

as well as unpretending names for these powers, would be derived from the three great realms of nature, according to which Productivity might be entitled the vegetative, or *vegetative*; the insective, or *insective*; and, lastly, the animal, or *animal*. Of more importance is it to observe that nature has marked the differences of these powers no less plainly in the classes that possess the three in combination, as in the realms in which, if not the power, yet their manifestations exist more or less severally; and this she effects not by the difference of the constituent organs, but the structures in which are the materials of these organs; the cellular, glandular, and venous structures corresponding to Reproduction,—the material and muscular to Irritability,—and the nerves to the Sensibility, in the physiological sense of the word; for, in the common sense of a susceptibility of pain and pleasure, we are better warranted to regard it as a sign and consequent of a nervous system than nerves in themselves unconnected with each other, as in the insulated small ganglia* of certain insects.

Nothing then remains but to state the fact that Powers exist of which the structures and functions especially characteristic of the Vegetable, Insect, and Animal realms are the representatives; that the manifest object of nature is to produce these gradually in harmony with each other, by a due subordination of the first to the second, and of both to the third. And that, as nature in the instance of the highest animals

ends in making the Sensibility the true principle of the unity of the three forces, it is rational and not unphilosophical to assume, that as she ends even so in reality doth she begin; that the Powers of Reproduction and Irritability are in all instances,—in the lichen, the coralline slime, and the caterpillar, no less than in the human frame,—only manifestations of sensibility which, therefore, alone is properly Life;—but with this distinction, that, in the case of the plant and the insect, these manifestations precede the appearance of Sensibility as the dawn precedes and announces the rising sun, or still more appropriately, perhaps, as the heat often precedes the bursting out of the fire; while in the animal the Sensibility is present in Self-manifestation as well as in Power, and the subordinate powers then appear to follow and to emanate from their principle as the heat and motion from a fire after it has burst forth. But the Sense of Man in its first simplest forms has supplied us with the most philosophical language in (the terms) length, breadth, and depth. The first appearance of body is that of simple length, or the line,—then follows surface, which includes and supposes length,—and, lastly, arises the depth, which is, in fact, no form or image at all, but yet that which, though manifesting itself to us last, is then known to be the cause, condition, and true substance of both the others, which without it would be impossible, except as phantoms in the eye or mind of the imaginer.

THE CONFESSIONS OF A METEMPSYCHOSIS.

BY THE DOMINIE.

This is an age of doubtful questionings. We believe nothing that has not been matter of commonplace experience. All faith has been banished from amongst us, as the dream of fanaticism or the ready engine of hypocrisy. And thus we wilfully thrust from us an exterior key to the most precious secrets of nature.

I, who write this, was once also carried away by the vain bubble of unbelieveing opinion; and my ignorant scepticism I dignified with the name of philosophy. In this state of mind

I lived; in this hardened want of faith I died. Heavens, what I have known since!—for though death *hath* passed upon me, though I *have* been buried and numbered with the defunct, I am now again in the enjoyment of consciousness. I feel, and think, and reason. I know that I am in existence; and yet my channel of existence is different from what it once was—has been changed, and will, as is likely, be changed again. I certainly cannot insist upon others believing this upon my mere statement; but I have clear experience to

* Knots of nerves.

satisfy myself. And how do I know but that there may be many others who dwell in the same mysterious state of being, if the secret were of such a nature with respect to the world that any one dared "blab it out." I am determined, however, to tell my own tale.

It might be too startling to the degree of faith with which I may be favoured, were I to relate minutely the circumstances of my death. Suffice it to say, that when I felt the weakness of coming dissolution creep over my clammy limbs and flutter at my heart—when I saw my friends weeping around me—when I felt that struggling and gasping sensation which accompanies the passing away of the exterior spirit of life,—I knew, of course, that I was dying; and, scarcely sensible to perception or regret, I resigned myself accordingly. Presently the curtains of the bed around me became as it were illuminated, and then faded into a flickering cloud—the weeping faces that overlooked me became grotesque and indistinct—the sonorous voice of the clergyman who read prayers for the dying sounded a hollow boom in my ears, until it departed like a distant murmur. I scarcely felt the thin fingers of my dear mother press down my eyelids, for sensation of all kinds was ebbing fast. It was gone—I was dead!

