

THE DELUSIONS OF CLAIRVOYANCE.

PROBABLY nine out of ten of the intelligent people of this country believe more or less firmly that certain persons, in peculiar states of the body or mind, have the power of clairvoyance or clear seeing, or, as it is sometimes called, of second sight. Just what this power is, or rather what is claimed for it, cannot be stated in a word, for the reason that it is vague and uncertain, varying with the person making the claim; but in general it is regarded as a kind of sixth sense not given to all individuals nor to any individual at all times, but developed usually, if not always, in the state of trance. Those who are favored above their fellow-mortals by this special gift of heaven can tell the past and predict the future histories of those with whom they are *en rapport*, and, more specifically, can find lost persons and property, diagnose and cure obscure diseases without seeing the patient, and, in some instances, become the privileged bearers of messages from the world of spirits.

Clairvoyance is the daughter of animal magnetism, which is the one great delusion of our time and especially of our country, and is indeed to the nineteenth century what witchcraft was to the sixteenth or seventeenth. The chief fact of interest connected with this delusion of clairvoyance as well as with its parent, animal magnetism, is that at the present time it prevails more widely among the thoughtful and cultured class than among the ignorant and degraded; among the latter the active belief in this delusion is unconsciously dying out; those who consult clairvoyants ride in carriages, dress in silks, laces and diamonds, attend popular churches, and, what is most remarkable, are highly intelligent in literature, in art and even in science.

In this respect, clairvoyance is repeating the history of witchcraft, which, as Mr. Lecky forcibly points out, was abandoned by the ignorant and the lowly, while yet scholars and gentlemen, jurists and philosophers, and even theologians such as Erasmus and Luther, Matthew Hale and Cotton Mather loved it, cherished it and fought for it.

The position that physicians and men of science have held in regard to these unscientific claims is one of passive but not active rejection; they have been unwilling to declare with certainty that such phenomena may not occur, although not regarding them

as in any sense proved, in spite of the testimony in their favor; consequently these claims have not been formally received into science, nor have they been formally expelled from science; rather they have been kept on the anxious seat, in a kind of probation, while all the time the suspicion has been growing and extending that the higher science of the future would cast them out altogether, just as the science of the past and present has already cast out the claims of witchcraft, alchemy, astrology, elixir of life, squaring the circle and perpetual motion. It is but a very few years since a paper was read at a meeting of the New York State Medical Society by one of the prominent members, advocating, in calm and earnest language, all the claims that it is the object of this essay to refute; and yet not a word of protest was offered. The silence that followed the reading of the paper was quite far from consent; but, at the present day, the reading of such a production would be met by facts and arguments of a most convincing character, for the advance of knowledge in the medical profession is away from these and all allied claims.* Medical science has been reconstructed since the committees of the French Academy made their non-expert experiments on the subject of clairvoyance and mesmerism.

Outside of negroes and spiritualists, there are probably not a thousand persons in this country who have even a lingering faith in witchcraft; on the other hand, there are probably not a thousand intelligent persons in the country—not even excepting physicians and all classes of professional, scientific and literary men—who would be willing to state, with absolute positiveness, that clairvoyance and animal magnetism were utter delusions; that there was nothing in them whatever that could not be explained in full detail by known physiological laws and by trickery; and yet, a person who should make such a positive statement would be quite right and would be sustained by the future. No member of the human race, man or woman, child or adult, in trance or out of trance, or in any

* It is evidence of the rapid progress of professional knowledge of these subjects, that at the last meeting of the society the president, Dr. Roosa, in his annual address, took the sound, scientific position in regard to delusions, and it was voted that his address be sent to every physician in the state.

phase of health or disease, ever possessed, even for one moment, the feeblest degree of clairvoyant or second-sight power.

It is known by established and formulated biological law that no human being has, or can have, any quality different in *kind* from those that belong to the race in general. To this law there can be no exception. What the law of gravity is to the claim of the vortices; what the Copernican theory is to the claims of those who believe in the flatness of the earth; what chemistry is to alchemy; what astronomy is to astrology; what mathematics is to the claim of squaring the circle; what the law of conservation of force is to the claim of perpetual motion; what general physiology and pathology are to the claims of witchcraft and spiritism; what the physiology and pathology of the involuntary life are to spiritism,—such is the above biological law to the claims of clairvoyance, prophesy, and mind-reading; disproving them absolutely and beyond the need of investigation,—indeed, to such a degree as to make investigation unscientific, as well as unnecessary. In this way, science, or organized knowledge, by discovering and formulating the unalterable laws of nature, in the various departments of human endeavor, is able to predict with unfailing precision not only what will happen, but what cannot happen. Science thus becomes the real and only clairvoyant; only through the eyes of science is it given to man to read the future.

