The Influence of the Mind on the Body

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WHATEVER may be the opinions which one professes in the matter of philosophy, whether one is a spiritualist or a scientific materialist, each one recognizes the reciprocal influence which the spirit and the body, the moral and the physical, exert upon each other.

It will certainly be interesting to attempt a precise definition of these words which one employs so frequently, and to show the transformations which the notion of the soul undergoes when one passes from the dualism of religions to the unity of natural philosophy.

But that will not be the object of my conference to-day, and I shall content myself, for the moment, with a summary

definition. When I speak of the mind, of morality, of the soul, if you will, I understand by that the ideas, mental representations, sentiments, all these things which we do not see, of which we take cognizance only through the conscience.

The physique of man is the entire body, comprising in it the brain with its thousands of cells and fibers, with the organs of feeling, these delicate antennæ which put it in communication with the outside world. This body exists; we can see it, can touch it. We have no doubts of its reality, its materialism, in spite of the specious reasoning of some philosophers who have pushed idealism to the extreme.

To say that the physical has an influence over the moral is then to affirm that the state of our body can modify our ideas, our sentiments, the condition of our soul.

Inversely, if we admit the influence of the mind over the body that is declaring that the mental representations which we make,

the feelings which animate us, can influence the body and modify the functions of its organs.

My object is, before all, to show the influence of the mind over the body, but to understand it better, it is necessary to examine the matter inversely and analyze fully the influence of the physical over the mental.

The dependence of the soul upon the body commences in the cradle and finishes only in the grave.

By the fact of heredity and of atavism we are born already influenced in a certain direction; we enter this world more or less well endowed. That is a heritage which we are obliged to accept without liability to debts beyond the assets inherited and during all our existence we shall live only on this capital and the interest which we shall know how to draw from it by a wise administration.

There are unhappy beings who are

born idiots; their brain is arrested in its development, deformed, and it is with infinite trouble that the devoted educators succeed in developing in these poor creatures some manifestations of intelligence.

In a less degree the cerebral malady is shown by imbecility. Less advanced still it produces these states of mental want of balance which often become more exaggerated in successive generations and tend to a degeneracy of the family.

One willingly recognizes that our intellectual faculties are controlled even by the formation of our brain. We say of a man who manifests a superior intelligence that he has a well-organized head. We suppose him to have a well-developed brain, working easily, capable of regular work, of logical reflection. There are people who have memory, others who have imagination; some work with facility, others distinguish themselves by their perseverance.

We fully understand that if it is possible for us to cultivate these qualities to a certain extent or to allow them to become useless from want of practise, they are given to us after all at birth.

One forgets too often that it is absolutely the same with moral qualities.

From the first years of life; before educational influences have been able to exert themselves; before the powerful contagion of example has been felt; we surprise in children the germs of future moral qualities and faults.

One child is, from the beginning of his life, docile and sweet, sensible and good; another is rebellious and hard, indifferent, or even cruel. Egotism and tendency to falsehood often manifest themselves very early. The child can not yet reason, we dare not speak to it of responsibility yet, and already we see in him the often indelible taint of heredity, the innate moral blemish.

Often the cerebral imperfection extends itself to both the intelligence and the moral sentiment; the subject is as little intelligent as he is vicious. On the other hand, one sees poor creatures who are disinherited in an intellectual point of view, but who present the touching contrast of a good heart, of a quick sensibility to affection which renders them sympathetic. Finally, much more often than we think, the most brilliant gifts of intelligence are matched to a total absence of moral feeling. The moral fool, or rather the fool of feeble morality, exists. He can dominate by the brightness of his cold intelligence, by his indomitable energy, by his imperturbable cold blood, but his intelligence is temporary, fragmentary, it will not allow him to see the difference between good and evil. In spite of education these notions are totally strange to him. As there are persons entirely destitute of all musical feeling, for whom music is only

the most disagreeable of noises, there are beings who have never felt the impulse of goodness, whose heart has never beat with a noble idea. These are the most unendowed, no matter what enviable situation they may occupy in the world.

And let us never forget that this intellectual and moral heritage is physical in its essence. It is not finished qualities or faults which procreation transmits. We are not born poets, musicians, scientists, statesmen; we are not predestined at the first onset to be a great man or a criminal. We are born simply with a brain more or less well organized, more or less apt to act under the influence of the stimulus which will come to it and which will keep up a constant play of the association of ideas which we call the life of the soul. I will go much further and say that all thought being necessarily bound to the physical or the chemical phenomena of which the brain is the seat, the slavery is still more

complete and that all the most elevated manifestations of thought, all our intellectual and moral life, depend above all on the state of our brain.

It will appear to you, perhaps, that this theory is acceptable only to the most absolute partizans of materialism. Without doubt the doctrinal materialists, the positivists, will be the first to give their adhesion to it.

But it is not the metaphysical question which I wish to dwell upon here. It matters little to me whether one considers thought as the product of cerebral activity or as a convinced spiritualist one perceives in the brain only the marvelous instrument which the immaterial soul uses to manifest itself. These questions are impossible to solve.