Without sensation time has no existence—so as to its lapse, or ought else that occurred, I can tell nothing, until time again became apparent through the medium of returned consciousness. And yet that consciousness was not like the renewed lighting up of the soul, but came upon me gradually like the dim perception of a wandering dream. It seemed to me also different from the consciousness of one who is *in the body*; for I had properly no sensation—at least no sensation of materialism or animal life; and although I could perceive that I was in my coffin, and believed myself buried in my appointed vault, I had no communion with the coldness and clamminess of death. Though I felt myself to be dead and buried, I could not be said to lie, like Tybalt, "festering in my shroud," for at least the process of dissolution made no part of my consciousness.

Anon my sensations, whatever could be their channel, became gradually

more acute. Methought, had I not been confined within the wood and the lead, I should have been able to see what was around me—certainly, without being sensible of using the proper organ, I began to hear, and that so acutely in the silence of the sanctuary of the dead, that I could distinctly recognise the twitter of the bat along the roof of the vault, and even the small crickety sound of the beetle, which leisurely moved along the outside of the oaken case in which at present I knew myself to be confined. Presently the bat fluttered again with a louder sound—I heard a key move in a rusty lock, a door creak as it opened, steps descend heavy and slow, and approach to where I was. Voices spoke—there were two; one old and tremulous, another young, because it sounded clear and firm, and manly withal; but it spoke almost in a whisper, as if afraid of disturbing the silence of our tomb. Heavens, I knew it! It was that of my old fellow-student Riemera; and he talked of me, and sighed, and spoke some of the quaint common-places about death; and the old man—for it was the sexton who accompanied him—tapped my coffin, and uttered a coarse pleasantry that seemed to shock the feelings of the meditative student. I declare I felt indignant, and really insulted at this vulgar freedom with myself and my brethren of the dead.

The student seemed now to fall into a reverie, as I knew by the silence that prevailed in the vault, which made me revert to the memory of former days, when I moved among the living, and to think retrospectively of his character. I knew him but slightly then, and only as we know those whose outward demeanour is somewhat of a mystery, and whose real character is a perfect enigma. A dreamer, a *philosophe*, a meditative inquirer into the dark occultations of nature; the penetrating shootings of whose mind, however, returned back upon himself, as I afterwards learned, blunted and abortive, as if nature had repelled the attempted search as impertinent and sacrilegious. This young man had dived into the questions of existence and non-existence, consciousness and annihilation, until his intellect had become half-crazed by its vain gropings into mysticism; and he had of late almost taken up his abode among the tombs.

And yet it struck my imperfect recollection that I had once heard something more of him, and a strange story was told of a strange and terrible fancy that had taken him with reference to another and a most interesting being. When I remembered this, it also came into my fugitive mind that, during the time that I lived upon the earth, I had known and experienced most things, but never had really known one passion, which some called a sentiment, and others confounded with all the sentiments and feelings which are said to agitate the human breast, but which has been the theme of poets and romances from the beginning of time. Considering how the student was said to be situated, I felt at once upon this recollection an involuntary longing to know what he knew; in other words, a strong desire came upon me to free myself of the prison to which I seemed to be confined, and to transfuse myself into his person—in short, to become himself. When I became conscious of this feeling, it so far overpowered me that the desire almost amounted to a prayer; the prayer seemed accompanied with a strange and impelling power. In obedience to volition, I felt uneasy, like one struggling in a dream. I wished again, as if my very wish could accomplish itself. A flash of something, which felt like a shock of electricity, came over me. I instantly found myself again a living man—no longer as I was before, but in the person and soul of the student.

My first sensations were not very distinct, as I left the vault and again emerged out into the light of day. Of the reflections with which I had been occupied as a visitor into the resting-place of the dead, I, the newly possessed of my new mansion of thought, only caught the last vibrations; and their usual unsatisfactory tendency and inconclusive darkness filled me with melancholy. But strange thoughts again occupied my mind, as I walked towards one of the obscure streets of the city, and a confused image of female beauty swam before my fancy; bright eyes and dark glances of a strange lightning seemed to shoot into my soul—until, as I meditated, my heart began to beat quick, and visions of joy unpeppable danced before my excited imagination. I now suspected that this was the sensation which I had often coveted to feel while

formerly inhabiting the earth, and never could; but when I was now to experience in the person of Rimiera the student.

