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King Lear: A Psychological Study.

Aye, every inch a King, in all his pompous vanity, his reckless passion, his unstable judgment, a thorough king, whom even madness could not dethrone from the royal habits of authority, of strenuous will, and of proud predominance. As the highest mountain summit becomes the fearful beacon of volcanic flame, testifying in lurid characters to the world's deep heart-throes, so this kingliest of minds—he who in his little world has been the summit and the cope of things—becomes, in the creative hand of the poet, the visible outlet of those forces which devastate the soul. We stand by in reverential awe, despairing, with our small gauge of criticism, to estimate the forces of this human Etna. Oppressed by the power and magnitude of the passions, as depicted in this most sublime and awful of poetic creations, it is only after the senses have become accustomed to the roar and turmoil that we throw off the stupor, and dare to look down upon the throes of the Titan, and begin to recognize the distinctive features of the fierce commotion. Even then we must stand afar off; for not in Lear, as in others of the poet's great characters, can one for a single moment perform the act of mental transmutation. In Hamlet, for instance, the most complex of all, many a man may see reflected the depths of his own soul. But Lear is more and less than human in its isolated grandeur, in the force and depths of its passions, in its abstraction from accidental qualities. In the breadth of his strength and weakness he is painted like one of those old gods, older and greater than the heathen representatives of small virtues and vices—the usurping vulgarities of polytheism.

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The true divinities of Lear were old, like himself very old and kingly—Saturn and Rhea, the autochthones of the heavens; even as his qualities are laid upon the dark and far off, yet solid and deep foundations of moral personality. Well might this King of sorrows exclaim, in the words of the World-spirit, to those who attempt to tear his passions to tatters before the footlights; yea, even to the more reverent efforts of critics—

"Du gleichst dem Geist den du begreifst,
Nicht mir!"

Essayists upon this drama have followed each other in giving an account of the development of Lear's character and madness, which we cannot but regard as derogatory to the one, and erroneous in relation to the other. They have described Lear as an old man, who determines upon abdication, and the partition of his kingdom, while he is of sane mind, and fully capable of appreciating the nature of the act. Thence it becomes necessary to view the original character of Lear as that of a vain weak old man; thence it becomes necessary to discuss the point when the faculties first give way; thence it becomes necessary to view the first acts of the drama as a gross improbability. "Lear is the only serious performance of Shakspeare," says Coleridge, "the interest and situations of which are derived from the assumption of a gross improbability." Such undoubtedly they would be, if they were the acts of a sane mind; but if, on the contrary, it be accepted that the mind of the old king has, from the first, entered upon the actual domain of unsoundness, the gross improbability at once vanishes, and the whole structure of the drama is seen to be founded, not more upon "an old story rooted in the popular faith," than upon the verisimilitude of nature. The accepted explanation of Lear's mental history, that he is at first a man of sound mind, but of extreme vanity and feeble power of judgment, and that, under the stimulus of subsequent insanity, this weak and shallow mind developes into the fierce Titan of passion, with clear insight into the heart of man, with vast stores of life science, with large grasp of morals and polity, with terrible eloquence making known as with the voice of inspiration, the heights and depths of human nature; that all this, under the spur of disease, should be developed from the sterile mind of a weak and vain old man; this indeed, is a gross improbability, in which we see no clue to explanation.

Gross improbabilities of circumstance are not so rare in

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Shakespeare. The weird sisters in Macbeth, and the ghost in Hamlet, are certainly not more probable as events, than the partition of Lear's kingdom. But there is one kind of improbability which is not to be found in Shakespeare—the systematic development of goodness from badness, of strength from weakness; the union of that which, either in the region of feeling or of intellect, is antagonistic and incompatible. Even in depicting the mere creatures of the imagination, Shakespeare is consistent; we feel the fairy to be a fairy, the ghost to be a ghost; and even those foul tempters in woman's form,

> "Who look not like the inhabitants of the earth
> And yet are on it,"

are distinct, special, clear-cut creations of the poet's brain, consistent in every characteristic with themselves: Ariel is all aerial, and Caliban all earthly. In Shakespeare's characters there is no monstrous union of fair with foul, and foul with fair, as in those phantasms who opposed Ruggier in the island of Alcina:

> "Alcun' dal collo in giù d'uomini han forma,
> Col viso altri di simie, altri di gatti;
> Stampano alcun' con piè caprigni l'orma;
> Alcun son centauri agili et atti;
> Son gioveni impudenti, e vecchi stolti,
> Chi nudi, e chi di strane pelli involti."

There is nothing of this in the works of the Supreme Mind, whose poem is created nature. There is nothing of this in the works of that human mind, who, in the consistency and power of his work, has attained the nearest approximation to his great Author. Neither in nature, that is, in the works of God, nor in high art, that is, in truthful imitation of nature, is any such monster to be found as a vain and weak old man developing into the strength and grandeur of a prophet; the voice of Isaiah in the mouth of an imbecile.

Hallam expresses unreservedly the opinion that Lear's wondrous intellectual vigour and eloquence are the result of his madness, and that the foundation of his character is that of a mere "headstrong, feeble, and selfish being."

"In preparing us for the most intense sympathy with this old man, he first abases him to the ground; it is not Œdipus, against whose respected age the gods themselves have conspired; it is not Orestes, noble minded and affectionate, whose crime has been virtue; it is a headstrong, feeble,

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and selfish being; whom, in the first act of the tragedy, nothing seems capable of redeeming in our eyes; nothing but what follows—intense woe, unnatural wrong. Then comes on that splendid madness, not absurdly sudden as in some tragedies, but in which the strings, that keep his reasoning powers together, give way, one after the other, in the frenzy of rage and grief. Then it is that we find, what in life may sometimes be seen, the intellectual energies grow stronger in calamity, and especially under wrong. An awful eloquence belongs to unmerited suffering. Thoughts burst out more profound than Lear, in his prosperous hour, could ever have conceived; inconsequent, for such is the condition of madness, but in themselves fragments of coherent truth, the reason of an unreasonable mind."

If this great and sound critic had possessed any practical knowledge of mental pathology, he could not have taken this view of the development of the character. Intellectual energy may, indeed, sometimes be seen to grow stronger under the greatest trials of life, but never when the result of these trials is mental disease. So far as eloquence is the result of passion, excitement of passion may stimulate its display; but it is remarkable that so long as Lear retains the least control over his passion, his imagination remains comparatively dull, his eloquence tame. It is only when emotional expression is unbridled, that the majestic flow of burning words finds vent. It is only when all the barriers of conventional restraint are broken down, that the native and naked force of the soul displays itself. The display arises from the absence of restraint, and not from the stimulus of disease.

The consistency of Shakespeare is in no characters more close and true, than in those most difficult ones wherein he portrays the development of mental unsoundness, as in Hamlet, Macbeth, and Lear; into these he throws the whole force of his genius; in these he transcends, not only all that other poets have effected before him, but all that he has ever done himself. The border country between sanity and insanity—that awful region of doubt and fear, where the distorted shadows of realities, and the chimeras dire of the brain, are distinguishable in the sunless gloom of our unreason by flickering corruscations of the fancy, by fog meteors of humour, and by lightning flashes of passion—this region his bold and fearless mind delights to explore, and to lead those who can follow him, even as Virgil led Dante through the circles of hell. He delights to observe and to explore it,

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and, with his own clear light of genius, to look down upon it and through it, and to trace the wanderings and the falls of the erring, misled, spirit; but never, for one moment, does he lose his own sharp and accurate faculty of distinguishing realities and moral probabilities. In his hands the development of an insane character is as strictly amenable to law, as that of the most matter-of-fact and common-place sanity. In his hands the laws of mental aberration are as sure as those of the most regular development; nay, they often tend to illustrate the latter, as in the hands of a botanist a green petal proves the development of the flower from the leaf. It is on the development of insanity, the gradual loosening of the mind from the props and supports of reason and of fact, the gradual transition of the feelings from their old habitudes and relations, to morbid and perverted excess, the gradual exaggeration of some feelings and the extinction of others and the utter loss of mental balance resulting therefrom; it is in this passage from the state of man when reason is on its throne to a state when the royal insignia of his preeminence among God's creatures are defaced, that the great dramatist delights to dwell. Other poets and dramatists have represented the developed state, either in features so repulsive, that, like Cibber's statues of madness at Bethlem, they need to be curtained from the vulgar gaze, or like Gray's

"Moping maniac, laughing wild amidst severest woe,"

they combine in an absurd manner qualities which neither in the sane man nor the maniac can possibly co-exist.

Cervantes, indeed, has painted with exquisite skill the half-lights of one form of insanity; but Shakespeare alone has described the transition period and the state of resistance. It is remarkable within how small a compass all that Shakespeare has written on perfected madness may be brought; namely, one short scene of Ophelia's madness, and three scenes of the madness of Lear.

The wilfullness with which critics have refused to see the symptoms of insanity in Lear, until the reasoning power itself has become undeniably alienated, is founded upon that view of mental disease which has, until recently, been entertained even by physicians, and which is still maintained in courts of law, namely, that insanity is an affection of the intellectual, and not of the emotional part of man's nature. The author of these essays was among the first to raise the standard of revolt against this theory, in two articles

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on the "Law and Theory of Insanity," in the 24th and 25th numbers of the *Medico-Chirurgical Review*. The veteran Guislain had already fully recognized the immense influence of emotional suffering in the causation of insanity; but the wider and still more important principle, that morbid emotion is an essential part of mental disorder, still remained a novel doctrine. Any detailed exposition of the metaphysical and psychological arguments, by which I have endeavoured to maintain the validity of this doctrine, would here be out of place. It may suffice to state, that with the exception of those cases of insanity which arise from injuries, blood poisons, sympathetic irritations, and other sources of an unquestionably physical nature, the common causes of insanity are such as produce emotional changes, either in the form of violent agitation of the passions, or that of a chronic state of abnormal emotion, which pronounces itself in the habitually exaggerated force of some one passion or desire, whereby the healthy balance of the mind is at length destroyed. From these and other reasons founded upon the symptomatology and treatment of insanity, upon the definite operations of the reasoning faculties, and their obvious inability to become motives for conduct without the intervention of emotional influence, and also from the wide chasm which intervenes, and must intervene, between all the legal and medical definitions of insanity founded upon the intellectual theory and the facts as they are observed in the broad field of nature, the conclusion appears inevitable that no state of the reasoning faculty can, by itself, be the cause or condition of madness; congenital idotcy and acquired dementia being alone excepted. The corollary of this is, that emotional disturbance is the cause and condition of insanity. This is especially obvious in the periods during which the disease is developing; "in the prodromic period of the disorder, the emotions are always perverted while the reason remains intact." Disorders of the intellectual faculties are secondary; they are often, indeed, to be recognized as the morbid emotions transformed into perverted action of the reason; but in no cases are they primary and essential.

How completely is this theory supported by the development of insanity, as it is pourtrayed in Lear? Shakespeare, who painted from vast observation of nature, as he saw it without and felt it within, places this great fact broadly and unmistakably before us. It has, indeed, been long ignored by the exponents of medical and legal science, at the cost of ever futile attempts to define insanity by its

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accidents and not by its essence; and, following this guidance, the literary critics of Shakespeare have completely overlooked the early symptoms of Lear's insanity; and, according to the custom of the world, have postponed its recognition until he is running about a frantic, raving, mad man.