The amount of human testimony in favor of the claim of clairvoyance is, it must be allowed, enormous and imposing, almost equal to that in favor of the claims of witchcraft, astrology, and the elixir of life; but in science average human testimony is of no value. A good example of the worth—or, rather, of the worthlessness—of popular beliefs in scientific matters, is the superstition, almost universal in this country, even among the very best classes, that it is the custom of surgeons to take out the eye and replace it in the socket. Oculists tell me that their patients sometimes declare that they have seen this operation performed, and they will not be convinced to the contrary by the statement of experts that it is as easy to cut off the head and replace it, as to detach the eye from its vascular and nervous connection and put it back in its socket. A medical friend tells me that he was once earnestly urged to take out a patient's liver and scrape it; and, when he demurred against attempting such an impossible operation, he was

informed that it could be done, that she had seen it done, or, at least, knew of its being done in the case of one of her friends; and, as usual in such cases, she persisted in her belief. Superstition is always skeptical. Those who consult clairvoyants are in logic not believers, unbelievers, since they doubt the teachings of science, distrust the necessary conclusions of the trained intellect, reject or ignore inevitable truth, refuse obedience to the empire of law, and take up arms against Nature itself.

To the eye of the physiologist, who is familiar with the science of delusions, all the claims built upon alleged clairvoyance are not even mysterious; they are as transparent as glass, and as frail. Science sees right through them, and it has but to touch them and they shiver to atoms.

The practical success of clairvoyants, public and private, is the result of these three factors: 1. guess-work reduced to a science and an art, 2. coincidences, and 3. trickery.

Guessing is at once a science and an art,—a science, because it may be regulated by certain principles. The familiar "guessing game" illustrates what can be done by guessing scientifically carried out; with the privilege to the guesser of but twenty chances, he may yet, beginning with the kingdom to which the article belongs, reach the most minute object before his list is exhausted. Success in this game, as all who have played it know, depends much on practice. Clairvoyants devote their lives to the practice of this game, for they play it with every victim they meet.

The subject of coincidences is one that has excited far less attention among the students of history or of human nature than it deserves; little, indeed, has been written upon it. Among those who have given the subject any thought, the most erroneous impression prevails that it can be brought under the laws of pure mathematics. In the life of every active human being are frequent, almost daily occurring, coincidences, which those who give any attention to them may, if they choose, make the basis of most absurd delusions. Usually we give no more attention to these occurrences than an exclamation of surprise, and then forget all about them. We are talking of a person whom, perhaps, we rarely meet, and have not seen for a long time; suddenly he appears. A thought—out of the ordinary course, it may be—enters our mind; we express it, when behold! the same thought has just been passing through the mind of our friend. We meet with a certain experience, and then

we remember, or fancy we remember, that the same experience has happened to us in a dream. Of all these daily and hourly happening coincidences, clairvoyants skillfully avail themselves, and in that direction they are aided by the ignorance and eagerness of their victims.

The trickery of clairvoyants consists mainly in the art of making their victims unconsciously reveal, by word or look, facts of personal history, and then, at the proper time, in re-impacting the information to them. In this way they gain the credit, even among persons of keen intellect, of being endowed with divine powers.

In drawing out the facts of personal or family history, clairvoyants do not always ask direct questions, but rather make statements with an implied interrogation, to which the victim, oftentimes entirely unconsciously, responds by word or look or gesture, or perhaps by all three; and, at a later stage of the interview, these secret facts are artfully given back to the victim, who has no recollection of having previously imparted them, and will not believe that he has done so, but prefers to believe that he is in the presence of Divinity.

