scandal of his married life. The brutality of his father as a husband appears to have been far surpassed by his own. His outbursts of temper were such, that on one occasion he kicked his wife while she was near her confinement, and on another, 'springing upon her like a tiger, made his teeth meet in her left cheek.'[1] Concerning the ear-ache above referred to, Lord Lytton writes of his father: 'To frequent and severe recurrence of that pain he was subject till middle age, and his public and social life was greatly affected by the deafness it induced. When he was about forty, an abscess revealed itself in the ear from which he had thus suffered ever since the age of sixteen. He was then told by the aurists that any attempt to stop the discharge from the abscess might prove fatal. In his seventieth year, after an exceedingly painful and prolonged attack of ear-ache, the discharge stopped of its own accord, and a few days after, he was dead.'

The characteristics of Macaulay were great physical activity, which expended itself in walking exercise, a mental vehemence and self-confidence to match, and a prodigious memory. An uncle, Colin Macaulay, was a remarkable linguist, and Zachary Macaulay, father of the historian, devoted his life to the suppression of the slave trade with a zeal little short of fanaticism, a mental quality which, as I have elsewhere shown, is closely associated with nerve disorder. Macaulay was a wonder-child, remembering without effort all that he read. This faculty never deserted him. He knew 'Paradise Lost' and the 'Pilgrim's Progress' by heart. Poems read through once he could recall forty years afterwards without the omission of a single word; the contents of a single page he could take in at a glance. 'To the last,' says his biographer,[2] 'he could read books more quickly than other people skimmed them, and skimmed them as fast as anyone else could turn the leaves.' From the age of fifty he suffered from confirmed asthma, and at fifty-nine he died from stoppage of the heart's action.

MACAULAY

The Brontë sisters were consumptive, deriving their unsound constitution from a father who was dangerously

[1] *Life of Lady Rosina Lytton: a Vindication.*
[2] G. O. Trevelyan: *Life of Macaulay.*

'eccentric.' Himself a writer and versifier, the Rev. Patrick Brontë was tyrannical to his children, and was accustomed to carry about with him a loaded pistol, which he fired off in moments of temper. Another mania of his was always to dine alone; and his habits were otherwise solitary and peculiar. As in the case of George III., his insanity entailed early blindness. All the children born to this unamiable cleric were short-lived but strangely gifted. A daughter, who died at eleven, was, before her death, able to discuss the political questions of the day. The three sisters Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Brontë, who have rendered the family famous, were much alike in constitution, and all showed poetical and imaginative talent of a high order. Charlotte suffered from nerves and depression, her biographer, Mrs. Gaskell, noting the similarity of her brooding tendencies to Cowper's. On one occasion she had an hallucination of hearing, a voice seeming to recite to her some unknown lines of poetry. She was extremely weak-sighted, and suffered severely from neuralgia and sleeplessness. She died at thirty-nine, of consumption. A few years before her death she married, but left no children. Emily and Anne, consumptive also, died at thirty and twenty-nine, the latter suffering from asthma as well. In their brother, Bramwell Brontë, we have another example of the ne'er-do-well who dogs the footsteps of genius. Bramwell had a talent both for poetry and painting, but he was deeply tainted with vicious habits, took opium, drank to excess, and had repeated attacks of *delirium tremens*. The sisters were deeply distressed at his 'frantic folly,' and regarded him as 'hopeless.' This, indeed, he proved to be, losing all his situations through vice or culpable negligence. He died at thirty-one of consumption. All the members of the family were as undersized as they were precocious and clever. The same remark applies to Maria Edgeworth, who, like Charlotte Brontë, suffered from weak eyes and was the daughter of an eccentric father.

BRONTË

Charles Dickens was a 'puny, sickly boy, subject to attacks of violent spasm, which disabled him for any active exertion.' He outgrew his feebleness, however, and as a young man showed extraordinary vivacity

DICKENS

and force of character. In early manhood he had nothing to complain of physically beyond 'a little weakness now and then and a slight nervousness.' As he advanced in years he became restless and irritable. His married life was 'a dismal failure.' Neuralgic pains interfered with his work, and he suffered from sleeplessness. Ultimately both gout and incipient paralysis attacked him. In his fifty-sixth year he wrote to a friend: 'My weakness and deadness are all on the left side, and if I don't look at anything I try to touch with the left hand I don't know where it is. Last Sunday I found myself extremely giddy, and extremely uncertain of my sense of touch both in the left leg and the left hand and arm.' In the following year Sir Thomas Watson reported upon Dickens's condition in the following terms: 'After unusual irritability he found himself giddy with a tendency to go backward and to turn round. Afterwards, desiring to put something on a small table, he pushed it and the table forward undesignedly. He had some odd feeling of insecurity about the left leg, as if there was something unnatural about his heel, but he could lift and he did not drag his leg. Also he spoke of some strangeness of the left hand and arm; he missed the spot on which he wished to lay that hand unless he carefully looked at it, and he felt an unreadiness to lift his hands towards his head, especially the left hand, when, for instance, he was brushing his hair. . . The state thus described showed plainly that Charles Dickens had been on the brink of an attack of paralysis of his left side, and possibly of apoplexy.' Dickens also mentioned to his medical adviser that he sometimes lost or misused a word, and that he forgot names and numbers. Meanwhile he suffered from repeated attacks of gout. At fifty-eight he died from effusion of blood upon the brain. Forster, from whom these particulars are derived,[1] is strangely reticent about the novelist's parentage and connections, but the elder Dickens appears to have been a thriftless man, and the existence of the ne'er-do-well member of the family is admitted, though the details of the case are, as usual, hushed up. The ne'er-do-well was Dickens's brother Frederick, to whom, on his death, the novelist thus alluded:

[1] Forster: *Life of Charles Dickens.*

'It was a wasted life, but God forbid that we should be hard upon it, or upon anything else in this world that is not deliberately and coldly wrong.'

Both of George Eliot's parents appear to have contributed to her peculiar organisation, her father being a 'man of extraordinary determination of character,' and her mother 'a woman with an unusual amount of natural force,' but of an ailing habit. In childhood the novelist suffered from a 'low general state of health and great susceptibility to terror at night;' and, according to her biographer,[1] the liability to have 'all her soul become a quivering fear' remained with her through life. At school she showed great aptitude for English composition and music, and as an example of her sensitiveness it is related that after playing she would go and throw herself down in a flood of tears. Fits of depression beset her in womanhood, and from her thirtieth year she was a martyr to headaches. In her diaries and correspondence occur such jottings as the following: 1849 (at the age of thirty), 'terrible headaches;' 1850, 'lost whole weeks from headache, system shattered;' 1852, 'pity me! I have had headache for four days incessantly;' 1853, 'a crop of very large headaches, rheumatism in the right arm;' 1854, 'I have got into a labyrinth of headaches and palpitations.' In her latter years some disorder of the kidneys manifested itself, but the immediate cause of her death was a cold. A sister of George Eliot's married a surgeon and lived a homely life; and a brother was content to be, like his father, a land agent.

GEORGE ELIOT

Sydney Smith's father was eccentric to the point of insanity. 'He was a man of considerable ability, endowed with great force of character and a keen sense of humour, but his disposition was selfish and his temper capricious; he was impulsive in his movements and arrogant in manner. He seems to have had a mania for doing rash and unaccountable things.'[2] One of these unaccountable things was to leave his newly-wedded wife at the church door and rush off to America, returning to her

SYDNEY SMITH

[1] J. W. Cross: *Life of George Eliot.*
[2] Stuart J. Reid: *Life of Sydney Smith.*

only after he had spent some years in random excursions up and down the world. He lived to be eighty-eight. Sydney Smith's three brothers were, like himself, remarkably precocious, though, unlike him, they died comparatively early. One became an Indian judge and an 'Oriental scholar,' having a great facility for acquiring languages. Sydney Smith had gout and heart disease. His eldest son at twenty-four succumbed to a 'long and painful illness.'

Another great humorist, Thomas Hood, belonged to a consumptive family. An elder brother, James, was thought to be the more promising youth. James was artistic, fond of literature, and a good linguist. He died, however, at an early age, a victim to consumption, which also carried off his mother and two sisters. Thomas Hood's life was one of much physical suffering; he had rheumatism, breast spasms, heart disease, a disordered liver, and other complications, of which he died at forty-six.

HOOD

De Quincey's father had a long period of ill-health, and died at thirty-nine. His mother's religious prepossessions led her to a 'gloomy narrowness and austerity.' The famous opium-eater was himself of stunted growth, being barely 5 feet 3 inches high, was short-sighted, and took to opium as a relief from neuralgia and general nervous irritability. He had great aptitude for languages, being able to talk Greek fluently at fifteen, was fond of music, slovenly in his dress, and cared nothing for money, which he was all his life incapable of handling. In his later years he was subject to great vicissitudes of temperament and spirits, being frequently depressed and physically torpid, which condition, however, was not incompatible with a 'frightful recurrence of long ago imagery and veriest trifles of the past.' A brother, William, who died at sixteen, was a boy of 'remarkable character and energy, incessantly writing and inventing.' Consumption appeared among the members of De Quincey's family.

DE QUINCEY

Thackeray died suddenly at fifty-two. He looked well and strong enough to have lived twenty years longer, but for the last fourteen years of his life he was continually ailing and was subject to certain painful

THACKERAY

spasms, which were probably the immediate cause of his death.[1] His father, an Indian Civil Servant, also died suddenly.

All his life Wilkie Collins was a sufferer from his nerves, to calm which he was accustomed to take laudanum in immense doses. His head was mis-shapen. On the right side there was a congenital swelling, and he was accustomed to say that Nature, in his case, had been a bad artist, having depicted his forehead 'all out of drawing.' He had gout and was otherwise in bad health for many years. The beginning of his last illness, which came when he was sixty-five, was a stroke of paralysis. Wilkie Collins's paternal grandmother died in a fit after prolonged suffering from 'infirmities of body and mind.' His father was William Collins, the Royal Academician, who died of heart disease, and there was also a faculty for painting in his mother's family.

WILKIE COLLINS

Although he attained the age of seventy-seven, Robert Browning had a curiously weak heart. Robert Buchanan writes of him: 'More than once at a time when he was in his prime, it was impossible to find at his wrist any pulsation whatever, or a pulsation so slow and apparently feeble as to be scarcely noticeable.' In his latter years the poet also suffered from asthma. There is some obscurity about Browning's descent, but his father, although engaged in commerce, possessed the significant gift of verse-writing. In boyhood, Browning showed some disposition to be a painter. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, his wife and a poetess, was always weak and ailing, and died of a 'decline.' By Sarah Coleridge she was described as a 'little hard-featured woman, with long dark ringlets, a pale face, and a plaintive voice.'

BROWNING

In Balzac there was a converging heredity of nerve disorder. His maternal grandfather died of apoplexy, and his mother is described as a woman of 'great vivacity of mind, untiring activity, and extraordinary firmness'—phrases which, in the circumstances, are of some significance to the pathologist. On the father's

BALZAC

[1] Anthony Trollope: *Life of Thackeray*.

side there was a pronounced strain of insanity. The elder Balzac was an *avocat* at Tours, 'where,' says his daughter, who has published the novelist's correspondence, 'his originality was proverbial, and manifested itself both in word and deed.' Although perfectly well in body, he took it into his head one day to lie in bed, and this he did continuously for twenty years thereafter, receiving his friends meanwhile, and even taking a part in public affairs. To everybody's surprise he got up one morning at half-past four, dressed himself—for he had always had his clothes kept in readiness—and went about his business as if nothing had happened. Among other peculiarities the elder Balzac had an extraordinary memory. This faculty the novelist inherited along with a feeble constitution. At school Balzac had an epileptic seizure, which so alarmed his teachers that they urged his parents to take him home. The illness was to them inexplicable, because he could not be accused of over-studying, being, in fact, a 'dull scholar.' Balzac does not seem to have had a return of this malady, which his sister, in her biography, curiously attributes to a 'sort of congestion of ideas;' for, although he cut a poor figure in the class at school, he was, it appears, an omnivorous reader. The weakness of his constitution finally assumed the form of hypertrophy of the heart—a disease which predisposes to congestion of the brain. Of this affection of the heart he died at fifty-one, leaving no offspring.

Balzac's literary energy was enormous. He owned to 'two immense desires—to be celebrated and to be loved'—and both of these he realised by dint of brain force alone; for physically he was the most insignificant of men, being barely five feet high. He was absorbed in his characters, and for weeks and sometimes months at a time he would not only disappear entirely from view, but all trace of him would be lost. At such times it was his whim to live in some garret under an assumed name—a proceeding not always necessitated by his pecuniary means. On one occasion he presented a play to the manager of the Odéon—for he dabbled for a time in dramatic authorship, though for the most part unsuccessfully. 'Where shall I apprize

you of the rehearsals? What is your address?' inquired the manager. Balzac, being then in one of his eccentric moods, flatly refused the information. Ultimately it was agreed that a messenger should be sent every morning to a spot in the Champs Elysées where, 'underneath the twentieth tree from the Arc de l'Etoile on the left,' he would see a man pretending to look for a bird. To this man he would proffer a certain password, and on receiving the due reply he would hand him the message from the theatre. Passwords were a favourite device with Balzac; it was his custom to exact them even from the most intimate friends who called to see him when his abode happened to be known. Letters he received under such whimsical names as the Widow Durand. The same species of eccentricity he imported into his methods of work. His usual hours of sleep were from six in the evening until midnight. Then he would bathe, don the white robe of a Dominican friar, pose a black skull cap on his head, and, under the influence of coffee and by the light of a dozen candles, would work incessantly till he could work no more—from twelve to twenty hours at a stretch. His work was done mainly on proof sheets, the original 'copy' of even his longest novels being at the most an outline, dashed off in a few nights of feverish anxiety. To no other member of Balzac's family was the gift of a creative imagination vouchsafed. One sister, who outlived him, published nothing but a meagre and colourless sketch of his life; another died young; and his only brother Henri was a ne'er-do-well, who sought his fortune abroad and failed to find it.

The father of Alfred de Musset died of gout. He was a man of 'stern and decided character.' A cousin of the poet on the same side committed suicide. His mother's family appears also to have been characterised by some nervous instability, his maternal grandfather having a prodigious memory, which enabled him at an advanced age to recite whole comedies by heart. With these credentials of a vicious heredity, Alfred de Musset started early upon a career of dissipation. He had the three weaknesses proverbially associated in all languages—women, wine, and play.

The first he developed almost in boyhood, conceiving a passionate attachment for a young cousin; at eighteen he regularly drank more than was good for him, and was a confirmed gambler. 'At the same time,' says his brother, who has written his life, 'he had an incredible activity of mind. Often he would write as many as fifty verses on leaving some late supper.' His gaiety alternated with fits of depression, in which it was his whim to don an old and ragged suit of clothes. In Italy, where he suffered one of his keenest *chagrins d'amour*, he had an attack of brain fever, and the disorder of his nerves for some time after was such that he could not speak of his troubles without falling into syncope. On one occasion a disposition to commit suicide appears to have been checked by the chance circumstance of his receiving an invitation from Rachel, the actress, to spend some days with her alone.

While recovering from an illness induced by his excesses he had some strangely vivid hallucinations, testifying to the morbid sensibility of his brain. Four little genii, with wings, seemed to him to be rearranging the articles on his work-table: bottles and other objects marched to and fro of their own accord. After the genii had put matters, as they seemed to think, in the state in which he had left them, the poet exclaimed, 'That is not right; there was some dust here and there.' Instantly there appeared a little man about three inches high carrying on his back a vessel of some sort with a tap, which he turned, and from which flowed a jet of fine dust as he walked, speedily bringing about the desired condition of things on the table. This vision was so forcible to De Musset, at the moment, that he had to question his brother who was present in order to distinguish real from imaginary objects, and while it was in progress he analysed his sensations precisely as if he had had a genuine spectacle before him. Symptoms of heart disease manifested themselves in De Musset soon after his thirtieth year. He also suffered terribly from sleeplessness, and had frequent attacks of syncope. Under these combined evils he died at forty-seven. George Sand, in her volume 'Elle et Lui,' describes a strange scene with Alfred de Musset in the

Forest of Fontainebleau, where the poet's visions, cries of despair, ecstatic joy, and nervous terror betrayed a nervous sensibility bordering upon absolute delirium. Some time before his death he was so worn with passion and debauchery that, according to Maxime du Camp, a lady who had come to admire the man of genius was moved to exclaim as he passed out of the room—the wreck of his former self—'Pauvre garçon!'

From about his twenty-third year Gustave Flaubert was an epileptic, and his nervous attacks rendered him morose and unsociable during the remainder of his life. Previous to his paroxysms he was accustomed to say that he had 'a flame' first in one eye then in the other, and that everything appeared to him under a yellow hue. This he called his golden vision. For months at a time, in dread of an attack, he would not go out of doors. A year or two before the malady set in, Flaubert's intelligence and intellectual power were observed to develop enormously, and Maxime du Camp believes that it was during this exceptional period that the future chief of the realistic school of novelists laid in his stock of observation.[1] Afterwards Flaubert's memory became fitful; he lapsed into a dreamy, indolent state which could not be shaken off without an effort, and he was at times so petulant and irritable that a trifle upset him. 'I have seen him,' says his friend and biographer, 'run about the room uttering cries because his penknife did not happen to be in its ordinary place.' Maxime du Camp naïvely observes that, but for his nervous malady, the author of 'Madame Bovary' would have taken a higher place in literature than he did. Readers of these pages will hardly be of this opinion. Without his malady and its clarifying effect upon the brain, Flaubert would probably have been an *avocat* at Rouen—the position to which he was destined by his father. It was in one of his convulsive attacks that he died at the age of fifty-nine. In his youth he had an admirable physique, being tall, broad-shouldered, ruddy, and blond. As a law student in Paris he was full of energy and enthusiasm

FLAUBERT

[1] Maxime du Camp: *Souvenirs Littéraires*.

for literature; but he had no passion for the fair sex, to whom, indeed, throughout his life he appears to have cherished an absolute repugnance. Like most neuropathic subjects, Flaubert was accustomed to pass rapidly from a state of exaltation to one of dejection without apparent cause. He was a most laborious writer, the question of style and literary form pre-occupying his mind incessantly to a degree that was positively painful to himself. The novelist's father was a medical man of 'remarkable energy and force of character;' a sister died from an attack of puerperal mania.