It was now getting dark as I turned into a mean-looking, desolate street, and, entering a low door, began to clamber up a narrow and broken stair. My heart sank within me, and my lofty imaginings melted into depression, as I surveyed the naked and poverty-stricken apartment which was my domicile. What signified my litter of moth-eaten books, which none but the patiently inquisitive had the resolution to study? What signified my laboratory of phials and philters, for in what did all my midnight studies end? what was the ultimate result of all my experiments? Ignorance, melancholy ignorance;—while, as to my graspings after the ordinary babblings of the world, my situation and chances were still more humiliating. The wretched sentiment of having hitherto lived in vain—of having mistaken my vocation—filled me with the most agonising reflections. Though my pursuits and my present situation were equally effects arising from the necessity imposed on me by the circumstances of my birth and its associations—nay, though all this had proceeded link by link, as by an iron law of fate, which I had attempted often to break, but in vain—still, still I could not help arranging myself as a criminal, by whose will and act the chain of destiny had been in great part, if not wholly, forged. I resolved to get rid of the shame and the sin of poverty; I would make another effort. I scarcely suffered a moment to be lost in my preparations to leave the apartment, and set forth to mix among the great, to attempt greatness myself for an hour—or, at least, to conceal the lack of that, without which pride is only a self-torture, and professed respect from others but a hypocritical mockery. Love, that sometimes shot instead of elevating my nature, as I felt was its tendency, sank me into the dust of humiliation when I reflected on the circumstances and company among which I was likely to be permitted to meet the object of it. Even the prospect of this pleasure gave me no joy; for who was I that dared to traverse a form in my heart on whom nobles looked with admiration, and princes contended to give upon with desire.

At length I arrived at the scene of revelry, and piloted my way like a phibetoric grasshopper among the crowd of equipages that surrounded the palace. But as I tripped up the marble steps of the great stair, and heard my name announced in the assembly of the honoured, the elevating atmosphere of human pride had an instantaneous effect upon my nature. The melancholy of the tombs and the humiliation of the poor student's chamber were forgotten; and, in the confidence of a man and a philosopher, I thought I could look even royally in the face.

Since my strange and inexplicable awakening in the vault, I was completely absorbed in my new being, and could scarcely recall a former existence. Now, however, the scene before me stimulating all the powers of reflection, I tried to recollect what I was, what was the precise meaning of my present feelings, and wherein consisted my actual identity. That I was the student was certain; and yet that I had lived before was equally matter of experience. A transient power of thinking as a separate existence occasionally came upon me, reminding me in a confused manner of my former life; and yet my present consciousness was to all intents and purposes the feelings and reflections of the man in whom I now lived, moved, and had my being. Yet the power of retrospection in his person was not very distinct; and his experiences, and the acts of his former life, were called up as it were only by an effort, when necessary to illustrate a present feeling. In this way the mixture of pride in some former chain of circumstances, and of shrinking humility in present consciousness—of aspiration after some occult knowledge, and of intense passion for some lovely being, which by turns caused an agitation in my bosom, as I wandered among the ceremonious splendours by which I was surrounded—filled me, as a new being, with a strange undiminished anxiety and curiosity, as if some personage was about to be introduced to me, or some event to happen which was to bring me into immediate acquaintance with myself.