Lear is king at a time when kings are kings. Upon his will has hung the life and wealth, the being and the having, of all around. Law exists indeed; the reverend man of justice and his yoke-fellow of equity are benched high in the land, but he is the little godhead below.

"Aye, every inch a king.
When I do stare, see how the subject quakes!"

Perilous height, too giddy for the poor human brain! Uneasy lies the head which wears a crown! Unsafely thinks the head which wears a crown! The very first king by divine appointment went mad. What are the statistics of insanity among crowned heads? Who can tell? About half a century ago, one fourth of the crowned heads of Europe were insane, those of Portugal, Denmark, Sweden, Russia, and England. But often the chariot of government may be kept in the ruts of routine long after the guiding mind is obscured. With trembling hands, royal servants and kinsfolk hold a veil before the piteous spectacle. Not as of old does Nebuchadnezzar wear his chains in public. The wide purple hides all, until the service becomes too dangerous; and then perchance the sharp remedy of the assassin's scarf has to be applied round Paul's imperial neck.

Or the madness may not be quite so extreme, nor the remedy so conclusive. It may be disguisable and tolerable until it abates, and the poor patient emerges to become one of Mr. Carlyle's hero-kings. It may display itself, as in Frederick Wilheim of Prussia, only in violence of language and conduct towards his children, in beatings and kickings, in restless frightened nights and wanderings from chamber to chamber, in terrors of assassination with loaded pistols under the pillow, and yet the government machine be guided by the frantic hand in an altogether admirable manner, according to Mr. Carlyle, and those who bow down in pious worship before power in high places, be it ever so wild.

And why should not Mr. Carlyle make a hero of his mad king, who is also a dumb poet polishing to perfection practical unspoken stanzas, as that of his giant regiment, which might irreverently be called one of his delusions? Why

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not, since Schiller has made a beautiful, all perfect hero from the materials of an insane prince; Don Carlos, who in this country and in private station, might have found his way to the criminal wards at Bethlem, to whom, in fact, the sharp remedy of assassination had to be applied, as to Muscovite Paul. Why not, except that poetry and history are rather different things.

This fact of royalty in Lear; that he has been eighty years and more a prince and king, that he is not only despotic in authority but in disposition, that his will can tolerate no question, no hindrance; this, if not the primary cause of his lunacy, gives colour and form to it. He strives to abdicate, but cannot; even madness cannot dethrone him; authority is stamped legibly on his brow; he is not alone a mad man but a mad king.

Unhappy king, what was thy preparation for thy crown of sorrows, thy sceptre of woe! Unlimited authority; that is, isolation. To have no equals, that is to say, no friends; to be flattered to the face, and told that there were gray hairs in the beard before the black ones were there, plied with lies from early youth, (for this teaches that Lear was a king before he wore a beard), and therefore to be set on a pedestal apart from his kind, even from his own flesh and blood, until all capacity to distinguish truth from falsehood, affection from hypocrisy is lost, this is thy preparation.

Half a century of despotic power, yielded by a mortal of rash and headstrong temper, and with vivid poetic imagination, may well produce habitudes of mind to which any opposition will appear unnatural and monstrous as if the laws of nature were reversed, to which the incredible fact can be accepted only with astonishment and unbounded rage.

But Lear's mind is conditioned by extreme age as well as by despotism; age which too often makes men selfish, unsympathising, and unimpressible; age, which in some "hardens the heart as the blood ceases to run, and the cold snow strikes down from the head and checks the glow of feeling," in others, is the occasion of stronger passion and hotter temper. A sad state, one of labour and sorrow, and dangerous to happiness, honour, and sanity. The natural state of old age is, that the judgment matures as the passions cool; but a tendency of equal force is, that the prevailing habitudes of the mind strengthen as years advance; and a man who in "the best and soundest of his time hath been but rash," feels himself, and makes those around him feel, "not alone the imper-

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fections of engrafted condition, but therewithal the unruly waywardness that infirm and choleric years bring with them;" a maxim not less true because it is the heartless observation of a thankless child, and one capable of being extended to almost all the prevailing emotions and tendencies of man. In old age, the greedy man becomes a miser; in old age, the immoral man becomes the shameless reprobate; in old age, the unchecked passions of manhood tend to develop thomselves into the exaggerated proportions of insanity. How stern a lesson is the folly, the extravagance, and the vice of old men, that while it is yet time, passion should be brought into subjection, and the proportions and balance of the mind habitually submitted to the ordinances of the moral law!

It is worthy of remark that Lear's age is physically strong and vigorous; he has been a warrior as well as a king.

> "I've seen the day with my good biting falchion
> I would have made them skip."

Even at the last he has vigour enough to kill the slave who was hanging Cordelia. He is a keen hardy huntsman, and he rides from the house of one daughter to that of another with such speed that his strong willing messenger, can scarcely arrive before him by riding night and day. Physically, therefore, he is a strong, hale, vigorous man; and the desire he expresses to confer his cares on younger strengths, that he may "unburthened crawl towards death," is either a specious reason for his abdication, or one which has sole reference to the consciousness of his failing judgment, which is obvious to others, and probably not unfelt by himself; and which his daughter so cruelly insinuates when he claims her gratitude.

This state of hale bodily strength in senile mania is true to nature; it is observed, both in second childhood, that is, in the dementia of old age, and in the insanity of old age, that the physical powers are commonly great—the body outlives the mind—or to speak more physiologically and truthfully, some functions of the body remain regular and vigorous, while others suffer morbid excitement or decay; general nutrition retains its power, while the nutrition of the brain becomes irregular or defective.

Coleridge justly observes, that "it was not without forethought, nor is it without its due significance, that the division of Lear's kingdom is, in the first six lines of the

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play, stated as a thing determined in all its particulars previously to the trial of professions, as the relative rewards of which the daughters were to be made to consider their several portions." "They let us know that the trial is a silly trick, and that the grossness of the old king's rage is in part the result of a silly trick suddenly and most unexpectedly baffled and disappointed."

That the trial is a mere trick is unquestionable; but is not the significance of this fact greater than Coleridge suspected? Does it not lead us to conclude, that from the first the king's mind is off its balance; that the partition of his kingdom, involving inevitable feuds and wars, is the first act of his developing insanity; and that the manner of its partition, the mock-trial of his daughters' affections, and its tragical denouement, is the second, and but the second act of his madness? The great mind, so vigorous in its mad ravings, with such clear insight into the heart of man that all the petty coverings of pretence are stripped off in its wild eloquence, not only is unable to distinguish between the most forced and fulsome flattery and the genuineness of deep and silent love; it cannot even see the folly of assuming to apportion the three exact and predetermined thirds of the kingdom according to the professions made in answer to the "silly trick;" cannot even see that after giving away two-thirds, the remainder is a fixed quantity, and cannot he be more or less according to the warmth of the professions of his youngest and favorite daughter; a confusion not unlike the the account he subsequently gives of his own age—"four score and upwards; not an hour more or less."

With what courtly smoothness of pretence goes on the mocking scene, until Cordelia's real love, and obstinate temper, and disgust at her sister's hyprocrisy, and repugnance perhaps at the trick she may see through, interrupt the old king's complacent vanity; and then the astonishment, the retained breath, the short sentences, the silence before the storm! and then the outbreak of unbridled rage, in that terrible curse in which he makes his darling daughter—her whom he loved best, whom he looked to as the nurse of his age—for ever a stranger to his heart! It is madness or it is nothing. Not, indeed, raving, incoherent formed mania, as it subsequently displays itself; but exaggerated passion, perverted affection, enfeebled judgment, combining to form a state of mental disease—incipient indeed, but

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still disease—in which man, though he may be paying for past errors, is for the present irresponsible.

The language in which is couched the expostulations of the noble-minded Kent collected and even-tempered in all his devoted loyalty and self-sacrifice, shews the impression which this conduct made upon the best and boldest mind present:

> "Be Kent unmannerly
> When Lear is *mad*."
>
> "With better judgment check
> This hideous rashness."
>
> "Kill thy physician and the fee bestow
> Upon the foul disease."

Lear's treatment of Kent; his ready threat in reply to Kent's deferential address, which, in the words of true devotion, only looks like the announcement of an expostulation; his passionate interruptions and reproaches; his attempted violence, checked by Albany and Cornwall; and finally the cruel sentence of banishment, cruelly expressed; all these are the acts of a man in whom passion has become disease. In the interview with France and Burgundy the seething passion is with difficulty suppressed by the rules of decorum and kingly courtesy. To Cordelia's entreaty that Lear would let the King of France know the simple truth of his displeasure, only the savage reply is given—

> "Better thou
> Hadst not been born than not have pleased me better;"

and he casts out his once loved daughter—the darling of his heart, the hope of his age—without his grace, his love, his benison.

All this is exaggerated passion, perverted affection, weakened judgment; all the elements, in fact, of madness, except incoherence, and delusion. These are added later, but they are not essential to madness; and as we read the play, the mind of Lear is, from the first, in a state of actual unsoundness, or, to speak more precisely, of disease. The conference between Regan and Goneril, which ends the scene, seems to prove this view correct; for, although they attribute their father's outrageous conduct to the infirmity of age, it is evident it has surprised and alarmed them. His sudden changes unguarded by any judgment, are evidently a new thing to these selfish and clear-sighted observers; although, indeed they are but the exaggerated

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results of long habits of rule and rashness, matured into a state which renders him unfit for the exercise of authority.

Gon. You see how full of changes his age is; the observation we have made of it hath been little; he always loved our sister most; and with what poor judgment he hath now cast her off, appears too grossly.

Reg. 'Tis but the infirmity of his age: yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself.

Gon. The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash; then must we look from his age to receive, not alone the imperfections of long-ingrafted condition, but therewithal, the unruly waywardness that infirm and choleric years bring with them.

Reg. Such inconstant starts are we like to have from him, as this of Kent's banishment.

Gon. There is further compliment of leave-taking between France and him. Pray you, let us sit together: if our father carry authority with such disposition as he bears, this last surrender of his will but offend us.

Reg. We shall further think of it.

Gon. We must do something, and i' the heat."

Goneril speedily finds that such authority as her old father chooses to exercise, does offend her. He strikes her gentleman for chiding his fool; wrongs her, as she thinks, by day and night; every hour he flashes, as she thinks, into one gross crime or other; he upbraids her on every trifle. She 'll not endure it. She has no love for the old man, and little patience for his infirmities, whether they be those of native disposition, of dotage, or of disease:

> "Idle old man,
> That still would manage those authorities
> That he hath given away! Now by my life
> Old fools are babes again, and must be used
> With checks as flatteries—when they are seen, abused."

Strong as her language has been on her father's constant wrongs to her, and his 'gross crimes,' Goneril attributes them to the effects of dotage, and appears to entertain no suspicion that real madness is threatening. It is not till long after—in the third act, when Glo'ster is "tied to the stake"—that the old king's insanity is recognized by one of his ungrateful daughters; Regan asking—

> "To whose hands have you sent the lunatic king?"

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Soon after Goneril's exposition of the terrain, Lear enters from hunting, hungry and impatient—

"Let me not stay a jot for dinner, go get it ready."