DUMAS

The exuberant imagination of Alexandre Dumas the elder is generally thought to have been derived from the negro blood in his veins. There is no physiological ground for such a supposition. Mulattos and quadroons—it was to the latter class that Dumas belonged—are not uncommon, but they are by no means distinguished for imaginative power. The germ of the great romancer's genius is to be traced rather to the eccentricity of his grandfather, a French noble, who at fifty suddenly sold his ancestral estates and exiled himself to the West Indies, where almost immediately he married a full-blooded negress of San Domingo. The existence of a legal contract in this case has been questioned; but there can be no doubt that the same ancestor, on returning to France twenty years later, after the death of his black consort, committed at the age of seventy-four a similar *mésalliance* in marrying his housekeeper. The San Domingo negress had an only son, who was subsequently known as General Dumas. This dashing soldier, the novelist's father, was celebrated for his courage and his enormous physical strength. It was said that he could crush a horse to death between his legs. He had a vehement temper and a want of restraint which ultimately brought him into disgrace with Napoleon. About this time he was also physically disabled for service by an apoplectic seizure, which destroyed or impaired his hearing. In retirement his constitution was further weakened by a troublesome disease, which would appear to have been gout, and of this he died at forty-four.

Shortly before his death General Dumas had married

a young woman, by whom he left in his turn an only son, the author of 'Monte Cristo.' The alliance was physiolcgically unsound, for Madame Dumas, the novelist's mother, was subject to epileptic fits—she had one which attracted public attention at the performance of her son's first play at the Théâtre Français—and she died of apoplexy. In the aggressive, vainglorious, extravagant, and even ridiculous life of Alexandre Dumas there is evidence of a want of mental balance apart from his great creative faculty. In his latter years he became imbecile, and, unfortunately, he did not lay down his pen until he had partly ruined his great reputation. In his sixty-eighth year, whilst being removed from Paris on the eve of the siege, he was 'quite helpless and almost unconscious of what was going on about him,' and in the same state of darkness a few months later his brilliant and romantic career came to a close. Alexandre Dumas' one son and namesake, the author of 'La Dame aux Camélias,' presents the rare example of genius passing in a direct form from parent to child.

Goethe's mother died of apoplexy, and the nervous unsoundness of her constitution revealed itself in the great mortality of her offspring. Three of the poet's brothers and one sister died in childhood. Another sister Cornélie lived to be twenty-seven, when she suddenly expired from no known cause. Goethe's mother, writing of the event, says, 'the flash and the stroke were one.' Cornélie is described by Goethe in his autobiography as an 'incomprehensible being, with wonderfully brilliant eyes, while the lineaments of her face, neither striking nor beautiful, indicated a character which was not and could not be at union with itself.' Goethe had on one occasion a visual hallucination of a remarkable kind. He saw a spectral figure of himself on horseback.[1] At all times he possessed a curious faculty of visualisation, which is intimately associated with hallucinations of sight. 'When I closed my eyes and depressed my head,' he observes, 'I could cause the image of a flower to appear in the middle of the field of vision; this

GOETHE

[1] Goethe: *Aus meinem Leben*, etc.

flower did not for a moment retain its first form, but unfolded itself, and developed from its interior new flowers, formed and coloured, or sometimes green leaves. These were not natural flowers, but of fantastic form, although symmetrical as the rosettes of sculpture. I was unable to fix any one form, but the development of new flowers continued as long as I desired it without any variation in the rapidity of the changes. The same thing occurred when I figured to myself a variegated disc. The coloured figures upon it underwent constant changes, which extended progressively from the centre towards the periphery, exactly like the changes in the kaleidoscope.'

Positive insanity is to be found in the family of Victor Hugo. This affliction befel the poet's elder brother Eugène, who died at thirty-seven in a lunatic asylum, where he was confined for many years. As a child Eugène Hugo was described by his mother as being *vif comme la poudre*; he had poetical tastes, and achieved some distinction at school for his effusions in verse. The first outbreak of his insanity occurred at Victor Hugo's marriage, the eccentricity which had for some time been growing upon him suddenly changing into an abiding incoherency of speech and action. Apparently the malady was inherited from the paternal side. Judging from his memoirs, General Hugo, the poet's father, possessed obstinacy and other angularities of character amounting to eccentricity. He fell into disgrace with his military superiors, separated from his wife, and passed his declining years in profuse scribbling—biography, fiction, and drama pouring forth from his restless pen. Victor Hugo's mother, for her part, had also some peculiarities, being, in particular, energetic and sensitive, with a pronounced taste for Voltaire's tragedies, of which, as a girl, she learnt long tirades by heart. As a woman she had indifferent health, and her death was sudden. If she did not contribute to, she probably did not correct, the eccentricity transmitted by the poet's father.

VICTOR HUGO

Victor Hugo's own angularities of character were sufficiently pronounced, although, unlike those of his brother Eugène, they appear to have kept within the bounds of

reason. Concerning Eugène, there is a significant passage in one of the biographies of Victor Hugo. 'The two brothers, so intimately associated, appeared to have been destined for the same existence; they had the same amusements, the same masters, the same poetical aspirations, the same restless activity; they had never left each other a moment until the death of their mother. Suddenly Fate separated them, and threw the one into the dazzling light and turmoil of fame, the other into gloom and isolation.'[1] Of Victor Hugo's children, Charles, the eldest, and the translator of Shakespeare, died suddenly and mysteriously in the house of his mistress; François fell a victim to consumption; Adèle is confined in a lunatic asylum. The condition of the last-named is deplorable, and presents so eloquent a testimony to the evils that genius carries in its train that I cannot refrain from quoting the description given of her malady by a friend to whom I have applied for information on the subject:—'Adèle has passed her life in asylums, and since the death of Victor Hugo has been confined in a private institution at Suresnes. There she will probably remain till her death. She is not violent, but idiotic, putting sand and pebbles in her mouth instead of food. Victor Hugo was in the habit of seeing her at regular intervals, but the spectacle became too painful to him, and for some years before his death he had ceased his visits.' A grandson of Victor Hugo, George Hugo, has recently been placed in 'perpetual tutelage' as being unfit to manage his affairs. A grand-daughter is described as 'flighty' (*étourdie*).

Homer is reputed to have been blind. Sophocles was accused by his sons of being unable to manage his affairs. Molière was epileptic, and left a daughter who was childless. Voltaire had apoplectic attacks. Montesquieu became blind, and Lesage deaf. Bossuet suffered from fits, in which he lost the power of speech and hearing. Madame de Stäel was eccentric and addicted to opium, and at her death was found to have a peculiar conformation of the skull. Dante, whose reputed skull exhibits an abnormal development of

[1] *Victor Hugo; Raconté par un Témoin de sa Vie.*

the left side and two swellings of the frontal bone,[1] died suddenly, and his family became extinct in the second or third generation. Petrarch's constitution at sixty-four was 'entirely worn out;' he had several paralytic seizures and died of apoplexy. La Bruyère at fifty became suddenly deaf, and soon afterwards died of apoplexy. There was a marked strain of literary ability in Corneille's family, his brother Thomas and his nephew Fontenelle both achieving distinction. Racine's father died at twenty-eight, and his mother at twenty-nine. He was of an irritable and sensitive temperament, and, after a somewhat dissipated youth, became excessively pious. Ben Jonson had hallucinations, and died of paralysis. Dryden was gouty and deaf. Pope was deformed, deriving his rickety constitution apparently from his father, who expired 'without a groan.' The mother of the poet Savage was insane. Rogers's memory decayed to such an extent that he was accustomed to ask his servants whether he knew persons whose names he heard. Richardson died of apoplexy after suffering during the latter part of his life from 'nervous attacks.' Fielding's constitution was shattered by gout at forty, and he had a son paralysed. Henry Kirke White—like Chatterton a marvellous boy—was epileptic and died of consumption. Porson, the 'Greek scholar,' had a stupendous memory and great physical activity, combined with an irresistible craving for stimulants. Niebuhr, who lost both parents when a child, was constitutionally feeble. Gibbon was deformed. De Foe had an attack of apoplexy about his fiftieth year, suffered from gout and stone, and died at seventy 'in a lethargy.' Heine became paralysed at forty-seven. Schiller's father died of gout. The poet himself had a delicate frame, suffered from weak eyes, and passed through a melancholic period during which he was suspected of insanity.[2] He died at forty-seven, and a post-mortem examination showed that his lungs and most of the important organs of his body were seriously impaired. Hallam, the son of an over-anxious mother, belonged to a family in which there was great mortality, his own children dying

[1] Lombroso.

[2] Palleske.

in the prime of life. Gérard de Nerval, long intermittently insane, hanged himself to a lamp-post. Théophile Gautier died of paralysis. Prévost Paradol shot himself, following the example of his father, who committed suicide in the same manner.

CHAPTER VI

NEUROPATHIC ASPECTS OF SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE—EXTRAORDINARY MORTALITY OF HIS BROTHERS AND SISTERS—CHARACTER OF HIS FATHER AND MOTHER—CONJECTURES RESPECTING GILBERT, RICHARD, AND EDMUND SHAKESPEARE—THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF SHAKESPEARE'S RETIREMENT—NEW INTERPRETATION OF THE KNOWN FACTS OF HIS DEATH—THE SIGNATURES TO HIS WILL AS EVIDENCE OF A PARALYTIC ATTACK—UNFITNESS OF HIS OFFSPRING—PROOF OF PARALYSIS IN HIS GRAND-DAUGHTER

In any attempt to explain the conditions of genius it is impossible to avoid a reference to Shakespeare. A theory of genius which did not accord with the ascertained facts in the life of the greatest poet that the world has seen would assuredly be unworthy of confidence. I purpose, therefore, dealing with Shakespeare from the pathological point of view, a task which, despite the immensely painstaking and far-reaching character of modern research, is now undertaken for the first time. Formidable, indeed, are the difficulties in the way, the known events of Shakespeare's career and of his family history being meagre in the extreme. Towards the close of last century Steevens gave the substance of a biography of Shakespeare in the following words:—'All that is known with any degree of certainty concerning Shakespeare is that he was born at Stratford-on-Avon, married, and had children there, went to London, where he became an actor, wrote poems and plays, returned to Stratford, made his will, died, and was buried.' If to this summary are added a few dates and a little contemporary history, the whole authentic record of Shakespeare's life stands revealed. The only phrase in his actual handwriting that has come down to us consists of the words 'by me,' prefacing one of the three signatures to his will, and the one passage from his pen in which he speaks *in propriâ personâ*, that is to say,

neither as a dramatist nor as a poet, but as a man, is the fulsome dedication of 'Venus and Adonis' to the Earl of Southampton. No biographer can piece together the scattered fragments of the poet's life without the aid of conjectures and hypothetical interpretations for which there is little or no warrant, and no exception can be made in this respect of the works of Halliwell-Phillipps and Karl Elze,[1] in which the latest results of Shakespearean research are embodied.

Still, there are facts in the poet's life, which although long known, acquire in the light of the present investigation a new significance, and these I will briefly set before the reader. The first circumstances calling for attention are the extraordinary mortality of Shakespeare's brothers and sisters, and his own comparatively early death. The poet was one of a family of eight, of whom only his sister Joan attained old age. Here is the testimony of the official register :—

Joan	baptized	1558	died in infancy.		
Margaret	„	1562			
William	„	1564	died	1616	aged 52.
Gilbert	„	1566	„	1611–12	„ 46.
Joan	„	1569	„	1646	„ 77.
Anne	„	1571	„	1579	„ 8.
Richard	„	1573–4	„	1612–13	„ 39.
Edmund	„	1580	„	1607	„ 27.

Clearly this is not a healthy stock, the average life of its members, with all the advantage of the second Joan's patriarchal age, being less than thirty-two years. What then becomes of the sententious remark of Halliwell-Phillipps, that it is 'not very likely that a woman unendowed with an exceptionally healthy and vigorous frame could have been the parent of a Shakespeare?'[2] This is quite in the customary vein of biography, in which it is assumed, often in flagrant contradiction to the facts, that the man of genius is necessarily a fine animal.

The general unfitness of Shakespeare's family for the battle of life would, in all probability, be explained by the

[1] Halliwell-Phillipps: *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare.* Sixth edition, 1886. Karl Elze: *William Shakespeare: A Literary Biography.* London, 1888.

[2] *Outlines*, p. 28.

physical condition of their parents and ancestors, could a record of this be found; but unfortunately on this subject a Cimmerian darkness prevails. Nothing is known of John Shakespeare and Mary Arden, the poet's immediate progenitors, except that the former died in 1601 after a reverse of fortune, and the latter in 1608. These dates indicate for both parents a tolerably good age, but, judging by the mortality of their offspring, neither can have been normally sound. Joan's extremely long life as a member of a generally short-lived family is precisely what might be expected from such neuropathic conditions as determined the early death of Keats and his brothers, whilst enabling their sister Fanny to exceed the age of four score. As has been shown in a preceding chapter, an established inequality in the nervous system may signify either a depression or an exaltation of the vital forces, with a short or a long life accordingly. Through Joan alone, by her marriage with William Hart, the hatter, was the Shakespeare blood transmitted beyond the third generation.

No trustworthy indication can be found of John Shakespeare's character. With his wife he obtained a considerable amount of property, and as a successful tradesman of some sort he became one of the magnates of the Stratford Corporation. About five and twenty years before his death, however, the prosperity of the family began to decline, and in the year 1586 John Shakespeare's affairs were desperate. From this position he appears to have been latterly rescued by his distinguished son. The probability is that his health broke about fifty, and that from that period he led a rather shiftless existence. Of Mary Arden all that can be gathered is that she was her father's favourite daughter; at all events, he seems to have so regarded her in his will, made when he was 'sick in body.' The expression 'sick in body' rather implies that Robert Arden's illness was a lingering one, and his special provision for Mary, his youngest daughter, may have been a token of gratitude for her nursing. Although Robert Arden was a well-to-do farmer, it is gratuitous to assume, as Halliwell-Phillipps does, that because one of her sons was Shakespeare, Mary Arden possessed a 'romantic tempera-

ment' and the 'highest form of subjective refinement.' Such assumptions the principles of heredity do not justify. It is the besetting sin of the biographer in this, as in so many cases, to recognise the law of heredity only to misapply it. Farm life in Mary Arden's day was rude in the extreme. She probably worked in the fields, ate her food with her fingers, washed herself once a week in a pail, and slept at night on the floor on sacks or straw. Among Robert Arden's effects, as disposed of by will, there was only one bed.

Shakespeare's three brothers, Gilbert, Richard, and Edmund, can have possessed none of their brother's ability. They were probably weak and ailing men. They are not known to have married; if they did marry they can have left no descendants, seeing that while the poet, in his will, makes bequests to the children of his sister Joan, there is no mention of other nephews or nieces. There is evidence that Gilbert was a haberdasher by trade; he is so described in a bail bond where he became surety to a clockmaker of Stratford for the sum of 19*l.*, but he does not appear to have been in business for himself. His signature is extant, and is that of a neat though not a fluent penman. According to the rules of graphology it denotes a man of a methodical and parsimonious turn, melancholic, destitute of vanity, and rather feeble in resolution. The signature of Thomas Quiney, the poet's son-in-law, on the other hand, would be interpreted as that of a person who thought a great deal of himself, and who was at once very attentive to his dress and appearance and fond of display in other ways. I give this evidence for what it may be worth.

Graphology contains no doubt a substratum of truth, though it may not yield results as definite as those its votaries claim for it. It is well known that insanity betrays itself occasionally in the handling of the pen, and scientifically I should expect that any depression or exaltation of the motor centres for the wrist and the fingers, or of the associated visual or auditory centres of the brain, would affect the character of the handwriting in respect of its neatness or slovenliness, its simplicity or its exuberance. No one accepting the rules of graphology could say that Gilbert's handwriting

was that of a man of a lively or sanguine disposition. Its 'finals' are stunted, it is bare of all 'flourish,' the cross-stroke of the 't' is very small; over or through the last syllable of the surname there is a curious line which, beginning thick, tapers to a point, and the signature shows a general tendency to droop.

Of Richard Shakespeare, nothing is known beyond the dates of his baptism and funeral at Stratford. The youngest brother Edmund died in London, where he was a 'player.' His age, twenty-seven, is a fatal one for those who have inherited the seeds of decline or consumption; and if I may add my guess to the many others that have been made concerning Shakespeare's family, consumption was the disease he probably died of. On the other hand, the greater ages of Gilbert and Richard point to a more lingering form of nerve-disorder. In 1693 Dowdall was told by the parish clerk of Stratford that 'Shakespeare was the best of his family'—a phrase implying that the poet's brothers were not much respected in their native town. Can Richard have been the ne'er-do-well who so often figures in the family of men of genius? There is no evidence that he ever left Stratford. Gilbert, who was enterprising enough to go to London, appears to have been the more responsible and trustworthy of the two brothers, inasmuch as he was entrusted by William with the carrying out of an important legal transaction on his behalf in 1602.