In both cases, mark well, the defective working of the brain is shown by troubled thoughts. We are, on reckoning up, all obliged to admit the constant concomitance

of the acting of conscience and of brain work, in other words, psychophysical parallelism.

I shall easily find among the protestant philosophers, defenders of free will, writers who remark this slavery of the soul to the body, but their testimony may appear suspicious; it is tainted with too much freedom of examination. I prefer to turn to one who represents Catholic orthodoxy. Listen to what a French prelate, Mgr. d'Hulst, says on this subject in his "Philosophical Medley"—"We have all been educated in admiration of a formula of which M. de Bonald is the author, but of which Descartes is the inspirer: 'The soul is an intelligence served by the organs.' The least fault of this definition is that it is very incomplete. The intelligence is served by the organs; served, yes, without doubt, but is subjected also.

"It is true that every master of a house is subjected to his servants more or less.

But in consenting to serve himself he could free himself from this dependence.

"The soul has not this resource. And the dependence goes further. If the question was only of the inferior part of the psychical life, sensation, that is the feelings of the body, one could say: The soul depends on the organs in all the operations which have their origin outside. But in its own life, its intellectual working, it is mistress and not servant, it does not depend upon the body. Unhappily for the theory, this is not always true. Even in the most simple act of intelligence there is a necessary concurrence; a concurrence of the organs which is important. The brain works in the skull of a thinker. There are vibrations of the cells in the cortical bed of the brain; there is, to render these possible, a sanguinary afflux as much more abundant as the intellectual effort is more intense; there is a rise in the temperature which results from it; there is

finally a combustion of organic matter. The more the soul thinks the more the brain burns its own substance. It is thus that head work as much as muscular work gives rise to a sensation of hunger.

"Finally, if this work is excessive there is fatigue, pain in the head; and if this excess is prolonged it will lead to a morbid condition, sometimes even to material lesions which autopsy can recognize after death and which will be the terrible signature of the animal nature which does not permit one to forget it when one wishes to do the work of the mind." We know not how this language can be improved.

But, you say, this slavery is revolting. What! all that we are, mentally and morally, depends upon the material state of our brain? Yes! Every state of the soul supposes a cerebral correspondence, and whatever may be the metaphysical doctrines to which we wish to attach ourselves, the soul remains pinned to the

body during all the continuance of our existence.

Not only are we born already endowed with certain good qualities or deformed by nature, but we bear, however slackly, to an advanced age the yoke of heredity; then we may hope to have escaped from it.

It is thus that one sees foolishness or epilepsy, which also leads to mental trouble, attack successively, at the same age, members of the same family. Without appreciable cause, other than that of an inborn predisposition which has been latent, one suddenly sees an intelligence fail which appeared to be developing normally. Illness of the body modifies the condition of the soul, we suffer from the delirium of fever, we succumb mentally under the influence of poison. Heat, cold, air pure or vitiated, barometrical pressure, the food which we assimilate all act upon our physical and moral condition.

Think of the state of mind which alco-

holic intoxication creates and you will instantly understand the trouble which the intoxication of the cerebral tissue produces in the thoughts, in the spirit.

A typical example of this action of the body upon the mind is furnished to us by the destruction of the thyroid gland. In other times in operations for goiter, which have become so frequent to-day, the whole gland was removed, upon the pretext that it was useless. It has become necessary to retract this opinion. It has happened that people who were normal before have fallen after the operation into a state of imbecility. Not only are the features swollen, the forehead wrinkled, the lips heavy, the face even taking a senile look; but the intelligence has suffered and the patients have fallen into a state of intellectual torpor. The same condition can occur without an operation by the atrophy of the thyroid gland.

Now in both cases we can give back to

the patient his intelligence, his vivacity of spirit, by making him eat the thyroid gland of a sheep or take pills made of the extract of that gland! We can plunge him again into idiocy by stopping his pills and render him intelligent anew by giving him a prescription for the chemist. This will demonstrate the influence of the body over the mind so long as this influence has need of being proved.

Are we then condemned always to submit to the yoke of heredity and the action of physical agents, as a tree which shall be not only well grown or stunted according to the germ which has given it birth, but must suffer also from bad temperature? Can we not here call in the intelligent gardener who will correct the first deviation of the branches, put them *en espalier*, and execute the grafting which will improve the fruit?

Yes, we can combat to a certain degree the effects of fatal heredity and escape the

noxious influence of exterior agencies. We shall accomplish this *by the education of ourselves.*

I have said, without hesitation, the education of ourselves because I esteem this personal culture to be the most efficacious. But it is necessary to understand it.

More or less imperfect from birth, we, mentally, can not be our own educator in the true sense of the word.

It is by intercourse with our kind, by the ideas which they suggest to us, that we can correct our faults and cultivate our good qualities.

We have, it is true, the sensation of originating our thoughts, of ourselves deciding the regulating of our conduct. But take care! The mental capital which we attribute to ourselves, from which we draw interest, comes to us from others, from the education which we have received, not only from voluntary education, that of the fam-

ily, that of the school, that of the priest, but the insensible education which is given by the world and by life.

It is sometimes good, sometimes bad, and it is upon this foundation of borrowed ideas that all the scaffolding of our thoughts and our sentiments is built.

