AN INQUIRY INTO THE NATURE AND ORIGIN OF MENTAL DERANGEMENT.

COMPREHENDING A CONCISE SYSTEM OF THE PHYSIOLOGY AND PATHOLOGY OF THE HUMAN MIND, AND A HISTORY OF THE PASSIONS AND THEIR EFFECTS.

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ON ATTENTION, AND ITS DISEASES.

Definition of the faculty of attention; difference between it and the power of attention; what stimuli excite it. The question whether it is under the influence of volition examined. The great readiness with which we attend to some subjects and objects, when compared with others, accounted for; the effects of education on attention. The morbid alteration of this faculty reduced under three classes, and each of them described and enlarged on.

When any object of external sense, or of thought, occupies the mind in such a degree that a person does not receive a clear perception from any other one, he is said to attend to it. The principle that is excited in his mind by a perception, or thought, is commonly called the faculty of attention; a faculty which
which may be justly said to be the parent of all our knowledge.

The experience of every man must lead him to acknowledge that the power of attention is different, not only in different individuals, but also in himself at different times. He meets with many who appear to him to exert it in a much stronger degree, and for a much longer period of time, than he himself can do; and he also discovers that some others are much inferior to himself in these particulars. He also observes that he himself cannot attend so well when wearied with fatigue, or oppressed with a full meal, or debilitated by disease, as when these causes do not operate: a proper distinction, then, ought to be made between the faculty and the power of attention. The faculty is the same, whether in action or not; the power is the degree of excitement produced by the application of mental stimuli.

The stimuli which set it in action, in the first place, are either perceptions of external objects,
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objects, or those renewed in the different operations of memory, imagination, and judgment, and when it is disengaged from one set of perceptions and thoughts, and passes to another, this happens either by means of the association of ideas, or by our being accidentally affected by some stronger impression than that with which we were previously engaged. The first of these positions is illustrated by finding that our attention passes easily, as it were, from one part of a chain of argument to another, which we have been accustomed to connect together, or from the recollection of any one past event to a multitude of others associated with it; and the second is elucidated by the facts, that a sudden and strong light, such as a flash of lightning, a loud and sudden noise, and bodily pain, all withdraw the attention from the thoughts it was occupied with the moment before these events occurred.

Are there any other powers which act on attention beside the mental stimuli already mentioned? When we refer to what passes within ourselves, we are inclined to think that attention
Attention can be increased by volition. There is no cause to be discovered in the nature either of attention, or volition, why this should not be so; but the opinion is considered as very unphilosophical by some modern writers, especially by those who deny the free agency of man. It is said that no man wills to be attentive, without some cause excites him to form that resolution. The cause that does so is a motive, and all stronger motives overcome weaker ones; therefore, when a person wills to be attentive, he only yields to a stronger impression than that which acted on his mind before this act of volition took place; and therefore we are deceived when we call this a voluntary act.

That the will cannot be excited to act without a cause, requires no great depth of philosophical knowledge to comprehend. The question, however, is not how the will is excited; the answer to that is of no consequence in the present case: all that we wish to know is whether volition has not a powerful influence on the faculty of attention.

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There are, unfortunately, no external phenomena which enable us to judge of what passes in the mind of others on such occasions as are fitted to determine this point; but as consciousness is a principle which makes us acquainted with the exercise of our own faculties, it is reasonable to depend on it for a proof. The conviction of every man who is not fettered by any philosophical hypothesis, is, that he can increase attention by an effort of volition; and when he wishes to excite the attention of any one else, he generally does so by exciting the will of that person. When we form a resolution to act in a certain manner, on any particular occasion, does it not often require the strongest effort of volition to attend to the resolution so as to exclude the impression of motives which, physically speaking, are of a much more powerful kind? A person by previously forming a resolution to submit to certain bodily pain, without uttering a groan, voluntarily directs his attention to some imaginary object, and he feels, or in other words, he is conscious of the voluntary exertion it requires to keep his attention fixed on
on that object under the pains he is suffering. Certain American tribes by fixing their attention on the hatred they owe their enemies, and the injuries which they or their friends have formerly received from them, sustain, without uttering a groan, the most excruciating pains which can be inflicted on the human frame. An Italian criminal, by voluntarily representing to himself the gibbet, and strengthening the representation by frequently calling out Io ti veddo, Io ti veddo, sustained all the cruel pains of the torture without confessing his crime.