It is not only possible but easy for a practical adept to draw out in this way minute and elaborate details of secret family history. A few years ago, while connected with one of the public institutions of this city, I made a number of experiments in this line. I told the patients afflicted with various forms of nervous and allied disorders, not to tell me about their symptoms, nor give me any facts in their cases, but to let me tell them; and then I would proceed to indicate, after the manner of a clairvoyant, the locality of their maladies, and the history of their troubles. In the majority of cases I was successful, and made out the diagnosis to the satisfaction of those who sought my advice, and with good reason, for nothing that I could do prevented them from telling me, although I asked them no questions; unintentionally and unconsciously, they would guide me at every stage of the interview. By a little practice any one could easily acquire this art; and long study, such as professional clairvoyants bestow upon this subject, develops great skill in thus managing and deluding the unwary and non-expert.

Another trick of clairvoyants is to find out facts in the lives of their victims before they consult them. In some cases this can be done without difficulty. One instance was

brought to my notice, where a traveling diviner astonished an entire village by informing those who consulted him of certain mysterious occurrences that had taken place there long before, and of which in some way he had gained knowledge. Grave-yards, town records, photograph albums, family bibles, and all other sources of family history, are elaborately studied by clairvoyants and mediums.

Yet another way of learning secrets is to employ a confederate who converses with the victims in the waiting-room and learns from them the object of their visit, or listens to their conversation from a safely secured closet. This form of trickery, however, is not usual, the first named being usually sufficient to deceive almost any non-expert. This is similar to the well-known confidence game. The old trick of opening sealed letters is very easy as dry heat or dry cold carefully applied will open almost any sealed letter without breaking the seal.

The undoubted success of clairvoyants in relieving and curing cases of obscure diseases is very easily explained. It has been shown in all ages, and among all people, that the action of the mind upon the body is one of the most potent means of relieving physical maladies, and, more or less, all successful physicians avail themselves, consciously or unconsciously, of this means of treatment. The confidence in clairvoyants, on the part of those who consult them, is the chief cause of their cures. In some cases tonic remedies are given that meet nearly all cases, and perhaps really help a certain proportion.

In order to test clairvoyance it is necessary to use test cases, into which the element of error from chance or coincidence cannot enter. In nearly all the cases of acute or chronic disease, at some one or all the stages there is pain in all the principal regions of the body, in the head, the chest, the stomach, the abdomen, and in the limbs. Take the cases of disease as they run, and we find very few indeed whose subjects have any prominent region of the body into which pains or uneasy sensations have not entered. Notably is this the case in chronic nervous diseases, the class that are most frequently referred to clairvoyants. It is in the majority of cases impossible for a clairvoyant to miss making a satisfactory diagnosis; so far, at least, as determining the locality of the pain is concerned, the difficulty of guessing wrong is greater than the difficulty of guessing right.

When a patient of this kind visits a clairvoyant, or sends a friend to consult her, or incloses a lock of hair in a letter and intrusts it to the mail, the chances are ten to one that he will get an answer which, in a general way, corresponds to his own idea and experience of the disease.

Another way in which clairvoyants succeed is by cautious generalizations that are wide enough to include specific facts. This statement can be best made clear by illustration. In guessing the value of lost property, for example, clairvoyants frequently say that it is jewelry. This revelation at once astonishes and delights the seeker for information, and he never stops to think that in nine cases out of ten stolen articles are some kind of jewelry. People very rarely consult a clairvoyant for lost books or papers, or trifles of any kind, or indeed for any other but quite valuable articles, as gold, silver, diamonds, or precious stones. The clairvoyant, encouraged by the perhaps unconscious expressions of satisfaction on the part of her interlocutor, hazards a guess, and states with great pomp and dignity that it is *round*. This announcement causes yet greater delight, for who, under such circumstances, overawed by converse with a superior being in direct communication with heaven, would stop to consider that almost all jewelry is "round," watches, rings, studs, locketts, buttons, pencils, pen-holders, plate of table-ware, even of all kinds, as napkin rings, ear-rings, braceletts, and so on, through the entire catalogue of a jeweler's establishment. Then she ventures the statement that it is of a bright color, which is pretty generally true of any jewelry worth keeping. To all these statements the seeker for information unconsciously nods assent; so the clairvoyant is sure she is right so far as she has gone. Growing a little more bold, the declaration is made that the article is small, "as she sees it," as though articles of jewelry were ever large. Again the victim nods assent. "It is worn about the person sometimes," continues the mind-reader. The speaking eye of the victim tells her that thus far there has been no mistake. "It is not a bracelet?" The expression, which she is intently watching by opening her eyes at each critical moment, tells her no. "Nor a ring? It is larger than that." No sign of assent from the entranced dupe, but rather a look of negation, which the operator quickly interprets. "It's a watch?" is the next venture.