If one reflects well upon it, all education can be looked upon as an influence of the mind over the body. Without doubt there are ideas which we transmit to our fellow-creatures by words, by looks; these are the ideas which we store up under the empire of foreign suggestions. But, as every one knows, all thought is accompanied by material phenomena in the brain; it is in the main a physical change which determines mental representations.

Education kneads our brain, if we can use such an expression, and renders it apt to respond to favorable influences. The materialism of the ultimate phenomena is symbolized by the popular expression

which makes us say, *apropos* of a moral habit, "The step has been taken."

But, in expressing this idea, I have not wished to enter upon delicate psychological analyses. I have a practical end in view and the question which presents itself is this:

Can we, by means of the mind, by our moral deportment, escape illness, prevent certain inborn functional troubles, diminish or suppress those which already exist?

To this question I boldly answer "Yes." It is needless to say that I set aside surgical maladies, infectious diseases, and those innumerable organic affections which are the fruit either of heredity or unfavorable hygienic conditions. Against these evils which torment humanity we can do almost nothing through the mind. We can combat them by the ordinary means of medicine, by drugs, by physical treatment. We can finally oppose them with a noble stoicism, but that is all.

But we often suffer from functional troubles which are not caused by organic changes and in the development of which the mind plays an immense part. Even in the course of purely bodily illness there is often the mediation of psychical symptoms which depend above all on the condition of our spirit. Man, in short, suffers quite differently from the animals and he suffers more than they. He does not content himself, so to speak, with brute suffering which is adequate for the physical disorders; he increases them by imagination, aggravates them by fear, keeps them up by his pessimistic reflections.

It is man who has the sad privilege of being tormented by nervous maladies, by the nervosity which is so frequent to-day. He alone knows in illness mental suffering in its highest degree and if he feels it with such acuteness it is not only because his spiritual life permits him to feel it, which would be only a superiority, but it is he

himself who creates, or at least exaggerates, this suffering.

Since we seek, above all, means to fight morally against illness, we must recognize the enemy and specify the means by which exterior influences, physical as well as moral, can act upon us and lead to functional troubles.

We are particularly vulnerable in two places, our sensibility and our emotionalism. I have already said that outside agents act upon us. Too intense cold, above all when damp, paralyzes us, afflicts us; heat when it passes a certain degree strikes us down. A too brilliant light, a too intense and long-continued noise, tires us, enervates us. Our exposed nerves bring us a crowd of painful or sad sensations. Fatigue, whether corporal, intellectual, or emotional, reaches the nerve centers and creates morbid conditions of which the mental symptoms are sadness and sullenness.

If these influences were purely bodily they would be incurable and we should passively suffer all the consequences. But it is here that the mistake is made. Yes, by means of our senses the ambient medium acts upon us; but if these sensations take such a reality, such a power, if they determine far-distant actions, it is above all because of the attention which we bestow upon them. It is by thinking of it that we render more fatal this influence of surrounding mediums; it is then by thought that we can fight against it, diminish it in place of exaggerating it.

I must remark, first of all, that the diverse sensations which our five senses furnish us with, sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch, exist in all their plenitude only thanks to the intervention of the attentive mind.

One well says that when a ray of light penetrates to the eye we feel a sensation of light, that we perceive a sound when the

tympanum is put in vibration. All that is true, but on condition that our attention is awakened.

Among the thousands of noises which in one day reach our ears there are many of which our understanding takes no cognizance. Has it never happened to you to answer some one only the second, third, or even fourth question which has been addressed to you in a loud and intelligible voice?

Yes; you were distrait, preoccupied with something else, you have not *heard*. We often look for an object and do not see it, altho it is before us and its image may have been ten times reflected in our eyes. When you are before the glass door of a library a crowd of books and objects of art are in your field of vision. A photographic camera put in your place would register all these details in an instant. As for you, you have only seen the romance of the day and an interesting engraving.

All the rest has struck your eye, but has not reached your understanding. In order to see, to hear, to feel, it is necessary to look, to listen, to give attention. If the light is brilliant, if the noise is intense, the pain severe, the attention is immediately awakened. But the more moderate impressions can be effaced and remain ignored if we pay no attention to them. This notion that one can overlook a sensation even if the cause which produced it remains is not new to the public; one now and then hears the picturesque expression of it in popular language. I mount in winter upon the tramway; a workman jumps upon it crying, "Oh! how cold my feet are! They hurt me!" "Oh! bah!" the conductor answers energetically, "you must not think about them."

And in another world; at the five o'clock tea the ladies rebel against the tyranny of the Paris fashions which in summer impose upon them the carrying of boas and ruches;

they find the heat intolerable. "Ah, well," says a pretty woman, "I do not agree with you. I look in the mirror and if the boa is becoming I am no longer warm!"