A collected conversation with disguised Kent follows, and then the steward appears to put upon him the predetermined insolent negligence, which his mistress had given him instructions for. Lear, in his magnanimity, does but half see it, and requires to have his attention directed to it by the knight, whose keener observation has remarked the great abatement of kindness, and lack of ceremonious attention, which has been latterly shewn to his master. The king has seen it too, but had rather blamed his own jealous curiosity, than permitted himself to think the unkindness was intentional. Even now he throws off the thought lightly, and calls eagerly for that strange being, that wonderful medley of wit and philosophy, of real affection and artificial folly, "my fool!" whom he loves none the less for his attachment to disgraced Cordelia.

"*Knight.* Since my young lady's going into France the fool hath much pined away.

Lear. No more of that, I have noted it well."

Silent repentance for his rash and cruel treatment of this well-loved daughter, hath already touched the old man's heart. But the transitions of feeling are more rapid than the changes of sunshine and shade in an April day. In the next sentence he is in unmeasured rage with the steward for his insolent reply, and has no control over his tongue or his hands:

"My lady's father! my lord's knave! you whoreson dog! you slave! you cur!" "Do you bandy looks with me, you rascal? [*Striking him.*]"

Enough of Lear's violence, both in language and conduct is manifested, to confirm the truth of Goneril's harsh accusations. It must be owned that the old king has a terrible tongue, and a quick and heavy hand. The slightest opposition throws him into violent and outrageous speech and behaviour, little likely to be endured with patience, except by those who have strong motives for it in love or duty or interest. It is strange, however, with what patience he endures the bitter taunts and sarcasm of his fool. They seem only to pique his curiosity, and to excite his interest in the gladiatorial display of wit and folly. The fool, indeed, is "a bitter fool," "a

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pestilent gall," but his taunts are elicited, not repressed; and the "all-licensed fool" says to his master's face, and without a word of reproof, fifty times more than had brought upon Kent his cruel sentence of banishment. But the talk with the fool is only a lull in the storm. Goneril enters with a frontlet of frowns, and in a set speech—harsh in its rythm even, and crabbed in its diction—she accuses her old father of the rank and not to be endured riots of his insolent retinue; charges him with allowing and protecting it, and threatens to apply instant redress, whether it offend him or not. Too much astonished to be angry, he exclaims, "Are you our daughter?" She retorts with accusations personal to himself, forcibly conveying the impression of Lear's changed state at this period; a point important to the view here maintained, that from the first the old king's mind is off its balance.

"*Gon.* I would you would make use of your good wisdom, whereof I know you are fraught; and put away these dispositions, which of late transport you from what you rightly are."

The altercation becomes warmer, the daughter's accusations more pointed and offensive. Her father's changed dispositions are "new pranks," his knights, "debosh'd and bold," infecting the court with their lewd and riotous manners. The king is commanded, rather than requested, to apply the remedy by diminishing and reforming his train. If he does not, Goneril will do it herself—"will take the thing she begs." The impression left on the mind is, that Goneril's accusations are well founded; urged, indeed, without affection, or sense of gratitude or duty, or even of that decent forbearance towards the failings of the old king, which a good woman would have felt had she not been his daughter. Hitherto only the hard selfishness of Goneril's character has been developed; its dark malignancy is unfolded by future events. However, she has struck her old father on the heart with harsh and bitter words, and his changing moods are now fixed into one master-passion. Delusion and incoherency and other features of insanity are added as the disease subsequently develops itself; but incontrollable rage is nowhere more strongly expressed than in the execrations and curses which Lear now hurls against his daughter. Eloquent as his terrible curses are, they are without measure and frantic. He beats his head,

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"Oh, Lear, Lear, Lear!
Beat at this gate that let thy folly in,
And thy dear judgment out!"

He weeps, and is ashamed at the hot tears; he weeps for rage, and curses through his tears. He threatens to resume his kingly power, and adds to Goneril's other selfishness, that of alarm. There cannot be a doubt that at this time his conduct is thoroughly beyond his control. He is beside himself, and insane.

Lear, who never appears more tranquil than when the butt of the fool's jests, is diverted by them for a few moments, and consents to laugh at his own folly; but his thoughts run upon his injury to Cordelia, and the one he has himself received:

"I did her wrong.
To take it again perforce! Monster ingratitude!"

He is conscious of his mental state, and even of its cause. He feels the goad of madness already urging him, and struggles and prays against it, and strives to push it aside. He knows its cause to be unbounded passion, and that to be kept in temper would avert it.

"Oh, let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven!
Keep me in temper; I would not be mad!"

This self consciousness of gathering madness is common in various forms of the disease. It has recently been pointed to by an able French author as a frequent symptom in that form of insanity accompanied by general paralysis. According to my own observation, it is a far more common symptom in that form of mania which developes gradually from exaggeration of the natural character. A most remarkable instance of this was presented in the case of an officer, whose generous but passionate temper became morbidly exaggerated after a blow upon the head. His constantly expressed fear was that of impending madness; and when the calamity he so much dreaded had actually arrived, and he raved incessantly and incoherently, one frequently heard the very words of Lear proceeding from his lips: "Oh, let me not be mad!"

Lear struggles against his temper, which he feels is leading towards madness; and even against the plain evidence of his daughter's ingratitude, which inflames the temper. He will not understand Goneril's accusations and threats, until they are expressed in language too gross and cruel to be mistaken. In the same

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manner he will not believe that Regan and Cornwall have placed his messenger in the stocks. To Kent's blunt assertion, it is both he and she—your son and daughter—he reiterates denial, and swears by Jupiter it is not so:

"They durst not do 't;
They could not, would not, do it; 'tis worse than murder,
To do upon respect such violent outrage;"

and when conviction follows upon Kent's plain narrative of his treatment and its occasion, rage almost chokes the poor old man. At first he struggles to repress its expression;

"*Lear.* O, how this mother swells up towards my heart!
Hysterica passio!—down thou climbing sorrow,
Thy element is below!"

He does not succeed long, and when denied access to his child; under the pretence of sickness, which he well recognizes as the image of revolt and flying off; and when reminded, inopportunely enough, "of the fiery quality of the duke," the climbing rage will not be repressed:

"*Lear.*. Vengeance! plague! death! confusion!—
Fiery? what quality? why, Gloster, Gloster,
I'd speak with the duke of Cornwall and his wife.
Glo. Well my good lord, I have informed them so.
Lear. Inform'd them! Dost thou understand me, man!
Glo. Ay, my good lord.
Lear. The king would speak with Cornwall; the dear father
Would with his daughter speak;—commands, tends, service;
Are they informed of this?—My breath and blood!—
Fiery? the fiery duke?—Tell the hot duke, that—
No, but not yet:—may be, he is not well:
Infirmity doth still neglect all office,
Whereto our health is bound; we are not ourselves,
When nature, being oppress'd, commands the mind
To suffer with the body; I'll forbear:
And am fallen out with my more headier will,
To take the indispos'd and sickly fit
For the sound man.—Death on my state! wherefore
Should he sit here? This act pursuades me,
That this remotion of the Duke and her
Is practice only. Give me my servant forth:
Go, tell the Duke and his wife, I'd speak with them,
Now, presently: bid them come forth and hear me,
Or at their chamber door I'll beat the drum,
Till it cry—*Sleep to death.*

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Glo. I 'd have all well betwixt you.
Lear. O me, my heart, my rising heart!—but down."

The first indication of commencing incoherence is seen in this most affecting expression of the conflict within:—"commands, tends, service;"—unless it be that the rapid flow of ideas only permits the expression of the leading words, omitting the connecting ones which would make sense of them. There is more of sorrow, than of haughty passion, in this conflict of emotion; the strong will resisting the stronger passion, and attempting to palliate and explain the evidence of that indignity, upon which it is too justly founded. The Fool's philosophy, that absurd cruelty and absurd kindness have the same origin, is well introduced at this point; though little likely to attract his frantic master's attention, whose unreasoning generosity to his daughter is now replaced by unmeasured rage and hatred.

"*Fool.* Cry to it, nuncle, as the cockney did to the eels, when she put them i' the paste alive; she rapp'd 'em o' the coxcombs with a stick, and cry'd, *Down, wantons, down:* 'Twas her brother, that, in pure kindness to his horse, butter'd his hay."

Lear is evidently more unwilling to quarrel with Regan than he was with Goneril. He loves her better; and indeed, if any difference can be marked between these most bad women, the temper and disposition of Regan are certainly, far less repulsive than that of her fierce sister. Black as her conduct undoubtedly is, viewed by itself, it is but grey when brought into contrast with that of her hellish sister—the adulteress, the murderess-poisoner, and suicide. Lear himself acknowledges the difference between them:

"No, Regan, thou shalt never have my curse;
Thy tender-hefted nature shall not give
Thee o'er to harshness; her eyes are fierce, but thine
Do comfort, and not burn;"

and it is remarkable that he does not curse Regan, except in connection with her sister. His terrific imprecations are heaped upon the head of Goneril alone, as if, with the instinct of madness, he had recognized the dark supremacy of her wickedness. When Regan, whom he appears to have loved, joins the old man, his heart is somewhat softened, and grief, for a moment, takes the place of pas-

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sion; yet it is passionate grief, choking its expression with its intensity:

"Beloved Regan,
Thy sister 's naught: O, Regan, she hath tied
Sharp-tooth'd unkindness, like a vulture, here,—
[*Points to his heart.*
I can scarce speak to thee; thou 'lt not believe
With how deprav'd a quality—O, Regan!"

He finds his convictions somewhat checked at this conjuncture; he does not meet with that sympathy from Regan, which he had made sure that his injuries will excite. She reasons with him, not accusingly and threateningly as Goneril, and yet not yielding a point of the question at issue. She tells him the truth without flinching, and strangely, without at first giving offence, as far as she is concerned:

"O, sir, you are old;
Nature in you stands on the very verge
Of her confine: you should be rul'd and led
By some discretion, that discerns your state
Better than you yourself."

One cannot but perceive, that if Regan had been permitted to act without the bad interference of her fiend sister, she might have ruled and led the old king without seeming to do so, and have guided his madness in a less turbulent channel; but she takes side with her sister, and suggests that the king should ask her forgiveness—the forgiveness of a daughter. The old king kneels and adds the eloquence of action to his reproof—unsightly tricks, as Regan calls it—and certainly not dignified, nor consistent with the demeanour of a sane king; but adding terrible force to the mockery of the suggested forgiveness, and to the fierce imprecation which it calls forth; "You nimble lightnings," &c., during the utterance of which Lear probably remains on his knees, with hands extended, to call down "the stored vengeance of heaven," which he invokes.

He now returns to the outrage upon Kent. He will not believe that Regan knew on 't, and is in a way, for the present, to be easily soothed, if it had suited the plans of the bad sisters to do so; but Goneril appears, and all goes wrong with him and with them:

"Who comes here? O, heavens,
If you do love old men, if your sweet sway

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Allow obedience, if you yourselves are old,
Make it your cause; send down, and take my part!"

Is there any passage more pathetic and sublime than this, even in Shakespeare?

Although Regan has immediately before defended the conduct of Goneril, Lear is astonished that she should take her by the hand; but the unison of the sisters, made patent to him by this act, recalls the cause of offence which he has with Regan herself, and which he has referred to and forgotten more than once:

"O, sides, you are too tough!
Will you get hold? How came my man i' the stocks?"

