the admixture of parental and ancestral characters takes place in different proportions. How this is effected the microscope partly shows. Prior to the conjunction of the male and female pro-nuclei in the segmentation nucleus, portions of the germ-plasm are extruded from the egg, forming what are called the polar bodies. This curious phenomenon Weismann aptly explains on the hypothesis, that a reduction of the number of ancestral germ-plasms in the egg is a necessary step towards fertilisation and the development of the young animal. He supposes that by the expulsion of the polar bodies one-half the number of ancestral germ-plasms is removed, and that the original bulk is restored by the addition of the male pro-nucleus to that which remains. He further supposes, though this is not proved, that a similar reduction takes place in the ancestral elements of the male pro-nucleus. As precisely corresponding molecules of this germ-plasm are probably not expelled from each ovum or each male pro-nucleus, similar germ-plasms need not be retained in each case; and thus diversities may be expected to arise between the offspring of the same parents.[1]

[1] Weismann: *Biological Memoirs*, 'On the Number of Polar Bodies and their Significance in Heredity.' This theory covers the facts better than any other hitherto put forward. The nuclear substance does not appear to be sexually differentiated; that is to say, it appears to be pretty much the same in the male and female pro-nucleus—seeing that the female germ-cell transmits the male characters of the ancestors of the female quite as readily as the female characters, and that the male germ-cell transmits the female quite as readily as the male characters of the ancestors of the male. In all sexual eggs two polar bodies are observed. The first is presumably a part of the nucleus which was required to complete the growth of the egg, and which, once the growth is complete, becomes superfluous. The second is believed to consist of germ-plasms, bearing hereditary characteristics, by the removal of which from the egg, the excessive accumulation of different kinds of hereditary tendencies is prevented, and room made for the introduction of the male or sperm-nucleus. It is an essential part of Weismann's theory that there should be complete or approximate equality between the quantities of hereditary substance derived from either parent. As to the germ-plasm of the offspring, it follows that the latter can only contain half as much paternal germ-plasm as was contained in the germ-cells of the father, and half as much maternal germ-plasm as was contained in the germ-cells of the mother. There is no room for more. With each succeeding generation the original quantity of germ-plasm becomes reduced until it reaches the vanishing point, its place being taken by due proportions of germ-plasm derived

By a sudden change after the entrance of one male cell, the ovum usually ceases to be receptive. Occasionally, however, two spermatozoa are believed to enter. Twins thus born of two germinal spots in the same ovum appear to be invariably of the same sex, and amazingly like each other in body and mind, whereas the resemblance between those derived from separate ova is much less close. On the subject of twins Galton has collected some interesting facts. The father of two twins writes :—

'Their general health is closely alike; whenever one of them has an illness the other invariably has the same within a day or two, and they usually recover in the same order. Such has been the case with whooping cough, chicken pox, and measles; also with slight bilious attacks, which they have successively. Latterly they have had a feverish attack at the same time.'

Another parent of twins says :—

'If anything ails only one of them, identical symptoms nearly always appear in the other; this has been singularly

from more recent sources. Although the microscope has not yet revealed a similar reduction of the germ-plasms of the male, the reduction, according to Weismann, must, somewhere or somehow, occur, as otherwise the number of male ancestral germ-plasms would be increased by one-half at every fertilisation. 'If then,' continues Weismann, 'we consider how numerous are the ancestral germs which must be contained in each nucleus, and further, how improbable it is that they are arranged in precisely the same manner in all germ-cells, and finally, how incredible it is that the nuclear thread should always be divided in exactly the same place to form corresponding loops or rods, we are driven to the conclusion that it is quite impossible for the reduction of the nucleus to take place in an identical manner in all the germ-cells of a single ovary so that the same ancestral germ-plasms should always be removed in the polar bodies. But if one group of ancestral germ-plasms is expelled from one egg and a different group from another egg, it follows that no two eggs can be exactly alike as regards their contained hereditary tendencies; they must all differ. In many cases the difference will only be slight, that is when the egg contains very similar combinations of ancestral germ-plasms. Under other circumstances the differences will be very great: namely, when the combinations of ancestral germ-plasms contained in the egg are very different. . . . According to my theory the differences between the children of the same parents becomes intelligible in a simple manner from the fact that each maternal, and presumably each paternal, germ-cell contains a peculiar combination of ancestral germ-plasms, and thus, also, a peculiar combination of hereditary tendencies.'

visible in two instances during the last two months. Thus, when in London one fell ill with a violent attack of dysentery and within twenty-four hours the other had precisely the same symptoms.'

A medical man writes of twins:—

'Whilst I knew them for a period of two years there was not the slightest tendency towards a difference in body or mind; external influences seemed powerless to produce any dissimilarity.'

The mother of the two other twins, after describing how they were ill simultaneously up to the age of fifteen, adds that they shed their first milk teeth within a few hours of each other. Trousseau tells of twins having a remarkable pathological resemblance. When one had an attack of ophthalmia, the other in a distant town was simultaneously attacked by the same disease. Moreau knew twins who were not only so nearly alike as to be easily mistaken the one for the other, but whose dominant ideas (they suffered from monomania) were absolutely the same. They both considered themselves subject to persecutions; the same enemies had sworn their destruction and employed the same means to effect it. Both had hallucinations of hearing; both were melancholy and morose. Being confined in different wards of the same hospital (at Bicêtre) they had no communication with each other. Yet, from time to time, at irregular intervals, without appreciable cause, and by the purely spontaneous effect of their illness, a very marked change took place in the condition of the two brothers. Both about the same time roused themselves from their habitual stupor and prostration and made the same complaints to the superintendent. The same thing occurred when they were confined in different asylums, one being at Bicêtre, the other at St. Anne. Baume ('Annales Medico-Psychologiques,' 1863) speaks of two brothers, twins, who had nearly simultaneous attacks of insanity, and who, being miles apart, dreamt a remarkable dream on the same night and about the same hour (they believed they were catching a thief who, a few days before, had robbed a box containing their joint savings); during a subsequent attack of insanity, one attempted to drown himself, and the

other, knowing nothing of the incident, actually did so. In other cases it has been found that twins have both been born ruptured, that they have suffered from toothache at the same age and have had the same tooth extracted, that their hair falls off at the same period, that identical diseases attack both, and that they die at very nearly the same age and from the same cause. It has already been shown that in life and in a state of health the same ideas occur to both.

The observed facts of nerve disease carry us a little further than the microscopic investigations of the physiologist. In families where there arises some instability of nerve element, we have seen how diverse are the forms it assumes from simple neuralgia to insanity. The obvious conclusion is that the symptoms of the evil vary according to the function of the particular portion of the cerebro-spinal system which happens to be morbidly affected. The change is, probably, for the most part of a molecular character, undiscoverable by the microscope. In pronounced cases of insanity and paralysis, however, some actual deterioration of the brain-substance is visible, and various organic disorders have been found associated with an impaired condition of the spinal marrow. How the metamorphoses of nerve disease are regulated it is impossible, in the present state of our knowledge, to say. They appear to be capricious, but as the facts of heredity continue to be observed and recorded in all their aspects it is possible that some law will ultimately be evolved from the existing confusion.

As already remarked, the earliest irregularity, the first disturbance of the healthy equilibrium of the nervous system, is probably the very common condition known as 'being out of sorts.' There is a loss of nervous force, betraying itself in headache, languor, want of appetite, impaired digestion, weakness, excitability, and kindred symptoms, the result of mental worry, business cares, want of exercise, insufficient sleep, improper food, and excesses of all kinds. 'Being out of sorts' is sometimes said to be a disease of civilisation and to be most commonly met with in great towns. This, however, is a mistake; it appears in all conditions of society. Where it does arise it is apt, unless promptly checked, to become per-

manent, in which case it leads to an innate weakness or nervous instability in the second generation. The operation of congenital causes of this kind is fully admitted by Weismann in his theory of 'the Continuity of the Germ-plasm.' Whether such a temporary condition as drunkenness in one of the parents at the moment of conception could exercise an injurious effect upon the child is not proved, although many observations to that effect have been recorded. Chronic alcoholism, however, does almost certainly affect the nurture of the germ-cells, and thus react disastrously upon the offspring.

Although most of the organic functions are withdrawn from the control of the hemispheres we are made generally conscious of anything being wrong in our systems. The feeling of health is not the feeling of disease. 'That the sensations of organic life,' says Ferrier, 'are represented in the cerebral hemispheres directly or indirectly is plain from the extraordinary influence which states of the viscera exercise on the emotional tone of the individual. Organic sensations generally, with one or two exceptions, are, unless rising to the pitch of painful intensity, obscure and non-localisable, and the healthy or morbid psychological activity is expressed subjectively as the vague and ill-defined feeling of well- or ill-being. Whether the centres of organic sensation are fused with those of tactile or common sensibility, or whether they are specially represented in and through the optic thalami or elsewhere, are all questions as yet unsolved. But, wherever situated, they seem to be the foundation or universal background of pleasurable or painful emotions in general. As healthy states of the viscera produce pleasurable feelings, and morbid states of the viscera produce painful or depressing feelings, so conversely, on the principle that the revived feeling occupies the same parts as the original, pleasurable emotions exalt and painful emotions depress the vital functions. Visceral derangements are frequently the cause and always the accompaniment of melancholic depression.'

CHAPTER III

RELATION OF GENIUS TO INSANITY—HALLUCINATIONS—DIVERSITY OF FACULTY—THE LAW OF EXCESS AND DEFICIENCY OF BRAIN FUNCTION—EXTRAORDINARY POWERS OF IDIOTS AND MADMEN—ILLUSTRATIVE CASES—CHANGE OF CHARACTER FROM BRAIN DISEASE—THE POETIC AND LITERARY FACULTIES OF THE INSANE—MAD POETS AND PHILOSOPHERS—HALF GENIUSES—GENIUS AND INSANITY COMBINED IN BLAKE

IT is chiefly through insanity that a view can be obtained of the workings of genius, and, from the facts I propose to bring forward, it will be seen that the two conditions of mind have much in common. The man of genius overflows with ideas; countless memories are stirred in his brain, and he discovers combinations and affinities in facts, tones, and colours, that lie beyond the scope of the ordinary mind. In all these accomplishments the madman is his equal. Both the man of genius and the madman owe their characteristics of thought and action to the excessive stimulation, the depression, or the excitability of certain regions of their brain. The difference between them is hardly a question of degree of susceptibility; it is rather a question of area. As an exciting cause in both cases, there may be an excessive or vitiated blood supply to the affected portion of the brain, or the nerve-cells and fibres of this portion may be naturally super-sensitive—it is impossible to determine which. Genius frequently merges into insanity, and insanity into genius, and both are attended by a common train of functional disorders. For it appears to be a law of Nature that excessive activity or depression of one region of the brain or spinal system entails a depression or an excessive activity of some other region, with a consequent loss of healthy function, affecting either the sensory or motor apparatus or the numerous channels

through which the growth and nutrition of the body are regulated. All this will be seen from the investigation to be made in subsequent chapters of the lives of great men in all spheres of human activity. Genius, insanity, idiocy, scrofula, rickets, gout, consumption, and the other members of the neuropathic family of disorders, are so many different expressions of a common evil—an instability or want of equilibrium in the nervous system.

There may be hallucinations of most of the senses without any appreciable impairment of the reasoning faculties. This is the explanation of the phenomena known as spectral illusions—figures of persons or animals or inanimate objects persistently occupying the patient's field of vision, although he knows them to have no actual existence. It is commonly thought that spectral illusions have no connection with insanity, but there is no doubt that the local disorder of the brain from which they arise would, if more widely extended, produce insanity. As accompaniments of insanity, hallucinations of the senses are very frequent, particularly of the sense of hearing, whereby the patient believes that he is addressed by spirit voices. The most striking case on record of hallucinations without insanity is probably that of Nicolai, the Berlin bookseller. One day, while walking with his wife and friend, Nicolai suddenly saw at a distance of ten paces the figure of a deceased person. This, after causing him great alarm, soon vanished, but afterwards he was assailed by swarms of figures day and night. 'I saw,' he declared, in a report made by himself to the Royal Society in Berlin, 'for almost two months constantly, and involuntarily, a number of human, and other apparitions, and this while I was in the full enjoyment of my senses, and even, after I had overcome the terror which at first seized me, perfectly composed in mind.' The apparitions consisted of human figures of both sexes; they commonly passed to and fro as if they had no connection with each other like people at a fair, but sometimes they appeared to converse. Once or twice he saw among them persons on horseback, also dogs and birds. They all appeared their natural size, and absolutely life-like. Nicolai could not summon up the figures by an effort of will

or imagination; they came and went as they pleased. He was attended night and day by two female spirits about three feet in stature, and of brown complexion. 'They called each other by their names, and several spirits,' he adds, 'would call at my chamber door and ask whether such spirits lived there, and these would answer they did.' The application of leeches to the patient's neck banished this affliction, the figures becoming paler and paler until they disappeared, and Nicolai was troubled with them no more. Here there were hallucinations of hearing as well as of sight, obviously the result of an excessive supply of blood to certain areas of the brain.

In true insanity there is frequently a very general disturbance of faculty, as is shown by the case of Kadinsky, a physician of Moscow, who, having been insane for two years, has left an interesting record of his symptoms. His illness, he relates, began with an irregular mental activity, a headlong race of thoughts, delusions, and dominant ideas, after which came hallucinations of all the senses, except taste. He felt abnormal pressure on the neck and other parts of the body; simple and co-ordinated sounds assailed his ears, sparks floated before his eyes, and there was sometimes a universal lighting up of the field of vision. Once he saw a statue of white marble—a Venus in a stooping position. After some seconds, the head of this figure seemed to fall off, exposing the muscles of the neck; the head, moreover, when it fell, broke, exposing the brain; and the contrast between the white marble and the red blood, adds the patient, was especially striking. The equilibrium of the body was also disturbed. The patient had a sense of rolling down a slope, of being whirled round or thrown into the air, and of flying through space. At other times it happened that to the right eye the wall of the room seemed to be moving upwards, while to the left eye the opposite wall seemed to be moving downwards, the painful feeling of a sundering of the brain being thus produced. And all this while he was fully conscious of himself and able to take note of his abnormal impressions. In epilepsy or falling sickness there is a violent agitation of the motor centres, affecting successively different

groups of muscles; temporary delusions of the senses are also produced, and the disease has a tendency to spread to other regions of the brain, insanity being a frequent although not an invariable result. It is observed that while hallucinations of sight are not infrequent in sane people, hallucinations of hearing are nearly always followed or accompanied by insanity. Probably this arises from the relative situation of the different centres of the brain. The visual centre lying at the back of the head is far removed from the supposed seat of what may be called the more intellectual faculties, namely, the frontal lobes, while the auditory centre is more forward and in greater proximity to that region. It need hardly be said, however, that in insanity all the senses are liable to derangement. Some lunatics eat the most disgusting substances without the smallest inconvenience. Others are utterly insensible to pain, and have been known to wilfully hold their hand or foot in the fire till it was burnt to a cinder. Others, again, constantly suffer the sensation of smelling putrid matter.

Among ordinary persons there seems to be as much diversity of faculty as there is of feature. Galton has collected statistics showing that, among one hundred sane people taken at haphazard, the power of mentally calling up some past scene varies greatly.[1] Some see vividly in their mind's eye the breakfast table of the morning with each object upon it distinct and properly coloured; others find the general image faint or misty and wanting in detail, while others, again, appear to have almost no power of visualisation whatever, but reconstitute the scene by an exhaustive process of association. Here we have really examples of the different kinds of memory to which reference has been made—memories of sight, smell, taste, or movement, each depending upon the efficiency of its particular centre in the brain. Some persons possess an accurate appreciation of form without being able to fill in a mental picture, in which case there is probably a deficiency in the colour sense. Colour blindness is understood to have its seat, not in the visual centre, but in the eye itself, or in the nerves of the eye, whereby imperfect sensations

[1] Galton: *Inquiries into Human Faculty.*

are transmitted to the brain. When the visual centre is highly developed, it is extremely responsive to impressions made upon the other centres. Thus, a person so endowed, on hearing a number pronounced, say the number ten, at once sees it in outline before him; numerals in certain minds have even a habit of arranging themselves in geometrical patterns. So with the sense of hearing. Sounds are associated with particular colours. There is an old, and no doubt a true story, of a man who always pictured to himself the sound of a trumpet as red.

As to the law of excess and deficiency in brain-function, it is observed in idiocy, which is due to the imperfect structure of the brain, that one faculty, either sight, hearing, smell, taste, or touch, is occasionally extraordinarily acute. 'The senses of many idiots and imbeciles,' says Ribot,[1] 'are unequally affected. The arrested development is not uniform at all points. The sight may be remarkably good while the other senses are obtuse, and a weakness of the memory in general may coincide with an excessive development of some portion of it. Certain idiots, insensible to every other impression, have a pronounced taste for music, and can retain an air which they may have heard but once. Others (the case is rarer), have a recollection of form and colour, and display an aptitude for drawing. More frequently one may meet with idiots having a special memory for figures, dates, proper names, and words generally. Dr. Herzen informs me of a Russian of Archangel who became imbecile at twenty-seven, and who, of the brilliant faculties of his youth, retained only an extraordinary memory, which enabled him to solve the most difficult problems in arithmetic and algebra, and repeat word for word long poems after once hearing or reading them.' Drobisch relates the following, of which he was an eye-witness:—'A boy of fourteen, who was almost an idiot, had great difficulty in learning to read. He had, nevertheless, a marvellous faculty for remembering the order in which words or letters were placed. If he had two or three minutes to run over a page printed in a foreign language, or treating of questions of which he was ignorant, he was able to

[1] Ribot: *Les Maladies de la Mémoire.*

repeat the words from memory as correctly as if the book had been lying before him.' 'There was,' says the Rev. Henry Fearon, 'a man in my father's parish who could remember the day when every person had been buried in the parish for thirty-five years, and could repeat with unvarying accuracy the name and age of the deceased and the mourners at the funeral. But he was a complete fool; outside the line of burials he had not one idea, and could not give an intelligible reply to a single question, or even be trusted to feed himself.'