The principal effect which attention has on the mind, is to render all perceptions and thoughts clearer and more vivid, and consequently to lay the foundation of a sure and faithful recollection, and to render judgment quicker and more correct.

As the mere force or intensity with which we employ attention is, in a great degree, a voluntary act, and as all acts of body and mind are more easily renewed in proportion to the number
number of times they are repeated, it is evident how much the attention of parents and instructors of children ought to be directed to this circumstance. It is almost impossible to begin too soon to render children attentive to the objects of their education.

There is a very singular fact attending the exercise of this faculty, which must have struck many people, but which, as far as my reading extends, has not yet been attempted to be explained. It is the great readiness with which we attend to certain subjects and objects rather than to others. The fact is so general that it is deemed unnecessary to adduce instances of it with the sole view of confirming the assertion. Instances must be adduced at all events, to prove the influence of the causes I shall assign for this curious psychological phenomenon.

As far as my own observation goes, it appears to me to depend, in most cases, on one of the two following circumstances:

1st. The
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1st. The constitutional proneness which we have to certain passions and emotions, rather than to others.

2dly. The influence of certain desires, passions, and emotions, to which we have not, indeed, any original or constitutional proneness, but which we have acquired from education, from our situation in life, our professions, or customary avocations, and various circumstances which regard our relationship with the world at large.

The common manner of explaining the nature of this secret influence by means of which certain objects seem to arrest our attention more forcibly than others, is by saying that these objects interest us; and in regard to those things to which we cannot direct our attention with steadiness, they are said to have no interest for us. But what do these expressions mean? This interest, what is it?

That
That some men from organization, or constitution, as it is commonly called, are disposed to certain emotions and passions, rather than to others; as, for instance, to the violent emotions of anger, and its modifications; the emotions of fear; the desire of the sex, and its modifications, &c. is a fact which daily experience is sufficient to confirm. Such men have their attention most readily engaged by every object or thought which excites these emotions. A person of an irritable disposition seems to the generality of mankind, from the mere influence which this law of the economy has over him, to take delight in seeking for sources of quarrel, controversy, and ill humour. A timorous person seems to create causes of alarm and apprehension from the slightest occasions.

Although the desires, emotions, and passions to which certain individuals are most subject, from the original conformation of their nerves, necessarily give a particular bias to this faculty of attention, especially among uncultivated men, and savages, inasmuch as
it is most readily engaged by the objects which excite these affections; yet it cannot be denied, that education may do a great deal to modify it. The tendency to any passion may be diminished by many correctives, but these must be very judiciously applied in early infancy, and employed with unremitting care for a great length of time, in order to produce this happy event.

Let us take a cursory view of the influence of the second set of causes, I mean those desires and passions to which we have not any particular proneness from constitution, but which become predominant in the course of our lives from various habits, from our mode of education, professions, avocations; and other relationships which regard our commerce with the world.

This subject is of immense extent, and is highly interesting if viewed in a proper light; for it contains a great store of psychological riches, inasmuch as it explains the effect which various systems of education, and various
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various pursuits and professions, have on the mental faculties, and moral qualities of man.

The whole subject borders so much on ethics, and on moral philosophy, strictly so called, that it cannot consistently with the plan of this work be minutely examined; but as much of its outline may be given as will prove satisfactory in regard to the assertion which has been made.

Education has for its object the improvement either of the body or mind, or both. The actions of the body which are to be improved by education, are chiefly those which consist of certain concatenations, or assemblages of voluntary motions, together with the exercise of the external senses. The improvement of the mind consists in strengthening and rendering its various faculties more perfect, and in acquiring a management over the passions.