It has been doubted whether the Gilbert Shakespeare, whose funeral is recorded as taking place at Stratford on February 3, 1611–12, was the poet's brother. The precise description is 'Gilbertus Shakespeare, adolescens.' The 'adolescens' is a curious word to apply to a man of forty-six. Can it be the parish clerk's Latin for bachelor? Or does it signify that a son of Gilbert's was then buried? Shakespeare mentions no brothers in his will, and the natural inference is that they were then all dead. On the other hand, there is a tradition favouring the supposition that Gilbert did not die in 1611–12. 'One of Shakespeare's younger brothers,' says Oldys, who wrote about a hundred years later, 'would, in his younger days, come to London to

visit his brother Will, as he called him; and be a spectator of him as an actor in some of his own plays. This custom, as his brother's fame enlarged and his dramatic entertainments grew the greatest support of our principal if not of all our theatres, he continued, it seems, so long after his brother's death as even to the latter end of his own life. The curiosity at this time of the most noted actors to learn something from him of his brother was great. They justly held him in the highest veneration, and it may well be believed, as there was besides a kinsman and descendant of the family who was then a celebrated actor among them, this opportunity made them greedily inquisitive into every little circumstance, more especially in his dramatic character, which his brother could relate of him. But he, it seems, was so stricken in years, and possibly his memory so weakened with infirmities which might make him pass the easier for a man of weak intellect, that he could give them but little light into their inquiries, and all that could be collected from him of his brother Will in that station was the faint, general, and almost lost ideas he had of having once seen him act a part in one of his own comedies, wherein being to personate a decrepit old man he wore a long beard, and appeared so weak and drooping and unable to walk that he was forced to be supported and carried by another person to a table at which he was seated among some company who were eating, and one of whom sang a song.'[1] If Gilbert Shakespeare did not die at the time specified, apparently he became of weak intellect.

The cause of Shakespeare's death—a matter of some importance to the present inquiry—has been the subject of much ingenious speculation. There is, however, a point of view from which it has never yet been considered. I refer to the peculiar character of the signatures the poet affixed to his will on his death bed. Examined in the light of medical experience, and taken in conjunction with the manifest unsoundness of the Shakespeare family, and notably with a remarkable failure of memory on the poet's part in the drawing up of his will, these signatures appear to me to be

[1] *Outlines*, etc. The part referred to is that of Adam in 'As You Like It.'

very significant, and to establish almost beyond a doubt the nature of Shakespeare's last illness. Concerning this illness, the only substantial report we possess is an entry in the diary of the Rev. John Ward of Stratford, made in the year 1663 in the following terms:—'Shakespeare, Drayton, and Ben Jonson had a merry meeting, and itt seems drank too hard, for Shakespeare died of a feavour there contracted.'

As there is no fever properly so-called which can be contracted by drinking, the reverend diarist's charitable assumption is clearly of no medical value. So much has been generally recognised. It is surprising, however, that while such a conscientious authority as Halliwell-Phillipps seeks to palliate or condone the drinking, he should unhesitatingly accept the hypothesis of the fever, which stands upon a much less valid basis, and that he should furthermore strain and distort the indubitable circumstances of the case in order to make out that the particular kind of fever of which Shakespeare died was that arising from insanitary conditions, namely typhus or typhoid. This theory being the one now generally accepted both in England and Germany (where Elze has followed the English biographer's lead), it may be worth while to show in a few words why it is not scientifically acceptable. On January 25, 1616, a draft of Shakespeare's will was prepared under the direction of a lawyer named Collins, and was left in the rough, apparently for some emendation, the testator being then in legal phrase in 'perfect health and memory.' Halliwell-Phillipps thinks these words ought to be accepted literally, and not as a legal formula, but there is a curious proof in the body of the document that whatever Shakespeare's bodily health at the time may have been, his memory was by no means perfect; for, in ordering bequests to be made to his nephews, the children of Joan, he was unable to recollect the name of the second boy, Thomas. The provision runs thus:—'Item, I give and bequeath unto her (Joan's) three sons, William Hart, —— Hart, and Michael Hart five pounds apiece,' etc.

That is to say, the testator's memory failed him when he

wished to name his nephew Thomas, whom he was doubtless in the habit of seeing every day, and the lawyer accordingly left a blank in his draft. This is a striking circumstance, and one that may help to explain various other omissions and irregularities in the will so freely commented upon by the biographers. However, Shakespeare was clearly in no anxiety about his health at this time, for the draft of the will was left untouched for two whole months, during which time the marriage of the poet's daughter Judith with Thomas Quiney took place.

Suddenly, in the latter part of the month of March, the household at New Place was plunged into a state of alarm. Shakespeare was thought to be dying. The draft of the will was brought to his bedside, and there it was signed in its rough state with a few verbal alterations made on the spur of the moment. The word January was struck out of the date, and the word March written in, while the day of the month, the 25th, was allowed to stand. It is clear, therefore, that on or immediately before March 25, 1616, Shakespeare had an attack of something which was thought to be eminently dangerous—so much so that no time was lost in getting the will signed in its draft form, although the preparation of a clean copy would only have been the matter of an hour or two. But Shakespeare did not die the day the will was signed. He lived for four weeks and a day, his death occurring on April 23! This is not the course of typhus fever, the third or fourth week of which from the beginning is usually the fatal period. Nor are the early symptoms of that disease of the alarming character which would have induced a methodical lawyer to have a draft will signed *talis qualis*. The business was so hurriedly carried through that the blank space left for Thomas Hart's Christian name was not filled up, but may still be inspected by the curious at Somerset House.

In order to support the theory of fever as the result of the insanitary condition of Stratford, Halliwell-Phillipps assumes that in the will 'the alteration of the day of the month was overlooked,' as, otherwise, 'there would be at least a singular and improbable coincidence.' Why should

the coincidence be so singular and improbable? The 25th of March was a Monday, and the 25th of January a Friday. That because the draft of a will is made on a Friday the testator should not fall ill on a subsequent Monday, which happens also to be the 25th day of a month, is surely a strong, not to say unwarrantable assumption. Coincidence must extend to greater lengths than that before it can be rejected on its own demerits. 'It is probable,' adds the biographer, 'that the melancholy gathering at New Place happened somewhat later than the 25th of March, the fourth week being generally the most fatal period of typhus fever. We may, at all events, safely assume that if death resulted from such a cause on April the 23rd the seizure could not have occurred much before the end of the preceding month.' Thus, because the Rev. John Ward enters in his diary a bit of foolish, and possibly malicious gossip, concerning Shakespeare's death forty years after the event, and uses the word 'fever,' which was then applied to almost every complaint of an unknown character, a theory of the poet's last illness is constructed requiring for its acceptance the falsification of serious and authentic documentary evidence!

If this is the most plausible theory of Shakespeare's death that finds currency at the present day, it cannot be wrong to suggest another more in harmony with the facts. First, let us glance at the pathological circumstances of the case, as illustrated by the law of heredity, which no biographer of the poet has yet invoked. We have seen that Shakespeare's brothers and sisters, with one exception, exhibit the conditions of a strongly neuropathic family; unfit to live a life of the normal span, or to engender healthy descendants. Three sisters die in childhood, one brother in early manhood, and two others in what ought to be the prime of life, or, assuming Oldys's narrative to be well founded, one of these brothers passes into a state of imbecility. They none of them leave descendants. Joan, alone, by virtue of an exceptional organisation, has children approaching the ordinary standard of fitness, and even in her case, as the pedigree of the Hart family shows,[1] the Shakespeare blood has a hard

[1] French: *Shakespearana Genealogica.*

struggle to survive. Of the Harts in the first generation there are three sons and a daughter, namely, William, an actor, and probably the kinsman of the poet referred to by Oldys, dying at thirty-nine, Thomas at fifty-six, Mary at four, and Michael at ten. Thomas alone has children by his marriage with a woman of whom nothing is known except that her name was Margaret, and that she died twenty-one years after her husband, namely in 1682. Almost immediately the advantages of this infusion of presumably healthy blood into the Shakespeare stock begin to be seen. George, a grandson of Joan, attains the age of sixty-six, and has the good fortune to select in his turn a long-lived and presumably healthy wife, by whom he has a numerous and healthy family, descending lineally to the present generation. The last known survivor was a George Hart of Birmingham, who emigrated to Australia in 1864. In the third generation of Harts the death of one of its members, Shakespeare Hart, a plumber, is recorded at the advanced age of eighty-one. Judging from the prolific character of the Harts—for old age alone is no criterion of soundness—healthy conditions appear by this time to be restored to the family, but as health comes in at the door genius flies out by the window. Throughout their nine recorded generations the Harts are a family of utter mediocrities, plying the humblest callings, and for the most part miserably poor. Of the female descendants of Joan Shakespeare nothing is known; they intermarried with men of common names and common position, and are hopelessly lost in the seething ocean of humanity.

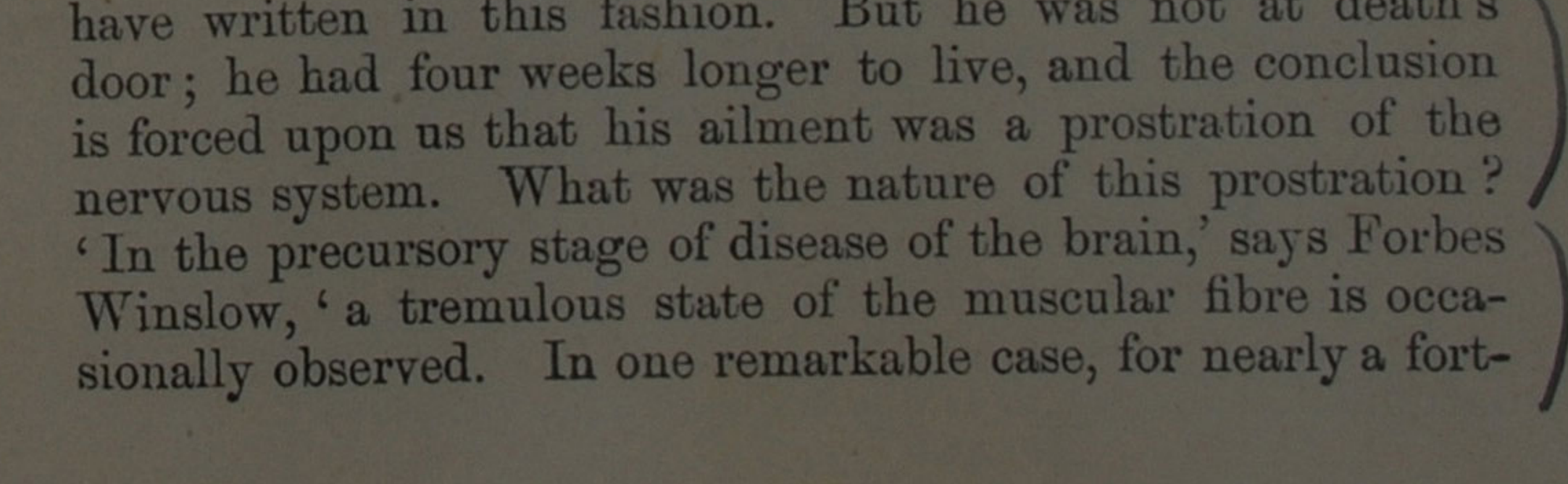
The few personal references to Shakespeare that have come down to us from Ben Jonson and others throw little light upon his physical condition. He appears to have been genial and well liked, and he was familiarly called 'Will' by his associates. Hypochondria, therefore, was clearly not one of his characteristics, at all events in his early days, as it probably was of his brother Gilbert. Further than this contemporary evidence does not go. That Shakespeare's health broke down, however, at forty-eight, or thereabouts —about the same period as his father's—may be inferred

from the curious fact that although in March 1612–13 he purchases a dwelling-house in Blackfriars, he, about the close of the same year, makes up his mind to retire definitely to Stratford, where his apparently gloomy forebodings are so far fulfilled that in little more than three years he is dead. There is no evidence, moreover, that after his forty-eighth year he wrote a single line of play or poem. Now, without ill-health is it likely that Shakespeare in the height of his reputation, and in the flower of his age, would withdraw from the literary pleasures of London and break with his congenial associates in order to bury himself in a dull, unattractive town like Stratford? It is variously surmised that his withdrawal to Stratford did not necessarily cut off his connection with London society, and that he wished to live the life of a country gentleman. In view of the difficulties and hardships of travelling in those days the first supposition can hardly hold good; the second gains some plausibility from the terms of his will, which betrays his ambition to found a family upon the principle of entail, but, without some overpowering physical cause the *cacoethes scribendi* of the born poet is not in the ordinary course of things to be suppressed at forty-eight.

The 'merry meeting' with Drayton and Ben Jonson probably took place about February 10, when Shakespeare's daughter, Judith, was married to Thomas Quiney. It is extremely unlikely on any medical hypothesis that it could be the cause of the poet's death, two months and a half later. What the facts really point to is this—that shortly after the merry meeting Shakespeare had an illness of some sort, attributed by the gossips to his drinking bout, but not of a sufficiently serious character to raise any question of the will, and that on March 25 the attack was suddenly renewed in such a grave form that his death was thought to be imminent. On the face of it, this illness looks like successive shocks of nerve disorder—the first slight, the second serious and so shattering that death ensued in a month, the interval being in all probability marked by further attacks and periods of unconsciousness. On this assumption the partial

loss of memory alluded to in connection with the drawing up of the will becomes remarkably significant, such an infirmity being the almost invariable precursor of paralysis or apoplexy.

There remains the evidence of Shakespeare's death-bed signatures, which, so far as I know, have not hitherto been critically examined from the medical point of view. The will is written on three sheets of paper, on each of which the testator's signature appears. On the first sheet the name is almost illegible; it is written at the left-hand bottom corner, where the paper is partially worn away, and it cannot now be reproduced without a considerable amount of touching up. Malone and Steevens have doubted whether it is Shakespeare's handwriting at all. On this point I offer no opinion. Two clear and undoubted signatures remain, and they are sufficient for my purpose. Here they are in fac-simile, reproduced from the original document in the archives of Somerset House:—

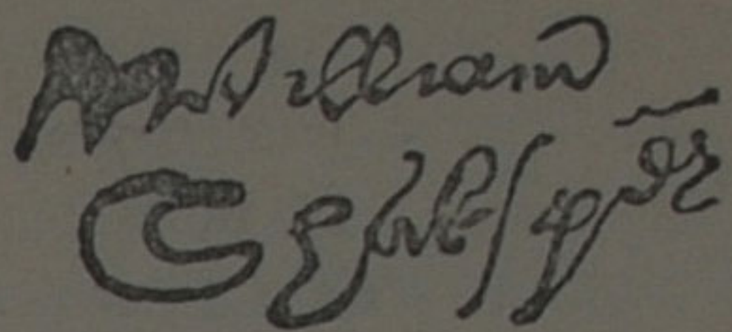


Shakespeare's condition when he penned these signatures must have been one of extreme nervous agitation. Brought to death's door from fever, he might from physical exhaustion have written in this fashion. But he was not at death's door; he had four weeks longer to live, and the conclusion is forced upon us that his ailment was a prostration of the nervous system. What was the nature of this prostration? 'In the precursory stage of disease of the brain,' says Forbes Winslow, 'a tremulous state of the muscular fibre is occasionally observed. In one remarkable case, for nearly a fort-

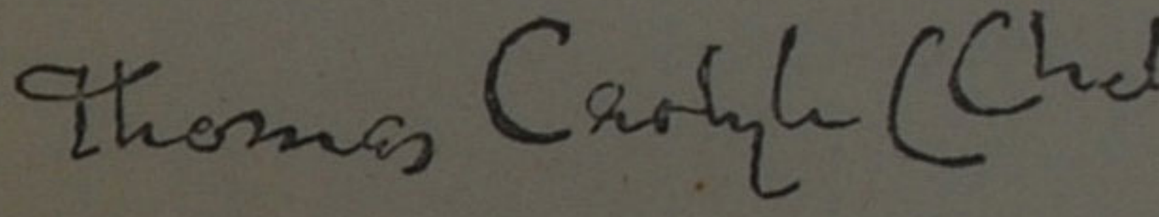
night previously to any acute head symptoms, the patient was observed to have a tremulous state of the hand. He appeared at the time otherwise in good health. This condition of the muscles was succeeded by violent paroxysmal attacks of headache, causing the patient to scream from the intensity of the pain. He subsequently died paralytic. A post-mortem examination revealed a malignant tumour in the substance of the brain.' In another case the muscular tremor which attacked the patient's mouth and tongue was followed by a violent epileptic convulsion. He had a succession of epileptic fits at varying intervals for a period of twelve months, when his mind became deranged, and in this state he died two years after the first epileptic seizure. Forbes Winslow has observed this state of tremulousness in several cases of acute and chronic softening of the brain, as well as in general paralysis.

The circumstances of Shakespeare's death would accord with a paralytic or epileptic seizure of the kind here referred to. There is also something to be said in favour of *paralysis agitans*, or 'shaking palsy.' Parkinson thus describes this ailment, upon which he is the chief authority: 'The first symptoms perceived are a slight sense of weakness, with proneness to trembling in some particular part, sometimes in the head, but most commonly in one of the hands and arms.' The evil gradually extends until the patient 'seldom experiences any suspension of the agitation of his limbs,' but temporary relief is obtained in any particular limb 'by suddenly changing the posture.' After this the disease may become more vehement, until a fatal result ensues. The progress of 'shaking palsy' seems rather too slow to account for such an attack as that which brought the lawyer with the draft copy of the will to Shakespeare's bedside. On the other hand, while we know on the authority of the players that the poet in his prime wrote with such ease, that they 'scarce received from him a blot'—that is, scarcely a correction—'in his papers,' there is evidence of a considerable unsteadiness in his hand three years before the fatal seizure. In 1612–13—and in the very month of March—he signed documents relating to the purchase of the property in Black-

friars. Appended is a fac-simile of his signature on that occasion :—



This is not a firm hand ; it has the cramped air which might result from the writer's attempt to suppress a palsied tremor. Thomas Carlyle had 'shaking palsy,' and the following signature of his, traced while he was suffering from that ailment, may be compared with Shakespeare's :—



On the whole, it appears tolerably certain that in his latter days Shakespeare was a victim to nerve disorder.