The reports of the Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind make mention of a female deaf and blind mute, Julia Brace by name, in whom the sense of smell was extraordinarily keen. Anybody whom she had met before, she recognised by smell. She knew all her acquaintances by the smell of their hands, being able, in fact, to perceive and distinguish odours unfelt by other persons. In sorting clothes that had come for the wash, she could distinguish those of each friend. If half a dozen strangers threw each his glove into a hat, and the gloves were mixed, Julia would take them up, and by means of smell alone assign them to their owners. She could also tell brothers and sisters by smell. In the same institution there was a blind boy in whom hearing was carried to a wonderful pitch, and who was lent to a locksmith on one occasion for an extremely delicate experiment. There was an iron safe to be opened by means of a key, but to avoid deranging the mechanism it was necessary to know which one of ten bolts should be shot back. The bolt sought for was longer than the others, and the locksmith argued that if lifted by the key and allowed to fall without being shot back, it would have a different sound from the others. His ear, however, could detect no difference between the different bolts. The blind boy being called in, listened as the bolts were tried one after the other, and declared that the sixth one struck a little the loudest. Upon this, the locksmith lifted and turned back the sixth bolt, and the lock was opened without the combination being deranged. Maudsley says: 'I have seen an imbecile in the Earlswood Asylum for Idiots, who can repeat accurately a page or more of any book

which he has read years before, even though it was a book which he did not understand in the least; and I once saw an epileptic youth, morally imbecile, who would, shutting his eyes, repeat a leading article in a newspaper word for word after reading it once. I have also been informed of a similar case in which the person could repeat backwards what he had just read.' The late Mrs. Somerville, in her autobiography, mentions two idiots, whom she had known, possessed of extraordinary memories. The first never failed to go to kirk, and, on returning home, could repeat the sermon word for word, saying, 'Here the minister coughed . . . . here he stopped to blow his nose.' The second idiot knew the Bible so perfectly that, if you asked him where such and such a verse was to be found, he could tell without hesitation, and repeat the chapter. A female child, three and a half years of age, the offspring of a paralytic father, that came under the treatment of Brierre du Boismont, was subject to violent fits of rage and caprice, but at the same time was intelligent far beyond her years. Dr. Robert Jones, resident physician of Earlswood Asylum, informs me that he has recently had two imbeciles under his care, of whom one could play any difficult piece of music after once hearing it, and the other was able to repeat word for word whole pages of Gibbon's 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.' A third idiot now in Earlswood possesses an extraordinary arithmetical faculty, and another, great constructive ingenuity in making models of ships.

In insanity, where there is a wide disturbance of faculty, the patient's general character undergoes a change. Wigan tells of a gentleman who, by dint of long and exemplary services, rose to a position of great importance, in which he exercised a paternal control over his subordinates and was much respected by all who knew him. Gradually, towards the age of sixty, this gentleman became garrulous and light in his conversation, and the others in his office suspected him of drinking. He had many rebuffs from the persons under his command, but this in no degree changed the indecorous levity of his conversation, which had formerly been remarkably dignified and as reserved as was compatible with his excessive benevolence of disposition. Months passed on, his language

became gradually worse, and despite repeated warnings from his employers he sank at last into the most depraved obscenity, which led to his dismissal. Not long afterwards he died of brain disease. Without being positively insane, a person may have what is called the 'insane temperament'—a condition characterised by singularities of thought, feeling, and action. He is eccentric in his habits; he does apparently purposeless acts, and he is often either extremely obstinate or given to violent fits of temper. With his children he is usually severe; it is the man of insane temperament who cuts off his son with a shilling for some trifling peccadillo. If not engaged in family quarrels he carries on a bitter feud with a neighbour. The insane temperament rarely lands its possessor in an asylum, but his children are apt to go there or to suffer from some of the diseases which alternate with insanity or follow in its train. 'Moral insanity'—another name given to the insane temperament—'is,' says Forbes Winslow, 'responsible for a vast amount of domestic discord, disunion, and misery. It often co-exists with great talents and high attainments, and is compatible with the exercise of active philanthropy and benevolence.' It cannot, indeed, be too emphatically urged that what is variously called moral principle, the law-abiding instinct, or conscience, is largely the result of constitutional causes over which we have no control—a physical condition, which may be inherited in a more or less perfect degree.

To the category of morbid inheritance belongs the case of a 'rather sharp-looking lad,' described by Maudsley. 'He could not hold his attention to anything, though very quick in instant perception. He was, however, most ingenious in mischief, and delighted to talk of playing some viciously malicious trick, in the imaginative description of which he exulted in a braggart and grotesquely dramatic fashion, chattering incessantly, and running from subject to subject without any other connection than the unity of character given them by the leading bent of his distinctive disposition. Though he could tell stories of the events, and even minute experiences of years back with surprising exactness of detail, he had no perception of truth, but evinced an inexhaustible and

uncontrollable craving for what might have been called lies had his nature been in the least sensible to truth, but what were really the constructions of a vivid and busy imagination revelling in its vicious activity. His continual talk was of killing persons or animals that had in any way offended him or ruffled his prodigious self-conceit; and he was ludicrously ferocious and boastful in his dramatic conceptions and circumstantial descriptions of the grand way in which he would do it. His father had died of what was called softening of the brain soon after he was forty years old, having been insane for some time before his death; his paternal grandmother had died demented in an asylum at a great age, having lived there for upwards of twenty years. On his mother's side, also, there was insanity, and she herself, though not actually insane, was extremely excitable, and a singularly insincere and shifty-minded person.'

Morally insane, also, was the man mentioned by Forbes Winslow, who was discarded by his family for his gross and inexplicable acts of impropriety, and who abandoned himself without restriction to all kinds of debauchery, vice, and profligacy, squandering, meanwhile, in the most reckless manner, a fortune which he had obtained with his wife. At the age of fifty he became clearly insane, and was placed in confinement. The conduct of a clergyman, also known to Forbes Winslow, had, for years, been marked by great eccentricity and caprice before his insanity became sufficiently acute to justify the interference of his friends. Yet, during the whole time he wrote and preached capital sermons and attended faithfully and zealously to all his parish duties. Similar causes were responsible for the behaviour of a young gentleman mentioned by the same writer, who, for a long time, had been a cause of much unhappiness to his family. 'He drank to a frightful excess, indulged in the society of the most degraded, depraved, vicious men and women, and squandered in a few years a splendid patrimony. He married a respectable girl much below him in social rank and station, whom he in a short time brutally ill-treated; he then deserted her and an infant child, leaving them both to the charity of friends. Towards his own immediate family he manifested

no kind of interest or affection. His father, who was a man very advanced in years, was subjected to a murderous assault on one occasion because he refused to attach his signature to one of his son's reckless acceptances. The young man was eventually accused of various acts of gross brutality as well as of theft. There never was known such an instance of accomplished vice and cold-blooded depravity.' His friends did not think him insane, but a post-mortem examination showed the enveloping membranes of the brain to have been affected for years. A young man of good family, known to Wigan, had an irresistible impulse whenever he passed a church door during divine service to run into the organ loft and play some well-known jocular tune attached, perhaps, to profane or indecent words. This he would do so suddenly that it was impossible to prevent it before he had thrown the congregation into confusion. He was always sorry for it, and declared that he tried with all his might to prevent it. In all other respects he was perfectly sane, but he was subject to periodical epileptic fits, and the propensity was at last observed to have some connection with the malady. For several years this mild and equivocal form of mental disturbance continued; the patient then entered into great sexual excesses and sensual indulgence, and died of what his friends called brain fever. A young lady patient of Maudsley's, who became wilfully passionate, impulsive, eccentric, developed, at the same time, an extraordinary vanity and was able to write letters containing vigorous and clever remarks.

So much for the results of disease upon the general character. Those of accident may be illustrated by a patient of Forbes Winslow's, a tradesman, who fell from the top of an omnibus in Oxford Street and suffered concussion of the brain. 'For some hours after the accident he continued in a state of semi-unconsciousness. At length he opened his eyes, gazed listlessly around him and asked, "Where am I? What has happened?" In the course of a fortnight he was able to resume his business. About twelve months afterwards, a marked difference was observed in his character. He became peevish and quarrelsome, discharging his principal clerk for some trifling inaccuracies. A short time subsequently to this

change being observed, he had, whilst in his country house, an attack of epilepsy. His mind appeared clearer and more composed than it was previously. He exhibited great self-command and acuteness in matters of business and appeared to be less irritated by family affairs. In about six weeks he showed symptoms of mental depression, which were soon followed by uncontrollable paroxysms of violent and furious passion. He had a second epileptic seizure, and on recovering from this fit a kindliness of disposition and affection again showed themselves. The change in the state of his intellect, and the altered condition of his emotions after each attack of epilepsy, were remarkable.' Other recorded cases of epilepsy show an alternation of extreme wickedness and extreme piety in the same individual, both states being most probably due to defective cohesions in the various centres.

Occasionally there is great intellectual activity produced by the epileptic condition, which seems to be caused by a wave of morbid excitement passing over the different cerebral centres. There is then a wonderful aptitude to conceive things quickly and to examine them under their most brilliant and poetical aspect. Previous to attacks of paralysis or apoplexy, the sight or the hearing may become abnormally acute, so that the patient sees objects at an unusual distance, or is oppressed by such a slight sound as the humming of a fly. Forbes Winslow had a patient who was able, while occupying a room at the top of the house, to hear, with remarkable clearness, the conversation taking place in the kitchen. 'In another case,' says the same writer, 'a few hours prior to an apoplectic seizure, a man remarked to his son that, when in a distant part of the house, he could hear distinctly a conversation that was taking place in the dining-room at a time when no one else could distinguish the sound of human voices.' The quickening of the senses in hypnotism produces intellectual effects of a surprising kind. Patients drawn from the inferior classes throw themselves into suggested characters and present them with a power and a truthfulness beyond, not only their own waking capacity, but that of the most intelligent and cultivated persons. Insane patients of little or no education astonished Lombroso by the depth of their remarks upon philosophical and scientific subjects. One, a tailor,

named Farino, placed in confinement for killing the mother of a girl with whom he believed himself to be in love, wrote a long, detailed, and extremely graphic account of the crime. Several members of his family were insane, and he himself was undoubtedly so. He was without the smallest literary culture. Nevertheless, his memoir, quoted in full by Lombroso, is a curious example of hallucinations existing side by side with perfect reasoning powers and a consciousness of right and wrong, and is marked, not only by clearness and propriety, but even by eloquence of style, and shows in particular an extraordinary tenacity and correctness of memory for the smallest events of bygone years. His reminiscences, in fact, exhibit much greater variety and accuracy than would those of an ordinary person of sound mind.[1]

Forbes Winslow knew a gentleman who, whilst insane, wrote an able, philosophical, and critical essay on 'Original Sin.' It was found among his papers after death. He was, when he penned the dissertation, under the delusion that there was a family conspiracy to poison him. The same writer declares that men, naturally most dull of apprehension, in fact, nearly half-witted, exhibit both in the early and in the advanced stages of insanity 'considerable intellectual acuteness and capacity. . . . Mechanical ingenuity, acute sense of hearing, seeing, and smelling, as well as wonderful powers of adaptation to all possible physical conditions are often observed among a certain class of the insane, utterly incapable of appreciating a rational idea.' Forbes Winslow once attended a young man whose attack of insanity was supposed to have been caused by ill-usage whilst at school. 'I was informed,' he says, 'that this youth had never exhibited any particular talent for arithmetic or mathematical inquiries; in fact, it was alleged that he was incapable of doing even a simple sum of addition or multiplication. After his recovery from the acute symptoms of his maniacal attack, and when he was able to employ his mind in reading and conversation, it was found that an extraordinary arithmetical power had been evolved during his illness. He was able with wonderful facility to solve several rather complex problems. This talent

[1] Lombroso: *Genio e Follia.*

continued for several months, but after his complete restoration to health, he relapsed into his former natural state of arithmetical dulness, ignorance, and general mental incapacity.' The wife of a clergyman, also attended by Forbes Winslow, exhibited during her paroxysms of maniacal excitement a wonderful talent for rapid and clever versification. The disposition to improvise was manifested mostly at night. After her recovery all capacity for rhyming appeared to subside. Previous to her mental illness she had not exhibited the slightest poetical inclination or ability. Van Swieten speaks of a woman who, during her paroxysms of mania, showed a rare facility for versification, though she had before been occupied with manual labour and her understanding had never been enriched by culture. He also quotes the case of a young workman, who, never having dreamt of making verses, during an attack of fever became a poet and was inspired.

In their lucid intervals, insane people speak of the clearness of intellect they experience during their attacks. 'I always awaited with impatience,' said a patient to Willis,[1] 'the accession of the paroxysms of insanity, since I enjoyed during their presence a high degree of pleasure. They lasted ten or twelve hours. Everything appeared easy to me. No obstacles presented themselves in theory or in practice. My memory all of a sudden acquired a singular degree of perfection. Long passages of Latin authors occurred to my mind. In general I have great difficulty in finding rhythmical terminations, but then I could write in verse with as much facility as in prose. I was cunning, malicious, and fertile in all kinds of expedients.' 'The records of the wit and cunning of madmen,' says Rush,[2] 'are numerous in every country. Talents for eloquence, poetry, painting, music, and uncommon ingenuity in several of the mechanical arts are often evolved in a state of madness. A gentleman whom I attended in a hospital often delighted, as well as astonished, the patients and officers by his displays of oratory in preaching from a table in the hospital-yard every Sunday. A female patient of mine, who became insane after parturition, sang

[1] Francis Willis: *A Treatise on Mental Derangement.*
[2] Benjamin Rush: *On the Diseases of the Mind.*

hymns and songs of her own composition during the latter state of her illness with a tone and voice so soft that I hung upon it with delight every time I visited her. She had never discovered a talent for poetry or music in any previous part of her life. Two instances of a talent for drawing evolved from madness have occurred within my knowledge. And where is the hospital for mad people in which elegant and completely rigged ships and curious pieces of machinery have not been exhibited by persons who never discovered the least turn for a mechanical art previously to their derangements?' W. W. Ireland knew a patient in an asylum who could not talk reasonably on any subject, his speech being an incoherent torrent of words, but who was able to make an ingenious snare for catching birds.

As a prelude to positive insanity, patients often feel alarmed at the excessive rapidity of their thoughts. A gouty patient told Wigan that, at times, there seemed to be another person thinking with his brain, and telling him things which he knew to be false, but which he had the greatest difficulty to prevent himself from uttering as his own. This gentleman's delusions became so pronounced that he was in imminent danger of being removed to an asylum. At this juncture the gout came out in his toe, whereupon his brain was suddenly cleared of its delusions and his reasoning powers became extraordinarily acute. 'In some preliminary stages of insanity,' observes Conolly, 'the patient displays an unwonted vivacity of attention and an incredible activity of memory. Nothing escapes him, every subject receives illustration from his lips, his observations on common things display unusual acuteness, his art is irresistible, and his sentiments are exalted. He marvels within himself that he is a master of such varied stores as are now revealed to him.' Abercrombie treated a boy who suffered from nervous attacks resulting in blindness, loss of speech, and paralysis of the right side. Meanwhile the patient's intellect was not affected, but was 'extremely acute.' The same authority notes generally in the insane a 'fertility of imagination which changes the character of the mind without remarkably distorting it. The memory,' he adds, 'is even more ready than in health,

and old associations are called up with a rapidity quite unknown to the individual in his sound state of mind.' In a case of insanity that came under Pritchard's care, the earlier symptoms displayed by the patient, a commercial man, were 'greater energy in business and more acuteness in buying and selling.' Penel says: 'I have often stopped at the door of a literary gentleman, who, during his paroxysms of insanity, appeared to soar above his usual mediocrity of intellect, solely to admire his newly-acquired powers of eloquence. He declaimed on the subject of the Revolution with all the force, the dignity, and the purity of language that this very interesting subject would admit of. At other times he was a man of very ordinary abilities.' Lombroso had under his care a poor woman who, in her insanity, developed a remarkable faculty for drawing and embroidery, tracing butterflies, which were so natural that they looked as if they had alighted upon the fabric. Luys observes that patients under an attack of mania will improvise, make quotations, associate ideas with extreme rapidity, say witty things, make puns, and generally perform mental feats of which they would have been incapable in their ordinary state. A young butcher confined in Bicêtre asylum astonished his keepers by reciting whole speeches from the 'Phèdre' of Racine. In a lucid interval he stated that he had but once heard the tragedy in question and that, despite his efforts to recall it, he could not recite a single verse. One of De Quincey's friends, Charles Lloyd, who had attacks of insanity, in one of which he died, was a most interesting talker. And 'the splendour of his talk,' says De Quincey, 'was quite hidden from himself, he was as free from vanity or even complacency in reviewing what he had done as it is possible for a human creature to be.' On the other hand, the vanity of the insane may be excessive. An insane volume of poems was published in Brussels in 1839; its author, an undoubted lunatic, observed in his preface, 'A man who writes on subjects as vast as these here treated ought to be possessed of all human knowledge. Such a man am I; my works prove it, and by my works I desire to be judged.' This gentleman at the same time, like many sane people of the same type, disclaimed all idea of vanity.