Particular instances in which natural gestures and movements of the body have been rendered
rendered quick and vigorous, yet graceful and easy; in which the organs of external sense have been improved to such a degree as readily to seize the most delicate impressions, and their differences; and which, therefore, enable a person to discern and relish whatever is beautiful, as well as sublime, in the external world; and in addition to which attention, memory, imagination, and judgment have been strengthened by proper objects of study; and where a great degree of self-command has been acquired in the most trying situations; such instances are oftener met with in the fictions of romance than in the history of men. Such prodigies, exhibiting the wonderful effects of a happy organization, and of education, however, have occurred, if we can give credit to the testimony of authors. Let no suspicion of vanity arise, if I mention one of my own name as an instance: the admirable Crichton, one whom the Muses, the Graces, and Minerva equally patronized. Of all that has been said of him, much, undoubtedly, must be considered as the effects of exaggerated praise, and of that secret spring in the human breast which disposed
disposes men to find pleasure in exciting wonder and surprize in the mind of others; but making a proper allowance for these motives, there is sufficient evidence of his having so far excelled the generality of mankind in personal accomplishments, as well as in the powers of his mind, and the knowledge he acquired, as to justify me in selecting him as an example, illustrative of a most extraordinary degree of culture. (a)

It is seldom, however, that the attention of youth is directed to such a number of objects as are necessary to the formation of men of this description. Of those who, according to the prevailing notion of this country, receive the best education, how few are there who

(a) Among the numerous testimonies in favour of the superiority of this man there is one which is not commonly known, though easily ascertained. A Glasgow edition of the Classics were dedicated to him, many of which are still extant; and as he had no title to such an uncommon mark of distinction from birth, or any other casual honor, it may be reasonably concluded that his wonderful acquisitions were the real causes to which it is to be attributed.
arrive at that eminence which exhibits the effects of a regular and well-conducted culture both of body and mind. During the early part of life, when all the faculties of the mind ought to be equally exercised, in order to be equally strengthened, does it not but too frequently happen that a boy is kept for many years together to the irksome task of loading his memory with a vocabulary of mere words; and that the active faculties of his soul for the want of proper exercise become inert, and are at last incapable of being exerted on subjects of abstract thought without pain. Of the prodigies of early learning, how few of those who preserve their health, arrive at any great eminence in the paths of science. A boy frequently becomes learned at the expense of common-sense, and now and then at that of his judgment. It is, indeed, a melancholy reflexion, that many young people who, previously to the commencement of what is called education, appear to be endowed with the finest minds, and who exhibit a quickness of apprehension and a docility under tuition, which would secure to them an easy conquest in the pursuits of fame, if they were managed with
with sufficient skill, either fall early victims to mental fatigue, or else acquire a great disgust for instruction, merely because the proper stimuli for captivating their attention have not been found out in time. The author dares not enlarge on the subject without going beyond the proper limits of his work.

It is to be observed, that every profession and pursuit of life may be considered as a species of education, which, by creating artificial wants and desires, causes a vast diversity in the proneness which men have for attending to certain objects and subjects of study rather than to others. It would be a curious spectacle to see a representative assembly of men actuated by the various artificial wants which they create to themselves by particular pursuits and branches of study, and that the means of gratifying their desires were to be suddenly granted them, and displayed before them. One would seize a Greek or Latin manuscript as a most inestimable treasure; another a butterfly, or moth; one would run to an antique statue; another to a piece of painted glass; another to a piece of mechanism; a piece
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piece of sculpture, a holy relic, a beautiful shell, a diseased bone, a new drug, a fine dog, or horse, would all have their admirers. One man would desire to mount up on the wings of æther to the milky way; while another would seek to penetrate the granitic crust of the globe, in order to examine its inmost caverns and recesses.

If all that has been said in this chapter be duly considered, it must be granted that the readiness with which we attend to certain subjects, and objects, rather than to others, depends on the two principles already stated. See p. 261.

As a healthy state of the brain and nerves is essentially necessary to the due and regular operations of this faculty, inasmuch as it modifies all impressions received on these organs, it must be evident that it may be greatly altered, or even totally suspended by various diseases of these parts.