That the poet shared to some extent the physical disability of his brothers is the natural inference to be drawn from the fate of his direct descendants. His only son Hamnet died in his twelfth year. His daughter Judith had three sons, who, however, all died early—(1), Shakespeare Quiney at one year ; (2), Richard at twenty-one ; and (3), Thomas at eighteen. Susannah had one daughter, Elizabeth, who was twice married, but by both husbands was childless. Thus vanished the poet's dream of founding a family ; the careful provisions of his will, which he imagined would affect generations to come, became null and void in less than a lifetime. There may, of course, have been some taint in the family of Anne Hathaway, the mother of Shakespeare's children, also in the Quiney and Hall blood. The supposition is not borne out, however, by such facts as are known. The Hathaways appear to have been a prolific family ; and although they are strangely overlooked in Shakespeare's will (with the exception of Anne, who received his 'second best bedstead'), they are remembered many years afterwards in the will of his granddaughter. Thomas Quiney, again, is

known to have been alive about the age of sixty-seven, and, what is more important, to have had numerous nephews and nieces. Finally, Dr. Hall died at sixty, not of a lingering illness apparently, but of some infectious disease, for he was hastily buried the day after. It is true that, according to his 'Select Observations,' he was afflicted a few years before with a slight delirium; but as this affection appears to have been cured by 'a pigeon cut open alive' and applied to his feet to 'draw down the vapours,' it can hardly have been serious.

There is hardly sufficient ground for the conjecture put forth in some quarters that Shakespeare was lame. The principal evidence in favour of it occurs in Sonnet XXXVII., where the poet thus speaks of himself:—

> As a decrepit father takes delight
> To see his active child do deeds of youth,
> So I, *made lame* by fortune's dearest spite,
> Take all my comfort of thy worth and truth.

Is this metaphorical, or is it put forward as a statement of fact? Scott has adopted the latter supposition in 'Kenilworth,' where Shakespeare is playfully alluded to as a 'halting fellow.' Elze thinks it would be an 'exceedingly strange coincidence' if Shakespeare had to be classed with Scott and Byron as a 'third lame poet.' On that score, however, no reader of the present volume is likely to share his opinion. At the same time, no contemporary allusion to Shakespeare's lameness has been discovered, while by Aubrey and others he is spoken of as a man of good parts and 'good shape.' Yet this is not conclusive, for Byron, despite his lameness, was accounted a handsome man, at all events, by the Countess Guiccioli. It has also to be considered that Shakespeare, as an actor, had curious limitations, suggestive of some physical infirmity. He appears to have been employed on the stage chiefly to represent old men, such as Knowell in 'Every Man in his Humour,' when he was still young, and Adam in 'As You Like It.' He is further believed to have played the ghost in 'Hamlet,' for the embodiment of which, of course, in the dim light of the scene a little lameness

would not disqualify him. The testimony as to Shakespeare's physical infirmity, however, is altogether more curious than convincing. I give it merely for the sake of completeness; it is in no sense required to sustain the theory of genius as a form of nerve disorder.

Quite in accordance with this theory is the fact that Shakespeare's surviving daughters, the eldest of whom lived to be sixty-six, and the younger seventy-seven, appear to have been very ordinary, not to say poor, specimens of womankind. Both were virtually illiterate. Judith, who made her mark on the register of her marriage, must have been either very plain, or of an unamiable disposition. At the time of her marriage she was thirty-two, and her husband, Thomas Quiney, a vintner, was not only her junior by four years, but was not of good family, or particularly well-to-do. This would imply either that Judith was capricious in her rejection of previous offers of marriage, or that, despite her father being a man of means, no acceptable offers were made to her. Moreover, according to Halliwell-Phillipps, 'there was some reason for accelerating the nuptials' between the parties, for they were married without a licence, an irregularity for which a few weeks afterwards they were fined and threatened with excommunication by the ecclesiastical court at Worcester. Susannah made a better match. Dr. Hall, whom she married in her twenty-fifth year, was a man of good social standing; and, unlike her sister, Mrs. Hall was able to append her name to the marriage register. She also obtained a favourable epitaph, in which it was recorded in the conventional language of tombstone flattery that she was 'witty above her sex.' Unfortunately, this is all that can be told to her credit. Dr. Hall at his death left some interesting manuscripts for the press. So far from his widow setting any store upon these, however, she sold them in a heap to one James Cooke, from whose account of the transaction it appears that she did not even recognise her husband's handwriting, or trouble to make herself acquainted with what he had written. It is small wonder that such daughters should have preserved none of their father's books or papers.

To the fortuitous circumstance of Cooke's purchase in 1642 we owe an invaluable piece of information, tending to establish the neuropathic condition of Shakespeare's family. The manuscript notes of Dr. Hall, published in 1657, consist of reports of cases of illness attended by the writer from the year 1617 downwards. Had they begun but a year earlier, they must have told us something of Shakespeare's illness and death. As it is, they record that the poet's daughter, Susannah, had attacks of 'scurvy,' also 'miserable pain in her joints, so that she could not lie in her bed, insomuch as when any one helped she cried out miserably'—the disease being evidently rheumatism or gout. Furthermore, Elizabeth Hall, the poet's grandchild and last descendant, is shown to have suffered from paralysis. 'At the close of the year 1624 Elizabeth, my daughter,' says Dr. Hall, 'was vexed with *tortura oris*, or convulsion of the mouth. At the same time she suffered from inflammation of the eyes. She was cured by January 5, 1624–5, but in the beginning of April she went to London, and returning homewards the 22nd of the said month, she took cold, and fell into the said distemper on the contrary side of the face; before it was on the left side, now on the right, and although she was grievously afflicted with it, yet by the blessing of God she was cured in sixteen days. In the same year, May 24,' adds Dr. Hall, 'she was afflicted with an erratic fever; sometimes she was hot by the sweating, again cold, all in the space of half an hour, and thus she was vex't oft in a day.'[1] It is a remarkable proof of the indifference which has hitherto been shown to the pathological aspect of genius that Halliwell-Phillipps, who in his 'Outlines' collected, as he imagined, every available scrap of information bearing upon Shakespeare, should have neglected the all-important evidence of Dr. Hall's Medical Case Book.

[1] *Select Observations on English Bodies: or Cures both Emperical and Historicall performed upon very eminent Persons in Desperate Diseases. First written in Latine by Mr. John Hall, Physician, living at Stratford-upon-Avon, in Warwickshire, where he was very famous, as also in the Counties adjacent. . . . Now put in English for common benefit by James Cooke, Practitioner in Physick and Chirurgery.* London, 1657.

CHAPTER VII

THE MUSICAL AND ARTISTIC FACULTIES ALLIED TO INSANITY—EXAMPLES IN BACH, HANDEL, MOZART, BEETHOVEN, AND MENDELSSOHN—ABSOLUTE INSANITY OF DONIZETTI AND SCHUMANN—NERVE DISORDER AMONG THE OLD MASTERS—MICHAEL ANGELO ECCENTRIC—REYNOLDS'S BLINDNESS AND DEAFNESS—FLAXMAN DEFORMED—THE INSANITY OF ROMNEY, COSWAY, HAYDON, AND LANDSEER—TURNER'S CONDITION IDIOTIC—NEUROPATHIC CHARACTER OF THE ACTOR'S GENIUS—EXAMPLES IN EDMUND KEAN, JUNIUS BRUTUS BOOTH AND RACHEL

PATHOLOGICALLY speaking, music is as fatal a gift to its possessor as the faculty for poetry or letters; the biographies of all the greatest musicians being a miserable chronicle of the ravages of nerve-disorder, extending, like the Mosaic curse, to the third and fourth generation. The genealogy of the Bach family has been traced for a period of over 200 years. The founder of the family was a baker named Veit Bach, who, in the sixteenth century, settled in Saxe-Gotha. He played the guitar, and taught music to his two sons. From these sprang numerous descendants, who not only cultivated music, but made it their means of livelihood, filling a number of official posts as organists or town musicians in Germany. Many of them, of course, were mediocrities, but one or two Bachs in every generation gained at least some local distinction. At first sight the growth of this highly musical family, which numbered at one time about 200 members, might be taken to prove the feasibility of producing by means of heredity a specially gifted race of men. If they did not marry in and in, the male Bachs, in many cases, chose musical wives, and music seemed with them to run in the blood. On a closer examination of the family history, however, the prospects of

BACH

a successful breeding of musical geniuses on the system adopted with Derby winners and prize oxen, not only diminish, but become reduced to the vanishing point. Of the great majority of the Bachs little or nothing is known beyond the dates of their births and deaths. Yet the meagreness of the record does not disguise the growing ravages of nerve-disorder in their midst, the evil culminating at the point where the musical genius of the family is at its greatest, namely in the person of Sebastian Bach.

One of the grandsons of old Veit Bach was blind, as well as eccentric enough to be the subject of many strange stories; other Bachs appear to have been addicted to drunkenness, and Spitta, the historian of the family, makes a regretful allusion to the sickness and general misery with which the several generations of Bachs had to contend.[1] Christopher Bach, grandfather of Sebastian, died at forty-eight; he was a court musician, and his wife, herself the daughter of a musician, died the same year. Of his three sons, two were twins, John Ambrosius and John Christopher, born evidently of the same ovum, seeing that they had exactly the same temperament, suffered from the same disorders, and were so remarkably alike that even their wives could not distinguish them except by their clothes. Moreover, they died within two years of each other, and about the same early age as their father, whose feeble constitution they no doubt inherited. A sister of theirs, the aunt consequently of Sebastian, was an idiot.[2] John Christopher had a sickly family, some of whom suffered from weakness of the eyes. It was John Ambrosius, however, who became the father of the most illustrious member of the family in whom, observes Spitta, 'the genius)

[1] Spitta: *Life of John Sebastian Bach.*

[2] At the burial of this hapless girl, whose life may be said to have been sacrificed on the altar of genius, the officiating clergyman preached from the text, 'For unto whomsoever much is given of him shall much be required,' and pointed out the strange distribution of human wealth and talents, saying:—'Our sister, who now rests in the Lord, was a simple creature, not knowing her right hand from her left; she was like a child. If, on the contrary, we look at her brothers, we find them gifted with a good understanding, and with an art and skill which make them respected and listened to in the schools and in all the township, so that through them the Master's work is praised.'

of the Bachs, after having diffused itself more or less widely through whole generations, culminated and exhausted itself.'

In Sebastian Bach the fatal inheritance of nerve-disorder first betrayed itself by short-sightedness in his youth. At sixty-five he became totally blind; a year later he was stricken with apoplexy, from which he died. Strange to say, ten days before his death, his sight was suddenly restored, from which it may be concluded that his blindness arose, not from a defect of the retina or a decay of the optic nerves, but from some disturbance of the visual centre of the brain, which the apoplexy temporarily corrected. Sebastian Bach was twice married, and had no fewer than twenty children. One of these was an idiot boy, who was thought for a time to have 'great genius.' Four other sons were musically gifted. With the whole family nerve-disorder played havoc. The eldest and most gifted son, Wilhelm Friedemann, was a man of obstinate and sombre disposition—more than half insane. He was said to be 'unable to adapt his style to circumstances.' During many years he depended for existence on the bounty of his friends, and died in extreme misery. Only a few of Bach's twenty children survived him, most of them indeed dying in childhood. One alone left issue, and with the death of Sebastian's solitary grandson, Wilhelm, court musician at Berlin, in 1846, the family of the great composer became extinct—a melancholy example of the unfitness of genius to perpetuate itself, or even to hold its own in the battle of life.

That a direct inheritance of musical gifts is essential to the constitution of musical genius is disproved by the case of Handel, whose family was of the respectable burgher stamp, and wholly unconnected with art. Handel's musical bent in childhood was indeed sternly repressed by his parents. Yet he contrived to overcome all the obstacles in his path, and by the age of eight or nine was a composer. The mental constitution which carried with it the gift of music, he appears to have derived from his mother, who was subject to paralytic seizures, in one of which she lost her sight. About the age of fifty Handel was himself struck down with paralysis, which so seriously unhinged his mind

HANDEL

that for over a year he had to live in retirement.[1] The effects of the malady are still to be seen in his changed handwriting; in dating one of his compositions, moreover, he makes the mistake of a whole year. It was a few years after this period that the 'Messiah' was given to the world. Handel was always impetuous and choleric, and his nerves were too irritable to endure the sound of tuning, so that the musicians who performed in his orchestra were careful to tune their instruments before his arrival. Like his mother, he lost his eyesight, and during the last few years of his long life—he died at seventy-five—was totally blind. Although well grown and distinguished in appearance, he never married, and it is noteworthy that, despite his musical ear, he never acquired a command of English, but spoke a jargon compounded of German, English, French, and Italian. Handel's mother had three other children, of whom only one, a daughter, left issue, and of the five members of the second generation it was again one daughter alone who transmitted the Handel blood, which had thus a hard struggle to survive. None of these members of the family gave any proof of the possession of artistic gifts, so that among his relatives Handel, as a musician, stands alone.

Like Bach, Mozart was the son of a musician, and may be said to have imbibed music with his mother's milk. For the acquirement of the art he showed astonishing aptitude, and at the age of four or five was able to compose. Mozart's father died of gout; his mother also succumbed to some nerve-disease apparently of an epileptic character, attended by convulsions, delirium, and prolonged insensibility. The offspring of such a couple could not be physically strong. Both Mozart and his only sister Marianne, who also displayed considerable ability as a musician, although destitute of the inventive faculty, suffered much from ill-health. Soon after the age of thirty the composer broke down mentally and physically. During the composition of the 'Requiem' he laboured under the delusion that he was being poisoned, frequently swooned away, and became partially paralysed. Afterwards he fell into a delirious state,

MOZART

[1] Rockstro: *Life of Handel.*

in which he still occupied himself with the 'Requiem,' blowing out his cheeks to imitate the trumpets and drums. In his thirty-sixth year he died of inflammation of the brain. The nerve disorder of the sister does not appear to have attacked any vital part of her system. She lived to an advanced age, but ten years before her death she became blind. Mozart's head was too large for his body, which was of stunted growth. Towards the close of his life he indulged in 'convivial excesses,' frequenting the society of 'low and unprincipled persons.' He left two sons, both of whom practised music, but with little success.

The eccentricities of Beethoven bordered upon insanity. He was constantly changing his lodgings, and, although miserably poor, had sometimes three or four places of abode to pay for at one time. He was always absent-minded and unpractical. Litigious and troublesome in disposition, he alienated both relatives and friends. He was in constant ill-health, and had some constitutional weakness of the eyes. From the age of thirty he gradually lost his hearing, and in his later years was completely deaf. Despite these afflictions he continued to play and compose, though sometimes 'he would unconsciously lay his left hand flat upon the key-board of the piano, and thus drown in discordant noise the music to which his right hand was feelingly giving expression.' The music he wrote during the latter half of his life was never heard by him in the ordinary sense of the word; it was conceived and perfected solely in his imagination. This is a feat which to a mind of ordinary calibre would be utterly impossible. Beethoven was most ungainly in his manners and habits. He was only five feet four inches in height, his head was unusually large, his hair bushy, and always in a state of wild disorder. He died at fifty-six, it is said of dropsy, which, however, is rather a symptom of some fatal malady than a malady in itself. More probably the vital functions were impaired through a deterioration of the brain. A post-mortem examination was made by one Joseph Wagner, who reported in the following terms:—'The auditory nerves were shrivelled and marrowless, the arteries running along them being stretched as if

BEETHOVEN

over a crow-quill. The fourth ventricle of the brain was filled with blood, and the brain substance was in this part of a much firmer consistence than the rest. Generally the brain was soft and watery, but its convolutions appeared twice as deep as usual, and much more numerous. The skull was throughout very compact and about half an inch thick.' Beethoven never married. His ailments he appears to have derived from his father, a tenor singer, who became a drunkard.

MENDELSSOHN

No family could present more distressing conditions of nerve-disorder than that of Mendelssohn, where deformities, blindness, apoplexy, paralysis, and epilepsy are found in unbroken sequence.[1] Moses Mendelssohn, grandfather of the composer Felix Mendelssohn, was a hunchback; he stammered, and also suffered constantly from violent headaches which nothing could relieve. At fifty-seven he died of apoplexy. He wrote verses in his youth, and afterwards achieved celebrity by his philosophical works. To this feeble, ailing, and insignificant specimen of humanity three sons and three daughters were born, most of whom appear to have inherited some species of nervous affection. The eldest son Joseph became a successful banker. As a boy, according to a letter of his father's, he showed 'great stubbornness and want of gentleness,' and was 'always of that temperament which would ten times rather break than bend.' At about his father's age he died 'painlessly and suddenly.' He had two children, of whom one died young, and the other left no issue. Abraham, the second son of Moses and the father of the composer, was also an active and energetic man of business, and of a hard and severe nature. He became blind, and, like his elder brother, died suddenly, no one supposing him to have more than a slight cold. His age at death was fifty-nine. Nathan, the youngest, outliving his brothers by a good many years, also died 'painlessly and suddenly,' leaving a family who had pronounced musical tastes. Although the cause of death in these cases is not specified, the recorded symptoms point to apoplexy or to some nervous affection of the heart. Not less afflicted in

[1] Rockstro: *Life of Mendelssohn.* Henschel: *Die Familie Mendelssohn*

their way were the daughters of Moses Mendelssohn. Henrietta was deformed and never married, while Dorothea and Recha were somewhat disordered as to their passions, the former deserting her first husband to elope with a lover, and the latter being divorced. It is noteworthy that Dorothea had 'literary and poetic abilities,' and that Recha was also 'intellectually clever' but 'a very sickly woman.'