The journals composed and printed by the inmates of lunatic asylums in different European countries abound in poems, articles, and scientific speculations of a high order of merit, proving the truth of the remark of Nathaniel Lee, the 'mad poet,' himself long an inmate of Bedlam, that 'it is difficult to write like a madman though it may be easy enough to write like a fool.' Of the literature of the insane in Italy, Lombroso gives numerous examples, and Octave Delepierre has collected many curious facts bearing on this subject from France, Germany, and America, as well as England.[1] There are not a few literary madmen—unquestionable lunatics—known to history. Nathaniel Lee, whose compositions were praised by Addison, wrote poems and tragedies while confined in Bedlam. Christopher Smart, a contemporary of Dr. Johnson's, confined as a dangerous lunatic, and deprived even of pens and ink, wrote a long poem on the walls of his cell with the aid of a key. It was in honour of King David, and the following verses will give an idea of its nobility and elevation of style :—

> He sang of God—the mighty source
> Of all things—the stupendous force
> On which all strength depends ;
> From whose right arm, beneath whose eyes
> All period, power, and enterprise
> Commences, reigns, and ends.
>
> . . . .
>
> Glorious the sun in mid career,
> Glorious the assembled fires appear,
> Glorious the comet's train ;
> Glorious the trumpet and alarm,
> Glorious the Almighty's outstretched arm,
> Glorious the enraptured main.
>
> . . . .
>
> Glorious, more glorious is the crown
> Of him that brought salvation down
> By weakness called the Son ;
> He that stupendous truth believed,
> And now the matchless deed 's achieved,
> Determined, dared, and done.

[1] Octave Delepierre : *Histoire de la Littérature des Fous.*

Thomas Lloyd, one of the notabilities of Bedlam in the early part of the present century, was an extraordinary compound of vanity, malice, and poetic talent. He believed himself to be the sublimest poet that the world had seen, and that he had a universal acquaintance with ancient and modern languages, science, history, and music. More than once his extraordinary gifts secured his liberation, but he had always to be shut up again, and, like Christopher Smart, died in confinement. Here is a sample of his verse :—

> When disappointment gnaws the bleeding heart
> And mad resentment hails her venom'd darts ;
> When angry noise, disgust, and uproar rude,
> Damnation urge, and every hope exclude ;
> These, dreadful though they are, can't quite repel
> The aspiring mind that bids the man excel.

In 1811 London was surprised by the publication of a drama by one Thomas Bishop, entitled 'Karanzzo's Feast; or, The Unfair Marriage: a tragedy founded on facts 2366 years ago, and 555 years before the birth of Christ. In five acts, embellished with sixteen descriptive plates by the first artists, ancient and modern. Printed by George Smalton, and sold by Hookham, and at the author's, 22 Clarges Street.' The author divided his work into 'Prologue, epilogue, dirge, and design,' and among his characters were the King of Babylon, the King of Persia, Lord Strawberry, Dr. Pill, four queens, Mrs. Hector, three savages, and five ghosts. In his preface he took credit to himself for being the first writer to convey to the public an exact idea of the characters, scenery, weapons, etc., existing at the date of the action. Grotesque as it was, the treatment of the subject was not without ingenuity. The closing scene contained the following stage directions. 'On one side a forest, part of which is dark. Two sofas and the appearance of a clock. Three savages in the distance.'

The case of a lawyer named Milman excited much attention in Pennsylvania at the beginning of the present century. He went out of his mind on hearing that his bride had been struck dead by lightning, and, whereas, before his insanity,

he had no literary aptitudes, after it he developed a very pleasant talent for satire, humour, and description, and wrote copiously. A similar change of capacity under similar circumstances is recorded of Luke Clennel, a painter and *protégé* of the Earl of Bridgewater. In 1817, while engaged upon an important picture for his patron, he suddenly lost his reason. Being a violent lunatic he was shut up in a madhouse, and here, curiously enough, he took to writing verses, of which the following, addressed to the Evening Star, are a specimen :—

> Look ! What is it with twinkling light
> That brings such joys serenely bright,
> That turns the dusk again to light ?
> 'Tis the Evening Star !
>
> What is it with the purest ray,
> That brings such peace at close of day,
> That lights the traveller on his way ?
> 'Tis the Evening Star !

About the same period a farm labourer of Northamptonshire attracted attention by his verses. A volume of his was published in London in 1825. Soon afterwards he became insane, but in the asylum he retained all his talent for versification and rhythm. His memory was astonishing. He seemed to assimilate everything that he read or heard, picturing events so vividly in his mind that he related them afterwards as if he had seen and taken part in them. Of the execution of Charles I. he believed himself to have been an eye-witness, and he was accustomed to tell most graphically his pretended experiences of the battle of the Nile and of the death of Nelson.

As there have been poets, so there have been philosophers undoubtedly mad. The scientific world was much perplexed in 1529 by the publication at Florence of a treatise on the anatomy of language. This proved to be the work of a doctor, one Joseph Bernardi, an inmate of a lunatic asylum. The author's contention was that the whole race of monkeys possessed the faculty of speech, but were too well advised to employ it; and he sustained his views with such ability

as to call forth from a Jesuit Father a refutation of them, based upon Scripture. In 1622 an insane professor of Salamanca, Miguel de Flores, published an ingenious theory of the universe, according to which the Supreme Being occupied the centre of creation with all matter moving round him in concentric circles. And some accompanying engravings showed the Deity working the universe by the mechanical action of his arms and legs. In this country, at different periods, nonsensical books on scientific subjects, showing much misdirected ingenuity, have been put forth with every appearance of good faith on the part of their authors. The more curious among these, perhaps, are Thomas Wirgman's 'Devarication [*sic*] of the New Testament,' and 'Grammar of the Five Senses,' published in the time of George III.; and William Martin's 'New System of Natural Philosophy on the Principle of Perpetual Motion,' dating from 1821. There was a scintilla of genius in Martin's family, his brother being the painter John Martin.

Many men who might be described as half-geniuses are known to history—men extraordinarily gifted, but too insane to turn their gifts to proper account. Such was George Burges, the college friend of Bulwer Lytton, who astonished people by his cleverness and oddity, and of whom some account is given by Lord Lytton in his biography of the author of 'Pelham.' 'While still an undergraduate at Trinity he published an edition of Euripides, with a preface and critical notes in Latin, which astonished by its excellence the best Greek scholars of the time, and raised the highest expectations of his future achievements as a Hellenist. . . . After leaving the University he was known chiefly by the eccentricities of his conduct and the absurdity of his speculations. He used to drive about London in a two-horsed vehicle of peculiar shape, the panels of which were painted with hieroglyphics, emblematical of his views as to the origin of language. He started two coaches, which plied up and down the New Road, and he inscribed upon his visiting cards, "Mr. George Burges, *αρματοποιός*" (coachbuilder). He invested a large sum of money in the construction of a huge, whale-shaped machine for the aërial conveyance of passengers from

Dover to Calais. He invented a coat fastened only by a single button in the centre of the back, and wore it in the streets of London, where it attracted general notice, but none of those who chanced to see him in his model dress were induced to adopt it. He then set up as the maker of a new kind of stays, which he called *corsets à la Venus*, and he frightened and offended some of the leading ladies of fashion by the earnestness with which he requested their permission to try this invention upon them. About this time he married, perhaps in order that the *corset à la Venus* might have at least one fair trial under his personal superintendence. Matrimony, or the ill-success of his other occupations, disposed him again to authorship, and he wrote an unreadable play called "The Sin of Erin; or, The Cause of the Greeks," which he published with a dedication from "George Burges to George Byron," greatly to the annoyance of the poet. His next experiment was a series of public lectures upon ancient and modern literature. In the course of these lectures he asserted that the pyramids have a foundation exactly corresponding in shape, as well as in size, with the above-ground portion of them (a foundation consisting, in short, of an inverted underground pyramid), and he sang to the tune of "Malbrook," the θέλω λέγειν Ἀτρείδας of the pseudo-Anacreon. His Greek, indeed, overflowed on every occasion. His knowledge of it was extraordinary, and he especially loved to exercise his fertile ingenuity in amending the text of the Greek dramatists—emendations marked by the same kind of wild invention which distinguished his innovations in dress and carriages. His lectures on literature shared the fate of all his projects. They were neither popular nor remunerative, notwithstanding the apparent attractiveness of the following advertisement:

'"GOOD AND CHEAP FOOD,

'"*Without Ruin to the Farmers.*

'"The nobility and gentry in and out of Parliament, and now nearly ruined by the awful depression of the landed interest, are respectfully informed that Mr. George Burges, M.A. of Trinity College, Cambridge, will, in his seventh

lecture, detail an easy plan by which his Majesty's ministers may, if they will, increase the revenue a million sterling annually, and so improve the soil of England as to enable it to feed sixty millions of mouths on cheaper and better bread than can be grown upon, or imported from, any other part of the globe."

'In the meanwhile his fortune had vanished into the coaches, the flying machines, the *corsets à la Venus*, and other creations of his genius, and for some years he earned a scanty subsistence by teaching and by drudgery work for the booksellers. In this long period of toil and penury, with a wife and family to maintain, his buoyant hilarity and self-complacency triumphed over his fits of depression at every monetary gleam which broke in upon his burdened existence. In 1856 a legacy from a friend and the assistance of Bishop Blomfield saved him from absolute destitution, and he then settled with his wife at Ramsgate, where they kept a lodging-house, and where he died soon afterwards from the effects of a paralytic stroke.' Theology has also had its share of visionary geniuses, some of whom, like Mahomet, Luther, and John Bunyan, have exercised an influence in the world, entitling them to be placed in somewhat better company than the foregoing.

Quite on the borderland of genius and insanity stands William Blake, the contemporary of Charles Lamb. Blake, who was the son of a hosier and of stunted growth, developed in his youth a genius for art and poetry. As a boy in his father's shop he drew pictures on the counter, and wrote poetry on the backs of the bills. He was moody and mystical, living a life of dreamy abstraction. He had hallucinations of hearing; celestial voices seemed to call him. He took to engraving as a means of livelihood, but he wrote poetry copiously, turning out between his twelfth and fifteenth year no fewer than seventy pages of verse. By-and-by, hallucinations of sight beset him. Historical figures of poets, heroes, and princes swarmed around him. These he mistook for reality, and he gave out that his designs were not the work of fancy, but revelations made to him in visions which he was commanded by celestial voices to publish. He held consulta-

tions with the spirit of his deceased brother, and from him obtained, as he said, a valuable art secret—the truly beautiful and original method he employed in the engraving and tinting of his plates. The spirit also counselled him as to the treatment of one of his best known and most successful works, 'Days of Innocence.' 'Write,' said the spirit, 'the poetry and draw the designs upon copper, with a certain liquid (which he named and which Blake ever kept a secret), then cut the plain parts of the plate down with aquafortis, and this will give the whole, both poetry and figures in the manner of the stereoscope.' 'The Gates of Paradise,' another of Blake's works, although ambitious in scope, is quite incomprehensible. It consists of twenty-seven designs, extracted, possibly, from many visions, and seems to embody the fall of Lucifer and the creation of man; but, in truth, all that can be truly said of it is that it swarms with fantastic figures, human, demoniac, and divine. In a letter written by the artist to Flaxman in 1800 he says:—

'I am more famed in Heaven for my works than I could well conceive. In my brain are studies and chambers filled with books and pictures of old, which I wrote and printed in ages of eternity—before my mortal life, and these works are the delight and study of archangels. Why, then, should I be anxious about the riches or fame of mortality?'

Moses, Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Milton, were Blake's constant companions in visions. When asked how these great men looked, he answered: 'They are all majestic shadows, gray, but luminous, and superior to the common height of men.' 'Did you ever see a fairy funeral, Madam?' he once asked a lady in company. 'Never, sir,' was the answer. 'I have,' said Blake, 'but not before last night. I was walking alone in my garden. There was great stillness among the branches and flowers, and more than common sweetness in the air. I heard a low and pleasant sound, and knew not whence it came. At last I saw the broad leaf of a flower move, and underneath I saw a procession of creatures of the size and colour of green and gray grasshoppers, bearing a body laid out on a rose leaf, which they buried with songs and then disappeared. It was a fairy's funeral.'

Subsequently to this period, he designed an extravagant and incomprehensible work called 'Jerusalem,' embodying aspects of earth and heaven. Plate after plate is meaningless as a whole, yet many of the figures looked at from the point of view of form and effect belong to the highest art, being marked by wonderful freedom of attitude and position. Others of his works, if less ludicrous, are quite as natural and poetic, so that it is impossible to deny to Blake the possession of true artistic genius. Curiously enough, he believed the spirit of Titian to be the evil genius of art, and professed to suffer from his persecutors. Blake drew visions for his friends. Sometimes a shape was long in appearing, and he sat with his pencil and paper ready, and his eyes idly roaming in vacancy. All at once the desired vision would come upon him, and he would work like one possessed (as indeed he was). A friend asked him to sketch the figure of William Wallace. He consented, and there was a pause. At length 'There, there!' he exclaimed, 'I see him now. How noble he looks! Reach me my things.' Having drawn for some time with a careful hand and steady eye, as if a living sitter were before him, the artist stopped suddenly, saying ruefully, 'I cannot finish it. Edward I. has just stepped in between him and me.' 'That's lucky,' said his friend, 'for I want the portrait of Edward too.' Blake took another sheet of paper and sketched the features of the Plantagenet king, whereupon his Majesty vanished, and the head of Wallace was then duly finished. The informant of Allan Cunningham, from whose life of Blake I have been quoting,[1] saw these pictures. They represented two warlike heads of the size of common life. That of Wallace was noble and heroic, that of Edward stern and bloody.

On one occasion Blake sketched the ghost of a flea which appeared to him. 'I felt convinced,' relates Varley, who saw the artist make the drawing, 'by his mode of proceeding, that he had a real image before him; for he left off, and began on another part of the paper to make a separate drawing of the mouth of the flea, the opening of which

[1] Allan Cunningham: *Lives of British Painters, Sculptors, and Architects.*

prevented him from proceeding with the first sketch for the time being.' Sometimes Blake desired to see a spirit in vain. 'For many years,' he said, 'I longed to see Satan. I could never believe he was the vulgar fiend our legends represent him to be. I imagined him a classic spirit, with some of his original splendour about him. At last I had my wish. I was going down stairs in the dark, when suddenly a light came streaming amongst my feet. I turned round, and there he was, looking fiercely at me through the iron grating of my staircase window. I called for my things. My wife (for Blake was married to a woman who loved him and believed in him) thought a fit of song was on me, and brought me pen and ink. I said, "Hush! Never mind, this will do." As he appeared so I drew him.' 'Upon this,' says the biographer's informant, 'Blake took out a piece of paper with a grated window sketched on it, while, through the bars, glared the most frightful phantom that ever man imagined. Its eyes were large and like live coals; its teeth were as long as those of a harrow, and the claws were such as might appear in the disturbed dream of a clerk in the "Herald's" office.' 'It is the Gothic fiend of our legends,' said Blake, 'all others are apocryphal.' Another friend of Cunningham's once called on Blake, and found him sitting, pencil in hand, and drawing a portrait with all the seeming anxiety of a man who is conscious of having a fastidious sitter. He looked and drew, and drew and looked, yet no living soul was visible. 'Disturb me not,' said Blake in a whisper. 'I have someone sitting to me.' 'Sitting to you,' exclaimed the astonished visitor, 'where is he? I see no one.' 'But I see him,' answered Blake, haughtily. 'There he is, his name is Lot; you may read of him in the Scriptures. He is sitting for his portrait.'

As Cunningham rightly observes, 'Had Blake always dealt with such visionary matters, he would have no claim to be a man of genius, some of whose works are worthy of any age or nation.' Even while indulging in these hallucinations, he drew and engraved one of the noblest of all his productions, the 'Inventions of the Book of Job.' His poems, too, are,

some of them, admirable. His 'Songs of Innocence' are introduced with the following pretty verses:—

> Piping down the valleys wild,
> Piping songs of pleasant glee,
> On a cloud I saw a child,
> And he, laughing, said to me—
>
> 'Pipe a song about a lamb;'
> So I piped with merry cheer.
> 'Piper, sing that song again;'
> So I piped—he wept to hear.
>
> 'Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe,
> Sing the songs of happy cheer;
> So I sang the same again
> While he wept with joy to hear.
>
> 'Piper, sit thee down and write
> In a book that all may read.'
> So he vanished from my sight
> And I plucked a hollow reed.
>
> And I made a rural pen,
> And I stained the water clear,
> And I wrote my happy songs
> Every child may joy to hear.

Blake died at seventy-one, childless. He was too flighty and eccentric to attain a commanding position as an artist, but his imagination undoubtedly glowed with what is called the 'divine fire.'

CHAPTER IV

EXAMPLES OF MEN OF LETTERS LAPSING INTO OR APPROACHING INSANITY—SWIFT, JOHNSON, COWPER, SOUTHEY, SHELLEY, BYRON, CAMPBELL, GOLDSMITH, CHARLES LAMB, WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR, ROUSSEAU, CHATTERTON, PASCAL, CHATEAUBRIAND, GEORGE SAND, TASSO, ALFIERI, EDGAR ALLAN POE, ETC.