Attention can hardly be said to be ever morbidly increased; for although in many instances
stances this faculty is involuntarily engaged for a much longer period of time than is usual, and in a degree which often proves hurtful, yet it cannot be called a disease of that faculty. The attention may be preternaturally arrested, for instance, by a diseased perception, so that the person cannot attend to any thing else; as is the case in various kinds of hypochondriasis, and melancholy; but the reason why external impressions do not, in such cases, produce their full mental effect, is not because attention is morbidly increased, but because it is arrested by the preternatural vividness of the diseased perception. Were it a fault of the faculty itself, the energy with which it acted would be equally great to whatever object it was directed, but this is not the case; which proves that it is a perception only which is diseased.

The morbid alterations to which attention is subject, may all be reduced under the three following heads:

1st. The incapacity of attending with a necessary degree of constancy to any one object.

2dly
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A total suspension of its effects on the brain.

The incapacity of attending with a necessary degree of constancy to any one object, almost always arises from an unnatural or morbid sensibility of the nerves, by which means this faculty is incessantly withdrawn from one impression to another. It may be either born with a person, or it may be the effect of accidental diseases.

When born with a person it becomes evident at a very early period of life, and has a very bad effect, inasmuch as it renders him incapable of attending with constancy to any one object of education. But it seldom is in so great a degree as totally to impede all instruction; and what is very fortunate, it is generally diminished with age. How it is to be corrected, will be spoken of hereafter in the curative part of the work.

The incapacity of attending with a necessary degree of constancy to any one object, which arises casually, like other diseases, accom-panies
panies every nervous disorder, in which the sensibility of the nerves is greatly increased, especially in hysteria. Stomachic complaints, chlorosis and hydrophobia also, induce it. In this disease of attention, if it can with propriety be called so, every impression seems to agitate the person, and gives him or her an unnatural degree of mental restlessness. People walking up and down the room, a slight noise in the same, the moving a table, the shutting a door suddenly, a slight excess of heat or of cold, too much light, or too little light, all destroy constant attention in such patients, inasmuch as it is easily excited by every impression. The barking of dogs, an ill-tuned organ, or the scolding of women, are sufficient to distract patients of this description to such a degree, as almost approaches to the nature of delirium. It gives them vertigo, and headach, and often excites such a degree of anger as borders on insanity. When people are affected in this manner, which they very frequently are, they have a particular name for the state of their nerves, which is expressive enough of their feelings. They say they have the fidgets.
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Should this state of the nerves continue for a great length of time, or often recur, a habit of inattention is the consequence, which is afterwards with difficulty removed. In some cases it increases to such a degree, owing to the violence and obstinacy of the bodily causes, those for instance which spring from the worst kinds of hysteria, and epilepsy, as often lays the foundation for permanent delirium.

The second diseased state of attention was said to be a morbid diminution of its power or energy. This may arise from a great multiplicity of causes, some of which are corporeal, and others mental.

The corporeal causes appear to be capable of being reduced under two heads, or classes.

1st. Causes of debility that operate by exhausting the principle of irritability, and consequently diminish the secretion of the sentient principle, and which of course weaken both external, and sensorial impressions in
force and clearness, and which therefore naturally shorten their duration in the brain.

2dly. Organic diseases of the brain, impeding, to a certain extent, the transmission of impressions.

In both of these cases attention is not sufficiently excited.

The first class of causes is very numerous fevers of all kinds, especially the varieties of typhus; chronic weakness, arising from stomachic complaints, and other diseases of the abdominal viscera. It is a curious circumstance, that the chronic weakness which accompanies scrofula, and rickets, have no influence in diminishing the energy of any of the mental faculties; but chronic weakness, arising from poor diet, bad air, and confinement in warm apartments, circumstances to which the inhabitants of large cities, especially the female ones, are peculiarly exposed; irregularities in diet, excessive evacuations, and the abuse of corporeal desires, are all causes which weaken attention, and consequently debilitate the whole faculties of the mind.
The second class of corporeal causes are either tumors, which are either gradually formed within, or on the brain, or else they are organic derangements of a more secret and hidden nature, such as arise in consequence of repeated attacks of epilepsy, apoplexy, convulsions, and blows on the head, &c.