In Felix Mendelssohn there was, as has been observed in the case of Walter Scott and other great men, a converging heredity of nerve-disorder, Abraham Mendelssohn having married a woman 'of an excitable nervous organisation and prone to heart disease.' Leah Solomon, mother of the composer, excelled alike as a linguist, a musician, and an artist, and was also 'very lively and witty.' She died suddenly of 'spasm of the lungs.' By her marriage with Abraham Mendelssohn she had four children—Fanny, Felix, Rebecca, and Paul. Both Fanny and Felix had a decided predilection for music in childhood; the others were not so gifted. All were of feeble constitution. Fanny was of stunted growth, slightly deformed (having one shoulder higher than the other), and was weak-sighted. She was subject to alarming fits of bleeding at the nose, one of which lasted thirty-six hours. At forty-two she was seized with paralysis while seated at the piano, and died a few hours afterwards 'from a rush of blood to the head.' She was very 'lively, sensitive, and fond of the beautiful in all things.'

Felix, the composer, who in his short life—for he died at thirty-seven—made the name of Mendelssohn illustrious, was wayward as a boy. Writing to him at this period, his father observed:—'You have never been able to divest yourself of a tendency to austerity and irascibility, suddenly grasping an object and as suddenly relinquishing it, and thus creating for yourself many obstacles from the practical point of view.' Like Handel and Mozart, Mendelssohn was extremely susceptible to discordant sounds. The national melodies of Wales, as performed by itinerant musicians during his visit to the Principality in 1829, threw him into a frenzy. 'No national melodies for me,' he wrote. 'Ten thousand devils take all nationalities.' The airs of the country were to his ear 'infamous, vulgar,

out-of-time trash,' and, he added, 'I am getting mad, and I must leave off writing till by-and-by.' By the age of thirty-five his health was 'hopelessly impaired.' This was soon after the composition of 'Elijah.' Rockstro remarks that Mendelssohn then appeared to be working himself to death. During the rehearsals of 'Elijah' he had a 'worn look' which it was distressing to witness. He next fell into a state of physical and nervous exhaustion, and was 'irritable to the last degree.' From this condition he never recovered. On hearing of his sister Fanny's death he fell down in a faint. Putting his hand to his head some time afterwards, he said mournfully, 'What is the good of planning anything? I shall not live.' The prediction was all too true. There is little doubt but that at this period Mendelssohn's mind was unhinged. His 'habits changed,' and he 'dreaded all contact with the public.' Epileptic symptoms appeared. He had shivering fits and headaches followed by periods of unconsciousness, and these attacks increased in violence until death supervened. Like his sister Fanny, Mendelssohn was undergrown. He was quick-tempered, lithe, and mercurial; his features were animated and expressive. Some of his vital forces, however, were deficient, for before his death, in what ought to have been the flower of his manhood, he began to be grey and bald. Rebecca suffered terribly from neuralgia, the pain being such that during her attacks she had to be held down in bed. At forty-nine she died of apoplexy. Paul escaped the family heritage of an early and sudden death; the unspecified malady that carried him off involved 'long and severe suffering,' which is no doubt referable to a deeply-impaired constitution.

In Donizetti and Schumann nerve-disorder attained the proportions of insanity. Both these composers also became paralysed. Donizetti, who composed his numerous works with marvellous ease and rapidity, was during his latter years confined in a lunatic asylum. He died at fifty, leaving a son, like himself, insane. Schumann's insanity manifested itself in his youth, when fits of melancholia beset him, accompanied by suicidal impulses. Afterwards he had hallucinations, hearing spirit voices, melodies,

DONIZETTI

and harmonies, and having perturbations of smell and taste.[1] For years he dreaded being shut up in a lunatic asylum, and this was eventually his fate. He died at forty-six. The heritage of nerve-disorder in Schumann's case appears to have been exceptionally strong. There were no musical aptitudes in the family; but his father, although engaged in trade, had strong literary and poetic aspirations, and 'died in the prime of life of a disease of long standing;' while the composer's mother 'fell into an exaggerated state of romance and sentimentalism, combined with sudden and violent passions and an inclination to singularity.' Three brothers all died in early manhood, while a sister fell into an 'incurable melancholy' followed by dementia, and died in her twentieth year. Physically Schumann was of middle stature, inclining to stoutness. He was calm and dignified, but not particularly intellectual in appearance, although his head was square and firm, broadening in a marked manner at the temples. A post-mortem examination was made with the following results:—

SCHUMANN

The traverse folds marking the fourth cavity of the brain were numerous and finely fashioned, and various abnormal characteristics in the cerebral substance were revealed, namely—

I. Distended blood-vessels, especially at the base of the brain.

II. Ossification of the base of the brain and abnormal development of the normal projections in the shape of a new formation of irregular masses of bone, which partially pierced the external hard covering of the brain with their sharp points.

III. Concretion and degeneration of the soft coverings of the brain and unnatural growth of the vascular covering and the rear portion of the cerebrum.

IV. A considerable atrophy of the whole brain, which weighed about seven ounces (Prussian Troy weight), less than is usual in a man of Schumann's age.[2]

Wagner's origin is obscure. He has told us, however, that his father, who occupied a humble position, died very

[1] Wasilewski: *Life of Robert Schumann.* [2] *Ibid.*

early—the year in which the composer was born. 'I hardly know,' says Wagner, 'for what I was originally intended. I only know that I heard one evening a symphony of Beethoven's, that I thereupon fell ill of a fever, and that when I recovered I was—a musician.' His tastes in the first instance were literary and dramatic, but he was a wild and disorderly boy, and infected with the wildest mysticism. At the beginning of his musical period he had 'while half dozing a day vision, in which fundamental thirds and fifths appeared to him incarnate.' Curiously enough, with all his genius for music, he was never able to acquire executive skill on the piano. For many years he suffered from hypertrophy of the heart, which was also Balzac's complaint. It was of this disease that he died. 'The most striking thing in Wagner,' says one of his biographers,[1] 'was the extraordinary energy that animated his frail (*chétif*) body, with its disproportionately large head and brow. This disproportion made him look smaller than he was in reality. He had a violent temperament; both in gaiety and anger he was tempestuous, and his wife was constantly on the watch to prevent or to repair the results of his uncontrollable actions.' 'Impatient, nervous, irritable, he seemed to take pleasure in rending in pieces men and things,' is another description given of him. He had a strange mania for silks and satins—a mania which increased with age. It was in these fabrics that he arrayed himself when about to compose, and in travelling he always carried about with him sufficient material of this kind to decorate his apartments, the room in which he died being upholstered in pink and pale blue satin.

WAGNER

Glück, avaricious and addicted to drink, died of apoplexy. Paganini, an inveterate gambler, was epileptic and consumptive. Weber lapsed into melancholia, and died of consumption at forty-two. The same malady carried off Hérold at the same age. Rossini had a cousin an idiot, and at times laboured under the hallucination that he was miserably poor.[2] Schubert's constitution was worn out at thirty-one. Bellini succumbed at thirty-three to an 'internal disease.'

[1] Jullien. [2] Lombroso.

Balfe died of asthma. Chopin was consumptive. The father of Berlioz was 'weakly in body and melancholic,' while his mother was 'fervently pious.' Gounod describes his brother-musician in the following terms:—'With Berlioz every impression and every feeling was carried to extremities; he only knew joy and sorrow at the pitch of delirium: as he said of himself, he was a volcano.' In the latter portion of his life Berlioz suffered excruciatingly from 'neuralgia in the intestines,' and his death was preceded by epileptiform fits.[1]

What has been said of music applies equally to the sister arts. Many of the greatest painters, sculptors, and engravers are but names to us; they live in their works, and MICHEL ANGELO have otherwise no personal history. All the available evidence, however, points clearly to the existence of nerve-disorder as a fundamental element of genius in relation to colour and form. The publication in 1856 of the letters contained in the Buonarroti archives threw some light upon the previously obscure personality of Michel Angelo,[2] who, in consequence, is better known to us than any of the artists of his period. And it would be difficult to choose a more representative name, for the great sculptor also excelled as a painter, and was given to the writing of poetry as well. Like so many great men, unfortunately, he dwindles on acquaintance. The family correspondence does not show him to advantage. His suspiciousness, his irritability, and his want of calm judgment were the causes of infinite trouble to himself and his friends. These characteristics of the 'insane temperament' he appears to have inherited from his father—a 'man of narrow intellect and hasty temper, unreasonable, and unjust.' Some of the artist's greatest works were achieved while he was afflicted with severe nervous ailments. About the age of fifty-six he is described as suffering from sleeplessness, weak sight, pains in the head, and giddiness. Having been injured in a fall, he shut himself up in his room and refused all assistance, the surgeon being compelled to force his way to his bedside. If this was

[1] *Life and Letters of Berlioz.*
[2] C. Heath Wilson: *Life of Michel Angelo.*

the act of a sane man nothing but a morbid condition of mind could explain the artist's petulant and violent letters and his frequent explosions of temper. One of his letters, undated, but addressed to a friend to whom he was much indebted and, indeed, warmly attached, is so incoherent that he could not have been in his senses when he wrote it. It is such a letter as might emanate from Bedlam.

'Messer Luigi,' says the writer, 'you suppose that I shall reply to you as you wish, but it may well be to the contrary. You give me what I never requested. Truly you do not sin in ignorance, sending it to me by Hercules, being ashamed to give it to me yourself. He who has snatched me from the grave may censure me, but I don't know which weighs most on me, censure or death. In short, I pray and conjure you by the true friendship existing between us that you destroy that print and burn the other impression, and that if you make a profit out of me you will not make others do likewise. If you make of me a thousand pieces I will do as much not of you but of your affairs.'

The signature to this communication is not the least curious part of it. It runs thus :—

'Michel Angelo Buonarroti,
Not painter, sculptor, or architect,
But what you will. But not a drunkard
As I told you at home.'

On the death of a lady to whom he was much attached Michel Angelo is said to have 'lost all control over himself.' He had an innate turn for art, which he adhered to notwithstanding that his father and uncles had recourse to blows to divert him from it as a boy. With the insane temperament he inherited from his father longevity, both dying at the age of ninety. The artist left no offspring, and, although many children were born to his brothers, few lived. 'It is not our fate,' wrote Michel Angelo, 'to multiply in Florence.' None of these brothers displayed any artistic gifts; they were, indeed, men of very little capacity, and 'frequently played an unsatisfactory part in the family history.' Leonardo was infirm and of a pious disposition; Giovanni Simone was the

ne'er-do-well of the family. Only one brother, Buonarroti, had surviving issue.

From the biographical sketches of other old masters some significant facts may be culled. Giorgione, remarkable for his big body and big head, lived an extravagant life, and was notorious for his love adventures; Tintoretto died of an 'incurable disease of the stomach;' Paul Veronese left a gifted son, who died at twenty-six; Botticelli at sixty-four was completely broken down in health, and 'hobbled about on crutches;' Leonardo da Vinci's right arm became paralysed; Rubens died of gout, which attacked him at fifty; Raphael, addicted to sexual excesses, died at thirty-seven; Albert Dürer was consumptive; Claude Lorraine succumbed to gout; Salvator Rosa sank into imbecility; Benvenuto Cellini had hallucinations of sight in the form of ecstatic visions; Vandyck was melancholic, and died at forty-one of 'disappointment;' Watteau was also melancholic, his early death being attributed to 'deception in love.'[1]

Coming to English artists of the first rank, we meet with nerve-disorder in all its forms, not excepting mental derangement, and in one distinguished case—that of Turner—idiocy, or a condition nearly approaching it. Between the parentage of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and that of Sir Joshua Reynolds there is a curious similarity. The painter's father, like the poet's, was a clergyman and schoolmaster; he was also 'an absent man' and 'remarkable for his taciturnity.'[2] It is no surprise in these circumstances to learn that at the height of his fame Sir Joshua had a stroke of paralysis, and that some time afterwards, while engaged upon a portrait, he felt a sudden decay of sight in his left eye. Under the latter affliction he laid down the pencil, never to take it up again. His sight gradually darkened, and in a few weeks his left eye was totally blind. From similar causes, no doubt, the painter long suffered from deafness. Paralysis was not, however, the malady which was destined to end his days. He had an enlargement of the liver—a disease which perplexed the best physicians of

[1] Dohme: *Kunst und Künstler des Mittel-alters und der Neuzeit.*
[2] Northcote: *Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds.*

the time, but which is now known to be in relation with the medulla oblongata. From this we may conclude that the disturbance of function which had occasioned paralysis, deafness, and blindness of the left eye invaded yet another portion of the cerebro-spinal system before proving fatal. Sir Joshua, despite his social success, never married, and he otherwise appears to have indulged in what in any sanely constituted man of his position would have been an unaccountable eccentricity, namely, meanness in small money matters. 'In his household,' says Allan Cunningham, 'he was close and saving; while he poured out his wines and spread out his tables to the titled or the learned, he stinted his domestics to the commonest fare and rewarded their faithfulness by very moderate wages.' He was 'prudent in the matter of pins, a saver of bits of thread, a man hard and parsimonious.' Public opinion pictured him close, cold, cautious, and sordid; and an exhibition of his 'old masters,' which he set up in the Haymarket ostensibly for the benefit of a servant, excited a suspicion, because of his well-known love of gain, that he was a partaker in the profits.—Hogarth died of a sudden nervous spasm—probably *angina pectoris*.

FLAXMAN

The parentage of John Flaxman is obscure, his father having been a maker and seller of plaster casts in a humble way, and nothing being known of his mother except that her name was Lee—a common gipsy patronymic. What the father of English sculpture inherited in a physical sense was a rickety, misshapen body which, in his early years, needed the support of crutches. As a child Flaxman was not expected to live; but an alert and tenacious spirit animated the puny frame, and after the perils of boyhood were past, he proved himself capable of sustaining the fatigue of incessant industry. Always drawing, the sickly youth became a precocious exhibitor and prize-winner. His health improved so much that he was able to lay aside his crutches, but he remained high-shouldered to deformity, his head always looked somewhat too large for his body, and he had an awkward sidelong gait. In religion he held stubborn and eccentric views. He was a believer in the Swedenborgian mysticism, and his opinions on this, as, indeed, on most

subjects, were inflexibly rigid. In art, of course, he was an enthusiast. His genius was exclusively for form. With no model before him he had, even as a lad, instinctively grasped the true principles of Greek design, and he may be said to have recovered the art of combining ideal grace of form and the rhythmical composition of lines with spontaneousness and truth of pose and gesture. Flaxman married, but left no offspring. The immediate cause of his death at seventy-one was a cold. An elder brother, William, of whom nothing is known except that he also was a modeller, died at forty-two.

Other forms of artistic nerve-disorder—for it is only possible to give a selection of cases—are illustrated by Morland, Fuseli, Lawrence, Liverseege, Wilkie, Maclise, Doré, and Meissonier. Unlike Reynolds, Lawrence, and many distinguished painters, George Morland came of an artistic family. His grandfather was a painter, his father also. The latter was what is known as a failure in life—a fact to which we may trace the germ of Morland's genius. This manifested itself early. At five or six years Morland drew wonderfully. He received no regular instruction. From the age of sixteen he was a drunkard, a spendthrift, a loafer about town, with the vulgarest tastes. Destitute of ambition, he worked only to supply the necessities of the hour. He painted with remarkable rapidity and often under the influence of intoxication, yet his pictures, observes Allan Cunningham, want nothing that art can bestow. His habits of debauchery obtaining the upper hand, he sank into the lowest state of destitution, while his personal character became an object of general contempt. At thirty-nine he was struck by paralysis. He recovered partially, but would often fall back senseless in his chair, and sometimes sank into sleep with his palette and brush in his hand. In his fortieth year he died, from the effects of swallowing an unusual quantity of spirits, in utter wretchedness and penury.

MORLAND

Fuseli was of 'diminutive stature and crabbed disposition,' and was all his life an eccentric, filled with fiery impatience and untamable enthusiasm, which, before he took to the easel, found vent through

FUSELI

literary and poetic channels. His style both in writing and painting was exaggerated and distorted, but always vigorous and animated. A consuming energy was his characteristic. To his friends and pupils his oddities, his jests, and his biting sarcasm were a constant source of amusement. He was subject to fits of despondency, and 'from these it was difficult and even dangerous to arouse him,' a violent explosion of temper being the usual result. In dispute he was eager, fierce, and unsparing, and he was too often morose and unamiable even with his best friends. The beautiful he saw chiefly with his mind's eye, for he was very near-sighted, and was obliged to study the effects of his pictures and to touch and retouch them with the help of an opera glass. For this reason, probably, his colouring has a kind of supernatural hue, well suited to beings of the spiritual world though not to those of flesh and blood. He died suddenly, but at an advanced age.

Sir Thomas Lawrence rivalled and, indeed, surpassed Sir Joshua Reynolds in tact, suavity, and courtliness of manner,

LAWRENCE

although in pecuniary matters so unlike his distinguished predecessor in the chair of the Royal Academy that, despite his vast earnings and the fact that he remained unmarried, he was always in want of money. It is remarkable that Sir Thomas was one of sixteen children, nearly all of whom died in infancy, inheriting their instability of constitution from a ne'er-do-well father, who became successively attorney, poetaster, spouter of odes, actor, revenue officer, farmer, and publican, and prospered in none of these callings. The early history of the painter is painfully mingled with the fortunes of his father. He was exhibited as an infant prodigy, and at five years of age spouted poetry and took portraits for the delectation of the rustics in his father's bar-parlour. At twelve he was an established portrait painter at Bath, at three and twenty a London celebrity. Everything and everybody conspired to make him a coxcomb, for personally he was very handsome, and he was especially a 'ladies' man,' but his native good sense never deserted him except where money was concerned. Towards his sixtieth year his health became uncertain; he

had frequent headaches, and was liable to be overtaken by drowsiness in company—a symptom of brain disorder—and soon afterwards he died of heart disease.

