

Speaking of Brains____: The other day, in conversation with a distinguished member of the Cincinnati bar I happened to remark that "B____" and old college friend, "must have Brains; or he could not have become so conspicuous a figure in the world, and acquired in less than a quarter of a century, so large a fortune." It seems to me," I continued, "that when nearly every man you meet is striving & struggling contriving and working to obtain money, that the man in this crowd, who acquires millions of dollars, with apparently no greater effort than the others put forth, who succeed in securing only hundreds of dollars, must have brains of a superior order."

Although what I said might be called a random remark, it had for a basis an indistinct foundation. Folded away somewhere in the convolutions of my Cerebrum, was the impression, that perception, and reason, judgment & will, were cardinal properties of what we call brains. The man who could keenly perceive all these dollars in other men's pockets, & conceive of methods which would cause them to leak from the others pockets into his own; and had the judgment, & will, to carry out schemes which would succeed in accomplishing this, must have the qualities of perception, imagination, reasoning, judgment & will. The distinguished lawyer did not agree with me. He said, "these men of whom we are speaking are narrow men, not men of brains in the sense that word is generally used. They are men of one quality; All their energies, & thoughts are bent into one channel - They possess one talent; they are acquisitive. Then he went on to tell of his personal experience with prominent money getters in this City and state, and in New York City; & remarked. "Take these men outside of their own line, which is the acquiring of money, place them in positions where reason & judgment could be displayed, are displayed by men who have been logically educated, & they are like babes in the woods, helpless, with no foundation for the exercise of will." Then continued the lawyer, "Look at these men when their occupation is gone, after they retire from business or active money gathering, when they expect to reap the benefit of their labors and live out the balance of their days in otium cum dignitate, do they not soon drop into decay, & drivel?"

You do not find this the case, in men of your & my profession, I felt very much flattered to have my professions acknowledged in this graceful way. But, Do we not all employ the word brains in an indefinite way? "A man of brains," "A chap with no brains" Distinguished painters have been known to say "you must mix brains with your colors," even an amateur photographer of the Camera Club of this city once remarked in my hearing, when the subject of interiors & exteriors were under discussion, "You must add brains to your exposures." Or at least this is what he seemed to mean _ perhaps he said "_You must expose your brains in an interior." Not being at all familiar with the art of photography I may expose myself to ridicule, when I attempt a repetition of technical terms.

Now we all know that every man has brains, we know that to handle a knife and fork, to smoke a cigar, to walk away steadily from this clubroom at 11 o'clock at night, & catch a suburban car & get off at the right crossing near our houses, gives unmistakable evidence of the possession of brains; for these simple acts are only accomplished by various complicated, coordinated & particularly well directed muscular movements & these could only be possible when governed by well-regulated nervous impulses, originating in gray nervous matter situated in the cranium in other words brains.

We also know that it would not be nice or practical for a painter to mix up organic nervous tissue with his inorganic pigments, when he wanted to prepare colors for the expression of even his mightiest imaginations on canvas. It is evident then, that when we hear or use the word brains, we do not think of that part of the Cerebro-Spinal nervous system which has its habitation in the Cranium.

We do not think of it as the anatomist or the physiologist does. We do not think of it as a complex organ, nor is a collection of organs, one part of its body made up, say, of cells or fibres, & localized in the certain part of the cavity of the skull, forming a distinct organ with a definite function, the direction and control of the lower limbs of the animal. Another part also localized & made up slightly differing cell & fibres forming a distinct & complete organ for the passive reception & retention of impressions from without and from within.

In selecting only these two organs of the Brain of man viz; & the one which receives & registers impressions called the organ of memory - as examples - may I be permitted to ask a question -Which has the more or better brains? He who remembers every thing he has ever seen, & heard, & felt, or she who can make her legs & feet flash in a complicated dance, accurately & rapidly, to the notes of music from an orchestra?

In my judgment when we isolate these two organs, & wave them in a balance, the danseuse will come off victor in far as the question of activity of brain is involved. In her case the specialized organ in the cranium, the centre which controls a large number of skeletal muscles & controls them so well that they are made at will to perform wonderfully rapid, unusual, difficult & exact movements, slowly or more rapidly depending upon impressions of sound as a stimulant on another organ that of hearing, must be in fine condition, It must be able to snatch from the life giving stream of blood passing through it, just the pabulum necessary for brain tissue & to give off as rapidly its waste. It must be in harmonious correspondence with other & neighboring organs or centre of the brain & []. It must be on friendly terms with the so-called higher qualities of the cerebrum memory, judgment, will & with the vital centres of respiration and circulation to keep it in rapport with the oxygen of the air & satisfy the increased activity of the heart during the experience of its own special function.