With eager eyes and a beating heart, I wandered from saloon to saloon in the brilliant assembly, seeking for a single sight of a fair being, who already seemed to have become my third existence. But no such being appeared amid the splendid throng; as for more than an hour I lingered a solitary and neglected intellect among those with whom I had neither part nor lot, until my heart sank again, in humiliation and disappointment. The thousand lights seemed to burn dim before my aching eyes—the clusters of diamonds shone, I thought, like blue and green sparkles of unearthly flames before my leaching sight—and the ranged countenances of noble dames began to appear to my meditative sense almost ghostly and tomb-like, as if ornamented beauty itself was only a thin veil over rottenness and dust, and grandeur but a varnish over inward misery, gnawn by envy, and feeding upon jealousy, or torn and blackened by the intolerable bitterness of disappointed pride. Was this morbidity, arising from the effects of my previous studies? or was it truth, which the deceiving world will not allow to be spoken? The lights all round me actually shone yellow, a sulphurous yellow, in this thick and dark atmosphere of a thousand artificial cordings of the heart; for the high society at this time congregated at Vienna was tormented by a thousand jealousies and private bickerings, which are too tedious as well as too contemptible to recount. A reaction now came upon my pride of manhood, if not of birth—for the latter barely entitled me to appear in this proud assembly; and I now thought, with a contrasting affection, of my poor chamber at home, and my phials and my chemicals, that made me happy in the investigation of nature—and of my black and musty books, that taught me wisdom—and my crabbed old attendant, that made my simple potage, and told me plainly of my faults and my waywardness. Presently I heard a buzz arise among the company towards the great entrance, and “the Englishman! the Englishman!” was whispered all round me. It was this personage, it seems, who, partly by the nature of his political mission, and partly by the advances he had made among the aristocratic families here, and the strife the reports of his great wealth had occasioned, who had been the cause of the various heartburnings which vexed the apparently gay sports which flattered round me; and I heard another name also whispered in association with his,

the bare mention of which, from feelings as yet to me but matters of indistinct retrospection, sent my heart bumping hard against my side.

Way was now made for the late-arriving party which caused all this sensation; but my straining eyes were in an instant transferred from the commonplace figure of the island nabob to the beautiful being who had entered along with him, and whom I had in vain looked for the whole of the evening; but who now, a perfect vision of beauty, peered forward, like the bright angel of purity, which had come to diffuse poetry and elevation around her, and to dispel from this gay assembly the dark and dubious spirits of evil. Her hair was bound with roses and sprigs of myrtle; she leaned on the arm of a noble-looking, yet reverend cavalier; and, looking round her modestly on the crowding assembly, she addressed a word occasionally to the dull bluff Englishman, who, with the characteristic insensibility of his countrymen, walked in animal stupidity by her side.

I looked upon this vision, as it drew near, as men should look upon an angel sent down from above. She did not in reality appear as belonging to the earth. As she turned her head slightly in passing, and looked modestly towards me, her eyes shot a feeling into my soul which seemed to me like the delirium of *Maomet's* paradise; and when I felt her dress afterwards rustle against my own, my heart beat so quickly that I seemed ready to faint, and for a moment I was deprived of all exterior sensibility.

This, then, was the sensation which, in my former state of being, I had so longed to experience—this was that intoxication which men called love, and which the poets of the world have sung of in all generations—this was the unaccountable adoration for a mere human being, which now put to flight all the philosophy amassed by me for years—this was the experienced feeling which made my abstract musings on mere humanity almost ridiculous, and the taste of which is the only real romance furnished by this dull and animal existence. And yet I felt it to be a thing which belonged to imagination and individuality, and which no man could make come or go at his bidding; for the features of this angelic creature I could perceive not to be

entirely new to me; formerly, before I had become the student *Rimiera*, I now could recollect to have seen her frequently. Then, however, her form had passed before my eyes without any impression to touch my feelings, more than would have done a pleasing picture painted by a limner. Now my spirit and heart sought for and dwelt in hers, as we seek for a better and holier state of existence.

The pleasures of love, however, no sooner were felt by me, than I began also to feel its pains; and those, like the other, were grievous and acute. First, the adoration of this lovely being recoiled upon myself in the shape of personal humiliation. What was I when placed in comparison with her? and what was my humble lodging, my poor prospects, my phials, books, and old woman, compared with this proud and splendid Englishman, who had plenty of gold, and no need of philosophy. Again, my heart sank within me as I saw the crowds that paid their court to *Alexina*; and that deep and saddening moral jealousy began to tear the sensitive strings of my feelings, as I observed how she smiled upon several highborn men, and especially upon this bold Englishman. Observation, reflection, meditation—hitherto the chief occupation and pleasure of my *student's* life—became now, as forced upon me by what I was obliged to witness, an insupportable torture. Discontent—the contrasting discontent of circumstances, the hopeless and humiliating misery of relative position, now came over me in their terriblest forms. And yet *Alexina* smiled upon me too; and I thought I heard her whisperingly express a pleasure at seeing the student *Von Rimiera*. But this condescension, which precluded me from touching the hem of her garment, was not the return that love seeks; and wishes, intense as my perception of bliss in the society of this angel, were fortuous in proportion as they appeared without hope.