Reflect, analyze your own sensations, and you will see that it is not rare for a sensation to disappear because the attention is elsewhere. Very painful feelings, even very sad ones, can thus vanish under the influence of a powerful distraction by the conviction that they do not exist. Every one knows that when going to the dentist's certain persons suddenly lose their toothache. I often see patients who acknowledge to me that their headache disappears when they receive an agreeable visit. I never conclude from that that their suffering is slight or their pain imaginary. No; the pain is really the outcome of a psychical phenomenon, therefore cerebral, and all change in the state of mind can modify the ultimate phenomenon of conscious perception. We do not feel

blows when we are the prey of violent anger, and we see persons submit to painful operations, drawing teeth, for instance, because it has been suggested to them that under the influence of a wash of cocaine they would feel no pain. On the other hand, by giving our attention, by fixing it, we are able to seize feeble impressions, to make them more distinct, as if we had used a magnifying glass. It is even possible to create these sensations, to feel them through pure mental representation. We have often said a mental representation is a beginning of a real sensation, it is even an act commenced. It is sufficient to be intimately persuaded that a phenomenon is about to be produced, that we are about to see or hear something, for us to feel the sensation with all the intensity of reality.

It is thus that people who are normal in other respects feel strange sensations in touching an electrical machine even when it is not charged.

One has been able to make students who are working with the microscope see things which are not there but which one tells them are there. Experiments sometimes improve upon a great scale. One hundred and twenty years ago Mesmer made the great ladies of the highest Parisian society experience the most strange sensations and provoked the most different functional troubles. How? he made them seize metallic bars which came out from a so-called magnetic tub! It was the imagination, the preconceived idea which gave birth to the sensation and led to trouble in the action of the organs.

We are easily made victims by these auto-suggestions, as they are called to-day, when we have some plausible reason to believe them. I have often felt heat radiating from a stove which I was passing. I had understood that it was heated; when touched it was cold. There are people who have felt the oil and smelled the odor

of petroleum when lifting a new lamp which has never contained any.

One can recall thousands of examples of these errors of the senses which show the influence of imagination, the incredible power of mental representations.

The success of hypnotism abundantly demonstrates this influence.

Physicians of hospitals which give themselves up to this class of practise can actually put to sleep eighty to ninety per cent. of their patients by pure verbal suggestion, by the following simple words pronounced with convincing power, "Sleep, sleep, sleep."

One can often in this hypnotic sleep, where credulity is increased by the suppression of the control of reason, suggest to the subjects all sorts of sensations: make them shiver with cold, perspire with heat, make them tremble before a menacing lion, recoil with fear before an imaginary rising sea. One can paralyze his

tongue, his arms, his legs, fix his feet to the earth by suggesting to him that he can not pass the line which has been drawn with chalk upon the floor. Even in a waking state we can provoke analogous phenomena. It suffices that the person upon whom we operate should be at the time in a condition of mind which responds to suggestion and persuasion. This state of mind may be natural and reasonable. For example: I saw, at Nancy, a workman to whom Professeur Bernheim proposed to employ hypnotism to soothe rheumatic pains. "I am willing," the man simply said; "I do not know what hypnotism is; but my comrades have told me that it will do me good." In the twinkling of an eye he was asleep, in the happy conviction that having gone to sleep he would awake having received great good from that proceeding! Another example of suggestion in a wide-awake condition. A young soldier presented himself at the hospital;

the professor examined him, verified a sore throat, and gave him a gargle. Then, desirous of showing his class the power of verbal suggestion, he takes the young man's arm and says to him point blank, "Since when has your arm been paralyzed?" The astonished patient declares positively that there is nothing the matter with his arm. But the professor stands firm. "See, gentlemen," says he to the students, "here is a young man who has been attacked by a rare affection, pyschic paralysis of the right arm. You see how this limb hangs, without life, by the side of the body and falls back again when it is lifted," and joining the action to the word he raised the arm, which really fell back like a club. The arm was really and truly paralyzed and it was necessary next day to restore it by inverse suggestion, which was quite as easy.

Numerous examples of auto-suggestions have been cited which show how a sensa-

tion can be created by pure mental representation. I will cite one of them which is typical.

A healthy man is present at an operation performed upon his brother, which consists of straightening, when under chloroform, a twisted knee. At the moment in which, under the treatment of the surgeon, the joint straightens itself with a snap, who is it who feels the pain? It is not the patient, plunged in sleep, but his brother, and he retains this painful affection for a year!

When one has fully grasped the power of fancy one understands how nervous ills can arise from the contagion of example. In the middle ages it was seen that nearly all the women of a town fell into hysterical crises and unanimously gave themselves up to foolish dances.

Even to-day we see hysteria under the form of a kind of dance of St. Guy invade

boarding-schools for little girls. It has been seen at Basle and at Baden within a few years. In the settlement of Kehrsatz thirty young girls were taken with pains in the joints and convulsive movements of the arms and legs. It was necessary to isolate them, to separate them from each other, in order to stop this epidemic of nervousness.

You all know the contagion of yawning and of the involuntary grimaces which our children make when they are present at the tricks of a clown or in a theater of marionettes. They live through all the scenes, they feel the sensations so fully that they spontaneously translate them by gesture and mimicry.

Even we, adults of sedate mind, shed tears at the theater when we know that all which passes before our eyes is fictitious, imaginary, and that we need not pity the fate of the heroes. Our voices tremble when reading an affecting page, even when

it is from a work of pure imagination; even when the recital has no historical foundation and awakens no retrospective sympathy.