Now let us look at the organ in the other than of the scales, The organ of memory The special organ of the man who remembers everything he has seen, or heard, or felt - for it is the organ of this particular kind of man that we have taken for comparison with the great dancer's special organ. What do we find? A trunk full of stuff photograph taken views some damn, some fine, of the old farm, though well, the wood shed, the road, city horses, streets, the faces of children & old people, the river and steamboats & skiffs & bridges & [] finished & half finished & landscapes, & clouds, & all that wonderful camera the eye has flashed upon, interiors & exteriors. We find voices & sounds, musical & noisy _ sermons & shady stories – poetry & prose, Mother Goose & Paradise Lost & all the tunes ever played upon the organs of the Corti in the inner ear by every resident vibration of the air – and these are mixed up with sensation of hunger & of its satisfaction of first and its various satisfactions, of pleasures & pains & of all the passing impulses registered as they touched and rapid flight the peripheral and organs of taste & feeling in the mucous membranes & the skin of this man – All these – A world of impressions fixed in this organ.

It is a dump into which all sorts of things are thrown. A wonderful mixture of holy & vile, valuable & useless, wise & silly, sweet & foul impressions & images. The receptacle of all the gathering of a life, from early childhood to manhood from which, by careful culling, a sorting & selecting, the wisdom and intelligence of the man is made up – But other important centres in the skull [], & made up of other cells and fibers of nervous tissue must be well endowed, trained by exercise, and constantly employed simply to make use of this dust heap of miscella mass before the man can show up as an intellectual success. Perhaps the scholar may object to these illustrations & claim that one belongs to Psychological and & the other two Physical phenomena of brain activity.

The line of demarcation between the two however is so very irregular & shadowy, that it is well not to be too positive about the matter. The Physical & the Psychological are so interwoven as origin of impulses, that we may admit that voluntary muscular that are in the beginning controlled psychological centres; after a while become unconscious, almost automatic movements, even when quite complex, in character, certainly when our densesse began the practice of her art, began training her muscles to perform their various exercises she employed the nervous centres of high intelligence and conscious, thoughtful, attentive, reasoning efforts to train the voluntary muscles of her legs, & of her whole body, to adjust her rapid changes of position to the proper equilibrium necessary to be maintained, to overcome the tendency to reflex and awkward contractions of muscles which would naturally receive the nervous force from other & lower centres which had become automatic from past habits of use, inheritance etc._

This must be true even if we admit that after years of training she might be able

to perform all her dances in an almost automatic manner & without consciousness being deeply engaged. The two astronomers who by rational inference from observed facts separately reached the conclusion that there must exist another planet far beyond the orbit of Uranus, & who pursuing the subject more carefully were unable to fix the point where the planet ought to be certainly offered brilliant examples of the exercise of the highest powers of the mind, And when Neptune was afterwards found by the improved instruments of a later astronomer in the place where these men had inferred that a planet must exist, it was heralded to the world as a mighty triumph of the mind, and it was but no doubt the same process of reasoning applied in thousands of cases in daily life without exciting the wonder and astonishment that follows this more dramatic incident.

The learned physician observes certain things at the bedside of his patient, & by rational inference and he reaches a conclusion that a certain organ or part of his patient is the seat of disturbance a colony of microbes have settled down & begun to make a history for themselves, say in the intestines. The man who makes the post-mortem examination confirms the inference of the physician. Our dancing girl has reasoned too in somewhat the same way. She has observed certain facts connected with the public,

The bald-headed portion of the community is exceedingly fond of watching girls who can kick high and rapidly & dance in an inspiring and original manner. The stress of our higher civilization, the exercise of our nervous systems - the protection of our heads from wind & weather is gradually making a hirsute covering for the cranium an unnecessary appendage - bald-headed men are becoming more frequent. Again, she made the observation that there are very few really great dancers upon the stage, that the great dancer gains name and is flattered and petted by men of high degree - She is considered a genius, a talented creation etc. etc.

The game to her, seemed worth the candle. She placed herself under instruction, & hour after hour, day after day, month after month, year after year she practiced training herself for conquest. Her will power was as great as that of the distinguished author who forces himself to regular, steady literary work. Her facts were as well observed. Her own energy & capacity will produce the desired result. Her rational influence was that she would gain success. Her imagination pictured herself as the star. —And the opera glasses of the bald-headed men in the first row proved the fact.