This flightiness of thought, this readiness to take up a subject strongly, and to lay it down again lightly, to run from one subject to another, and still more, from one temper to another, is a phase of mental disease approaching that which is called incoherency. At present, the sudden changes of thought and feeling are capable of being referred to some cause recognizable, although inadequate. In complete incoherency, the mind wanders from subject to subject without any clue being apparent by which the suggestion of thought by thought, or idea by idea, can be followed and explained. In the sane mind one idea follows another, according to laws of suggestion, which vary in individuals, but are subject to general principles; and a man, intimately acquainted with the mental peculiarities of another, might give a very probable opinion as to the succession of any ideas which had passed through the well known mind; or, one idea being given, might guess the character of the one which suggested it, and the one which in turn it would suggest. But, in the mind of the insane, these general principles of the succession of ideas are abrogated. Doubtless there are rules of suggestion and succession if we knew them, but for the most part they are too strange and uncertain to be recognized; the mode of suggestion of ideas in one madman being far more unlike that which exists in another madman, than the different modes which exist among sane people. Moreover, the genesis of thought differs greatly in the same insane mind, during different periods and phases of the malady. The idea of preaching, for instance, in the present phase of Lear's insanity, would probably have suggested some sublime expression of moral truth. At a later period it brought under his notice the

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make and material of his hat, and suggested cavalry shod with felt, and the surprise and slaughter of his enemies. The idea-chain of a sane mind is somewhat like the images in a moving panorama; one can tell if the country is known, what has preceded and what will follow any particular scene; but the sequence of ideas in the insane mind is more like the arbitrary or accidental succession of grotesque images, which are thrown on the curtain of a magic lanthorn; there is no apparent connection between them, and no certainty of sequence: it is as if ideas were suggested by the points and corners of those which precede, by the unessential parts, and not by their real nature and character. This, no doubt, is owing to the rapid flow of ideas which takes place in these phases of insanity; an idea is not grasped in its entirety, it only touches the mind, as it were, and suggests another. The *Ideen-jagd* of the Germans is a good descriptive term for a common form of incoherence.

Lear, however, is not yet incoherent; he is only approaching that phase of the malady. He has entirely lost that obstinate resolve, which his heady and passionate will gave him at the commencement. He is flighty, even on subjects of the most dire moment to him. He takes up and lays down his determinations, with equal want of purpose. This is evident in his hasty references to the treatment which Kent has met with from the fiery duke and Regan. This flightiness of thought is accompanied by a rapid and undirected change of emotion, a still weightier evidence of the mind's profound malady. This is strongly marked in the speech to Goneril, whom, in eight lines, he addresses in four different tempers: irritation; sadness, with some memory of affection; followed by an outburst of rage and hate; and again by straining patience:

> "*Lear.* I pri'thee daughter, do not make me mad;
> I will not trouble thee, my child; farewell;
> We 'll no more meet, no more see one another:
> But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter;
> Or, rather, a disease that 's in my flesh,
> Which I must needs call mine; thou art a boil,
> A plague-sore, an embossed carbuncle,
> In my corrupted blood. But I 'll not chide thee.
> Let shame come when it will, I do not call it."

This state of mind is further evident from the sudden

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change of his resolution to return home and reside with Goneril, because he believes that she will let him have more attendants than her sister. He has just before declared that he would rather "abjure all roofs," or "knee the throne of France," or be "slave and sumpter to this detested groom," than return with her; and yet, because Regan entreats him to bring but five-and-twenty followers, assigning as good reason:

> "How in one house
> Should many people under two commands
> Hold amity? 'tis hard, almost impossible."

he forgets all the comparisons he has drawn between her and Goneril, so unfavourable to the latter; he forgets his deep-rooted hatred to Goneril, and proposes to return home with her:

> "I 'll go with thee,
> Thy fifty yet doth double five-and-twenty,
> And thou hast twice her love."

At this point the mind seems almost falling into fatuity; yet it is but for a moment, for immediately after comes that outburst of eloquence and reason:

> "O, reason not the need," &c.

the grandeur of which it would be difficult to overmatch with any other passage from dramatic literature. It concludes, not with expressions of noble anger, but with those of insane rage, at a loss for words to express itself.

> "No, you unnatural hags,
> I will have such revenges on you both
> That all the world shall ——, I will do such things ——.
> What they are yet I know not; but they shall be
> The terrors of the earth. You think I 'll weep;
> No, I 'll not weep:—
> I have full cause of weeping; but this heart
> Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws,
> Or ere I 'll weep:—O fool I shall go mad!"

It is the climax of his intercourse with these daughters, who turn their backs on him and bar their doors. Not yet do they directly plot against his life. He rushes into the stormy night, such a night that nature seldom sees, such a storm that "man's nature cannot carry the affliction nor the fear." He escapes from the cruel presence of his daughters to the bare heath, where "for

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many miles about there's scarce a bush." Here, in company with the fool, "who labours to out-jest his heart-struck injuries," in reckless, frantic rage, he "bids what will take all." On this scene Coleridge finely remarks,

"What a world's convention of agonies is here! All external nature in a storm, all moral nature convulsed,—the real madness of Lear, the feigned madness of Edgar, the babbling of the Fool, the desperate fidelity of Kent—surely such a scene was never conceived before or since! Take it but as a picture for the eye only, it is more terrific than any which a Michael Angelo, inspired by a Dante, could have conceived, and which none but a Michael Angelo could have executed. Or let it have been uttered to the blind, the howlings of nature would seem converted into the voice of conscious humanity. This scene ends with the *first* symptoms of positive derangement."

Hardly so; it is but the climax of the disease, the catastrophy of the mind history. The malady, which has existed from the first, has increased and developed, until it is now completed. And yet writers generally agree with Coleridge in considering that Lear only becomes actually insane at this point, and some indeed have endeavoured to mark the precise expression which indicates the change from sanity to insanity. That which they (under the vulgar error that raving madness, accompanied by delusion, is alone to be considered real insanity) take to be the first signs, I may enquire into as the signs of the first crisis, or complete development of the disease. It is to be remarked that Lear's first speeches in the storm, beginning

"Blow winds and crack your cheeks; rage, blow!"
"Rumble thy bellyfull, spit fire, spout rain!"

and even his frantic demeanour, as he contends unbonneted with the elements, are the same in character as his language and conduct have been hitherto. There is no difference in quality, although the altered circumstances make the language more inflated, and the conduct more wild. He has, before this time, threatened, cursed, wept, knelt, beaten others, beaten his own head. Under the exciting influence of exposure to a storm so terrible as to awe the bold Kent who never, since he was a man, remembers the like; under this excitement, it is no wonder that the "poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man," should use the extremest emphasis of his eloquence. These speeches, therefore, do not more appear the frantic rant of insanity than much which has

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preceded them; still less can I admit, as evidence of delusion, the accusation directed against the elements, that they are "servile ministers" of his "pernicious daughters." This seems but a trope of high-flown eloquence, consistent with the character and the circumstances. The real critical point where delusion first shews itself I place a little further on, where Lear for the first time sees Edgar, and infers, with the veritable logic of delusion, that a state of misery so extreme must have been the work of his unkind daughters. Before this point, however, is reached, an event occurs very notable, although likely to escape notice, than which there is nothing in this great case from the poet's note book more remarkably illustrating his profound knowledge of mental disease, not only in its symptomalology, but in its causation and development. It is *the addition of a physical cause* to those moral causes which have long been at work.

Lear's inflated speeches, which indicate resistance to the warring elements, are followed by a moment of resignation and of calm, as if he were beaten down by them. He "will be a pattern of all patience." He thinks of the crimes of other men, in that speech of regal dignity: "Let the great gods find out their enemies now." He is "a man more sinned against than sinning." The energy of rage and of frantic resistance has passed by. Calmer thought succeeds, and then comes this remarkable admission:

> "My wits begin to turn,
> Come on my boy. How do'st my boy? art cold?
> I'm cold myself. Where is this straw, my fellow?
> The art of our necessities is strange,
> That can make vile things precious. Come; your hovel;
> Poor fool and knave, I've one string in my heart
> That 's sorry yet for thee."

The import of this must be weighed with a speech in the last act, when Lear is incoherent and full of delusion, but calmer than at this time, and with the reason and impertinency mixed of complete mania:

"When the rain came to wet me once, and the wind to make me chatter; when the thunder would not peace at my bidding, there I found 'em, there I smell'd 'em out. Go to, they are not men o' their words; they told me I was everything: 'tis a lie: I am not ague proof."

This is thoroughly true to nature. Insanity, arising from mental constitution, and moral causes, often con-

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tinues in a certain state of imperfect development; that state which has been somewhat miscalled by Pritchard, moral insanity; a state of exaggerated and perverted emotion, accompanied by violent and irregular conduct, but unconnected with intellectual aberration, until some physical shock is incurred—bodily illness, or accident, or exposure to physical suffering; and then the imperfect type of mental disease is converted into perfect lunacy, characterised by more or less profound affection of the intellect, by delusion or incoherence. This is evidently the case in Lear, and although I have never seen the point referred to by any writer, and have again and again read the play without perceiving it, I cannot doubt from the above quotations, and especially from the second, in which the poor madman's imperfect memory refers to his suffering in the storm, that Shakespeare contemplated this exposure and physical suffering as the cause of the first crisis in the malady. Our wonder at his profound knowledge of mental disease increases, the more carefully we study his works; here and elsewhere he displays with prolific carelessness a knowledge of principles, half of which, if well advertized, would make the reputation of a modern psychologist.

It is remarkable, that in the very scene where Lear's madness is perfected, his first speeches are peculiarly reasoning and consecutive. Shakespeare had studied mental disease too closely, not to have observed the frequent concurrence of reason and unreason; or the facile transition from one state to the other. In Lear, his most perfect and elaborate representation of madness, he never represents the mental power as utterly lost; at no time is the intellectual aberration so complete that the old king is incapable of wise and just remark. He is as a rudderless ship, which fills her sails from time to time, and directs her course aright, and to the eye observing for the moment only, her stately and well directed course speaks of no want of guidance; but inward bias, or outward force, destroys the casual concurrence of circumstances to produce a right direction, and the next moment she is tossing in the trough of the sea, with sails a-back, drifting helpless, the sport of wind and wave.

Lear's first speech in this scene, contains a profound psychological truth: Kent urges him to take shelter in a hovel from the tyranny of the night, too rough for nature to endure; Lear objects that the outward storm soothes that which rages within, by diverting his attention from it; which he may well feel

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to be true, though the exposure and physical suffering are at the very time telling with fearful effect upon his excited, yet jaded condition. In the excitement of insanity physical injury is not perceived, for the same reason that a wound is not felt in the heat of battle. But the injury is not the less received, and the sanatory guardianship of pain being abrogated, is more likely to be endured to a fatal extent without resistance or avoidance. It is a cruel mistake, that the insane are not injured by hardships from which they do not appear to suffer. I have heard a barrister use the argument to exonerate the most heartless and cruel neglect.