This human suggestibility, already so marked when it regards pure sensation, becomes extreme as soon as emotion is joined to it. Fear establishes itself, pessimistic thoughts crop up, and it is then that one verifies *apropos* of the least indisposition the enormous influence of the mind, not only over the sensations, but also over the organic functions.

There are no organs which escape this influence, for all the organs have nerves and are in intimate relation with the cerebral center.

Not only tears (the habitual means of emotional expression) can flow, but the heart beats more quickly or more irregularly, the breathing is accelerated, becomes panting, the face pales or flushes; the appetite goes, the digestive functions are

deranged, and we know the effect upon the intestines of a child, even upon those of a soldier, which the well-known sentiment of fear can have.

Emotion as a river which has broken its bounds spreads itself everywhere in different torrents and can carry trouble into the working of all our organs.

At the same time emotion fatigues. It does not only create functional trouble by the vivacity of the mental representations to which it leads; it engenders also, by nervous exhaustion, real sensations, disagreeable or painful, which furnish new food to the unquiet mind of the patient, give rise to other fears, other vexatious auto-suggestions.

One can thus understand how a passing and trivial sensation which should have been neglected and would have disappeared if one had voluntarily distracted his attention, persists, increases in the mind of the person, leads to unhealthy

fear, and gives birth to troubles which are disproportioned to the first cause.

There are no imaginary sick people; they all suffer and are worthy of our compassion. But there are legions of these sick in whom the most careful examination can verify no physical trouble, to whom one can deliver a favorable certificate for the life-insurance company, and who during months and years, and often all through life, suffer martyrdom and present the most curious functional troubles.

It is owing to their sensibility and their exaggerated emotionalism that they must go through a life of infirmity.

Such an one who has felt a weight in his stomach, has seen his tongue coated, believes himself afflicted with a cancer, and from that time uneasy and fearful, he experiences all the subjective symptoms of that disease. It is often difficult to rescue him from this fixed idea which constitutes all the disease.

Nothing is more frequent than to see patients who, under pretext that they have a dilatation of the stomach, which is now the fashionable disease, submit for years to a painful and debilitating regimen. And this dyspepsia is so much of mental origin, so much imaginary in its mode of development, that often the doctor who possesses a sufficient gift of persuasion can gradually restore these invalids to their ordinary food. It is the same with the working of the heart.

A woman is taken, no one knows why, perhaps under the empire of a forgotten nightmare, with palpitations. She has, for for example, one hundred pulsations.

Forthwith she asks herself what is the matter, she is frightened, fears a mortal swoon; if unhappily some one of her family, of her acquaintance, has died of heart disease the anxiety appears still more justifiable. The family circle also becomes frightened and agitated, which

is not tranquilizing for the invalid. Now as emotion suffices to make the heart beat faster, the pulse mounts to one hundred and twenty. At this figure the anguish is still more marked, the emotion increases, and the pulse reaches one hundred and forty. I have seen it rise to two hundred through this succession of increasing emotions. Then the doctor is called in, often in the middle of the night. He comes good-naturedly, altho sometimes sorry to have been awakened out of his sleep. He examines carefully, questions, feels the pulse, takes the temperature. There is no organic trouble, only the nervous beating of the heart. He gives his advice tranquilly, supports his opinion with encouraging examples, affirms that there is no danger, that no one dies of this. Little by little conversation with the invalid becomes more easy and cheerful, pleasantry follows, a smile appears upon the lips of the patient, the relations become calm, and

if the doctor has well filled the rôle of consoler the pulse has already become slower, the agony has ceased, and the patient will sleep for the rest of the night without the necessity for awakening the chemist at the corner.

Take another example. A lady suffers, through the action of an impertinent servant, from a sharp contrariety. Anger reaches its height and suddenly, under the influence of this emotion, her legs give way under her. This would not have happened if she had not lost her head, but she was fatigued, perhaps felt out of sorts; she could not control herself and at once thinks that she is really paralyzed. If, unhappily, the physician who sees her does not know how to dissipate her fears, to strengthen this unsettled will power, it is all over with her; hysterical paralysis will be established and may last for months and years. I should never finish if I were to particularize all the numerous apparently

physical affections which arise through psychical means, by attention concentrated upon oneself, by the calling into play of sensibility and emotionalism.

These maladies are sometimes grave as symptoms, lasting, and often lead to the unhappiness of the invalids and their families.

I do not hesitate to say that these nervous affections which are accessible to mind-cure are more frequent than bodily illnesses and that great progress would be made in the public health if by a voluntary influence of the mind over the body we knew how to stop in their development these strange evils which are more mental than physical.

In these various examples I have spoken only of one emotion, that of fear, of apprehension which is insufficiently justified by some unimportant ailment. There are also others.