The mental causes which weaken this faculty are also of two kinds,

1st. Debility, arising from neglecting to exercise the faculty sufficiently, and

2dly. The over-exercise, or abuse of its powers.

The first of these is a direct cause of habitual inattention; the second is an indirect cause of a species of diminished attention, which is for the most part of a transitory nature.

That neglecting to exercise attention is the certain means of inducing a diminished energy
of that faculty, hardly requires any illustration, since innumerable instances are constantly occurring which cannot altogether escape the notice of the most superficial observer.

Among the lower class of people, attention is, generally, sufficiently excited by their numerous wants, the pressure of which, by exciting acute desires, keeps the faculty alive; and hence the natural shrewdness and cunning which many of them exhibit in matters which regard their own interest. But among the more affluent and independent part of mankind, the exercise of attention is commonly dependant on artificial wants, and on those who are entrusted with their education. The influence which the first of these has on the mind shall be investigated in the inquiry into the origin of the passions; with regard to the second, a great number of observations naturally present themselves to every person of reflection who is accustomed to think for himself.
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It unfortunately happens that the mental treatment of youth, not only at schools and academies, but also at home, is generally the same for all boys. That of girls is subject to a similar fault. The peculiar idiosyncrasies, or dispositions of each individual, are seldom sufficiently attended to; and hence it frequently happens that many of our youth, although endowed with excellent natural talents, remain dunces during the early part of their lives. If they improve afterwards, it is owing to self-tuition, or accidental circumstances having fortunately thrown such objects of science in their way as are fitted to awaken new desires, and kindle the flame of curiosity in their mind. That some boys must be forced to learn by menaces, and fear, and others by intreaty, and kindness, is so common an observation, as to be known by every pedagogue. But although this be the case, the practical rule, it is not always judiciously applied. There is another observation, however, more important than this, that is not generally known, or at least, its force is not acknowledged; it is this: that many boys require very different

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different objects of study than what others do, in order to have their attention sufficiently roused, and their minds put into due exercise. Every public teacher must have observed that there are many to whom the dryness and difficulties of the Latin and Greek grammars are so disgusting that neither the terrors of the rod, nor the indulgence of kind entreaty can cause them to give their attention to them. If a boy of this disposition be found to be by no means deficient in natural understanding, why should many good years be lost in a fruitless attempt, which must evidently become irksome to the preceptor, and prejudicial to the young person? Would a wise physician insist on it that one kind of diet was that which was most suitable to every constitution? If he found a few individuals who evidently could not digest it, would he not endeavour to find out what things were best adapted to their peculiar idiosyncrasies? It will be found, in general, that the boys' spoken of will easily apply to some other branches of study; and if that is the case, the natural bent of mind ought not to be forcibly thwarted, or left neglected.
It ought to be recollected that it is a matter of great indifference what it is which a boy first learns, provided it is some useful object, and is of such a kind as to give due exercise to his intellectual faculties. If he once gains a habit of attention, it will afterwards be easily directed to other things of more consequence.

Another circumstance of great importance is this, that as the power of attention is as different in different boys, as their bodily force, so their mental diet, if the expression be permitted, must also be varied accordingly. To some, all kinds of study ought to be rendered easy for the first years of their lives, while to others a certain number of difficulties are absolutely necessary in order to excite a proper degree of attention. Boys endowed with what is commonly called strong minds, require hard and laborious study in comparison with others, if it is meant that they should maintain the superiority for which nature seems to have intended them.—Let not this digression, which certainly belongs to the art of preventing mental weakness and disease, be considered
considered as totally foreign to the physiology. It accounts for the ignorance and inattention of a number of men, who, if they had been judiciously treated in their youth, might have become ornaments to their family, and useful members of society; but who having acquired an early disgust for study, have fallen a prey to false desires and wants, to the great prejudice of their health and fortune.