"*Lear.* Thou thinkst 't is much, that this contentious storm
Invades us to the skin: so 'tis to thee;
But where the greater malady is fix'd
The lesser is scarce felt. Thou'dst shun a bear;
But if thy flight lay toward the roaring sea,
Thou'st meet the bear i' the mouth. When the mind 's free
The body 's delicate: the tempest in my mind
Doth from my senses take all feeling else,
Save what beats there—filial ingratitude!
* * *
O, that way madness lies; let me shun that;
No more of that"—

This is the last speech of which there have been so many, expressing the consciousness of coming madness, which now yields to the actual presence of intellectual aberration; the excited emotions of unsound mind giving place to the delusions and incoherence of mania. There is one more speech before delusion appears. Lear will not enter the hovel because the tempest "will not give him leave to ponder on things which would hurt him more;" and yet he yields with meekness unnatural to him: he will go in, and then "I 'll pray and then I 'll sleep;" and then comes that calm and pitiful exordium to houseless poverty, that royal appeal for "poor naked wretches," whose cause has been pleaded in these recent days, with so much success by the great power which now acts in the place of despotic authority—the power of the press. What Lear thought, under the tyranny of the wild storm, the great and wealthy have recently felt under the newspaper appeals, which have so forcibly and successfully brought the cause of the houseless poor to their knowledge.

And now intellectual takes the place of moral disturbance. It is remarkable how comparatively passionless the

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old king is, after intellectual aberration has displayed itself. It is true, that even in his delusions he never loses the sense and memory of the filial ingratitude which has been the moral excitant of his madness; but henceforth he ceases to call down imprecations upon his daughters; or with confused sense of personal identity, he curses them, as the daughters of Edgar. It is as if in madness he has found a refuge from grief, a refuge which Gloster even envies when he finds his own wretchedness "deprived that benefit to end itself by death:"

"*Gloster.* The king is mad. How stiff is my vile sense,
That I stand up and have ingenious feeling
Of my huge sorrows! Better I were distract:
So should my thoughts be severed from my griefs;
And woes by strong imaginations lose
The knowledge of themselves."

To lose the sovereignty of reason is, indeed, to be degraded below humanity:

"A sight most pitiful in the meanest wretch,
Past speaking of in a king!"

and yet, like the grave itself, it may be a refuge from intense agony. As the hand of mercy has placed a limit even to physical suffering in senseless exhaustion or forgetful delirium, so in madness it has raised a barrier against the continuance of the extreme agony of the soul. Madness may, as in acute melancholia, be the very climax of moral suffering; but in other forms it may be, and often is, the suspension of misery—the refuge of incurable sorrow. This is finely shewn in Lear, who, from the time that his wits, that is, his intellect, unsettle, is not so much the subject as the object of moral pain. His condition is past speaking of to those who look upon it, but to himself it is one of comparative happiness, like the delirium which shortens the agony of a bed of pain. The second crisis, indeed, arrives—the crisis of recovery; and then he experiences a second agony like that of a person reviving from the suspended animation of drowning.

The king recognizes, in Edgar's miserable state, a reflection of his own; and the intellect, now in every way prepared by the accumulation of moral suffering and physical shock, falls into delusion and confusion of personal identity:

"*Lear.* Hast thou given all to thy two daughters?
And art thou come to this?"

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"*Lear.* Now, all the plagues that in the pendulous air
Hang fated o'er men's faults, light on thy daughters!
Kent. He hath no daughters, sir.
Lear. Death, traitor! nothing could have subdued nature
To such a lowness, but his unkind daughters—
Is it the fashion, that discarded fathers
Should have thus little mercy on their flesh?
Judicious punishment! 't was this flesh begot
Those pelican daughters."

The next speech is a wonderful example of reason and madness. He seizes, in Edgar's nakedness, upon the first suggestion of that train of thought which makes him the grand Sartor Resartus of poetry:

"*Lear.* Thou were better in thy grave, than to answer with thy uncovered body this extremity of the skies.—Is man no more than this? Consider him well: Thou owest the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume:—Ha! here 's three of us are sophisticated!—Thou art the thing itself: unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art.—Off, off, you lendings;—come; unbutton here." [*Tearing off his clothes.*

Before this time he has placed a high value upon appearance and outward respect; man's need must not be argued; the gorgeous robes and appurtenance of royalty are of exaggerated value in his eyes; but henceforth all is changed, and the spirit of that philosophy, which has found modern expression in the grotesque and powerful work of Carlyle, pervades all his rational speech. He tears his clothes, not in the common spirit of destructiveness, which instigated the epileptic Orestes to the same act, and which is seen in common operation where madmen are accumulated; he tears off his clothes as disguises of the real man, as he afterwards tears off the disguise of hypocritical modesty from the simpering dame, whose face presages snow; as he afterwards tears off the disguises of unequal justice; and of the scurvy politician with glass eyes; and of the gilded butterflies of court; and the pretences of those who affect to look into the mysteries of things as if they were God's spies; the disguise, that is, of knowledge not possessed, the very inmost rind of Teufelsdreck himself, the disguise of philosophy. This tendency of thought is the ground of Lear's second delusion; he recognizes in Edgar, a philosopher, one who has practically reduced man

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to his elements; and he holds to the idea to the end of the scene:

"First let me talk with this philosopher:
What is the cause of thunder?"

He is serious enough in the opinion:

"Let me ask you one word in private."

He will not go into the shelter which Gloster at so much risk has provided, unless he is accompanied by his "philosopher," his "good Athenian;" and Gloster and Kent are fain to permit the companionship of the abject Edgar: "Let him take the fellow." But in the next scene in the farm house, this delusion has given way to a third: Edgar and the Fool are believed to be the high justiciaries of the kingdom, before whom Goneril and Regan shall be tried. This easy change of delusion is true to the form of insanity represented: acute mania, with rapid flow of ideas, and tendency to incoherence. In the more chronic forms of insanity, the delusions are more permanent; but in this form they arise and subside, giving place to others, with the rapidity thus faithfully represented.

At every stage the king recognizes his own madness. At this point, when the somewhat blind perceptions of Kent have only just recognized the fact, that "his wits begin to unsettle," Lear eagerly acknowledges the completed reality:

"*Fool.* Pr'ythee, nuncle, tell me, whether a madman be a gentleman, or a yeoman?
Lear. A king! a king!"

There never yet was an idea, sane or insane, which had not its origin in a sensation, physical or emotional, or in another idea. The laws of the genesis of thought are not abrogated in insanity: they only differ from those of the healthy mind, as the physical laws of pathology differ from those of physiology. Man's knowledge, indeed, of mental law, is far less precise than that of physical law, and he is far less able to trace its disturbed action. The means of making a probable conjecture at the genesis of Lear's delusions are, however, left us. The first, respecting Edgar's supposed daughters, is suggested by the lowness to which his nature is subdued, which could only be through his unkind daughters. The second is suggested by Edgar's naked, unaccommodated manhood. The third appears to have had its origin in a slighter suggestion, the

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sight of a pair of joint stools, hard and warped, whom the poor madman likens to his daughters, and for whose trial he suddenly extemporizes a court of justice:

"*Lear.* It shall be done, I will arraign them straight:—
Come, sit thou here, most learned justicer:— [*To* Edgar.
Thou, sapient sir, sit here. [*To the* Fool.]—Now, you she foxes!—
* * * *
Bring in the evidence.—
Thou robed man of justice, take thy place:— [*To* Edgar.
And thou, his yoke-fellow of equity, [*To the* Fool.
Bench by his side:—You are of the commission,
Sit you too. [*To* Kent.

Edg. Let us deal justly.

Sleepest or wakest thou, jolly shepherd?
Thy sheep be in the corn;
And for one blast of thy minikin mouth,
Thy sheep shall take no harm.

Pur! the cat is grey.

Lear. Arraign her first; 't is Goneril. I here take my oath before this honourable assembly, she kicked the poor king her father.

Fool. Come hither, mistres; Is your name Goneril?

Lear. She cannot deny it.

Fool. Cry you mercy, I took you for a joint-stool.

Lear. And here's another, whose warp'd looks proclaim
What store her heart is made of.—Stop her there!
Arms, arms, sword, fire!—Corruption in the place
False justicer why hast thou let her 'scape?"

Were it not for the comments of Kent and Edgar, this scene would read as if Lear threw some voluntary mockery unto it; but his amazed look which we learn from Kent, and the pity with which Edgar is overwhelmed, prove its sad earnestness. It would be most interesting could we know how this scene was actually played under the direction of Shakespeare. It does not seem probable that he wished to represent Lear as the subject of so extreme an hallucination as that his daughters were present, in their own figure and appearance, and that one of them escaped. It is more probable that he wished to represent them, personified by the excited imagination, in the form of the stools; and that Kent or Edgar, seeing the bad effects which this vivid personification was working, snatched away one of the stools; and this produced the passionate explosion on Regan's supposed escape.

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There is little, indeed, which, in the features of madness, Shakespeare allowed to escape his observation. Here, thrown out with the carelessness of abundant wealth, is the knowledge that the accusations of the insane are worthless as evidence: "I here take my oath before this honourable assembly that she kicked the poor king, her father." The honourable assembly, doubtless, did not believe the precision of this statement; but assemblies more honourable, and real official persons, who, at least, ought to possess a larger knowledge of the peculiarities of the insane, have given credence to the accusations of lunatics, like to this of Lear's, except that they had no foundation in the reality of unkindness:

"'Tis the times' plague when madmen lead the blind."

In the speech, "Let them anatomize Regan," &c., passion has subsided into reflection; the storm is past, the poor old heart is tranquilized by exhaustion, the senses are falling into the blessed oblivion of sleep:

"Make no noise, make no noise; draw the curtains:
So, so;—we 'll go to supper in the morning."

Even Kent now acknowledges that his dear master's wits are gone; but trouble him not, he sleeps, and noble affection watches and hopes:

"*Kent.* Oppress'd nature sleeps:—
This rest might yet have balmed thy broken senses,
Which, if convenience will not allow,
Stand in hard case."

Hardly so, noble Kent. The mind's malady is too deep-seated to be thus easily cured by nature's effort; nature's sweet restorer will scarcely balm the wounds which have so long festered. To use a surgical simile, there can be no union by first intention here; sleep may terminate the brief and sudden insanity of delirium, but not this. If, afterward, his "untuned and jarring senses" are actually restored by the sweet influence of sleep, it was not by the brief and insufficient sleep of exhaustion, but by that of skilful and solicitious medication; sleep, so long and profound, that it is needful to disturb it; sleep, the crowning result of successful medical treatment, conducted in the spirit of love and sympathy, and whose final remedy hangs on the sweet lips of Cordelia. In mania, the broken sleep of mere exhaustion does but renew the strength of excitement; but the profound sleep, resulting from skilful treatment, is often the happy cause of restoration.

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The intellectual and excited babbling of the Fool, and the exaggerated absurdities of Edgar, are stated by Ulrici, and other critics, to exert a bad influence upon the king's mind. To persons unacquainted with the character of the insane, this opinion must seem, at least, to be highly probable, notwithstanding that the evidence of the drama itself is against it; for Lear is comparatively tranquil in conduct and language during the whole period of Edgar's mad companionship. It is only after the Fool has disappeared —gone to sleep at mid-day, as he says—and Edgar has left to be the guide of his blind father, that the king becomes absolutely wild and incoherent. The singular and unboubted fact was probably unknown to Ulrici, that few things tranquilize the insane more than the companionship of the insane. It is a fact not easily explicable, but it is one of which, either by the intuition of genius, or by the information of experience, Shakespeare appears to be aware. He not only represents the fact of Lear's tranquility in the companionship of Edgar, of his sudden and close adherence to him, though drawn thereto, perhaps, by delusions; but he puts the very opinion in the mouth of Edgar, although applying it to his own griefs, and not to those of the king.