There is a form of exaggerated emotion-

alism which I must point out to you; it is that which consists of disquieting oneself about everything and nothing. There are beings who are true virtuosos in the art of making the lyre of the emotions vibrate. Their life is passed in tormenting themselves, in making tragic the least events of their life. When a lady, for example, is endowed with this grievous impressionability she is wasted by excitement from morning to night and often from night to morning. On awaking she is in a state of anxious agitation which opens the day; she feels herself already crushed under the weight of all that she has to do and of all that she will have to bear; she suffers from it by anticipation. The little vexations which every mistress of a house has to bear are not for her simple annoyances; they are catastrophes and the morning is already full of them. At noon one of the boys has not returned. In place of supposing that he has loitered with his little

comrades the mother gets it into her head that he has been run over by a tram car and the servant must go and look for him. During this time the soup or the roast is burned.

If the husband, also unnerved by his work, comes home a little sullen and fault-finding, which will happen, alas! madame takes offense. In the afternoon there are new emotions *apropos* of a letter in which is read between the lines that which is not there, or because of a telegram which is opened with trembling hands, but which proves only to contain some insignificant news.

At the end of the day the unhappy woman has supported twenty sorrows which were only imaginary, but emotion has produced them. She has weakened her nervous system in spite of the futility of the causes. They affect her sleep, which is troubled by painful dreams. The invalid rises with a heavy head, made more

sensitive by fatigue, still more incapable of controlling herself, and the next day the interminable succession of emotional commotions recommences.

Think to what a degree this weakness of the nerves will extend when to all that are added real cares, sad events, and when incompatibility of temper comes to trouble the family relations.

Life then becomes a hell and under these influences we see the most serious nervous maladies arise. With many women this impressionability takes an altruistic character which partly excuses it and represents it as a good quality.

One sees mothers always anxious about their own, their husband or their children, whose breathing they listen to. The sentiment is certainly not blamable in itself, but it is disastrous in its effects.

Under the empire of emotion one loses self-possession, renders himself ill, and only complicates the situation in which

he is placed. Among men we find less often the slightly puerile emotionalism which I have described. They have not the multiplicity of little duties of the woman, neither have they her conscientiousness in fulfilling them.

As to altruism, that does not trouble them. Men often love their ease, enjoyment, the money which procures it, and success. But, as the Chinese say, they easily lose countenance.

The least difficulties, real or imaginary, produce discouragement. A boy has been known to commit suicide after failing in an examination or for a slight reprimand. Suicide from insufficient moral elasticity is the most common of all. This despair can spring from trifling causes, as shown by the Parisian family which had recourse to charcoal fumes (I believe several years ago) because they had an income of only twenty thousand francs, unhappy creatures!

Often also in this condition of egotistical weakness some drink and others take morphia. They hope thus to find strength, but it is only forgetfulness which they find, and under the influence of these poisons they hasten their mental downfall.

You will easily understand that all these nervous victims must do more than use medicaments and physical methods of treatment. They may, in some cases, have need of prolonged repose, but, above all, there is need for them, as for well people *who do not wish to become nervous*, of a good physical and, also above all, mental hygiene. Physical hygiene is very simple. It consists in letting oneself live well. Varied food is necessary for man, sufficient to make up each day the loss entailed upon the human machine by work. *En passant* I may remark that the importance of meat has been exaggerated. We generally eat too much of it and it would be well to give a larger place to vegetable food.

The greatest moderation in alcoholic drinks is imperative. There should be a just proportion of work and healthy amusement, of action and repose. But of what use are these commonplaces? We all know very well what are the rules for a good life and if we do not follow them it is sometimes because we are prevented by our duties, but more often because the prescriptions of hygiene oppose our passions. It is these latter which render so difficult what has been called the hygiene of the soul. What then should be our moral deportment if we wish to escape all these maladies which arise by means of the mind?

The first thing necessary, tho this is often forgotten, is a good constitution mentally. Has it not been jestingly said rather *apropos* of the bodily health that it is necessary to be judicious in the choice of one's parents?

My advice is aimed at these last. The

parents must take upon themselves the duty of watching over their own health and not ruin it by wrong habits of life, in order to transmit to their descendants a healthy mind in a healthy body.

This is not always considered, and every day we see the sad spectacle of children blemished physically, intellectually, and morally by the misconduct of their parents, especially by alcoholism.

A second duty imposed upon parents who are careful of the future of their children is that of giving them a good education; I do not say instruction. Now the best one is that of example. The child profits little from lessons, does not relish exhortations, he has a logical mind, and actions are what he appreciates.

In this domain of nervous diseases it is easy to prove the contagion of example. We see little girls already imitate their nervous father or hysterical mother, throwing themselves upon a sofa at the slightest

fatigue and complaining of backache and headache. They are sensible to all exterior influences, can not take food which they do not like, and become unnerved like their mother. They play so well the part of little nervous women that they are caught in the snare and become so really. Nervous Parents, think of this danger of moral contagion!

When we have arrived at the age of reason personal education begins and our greatest task is to retain command over ourselves. It is necessary, above all, for one to believe in his good health and his power to resist morally as well as physically.

As soon as a man believes himself to be ill he is so. He is not only so in imagination, be becomes so really, physically.

All those which have been justly called the unhappy passions—fear, inquietude, discouragement, anger—lower the nervous tension and, as all organs work under the influence of the nervous system, they

can all suffer from the rebound of our moral feebleness.