AMONG English men of letters and poets who have become actually insane, or who have had hallucinations and idiosyncrasies characteristic of insanity, may be mentioned Swift, Johnson, Cowper, Southey, Shelley, Byron, Campbell, Goldsmith, Charles Lamb, Walter Savage Landor, and Edgar Allan Poe, with whom may be coupled, among foreign writers, Rousseau, Pascal, Chateaubriand, Tasso, Silvio Pellico, and Alfieri. Swift has been harshly judged by those who regard genius and wisdom as interchangeable terms. There was certainly much eccentricity, and even cruelty, in his conduct, especially in his treatment of the two hapless women known as Stella and Vanessa, to whom he held out delusive hopes of marriage, but he was never quite responsible for his actions. His insanity was congenital. A paternal uncle, Gordon Swift, was 'seized with lethargy, lost both speech and memory, and died insane,' and Swift, from his boyhood, was full of crazy impulse. At Dublin University he led a wild, vicious life, for which he was severely censured by the academical authorities. The same irresponsibility marked his conduct as a man, and from his correspondence and other sources we learn that he suffered at various times from giddiness, deafness, impaired sight, muscular twitchings, and paralysis of the muscles of the right side of the mouth—all symptoms of brain disease. He had violent explosions of temper, and sometimes addressed strangers in an abrupt and enigmatical fashion. Before he became a

SWIFT

celebrity, he astonished the frequenters of Button's coffee-house by the singularity of his actions, and was known for a time as the 'mad parson.' He was always haunted by the dread of going out of his mind. On one occasion, observing by the wayside an elm that had been blasted by lightning, he said to a friend, 'I shall be like that tree, I shall die at the top.' As old age approached, his condition worsened. He developed violent mania, and had to be placed under a keeper. Some time before his death, however, he lapsed into a state of imbecility, in which he is said to have kept silence for months together. A post-mortem examination revealed extensive serous effusion upon the brain and also softening of the cerebral substance.

Ninety years after Swift's death, that is to say in 1835, his bones were exhumed in the course of some alterations made in St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, and the skull was then found to present abnormal characteristics. 'The condition of the cerebral surface of the whole of the frontal region,' said a medical man who examined the skull, 'is of a character indicating the presence during life of diseased action in the subjacent membranes of the brain. The skull in this region is thickened, flattened, and unusually smooth and hard in some places, whilst it is thinned and roughened in others. The marks of the vessels on the bone exhibit, moreover, a very unusual appearance; they look more like the imprints of vessels which had been generated *de novo* in connection with some diseased action, than as the original arborescent trunks. The impressions of the middle arteries of the dura mater (an enveloping membrane of the brain) are unusually large and deep, and the branches of those vessels, which pass in the direction forwards, are short and thick, and terminate abruptly by dividing into an unusual number of minute twigs, whilst those of the same trunks that take their course backwards are long and regular, and of graduated size from the beginning to the end of their course. . . . The internal parts corresponding to the frontal protuberances were unequal in concavity.'[1] From the peculiar formation of the

[1] Wilde: *Closing Years of Dean Swift's Life.*

skull, the cerebellum, it was thought, must have been 'exceedingly small.'[1]

As the cerebellum has since been shown to be the centre for movements connected with the equilibrium, we have in this circumstance, no doubt, an explanation of those fits of giddiness of which Swift constantly complained in his correspondence. 'A sudden turn at any time,' he wrote, 'makes me feel giddy for a moment'—showing a deficiency in the balancing mechanism. His giddiness began, according to his own account, at the age of twenty-three; his deafness a few years later. As he died at seventy-eight, he suffered from active brain disease for over fifty years—an unusually long period. Wilde concludes from Swift's treatment of Stella and Vanessa, that he was constitutionally incapable of any passion stronger than friendship.

DR. JOHNSON

From his father Dr. Johnson inherited 'a vile melancholy,' which, to borrow his own words, made him 'mad all his life, or, at least, not sober.' This parent was a Lichfield bookseller of obscure extraction; Johnson's mother, according to Boswell, was a woman of 'distinguished understanding.' There was a second son of the marriage, Nathaniel, who died in his twenty-fifth year. At twenty, Johnson was in a state of 'perpetual irritation, fretfulness, impatience, dejection, gloom, and despair.' From hypochondria he was never afterwards free. He suffered, likewise, from convulsive cramps and scrofula—a well-known concomitant of nerve disorder—and he had the use of only one eye, though the other was very little different in appearance. On one occasion he had a paralytic seizure, which deprived him for the time being of speech, and in this state he wrote a prayer entreating the Almighty to allow him, as long as he should live, the enjoyment of his understanding. The dread of insanity haunted Johnson as it did Swift, and he must sometimes have been on the very brink of mental derangement. Upon his other disorders hallucinations of hearing supervened. 'One day at Oxford,' says Boswell, 'as he was turning the key of his chambers, he heard his mother distinctly call "Sam," although she was then at

[1] Wilde.

Lichfield.' So morbid was Johnson's constitution, that he 'never knew the natural joy of a free and vigorous use of his limbs.' Concerning his hypochondria, Boswell naïvely remarks: 'How wonderful, how inscrutable are the ways of God! Johnson, who was blest with all the powers of genius and understanding, in a degree far above the ordinary state of human nature, was, at the same time, visited with a disorder so afflictive, that they who know it by dire experience will not envy him his exalted endowments. . . . Insanity was the object of his most dismal apprehension, and he fancied himself seized by it, or approaching to it, at the very time when he was giving proofs of more than ordinary soundness and vigour of judgment.' The complaint that carried Johnson off was asthma, attended with dropsy.

COWPER

The ancestry of Cowper was distinguished on both sides. It must, however, have been corrupt in an equal degree, inasmuch as symptoms of mental derangement declared themselves in the poet in his boyhood. His father, a clergyman, was a son of Justice Cowper, and nephew of the first Earl Cowper, Lord Chancellor; his mother, Anne, boasted a connection with several noble houses, and could trace her descent from Henry III. Which parent was the more responsible for the transmission to Cowper of his insanity, and with this of his genius, it is now impossible to say. Nor is the point material, seeing that the neurotic condition of the poet speaks for itself and does not require to be established by collateral evidence. Southey states that Cowper's father and uncle could both write verses—an ominous gift! while his mother died at the early age of thirty-four, so that there was probably a condition of nervous unsoundness in both parents.

At eight or nine years of age, Cowper was threatened with loss of sight; the progress of the disease was stopped, but his eyes remained liable to inflammation all his life. At twenty-one, when Cowper was studying for the bar, he fell into melancholia. 'Day and night,' he says in his autobiographical notes, 'I was upon the rack, lying down in horror and rising up in despair. . . . . This state of mind continued near a twelvemonth, when, having experienced the in-

efficiency of all human means, I, at length, betook myself to God in prayer.' Throughout his life Cowper's hallucinations had a strong religious colouring. The long fit of depression above referred to ended as suddenly as it began. He was walking one day on the cliffs at Southampton.

'On a sudden,' he says, 'as if another sun had been kindled at the instant in the heavens on purpose to dispel sorrow and vexation of spirit, I felt the weight of all my misery taken off me. My heart became light and joyful in a moment.'

Such lightning-like changes of mood are frequent in insanity, and, however subtle they may seem, are known to be dependent upon strictly physical conditions. In another year Cowper's melancholia returned with redoubled force, inspiring him, to use his own words, with the 'dark and hellish purpose of self-murder.' His attempts at suicide are detailed with curious minuteness in his autobiographical sketches.[1] First he bought laudanum. This was when he was twenty-two and already writing poetry. 'The apothecary of whom I bought the drug,' he says, 'seemed to observe me narrowly, but if he did I managed my voice and countenance so as to deceive him.' Here we have a good example of the madman's cunning; and another marked characteristic of insanity is disclosed in a subsequent hallucination. He kept the poison in his pocket for some time, but one day, happening to read a letter in a paper which he took up in a coffee-house, a strange sensation came over him. 'The author seemed to be acquainted with my purpose of self-destruction, and to have written that letter in order to secure and hasten the execution of it.' Flinging down the paper he rushed out to seek a convenient spot for suicide, but before he had gone far the idea occurred to him that he would go to France and enter a monastery. He accordingly went home to the Temple and prepared for his departure. Again his mind changed, and the suicidal impulse once more possessed him. He called a cab and drove to the Tower Wharf, intending to throw himself into the river from the Custom House Quay, but on arriving there he

[1] Southey: *Life of Cowper*.

'found the water low, and a porter seated upon some goods as if on purpose to prevent him.' Returning to his chambers in the Temple, he tried to take the laudanum, but could not bring himself to do so, and the same irresolution defeated his efforts to cut his throat. Hanging was his next thought. He fastened a thong to his bedroom door, looped it round his neck as he stood upon a chair and then threw himself into space. As he did so he distinctly heard a voice say three times, ''Tis over.' The voice, however, was mistaken. The frenzied poet hung by the neck until he lost consciousness, and his next impression was finding himself lying face downwards upon the floor; the thong had broken.

After this providential escape Cowper abandoned the idea of suicide, though 'a frequent flashing like that of fire before his eyes and an excessive pressure upon the brain made him apprehensive of apoplexy.' He gave himself up to religious despair; he thought he had committed the unpardonable sin and was oppressed by uninterrupted misery by day and terrifying visions by night. To reassure himself in this condition he tried to repeat a prayer, but could not remember the words of it. In the effort to recall them, he says, 'I perceived a sensation in the brain like a tremulous vibration of all the fibres of it. Afterwards a numbness seized upon the extremities of my body, and life seemed to retreat before it. My hands and feet became cold and stiff, a cold sweat stood upon my forehead, my heart seemed at every pulse to beat its last, and my soul to cling to my body as if on the brink of departure. While traversing the apartment in the most horrible dismay of soul, expecting every moment that the earth would open her mouth and swallow me up . . . a strange and horrible darkness fell upon me. If it were possible that a heavy blow could light on the brain without touching the skull, this was the sensation I felt. I clapped my hand to my forehead and called aloud through the pain it gave me. At every stroke my thoughts and expressions became more wild and indistinct; all that remained clear was the sense of sin and the expectation of punishment.' This crisis ended in Cowper's removal to a lunatic asylum,

where he was confined for eighteen months. On his release he composed the well-known hymn:—

> The soul, a dreary province once
> Of Satan's dark domain,
> Feels a new empire formed within
> And owns a heavenly reign.

The improvement in his condition, however, was not permanent. Attacks of insanity occurred at intervals, and once he nearly succeeded in hanging himself, being discovered and cut down while on the point of strangulation. Throughout his life he was a victim to religious melancholia, and in this state—one, as he described it, of 'unutterable despair,' he died in his sixty-ninth year. More clearly marked symptoms of insanity could not be found than in this man of genius, rightly described by Southey as 'the most popular poet of his generation.' Cowper's brother John, a clergyman, died of asthma.

SOUTHEY

Southey himself retained the use of his faculties till within a few years of his death, but he came of an unsound stock on his mother's side. He had a maternal uncle who was an idiot, and a peculiarity of this relative was that, though he learnt to know the letters of the alphabet separately, he could never be taught to combine them into words, but yet possessed 'an excellent memory,' and a sort of shrewdness which, says Southey, 'would have qualified him had he been born two centuries earlier to have worn motley and figured with cap and bells and a bauble in some baron's hall.' Apoplexy carried off this weakling of the family. Southey's mother, 'while a mere child, had a paralytic affection which deadened one side from the hip downwards, and crippled her for almost twelve months.' 'In quickness of capacity,' says her son, 'I never knew her equal.' Southey's father kept a shop, but was 'passionately fond of field sports.' Extraordinary physical energy is often found in connection with nerve-disorder, the result of an excessive stimulation of the motor centres of the brain. Whether on the side of Southey's father some neuropathic tendency existed, there is nothing very positive to show.

An uncle, Thomas Southey, appears to have been rather eccentric. At his death this relative left a considerable amount of property to his footboy, Tom, and another stranger, ignoring the claims of an aged sister who kept house for him and who was unprovided for. This poor old lady, indeed, he turned out of doors for no other reason than that 'she discovered some regret at seeing the footboy, Tom, preferred to her nephews.' As to Southey's father, a passion for field sports is a somewhat suspicious attribute of a shiftless young tradesman, who tries his luck first as a grocer and then as a linendraper. It is to be noted that the physical energy which is so indispensable an element in productive genius was possessed by Southey in a remarkable degree. His literary output was enormous, consisting of some forty or fifty volumes of poems, history, biography, and essays on general subjects. Literary exertion, he himself remarked, was as necessary to him as meat and drink. As a child he was precocious, and wrote verse before he was eight years of age.

Whether as the legacy of one or both parents, Southey's sensibility was extreme. In a letter written in his forty-fifth year, he says: 'It is a matter of surprise to me that this bodily machine of mine should have continued its operations with so few derangements, knowing as I well do its excessive susceptibility to deranging causes. If I did not vary my pursuits, I should soon be incapable of proceeding with any, so surely does it disturb my sleep and affect my dreams if I dwell upon one with any continuous attention. If it were not for great self-management, and what may be called a strict intellectual regimen, I should soon be in a deplorable state of nervous disease.'

Carlyle, who saw Southey in his latter days, thought him the 'excitablest man' he had ever met. 'The shallowest chin, small, care-lined brow, the most vehement pair of hazel eyes! A well read, honest, limited, kindly-hearted, most irritable man! I said to myself, "How has this man contrived, with such a nervous system, to keep alive for near sixty years? How has he not been torn to pieces long since under such furious pulling this way and that?"'[1]

[1] Thomas Carlyle: *Reminiscences.*

Not long after these words were penned, Southey's mind did give way. He sank into a condition of imbecility, in which he died. 'The approaches of his malady,' says his son, 'had been so gradual as almost to escape notice. A loss of memory on certain points, a lessening acuteness of the perceptive faculties, an occasional irritability wholly unknown in him before, a confusion of time, place, and person, the losing of his way in well-known places—all were remembered to have taken place when the melancholy fact had become too evident that the powers of his mind were irreparably weakened. . . For a year before his death, he passed his time as if in a dream, with little, if any, knowledge of what went on around him.' In addition to his mental instability, Southey exhibited some irregularities of physical growth. Carlyle noted the fact at their first meeting. 'He' (Southey) 'had only half risen, and nodded on my coming in, and all along I had counted him as a lean, little man; but now (as Carlyle was taking his leave), he shot suddenly aloft into a lean tall one, all legs, in shape and stature like a pair of tongs.' At eight-and-twenty, Southey suffered from 'an ominous dimness of sight at times,' but this weakness appears to have worn off.

Most of Southey's brothers and sisters died young, and in one instance, hydrocephalus is mentioned as the cause of death. The same form of brain disease carried off some of Southey's own children, though, as his wife also became insane, this result need not be ascribed to Southey's organisation exclusively. Of a daughter, who died at twelve months from hydrocephalus, he remarked that previously she had given no sign of disease save a 'somewhat unnatural quickness and liveliness.' Side by side with the genius of a family occurs with strange frequency and regularity the ne'er-do-well, a brother or other near relative possessing the sensibility and the waywardness of genius without its faculty of self-control. Southey's youngest brother Edward was of this stamp. 'The subject,' says Southey's biographer, 'is a painful one, and I may be excused from entering into it further than to say that every effort was made both by my uncle, Mr. Hill, and his brothers, to place him and keep him in a respectable line of life. He possessed excellent abilities, and

had received a good education, and, if he had chosen a profession, they would have prepared him for it. He was placed first in the navy, then in the army, but in vain; for he finally took to the wretched life of an actor in provincial theatres.'[1] Miss Tyler, a relation of Southey's on the maternal side, rendered herself notorious for her immorality.

SHELLEY

The immediate progenitors of Shelley were eccentric. His grandfather, Bysshe Shelley, had a melancholy temperament, which is ascribed to his having been crossed in love in his youth. He invited no friendships, and lived apart from persons of his own station. Although wealthy, he hoarded money, and was indifferent to his personal appearance. Similar characteristics appeared in Timothy Shelley, the poet's father, whom Dowden describes as a 'kindly, pompous, capricious, well-meaning, ill-doing, wrong-headed man.' Timothy married a Miss Elizabeth Pilfold, who had a 'violent and domineering temper,' and the poet was the offspring of this union. From boyhood, Shelley was of a peculiar disposition. He was fond of musing alone, and was thought to be a strange and unsociable being. At Eton, he was known as 'mad Shelley.' He combined the diverse qualities of shyness, singularity, carelessness of attire, and unusual excitability of temper. Often he lost himself in waking visions, which were followed by much nervous excitement, his eyes flashing, his lips quivering, his voice being tremulous with emotion, and a sort of ecstasy coming over him. His sleep was disturbed by frightful dreams, and he was a somnambulist. As he grew to manhood, the excitability and impulsiveness of his temperament increased rather than diminished. He had a small, piercing, discordant voice, but his features breathed animation, fire, enthusiasm, and a vivid and preternatural intelligence. In conversation, he was impetuous and argumentative. About his twentieth year, the general state of his nerves was such that he had constantly to take laudanum to calm them. Hogg says he always looked 'wild, intellectual, unearthly, like a spirit that had just descended from the sky, or a demon, risen at that moment out of the ground. In telling a story

[1] Cuthbert Southey: *Life and Letters of Robert Southey.*

he would shriek with paroxysms of the wildest laughter.' Hogg adds that Shelley had 'singular caprices, unfounded frights and dislikes, vain apprehensions, and panic terrors. . . He was unconscious and oblivious of time, places, persons, and seasons; falling into some poetic vision or day dream, he quickly forgot all that he had repeatedly and solemnly promised. Or he would run away after some object of imaginary urgency and importance which suddenly came into his head, setting off in vain pursuit of it, he knew not whither.'