It has been remarked that debility and torpor of body are causes which weaken attention, inasmuch as the nerves of such people do not convey the impressions they receive with a due degree of force and clearness. The passions and affections of people of this description are naturally weak, and hence they are often of a retired and unsocial disposition, having few friendships, or attachments of any kind, and these seldom of a lasting, or durable nature. But when once the habit of commanding attention is so far weakened as to render a person almost insensible to external objects, or to the impressions which awaken the social feelings, he may then be said to be predisposed
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Predisposed to a very bad kind of mental derangement; for if any strong passion be accidentally excited in such a case, how is the attention to be directed to ordinary matters?

I lately attended a very remarkable variety of insanity of this kind, along with my friend Dr. Pitcairn, to whom it appeared equally uncommon as to myself, although his extensive practice yields him frequent opportunities of seeing the insane.

The patient was a young gentleman, of large fortune, and who until the age of twenty-one had enjoyed a tolerably uniform state of good health. He was of a very delicate and slender frame of body, and of a gentle and calm, but rather unsocial disposition. He bore evident marks of great debility; his hands and feet were generally cold, his veins were small, and although seldom distended with blood, yet they shone through the skin. His countenance was pale, and expressive of great languor, his hair dark brown, and his eyes blue.

When
When I first saw him, the mental derangement under which he laboured, appeared chiefly to consist in a most uncommon degree of absence of mind. He seemed lost to every thing around him, and would willingly sit for a whole day without moving; yet, with all this, he was not like a melancholy patient; for if his countenance was attentively observed, it was easy to discover that a multiplicity of thoughts were constantly succeeding each other in his mind, many of which were gay and cheerful. He would laugh heartily, at times, and it was evident from the character of his laughter, that it was not of that unmeaning nature which we often see in idiocy, but such as any one might happen to fall into who had ludicrous thoughts, and was not under the restraint of society. In a moment afterwards the whole expression of his countenance changed, and he would sink into a deep reverie. In the course of his disorder he became so remarkably inattentive, that even when pressed by some want which he wished to express, he would, after he had got
got half way through the sentence, suddenly stop, as if he had forgotten what he had to say.

When his attention was roused, and he was engaged to speak, he always expressed himself in good language, and with much propriety; if a question was proposed to him which required the exercise of judgment, and he could be made to attend to it, he judged correctly. A total disregard for those whom he had formerly most loved, became daily stronger, and at last he shewed evident marks of dissatisfaction when visited by his near relations; yet, unlike melancholy patients, who generally exhibit a similar antipathy, this conduct did not seem in him to arise from an opinion, either that they had done him an injury, or intended one to him. He would, at times, mutter to himself expressions of anger at their being present; but suddenly, as if aware of the impropriety of his behaviour, he would as quickly change the expression of his countenance, and seem anxious that they should not hear what he said. In the later periods of his illness, however, he was not quite so guarded,
guarded, and would, at times, behave rudely, and then he could not be conciliated by kindness.

When he was placed in such situations as required the exercise of attention, in order to preserve himself from danger he commonly exerted himself until he became familiarized with it, and then he gradually grew less attentive. It was with difficulty he could be made to take any exercise. I prevailed on him, however, for a considerable time to drive his curricle, and accompanied him in it to watch his mind. For a few of the first days he was all attention, but the irksomeness of the exercise made him soon tire, and before he had driven half a mile from home, he returned, although no arguments were spared to induce him to go on. He drove steadily, and when he was about to pass a carriage, took pains to avoid it; but when at last he became familiarized with this exercise, he would often relapse into thought, and allow the reins to hang loose in his hands. He then began to drive unsteadily, sometimes lashing the horses with
all his force, and then suddenly checking them until they stood still; sometimes driving very quick, and sometimes just as slow. His conduct, in this respect, never appeared to be regulated by any wish relative to the nature of the exercise he was taking, but appeared to me to proceed solely from the natural concatenation which habit institutes between the quickness of bodily action, and the quickness of thought. His ideas, I have already said, were for ever varying. When any one crossed his mind, which excited anger, the horses suffered for it; but the spirit they exhibited at such an unusual and unkind treatment, made him soon desist, and re-excited his attention to his own personal safety; as soon as they were quieted, he would relapse into thought; if they were melancholy ones, the horses were allowed to walk slow, if they were gay and cheerful, they were gently encouraged to go fast.