"That's so; but how could you find out?" inquires the astounded visitor.

"It's just as mysterious to me as to you," replies the deceiver; "but it exhausts me terribly."

"Can you tell me what has become of the watch?" further inquires the visitor, overjoyed as well as astonished, and ready to receive anything.

"Sometimes I can do that. You suspect your servant-girl, and you are right," is the shrewd reply.

So long as that victim lives she will sound the praises of that clairvoyant, and will declare that she could read the secrets of the soul.

A friend of mine, a superior expert in the study of delusions, once visited a male clairvoyant and medium by the name of Slade,—a man very famous in this specialty,—and made inquiries about an invalid lady friend. Slade closed his eyes, professing, after the manner of those of his class, to go into a trance, and prepared to deliver his revelations. He began by inquiring the sex of the invalid, and then made the very general statement, "This person is quite nervous." As this remark would apply to nearly the entire population of this country, my friend was not specially enlightened. Then followed a string of generalizations, such as that there was "congestion," and "quiet was needed," and so forth,—statements that would apply to about every bed-ridden person in the land. My friend was so amused at the awkwardness of the imposition that he laughed aloud, at which the entranced medium instantly opened his eyes.

And yet the majority of the dupes of clairvoyants would have called such an interview satisfactory, and would have gone away declaring that they had been told just what was the matter with the patient.

One time, in company with the same friend, I visited a Mrs. Chase, a noted clairvoyant, a stately and graceful lady, famous both for her cures and as a finder of lost property. Judging from our looks, perhaps, that we were not sufficiently credulous, she was at first indisposed to grant an interview, but finally consented. Lowering the gas somewhat, she passed her hand over her face, and professed to go into a trance in a style quite artistic. I had in my mind a patient with a goiter, or tumor of the neck, who at that time

chanced to be under my care. In all other respects the patient was perfectly well. There were no general symptoms upon which a clairvoyant could seize. The disease was special and local, and was disappearing under treatment. The case was therefore excellently adapted to test the alleged powers of clear seeing.

The woman began by quiet questioning to find out the particulars of the case, but I gave her little assistance beyond informing her that the sick person was a young man, and my friend. I need not go into the full details of a *séance* that was protracted for nearly two hours, all of which time was occupied on the part of the clairvoyant in the hopeless endeavor to devise generalizations that would cover the case for which she was consulted. She informed me that my patient was confined to his bed in the basement of a house in New York, that he would not probably recover, that he had been badly treated by some one, and that he would probably continue to be a sufferer, in spite of all that I could do.

"Is there no hope?" inquired I. "Cannot you do something for him? I can't bear the thought of losing my friend."

"We may help him," she replied.

"Who is *we*?" I inquired.

"Myself," she replied. "When I am in this state I say *we*."

What she meant by this I did not fully understand, but it may be supposed that in the trance state she professed to count herself one, and her personality another, making two in all, thus justifying the editorial "*we*."

"Our tonic No. 47," she continued, "will help him."

"Do you see him as you talk to me?" I asked.

"Yes; I see the room, and his friends about his bed; he is suffering terribly; it is all before us."

"Wonderful, wonderful!" I ejaculated as I thought of my patient in perfect health, (save a slight tumor), attending to his daily duties.

I promised to get a bottle of tonic No. 47 the next day, and further asked whether it would not be well to remove the patient to one of the upper stories of the house, where the air would be better. She thought he was too weak to be moved, whereupon I suggested that the whole floor over his head might be removed and the bed raised by ropes. Even this horrible absurdity disturbed her but slightly, for she went on manu-

facturing falsehood after falsehood with a cool and calm countenance and a perfectly un-irritated manner. The equanimity of this woman excited our amazement and admiration. Every word that she uttered during that long interview was a lie. She knew that she was lying and that her trance was a sham, and she suspected that we knew it; and yet there was nothing in her manner to suggest anything but entire confidence in the truth of her revelations.