The son of a harsh and cruel father who held a subordinate situation in a Manchester cotton factory, Liverseege was born weak and deformed. Afflicted with asthma from his cradle, he was of peevish disposition, but he was also thought to be quick in comprehension and eager for knowledge. He taught himself to draw and soon made a livelihood by his portraits, which he afterwards quitted for more poetic subjects. During his brief and troubled existence, for he died at twenty-nine, he had alternate fits of melancholy and exaltation, and was always more or less ailing. A sudden nervous seizure of some kind cut short, in his case, a career of singular promise. LIVERSEEGE

David Wilkie, 'the raw, queer Scotchman' of Jackson's description, was all his life, and despite his great success, a modest, diffident man, with little cultivation of manners, and wholly insensible to the charms and blandishments of the fair sex. Nervous ill-health weighed upon him from early manhood; and from before his fortieth year he was a confirmed invalid, going from place to place consulting one physician after another, and trying endless remedies all to no purpose. One symptom of his condition was a loss of the power of attention. This he recovered to some extent, though his later works are all inferior to his earlier ones. Haydon found him at forty looking 'thinner and more nervous than ever'—his 'keen and bushy brow, irritable, eager, and full of genius.' Returning by steamer in the Mediterranean from an Oriental tour, Wilkie had a nervous seizure 'which rendered his speech incoherent,' and to which he rapidly succumbed at the age of fifty-six. WILKIE

Daniel Maclise was born of very humble parents, of whom nothing is known. Even the precise date of his birth is a mystery. He had two brothers, one of whom died with an 'undermined constitution,' the other attained some eminence as a singer. One sister married; another 'loved her brother Daniel so intensely that nothing would induce her to separate from him'—a circumstance MACLISE

recalling the devotion to their brothers of the demented Mary Lamb and Dorothy Wordsworth. For some years this sister was an invalid. Maclise's health was also unsatisfactory. About the age of thirty, when beginning to be famous, he wrote to a friend:—'I am really and truly unwell; it may be hypochondria, a return of my old ailment, but I was prohibited dining out. I fell down at the door of my painting-room, and have had the most unquiet nights from palpitating fevers.' Latterly Maclise's habits became very solitary and sedentary, and about the age of sixty he died of consumption, unmarried.

David Roberts, the Royal Academician, who began life as a house-painter, and who won his way to fame without any systematic instruction, had a marvellously retentive memory and a rapid execution. These gifts he paid for in his sudden death from apoplexy.—To this complaint Gustave Doré succumbed.—Another wonderfully rapid worker was John Phillips, who was also originally a house-painter and who died from paralysis.—Meissonier, who suffered much from gout, was physically very active, for ever on the move, but hardly more than five feet high, with a large leonine head and great beard, set on a small body and supported by diminutive legs.

The degeneration of artistic genius into true insanity is exemplified by Romney, Cosway, Haydon, and Landseer.

ROMNEY

Romney's father was a carpenter, and although successful in business was recognised to be 'something of a dreamer in curious projects and expensive plans'—a description which prepares us for the discovery of an unbalanced condition of mind in the son. The artistic genius of Romney had its usual concomitants of extreme nervous sensibility and waywardness. Hypochondria marked him for its own. According to his friend Hayley, the painter laboured under a frequent dread that his talent would utterly desert him, and in the height of his fame his depression was such that he thought of relinquishing his art altogether. Romney in his letters speaks of his own 'distempered mind and body,' and in view of his friend's inexplicable fits of depression Hayley remarks:—'What can be more truly pitiable

than to see great talents rendered frequently inactive by those wonderful variations in the nervous system that throw a shadowy darkness over the mind and fill it with phantoms of apprehension!' About the age of sixty Romney had a paralytic stroke which affected both his eye and his hand, and from this time impairment of his faculties proceeded rapidly. He built a whimsical dwelling at Hampstead, acting as his own architect; but this indulgence of an eccentric fancy brought him neither rest nor satisfaction. His dejection increased, and although he still busied himself with his paints and brushes, it was noticed that his skill had departed. By-and-by he ceased to recognise his friends or relatives, and thenceforward until his death at sixty-eight remained, as Hayley puts it, 'in that state of existence which is infinitely more afflicting to the friends who behold than to the mortal who endures it.' An elder brother of Romney's 'gave such proofs of genius in art as made his early death regretted.' By a wife whose existence he never acknowledged in London, and whom he neglected for nearly forty years, Romney left a son, who lived long enough to become a clergyman. In his youth the painter displayed a taste both for music and mechanics. For art he had an inborn aptitude; he was put to his father's trade, that of a carpenter, but began painting without having any models before him or receiving any artistic instruction whatever.

Very similar, in an artistic sense, was the origin of Cosway, whose taste for drawing, which made him the foremost miniature painter of his day, asserted itself in boyhood and in the face of the gravest difficulties. As a suite to certain 'infirmities' from which his father suffered, Cosway had a paralytic stroke which deprived him of the use of his right hand. Upon this hallucinations followed. These happily were of a pleasing order. Sometimes he would startle his friends by stating with a serious air that he had just had an interview with Praxiteles and Apelles, and that to the English Academy the former recommended a closer study of the human figure, the latter a less gaudy style of colour. Once as he sat at the dinner of the Royal Academy he turned to one of his fellow Academicians and said, 'Pitt while he

Cosway

lived discouraged genius; he has seen his error now. He paid me a visit this morning and said, "Cosway, the chief fault I committed on earth was in not encouraging your talent."' 'I have heard Cosway,' says another friend, 'relate conversations which he held with King Charles I. (then dead for 150 years) so seriously that I firmly believe he considered everything he uttered to be strictly true.' According to Hazlitt, Cosway professed to have held conversations with more than one person of the Trinity, and to be able to talk with his lady at Mantua through some fine ventricle of the senses, as we speak to a servant downstairs through an ear-pipe. The afflicted painter died at an advanced age, childless.

HAYDON

The 'clamorous, frenzied life' of Haydon is one of the saddest in the annals of art. Inheriting a double strain of insanity, first from an eccentric father, who in recording his birth in a diary, added that the wind at the time was W.S.W., and secondly from a mother who suffered from mental derangement, and who died of *angina pectoris*, Haydon, besides his artistic genius, had two characteristics enormously in excess, a burning enthusiasm for art and a prodigious vanity. Folly, extravagance, and lawsuits had well-nigh ruined the family, and it is noted that Haydon's paternal grandmother was a woman 'of great energy and violent prejudices.' The painter suffered from suppressed gout. In his youth he was threatened with blindness, but this danger passed off, leaving him a prey chiefly to his own inordinate ambition and self-will. He was apprenticed to the bookselling business of his father, but his tastes were all for drawing. 'I hated day-books, ledgers, and cash-books,' he says in his autobiography; 'I hated standing behind the counter, and insulted the customers. I hated the town (Plymouth) and the people in it. I rose early and wandered by the sea; sat up late and pondered on my ambition, and my whole frame convulsed when I thought of being a great painter.' In this passage we have the key to Haydon's nature. Sent to London with 20*l.* in his pocket to make his way, he imagined that he was destined to revive all the ancient glories of painting, and worked with such energy that his gums were 'sore from the clenched tightness of his

teeth.' His fiery zeal at first only brought him disappointment, his pictures being received with an indifference which to the impetuous young painter was 'agonising.' Success came by-and-by, though it profited him little. Out of the exhibition of some of his huge canvases he made large sums of money, but he was, nevertheless, constantly struggling with debt and addressing passionate prayers to the Almighty for protection. The vulgar necessities of daily life appear to have had a maddening effect upon Haydon's fervid soul. Repose he never found. 'My brain seems to require constant pressure to be easy, and my body incessant activity.' Three years later, disappointed with the result of an exhibition of his pictures, and suffering from a mental excitement which is vividly reflected in the following entry in his diary:—'Slept horribly—prayed in sorrow and got up in agitation'—he took a pistol and tried to shoot himself, failing in which attempt he cut his throat. A post-mortem examination revealed a long-standing irritation of the brain. There were innumerable bloody points throughout the cerebral substance, and the enveloping membrane was thickened and adherent.

Throughout the Landseer family the artistic faculty predominated. John Landseer, the father, was an engraver whose angularities of character enabled him to wage a prolonged quarrel with the Royal Academy. In consequence of the comparative failure of his efforts to raise the professional status of engravers, 'disappointment,' it is said, 'preyed upon his mind so deeply' that he turned his attention from the practice of his profession to the study of archæology. He was also an attractive lecturer. Crabb Robinson described him as 'animated in his style,' adding that his 'animation was produced by indulgence in sarcasm and in emphatic diction.' In the absence of medical details, John Landseer's character may be said to be significantly indicated in these accounts of him. Two of his sons, Thomas and Charles, attained distinction as artists; two daughters also possessed artistic tastes. The third son, Sir Edwin Landseer, sketched from childhood. At six or seven he drew a cow from life, and constantly busied himself with his sketch-book in the fields thereafter. Like most great men, he was

LANDSEER

thus a precocious genius. One of his first drawings of a dog was done at the age of thirteen. As an example of the extraordinary manual dexterity he acquired, it is related of him that at an evening party he with a pencil in each hand drew simultaneously and without hesitation the head of a stag and that of a horse, both full of his characteristic energy and spirit. About his fifty-eighth year symptoms of the insanity which darkened the close of Sir Edwin Landseer's life attracted attention. The eccentricity of a picture entitled 'A Kind Star' alarmed his friends. This was exhibited in 1859, and showed a Spirit with a star in its hair bending over a dying stag. In the following year his 'Flood in the Highlands' seemed to promise a restoration of his powers, but the promise was not fulfilled. Always a man of 'extreme nervous susceptibility,' the painter 'had hints,' says his biographer,[1] 'that the human mind and the body which surrounds it are mortal. He was constitutionally subject to nervous depression, but these attacks accumulated force as years went on, and threatened the end which came with all its painfulness.' Landseer died at sixty-nine, leaving no one to inherit his name, the last bearer of which was a surviving maiden sister.

Turner stands alone as an example of a surpassing faculty for colour, combined with the lowest intellectual powers.

TURNER

Hogarth, according to Walpole, was a man of a 'gross and uninformed mind.' Nollekens never had any notion of spelling or grammar. Reynolds himself is said to have been deficient in scholastic attainments. But Turner, as regards the general cast of his mind, was little above the level of the idiot. His mother, always a woman of fierce and ungovernable temper, became insane and had to be placed in confinement; his father was a loquacious barber, mean and dwarfish-looking, and without much stability of character. To this most unlikely couple there appears to have been no other child born than the most renowned landscape painter of England. Turner as a boy was impenetrably dull; there was only one thing he was found to do well, and that was, during the period of his apprenticeship in an architect's office, the washing in of blue skies and

[1] F. G. Stephens.

orange gravel walks in architectural drawings. Here his innate faculty for colour first showed itself. This, by degrees, led to his becoming a student at the Academy, but he does not seem to have profited much by the teaching he there received. His genius, indeed, was remarkably slow in developing. Probably it would never have been recognised at all had there not arisen an eminent critic who could see visions of beauty in canvases which to the uneducated eye looked like inchoate masses of colour. It is, indeed, acknowledged that some of Turner's works are 'fitful dreams, nightmares of beauty rather than distinct images;' but this is said to be the 'vision of the poet which, although perhaps less definite, yet often catches further glimpses of truth and beauty than ordinary sight can attain.' There is no doubt that Turner's reproductions from Nature are at least untruthful in outline. As pictures of real places—Kilchurn Castle and Ben Cruachan, for example—they are absolutely misleading. The colour sense was Turner's forte. With this he possessed an extraordinary executive skill. His small hand was so delicate that he could draw with a degree of refinement astonishing even to opticians; his arm was so steady that he painted on upright canvases without the support of a maulstick, while his constitutional strength was such that he could work fifteen hours at a stretch without fatigue, and eat anything regardless of digestion. The only moral characteristic that he appears to have had in excess was avarice; he was saving even in the matter of half-pence, and haggled with dealers like a Jew pedlar. For the rest, he fell infinitely below mediocrity. The mastery of English grammar was beyond him, he could never write or speak like a person of education, while his manners were slovenly, awkward, unconciliatory—boorish in the extreme. When he attempted to explain himself on the subject of art his words were mere gibberish. Here is an example of his philosophical observations, which the reader is invited to make sense of if he can:—

> They wrong virtue enduring difficulties, or worth in the bare imitation of nature, all offers received in the same brain; but where these attempts rise above mediocrity it would surely not

be a little sacrifice to those who perceive the value of the success to foster it by terms as cordial that cannot look so easy a way as those spoken of convey doubts to the expecting individual. For as the line that unites the beautiful to grace and these offerings forming a new style not that soul can guess as ethics. Teach them of both but many serve as the body and the soul, and but presume more as the beacon to the head-land which would be a warning to the danger of mannerism and the disgustful.[1]

Yet, in this strangely muddled brain there appears to have been some occasional stirring of the poetic sense. His bad spelling and defective grammar notwithstanding, Turner appealed to the muses. 'Lead me along,' he sighs in one passage, 'with thy armonuous verse.' The result was always ludicrous. Much of his poetry, in fact, is sheer nonsense, like the following verse which may stand as an example :—

> If then my ardent love of thee is said with truth
> Agents the demolition of thy house forsooth,
> Broke through the trammels doubts and you my rhyme
> Roll into being since that fatal time.[2]

By way of explaining Turner's habitual sullenness, moroseness, and unsociability, it has been said that in his youth he was crossed in love. Remembering the strain of insanity in his composition, we may dismiss as groundless a story in support of which no biographer has been able to bring forward a particle of evidence. The mental constitution of the great colourist was, plainly speaking, that of the congenital idiot in whom, as we have already seen, there is often a special development of faculty. Ruskin places Turner among the seven supreme colourists of the world, the other six being in his estimation Giorgione, Titian, Veronese, Tintoretto, Correggio, and Reynolds. It certainly needs an abnormally constituted eye to appreciate Turner's colour, particularly his scarlet shadows in combination with white lights. That such shadows exist in nature, although they remained to be discovered by Turner, Ruskin asserts;[3] but the ordinarily constituted mind will be content to regard

[1] P. G. Hamerton : *Life of Turner*.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] Ruskin : *Modern Painters*, Part IX. Chap. XI.

them either as a technical device of the painter's for obtaining a false brilliance or as an aberration of the visual sense. The latter years of his long life Turner passed in misanthropic seclusion in a house in Queen Anne Street, which he allowed to fall into the last stage of dilapidation. When friends called here they would sometimes find him 'quite dizzy with work;' it is believed that to other sordid vices he added drinking. His eccentricities were quite of the insane order. When Maclise called to tell him of Haydon's suicide, Turner scarcely stopped painting, but merely growled out between his teeth, 'He stabbed his mother, he stabbed his mother.' 'Good heavens,' said Maclise, so excited that he was prepared for any new horror, 'you don't mean to say, Turner, that Haydon ever committed a crime so terrible!' Still Turner made no reply, but slowly chanted 'He stabbed his mother, he stabbed his mother.' Nothing but this could his startled friend wring from him. The biographers suppose Turner to have meant that Haydon had injured the Royal Academy, but it is more reasonable to conclude that the words were an insane 'tic' such as is often to be found in the speech of lunatics.

The actor's art is not perhaps accorded as high a place in popular estimation as music, painting, and the literary faculty. Nevertheless, its pathological aspect, as illustrated by the lives of the greatest actors, establishes its identity of origin with the other forms of genius we have been considering. From both parents Edmund Kean inherited a strain of insanity. His maternal great-grandfather, Henry Carey, a composer of songs and a humourist of some repute, led a ne'er-do-well life, became blind, and hanged himself. Henry Carey's son, George, was a man of the same unsettled habits. Actor, musician, and itinerant lecturer by turns, he lived a life of continued hardship and struggle, his greatest talent being for the unprofitable business of mimicry. Nance Carey, George's daughter, and mother of the tragedian, proved in turn a worthy bearer of the family name. At fifteen she joined a company of strolling players, and the connection she formed soon after with Edmund Kean, the tragedian's father, was

of the same fortuitous and unstable character as the family fortunes. She had no motherly affection, for she deserted her child three months after his birth, and only claimed him some years later, when there seemed a prospect of making a paltry profit out of his appearances on the stage.

Turning now to the paternal descent of the great actor, we find, if possible, a blacker record. Edmund Kean the elder was one of three brothers. Aaron was a drunkard; Moses was a tailor by trade, but earned his bread chiefly as a mimic, and had a wooden leg which probably had a neuropathic history if we but knew it, amputation being sometimes resorted to in severe rheumatic affections. With or without these collateral indications of nerve-disorder, there can be no doubt as to the constitutional infirmities of the third brother Edmund, father of the tragedian, with whom we are more immediately concerned. Early in life he was known as a fluent speaker at debating societies, although his calling was that of a clerk; and, after his acquaintance with Nance Carey, he drank heavily, lost whatever social position he had had, and finally sank into hopeless insanity, in which state he met his death by falling or throwing himself from the roof of a house into the street. In the tragedian's daily life as well as in his genius his mother's thriftlessness and his father's insanity were faithfully reflected. Kean not only drank heavily but committed strange acts, such as getting up at three o'clock in the morning, sending for a hackney coach, placing inside it a dog, a pair of pistols, a bottle of brandy, and two lighted candles, and gravely telling the coachman to drive 'to hell.'[1] He was constantly disgracing himself with the public by failing in his engagements through drunkenness or inattention. Visiting an American lunatic asylum, he walked out with some friends upon the roof, and after admiring the prospect, rushed suddenly to the edge, exclaiming, 'I'll make a leap; it is the best end I can put to my life.' With difficulty he was restrained from giving effect to his words. By the age of thirty-seven the tragedian's health, mental and bodily, was shattered, his memory began

[1] Molloy: *Life and Adventures of Edmund Kean.*

to play him false, even the extreme sensibility which was so long his unfailing characteristic occasionally deserted him, so that he walked through his parts 'with moveless muscle and glazed eye' like a man in the last stage of exhaustion. He lingered, however, a few years longer, acting to the last. In the midst of a performance of 'Othello' at Covent Garden he fell down insensible and was carried off the stage. From this attack he never recovered. It was found that his mind was unhinged, and in this condition death overtook him at the age of forty-six.