"Who alone suffers, suffers most i' the mind;
Leaving free things and happy shows, behind:
But then the mind much sufference doth o'er-skip,
When grief hath mates, and bearing fellowship."

Edgars assumed madness presents a fine contrast to the reality of Lear's. It is devoid of reason, and full of purpose. It has the fault, which to this day feigning maniacs almost invariably commit, of extreme exaggeration. It imposes upon the unskilful observation of Gloster, Kent, and the others; but could scarcely impose upon any experienced judgment. Had Edgar himself found any future need to repeat his deception, he might have taken lessons as to the truer phenomena of diseased mind from the poor old king, whom he observed from the covert of his disguise, and have represented that characteristic of true madness—"matter and impertinency mixed"—which he entirely fails to exhibit. Edgar's account of his motives for assuming this disguise to escape the hunt after his life, is a curious illustration of the manner in which the insane were permitted to roam the country, in the good old days:

"While I may scape,
I will preserve myself: and am bethought

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To take the basest and most poorest shape,
That ever penury in contempt of man,
Brought near to beast: my face I 'll grime with filth;
Blanket my loins; elf all my hair in knots;
And with presented nakedness out-face
The winds, the persecutions of the sky.
The country gives me proof and precedent
Of Bedlam beggars, who, with roaring voices,
Strike in their numb'd and mortified bare arms
Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary;
And with this horrible object, from low farms,
Poor pelting villages, sheep-cotes and mills,
Sometimes with lunatick bans, sometimes with prayers,
Enforce their charity.—Poor Turlygood! poor Tom!
That 's something yet;—Edgar I nothing am.

In Disraeli's "Curiosities of Literature," an interesting and learned account is given of the singular mendicants, known by the name of "Toms o' Bedlam." Bethlem at the time when Shakespeare wrote, "was a contracted and penurious charity," with more patients than funds, and the governors were in the habit of relieving the establishment by discharging patients whose cure was very equivocal. These discharged patients, thrown upon the world without a friend, wandered about the country chanting wild ditties, and wearing a fantastical dress to attract the notice and the alms of the charitable. Sir Walter Scott suggested to Disraeli, "that these roving lunatics were out-door pensioners of Bedlam, sent about to live as well as they could on the pittance granted by the hospital." But, in addition to the true "Tom," there was a counterfeit who assumed the grotesque rags, the staff, the knotted hair of the real one, to excite pity or alarm, and to enforce undeserved charity. These men, who are described by Decker in his "English Villanies," were called "Abram men," and hence the phrase current to the present day, to "sham Abram:" they had a cant language, a silly, rambling "*maund*," or phrase of begging. The fullest source of information on this subject Disraeli found in a manuscript note transcribed from some of Aubrey's papers, which singularly elucidates a phrase which has been the subject of some "perverse ingenuity" among the critics—"Poor Tom, thy horn is dry!"

"Till the breaking out of the civil wars, *Toms of Bedlam* did travel about the country; they had been poor, distracted

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men, that had been put into Bedlam, where, recovering some soberness, they were licentiated to go a begging, *i. e.*, they had on their left arm an armilla, or iron ring for the arm, about four inches long, as printed in some works; they could not get it off. They wore about their necks a great horn of an ox, in a string or bawdry, which, when they came to a house they did wind; and they put the drink given them into this horn, whereto they put a stopple. Since the wars I do not remember to have seen any one of them."

The whole description of these Toms o' Bedlam and their counterfeits—"the progging Abram men," as they are given by Disraeli, from Decker and other old authors—affords a curious illustration of the fidelity of Shakespeare's delineation of character, even when most grotesque and apparently unnatural. The assumed character of Edgar bears the most exact resemblance to the description of these beings, as it has been dug out of the past by the researches of this author.

What can be said of the Fool? What can be thought of him? Fool he was not, in the sense of lack of wisdom or of knowledge. He is as individualized and unique as any character in Shakespeare. He is Jacques with a cap and bells, and a gay affectionate temper. He is a spiritualized and poetical Sancho Panza, and, like him, adds to the sadness of the tale by the introduction of ridiculous images: for of Lear it may be said, as Byron said of Don Quixote:

> "Of all tales 't is the saddest—and more sad
> Because it makes us laugh."

Shakespeare represents his other fools as mere ornaments and appendages to the tale, the grinning gurgoils of his structure: but the fool in Lear is an important character, a buttress of the tale. It is through him that Lear first gets into trouble with his dog-hearted daughter. Lear loves him, and he loves Cordelia, and thus there is a bond of affection which knits him to the two as part of the family. His reckless and all-licensed speeches serve the part of the Greek chorus in explaining many things which would not otherwise be so readily intelligible. Altogether, his child-like affection to Cordelia, his devoted attachment to the king, his daring contempt for the bad daughters, his profound insight into the motives of human action cynical yet tempered by love, render him a most charming character, and give him an easy pre-eminence

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over all others who have philosophised in motley. Although called a boy, his great knowledge of the heart indicates his age to have been at least adult. So far from being in any degree imbecile, his native powers of intellect are of the finest order. His wayward rambling of thought may be partly natural, partly the result of his professed office, an office then held in no light esteem. In physique he is small and weak. His suffering from exposure to the inclement night excites Lear's tender compassion, even in his wildest mood, and it does in effect extinguish his frail life. A waif of wayward unmuscular intellect in an age of iron. An admirable union of faithful affection with daring universal cynicism; he also illustrates the truth of the opinion, that the scoffer and the hater are different beings. The "comic sublime" of this character forms a grotesque counterpart and contrast to that of the king, and heightens the effect while it relieves the pain of the tragic development.

Ulrici has some excellent remarks on the supreme art of this contrast:

"Nowhere has Shakespeare pushed the comic into so close and direct proximity with the tragic, and with no one else has the great hazard of doing so, succeeded as with him. Instead of thereby for one moment injuring the tragic effect, he has known how, by this means, wonderfully to exalt and strengthen it; not only does the wisdom of the Fool make, by contrast, the folly of the king and its tragic meaning more conspicuous; not only does he thus, on all occasions, hold up a mirror to the thoughts and acts of others, and through its reflex greatly strengthen the light of truth; but yet more in the profound humour of the Fool, a depth of intelligence conceals itself, upon which the tragical world-intuition (Weltanschauung) generally rests. To this humour, the tragic art, as it were, allies itself, in order to place her deepest innermost centre nearer to the light. This genuine humour of the Fool plays, as it were, with the tragic; to him pleasure and pain, fortune and misfortune are synonymous; he jests with the griping suffering and fate of earthly existence; death and annihilation are a jest to him. On this account he stands above the earthly existence and its tragic side; and he has already attained the aim of the tragic art, the elevation of the human spirit over the mere life of this world, with its sufferings and doings; this appears in him, as it were, personified. His very humour is in its conception, the comic sublime. Wonder has

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been expressed that the poet should confer such magnanimity and intelligence on one who has degraded himself to the position of a mere jester. I can only admire therein the profound wisdom of the master; for when life itself is nothing to a man, his own position in life will be nothing to him; and the lowliest lot will be preferred and selected, because it expresses most clearly our real elevation."

In Lear's next appearance a change has taken place both in his circumstances and his in state. He has arrived at Dover, and he

> "Sometimes, in his better tune, remembers
> What we are come about, and by no means
> Will yield to see his daughter."

The memory of his own harsh and cruel conduct to this dear daughter, and the burning shame he feels, detain him from her. It appears from his subsequent interview with her, that apprehension of Cordelia's hatred, affords another motive. "I know you do not love me." His old love for her indeed has returned, and he will take poison from her hands if she wills it; but the poor vexed mind cannot perceive that Cordelia differs from her sisters; differs so much as to lead Kent to declare that human disposition is the sport of fate, and not the result of law; that injuries cannot weaken her love, even as unbounded benefits could not secure theirs. Lear is no longer surrounded by the sympathising but grotesque companionship of his first maniacal hours. The dearly loved fool has strangely disappeared; his frail existence ceases, without sign or comment. Edgar is transformed from mad Tom into the peasant guide of his blind father. Some dear cause must also wrap Kent in concealment until the catastrophe arrives; he leaves an un-named gentleman to attend his master, and the poor madman escapes from the stranger's watch and guard, and roams in the fields alone, as Cordelia so touchingly describes:

> *Cor.* Alack, 'tis he; why he was met even now
> As mad as the vex'd sea: singing aloud;
> Crown'd with rank fumiter, and furrow weeds,
> With harlocks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-flowers,
> Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow
> In our sustaining corn.—A century send forth;
> Search every acre in the high-grown field,
> And bring him to our eye.

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What can man's wisdom do,
In the restoring his bereaved sense?
He that helps him, take all my outward worth.
Phy. There is means, madam:
Our foster-nurse of nature is repose,
The which he lacks; that to provoke in him,
Are many simples operative, whose power
Will close the eye of anguish.
Cor. All bless'd secrets,
All you unpublish'd virtues of the earth,
Spring with my tears! be aidant, and remediate,
In the good man's distress!—Seek, seek for him;
Lest his ungovern'd rage dissolve the life
That wants the means to lead it.

The word rage seems here used not to designate passion, but the frenzy of maniacal excitement; at this time it is not passionate, but tending rather to gaiety. The first phase of mania was emphasized by the memory of recent injury; and although even then the passionate indignation was subdued from the intense bitterness which the first sense of his daughters' conduct occasioned, the emotional state was that of anger and sorrow. After the interval which has elapsed between the sudden flight from the neighbourhood of these daughters who were plotting against his life, and his reappearance at Dover with Cordelia's blessed succour nigh, the emotional state has changed into one less painful, yet indicating more profound disease. The proud and passionate king is now wild and gay, singing aloud, crowned with wild flowers; his incoherence is sometimes complete, and no idea rests in his mind with sufficient tenacity to be called a delusion. This new phase of mania is as wonderfully and exactly true to nature as the one which it follows in consistent development. The more perfect incoherence is now dissociated from formal delusion. The emotional disposition natural to the man, and hitherto exaggerated by the wrongs he has suffered, is now completely lost and perverted by the progress of disease. Though he forgets that he is no longer a king, the regal deportment is altogether lost; though he does not forget his daughter's injuries, and can compare their conduct with that of Gloster's bastard, the fierceness of anger is quenched. The state of mind in which a delusion is suggested by a casual circumstance, just as a dream is suggested by casual sensations, in which the false idea thus originating is dwelt

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upon and examined in its various bearings, as if it were the representative of truth in a sane mind, this intellectual state has given way to the one of more profound injury called incoherence, in which false mental associations and false ideas arise and fade too easily, too transiently to be called delusions. A dozen false ideas chase each other in half as many minutes. Strictly speaking, perhaps each of the false idea-images of incoherence deserves the name of delusion, although it is not usually given. The simple and important fact may be stated with regard to Lear thus: that in the first phase of his mania the false ideas were few, and had some consistency and duration; in the present phase they are numerous, disjointed, and transitory:

"*Edg.* The safer sense will ne'er accommodate
His master thus.
Lear. No, they cannot touch me for coining; I am the king himself.
Edg. O thou side-piercing sight!
Lear. Nature's above art in that respect.—There's your press-money. That fellow handles his bow like a crow-keeper: draw me a clothier's yard.—Look, look, a mouse! Peace, peace;—this piece of toasted cheese will do't.—There's my gauntlet: I'll prove it on a giant.—Bring up the brown bills.—O, well flown bird!—i' the clout, i' the clout: hewgh!—Give the word.
Edg. Sweet marjoram.
Lear. Pass.
Glo. I know that voice.
Lear. Ha! Goneril!—with a white beard!—They flattered me like a dog; and told me I had white hairs in my beard, ere the black ones were there. To say ay, and no, to every thing I said!—Ay and no too was no good divinity. When the rain came to wet me once," * *

The withering denunciation of incontinency, "The wren goes to't," &c., and the grander one of injustice, "Thou rascal beadle," &c., are too consecutively reasoned for the king's state of mind at this period. The apparent inconsistency is only to be accounted for by Lear's inherent grandeur of thought and natural eloquence, which even in frenzy rolls forth its magnificent volume, like nothing else I know of in poetry. It is not common to see incoherence alternating with the precise expression of complex thought, but I have sometimes observed the phenomenon when the complex thoughts, so expressed, have formed a part of the hoarded

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treasures of the mind. And so it must be with Lear; the eloquence of his madness is partly the result of an imagination naturally vivid and now stimulated to excess, and of an involuntary display of oratorical power, native to the man, and partly of profound knowledge of human nature, acquired during an age of practical kingship. He speaks, as the bird sings, from inborn force, which neither anger, nor grief, nor madness, nor the pangs of approaching death, can subdue.

Blind Gloster's reflection upon the ruin of such intellect is truly grand, for what is the inert world that it should outlast the spirit which dwelleth therein? What is the beauty of nature without eyes to behold it, or its harmony without mind to rejoice in it?

"*Glo.* O ruined piece of nature! This great world
Shall so wear out to naught. Dost thou know me?
Lear. I remember thine eyes well enough—
Dost thou squiny at me?
No, do thy worst blind cupid, I 'll not love—
Read thou this challenge, mark but the finishing of it."

Stark madness again instantly following reasoning eloquence; the eyeless orbits of an old friend but the occasion of an incoherent jest. The thoughts are now the mere sport of the suggestive faculty. Any slight circumstance may give rise to the most earnest, any impressive object or terrible incident may give rise to the most trivial or wayward notions. His old friend's great calamity is lost in his own, and does but suggest absurd comparisons and empty quibbles.

The quibble on seeing without eyes induces the comments on the justice and thief, and the dog in office, beginning prosaically and rising into the grand poetic climax, and ending in mere incoherence.

"None does offend, none, I say, none; I'll able 'em:
Take that of me, my friend, who have the power
To seal the accuser's lips. Get thee glass eyes;
And, like a scurvy politician, seem
To see the things thou dost not.—Now, now, now, now:
Pull off my boots:—harder, harder; so.
Edg. O, matter and impertinency mix'd!
Reason in madness!
Lear. If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes.
I know thee well enough; thy name is Gloster:
Thou must be patient; we came crying hither.

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Thou know'st, the first time that we smell the air,
We wawl, and cry:—I will preach to thee; mark.
Glo. Alack, alack the day!
Lear. When we are born, we cry, that we are come
To this great stage of fools;——This is a good block?—
It were a delicate stratagem, to shoe
A troop of horse with felt: I'll put it in proof;
And when I have stolen upon these sons-in-law,
Then, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill."

Here is the inexpugnable notion of kingly power, then the rambling "pull off my boots,"—then tardy pity for Gloster and consolation in the spirit of the doctrine that we are born to trouble; then the strange idea chain, that consolation shall be given in the form of a religious discourse, which brings the hat under observation, "a good block; this the silent cavalry and the stolen revenge. A more perfect representation of wandering intellect it is impossible to conceive. Even his own pitiful recognition of his state assumes a form of expression, half incoherent, half poetical. He no longer distinguishes friends from foes, and with other changed feelings, he has become susceptible of fear. When this is removed, he perceives clearly enough that his personal liberty is not secure even from his friends, and away he decamps, poor old king, a veritable type of gay, incoherent mania. Incoherency, the characteristic of rapid and irregular idealization, is so far from being a definite quality, like a clear-cut delusion, that its degree may vary from the slight fault in the sequence and order of ideas, which may be observed in the earliest stages of excitement from wine, to that ceaseless and utterly unintelligible babble, which is observed in some chronic lunatics. Extreme degrees of incoherency are invariably associated with advanced decay of the mental powers. Perception and memory are greatly enfeebled; the power of comparison is clean gone. A ceaseless flow of shallow images ripples over the mind, and continues ever after. All power of attention to new objects is lost; in some cases the babble of words appears to be continued, even after the mind has ceased to reflect the pale spectres of thought which they once represented. In Lear, incoherence, although the characteristic feature of his madness at this phase, has not attained this advanced degree. The force of the perceptions are uncertain, but they are not always weak: the memory still gives light, although it flickers: and the power of comparison is vigorous, although its exercise is vagrant. The incoherence arises more from the irregu-

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larity and strangeness of idea suggestion than from its want of power. The links of the chain of thought lie tumbled and confused, but are not broken. And what links they are! Some of gold, some of iron, some of earth! The finest poetry, the noblest sentiment, the strongest sense, held together by absurdity and grossness!

The ruins of this mind are grand and beauteous, even in their fragments. Breadth of imagination and loftiness of diction have never attained fuller development than in his burning words. Wide as the scope of human nature in his passions, in his love and in his hate, in his sympathy and in his censure; he is a man to be dreaded, even in his fallen state, by such creatures as Goneril and Regan; a man to be loved unto death by all good natures, however diverse from each other, by the blunt Kent, the rash Gloster, the witty fool, the firm, self-contained, yet devoted and gentle Cordelia. We see all his greatness reflected in the feelings he inspires.

The scene of Lear's restoration, touching and beautiful as it is, does not quite follow the probable course of mental change, with the same exact and wondrous knowledge of insanity as that hitherto displayed. A long and profound sleep has been induced by the physician; this it is thought needful to interrupt, and, in order that the sensations on awaking may form a striking contrast to those which had preceded sleep, the patient must be awoke by music, and the first object on recovering consciousness must be that of his dear child:

"*Phys.* So please your majesty,
That we may wake the king? he hath slept long.
Cor. Be govern'd by your knowledge, and proceed
I'the sway of your own will. Is he array'd?
Gent. Ay, madam; in the heaviness of sleep,
We put fresh garments on him.
Phys. Be by, good madam, when we do awake him;
I doubt not of his temperance.
Cor. Very well.
Phys. Please you, draw near.—Louder the music there."

This seems a bold experiment, and one not unfraught with danger. The idea that the insane mind is beneficially influenced by music is, indeed, a very ancient and universal one; but that the medicated sleep of insanity should be interrupted by it, and that the first object presented to the consciousness should be the very person most likely to excite profound emotion, appear to be expedients little calculated to promote that tranquililty of the mental functions,

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which is, undoubtedly, the safest state to induce, after the excitement of mania. A suspicion of this may have crossed Shakespeare's mind, for he represents Lear in eminent danger of passing into a new form of delusion. The employment of music in the treatment of the insane would form an interesting chapter in the history of ancient and modern psychology. The earliest note of it is in Holy Writ: "And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp and played with his hand, so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him" (1 Sam. xvi.) In Elisha it produced inspiration: he called for a minstrel, and "when the minstrel played, the hand of the Lord came upon him" (2 Kings iii.) Asclepiades effected many cures of insane persons by this means; and Galen reports that Æsculapius did the same. "Jason Pratensis (cap. de maniâ) hath many examples how Clinias and Empedocles cured some desperately melancholy, and some mad, by this, our music."—*Burton.* But there is danger in its use, "for there are some whom," saith Plutarch, "*musica magis dementat quam vinun.*" In modern times, the greatest advocate for music in the treatment of insanity, hath been Dr. Mason Cox, who employed it systematically, and, as he relates, with the best effect. Frank also employed it, and he relates the instance of a young person affected with periodical insanity, who, every time he heard the sound of music, was seized with a furious paroxysm of mania. Dr. Knight had seen its tranquilizing and beneficial effects in numerous cases, and had never seen it do harm; but yet he could not think its employment safe in excited and recent cases. Guislain distinguishes its use—1st, as exercising the mind of the patient who executes; and, 2nd, when played by others, as producing effects upon the nervous system through the emotions. In the first of these modes, its employment is, undoubtedly, beneficial as a means of recreation; but modern physicians appear to have little faith in its effects when simply listened to. Either the nerves are less delicately strung than formerly, or the quality of music is deteriorated, or the power of medical faith has decayed; of which explanations the latter is, probably, the true one. Still, credence is given to its power in certain conditions; for instance, the national melodies of mountain countries are said to possess a most wonderful influence on the nerves. The *ranz des vaches* causes melancholy in the Switzer; and Locheil, in the shrill screams of the bagpipe, is said to produce the effect of making a Scotchman ardently desire to return to his own country.

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Shakespeare tells us another remarkable consequence of listening to the Highland music. A physiological explanation, however, may be offered of Shylock's assertion, that some men, "when the bagpipe sings in the nose, cannot contain their urine," namely, that the musical performance described merely meant a violent fit of sneezing; which might easily, in nervous persons, occasion the peculiar effect attributed to it. It is the forcing strain of interrupted respiration, and not the exciting strain of the pibroch, which is meant; and are not some notes of the bagpipe marvellously like a musical sneeze?

When Lear awakes with the loud music ringing in his ears, and finds himself once more in royal state and apparel, and with Cordelia at his feet, fancy flashes upon him the idea that he has past the dread bourne of life. Remembrance fails, and even personal identity needs verification.

Lear. You do me wrong, to take me out of the grave:—
Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound
Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
Do scald like molten lead.
Cor. Sir, do you know me?
Lear. You are a spirit, I know; When did you die?
Cor. Still, still far wide!
Phys. He's scarce awake; let him alone awhile.
Lear. Where have I been? Where am I?—Fair day-light?—
I am mightily abus'd.—I should even die with pity,
To see another thus.—I know not what to say.—
I will not swear these are my hands:—let's see;
I feel this pin prick. 'Would I were assur'd
Of my condition.
Cor. O, look upon me, sir,
And hold your hand in benediction o'er me:—
No, sir, you must not kneel.
Lear. Pray do not mock me:
I am a very foolish fond old man,
Fourscore and upward; not an hour more nor less;
And, to deal plainly,
I fear, I am not in my perfect mind.
Methinks, I should know you, and know this man;
Yet I am doubtful: for I am mainly ignorant
What place this is: and all the skill I have
Remembers not these garments; nor I know not
Where I did lodge last night: Do not laugh at me;
For, as I am a man, I think this lady
To be my child Cordelia.