In the early part of the interview I induced her to say that my patient was of good character. In the latter part of the interview, leading her along by various suggestions, saying yes to all her guesses and raising little queries now and then, I induced her to give a directly opposite opinion that he was a harum-scarum young fellow. After some further trifling suggestions we closed the interview. As I paid my fee I asked her with the sincerest possible expression:

"Do you always get your cases as accurately in all their details as this?"

"Yes, almost always."

"Then you must be inspired," I replied, and left her, with the final assurance from her that if my friend, bad as he was, would take her tonic No. 47 there was perhaps one chance in ten that he would get well. And yet this clairvoyant did as well as any one ever did or ever could with such a test case as I gave her. I have seen many of the best clairvoyants in the country, and she succeeded as well as any other.

In order to test the power of a very celebrated woman in New York who was every week doing wonderful things in medicine, and in the discovery of lost property, I used as a test case a medical instrument that had strangely disappeared. This was an instrument that was then comparatively new and would not be familiar to the majority of people, even to clairvoyants. The test seemed to me almost a crucial one and the chance of her guessing it one in many millions. This was my first experience with clairvoyants. Although I was there to investigate her professed powers, or rather to find out how it was that so many of my friends were deluded by her, I yet allowed myself to tell her where I lived, and was beginning to give her other information when my reason came to the front and took command. Up to that moment she had astonished me by the general accuracy of her guesses; after that moment all was confusion; I no

longer gave my dissent from or assent to her leading questions by any audible sound whatever, or by expression of the face, but compelled her to confine herself to her legitimate business of mind-reading. She informed me that the article I had lost was small, as is indeed almost all lost property, and that it was of a bright color, which is true of all jewelry and metals.*

I have been speaking thus far of public clairvoyants, those who make a business of pretending to go into the trance, and, while in that state, of finding lost persons and property and diagnosing and curing disease; while there are some persons who can at will put themselves into a trance, yet these public clairvoyants rarely, if ever, go into that state. There is no reason why they should do so even if they have the power, for the trance, in any of its stages, confers no new or special gifts, but only exaltation of those senses and those faculties that in greater or less degree are common to all persons out of the trance.

Trance is a disease of the nervous system in which the cerebral activity is concentrated in some limited region of the brain, the activity of the rest of the brain being for the time suspended. It is not so very infrequent, is, indeed, quite common; very many cases representing various phases have been brought to my attention; some of them I have had opportunity to study at every possible advantage. Among the genuine and interesting symptoms of trance are sighing respiration, excited pulse, exaltation of the special senses, giving rise to the belief that there is a transference of sense or a sixth sense, coldness of the extremities, darting, shooting, thrilling sensations resembling electrical shocks, muscular twitchings, convulsions, closing of the eyes and fixity of

position, illusions and hallucinations, somnambulism, and, in rare cases, double consciousness. All of these phenomena are of the highest interest, and they are verifiable, but they are not supernatural, nor unnatural; they are a part of law as truly as the symptoms of small-pox or typhoid fever.

The early stages of the trance can be readily counterfeited so that the best expert cannot detect it. Clairvoyants have every reason in the world to simulate the trance, because there is in all civilized lands an almost universal but very erroneous belief that the trance develops powers of prophecy and second sight. On the other hand they have every reason to keep out of the genuine trance, because when we seek to deceive and swindle our fellow-mortals we need full control of our faculties, and this entranced persons do not have.

Another count in this indictment against public clairvoyants is that many of them are procuresses and seek in every way the ruin of the young girls who consult them. Their power over their victims even when they do not directly accomplish their destruction is very great, leading oftentimes to waste of money, or health or life.

Clairvoyants are responsible for not a few deaths in the families of those who believe in them. Their method is as follows: A clairvoyant hazards the prediction that a death will take place in the family of one of her patrons in less than a year. During the next year, some one or two in that family are taken ill, it may be seriously; the prediction is called to mind and the consequent fright may be the cause of the patient's death.

To rescue one who has ever become fully convinced of the genuineness of clairvoyants, and addicted to the habit of consulting them, is sometimes as difficult as to save a drunkard or an opium eater. The victims of clairvoyance, as of other and allied untruths, become moral inebriates; they are drunk with their delusions, and, although, like the victims of intemperance, they may be ashamed of their folly, and, when removed from temptation, may resolve, in full sincerity to reform, yet, under the pressure of affliction, or in the presence of a pretender to these mysterious powers, their resolutions are forgotten; they relapse like the drunkard who finds that a single glass of wine is stronger than legions of pledges, or the love and pleadings of wife, and parent, and child.