The great tragic genius of Junius Brutus Booth was as nearly allied to insanity as Kean's. Similar eccentricities marked his public and private life, though he does not appear to have been addicted to drinking. When not in the humour to act he would disappear without a word of warning, leaving the managers who had engaged him in serious difficulties. In playing 'Richelieu' on one occasion he suddenly halted, tripped over to one of the characters, the priest *Father Joseph*, and, seizing him in his arms, waltzed with him round the stage, to the amazement of the house and the horror of the manager, who had the curtain dropped on this mad prank. Booth then disappeared and was not seen by his friends for some days. At thirty-five his eccentricities culminated in true insanity, the first outbreak of which occurred in the midst of a performance. In playing a tragic part at Boston, U.S.A., he suddenly dropped into a colloquial tone, and *à propos* of nothing said, 'Upon my word I don't know.' To the murmurs of the house he responded with a ringing laugh. The manager then rushed from behind the scenes and led him off, whilst he shouted 'I can't read—I am a charity boy—I can't read—take me to the lunatic asylum.' For some time after this incident Booth was an undoubted maniac. His mental aberration was, however, marked by lucid intervals in which he continued to act. While at sea off Charleston he jumped overboard, saying he had a message for an actor who had drowned himself near the spot some years before. He was rescued with difficulty and afterwards carefully watched. In a more or less demented condition he lived till the age of

fifty-six, dying then of a cold. His insanity he transmitted to his son, Wilkes Booth, who assassinated President Lincoln.

THE KEMBLES

The Kemble family exhibit a considerable variety of nerve-disorder, whence inherited there is nothing to show, save that the mother of Mrs. Siddons and of John Philip Kemble was a woman of 'severe character.' Old Roger Kemble and his wife Sarah, strolling actors, had a large family, of whom Mrs. Siddons was the most gifted. This great actress was a woman of extreme sensibility. She had occasional fainting fits, and suffered from sciatica and nervous depression. She was popularly said to be 'mad'—a rumour which she took occasion pointedly to contradict. Unquestionably she had a somewhat unbalanced mind, being accustomed, artist-like, to attribute every adverse opinion and every slight to deep-seated and malignant animosity. Before the age of fifty physical weakness unfitted Mrs. Siddons for acting, but she lived to an advanced age, and died of erysipelas. In her family consumption appeared, two of her children dying of that complaint. John Philip Kemble, the tragedian, and the most famous brother of Mrs. Siddons, was a man of strange moods, who took opium and drank wine, it is said, 'in pailfuls.' He had asthma, but a graver nerve disorder seized him ultimately, in the shape of paralysis, of which he died. Charles Kemble, inferior to his brother, but still an actor of repute, became deaf before he attained the age of forty. Another brother, Stephen Kemble, was noted for his excessive stoutness—a defect which also characterised Mrs. Siddons in her later years. Fanny Kemble attained some distinction as an actress, but other members of the family showed little or no aptitude for the boards.

In the case of Mrs. Curtis, youngest sister of Mrs. Siddons, nerve disorder assumed what is commonly thought to be a discreditable form; she was lame, eccentric, incorrigibly immoral, and generally a 'disgrace' to the family. At the same time she had poetic and literary ability. While Mrs. Siddons was at the height of her fame, the poor ne'er-do-well issued a volume of miscellaneous poems, some of which she had written at the age of fourteen, and others 'under a complication of difficulties.' She also wrote romances. On one

occasion she added to her notoriety by attempting to poison herself in Westminster Abbey. But for her lameness it was thought she would have cut a respectable figure on the stage. Although known as the 'notorious Mrs. Curtis,' she was acknowledged to possess 'uncommon intellect.' She lived till the age of seventy-four, making the family uneasy all their lives, though latterly she was pensioned by Mrs. Siddons.

Rachel, the greatest tragic actress of the French, or indeed of any stage, was born of Jewish pedlars named Félix, and sang or recited in the streets as a child. She was abnormally thin and pigeon-breasted, but, as an actress, her coal-black eyes glowed with passion and she had a something in her manner which made her silence even more expressive than words. The family were of a singularly mean and sordid disposition, and exploited Rachel in a shameless manner throughout her short but brilliant career. The great *tragédienne* was a 'bundle of nerves.' On the stage she was once seized with a fit of hysterics so violent and so prolonged that her reason was thought to be in danger. Her sister Rebecca died of consumption, and to this disease Rachel herself, after frequently failing in her engagements owing to 'ill-health,' succumbed at the age of thirty-seven. She was subject to fits of an epileptic character, and some time before her death was haunted by the vision of a giant's hand crushing in her chest. This was sometimes accompanied by an auditory hallucination, a voice saying to her, 'You shall die here, under my hand.' Rachel possessed no ear for music, being unable to distinguish time or tune; but she had a great passion for gambling. On the point of heredity it is to be noted that Rachel's father was subject to 'ungovernable fits of anger,' and that her mother was of a 'sharp, grasping, covetous nature'—defects which are acknowledged in the friendly sketch of the actress's life written by Madame de B——.

RACHEL

In not a few cases the genius of eminent actors has been coupled with neuropathic symptoms. Peg Woffington died of paralysis.—Monrose, the best *Figaro* of his day, developed insanity on the stage while playing his favourite character.—Mdlle. Mars, an inveterate gambler, died in a prolonged state

of delirium which was attributed ignorantly to her use of hair dye.—Talma possessed the power of vividly picturing his audience to himself as unclothed skeletons.[1]—The beautiful and fascinating Rose Chéri belonged to a mad family.—Augustine Brohan was threatened with blindness.—Frédérick Lemaître drank heavily.—Aimée Desclée developed a strong religious vocation.—Robson, a pigmy in stature, drank himself to death. And Charles Kean inherited the nerve-disorder of his father in the form of gout.

[1] This curious faculty of Talma's was possessed by a medical man of Wigan's acquaintance who died of brain disease. In any large assembly his imagination gradually and slowly went on removing one article of clothing after another from all the persons present, then their integuments, then layer after layer of muscles, then the viscera, and at last left them all bare skeletons dancing before his eyes.

CHAPTER VIII

COMMANDERS AND STATESMEN AS NEUROPATHIC SUBJECTS—ALEXANDER THE GREAT—JULIUS CÆSAR—MARLBOROUGH—CLIVE—NAPOLEON—AND WELLINGTON—THEIR PARALYTIC AND EPILEPTIC TENDENCIES—THE PROPHETICAL MISSIONS OF MAHOMMED AND JOAN OF ARC—CHARACTERISTICS OF CHARLES V. AND FREDERICK THE GREAT—UNSOUNDNESS OF THE CROMWELL BLOOD—THE PITTS, FATHER AND SON—INSANE TENDENCIES OF THE FORMER—WARREN HASTINGS'S PARALYSIS—BROUGHAM'S EXTRAVAGANCE AND IRRESPONSIBILITY—THE NEUROPATHIC STRAIN IN BEACONSFIELD

A COMMON impression prevails that, be the weaknesses of genius what they may, they are manifested exclusively in men possessing literary and artistic faculty; but an examination of the facts shows such a belief to be erroneous. Great distinction is achieved in war and statesmanship under the same conditions as in literature and art; there is a morbid development of certain portions of the brain entailing a hyper-sensitiveness or an impoverishment of other portions with results that are disastrous either to the individual himself, or, by the operation of heredity, to his offspring and connections. In all the military commanders of the world of absolutely the first rank, a class so limited in number that they may almost be reckoned upon the fingers of one hand, the existence of such conditions is clearly proved upon the evidence of history.

The parentage of Alexander the Great was of a most unpromising character. His father Philip was violent in temper, and given over to drunkenness and debauchery; his mother Olympias was a dissolute, ungovernable woman, who is said, previous to his birth, to have had a remarkable vision of her son's greatness. Alexander was himself addicted to orgies, in one of which he died in his thirty-second year, but the neuropathic nature of his genius was shown more particularly by an affection of the

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muscles of the neck, which from birth compelled him to incline his head to one side, and by the circumstance that a brother of his, put to death by order of Olympias, was an idiot.

JULIUS CÆSAR

On the authority of Suetonius we learn that Julius Cæsar towards the close of his life became subject to epileptic fits. This is confirmed by Plutarch, who states that while the battle of Thapsus was being fought Cæsar fell into convulsions. Two years after the close of his African campaign, and at the age of fifty-six, Cæsar was murdered. As repeated attacks of epilepsy impair the mental powers, it is possible that the daggers of Brutus and Cassius saved the dictator from a worse fate, that of lapsing into insanity.

MARLBOROUGH

From boyhood Marlborough was subject to headaches, giddiness, and what was called 'fever'—complaints which affected him greatly before and after the battle of Blenheim, his correspondence at the period containing frequent reference to his bodily sufferings. After his return to England in 1716 at the age of sixty-six, paralysis deprived him for a time of speech; and a series of epileptic attacks subsequently reduced him to a state of great bodily and mental debility. He was never himself again, he spoke with difficulty, and both his memory and understanding were impaired. At seventy-six his nervous attacks increased in violence and carried him off.[1] The hereditary influences which conduced to Marlborough's disorders are indicated in the fact that his father was a man of letters, and that his sister Arabella was a woman of dissolute character. In his own offspring neuropathic conditions were very marked, the evil tendencies of the Churchill blood having been aggravated, probably, by Marlborough's marriage with a woman of vehement temper. Marlborough's only son died in boyhood, a daughter Elizabeth died at twenty-six, and another daughter, Anne Countess of Sunderland, at twenty-nine, after having been 'long afflicted with a tedious disorder.' On Marlborough's death his title and honours descended to his daughter Henrietta, whose son became the Marquis of Blandford. This young man, though married, died childless at thirty-

[1] Coxe: *Life of Marlborough.*

two, and on the death of Henrietta the title and honours passed to the Sunderland line, in which they have since remained.

The hereditary influences that determined the career of Clive are obscure, though his own individual life shows them to have been of the usual neuropathic character.[1] His father, a country attorney, appears to have been a thriftless person, consistently unsuccessful in life, and the future conqueror of India, by dint of that metamorphosis of heredity which has been so frequently illustrated in these pages, came into the world accordingly with a disposition of great impetuosity and waywardness. At school Clive was inordinately addicted to fighting, and was described by an uncle in a letter as flying into a temper upon every trifling occasion. He was also full of daring and adventure. Sent out to a writership in the East India Company's service, he proved irritable and impatient of control, and had fits of low spirits in which, as a lad, he twice attempted to kill himself, his life being saved only through his pistol missing fire. In a duel with a comrade he displayed an extraordinary degree of nerve; he had called an officer a cheat, and when, having missed his aim, he stood at his adversary's mercy, he shouted 'Shoot and be damned, I said you cheated and I say so still.' The officer declaring the young man to be mad, threw away his weapon and there the matter ended. Clive's temperament called for strong and constant excitement, and this he eventually found in war. Of moral scruples he had none; it is known that he stooped to forgery in order to circumvent a native opponent. At forty years of age Clive had conquered India and acquired a world-wide reputation. Yet in the height of his success he suffered from great depression of spirits, and his letters betoken a morbid, restless mind. He had a painful gouty rheumatic affection, to relieve which he took opium in large doses. With the untold wealth he had acquired in India, Clive indulged in extravagances that covered him with ridicule, ordering, for example, the costliest clothes, among other things a court suit, 'lined with parchment so that it might not wrinkle.' With everything at his

CLIVE

[1] Gleig: *Life of Clive.*

command apparently to make life worth living, riches and reputation without stint, he committed suicide at the age of forty-nine. Clive's book learning, according to his friendly biographer Gleig, was a mere blank. He had a harsh and heavy countenance, and his general manner in society was sullen and reserved. Lady Clive survived her husband a great many years, and her son, the first Earl of Powis, died at eighty-five.

There is nothing discoverable in the ancestry of Napoleon that foreshadowed his greatness except an excessive mortality, and the fact that his mother, Lætitia Ramolini, was a woman of 'strong character,' although illiterate, evincing firmness in certain matters, but in others, says the Duchesse d'Abrantès, 'an extravagant obstinacy.' Both the Emperor's parents were left orphans at an early age. Charles Bonaparte, his father, was a Corsican functionary of humble position, who died at thirty-nine of a cancerous affection of the stomach inherited from his father, who died about the same age. This also was the disease to which Napoleon himself succumbed, at little more than fifty. From boyhood Napoleon was irritable, obstinate, morose, splenetic and domineering, always more feared than loved. The sketches given of him by Bourrienne[1] and other observers reveal a disposition alternately sullen and impulsive, and lacking in all consideration for the feelings of others. 'His anger,' says the Duchesse d'Abrantès, 'was frightful, and though I am no coward I could never look at him in his fits of rage without a shudder.[2] His smile, it appears, was correspondingly winning. At school the only branch of study for which Napoleon showed any special aptitude was mathematics, though he had some taste also for history and geography. To the last he was unable to spell correctly, while his handwriting was an unreadable scrawl, bearing in every slur and dash the traces of an impetuous temperament. Constant, his valet, who has written his memoirs, says that owing to his natural impatience and hastiness of manner Napoleon never attempted to shave without severely cutting himself.

NAPOLEON

[1] Bourrienne: *Mémoires sur Napoléon.*
[2] D'Abrantès: *Souvenirs historiques sur Napoléon.*

In an interesting study of Napoleon's handwriting,[1] the Abbé Michon, a graphologist, maintains that the Emperor's passionate vehemence and impenetrable dissimulation both stand revealed in the manner in which he wielded his pen. The furious illegibility of the Emperor's manuscript, the apparently unconscious leaps and bounds of the Imperial pen, convince Michon that Napoleon possessed the insane temperament. This conclusion he draws more especially from the strange abnormal form and excessive development of the letter *p* in Napoleon's handwriting. The Abbé states—and in this he is supported by medical authority—that the writing of the partially deranged usually exhibits some similar sign which he calls *la petite bête*, this sign generally consisting of a nervous, disordered, unusual stroke which falls fatally and spontaneously from the pen. Pascal, whose imagination, as already stated, was so far out of gear that he always saw an abyss yawning at his side, and whose writing in his later years Napoleon's most resembles, used an extravagant and accusing *g*. No doubt 'insane handwriting' is due to a morbid excitability of the motor centres, particularly those of the wrist and hand.

What, we may now inquire, is the direct evidence of a neuropathic condition in Napoleon himself? Brierre de Boismont[2] relates the following, which he heard from a friend to whom it was told by General Rapp:—'In 1806 General Rapp on his return from the siege of Dantzig, having occasion to speak to the Emperor, entered his study without being announced. He found him so absorbed that his entry was unperceived. The general seeing the Emperor continue motionless, thought he might be ill, and purposely made a noise. Napoleon immediately roused himself, and without any preamble seizing Rapp by the arm, said to him, pointing to the sky, "Look there, up there!" The general remained silent, but on being asked a second time, he answered that he perceived nothing. "What," replied the Emperor, "you do not see it? It is my star, it is before you, brilliant." Then, becoming animated, he cried out: "It has never

[1] Michon: *Napoléon I. d'après son écriture.*
[2] Brierre de Boismont: *Des Hallucinations.*

abandoned me, I see it on all great occasions, it commands me to go forward, and it is a constant sign of my good fortune."' Another authority, the historian of the Russian campaign, General Ségur, mentions Napoleon's star. Cardinal Fesch was begging him in 1811 to desist from his futile warfare, when the Emperor took him by the hand, led him to the window, opened it, and said, 'Do you see that star?' 'No, Sire,' replied the Cardinal. 'Look again,' insisted the Emperor. 'Sire, there is no star visible,' was the answer, to which Napoleon rejoined, 'I see it.' Whereupon the astonished Cardinal lapsed into silence, imagining that Napoleon intended to convey that his ambition extended even to the heavens.[1] This independent testimony in Rapp's favour is all the more convincing from its motiveless character, neither the Cardinal nor the historian having a theory of hallucinations to propound.

These stories of a guiding star of Napoleon's are rather unconvincing as they stand. There are unquestionable facts, however, that support them. Bourrienne says Napoleon 'frequently gave an involuntary shrug of his right shoulder which was accompanied by a movement of his mouth from left to right.' Meneval, who succeeded Bourrienne as the Emperor's private secretary, refers to the same peculiarity. While dictating, Napoleon, according to Meneval, 'experienced a sort of "tic," consisting in a movement of his right arm, which he twisted while pulling with his hand the lining of the cuff of his coat.'[2] This testifies to an abnormal excitability of the nerve cells in the motor area of the brain. A similar excitability in the visual or auditory area would tend to produce hallucinations of sight or hearing, and would account for the visions above described. It was persistently reported during Napoleon's lifetime that he was subject to attacks of epilepsy, though Bourrienne declares that during the eleven years he was with him he never observed any symptom of that malady. While it is significant that such reports should have been circulated at a time when no suspicion could be entertained of the relations existing between

[1] Ségur: *Histoire de Napoléon et de la Grande Armée.*
[2] Meneval: *Napoléon et Marie Louise.*

Napoleon's genius and the epileptic habit, evidence of grave nerve-disorder on the Emperor's part is not wanting. Corvisart, his physician, told Madame de Rémusat that Napoleon's awakening from sleep was generally melancholy, and appeared painful, and that not unfrequently he had convulsive spasms in the stomach which made him vomit.[1] As bearing upon the question of epilepsy, it may be remarked, that during the Russian campaign, according to Ségur, Napoleon's memory became temporarily affected, particularly as to names and dates. For a time he was constantly confusing one person with another, and making odd mistakes as to the period of events. His strange fits of apathy, it is said, also attracted the attention of his generals. This, it is important to observe, was long after Bourrienne had ceased to be on confidential terms with the Emperor.