This gentleman generally passed a good night, and he was fond of indulging himself by laying long in bed. His disease began with a slight state of phrenzy, when abroad
on his travels, and was excited, according to the opinion of his relations, and the servants who accompanied him, by the injudicious conduct of a travelling tutor, whose character, according to the reports spread of him, was more suited for the severities of a monkish life, than the companion of a man of fashion. They had various quarrels; and after the last one, which occasioned their separation, the unfortunate gentleman, whose case I have given, was observed to be very strange in his conduct. Other causes of mental disquietude were represented as having joined themselves to those mentioned; and to the combined influence of the whole the first attack of delirium was ascribed.

It was observed, that attention might suffer a temporary alteration from its healthy state by being too long exercised. This generally consists in a great diminution of its powers, which remains longer, or shorter, according to circumstances. The following case, with which this chapter shall be concluded, is a very remarkable instance of the kind. It is that
that of a Mr. Spalding, a gentleman well known as an eminent literary character in Germany, and a man much respected by those who know him. The case is drawn up by himself, and was sent to the celebrated Mr. Sulzer, and by him presented to the editors of the Psychological Magazine.

"I was this morning engaged with a great number of people, who followed each other quickly, and to each of whom I was obliged to give my attention. I was also under the necessity of writing much, but the subjects which were various, and of a trivial and uninteresting nature, had no connection the one with the other; my attention, therefore, was constantly kept on the stretch, and was continually shifting from one subject to another. At last it became necessary that I should write a receipt for some money I had received on account of the poor. I seated myself, and wrote the two first words, but in a moment found that I was incapable of proceeding, for I could not recollect the words which belonged to the ideas that were present
present in my mind. I strained my attention as much as possible, and tried to write one letter slowly after the other, always having an eye to the preceding one, in order to observe whether they had the usual relation to each other; but I remarked, and said to myself at the time that the characters I was writing were not those which I wished to write, and yet I could not discover where the fault lay. I therefore desisted, and partly by broken words, and syllables, and partly by gesture, I made the person who waited for the receipt understand he should leave me. For about half an hour there reigned a kind of tumultuary disorder in my senses, in which I was incapable of remarking anything very particular, except that one series of ideas forced themselves involuntarily on my mind. The trifling nature of these thoughts I was perfectly aware of, and was also conscious that I made several efforts to get rid of them, and supply their place by better ones, which lay at the bottom of my soul. I endeavoured, as much as lay in my power, considering
the great crowd of confused images which presented themselves to my mind, to recall my principles of religion, of conscience, and of future expectation; these, I found equally correct, and fixed as before. There was no deception in my external senses, for I saw, and knew every thing around me; but I could not free myself from the strange ideas which existed in my head. I endeavoured to speak, in order to discover whether I was capable of saying any thing that was connected, but although I made the greatest efforts of attention, and proceeded with the utmost caution, I perceived that I uniformly spoke other words than those I intended. My soul was at present as little master of the organs of speech, as it had been before of my hand in writing. Thank God, this state did not continue very long, for, in about half an hour, my head began to grow clearer, the strange and tiresome ideas became less vivid and turbulent, and I could command my own thoughts with less interruption.
ON ATTENTION, AND ITS DISEASES.

"I now wished to ring for my servant, and desire him to inform my wife to come to me; but I found it still necessary to wait a little longer, to exercise myself in the right pronunciation of the few words I had to say; and the first half hour's conversation I had with her was, on my part, preserved with a flow and anxious circumspection, until at last I gradually found myself as clear and serene as in the beginning of the day. All that now remained was a slight headache. I recollected the receipt I had begun to write, and in which I knew I had blundered; and upon examining it I observed, to my great astonishment, that instead of the words fifty dollars, being one half year's rate, which I ought to have written, the words were fifty dollars, through the salvation of Bra— with a break after it, for the word Bra was at the end of a line. I cannot recollect any perception, or business, which I had to transact, that could by means of an obscure influence have produced this phenomenon."

CHAP.