The friend to whom I have several times referred, and who is an expert in the study

* Those who would learn the secret of the success of clairvoyants would do well to study in detail the performances of that wonderful lad, who recently convinced the residents of St. Albans, Vermont, that he was Charley Ross. Even a citizen of Philadelphia was for the time convinced by his general replies to questioning that the clever lad was, as he pretended, familiar with that city. The desire of the people to have the boy proved to be the real Charley Ross blinded them to the defects or blunders in his statements, and induced them to aid him unconsciously in the manufacture of his lies. Mr. Ross, himself made skeptical by many disappointments, at once recognized the real character of the pretender.

In a similar manner, those who visit clairvoyants, desire to have them succeed, and consequently overlook their mistakes, make the most of their happy hits, and unconsciously assist and guide their guessing in every possible way.

of delusions, and has had an especially large experience in detecting and exposing clairvoyants, tells me that he has found great difficulty in saving their victims, especially young persons, who have once fallen into their power.

Sometimes, as I myself know, the treatment of established physicians of character and education has been completely overthrown,—and with disastrous results,—by some one's superstitious confidence in the prescriptions of clairvoyants.

To offer money rewards for the display of clairvoyant power—as the French Academy has done—is unscientific and puerile, and—save, perhaps, as a means of impressing and convincing the people, who cannot understand physiological law—should not be encouraged. Money has its limitations as well as its power; the laws of nature are not in the market; the sun cannot be hired to rise in the west, nor to give place to the earth as the center of our system; the principle of the conservation of force is not open to bribery; and all the wealth of the world is as helpless as an infant to make seventeen out of two and two, or to endow any human creature with clairvoyant, or second-sight, or mind-reading, power.

Sometimes the question is asked whether some of the public clairvoyants may not be honest, self deceived, but not intentional swindlers. Honest clairvoyance pursued as a business is a contradiction of words. Success in the practice of clairvoyance as a trade requires a knowledge, natural or acquired, of the conditions of success, one of which is intentional deception of the victim. In private life there are occasionally found those who, through exhaustion of disease or from natural susceptibility of constitution, readily fall into the well-understood state of trance, and in that state they honestly imagine that they are blessed with the gifts of healing and prophecy, and in this delusion they are encouraged by the fondness of friends, the credulity or non-expertness of their medical attendants, and by occasional coincidences. Clairvoyants of this class are sometimes honest at first, although they may develop into professional tricksters; but if they remain honest, they soon find out that their gifts are too uncertain to be of any practical value, and soon, as the expression goes, they "lose their powers."

A striking case of this kind occurred a few years since in Brooklyn. A young lady of good character afflicted with severe

chronic disease professed to be favored with second sight. Friends and physicians, amid great excitement, urged her on; clergymen and newspapers became interested and professed to investigate; half a city went wild about a poor suffering invalid, who had no powers except those common to the race, and who, above all things, needed to be let alone.*

Another question often raised is whether these public clairvoyants can be legally punished. I received about a year ago a letter from one of the editors of this city, asking me to aid him in framing a law to be presented to the legislature that would cover these cases. My reply was in substance that any law, however skillfully framed, could be enforced only with great difficulty, especially in this country. In a despotism impostors fare much harder than in America. As long as average human testimony is accepted in our courts on questions of this nature, so long will it be impossible to convict clairvoyants or mediums; for human testimony without limit can be brought in favor of the wildest of their claims. Even witchcraft, in the days of its glory, could not have arrayed a more intelligent, and honorable, and sincere body of believers and advocates, than the clairvoyance of to-day.

In departments of science that have been long established, the testimony of two or three experts, if they accord, outweighs that of