There is no doubt that Shelley had actual hallucinations. While staying at Keswick, he was alarmed early one morning by a noise outside the cottage he occupied. He went to the door, opened it, and instantly received a blow which struck him to the ground, where he lay for a while unconscious. This was Shelley's account of the affair, but the neighbours were sceptical as to his supposed adventure, and believed him to be the victim of a delusion. Trelawney thought that Shelley's imagination played him false as to occurrences. Certainly Shelley indulged for a time in the foolish belief that he had elephantiasis, and if the Keswick hallucination is a doubtful one, there is proof of his having had visions in Italy. 'After tea,' wrote Williams, shortly before he and Shelley were drowned in the Bay of Spezzia, 'Shelley complained of being unusually nervous, and, stopping short, he grasped me violently by the arm and stared steadfastly at the white surf that broke upon the beach under his feet. Observing him sensibly affected, I demanded of him if he were in pain, but he only answered by saying, "There it is again—there!" He recovered after some time, and declared that he saw as plainly as he then saw me, a naked child rise from the sea and clap its hands as in joy, smiling at him. This was a trance that it required much reasoning and philosophy to awaken him from, so forcibly had the vision operated on his mind.'[1] Again, it is related by Medwin on Byron's authority, that Shelley thought he met one day on the terrace near his Italian residence a figure wrapped in a mantle, which lifted up the hood of its cloak and revealed the

[1] Dowden: *Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley.*

phantasm of himself, saying, 'Siete soddisfatto?' (Are you satisfied?). Mary Shelley also mentions this vision, adding that Shelley often saw such figures when ill. Seeing a spectral image of oneself is a form of hallucination that occurs among the apoplectic and the insane; and it is also observed during the delirium of fever. Goethe experienced it in open day as well as Shelley. To the last, Shelley's terrifying dreams, a sure sign of morbid cerebral action, continued to afflict him, and he seems occasionally to have been in doubt as to whether they were dreams or waking visions.

In forming an estimate of Shelley's conduct as a man and as a husband, it is obviously unfair to judge him by the ordinary standard of sanity. Like Swift, he was the slave of morbid impulse, and who can say what developments of moral unsoundness his accidental death at the age of thirty may not have nipped in the bud? Both he and his brother John left issue, but it is strange to note how many of their descendants have been childless. Among the half dozen adults forming the first generation, three, if not four, cases of childlessness occur, an enormous proportion, testifying to the existence of neuropathic conditions.

'Some curse,' wrote Byron to a friend, 'hangs over me and mine.' He was right. It was the curse of heredity.

BYRON

On both his father and his mother's side Byron came of a vitiated stock, although with the fatuity of the common run of men who look at the extent of a genealogical tree, and not at its vigour or freshness, he was proud to an extraordinary extent of his descent, prouder, it has been said, than of his works. It is unnecessary to go deeply into the poet's pedigree in order to ascertain its neurotic character. In his immediate progenitors the 'insane temperament' stares us in the face. The ancestor whom he succeeded in the title, his grand-uncle, was a licentious, quarrelsome, vindictive man, feared or hated by everybody, and popularly known as the 'mad,' or 'wicked Lord Byron.' There was no enormity of crime of which this representative of a noble house was thought to be incapable by those who knew him. Under circumstances that forcibly suggested murder, he killed his friend and neighbour Chatworth, in a

room where, by the feeble light of a single candle and without seconds or witnesses, a so-called duel was fought about a trifle. Shunned by his equals and deserted by his wife, he led a morose and lonely existence. From hatred to his son and heir he let the family seat go to ruin, cut down the timber on the estate, and sold illegally a portion of his property. His son and his son's son, however, died before him, whereupon the miserable old man transferred his aversion from them to the 'little boy at Aberdeen,' as the poet was then called. The brother of this 'mad Lord Byron,' was Admiral John Byron, the poet's grandfather, in whom the devil-may-care nature of the family happened to be turned to good account. Admiral Byron was a man of remarkable courage and endurance, and distinguished himself both in peace and war; but in his son John, father of the poet, the worst characteristics of the Byron blood re-appeared.

'Mad Jack Byron' led such a dissolute life, that, before he was out of his teens, he was held in general disrepute. At twenty-two he ran away with the Marchioness of Carmarthen, married her after her divorce—she was an heiress—and, after squandering her fortune, killed her, it was said, by his ill-usage. When penniless, he looked about for another heiress, and found one in Miss Gordon, whose money also, after marriage, he spent like water, leaving her almost penniless with her only child. To such straits was the fine gentleman subsequently reduced by his own extravagance that, after separating from his wife, he had the meanness to write her a begging letter, imploring her to give him a guinea. He went to France and died there in his thirty-sixth year. To Harness, the poet more than once stated that his father 'was insane and killed himself.' The suicide has not been clearly established, but circumstances point to it. Jeafferson observes that the man who was known throughout life as 'mad Jack Byron,' may be presumed to have been a person whose 'eccentricity bordered upon insanity,' and that having gone abroad with a few guineas in his purse, just enough to keep him for a few weeks, suicide was with him a very likely resource.[1] In any case, 'mad Jack's' character and his early

[1] J. Cordy Jeafferson: *The True Lord Byron.*

death, leave no room for doubt as to the morbid condition of his faculties.

The poet was no less unfortunate in his mother. His maternal grandfather, who was subject to melancholia, drowned himself at forty, and another near relative attempted suicide by poison.[1] His mother, inheriting thus a strain of insanity, was a woman of very unbalanced temperament. At the theatre in Edinburgh she went into convulsions on seeing Mrs. Siddons act. Her husband had good reason to fear her temper; to be sure, it was sorely tried, but towards other people she fell into 'frequent fits of uncontrollable fury.' Jeafferson says she rarely allowed a week to pass without 'a wild outbreak of hysterical rage.' She even mocked at her son for being 'a lame brat,' and Disraeli hints that she was addicted to drink. As a child Byron feared this unnatural mother, as a man he ridiculed and despised her; but the biographical theory which attributes the poet's unhappy characteristics to maternal ill-treatment in his boyhood, obviously does not take sufficient account of the evil heredity to which he was subject. While still a youngish woman, Mrs. Byron died suddenly, owing, it was said, to a fit of anger into which she had been thrown by an upholsterer's account, but more probably as the result of some affection of the brain or nervous system, and Byron, instead of following the body to the grave, engaged with his servant in a bout with boxing-gloves!

Combining thus, in himself, two converging lines of morbid heredity, Byron was necessarily a being of strange and wayward habits. It is such parentage as his that fills our mad-houses with patients. For, be it remarked, there can be no pretence of any inheritance on his part of intellectual gifts in the common acceptation of the word. 'Mad Jack Byron' may have had captivating manners, but he never gave proof of possessing even average mental ability, while Mrs. Byron, despite a distinguished lineage, was deplorably lacking both in intelligence and refinement. The poet's deformed foot is supposed by the biographer to have been due to an accident at birth; but malformations, as we have seen,

[1] Elze: *Life of Byron.*

are a common accompaniment of nervous disorder, and the deformity, which resisted all attempts to cure it, may be regarded as congenital. Owing to Byron's sensitiveness on the point, none of his friends, even the most intimate, appear to have known precisely what he suffered from; nor is the question ever likely to be settled. Trelawney's account is the most positive and authentic. He saw Byron lying in his coffin; impelled by curiosity, he sent the servant out of the room and uncovered the feet of the dead man. 'Then,' he says, 'the mystery was solved; both feet were clubbed, and his legs withered to the knees, but the right foot was the most distorted, while the right leg was also shorter than the other.' Byron's life, from first to last, was that of a man governed by morbid impulse and scarcely responsible for his actions. In friendship, politics, religion, and love he was uniformly unstable and insincere, and his strongest motive in everything was probably vanity.

Although his whole life might be cited as a proof of the neuropathic character of his genius, the evidence directly bearing on the subject, apart from heredity, admits of being given within small compass. His diary, written in the very heyday of his youth and fame, reflects a distempered mind. 'When I am tired,' he says, 'as I generally am, out comes this and down goes everything. But I can't read it over, and God knows what contradictions it may contain. If I am sincere with myself (but I fear one lies more to oneself than to anybody else) every page should confute, refute, and utterly abjure its predecessor.' The entries abound in expressions of indifference and callousness, of vacuity and satiety, of loathing and contempt for his fellow-mortals. 'What have I seen!' he exclaims. 'The same men all over the world. Aye, and women too. . . Hang up philosophy! To be sure I have long despised myself and man, but I have never spat in the face of my species before. Oh, fool! I shall go mad.' A fear of going mad haunted Byron through life, as it often does those who are destined to that fate—Swift, for example. Lady Caroline Lamb's first impression of him was that he was 'mad, bad, and dangerous to know.' Lady Byron left him after one miserable year of married life, and explained that she

did so because it had been strongly impressed upon her mind that 'Lord Byron was under the influence of insanity.' Sixteen points in support of her contention were submitted to the judgment of the medical men in the investigation which she promoted, but they were never disclosed. This is understood to have been one—that Byron was thrown into convulsions by Kean's performance of the part of Sir Giles Overreach, just as his mother had once been by the acting of Mrs. Siddons. On another occasion he was said to have thrown his watch, which he had worn from his earliest boyhood, into the fire, and dashed it to pieces with the poker. That he once discharged a pistol in his wife's bedroom is admitted even by the Countess Guiccioli.

The grossest excesses and the keenest nervous suffering marked Byron's life in Venice. 'His harem on the Grand Canal, to which he gathered frail women from the homes of artisans and the cabins of suburban peasants, was fruitful of scandals. . . Little or nothing, however, was heard in England of the degree to which the poet now succumbed to the appetites of the glutton and the sot. . . In the increasing violence of his temper, ever too fervid, in the alteration of his voice, once so clear and musical that children turned from their play for the delight of listening to it, and in his penmanship, always indicative of irritability, and now growing so illegible that it troubled the best compositors to decipher it, there were signs of the nervous distress caused by drinking. . . . At night he would roll in agony through long assaults of acute dyspepsia, more often lie in melancholy moodiness, or endure the torture of afflicting hallucinations. . . To Byron, with a nervous idiosyncrasy that rendered him peculiarly sensitive and impatient of physical discomfort, the pain of these spasmodic seizures was almost maddening torment. The mental anguish that came to him from dreams was no less acute.'[1]

The epileptic attacks preceding Byron's death sufficiently explain his restless, extravagant, and impetuous life. He was the victim of his organisation as truly as the violent lunatic who has to spend his miserable days in a padded

[1] Jeafferson.

room. It was at Missolonghi, in his thirty-sixth year, that the first epileptic seizure occurred. It appears to have been sharp and severe, lasting about a quarter of an hour. 'Every reader of the Byronic biographies has heard of this attack. A fact less generally known,' says Jeafferson, 'is that this seizure was the first of a series. . . In fact the poet had five epileptic fits within thirteen days.' Two months later he passed away, the immediate cause of death being said to be 'fever' arising from a chill. Probably the end was hastened a little by the excessive bleeding to which the patient was subjected, the doctors fearing that the epileptic attacks would be followed, as they so often are, by mental derangement. How near to insanity Byron's condition was, the following glimpse of it, given by his companion Leicester Stanhope, will show:

'The mind of Byron was like a volcano, full of fire and wealth, sometimes calm, often dazzling and playful, but even threatening. It ran swift as the lightning from one subject to another, and occasionally burst forth in passionate throes of intellect nearly allied to madness. A striking instance of this sort of eruption I shall mention. Lord Byron's apartments were immediately over mine at Missolonghi. In the dead of night I was frequently startled from my sleep by the thunders of his lordship's voice, either raging with anger or roaring with laughter, and arousing friends, servants, and, indeed, all the inmates of the dwelling from their repose.'

In Byron's offspring neurotic characteristics are to be detected. His daughter Ada suffered from determination of blood to the head and died at thirty-seven, leaving by her husband, Earl Lovelace, a son, who appears to have inherited all the eccentricities of the Byrons, saving only his grandfather's genius. This young man, Byron Noel, Viscount Oakham, mixed little with people of his own rank, but served as a common seaman, and then worked for some time as a ship carpenter at Millwall. The abnormal character of his organisation is suggested by his death occurring at the early age of twenty-six.

A tendency to insanity was strongy marked in Thomas Campbell, and reflected in his family. The evil appears to have been mainly on his mother's side, for insanity existed

among his maternal cousins, while his mother herself is described by an indulgent biographer[1] as excessively 'irritable,' and 'unnecessarily severe or even harsh in the exercise of her authority,' a phrase of much significance to the student of mental disease. In old age she became paralysed. The poet's father was a merchant of good repute. Both parents were long-lived, and transmitted their longevity to some of their numerous children, who, in their several ways as the brothers and sisters of a poet of undoubted genius, present an instructive study in pathology. The family record is as follows:—

CAMPBELL

Name			Age	Remarks
Mary Campbell	died at		86	Paralysed, childless.
Isabella	,,	,,	79	Paralysed, 'poetical,' childless.
Archibald	,,	,,	70	Childless.
Alexander	,,	,,	65	Went abroad, prospered, and had a large family.
John	,,	,,	43	Childless.
Elizabeth	,,	,,	64	Suffered from protracted ill-health, childless.
Daniel	,,		—	Died in infancy.
Robert	,,	,,	35	Childless.
James	,,	,,	13	Drowned while bathing.
Daniel	,,		—	Nothing known of his death, a ne'er-do-well.

The poet was the eleventh child. Besides his genius, the characteristics of the family, it will be seen, were paralysis, infertility, and ill-health. The presence of the ne'er-do-well, as in Southey's case, is also noteworthy. This member of the family was put into business, but, as the biographer remarks, he had 'either too much genius or too little perseverance to keep there.' A 'boon companion,' and a 'man of infinite humour,' he became unfitted for his calling, which probably means that he gave himself up to drinking; he then went abroad and was no more heard of. He had one son, who died early. As a child Campbell was precocious; he wrote verses at ten, was imaginative, sensitive, and passionately fond of music. At eighteen he was attacked by melancholia.

[1] Charles Rogers: *Life of Thomas Campbell.*

and Professor Pillans of Edinburgh, who knew him a year or two later, wrote as follows to a friend: 'He accompanied me to my father's in the lowest state of depression, so much so that my father taunted me with bringing to his house a man who seemed to be bordering on insanity.' The Campbell blood being so unquestionably corrupt, it was unfortunate that its evil effects should have been intensified in the poet's case by a consanguineous marriage. Such, however, was the case. Campbell married his maternal cousin, who had a sister insane, and who herself was very 'vivacious,' 'energetic,' and 'irritable,' and the one son of his who survived the perils of childhood was a lunatic. At the height of his reputation Campbell showed signs of insanity, believing that he was ruined, for example, while he was really in the most prosperous circumstances. He was eccentric in many ways, and also, which is important in a pathological sense, suffered from gout or rheumatism. His habits were most unsettled, and his nerves so troublesome that he resorted to stimulants. In his latter years he sank into a condition of mental debility, in which he died at sixty-seven.

GOLDSMITH

Little is known of Oliver Goldsmith's personal and family history, but such facts of his career as have been recorded, tend to qualify him for a place in the group of distinguished men now under discussion. There was a strong tincture of ne'er-do-wellism in his character, and much foolish moralising on his account has been indulged in by biographers, who see in him only the man of genius condemned to live from hand to mouth, and to write immortal works in a garret. In truth, few young men had better chances in life of comfort and respectability—if such be the biographer's ideal of happiness—than Goldsmith, and none assuredly threw such chances more perversely away. He was maintained at college till he took his degree (in spite of his being a 'dunce' at learning), and neither then nor for some years afterwards did he do a stroke of work of any kind, but preferred to live on the bounty of his relatives. The intermittent literary occupation that he finally settled down to suited his temperament as an idler and a vagabond; but with money pouring in upon him whenever he chose to do

anything for it—Macaulay calculates that during the last seven years of his life Goldsmith made 800*l*. a year in English currency—and with not a soul in the world to keep but himself, he still lived in squalor, had to be dunned for his milk bill, and died 2,000*l*. in debt, this sum representing loans that he had cadged from his friends, probably without the smallest intention of repaying them. Of Oliver's brothers, one was a humble village preacher, who appears to have died early, another 'departed a miserable life' as a cabinet maker, and a third, after a career of adventure abroad, died in wretched lodgings in London. Considering that their father was a Protestant clergyman of some position in Ireland, this must have been a very thriftless family altogether. Oliver was a most unpromising boy. Though he scribbled verses early, he was 'impenetrably stupid' at school, and, according to his sister, was 'subject to the most particular humours,' with the 'most unaccountable alternations of gaiety and gloom.' This mental condition explains his boyish freak of running away from home for six weeks, and also his prolonged vagabondage on the Continent. Boswell says, Goldsmith 'disputed his way through Europe.' It is more likely, as William Black remarks, that he 'begged his way through Europe.' The portrait by Reynolds does not convey a favourable impression of Goldsmith's character, exhibiting a heavy, receding jaw, thick lips, a bulging brow, and a listless, idiotic expression. Goldsmith died of some nervous affection, the most clearly defined symptom of which was 'a violent pain extending all over the fore part of his head.'

CHARLES LAMB

Charles Lamb appears to have owed his poetical and literary faculties to a converging heredity of brain and nerve-disease. His father, who occupied the humble position of a servant in Lincoln's Inn, wrote verses, and about his fiftieth year lapsed into a state of imbecility; his mother became paralysed. This couple had three children, John, Mary, and Charles Lamb. John is described in one of the 'Essays of Elia' as a man 'of fiery and tempestuous temper,' unable to reason logically, but jumping at 'most admirable conclusions;' he held some position in the South Sea House, and died respectably at sixty or thereabouts.