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Cor. And so I am, I am.
Lear. Be your tears wet? Yes, 'faith. I pray, weep not:
If you have poison for me, I will drink it.
I know, you do not love me; for your sisters
Have, as I do remember, done me wrong:
You have some cause, they have not."
"*Phys.* Be comforted, good madam: the great rage
You see, is kill'd in him: and yet it is danger
To make him even o'er the time he has lost.
Desire him to go in: trouble him no more,
Till further settling.
Cor. Will't please your highness walk?
Lear. You must bear with me:
Pray now, forget and forgive; I am old, and foolish."

The idea that death is past is half a delusion half a dream, in which the objects of sense are visible while the judgment is not sufficiently awake to interpret them. When he does awake, the mind, suffering from the weakness which follows fierce excitement, cannot comprehend the new circumstances which surround him—the unknown place and the royal robes. But, first of all, the poor patient would assure himself that he is a living sentient being, and not a soul in torture, as the fearful dream has represented. The half-timid enquiries into his state and surroundings, represent both exhaustion and calmness. This self-examination and interrogation is a common feature in convalescence from insanity; although, it must be admitted, that the transactions here represented, and as the exigences of the drama perhaps require that they should be represented, are more sudden and distinct than the real operations of nature. Lear's timid consciousness of infirmity of mind, "I fear I am not in my perfect mind," is in fine contrast to the energetic assertion of his frantic state: "Let me have surgeons, I am cut to the brains." The statement of his age affords a delicate touch of that intellectual weakness which accompanies the state of repose and exhaustion. He does not see that four-score and upward is not an exact, but an inexact statement. "Be your tears wet," seems a return to the half-dream, half-delusion; he still doubts the personality of Cordelia, and when he attains conviction on the point, the idea that she will avenge her wrongs upon him does not at once forsake him; and yet it lasts not long, and he desires her to forget and forgive. The physician wisely apprehends danger from the weak mind throwing itself back upon the memory of its injuries and

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suffering, and interrupts the colloquy. The high honour and worth with which Shakespeare invests the physician here and elsewhere, deserves notice. In Macbeth, although the angry king rejects an agency which cannot work social and political cures, the physician is represented as a wise and dignified person. In this play of Lear the character is still more exalted; and it would be easy to prove that throughout Shakespeare's writings, there is no character held in more honour than that of the medical man. Even the starved apothecary in Romeo and Juliet, is gifted with a conscience. Shakespeare, in this respect, presents a remarkable contrast to Molière, with whom the physician of his day was the favourite butt of ridicule; but Shakespeare's esteem for physic was founded upon knowledge, while Molière's contempt of it was founded upon ignorance; for while the latter sets up the manners and pretensions of the medical pedant as the butt of his ridicule, there is not a passage in his writings which indicates the slightest knowledge of the art or science of the profession which he so assiduously covers with contempt: the gibberish of dog-Latin pretended prescriptions is his nearest approach to it. Shakespeare, on the other hand, evinces so surprising and minute a knowledge of both, that it would be no difficult task to prove from his writings that he had been a diligent student of the healing art, and thence it might be inferred that he had been a doctor's apprentice, with a probability not much below that which has been so ingeniously developed by the Lord Chief Justice, to prove that he was an attorney's clerk. I yield, indeed, to Mr. Payne Collier's theory as argued by Lord Campbell, the precedence of probability, inasmuch as Shakepeare's knowledge of law is technical, while his knowledge of medicine is general, and such as he might have more readily acquired outside the professional limits. His knowledge of law is that which a clerk might possess; his knowledge of medicine is evidently the acquirement of a riper age, capable of resolving observation into principle; a very different thing to the inventory of an apothecary's shop, which Lord Campbell justly scouts as evidence of more than casual remark and faithful memory. The more modest and probable conclusion, however, would seem to be, not that which the lawyer may compliment himself with, nor that which the doctor or the sailor might respectively arrive at, in consequence of his wide knowledge of medical and nautical affairs; but simply, that in Shakespeare the world possessed a man, who, like Aristotle, was endowed with all the knowledge of his time, combined with the divine

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gift which the Greek did not possess, of making it available in the most gorgeous employment of fancy and language. He was a naturalist in the widest sense, and a poet in the highest. Infinitely more than Goëthe he merited the title of the Allsided One.

Let us conclude this somewhat professional digression by expressing the opinion, that Shakespeare's prescription for Gloster's empty and bleeding orbits, "flax and the whites of eggs," is good domestic surgery.

When Lear next appears a prisoner with Cordelia, his mental state has again undergone great change. The weakness of exhaustion has disappeared, and the delusion and incoherency of the preceding excitement has yielded to the good influences with which this daughter, thrice blessed in her devoted affection, has balmed the wounded soul. Lear has returned as nearly as possible to his state of mind before the storm and the shock of physical suffering and exposure. Medical treatment and physical comfort, and the blessed influences of affection have soothed his intellectual frenzy. But the moral disturbance remains, with this notable difference, however, that he now gives vent to passionate love, as he formerly did to passionate anger and hate. There is no measure or reason in his love for Cordelia, as there was none in his hatred of Goneril. He forgets his age in one as in the other. In prison he will wear out sects of great ones; his enemies shall die and rot before he will part with Cordelia, or weep at sorrow which has lost its sting now she is with him.

"*Lear.* Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,
The gods themselves throw incense. Have I caught thee?
He that parts us shall bring a brand from heaven,
And fire us hence, like foxes. Wipe thine eyes;
The good years shall devour them, flesh and fell,
Ere they shall make us weep: we'll see them starve first."

This is not mania, but neither is it sound mind. It is the emotional excitability often seen in extreme age, as it is depicted in the early scenes of the drama, and it is precisely true to the probabilities of the mind history, that this should be the phase of infirmity displaying itself at this moment. Any other dramatist than Shakespeare would have represented the poor old king quite restored to the balance and control of his faculties. The complete efficiency of filial love would have been made to triumph over the laws of mental function. But Shakespeare has represented the exact degree of improvement

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which was probable under the circumstances, namely, restoration from the intellectual mania which resulted from the combined influence of physical and moral stock, with persistence of the emotional excitement and disturbance which is the incurable and unalterable result of passion exaggerated by long habitude and by the malign influence of extreme age.

The last scene, in which Lear's tough heart at length breaks over the murdered body of his dear child, is one of those masterpieces of tragic art, before which we are disposed to stand silent in awed admiration. The indurated sympathies of science, however, may examine even the death scene. The first thing to remark is, that there is no insanity in it, that Lear might have spoken and acted thus if his mind had never wandered. He has found Edmund's mercenary murderer hanging Cordelia, so as "to lay the blame upon her own despair." He kills the slave, and with the last remnant of strength carries the dear body into the midst of that heart-struck conclave, where the sisters, who "desperately are dead," already lie. At first he is under the excitement of mental agony, expressing itself in the wild wail :

"Howl, howl, howl! O ye are men of stones ;
Had I your tongues and eyes I'd use them so,
That heaven's vault should crack :—She's gone for ever!"

Then follows the intense cruel anxiety of false hope, followed by quick resolve and reasonable action : the demand for the looking glass : the trial of the feather, to ascertain if any faint imperceptible breath remains. Then, the sustaining but fatal excitement over, leaden grief settles upon the heart, and benumbs the feelings to every sense, save one. Noble Kent comes too late with the prepared surprise of his discovery. The wreck of kinghood sits in the midst, with no eyes, no thoughts for living friend or dead foe, for no object save one, the voided temple of his love, now a limp carcase in his nerveless lap. What a group for a sculptor, Lear and Cordelia, types of manly grandeur and female grace, with but half a life between the two! The feather test has failed, and the sweet breath refuses to mist or stain the clear surface of the stone ; conviction arrives that "now she's gone for ever," and there is no fire left in the once warm heart for one more angry word, no thought except the passing one of satisfied revenge. She's gone for ever—doubt of the stern fact is past, and death presses on his own heart ; feeling is mercifully blunted and thought obscured ; imagination is the last to congeal ; desire,

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father to the thought, makes the dear lips move, and the soft voice invite to follow :

> "Cordelia, Cordelia, stay a little. Ha!
> What is't thou say'st?—Her voice was ever soft,
> Gentle and low; an excellent thing in woman :"—

The loyal friends around, Albany and Kent and Edgar, strive to arouse his attention from the gathering stupor, which they do not yet recognize as that of death; and in banished Kent, now reinstated in the appurtenances and lendings of his rank, an object bound to stimulate attention and curiosity is at hand. But he has put off the revelation of his faithful service, until it is too late to be understood. The king recognizes his person, indeed, even through the gathering mists of death, which beginning at the heart, weakens the circulation through the brain and dims the sight. How constantly does the dying man complain that the room is dark, or that he cannot see. "Where is your servant, Caius?" brings a mechanical thought, trifling as it seems, but in true place. The unreflecting movement of the mind, the excito-motory action of the brain, as some would call it, a thought of simple suggestion, which, as involuntary muscular action endures after voluntary power of movement is lost, is the last kind of thought which the dying brain can entertain. The new idea that Caius and Kent are one, cannot be entertained: this requires comparison and a greater power of cerebration than the feeble tide of blood, which is now percolating the brain can provide for.

> "I am old now,
> And these same crosses spoil me.—Who are you?
> Mine eyes are not o' the best :—I'll tell you straight.
> *Kent.* If fortune brag of two she lov'd and hated,
> One of them we behold.
> *Lear.* This is a dull sight: Are you not Kent?
> *Kent.* The same;
> Your servant Kent: Where is your servant Caius?
> *Lear.* He's a good fellow, I can tell you that;
> He'll strike, and quickly too: He's dead and rotten.
> *Kent.* No, my good lord; I am the very man;—
> *Lear.* I'll see that straight.
> *Kent.* That, from your first of difference and decay,
> Have follow'd your sad steps.
> *Lear.* You are welcome hither.
> *Kent.* Nor no man else; all's cheerless, dark, and deadly.—
> Your eldest daughters have fore-done themselves,

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And desperately are dead.
Lear. Ay, so I think.
Alb. He knows not what he says; and vain it is
That we present us to him.
Edg. Very bootless.

Very bootless! and yet stupified by dire mischance, they are blind to the near approach of the "veiled shadow with the keys," who is at hand to release this loved and hated one of fortune from his eminence of care. Albany proceeds to make state arrangements, to promise the wages of virtue and the cup of deservings to friends and foes, and to resign his own absolute power to the old majesty, whose heart is beating slower and fainter, whose face is blanching, and whose features are pinching as the life current passes on its way in ever slower and smaller waves, until at length the change of aspect suddenly strikes the dull Duke, and he exclaims, "O! see, see!" and then one flicker more of reflecting thought, one gentle request, "Pray you undo this button;" expressing the physical feeling of want of air; one yearning look on her who 'll "come no more," and the silver thread is loosed, the golden bowl for ever broken.

Lear. And my poor fool is hang'd! No, no, no life:
Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more.
Never, never, never, never, never!—
Pray you undo this button: Thank you, sir.—
Do you see this? Look on her,—look,—her lips,—
Look there, look there!— [*He dies.*
Edg. He faints!—My lord, my lord,—
Kent. Break, heart; I prithee, break!
Edg. Look up, my lord.
Kent. Vex not his ghost: O, let him pass! he hates him
That would upon the rack of this rough world
Stretch him out longer.

J. C. B.

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