Nerve-disorder revealed itself unmistakably in Napoleon's brothers and sisters. Joseph Bonaparte had paralysis; Lucien was extremely short-sighted; Louis during the greater part of his life was an invalid, his infirmities, says the Duchesse d'Abrantès, giving him the appearance of an old man before his time; Caroline, like the Emperor, had cancer in the stomach; Pauline died of consumption. Alone among the family, Jerome lived to old age. The cause of death in all cases has not been recorded. But the curious dissimilarity in the character of the various members of the Bonaparte family is not without significance from the neurotic point of view. In extreme contrast to the Emperor, Joseph and Lucien were fond of literature; Louis was a mild, easy, good-natured man; Jerome was a spendthrift; Pauline was vain, capricious, unchaste, and generally foolish. Anomalies of physical growth are also to be noted in the family. While the Emperor was short and thick-set, Lucien was tall and thin, with legs, says the Duchesse d'Abrantès, like a field spider; the one brother had an excessively large head, the other a small one. Pauline was extremely graceful; Caroline, on the other hand, was ill-made, walked badly, and was undignified in her manners. Almost all the Emperor's nephews and nieces were very hasty-tempered. This is the testimony

[1] Rémusat: *Mémoires.*

of the Duchesse d'Abrantès, who adds: 'I have known Achille Murat (son of Caroline) so violently overcome by strong passion as to be thrown into convulsions.' The last piece of evidence I can offer as to Napoleon's nerve-disorder, is the early death of his only legitimate son, the offspring of Marie Louise. This poor young man, in whom the Emperor had centred his hopes of founding a dynasty, died at twenty, of what is described as a 'premature decay.' As a child, he was, like his cousins, self-willed and liable to strong fits of passion. Metternich visited him on his deathbed. 'It was a heartrending sight,' says the old diplomatist.[1] 'I have never seen a more mournful picture of decay.'

N. Wellington was epileptic. His father, the Earl of Mornington, was distinguished for his musical tastes, and an elder brother had some poetic faculty. During Wellington's career as a statesman, after the battle of Waterloo, his fainting fits were repeatedly a subject of alarm to the nation;[2] and it was an attack of epilepsy that caused his death. In reference to the Duke's condition 'The Times' remarked: 'Of late years increasing infirmities —manifest though energetically resisted—the treacherous ear, the struggling utterance and the fottering step, all told their tale, and suggested even a fear that the greatest man of his age might live to illustrate the decay from which no greatness is secure.'[3] Longevity, a characteristic of Wellington's mother, who died at ninety, persisted in the family, but it is noteworthy that Wellington's elder brother left no issue by either of two wives, and that his eldest son and direct heir was childless.

Turenne, the greatest of French generals before Napoleon, had a weak constitution in boyhood, was a dull scholar, impatient of restraint, and showed dogged perseverance. He stuttered, and was subject to a convulsive movement of the shoulders.—Prince Eugène, who commanded the Imperial army of Austria at twenty-five, was deformed.—Gustavus Adolphus, shot in battle at thirty-eight, left a daughter, Christine, Queen of Sweden, who was of masculine habits

[1] Metternich: *Mémoires.* [2] Greville: *Memoirs.*
[3] *The Times*, September 16, 1852.

and eccentric, and his great-aunt Cecilie led a dissolute and rambling life.—Charles XII., the son of an obstinate, harsh, and despotic father, began his wars at eighteen, and during the stormy life which he ended on the battle-field at thirty-seven displayed extraordinary courage, self-will, and cruelty.—Runjeet Singh, the founder of the Sikh Empire, whose father died at thirty, began his military career at seventeen, acquired large dominion, and at fifty could not stand without support, his health being said to be broken by excesses and low indulgence.

The prophetical missions of Mahommed and Joan of Arc, although belonging to a different order of mental phenomena from the foregoing, are equally traceable to physical causes. It need hardly be said that the ideas expressed to insane people by visionary characters are really their own. Blake conversed with his spirits not in words, but, as he expressed it, by 'intuition and magnetism.' Having summoned up the figure of Richard III., he was requested to ask the tyrant whether he could justify the numerous murders committed by him in the course of his life. The reply was immediate. 'Your question,' said Blake to his interlocutor, 'has already reached him. We have no need of words; this is the answer a little fuller than he has given it me, as you do not understand the language of spirits. He says, that what you call murder and carnage is nothing, that in butchering fifteen or twenty thousand people no harm is done, because the immortal part of them is not only preserved, but passes into a better world. A murdered man who reproached his murderer with killing him would be guilty of ingratitude, seeing that the latter procures him a more comfortable abode, and a more perfect existence.' Many epileptics are able to call up their hallucinations at will. They think of an object and it straightway appears before their eyes, or their unuttered thoughts are translated into audible speech.

A hundred millions of men now living upon the earth believe that Mahommed was sent by God, and that his visions were a revelation of the divine truth. Yet nothing can be more certain, scientifically speaking, than that the founder of Islam possessed no other source of inspiration than the morbid

workings of his brain. We need not on that account deny Mahommed the credit of sincerity. There is no doubt that he was, in a great measure, sincere, and as much may be said of all great religious teachers and prophets, both before his time and since. Traditions relating to Mahommed were industriously collected and recorded during the first three centuries of his era, and we have consequently a tolerably complete view of the prophet as a man. His parentage was not sound. His father, Abdullah, died at twenty-five, and his mother appears to have been a woman of nervous temperament. Frequently in a half-waking condition she fancied she was visited by spirits, and she died when Mahommed, her only child, was six years of age. In boyhood Mahommed had several epileptic seizures, the first occurring when he was four years of age, and causing great alarm to his nurse, who thought he was possessed by an evil spirit. These fits were afterwards regarded by the prophet and his disciples as of supernatural origin in accordance with a prevalent belief in the East. As a young man Mahommed showed great inactivity, and inaptitude for the ordinary duties of life. Until the age of twenty-five, when the widow Kadyjah chose him for a husband, he lived upon the charity of his relatives, and was reduced to the necessity of pasturing sheep, a humble occupation among the Arabs. After marriage he devoted himself to ascetic exercises and religious speculations, based upon the notions of Christianity which had penetrated into Arabia. His temperament was nervous and melancholic. He was generally low-spirited, pensive, and restless. About the age of forty he began to have visions and to hear spiritual voices. More than once he attempted suicide, and his friends were alarmed at the state of his mind. He himself thought he was possessed by a jinn or spirit. 'I hear a sound; I see a light,' he said to his wife. 'I fear there is a jinn in me.' Kadyjah went to consult a wise man. On returning she was told by Mahommed that the Angel Gabriel had appeared to him and told him that he was not possessed by a jinn. Subsequently it was a vision of Gabriel that determined Mahommed to declare his prophetical mission.

MAHOMMED

Walking on the hill near Mecca one day, he heard a voice

from heaven, and looking upwards he beheld Gabriel sitting with crossed legs upon a throne between heaven and earth. The angel cried out to him, 'Oh Mahommed, thou art in truth the messenger of God and I am Gabriel.' After this, came to him at short or long intervals the revelations set forth in the Koran. Tradition speaks of his being at such times either in a swooning or prostrate condition. 'Inspiration descendeth upon me,' he explained in two ways. 'Sometimes the revelation is communicated to me by Gabriel as by one man unto another, and this is easy; at other times it affecteth me like the ringing of a bell, penetrating my very heart, and rending me as it were in pieces, and this it is which grievously afflicteth me.' Ayesha, his favourite wife after the death of Kadyjah, saw beads of perspiration on his brow as he received an inspiration on a very cold day. Othman, according to another tradition, related the following: 'When speaking to Mahommed one day he remarked that the prophet's eyes turned towards heaven and then to the right. His head moved as if he were speaking. After some time he turned to Othman and his face was then covered with sweat. Othman asked what was the matter, whereupon he repeated a verse of the Koran which had just been revealed to him.' Habitually the paroxysms may have been slight, but some of them were undoubtedly severe, as when the prophet 'fell heavily to the ground and snorted like a camel.' Besides the devout spirit, Mahommed displayed many of the qualities of a military commander, managing his affairs with tact and skill, and undergoing privation and danger with unflagging courage. It may be supposed that the cerebral disorder which produced Mahommed's visions tended in the latter half of his life to develop his erotic sensibility, and to give his religious system the sensual cast which distinguished it. Until his forty-ninth year the prophet contented himself with one wife; afterwards he had a dozen, and received inspirations justifying the successive additions to his harem.

Hallucinations were at the bottom of the achievements of Joan of Arc. This heroine lived in credulous times; her countrymen were longing to throw off the English yoke,

and believed that she had a mission to lead them to victory, and her manifest sincerity inspired them with an invincible courage. How did she come by her mission? Supernatural voices and visions began to manifest themselves to her about the age of thirteen, a critical period in girlhood, when mental and physical disorders are not infrequent. She seldom heard voices without seeing a light, and when visited by the angels Gabriel, St. Catherine, and Michael, she was *kissed* by these celestials, and felt that they had a good *odour*. Thus she had hallucinations of hearing, sight, touch, and smell. At her trial Joan maintained the reality of her apparitions. 'I saw them,' she said to her judges, 'as plainly as I see you, and when they retired from me I wept, and much I wished that they would take me with them.' No one, whether friend or foe, seems to have thought Joan insane, and it is, of course, a well-established fact that hallucinations of all the senses may exist without intellectual derangement. The judges who condemned her to be burnt evidently believed that she was being deceived by evil spirits, who took the form of angels and saints. Had she lived in these days, poor Joan would have had a different fate; she would have been treated by doctors of medicine, not doctors of divinity; but happily the brain-disorder which brought her to the stake gave her also the fortitude to endure her martyrdom unflinchingly.

JOAN OF ARC

Statesmen and administrators of genius present the same characteristics as great commanders. The Romanoff dynasty became neuropathic soon after its accession to the Russian throne in 1613. Alexis, son of Michael, who died at sixteen, had by a first wife Feodor, Ivan, Sophia, and several other daughters. By a second wife he had Peter and Natalie. Feodor, who kept the throne for five years, was weak-minded, and Ivan positively imbecile, the latter being almost blind, unsteady in his gait, given to stammering, and subject to convulsions. On the death of Feodor his sister Sophia tried to make Ivan the Czar, in order to rule in his name. She was a woman of superior talents, a good writer, and a poet. She was also inordinately ambitious, but had to give way to the irresistible force of will of

PETER THE GREAT

her younger brother Peter, afterwards surnamed the Great Thus, of the children of Alexis two were weak-minded, and two had genius. Peter was afflicted from infancy with nervous attacks which degenerated into epilepsy. Excitement often brought on these seizures, one of which is said to have lasted three days. Peter had six sons, five of whom died in childhood. The survivor, Prince Alexis, was a drunkard, and so much given to insubordination and excesses of every kind, that his father had him put to death. Peter the Great was succeeded by his wife Catherine, who was followed by Peter II., son of the unfortunate Prince Alexis. With this youth, who died young, the male line of the Romanoffs became extinct.

Charles V., in his day the most powerful ruler of Europe, was a son of the insane Juana, sister of Catherine of Arragon. Insanity had long been in the family, Juana's grandmother, Isabella, having been demented, and her father, Ferdinand, melancholic. Juana was kept in confinement for many years, being under the delusion that she was possessed by evil spirits. She was also deformed. In this poor lunatic's son administrative genius reached its highest expression. Charles V. had indeed a double heritage of insanity, as there are traces of that disorder also in the family of his father, the Archduke Philip. In his youth Charles V. was epileptic. CHARLES V. His fits appear to have ceased about the time of his marriage, but he remained subject to violent headaches, and had gout from the age of thirty. He was subject to melancholy, he stammered, was bald early, his lower jaw was longer than the upper, and he had bad teeth, the sign of a scrofulous taint. With these defects he combined great physical strength and activity, extraordinary mental power and versatility of intellect. At fifty-six bad health compelled him to retire, and two years later he died. By a Flemish lady Charles V. had an illegitimate daughter, who became regent of the Low Countries. She inherited the Emperor's gouty diathesis, and was a woman of masculine character. By Octavio Farnèse she became the mother of Alexander of Parma, a man of eccentric genius, and undoubtedly the greatest general of his time. The legitimate descendants of

Charles V. did not inherit their father's abilities. The eldest son, Philip II., was weakly, gloomy, severe, obstinate, and superstitious. By a marriage with his niece, Philip II. had Philip III., a man of feeble and indolent character. Another grandson of Charles V., Don Carlos, exhibited weak or unequal intelligence, and a fitful and turbulent character. He was five years old before he could speak, and afterwards he articulated badly; he had the long protruding chin of his grandfather, the great Emperor, he was unintelligent, his beard was slight, and he was deficient in virility. In Philip IV., who composed a tragedy, the nerve-disorder of the family manifested itself in a taste for literature and the fine arts. The eldest son of this monarch had convulsions, and died early. His younger son became Charles II., a poor rickety, epileptic creature, deficient in intelligence, so malformed in his lower jaw that he could not masticate his food, twice married, but childless. Such was the last descendant in the male line of the ruler of Germany and Spain, the greatest European potentate of the sixteenth century.[1]

FREDERICK THE GREAT

The father of Frederick the Great was eccentric to the point of insanity. Macaulay's description of him makes this sufficiently clear. 'The nature of Frederick William was hard and bad, and the habit of exercising arbitrary power had made him frightfully savage. His rage constantly vented itself to right and left in curses and blows. When his Majesty took a walk every human being fled before him, as if a tiger had broken loose from a menagerie. . . . But it was in his own house that he was most unreasonable and ferocious. His palace was a hell and he was the most execrable of fiends, a cross between Moloch and Puck. His son Frederick and his daughter Wilhelmina were in an especial manner objects of his aversion. His own mind was uncultivated. He despised literature. The business of life according to him was to drill and be drilled.' Again, 'his parsimony degenerated into sordid avarice; his taste for military pomp and order became a mania. While the envoys of the Court of Berlin were in a state of such squalid poverty

[1] The neurosis of the Royal Family of Spain has been carefully tabulated by W. W. Ireland in his work *The Blot upon the Brain.*

as moved the laughter of foreign capitals, while the food placed before the princes and princesses of the blood royal was too scanty to appease hunger, and so bad that even hunger loathed it, no price was thought too extravagant for tall recruits.'[1] In view of the metamorphoses of heredity it is no surprise to learn that the great Frederick, son of this monster, was born with 'an exquisite ear for music, and performed skilfully on the flute,' and that he wrote prose and verse abundantly. It was by the merest chance, the cast of Nature's die, so to speak, that Frederick did not become a man of letters or a musician. As it happened, the qualities predominated in his brain that made him, as soon as the opportunity presented itself, 'a tyrant of extraordinary military and political talents, of industry more extraordinary still, without fear, without faith, and without mercy.' While there was a wide difference between father and son as respected extent and vigour of intellect, 'the groundwork of the character,' adds Macaulay, 'was the same in both. To both were common the love of order, the love of business, the military taste, the parsimony, the imperious spirit, the temper irritable even to ferocity, the pleasure in the pain and humiliation of others. But these propensities had in Frederick William partaken of the general unsoundness of his mind, and wore a very different aspect when found in company with the strong and cultivated understanding of his successor.' To the last, amid all the cares of State, Frederick retained his passion for music, for reading, for writing, and for literary society. His conversation was lively, his manners to those whom he desired to please were even caressing. But he had a bad heart which betrayed itself in a taste for severe practical jokes, 'a nature,' as Macaulay observes, 'to which the sight of human suffering and human degradation is an agreeable excitement.'

Oliver Cromwell did not come of a sound stock, nor was his own offspring long-lived or prolific. His father, Robert Cromwell, died prematurely, while an uncle, Oliver, was a gay spendthrift who dissipated a considerable amount of property. It is stated that the Protector's father

CROMWELL

[1] Macaulay: Essay, *Frederick the Great.*

was 'a sickly man judging by the languor of his countenance'[1] as shown in a contemporary portrait. By Robert Cromwell's marriage with Elizabeth Seward, he had, besides Oliver, two sons who died early, a daughter Elizabeth, who never married, another daughter Anna, who died at forty-two, and yet another daughter whom a 'lingering illness' carried off at fifty-one. Elizabeth Seward, the Protector's mother, was one of a family of seven, of whom only herself and a brother, Thomas Seward, survived. Thomas appears to have been weak-minded; at all events, Oliver Cromwell petitioned for a commission in lunacy against this maternal uncle, whom he believed to be incapable of managing his property. The Protector is said to have led in his youth a low boisterous dissolute life, and his letters seem to prove it. Apart from Royalist prejudices, such a career is what might well result from the neuropathic tendencies of his constitution. More importance may certainly be attached to this as evidence of the constituent elements of his genius than to the vision he is said to have had as a boy, namely, that of a gigantic figure pulling aside the curtains of his bed and telling him he would live to be the greatest personage in England. According to a document in Thurloe's State Papers, Oliver Cromwell's temper was 'exceedingly fiery.' Sir Philip Warwick says he was of good stature, but his countenance was 'swollen and reddish, and his voice harsh and untunable.' Among the Protector's distempers gout is mentioned. Thurloe speaks of his being dangerously sick in consequence of 'the retirement of the gout out of his foot into his body.'[2] The cause of his death at fifty-nine was ague, a malady the exciting causes of which are still unknown, but which is obviously of a nervous character. For some days before his death, his fits were so frequent as to be almost continuous.

By his wife, Elizabeth Bourchier, who appears to have been a woman of sound constitution, Cromwell had a large family, in whom, however, the evil influence of the Cromwell blood is apparent. Richard, who succeeded his father in the

[1] Noble: *Memoirs of the Protectoral House of Cromwell.*

[2] *Memoirs of the Protector and of his Son.* By Oliver Cromwell, a descendant of the family.