* Since the above was written, this person, Mollie Fancher, has become famous all over the world; and, if any amount of excellent human testimony of the non-expert sort could create a science, all of the claims that have been made in regard to her must be accepted. So far as the unfortunate patient is concerned, no responsibility can be attached to what she claims, or what is claimed for her; the question as it relates to her does not in any way touch on morality, but is purely one of science; the phenomena of hysteria and trance which she manifests are symptoms that are now familiar and well understood, and are of great interest; the claims of clairvoyance, second sight, and prophecy that have been made for her by various persons—though not by the physician who has seen most of her, and for years has studied her symptoms—are of the same value as similar claims that are made by and for thousands and thousands in this and other countries. In hysteria, hystero-epilepsy and hysterical trance, delusions and deceptions are a part of the symptoms as truly as starvation, exaltation of the senses, anæsthesia, or paralysis, and those sufferers who manifest these delusions or deceptions are frequently no more blameworthy for them, than for the various and obvious physical symptoms of their disease. On the part of many, great desire has been expressed to see this Brooklyn case, and study her clairvoyant manifestations; but for this eagerness there is little justification, since claims, every way identical, are made by very many in private and public life, and in every part of the country.

scores of non-experts, as is seen not unfrequently in cases of poisoning; but the successful study of delusions is something very recent; it is, so to speak, just entering the domain of science; the number of experts in the subject is very limited, and those few are known as such only in a very narrow circle; consequently, their opinions are not sought for in litigated cases; but in their place, mediums and clairvoyants and their victims are invited to give their opinions under oath on one of the most difficult and important branches of science, the physiology and pathology of the nervous system.* Years

* This was illustrated in the famous Ward case in Detroit, in which any one thoroughly familiar with the subject of delusions, would have sworn, and could have sustained his oath by cogent and convincing reasoning, that a firm belief in spiritualism is not by any means a presumptive evidence of insanity, and thus would have avoided a long and useless trial.

In the Kiddle case, now before the public, the same question has been presented. There is no presumptive evidence that this hitherto successful superintendent of our public schools is insane, or likely to be; he is simply a non-expert. Cases of real or professed trance in his own family have puzzled him as they would have puzzled any one but a specialist in that department of the nervous system. Unable to account for these phenomena by laws that were known to him, he accounts for them—in accordance

hence, when the knowledge of this subject, now confined to a limited body of specialists, shall be somewhat diffused through society, and the fact of the existence of such knowledge shall be recognized, then, and probably not before, will it be possible to enforce any law designed to protect our people from clairvoyants. In this as in other matters, law follows public opinion more than it leads it. At the present time clairvoyants are very dear to the American heart; nearly every house is for them a castle; if seriously threatened, thousands would rally to their support. The remedy for delusions is not in law, but in a higher civilization.

with the accepted logic of the day—by the theory of spirits. His conclusion is unscientific, but his logic is unanswerable.

Indeed, if a belief in spiritism, in animal magnetism, in clairvoyance, in mind-reading, in the evidence of the senses, and allied delusions is proof of insanity, then this United States of America is but one vast asylum. As it is, delusions take but the third rank among the exciting causes that fill our institutions for the insane. In the twentieth century the true philosophy of trance, and kindred phenomena of the nervous system will be taught in all our schools; and then our pupils, our teachers, and our superintendents, will be saved from the evil consequences of false reasoning.

THE FLOODING OF THE SAHARA.

"ACROSS the Sahara by steamer" promises at no distant day to be classed among the announcements of this age of mechanical and engineering triumphs. That the Sahara, the figure in the world's literature and oratory for barrenness and solitude, should lose its old character and put on a new one in contrast with the old, would be surprising indeed. The proposal on the part of English and French engineers to flood the great desert with the waters of the ocean and of the Mediterranean, and transform its waste into a watery highway for the commerce of the nations, at first impresses us as visionary and impracticable. A thorough examination of the subject, however, has led some of the most eminent scientists to quite a different conclusion.

The isolation of Africa has largely been due to the succession of cataracts with which nature has blockaded her great rivers. The Nile, the Niger, and the Livingstone, with their insuperable obstacles to navigation,

seem the very emissaries to the spirit of darkness, forbidding the entrance of light to his primeval domain. Though embracing within its boundaries nearly one-fourth of the entire land area of the globe, Africa has the smallest extent of coast line of all the continents. Few indentations are observed in its entire circuit, and consequently but few harbors exist. Its great desert, also, has always presented a barrier which the civilizations of the Mediterranean could not pass. Hence the great continent has remained undeveloped and comparatively unknown to the present. Exploration has, as yet, offered no satisfactory solution for the problem of opening Africa to the world. Stanley's magnificent achievement will be almost as magnificent for any bold adventurer who may follow in his footsteps, since the second, and probably all, descents of the Livingstone for decades to come, will be as difficult as the first. It is furthermore possible that the savages of the great river,