Mary became subject to fits of insanity, in one of which she stabbed her invalid mother to the heart and killed her. Charles Lamb was himself confined for six weeks in a madhouse about his twentieth year—the period at which he wrote most of his sonnets. He was of puny physique, constitutionally nervous and timid, subject to stammering, and to violent headaches. In his later years he gave way to what he called his 'cursed drinking.' The immediate cause of his death at sixty was erysipelas, but Talfourd says his constitution was by that time thoroughly broken down.

In her lucid intervals Mary Lamb had a fine poetical taste, very like Elia's own. Describing her insanity, Charles Lamb says:—'Her ramblings often sparkled with brilliant descriptions and shattered beauty. . . . She would fancy herself in the days of Queen Anne or George I. and describe the brocaded dames and courtly manners as though she had been bred among them, in the best style of the Old Comedy. It was all broken and disjointed, so that the hearer could remember little of her discourse, but the fragments were like the jewelled speeches of Congreve, only shaken from their setting. There was sometimes even a vein of crazy logic running through them, associating things essentially most dissimilar but connecting them by a verbal association in strange order. As a mere physical example of deranged intellect, her condition was, I believe, extraordinary; it was as if the finest elements of mind had been shaken into fantastic combinations like those of a kaleidoscope.' Throughout life Mary and Charles Lamb were devoted to each other, having a perfect community of literary and poetic tastes.

LANDOR

In his defiance of all authority, his reckless impulse, his fierce outbursts of temper, his swift changes of mood, his general singularities which the most indulgent of biographers do not attempt to conceal, Walter Savage Landor would most certainly have been entitled to be classed as a victim of the 'insane temperament,' even had his closing years been unmarked by any of the more unmistakable characteristics of insanity.[1] He belonged to a

[1] John Forster: *Walter Savage Landor, a Biography.*

gouty family. As early as the age of twelve he had a violent attack of gout, and his father and brothers were sufferers from that malady. In a previous chapter gout has been shown to alternate sometimes with mental disorder. Landor's first attack was his last; the gout never returned, but, on the other hand, his mental condition was ever afterwards peculiar. His laugh is historical; it must have surpassed in volume even that of Shelley or Byron. 'Higher and higher,' says Forster in describing it, 'went peal after peal, until regions of sound were reached very far beyond ordinary human lungs.' Landor was consumed by an irrepressible energy, for which his poetic and literary occupations afforded some outlet. Poetry and literature he turned to instinctively, for, being possessed of private means, he was never under the necessity of writing for a livelihood. 'He had the power, sudden as thought itself, of giving visual shape to objects of thought, and with all this, an intense energy of feeling and a restless activity of imagination eager to reproduce themselves in similar forms of vivid and picturesque expression. He had an exceptional faculty for Latin verse, his excellence in which was a tradition at Rugby for half a century after he left. In every other study or pursuit he was the creature of caprice. At Oxford his character was ungovernable; he held fierce and uncompromising opinions, and once fired a fowling-piece into the window of a political opponent—an offence for which, refusing to apologise, he was rusticated for a year and very nearly expelled. Nor did time soften his asperities. He was always uncontrollably impetuous, and so prone to act from undisciplined impulse . . . that during hardly any part of his life could he live with other people in peace for any length of time; good-humoured for a while, he was apt gradually to become tyrannical where he had power, and rebellious where he had not.'

On one occasion, Forster had the greatest difficulty in restraining him from sending a challenge to Lord John Russell for some fancied slight to the memory of a supposed ancestor, Sir Arnold Savage, Speaker of Henry the Seventh's first House of Commons. After succeeding to the family estates, he so embroiled himself with tenants and neighbours,

that the control of the property was taken out of his hands, and during a great part of his long life he lived abroad, owing, as he said, to the many acts of injustice and unkindness he met with in England. He was himself, however, his greatest enemy. In public and private affairs his plan of proceeding was on the eccentric principle of differing as widely as he could from everybody else. He was ever swayed by the mood that possessed him for the moment, and 'though it was easy by humouring this to continue friendly with him, it was yet easier to quarrel with him by opposing it in however slight a degree.' Changing his clime, Landor did not change his nature, for in Tuscany he contrived to get himself expelled by order of the Government. The mental breakdown in his latter years was complete. Referring to an action for libel in which Landor had enmeshed himself in one of his storms of frantic passion, Forster remarks that the old man had ceased to be a 'responsible human being.' He had not now even memory enough to recollect what he was writing from day to day, and 'while the power of giving keen and clear expression to every passing mood of bitterness remained to him, his reason had too far deserted him to leave it other than a fatal gift. He could apply no gauge or measure to what he was bent upon either doing or saying; he seemed to have no longer the ability to see anything not palpably before him; and of the effect of any given thing on his own or another's reputation, he was become wholly powerless to judge.'

Shortly afterwards, Landor persisted in printing, in spite of the remonstrances of his friends, the worthless scraps of his writings, which he called 'Dry Sticks;' the proofs had to be altered without his consent; and he had tried, though unsuccessfully, to make it a condition with the publisher that his name should appear on the title-page as 'the late W. S. Landor.' He talked of a 'swimming in his head,' of inability to remember places and faces, though verses of the 'Odyssey' and 'Iliad' were perpetually floating before his mind. In this condition he lived six or eight years longer, incurring another action for libel, in which damages of a thousand pounds were awarded against him. The close of his life was spent in

Italy, where, according to a letter of Browning's, he required to have some one always at hand to explain away his irritations and hallucinations as they arose. He suffered severely from sciatica, and upon his loss of memory deafness supervened. His death at eighty-nine was brought about by his abstaining for three days from food, whether as the result of weakness or of some hallucination is unknown.

CHATTERTON

Thomas Chatterton, the most precocious literary genius that the world has ever seen, was the offspring of a 'drunken, wild-eyed' choir singer, who died before his marvellous son was born, and of a woman who was long afflicted with a 'nervous disease,' probably palsy. His sister, a Mrs. Newton, had an attack of insanity. The boy's temper had 'something in it quite unusual in one so young. Generally very sullen and silent, he was liable to sudden and unaccountable fits of weeping, as well as to violent fits of rage.' In his eighteenth year he committed suicide. It is generally thought that this was due to his finding himself in a state of destitution in a humble lodging in London. Before his suicide, however, his landlady 'did not think he was quite right in his mind.' He showed a 'growing restlessness,' and 'sudden fits of vacancy or silence that came upon him sometimes while he was talking rapidly.' He would often 'look steadfastly in a person's face without speaking or seeming to see the person for a quarter of an hour or more, till it was quite frightful.'[1] Young as he was, the boy had acquired a name for immorality in his native town of Bristol. He appears also to have been enormously vain. Mrs. Newton had an only daughter who died young. This was the last of the Chattertons.

ROUSSEAU

Jean Jacques Rousseau was of melancholy temperament, and more than once had hallucinations of persecution.[2] There seems to have been insanity on his father's side, a cousin of the name of Rousseau having been afflicted with that disorder. He was a weakly and ailing child, and a ne'er-do-well brother was a precocious libertine. Corancez, a friend of Jean Jacques', has left on record some

[1] Masson: *Essays Biographical and Critical.*
[2] Moreau: *La Psychologie Morbide.*

curious details as to the philosopher's mental condition. Rousseau lived under the constant belief that his life was being conspired against; and in the most trifling circumstances he saw a confirmation of his suspicions. 'My enemies,' he remarked on one occasion, 'employ more ingenuity in persecuting me than would be required for governing Europe.' Corancez discovered Rousseau on several occasions in a convulsed state, in which his features wore a strange and terrifying expression. At such times the philosopher's discourse was incoherent and wild, one of his remarks being that his misfortunes had been specially predicted by Tasso. Rousseau's condition at the time of his acquaintance with Hume was clearly a dangerous one. What could better reflect the hallucinations of a disordered mind than his own account of his experiences? 'One evening,' he says, 'a remarkable circumstance struck me. As we were sitting by the fire, I caught sight of Hume's eyes intently fixed on mine, and that in a manner of which it is difficult to give an idea. He gave me a steadfast, piercing look mixed with a sneer, which greatly disturbed me. To get rid of my embarrassment, I endeavoured to look full at him in my turn, but, in fixing my eyes on his, I felt a most inexpressible terror, and was obliged soon to turn them away. . . . My trouble increased even to the degree of fainting, and if I had not been relieved by a suffusion of tears, I should have been suffocated. Presently after this I was seized with the most violent remorse, and in a transport of joy I sprang upon his neck and kissed him. I felt my heart yearn towards him. . . . The first night after my departure with Hume for Paris we slept in the same chamber, when, during the night, I heard him cry out with great vehemence in the French language, "Je tiens Jean Jacques Rousseau." I knew not whether he was awake or asleep. The expression was remarkable. I took the words, however, in a favourable sense, notwithstanding that the tone of voice in which they were spoken was still less favourable than the expression. It is indeed impossible for me to give any idea of it, but it corresponds exactly with those terrible looks I have before mentioned. At every repetition of them I was seized with a

shuddering, a kind of horror. I could not resist, though a moment's recollection restored me, and made me smile at my weakness. The next day all this was perfectly obliterated.'[1] Rousseau died of apoplexy.

PASCAL

According to Lélut, who made a complete study of his case from the pathological point of view,[2] Pascal suffered from hallucinations, one of which was, that there was a yawning abyss by his side. He was all his life a victim to extreme nervous suffering. As a child he had a sort of hydrophobia, being unable to look upon water without falling into convulsions. Another idiosyncrasy was that he could not bear to see his father and mother together, they had to approach him separately. His headaches were of extraordinary intensity, and afterwards he had epileptic convulsions, which were the cause of his death. A post-mortem examination revealed a strange condensation and solidification of portions of the brain, and an infusion of blood into certain cavities, together with some irregularities in the form of the skull. A sister of Pascal's, Jacqueline, wrote verses, was very precocious and sensitive, and became excessively pious, passing the latter part of her life in a state of religious exaltation.

CHATEAU-BRIAND

Chateaubriand belonged to a mad family, and was himself of a melancholic temperament. His father died of apoplexy; a brother and sister were eccentric and vicious. The illustrious author of the 'Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe' was haunted by ideas of suicide. As he himself relates, he one day loaded a fowling-piece, sought a retired spot, and tried to fire the weapon into his mouth; it failed to go off, and he was disturbed before he could carry out his intention. This occurred in his youth, but his suicidal ideas never quitted him. 'My great defect,' he writes in the work above mentioned, 'is *ennui*, a distaste for everything, and a perpetual doubt.'

Not a few other writers of eminence have shown symptoms of insanity. George Sand was, in her youth, profoundly melancholic and felt tempted to commit suicide.

[1] David Hume: *Philosophical Essays*.
[2] Lélut: *L'Amulette de Pascal.*

'This temptation,' she writes, 'was sometimes so strong, so sudden, so strange, that it can only be described as a species of insanity. It partook of the character of a monomania.' The sight of water, of a precipice, of a loaded pistol, or of bottles containing poison was sufficient to arouse suicidal ideas in her mind, and her father, it appears, was subject to a similar weakness.—Tasso's homicidal mania and other eccentricities caused him to be confined for a time as a lunatic. He saw apparitions, sometimes glorious, as when the Virgin appeared to him in a crimson vapour, sometimes hellish and impish; he heard aërial laughter, hissing, and the ringing of bells. He believed himself to be accompanied by a familiar spirit with which he held sublime conversations. In the presence of his friend Manso (who was also Milton's friend), he summoned up this spirit and was surprised that Manso did not see and hear it also.—Silvio Pellico had hallucinations of sight, hearing, and touch. The stillness of his prison cell was broken by groans and laughter, while spirit hands seemed to pluck him by the garments or to try to extinguish the light. 'These apparitions,' he says, 'became at times terrible realities.' In the dark he often saw phantoms.—Both Tannahill and Lenau committed suicide. The latter, who ranks high as a poet in German estimation, was, from his boyhood, of a restless and extravagant disposition, and notorious for his excesses in wine and love. Like Byron, he often felt he would go mad. His deep melancholia was followed by a stroke of paralysis. In a sudden frenzy he threw himself out of a window, and from the injuries so received he died. The brain proved on a post-mortem examination to be profoundly diseased.—Hölderlin's insanity lasted nearly forty years.—Although never placed under restraint, Edgar Allan Poe was undoubtedly an insane subject. More than once he attempted or threatened suicide under delusions of persecution.[1] He was, moreover, very erratic, hypochondriacal, and from his early years a confirmed drunkard, and he died of brain disease at forty. The family stock was radically unsound. The poet's father, David Poe, was a drunkard, and given to extravagances

[1] W. J. Gill: *Life of Edgar Allan Poe.*

which 'excited great solicitude among his family and friends.' At eighteen David Poe eloped with and married an actress, and both he and she died early of consumption, leaving, besides the author of 'The Raven,' a daughter and another son named William. The daughter died young. William Poe was a poet of some promise, but, like his brother, of very 'irregular habits,' and short-lived.—Diderot had a sister insane, and a brother inordinately pious; Kerner's aunt was of a poetic disposition but melancholic, and had a daughter insane, another daughter, who was a somnambulist, becoming the mother of the poet Hauff.—Alfieri had fits of extreme exaltation and melancholy, was eccentric, and more than once attempted suicide.—The Roman poet Lucretius suffered from intermittent mania, in the lucid intervals of which he composed his great work 'De rerum naturâ.' At forty-four he is said to have committed suicide.

CHAPTER V

METAMORPHOSIS OF NERVE-DISORDER IN CONNECTION WITH GENIUS—GOUT, BLINDNESS, DEFORMITY AND NE'ER-DO-WELLISM IN MILTON'S FAMILY—THE NE'ER-DO-WELLISM OF THE SHERIDANS—THE COLERIDGE FAMILY PRESENTING EXAMPLES OF GOUT, INSANITY, DIPSOMANIA, PARALYSIS, AND CONSUMPTION—WORDSWORTH'S SISTER INSANE—BURNS'S HYPOCHONDRIA AND DRUNKENNESS—UNSOUNDNESS OF WALTER SCOTT'S FAMILY—BULWER LYTTON'S CHARACTERISTICS—MACAULAY AS A PRODIGY—THE BRONTË FAMILY—PATRICK BRONTË INSANE, HIS DAUGHTERS CONSUMPTIVE, HIS SON A NE'ER-DO-WELL—DICKENS'S GOUT AND PARALYSIS—THACKERAY, GEORGE ELIOT, WILKIE COLLINS, AND BROWNING AS NEUROPATHIC SUBJECTS—THE ECCENTRICITIES OF BALZAC, DUMAS, AND ALFRED DE MUSSET—GUSTAVE FLAUBERT AN EPILEPTIC—INSANITY IN VICTOR HUGO'S FAMILY

MILTON

As insanity is only one of the family of nerve-diseases, genius will be found combined, in most cases, with some other of the many ailments, mental and physical, which spring from the neurotic condition. Evidence of the morbid character of Milton's genius is furnished by the threefold fact that he lost his sight from congenital causes, that he was a gouty subject, and that a well-marked strain of ne'er-do-wellism ran through his near collaterals. Milton's father was a scrivener and a musician of considerable attainments, who lived to a great age. Of the poet's mother the suggestive fact is recorded by Aubrey that she 'had very weak eyes and used spectacles presently after she was thirty years old.' She died rather early, though of what disease is not stated. To this couple six children were born, three of whom died in infancy, leaving John, who was the third child, an elder sister, Anne, and a younger brother, Christopher. Anne married a man named Philips, and had two sons, Edmund and John Philips, the black sheep of the family. Both these nephews of the poet possessed literary ability,

but they led shiftless lives and died miserably poor. The former, who was a clever hack writer, married a widow with children, but whether he left descendants is unknown. John Philips wrote both prose and verse, and is described as a 'man of very loose principles, who forsook his wife and children without making any provision for them.' He had gout both in his hands and feet. In the memoirs of one John Dunton, published in 1705, it is said of him, 'He'll write you off a design in a very little time, if the gout or claret don't stop him.' From this it would appear that to his other vices he added drinking. Of his children we know nothing. The poet's sister, after the death of her first husband, married one Thomas Agar, who appears to have brought a corrective influence to bear upon the Milton blood. At all events, Agar's offspring by Anne Milton proved to be vigorous enough to leave respectable and prolific descendants, whence it may be concluded that the Philips blood was not a desirable blend. Milton's only brother Christopher became a disreputable judge, whose descendants do not appear to have outlived the third generation.

As a child, Milton was a prodigy; at ten years of age he was a poet, or at least a writer of verses. Unlike most poets, however, he was from his earliest years austere and serious, albeit not free from a certain 'haughty self-esteem.' A stickler for moral integrity, he was, as Masson expresses it, 'dead against the wild-oats theory,' holding that sensual indulgence at any period of life was the cause of spiritual incapacity. He had a judicial though somewhat contentious mind, and a total lack of humour. As a boy he suffered with his eyes, and had torturing headaches. Soon after his thirtieth year—the period from which his mother's infirmity dated—his eyesight began seriously to fail, and at the age of forty-four he found himself totally blind. As his eyes never showed any structural blemish, or his visual memory any falling off, the seat of the evil was probably the optic nerves. The morbid condition he transmitted to his descendants. His daughter Deborah had in turn a daughter who became a Mrs. Foster, and this lady, Milton's granddaughter, being visited by one Thomas Newton in 1749, when she was sixty-

one years of age, was found to be 'extremely short-sighted,' as well as 'weak and infirm.' She told Newton that her mother Deborah had inherited Milton's weakness of eyes, having been obliged to use spectacles from about the time of her marriage, and that she herself had been 'unable to read a chapter of the Bible these twenty years.'