Unable any longer to bear this scene of envious excitement and self-annihilation, I fled home in the dark and the taste of which is the only real romance furnished by this dull and animal existence. And yet I felt it to be a thing which belonged to imagination and individuality, and which no man could make come or go at his bidding; for the features of this angelic creature I could perceive not to be

of my books appeared to me passionless proofs of inapplicable wisdom, or dreaning propensities after some unattainable philosophy. My acids and chemicals seemed unsavoury and nauseous. I poured drugs and liquids together, while the fœd of abortive excitement seemed to rise up from among my bottles, and laugh me to scorn. Unlooked-for combustion ensued, and the whole blew up in my face. I rushed forth from my garret, and ran towards the principal hotel to try if I could hear anything of *my lord* the Englishman.

To my great joy at first I learned that he meant to depart from Vienna next day. I learned also that he was about to sup in the evening of this day at the hotel of the Count de *Peublo*, where it was expected he was to meet again with *Alexina* at a grand entertainment. From a strange restlessness and curiosity, I lingered about his hotel to witness his departure. As the evening approached, and his splendid equipage drew up at his gate, an intense feeling of envy of his happiness, or at least of desire to enjoy it, took uncontrollable possession of my mind. When I saw him issue forth through a double row of servants, I thought I would have given worlds to enjoy what he was likely to enjoy this one night. The thought of my transferred existence now shot into my mind like electricity. I involuntarily made use of the same praying wish that I had originally done from my coffin in the vault. A shock, like a bolt of lightning shot through me; in another instant I found myself seated in the splendid carriage, and looking with a sort of flattered contempt upon the poor student, and other rabble pedestrians who surrounded my equipage. The women through whom I had just passed in my carriage—that is, as many of them as could find room to stand on the board—jumped up behind me, and away I drove to the hotel of the Count de *Peublo*.

Carrying into my new being some vibration of my late impressions, though my mind and feelings were altogether changed, I yet experienced a sort of arguid astonishment at not feeling the least of that joy in going to meet *Alexina* that I could recollect having anticipated. In truth every thing I saw, as I was whirled along, I thought,

if thinking it could be called inferior, tiresome, or contemptible. On the German staidness of the society which I met, and which is less repulsive, after all, as I now know, than that of England, I recollect looking with perfect ridicule. In truth, on nothing that I saw, however splendid, however elaborate, and meant for my gratification, did I look with any pleasure.

But *Alexina*!—to me that evening she was particularly tiresome, and what the people could see at her I am sure I could not understand; for to me her beauty, and her manners, and her bewitched blandishments, were absolutely a bore. Some traces were left on my dreamy recollection of a former worshipping fluttering at the heart in her presence; but how it arose I could not conceive—she was absolutely nothing! but pretty and plugging as most women are—and proud as a princess, without more to live upon than my mother's mantle-maker; and her father proud still, and yet the ghostly old *Von* was of less sterling value than my English steward. And these grotesque, stupid Germans took the liberty of talking off her and me, because, forsooth, I chose to flirt with the creature, because every one admired her, and I found it was the fashion. Bah! I was sick, and wished myself again in *Illovers Square*, although I couldn't recollect that that was much better. In short, the night was, as usual, insufferably fatiguing, and still more stupid than the former. I returned early to my hotel, and was obliged to take a sleeping draught—I was so wretched.

Next morning I found some satisfaction in the perusal of an English newspaper. My thoughts were all of home, and I hoped some relief from the sight of old faces; and with these feelings was mixed that undefined sort of curiosity that arose out of a certain former consciousness. To do justice to my rascals, they had every thing prepared—all was packed and arranged—I had nothing to give me the slightest trouble. Throwing my newspaper into my pocket, I was assisted to my carriage. I was seated—I was ready. Up went the side-blinds, smack went the whips, and I heard the forward villains from behind shout, "Holt for England!"