We must take literally the popular expressions to improve bad blood or, on the contrary, to improve good blood. When one is gay, contented, when one is able to believe fully in his good health, the circulation improves, the nutritious exchanges are accelerated, and the human machine works harmoniously. On the contrary, when one doubts his strength, it diminishes and all the organs manifest functional trouble, as in an electrical circuit where all the lamps burn badly because the current has lost its force.

To keep this sound confidence in his own health it is necessary not to disquiet oneself with little ailments and hurts. The human body is so complicated, it submits to so many noxious influences, that it can not work one day without some perceptible grating of its innumerable wheels. It is necessary to know how to say

"That is nothing. It will pass." For never forget that as soon as our attention, however little uneasy, dwells upon a sensation it becomes greater; if we know how to turn away our mind from it it will diminish! One can truly say of nervous ills, fear calls them forth, gives birth to them. It is with nervous diseases as with dogs—they more readily attack those who fear them.

Without doubt this tendency to neglect ills, to treat them with scorn, should not be carried too far; that would be to risk letting a serious affection develop through want of care.

This stoicism on a small scale applies only to functional troubles which we understand and of which we admit the harmlessness. In doubt it would be well to consult a physician, but one who thinks, who has other resources than drugs. It is for him to say whether it is the beginning of an organic malady or of a func-

tional trouble, for him to seek the origin which is often psychological and to give the counsel of a friend.

Many nervous symptoms arise under the influence of fatigue. Each one must learn to know himself and to fix the limits which he can not pass. A need of repose can become evident. But it is also necessary to avoid seeing fatigue through the magnifying glass of discouragement. One should know how, when duties present themselves, to shake off this fatigue, which is often more mental than physical.

People who suffer have often a natural but fatal tendency to find out the cause of the pain which they feel and to establish the relation of cause and effect between the events which preceded it and the suffering. I truly wish this was logical, but there is danger in it.

When the mind of the invalid has been struck by a succession of phenomena he is convinced of the reality of the link which

he has established and will await with anxiety the expected result. Then, as I have said, the anxious and expectant attention produces such vivid mental representations that functional trouble follows.

The history of nervousness is full of facts which show the danger of these hasty conclusions.

Many invalids show, in the least change of weather, such sensitiveness that one can not prevent the conclusion that auto-suggestion is the most manifest cause of this sensibility.

I often see invalids who can not stand the presence of some kinds of flowers in the room; they are immediately affected with headache. I have always succeeded in persuading these ultra-sensitive people to the contrary. Ladies have also been taken ill in a drawing-room and attributed their discomfort to a bouquet without discovering that the flowers were artificial!

I have seen men take cold because a

neighbor in turning the pages of his newspaper had created a current of air! I have seen a nervous attack produced from taking a glass of water between the thumb and forefinger! Because it was so cold, if you please!

It is necessary to understand how to protect oneself mentally against this quite imaginary sensitiveness. We should know also that a brave and gay spirit allows us to resist even real influences. When we have high spirits we feel the cold less; we suffer from it, on the contrary, when we feel out of sorts, sad, and it is then above all that it can exercise its deleterious influence.

The joyous humor of a family holiday or of a gay banquet permits our stomach to digest a mixed repast which we could never undertake in ordinary times when our being is affected by daily preoccupations.

Our physical health, our resistance to

illness is augmented by good moral control. And it is important to keep and carefully cultivate this moral control as a precious possession. In the first place, one must believe in the possibility of supporting, without injury, the conditions of life in which we are placed.

The world is full of people who in one way or another are persuaded of their want of power, and this conviction almost certainly leads to real want of strength.

Look at all those unhappy creatures who, healthy in body, can not support the winter in our country and believe themselves obliged to take refuge on the Riviera! Others, whose heart and lungs are sound, can not breathe on the plain and as soon as it becomes a little warm move to a mountain spot. There are some who can not stand the noise of the city, others who can not live without continual worldly distraction.

And, unhappily, it is not only the privi-

leged in point of fortune who lead this wandering life and make their health depend only on their surroundings. We often see old parents who have worked hard at the most severe tasks bleed themselves from four veins, as the saying is, to furnish their nervous sons and hysterical daughters with the money necessary for their continual journeys. And our peasants, our servants are affected also. There are some who can not bear the food of the family they serve; others, strong in body, who must be spared heavy work. They are impressionable and whenever they hear a malady spoken of they at once feel all the symptoms of it.

Still worse, I see vigorous butcher boys, farm hands, peasants who it seems to me would make superb grenadiers, complain of all the uneasy feelings of a fine lady.

This nervousness is now felt in all classes, it has become universal, and it increases from day to day.

To escape from it one must fight vigorously against it. It is a question of moral resistance and not of physical strength.

Unhappy is he who can not straighten himself up morally, who too quickly declares himself ill! He takes his place among the innumerable followers of the body of the army and life is hard for him. In the combat of life as in a campaign we bury the dead with respect, we nurse with solicitude the wounded, but no one loves the lame who do not look ill and yet are always complaining. However, the physician understands and loves these feeble creatures. He recognizes in them the weaknesses against which he himself must fight; but if he is ready to help them with warm sympathy he must do it by showing them the only road, which is self-education!