Milton's nerve-disorder revealed itself most unmistakably through his daughter Anne, who was lame and otherwise deformed, and who suffered from an impediment in her speech.[1] Deborah, with her weak eyes, was 'likest her father.' A third daughter, Mary, appears to have been of an ailing disposition, for she remained unmarried and died about forty. These were the children of Milton's first wife, of whose character nothing is known except that she found in the poet an uncongenial husband. There was a son born, but he died in infancy, according to a biographer, 'through ill-usage or the bad constitution of an ill-chosen nurse.' More probably he fell a victim to the same inherent weakness that crippled Anne, that blinded Deborah, and that brought Mary to an early grave. By a second and a third wife Milton had no family. The daughters lived most unhappily with their father. They found him tyrannical, while he thought them undutiful, and he accused them of cheating him in money matters and stealing his books in order to sell them. Genius may be a golden idol, but, if so, it too often has feet of clay. The dissensions of the Milton household tell their own tale of what the world is accustomed to venerate as greatness. Milton died at sixty-five of gout 'struck in,' and some further indications of a neurotic condition is furnished by the fact that he was physically undergrown.

In a Darwinian sense the poet's descendants are to be numbered among the unfit. The only one of his daughters who had offspring was Deborah. She married a weaver named Clark, and had ten children, of whom only three attained to adult age. The first of these survivors, Urban Clark, died unmarried; another, the Mrs. Foster above referred to, had seven children, none of whom left issue; the third, Caleb Clark, went to Madras, and with the record of

[1] Masson: *Life of Milton.*

the death of a single grandchild of his all trace of Milton's posterity ceases.

STEELE

Of the parentage of Richard Steele there is nothing known, in a medical sense, except that he lost his father at five years of age, that his mother died soon afterwards, and that, in his thirty-sixth year, he speaks of himself as being 'divested of all relations' that might enjoy anything after him. A medical man named Woodward had Steele under his care, and in a posthumous volume, published in 1757, makes the following reference to the case of his eminent patient: 'He had the gout by fits for years, it constantly growing upon him, and in the winter of 1715 (when Steele was forty-three) and the following spring the fit was more severe than ever before, and continued for several months.' Woodward represents that he cured Steele's gout, although the patient 'frequently drank hard.' 'Only sometimes, after a great excess, his limbs became heavy, clumsy, and stiff, but never to such a degree as not in a little time to come to themselves.' In a diary kept by Steele in 1721 the writer deplores 'the miserable habit of mind' which he has contracted through a guilty indulgence of his appetites and passions. Here Steele probably refers not only to his drinking, but to his notorious thriftlessness and extravagance. In 1727 Steele had 'a stroke of paralysis, accompanied by a partial loss of speech, and he never completely recovered his mental powers.'[1] Two years later, at the age of fifty-seven, he died. By a second wife, who was not long-lived, Steele had two sons and two daughters. The boys passed away at six and eleven years of age respectively; Mary, the second daughter, died soon after her father of a 'lingering consumption.' The elder, Elizabeth, lived to become Lady Trevor. Aitken says she 'inherited something of her mother's beauty and her father's thriftlessness;' she had two children: one was still-born; the other, Diana, Steele's only grandchild, lived to the age of thirty-four, but was an idiot. 'It was thought,' says Aitken, 'that her idiocy was due to a fright which her mother had from a stag previous to her birth,' but her grandfather's gout and paralysis, her

[1] Aitken: *Life of Richard Steele.*

aunt's consumption, and the fact that Lady Trevor herself died of paralysis, give a different complexion to the matter.

Joseph Addison, Steele's more eminent colleague, died at forty-seven of asthma. There is evidence that he was addicted to drinking, and that, despite his brilliant social position, he suffered from depression of spirits. He left a daughter, who was weak-minded.

ADDISON

For several generations the Sheridan family were notorious for their ne'er-do-well qualities.[1] Thomas Sheridan, grandfather of the author of 'The School for Scandal,' was a strange, mercurial person, possessed of an 'extraordinary gift for occasional poetry,' but careless, eccentric, and ever the butt of fortune,'—always struggling with debt—the victim of perpetual failure. He died of asthma. The only one of his children of whom anything is known, 'Tom,' the actor, was a man of ability, but like his father, thriftless, and, according to Boswell, had 'a Quixotic mind.' This erratic personage, who was ruined by his own extravagance, did little for himself, but, by his marriage with Miss Chamberlane, he presented to the world Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the dramatist. Tom's wife was, like himself, a neuropathic subject. Her father, the Rev. Mr. Chamberlane, sank into imbecility and left behind him a weakly, ailing family, who died in their prime. A son, the Rev. Walter Chamberlane, was a poet, and was given to 'absent-mindedness,' with reference to which peculiarity various anecdotes are told. The mother of Richard Brinsley Sheridan was the eldest of this family. As a child she had a paralytic affection which induced permanent lameness. Gifted, or cursed, with a 'strangely sensitive temperament,' she wrote verses, and a novel that had much success in its own day. From a memoir by her granddaughter, Miss Alicia Lefanu, it appears that Mrs. Sheridan was, all her life, subject to 'fainting fits' and 'absent-mindedness,' and that she was 'often a sufferer from her health.' She died at forty-two. The day before her death she became speechless, probably from paralysis, but a post-mortem examination, it is

SHERIDAN

[1] Percy Fitzgerald: *Lives of the Sheridans.*

stated, revealed the presence of 'four internal maladies, each of which must have proved fatal.'

From the pathological point of view, the union of this nervous and suffering lady with the thriftless and eccentric Tom Sheridan could not but be disastrous. Richard Brinsley Sheridan was a dunce at school, and a weakly boy; but he had hardly attained to manhood before he launched out in the true Sheridan style. His thriftlessness and extravagance are well known. He abandoned himself to riotous living without a moral check of any kind. 'There was hardly a single person,' says Fitzgerald, 'with whom he had ever been intimate that he did not alienate or injure.' That he ran away with Miss Linley was the smallest of his moral offences. She became a most unhappy wife. Sheridan wore her out with his 'unreasonableness and unintelligible folly.' Within a few weeks of her death he married again, the victim on this occasion being a Miss Ogle, whom he won by love-letters copied from those previously addressed by him to Miss Linley. The second wife was as much to be pitied as the first. As he advanced in years Sheridan's vices became more and more intolerable. He drank to excess; his friends cut him dead; he became a *déclassé*, miserably poor, if not in absolute want; his debts were 'la mer à boire.' At the age of sixty-six he was seized with epileptic fits, in which he died. His genius was of the most unpainstaking kind. 'The Rivals' he dashed off in six weeks at the age of twenty-three; the 'School for Scandal,' his masterpiece, dates from his twenty-fifth year. With ordinary restraints his career would have been a brilliant and honoured one, but this was not a condition of his genius. If he ever had any moral compunctions as to anything, they were merely impulses of the moment, too ephemeral to pass into acts.

The Linley family, with whom Sheridan allied himself by marriage, appears to have been as unsound as his own. Mrs. Sheridan's father was a musician and composer, who became imbecile. His sons were 'a compound of musical gifts and eccentricity!' One of them, Thomas Linley, who was accidentally drowned at twenty-two, was a prodigy as a composer and violinist, and was declared by Mozart to be a

true genius. The daughters, beautiful and fascinating, sang like nightingales. All the family died young, Mrs. Sheridan falling a victim to consumption. By his marriage with Miss Elizabeth Linley, Sheridan had several children, only one of whom, Tom, left descendants. Short-lived himself, for he died at forty-seven, the son appears to have had the good fortune to marry healthy blood in the person of Miss Callender, who saved the direct Sheridan line from extinction. The family born to this couple comprised the Hon. Mrs. Norton, and one of their grandchildren is the present Lord Dufferin. Throughout both the Sheridan and Linley stock nerve disorder and genius are found side by side.

COLERIDGE

The father of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the Rev. John Coleridge, was eccentric and absent-minded, and died suddenly at sixty-one. Anecdotes illustrative of his peculiarities will be found in all the poet's biographies, and need not be repeated here. Coleridge's mother was an uneducated woman, simple in her habits, and long-lived. To the medical expert, eccentricity in life and sudden death—the latter being due almost invariably to apoplexy or failure of the heart's action—are eloquent indications of nerve disorder, and in the family of an individual so afflicted, morbid symptoms are naturally to be looked for. In the Coleridge family such symptoms are not wanting. The Rev. John Coleridge had three daughters by a first wife, and nine sons and one daughter by a second. Of the lives and deaths of the first family there is no record; the second, of which 'S. T. C.' was the youngest member, was certainly not robust. Five of the poet's elder brothers, and his only sister, were in their graves before he was twenty-one, and the history of the surviving members of the family, though meagre, is significant. Luke Coleridge, dying at twenty-four, left a son, William Hart Coleridge, afterwards Bishop of Barbadoes, who had to resign his see 'through ill-health' at forty-two, and who 'died suddenly' at fifty; while of the family of the poet's brother James, Hartley Nelson Coleridge died at forty-five of spinal paralysis, and a daughter, Mrs. Patteson, of a 'wasting illness.' The issue of James Coleridge possessed the necessary vigour to survive and even to become prolific; but another

brother, the Rev. Edward, had no children by a first wife, and by a second had a son and daughter, who died childless; while a third brother, George, left a son, who died unmarried.

Upon Samuel Taylor Coleridge himself the family heritage of nervous instability appears to have descended in a specially aggravated form. As a child he was weakly, self-absorbed, and morbidly imaginative. In his fifth or sixth year, in consequence of some quarrel with a brother, he ran away from home and passed the whole night, a night of rain and storm, on a bleak hill side, where he was found at day-break, numbed in every limb. The same kind of morbid impulse caused him afterwards to run away from college and enlist as a private soldier, and later still to betake himself to Malta for no intelligible reason, leaving his friends in ignorance of his fate, and his wife and children dependent upon charity. From his earliest years he was also extremely precocious. 'I never thought as a child,' he says, 'never had the language of a child.' By his eleventh year, according to his son and biographer, the Rev. Derwent Coleridge, he was 'already a poet, and yet more characteristically a metaphysician.' Coleridge's own account of the matter is that 'at a very premature age, even before my fifteenth year, I had bewildered myself in metaphysics and in theological controversy,' particularly with reference to 'fixed fate, free-will, and fore-knowledge absolute.' The poet's youth and early manhood were the only period of his life during which he enjoyed a truce from bodily and nervous ailments. This blessed interval, as he calls it, appears to have lasted some ten or twelve years. At the age of thirty his health was completely broken by gout, and bodily suffering drove him to the use of opium. He lived to be sixty-two, but the latter half of his life was a wreck. In personal appearance Coleridge was far from prepossessing. 'His whole figure and air,' says Carlyle, was 'flabby and irresolute, expressive of weakness under the possibility of strength.' He hung loosely upon his limbs, with knees bent, and in a stooping attitude. In walking he shuffled rather than stepped. Dorothy Wordsworth remarked that he had bad teeth, and De Quincey says he had in his later years a lateral curvature of the spine—

both indications of a scrofulous constitution. 'After death,' wrote his daughter Sara, 'his body was opened, according to his own earnest request. The causes of death were sufficiently manifest from the state of the vital parts, but that internal pain from which he suffered more or less during his whole life was not to be explained, or only by that which medical men call nervous sympathy.' It is a pity no record has been kept of the condition of the brain, where, possibly, the secret lay.

There is, however, another record open to us in the fate of Coleridge's offspring, where the morbid characteristics of genius are so clearly written, that he who runs may read. Coleridge married Sara Fricker, sister of Mrs. Southey. As Mrs. Southey became insane, and as another Fricker died of paralysis, it is obvious that the marriage was a most undesirable one in a physiological sense. Whether the Coleridge or the Fricker heredity was the more to be dreaded it is impossible to say; but the blend of the two proved singularly disastrous to Hartley Coleridge, the first-fruit of this ill-starred union, who with great gifts combined great vices, and under the load of both sank into an early grave. Hartley Coleridge was a poet with more than a dash of insanity in his composition. He was never quite responsible for his actions. As a child he was even more precocious than his father. At five years of age he was a deep thinker, and was already in an agony of doubt as to the reality of existence; while seated on somebody's knee he would pour forth the strangest metaphysical speculations and poetic inventions. Between fact and fiction he was apparently unable to discriminate. He imagined a cataract bursting forth in a field near his home and forming an island, in which a community grew up; and this region gradually attained in his mind the dimensions of a new continent, with a people and a system of government of its own. He called it Ejuxria. Derwent Coleridge, in his memoir of Hartley, says: 'The history and geography of Ejuxria were at one time as familiar to me, to say the least of it, as any other portion, I was about to say, of the habitable globe.' From Hartley's vivid description Derwent knew the generals and statesmen of Ejuxria by name; he

witnessed the jar of faction, traced the course of sedition, saw changes of government and the growth of public opinion. In a word, Hartley's hallucinations had all the features of a living reality, and he was able to convey a similar impression of it to others. He grew 'angry and mortified' if the literal truth of his words was doubted. 'His usual mode of introducing the subject,' says his biographer, 'was, "Derwent," calling me by name (for these disclosures in later years were made to me alone), "I have had letters and papers from Ejuxria." Then came his budget of news with appropriate reflections, his words flowing on in an exhaustless stream, his countenance bearing witness to the inspiration—shall I call it?—by which he was agitated. Nothing could exceed the seriousness of his manner and, doubtless, of his feelings. He was, I am persuaded, entirely unconscious of invention.'[1] It would be difficult to find a more striking example of an insane hallucination than this conception, which possessed the mind of Hartley Coleridge for so many years. Nor was this the only figment of his brain. As a boy he was accustomed to spin to his companions endless romances embodying a great variety of personages, his language on such occasions being as vivid as it was flowing. 'His sensibility was intense, and he had not the wherewithal to control it. He was liable to paroxysms of rage, self-accusation, and other painful emotions, during which he bit his arm or finger violently.' In his fits of depression he had hallucinations of hearing. To his friend, Chauncey Hare Townshend, he said, with reference to his hypochondriacal tendencies, 'I have even heard a voice—not a creation of the fancy, but an audible and sensuous voice, foreboding evil to me.' Along with these manifestations of insanity Hartley Coleridge displayed intellectual and poetic powers of a high order, and he also had the physical energy required to turn them to account. His misfortune was that, in a still greater degree than his father, he was destitute of the power of self-control. He took to drinking, and led an irregular and spasmodic existence till his death, which occurred from an attack of bronchitis at fifty-two.

[1] Derwent Coleridge: *Memoir of Hartley Coleridge.*

The genius which cannot regulate itself is not very distinguishable from insanity. Hartley Coleridge's brain was always teeming with ideas. These appear to have found but incomplete expression in the poems which he threw off almost without effort. In repose 'his countenance was stern and thoughtful in the extreme, indicative of deep and passionate meditation, so much so as to be at times almost startling.' 'Judging from his note-books and miscellaneous papers, the quantity, variety, and quality of the thoughts which passed through his brain in his latter years,' says his brother, 'would surely have ranked him among the most copious and instructive, as well as delightful, writers of his age had he exerted his resolution or possessed the faculty of combining his materials on any considerable scale or on any given plan.' The vice of Hartley Coleridge's organisation betrayed itself in his stunted stature, which barely exceeded five feet, and in his prematurely aged gait and appearance; his hair was latterly quite white.

Sara, the only daughter of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, inherited a feeble constitution, and with it, not only some of her father's poetic genius, but also his fondness for metaphysical inquiry. There is a close analogy between her case and that of her brother Hartley. 'Nervous sensitiveness and morbid imaginativeness,' she remarks, 'set in with me early.' She fell into a 'wasting illness' and died at forty-nine. During the last ten years of her life she was 'unchangeably depressed.' She married her cousin Hartley Nelson Coleridge, another sufferer from the evil heritage of the Coleridge blood, whose death from spinal paralysis has already been noted. The son who was born of this fatal marriage, Herbert Coleridge, was afflicted with stammering, and died of consumption at thirty-one. Derwent Coleridge, Hartley's younger brother, inherited the longevity of his paternal grandmother, dying at eighty-three. In his case the neuropathic tendency of the family assumed the form of 'constant attacks of acute neuralgia.'

Very similar to that of Charles and Mary Lamb was the association of Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy, except that throughout his long life—he died at eighty-four—Wordsworth's intellect was never deranged. Evidence of the neuro-

pathic element in his composition is afforded by the history of his family, and chiefly by the insanity of Dorothy Wordsworth, who, like Mary Lamb, was poetical and in the closest sympathy with her brother's pursuits. Wordsworth's father was a man of 'great force of character'—a phrase which occurs with remarkable frequency in the family history of the insane. What it means precisely in the present instance cannot be gathered from biographical records, but if no neurotic characteristics existed in the poet's father, who died suddenly at forty-two, of what is said to have been 'inflammation of the lungs,' there is an unmistakable unsoundness to be traced to his mother, who died at thirty-one of consumption. Wordsworth attributed his mother's decline to her having caught cold from being put to sleep in a friend's 'best bed-room;' but, as the consumptive taint subsequently appeared in his own children, it probably existed in the family before the incident of the bed-room occurred. De Quincey's description of Dorothy Wordsworth testifies to the strain of insanity in the Wordsworth blood: 'Her eyes were not soft, nor were they fierce or bold; but they were wild and startling, and hurried in their motion. Her manner was warm and even ardent; her sensibility seemed constitutionally deep, and some subtle fire of impassioned intellect apparently burned within her, which, being alternately pushed forward into a conspicuous expression by the irresponsible instincts of her temperament, and then immediately checked in obedience to the decorum of her sex and age and her maidenly condition, gave to her whole demeanour and to her conversation an air of embarrassment, and even of self-conflict, that was almost distressing to witness. Even her very utterance and enunciation often suffered in point of clearness and steadiness from the agitation of her excessive organic sensibility. At times the self counter-action and self-baffling of her feelings caused her even to stammer, and so determinedly to stammer that a stranger who should have seen her and quitted her in that state of feeling would certainly have set her down for one plagued with that infirmity of speech as distressingly as Charles Lamb himself.' The same writer further remarks: 'Miss Wordsworth was too ardent and fiery to maintain the

WORDSWORTH

reserve essential to dignity'—in short, she was 'the creature of impulse' with 'a self-consuming fire of thought.'

