of such beings, if spirits did not exist at all? For my part, the fact that this is an invariable result of the super-excitement of the organ, concurring as it does with the almost universal belief, expressed in the words of Milton, that

“ Millions of spiritual beings walk the earth unseen,  
Both when we wake and when we sleep,”

only affords me an additional reason for the validity of the general belief. It shows that the belief is “deep-seated in our mystic frame,” and thereby affords the strongest abstract reason that can be given for its verity. Mr Combe mentions the case of a gentleman in Boston, Mass., in whom ideality, wonder, and hope were large, whose natural habit was to shut out the world and ordinary things, and realise the spiritual and eternal; he communed mentally with superior existences, and experienced their influence. He did not see visions, or believe in the actual presence of supernatural beings, but inferred that a state of being *must* exist to which these impressions are related. His inference was assuredly the natural and legitimate one; and, but for the influence which certain assumptions are seen to exert upon the human mind, one would be at a loss to conceive how any other inference could ever be entertained.

The support this argument derives from the negative results of deficiency of development is also remarkable. A case is mentioned in the Phren. Jour., vol. v, p. 430-31, of a man named James Bullus, of Hull, who had this organ of wonder so small, that it seemed actually “scooped out” on each side of the head. The singular fact in his case was, that he actually saw ghosts, but could not believe in them. On the hypothesis of the actuality of spirits, his nervous system was sufficiently developed to enable him to see their ethereal forms, but his wonder was so small that he could not credit the evidence of his senses. On the hypothesis that these spectra were mere cerebral creations, altogether illusory, his negative belief was simply accordant with the nature of things. We are not supplied with the means of judging of the nature of the apparitions this man saw, whether or not they presented any peculiarities such as the apparition of the lady did to the other gentleman already mentioned, *e. g.*, reflecting the rays of light, being shadowed by the hand, &c., and thereby giving approximate proof of their objectivity. But his inability to believe in the possibility of their actual existence is the notable point, and this concurs with the organic deficiency of wonder, of which it was very likely a result.

The question is, whether the tendency to belief in spiritual beings and things has any warrant in the external universe. My argument is, that this *being proved to be a general faculty of the human mind, having its organ in the brain*, there *must* in the constitution of the universe be external objects related to the internal faculty.

The argument to the contrary derived from exceptional cases, has been shown to be invalid. The weaker the faculties in any

relation, the less is seen and believed in that relation. The stronger the faculties, the more is seen and believed in their own relation. The faculties that are *plus*, in a state of health, if not disproportionately developed, give more reliable and certain indications of their related objects, than those which are *minus*.

The argument from pathological considerations, in the present case, has been shown not to invalidate the conclusions logically derivable from the normal action of the faculty, and likewise to afford no tenable ground for the hypothesis that all (so-called) spiritual appearances are merely subjective creations.

A host of external evidences could now be adduced in proof of the objective reality of the beings the existence of whom the normal function of this faculty implies, but this would lead us beyond the range of the subject of this too extended paper. Suffice it, that such evidences exist, proving by strict induction and overwhelming force the point at issue.

Thus, by both the *a priori* and the *a posteriori* methods, the intimations attributed to this faculty are vindicated. We may rely upon the native integrity of our mental constitution in this as in other relations; encourage the development of Wonder in harmony with that of all other powers; and, in wise reliance on truthful and beneficent results, rest assured that, if amongst these results be a restoration in this scientific age of the primitive faith of mankind in a spirit-world, and in the reality of spiritual intercourse between it and this world, as I believe, a rounded completeness will be given to our philosophy, a richness and glory be added to our life, such as at present we are little capable of appreciating.