Not content with overlooking our physical discomforts, we must also diminish our impressionability as to moral emotions.

I do not mean by that to say that we must shut ourselves up in a cruel indifference, being moved by nothing. This would be egotism and that is one of the repugnant sides of a stoicism pushed to excess.

We should react briskly, act enthusiastically for good, obey the impulse of our better feelings. But however spontaneous this reaction may be, we must nevertheless leave time for calm reason to exercise a rapid control. Our reason is that which as an arbiter judges finally the value of the emotions of sensibility which make us act. If it is a sentiment of goodness, of pity, which carries us away, reason very quickly gives its approval. But when we are about to give way to a feeling of anger, envy, vexation, reason should intervene to correct the first impression and modify the final decision.

It is the same when the emotion, without being morally unhealthy, is useless and

only keeps up, without profit for any one, a sickly condition. It is necessary everywhere and at all times to know how to stop in time a tempest of emotional feeling as we stop the vibration of a glass by putting our finger upon its edge.

I often hear people to whom I give this hygienic moral advice answer me with vivacity: "But I can not do it; I have always been like this; it is my temperament." I do not doubt it. The temperament is precisely that innate disposition which we show from birth, which education often exaggerates, and which always forms the foundation of our moral personality.

But by rational education of ourselves we modify our ideas and our sentiments and we make our temperament of a noble character.

It is by no means necessary for that to have a strong will, considered as a free power. It suffices to think well, to see

clearly before us the path to be followed.

When one is quite convinced of a truth it seizes upon him and leads him on. A French philosopher, Guyau, has well said,—"He who does not act as he thinks, thinks badly."

This work of self-education is less difficult than one would think. I see every day sick people who during all their lives have suffered cruelly from this impressionability which renders them incapable of performing their duties. Often in some days, almost always in some weeks, they succeed in altering their point of view, in seeing things from another angle. In proportion as they recover their mental calm under the empire of healthy reflections, functional troubles disappear, sleep returns, the appetite arises, the body becomes stronger, and the success of this mental treatment demonstrates the supremacy of the mind over the body.

It is in this self-education that the sick should find a cure, and well people find a preservative against nervous diseases. They should begin in little things, in the good habit of overlooking trifles and going bravely forward without troubling too much about their own ease.

With age anxiety increases. Practical life brings us annoyances of all kinds; new occasion to control our sensibility, voluntarily to create an optimistic disposition which will make us, as the saying is, take everything by the good end.

Finally, if, having reached a certain maturity of mind, we have, however little, succeeded in creating this precious condition of the soul, our aspirations should rise higher still and we should face the duties which our presence in this world imposes upon us in our intercourse with our fellow beings.

We see then clearly that the main object of our life should be the constant perfecting of our moral self.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE

In the absence of all religious conception, of all peremptory morality, the thinker feels the unspeakable trouble which results from a life where egotism prevails. To find complete happiness and health we must then turn our attention away from ourselves and fix it upon others; altruism should take the place of native egotism. This tendency can not carry us too far and we risk but little in forgetting ourselves completely. Is this not so?

In this domain of higher morality our step at best is as unsteady as in the mental hygiene which we should oppose to physical ills and vexations. Here also we have need of all possible moral assistance. Those whose turn of mind still permits of a simple faith find a support in their religious convictions if they are sincere and lived up to. Those whose reflections lead them to be freethinkers find in themselves, in a stoicism free from egotism, strength to resist all which life brings them.

Wo to the indifferent ones—those who seek only the satisfaction of their own selfish desires!

It is dangerous to go through life without religion and without philosophy. I can even, without doing any wrong to the believers, say plainly without philosophy; for religion itself can be efficacious only when it creates a living philosophy in him who practises it.

The banner matters little if we carry it high enough!

The influence of the physical over the moral is generally exaggerated and biological science not well understood or well interpreted has encouraged a crude and gross materialism which can never avail in regulating the life.

It is useless, in my eyes, to return, in order to solve the problem, to the ancient conceptions of a spiritual dualism, to turn the back on reason and substitute a blind faith for it. It suffices to recall the fact

that there is an ideal world and that we at the same time obey the impulses of sensibility and the incentives of reason. We can draw largely from the depths of moral conceptions which successive generations have created and work for the harmonious development of our personality.

Our moral health depends upon it and as the body suffers in the rebound of the various conditions of our spirit we shall, without repeal, assure our physical health by the education of our reason.

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The day after the above lecture I received letters from some persons who told me that they had profited by my advice and who manifested their intention of applying this mental treatment to their ills. I congratulate them and I beg them to remember well that in insisting upon the power of mental representations I have never wished to accuse their sufferings

of being imaginary. I know all the effort which this stoical education demands.

On the other side, I fear to have been misunderstood by others. I have been told of husbands who have recognized their wives in the cases which I have sketched and have not hesitated to tell them so with too little gentleness.

I have seen young ladies a little sharply correct a too emotional friend. I should be distressed to have been the involuntary cause of such things.

It is our own ills and not those of others which we should treat with this philosophical disdain.

We must not look for the mote in the eye of our neighbor and fail to see the beam which is in our own!

THE END.