Dorothy Wordsworth's poetic nature found expression in many passages of her diary, and she also wrote verses of a high order of merit. Physically her energy was prodigious; she was accustomed to walk twenty or thirty miles a day. In her fiftieth year her intelligence began to give way, a severe illness so prostrating her in body and mind that, according to Principal Shairp, she 'never recovered from it.' Three years afterwards an attack of brain fever supervened, leaving 'her intellect painfully impaired and her bright nature permanently overclouded.' It was not, however, until she was fifty-six that, in Wordsworth's euphemistic phrase, his sister became 'a confirmed invalid.' Loss of memory was the earliest characteristic of her disease, and she gradually fell into imbecility, which continued till her death at eighty-six. In her benighted condition she was accustomed to repeat the favourite small poems of her brother, as well as a few of her own. What is still more remarkable, her faculty for poetic composition remained, several pieces composed during her state of mental darkness finding a place in her biography.[1] At least one other member of the Wordsworth family showed signs of the poetic temperament. Concerning the seafaring brother who went down with his ship off the Bill of Portland in 1804, Coleridge wrote on one occasion to Miss Wordsworth: 'Your brother John is one of you—a man who hath solitary usings of his own intellect, deep in feeling, with a subtle tact and swift instinct of true beauty.' Wordsworth himself says that his brother John became a 'silent poet,' and was known among those of his own craft as 'the philosopher.' In Wordsworth's offspring the neuropathic taint unmistakably appears. One of his children, Kate, had a stroke of paralysis at the age of four, her left side being disabled. Some months afterwards she was discovered in a speechless condition in bed and suffering from convulsions, in which she died. Wordsworth's favourite daughter Dora grew to womanhood, with a character which Sara Coleridge described as 'most peculiar—a compound of vehemence of feeling and gentleness, sharpness

[1] Edmund Lee: *Dorothy Wordsworth, the Story of a Sister's Love.*

and lovingness, which is not often seen;' and at forty-three she died of consumption.

BURNS

Robert Burns believed that poets had a 'stronger imagination, more delicate sensibility, and a more ungovernable set of passions' than other men. He spoke from experience; in the words above quoted he faithfully describes his own characteristics. But while he had something more, he had also something less than other men. His ballads notwithstanding, he had no aptitude for music. Both the poet and his brother Gilbert took lessons in music, but, says their teacher, 'Robert's ear in particular was remarkably dull; it was long before I could get them to distinguish one tune from another.'[1] Burns's mother lived to old age without any notable ailment. His father, however, died of consumption, and was distinguished in life, says the poet in one of his letters, 'for a headlong, ungovernable irascibility.' Here we have explanation enough of the nerve-disorder of the son. The poet, in a letter, says: 'My constitution and frame were *ab origine* blasted with a deep incurable taint of melancholia which poisons my existence.' As a young man, according to his brother Gilbert, he not only suffered from depression of spirits but 'was almost constantly afflicted in the evenings with a dull headache, which at an after period of his life was exchanged for a palpitation of the heart, and a threatening of fainting and suffocation in his bed in the night-time.' With reference to these ailments Lockhart observes: 'I have heard from an old acquaintance of the bard who often shared his bed with him at Mossgiel, that even at that early period, when intemperance had surely nothing to do with the matter, those ominous symptoms of radical disorder in the digestive system—the palpitation and suffocation of which Gilbert speaks—were so regularly his nocturnal visitants that it was his custom to have a great tub of cold water by his bedside into which he usually plunged more than once in the course of the night, thereby procuring instant, though short-lived relief.'[2] Like Edgar Allan Poe, Burns fell a victim to drunkenness, and although his death at thirty-seven was immediately due to cold—the result of a drinking bout—we may

[1] Currie's Memoir.

[2] Lockhart: *Life of Burns.*

conclude with Lockhart that the 'irritable and nervous bodily constitution,' inherited from his father, together with the 'exhausting excitement of an intensely poetical temperament,' was incompatible with length of days. Burns's sensibility was extreme. Once in Edinburgh, in the presence of Walter Scott, then a boy, Burns was shown a print representing a soldier lying dead in the snow, with his dog sitting in misery beside him; and the simple picture so affected him that he shed tears. Scott, who relates the incident, further remembers that Burns's eye was large and dark, and that it glowed—'literally glowed'—when its owner spoke with feeling or interest. There was one thing that Burns loved as passionately as poetry—woman. 'In love,' says his brother Gilbert, and the passion began with him at fifteen, 'the agitations of his mind and body exceeded anything of the kind I ever knew.' Gilbert lived to the age of sixty-seven, but a younger brother died early, and although the poet had four sons I am not aware that there are any descendants of his at the present day.

SCOTT

The family of Walter Scott, whose pathological history stands out clearly in his own autobiographical notes and in Lockhart's admirable life of him, was permeated by nerve disorder. Scott's paternal grandfather, a farmer and dealer, was 'extremely active, quick, keen, and fiery in his temper,' and he married a woman whose character is vaguely indicated by the fact that she had a brother described by Scott as a 'weak, silly man.' Of the children born to this couple, the one with whom we have more particularly to do, Scott's father, also named Walter, died in his seventieth year 'after a succession of paralytic attacks, under which mind as well as body had by degrees been laid quite prostrate.' Unlike his father, this Walter Scott, although a lawyer, was a man of much simplicity of character, and devout. He married Anne Rutherford, daughter of an eminent physician. This lady, the novelist's mother, died also of paralysis at an advanced age, losing suddenly the use of speech and of one side; her brother, Dr. Rutherford, died of gout in the stomach after showing a partial failure of memory; while her sister, from some unknown cause, 'expired suddenly without a groan and without suffering.' That a robust family could be born

to such a couple was, of course, an impossibility. They had twelve children, of whom six perished in infancy, and, writing fifty years later, Lockhart sorrowfully observed that of the remaining six four had left no descendants.

Sir Walter had four brothers and one sister, concerning whom he has left on record some interesting facts. The eldest brother, Robert, was in the army. 'His temper,' says the novelist, 'was bold and haughty, and to me was often chequered with what I felt to be capricious tyranny. In other respects I loved him much, for he had a strong turn for literature, read poetry with taste and judgment, and composed verses himself which had gained him great applause among his mess-mates. . . . In bad humour he kicked and cuffed without mercy.' This brother died of paralysis. The second, John Scott, was also in the army, and died a young man. Anne Scott, the novelist's only sister, was of a delicate constitution and died at twenty-nine. 'Her temper,' he observes, 'like that of my brother, was peculiar, and in her, perhaps, it showed more odd from the habits of indulgence which her nervous illnesses had formed. But, at least, she was an affectionate girl, neither devoid of talent nor of feeling, though living in an ideal world which she had formed to herself by force of imagination.' Thomas, the third brother, emigrated to Canada, where he had a son and two daughters, who do not appear to have left descendants. In Sir Walter's youngest brother, Daniel, the inevitable ne'er-do-well of the family, who treads upon the heels of genius, crops up. With a marked 'aversion to labour,' or, rather, 'indolence,' 'he had neither the vivacity of intellect,' says Sir Walter, 'which supplies the want of diligence, nor the pride which renders the most detested labour better than dependence or contempt. His career was as unfortunate as might be augured from this unhappy combination, and after various unsuccessful attempts to establish himself in life he died on his return from the West Indies.' Concerning Daniel, Lockhart supplies some further particulars. 'The story is, shortly,' says the biographer, 'that the adventurer's habits of dissipation proved incurable, but he finally left Jamaica under a stigma, which Sir Walter regarded with utter severity. Being employed

against a refractory or insurgent body of negroes, he had exhibited a lamentable deficiency of spirit and conduct. He returned to Scotland a dishonoured man, and though he found shelter and compassion from his mother, his brother would never see him again. Nay, when soon after, his health, shattered by absolute indulgence, gave way and he died as yet a young man, the poet refused either to attend his funeral or to wear mourning for him like the rest of the family.' Twenty years afterwards, however, Scott spoke to Lockhart in terms of great and painful contrition for the austerity with which he had conducted himself on that occasion. Like others of his class, the unfortunate young man was a victim to the law of heredity; science, recognising that his faults were those of an inherited organisation, does him the justice that his own family denied him.

The paralytic ailment of his parents declared itself in Scott's case in infancy. At the age of eighteen months he felt a sudden loss of power in his right leg, and for the remainder of his life he was lame. During youth and manhood his nerves appear to have been dormant, but both paralysis and apoplexy were the afflictions of his later years. At the age of fifty, the novelist, writing to a friend with reference to the work on which he was then engaged, says, 'Peveril will, I fear, smell of the apoplexy.' This letter, adds Lockhart, 'contains the first allusions to the species of malady that ultimately proved fatal to Sir Walter Scott. He, as far as I know, never mentioned to any one of his family the symptoms he here speaks of. But long before any serious apoplectic seizure occurred, it had been suspected by myself, and by others of his friends, that he had sustained slight attacks of that nature and concealed them.' Three years later, in his journal, Scott speaks of feeling 'a tremor of the head, the pulsations of which become painfully sensible, a disposition to causeless alarm, much lassitude, and decay of vigour and activity of intellect.' An odd optical delusion also occurred to him. 'I have of late,' he writes, 'been accustomed for the first time to the use of spectacles. Now, when I have laid them aside to step into a room dimly lighted out of the strong light which I use for writing, I

have seen, or seemed to see, the rim of the same spectacles which I have left behind me. At first the impression was so lively that I put my hands to my eyes, believing that I had the actual spectacles on at the moment; but what I saw was only the *eidolon* or image of the said useful servants.' More alarming was the hallucination of sight which occurred to Scott on hearing of Byron's death. He thought, for a moment, that he saw the image of his deceased friend, but on examination it proved to be nothing but the folds of some drapery. It was while Scott was writing the 'Tales of a Grandfather,' at fifty-eight, that his first alarming stroke of paralysis occurred. It rendered him speechless for ten minutes, and thenceforward his letters continued to drop hints as to the imminence of a recurrence of that ailment or apoplexy. His gloomy anticipations were soon realised. Repeated shocks of paralysis weakened him to such an extent, that he sank into a state of mental torpor, and, apoplexy supervening, caused his death at sixty-one.

The curse that overhangs the family of the man of genius fell with its wonted severity upon the offspring of Scott. He had two sons and two daughters. The former died as young men, childless. The elder daughter, Anne, laboured, for years, under a 'miserably shattered' constitution, looking and speaking like one 'taking the measure of an unmade grave,' and finally succumbed to brain fever. Sophia, the younger, who became Mrs. Lockhart, died, like her sister, in what ought to have been the prime of womanhood, after a long 'illness'—most probably consumption—'which she bore with meekness and fortitude.' Mrs. Lockhart left two children, Walter and Charlotte; the former died young, without issue, and Charlotte, who became Mrs. Hope, succeeded to Sir Walter's estate at Abbotsford, but of her three children only one, a daughter, survived the period of childhood. 'The poet's ambition to found a family,' says Lockhart, 'sleeps with him.'

KEATS

No poet was ever born in more prosaic surroundings than Keats. His father was a stableman, his mother a livery-stable keeper's daughter. The elder Keats was killed by falling from a horse at the age of thirty-six,

and nothing is known of his parentage; but there is evidence enough that the poet derived his constitution mainly from his mother. Prodigal in her tastes, passionately fond of amusement, and, at the same time, 'saturnine in disposition,' Mrs. Keats suffered from rheumatism, and died of consumption—a neuropathic subject to the tips of her fingers. As a child Keats was 'violent and ungovernable,' and manifested emotional extremes, being one moment convulsed with laughter and the next bathed in tears. He was dwarfish in figure, barely five feet high, but his passions were so strong that he had to calm his nerves with laudanum. Lord Houghton saw him once in a state of physical excitement so intense, that it 'might have appeared to those who did not know him to be one of fierce intoxication.' He had a 'swooning admiration' for Fanny Brawne, to whom he wrote passionate love letters. When out of this vein he was plunged in despondency. On one occasion he wrote: 'The world is too brutal to me; I am glad there is such a place as the grave—I am sure I shall never have any rest till I get there.' The prophecy was too true. During his short life Keats was 'almost delirious' at times with his mental and bodily sufferings, and his agitation under the attacks of the critics is said by Shelley to have resembled insanity. No organisation could have been more responsive than his to outward influences. 'The humming of a bee, the sight of a flower, the glitter of the sun,' it is said, 'made his nature tremble; then his eye flashed, his cheek glowed, and his mouth quivered.' He died at twenty-five, of consumption. The same disease carried off his brother Thomas in early manhood, but his sister Fanny attained the age of eighty-six. Both these members of the family were as undistinguished as their ancestry, among whom no biographer has discovered the smallest trace of eminence.

MOORE

Moore lost his memory some years before his death, which occurred at seventy-two. All his family, daughters and sons, predeceased him—Anne at five (as the result of a fall, though, had she lived, said the doctors, it could only have been as an 'invalid from the bad state of her inward parts'), Anastasia Mary at seventeen, Olivia in infancy,

John at nineteen ('his constitution,' according to Lord John Russell, 'being too delicate to carry him on to manhood'), and Thomas at twenty-seven. The last named, who was the eldest son, belonged to the ne'er-do-well class. Lord John Russell says he 'was not physically strong, and had little restraint over himself;' his wild and dissipated life terminated in consumption.

BULWER LYTTON

'All biographies begin with genealogy,' says Bulwer Lytton, 'and with reason, for many of the influences that sway the destiny that ends not with the grave, are already formed before the mortal utters his first wail in the cradle.'[1] There never was a truer word spoken, though it may be doubted whether Bulwer Lytton, who was proud of his ancestry, grasped its full import as regards himself. His maternal grandfather, Richard Warburton Lytton, was eccentric. The unbalanced condition of his mind revealed itself in an extraordinary capacity for acquiring languages ancient and modern. He wrote a drama in Hebrew, intending it for the stage. This work he afterwards burned in despair because, as he told a friend, he could not find Jews sufficiently versed in Hebrew to act it. The friend pertinently observed, 'And if you did, where on earth would you find an audience sufficiently versed in Hebrew to understand it?' The old scholar was extremely short-sighted, mismanaged his affairs, quarrelled with and lived apart from his wife, and died of an apoplectic seizure. His daughter, the novelist's mother, had a shy, sensitive temper, great self-will, and a passionate fondness for poetry. There was something morbid in the long estrangement she set between herself and her distinguished son on account of his marriage. On the paternal side of Bulwer Lytton's family there was also a strong neuropathic strain. His father, Colonel Bulwer, suffered from gout, of which he died suddenly. Two uncles were 'eccentric.' Colonel Bulwer, with his 'powerful self-willed nature,' appears to have merited the same description. The marriage of which the novelist was born was an extremely ill-assorted one. 'At first,' says Bulwer Lytton, 'though my father's temper was of the roughest, yet he was

[1] *Life and Remains of Edward Bulwer, Lord Lytton.* By his Son.

very much in love, and love has a good-humour of its own. But gradually the temper rose superior to the love, and gout, to which from early youth my father had been occasionally subjected, now fixed upon premature and almost habitual residence. He bore pain with the fierce impatience common to the strong when they suffer, and it exasperated all the passions which, even in health and happiness, that powerful and fiery organisation could but imperfectly control.' The mother's constitution, always delicate, also began to give way; her nerves were shattered, and 'to the dejected mind was added the enfeebled frame.' It was in her darkest hour that Bulwer Lytton was born. As a child he was weakly and delicate, and for some reason—no doubt a morbid caprice—his father always regarded him with a special aversion. At school the future author had a reputation for precocity and cleverness, and composed verses. He was only nine years of age when his master wrote to Mrs. Bulwer: 'Your son has exhausted all I can teach him. His energy is extraordinary. He has a vital power which demands a large field. He has it in him to become a very remarkable man.'

Exuberant natures with a morbid tinge are subject to strong reactions. In early manhood Bulwer Lytton's disposition took 'a morbid and even a dangerous inclination.' He had frequent 'fits of great melancholy and dejection,' and these moods were followed by impatient cravings for excitement. From the restlessness due to his great physical activity he sought relief in smoking, and all his works from the age of twenty-two were composed under the soothing influence of tobacco. At the same time his irritability was sometimes such as to render him 'absolutely unapproachable.' Although never robust, he had a devouring energy for work, and even in his early married days so incessantly was he occupied, that his wife seldom saw him for five minutes till two or three in the morning. A nervous pain in the ear caused him great suffering, and long before he was thirty his sensitiveness had become so morbidly acute that, to a visitor, he 'seemed like a man who had been flayed and was sore all over.' Ordinary worries were, to his exasperated brain, like friction to highly inflamed flesh. Hence the miseries and