The man with the wonderful memory in the mean time to has been absorbing impressions with but the slight effort affixing his attentions on objects & sounds & feelings that brush past his peripheral nerve endings, and yet memory per se is believed to be a higher brain faculty than the ability to contract the striped

muscles and, I do not wish in any way to deprecate memory as an organ of the Mind whether it belongs to the visual, the motile, the auditory or the concept classification. We must recognize perhaps as a quality of all living matter, whether it appears as an unconscious instinct, or an animal or an unconscious property of a muscle cell.

But I object to the man with a memory so sensitive that it responds almost automatically to the slightest stimulus. You sit down to the table at our club with him, the impression of your inverted image on his retina acts as a stimulus, the apparent impulse flies to his memory, the apparent response brings down the story that he told you the last time he saw you. You make a remark upon any subject apparent impulse flies away from the inner ear of your companion to memory cells, down comes another story or saying of somebody else on the same subject, just like an ordinary reflex act, or the sensation experienced by tickling the sole of the foot in the jerk of the leg as the response. Then when the man with the well stored and responsive memory gets old, we try to avoid him as we would a singing mosquito. When the danseuse gets old and retires from business of course her legs lose their power of responding to the worn-out nerve centres, & both may become atrophied. The most active brain, the highest reasoning powers, the keenest intellect - all gradually drop into decay when bodily tissues are impaired & nutrition fails from the natural cause known as old age. I do not know personally many retired lawyers. I have no doubt there are a great many who do retire from active practice who retain their mental vigor. I am quite sure after a long and intimate acquaintance with men of my own profession, (notwithstanding the complement of that great lawyer) that as a rule, as soon as they retire from active practice, pronounced disassociation of the elements of not only their brain but of all their tissues begins immediately - and they don't recover

The only cases of voluntary retirement from daily practice for the purpose of living the ideal life of ease with dignity which have fallen under my personal knowledge can be counted on a thumb & one finger of one hand. One was during our late unpleasantness with our southern brethren, when, having the opportunity of practicing upon officers and soldiers in a border city, this friend acquired in a year or two some \$10,000 which he immediately invested in sugar. The price of sugar advanced daily & my friend's investment increased at the rate of \$100 per day. This was enough for him. He closed his office, bought a gold headed cane & walked about in the free air & sunshine, & enjoyed every minute of existence.

Life began for him. He was a perfect example of elegant leisure _ But while sugar was sweetening his existence, he became neglectful of Market reports, & prices took a tumble. He went back to his office cheerfully, & though now a very old man, is still there, hoping for another chance to sport his gold headed cane & enjoy God's sunshine like a Christian, sir. as he did when sugar was on my rise, sir!

The other case was of a man who had great determination of character, a strong man, one who, when he said he would do a thing, did a thing, a General Jackson sort of man. In his early youth he made up his mind that all his energies should be trained toward one object & that was to become the possessor of \$75,000. Why he fixed on this particular amount I do not know, but he was to earn \$75,000 and then quit as he expressed it, & after that he would live in a villa on the banks of the lake Zürich & devote himself to the study of music & chemistry & vocal music.

He lived long enough and close enough;_in the early years of his practice, and dried apples and water with his determined will bending every thing to his object; neglecting the cakes and ale of life, in other words, saving his cake and not eating it, until at the age of 4 or 5 and forty, he could reckon his possessions as worth \$75,000. True to his to himself he gave up practice – in fact sold out his practice to excellent advantage. Thereby increasing by several thousand dollars his capital; rented a villa on the Lake of Zurich – engaged a singing master, & began the study of chemistry at the Polytechnique.

For one month he was the happiest man imaginable – He had a lot of sound & cheap white wine in his seller, & began to cultivate a more intimate acquaintance with it than he had been able to formerly. “Now,” as he said, he had the opportunity, & no particular reason why you should have a clear head in the morning. Chemistry was a dull study any way & he seemed to comprehend just as well with his dull senses, as he did when his head was clear. As far as music was concerned he thought he sang rather better when he & his teacher had cleared their throats well, with that sharp good wine. I envied the fellow, and wished that I had saved my cake, & could retire, & live as he was living.

Only I always preferred red wine, & my choice would have been to substitute a certain brand of wine that unfortunately cost 14 francs a bottle instead of 15 centimes, the price of his. At the end of three months he had quarreled with his music teacher, said he drank too much to be a good master, had given up chemistry, couldn't begin a study like that at his time of life. He believed that that fellow to whom he had sold his practice was simply coining money. In six months he was refurnishing another office & sending circulars to all his old patients stating that he had recovered his health and would resume practice. He is still at it, and agrees with the observation of Schiller that

“Die Hauptsticke is der Fleise; denn dieser giebt nicht nur die. Mittel des Lebens, sindem er gielt ihm auch seinen allunegen Werth.”

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