

intellect, the moral feelings, and the will, because it is imagined that so much of these remains to him that his mind can tell the difference between right and wrong. There is little doubt that he does know the difference between right and wrong. But his mind and will are diseased; he could not restrain his suicidal impulses—he could not overcome delusive impressions; and it is almost certain that mental disease led him to commit a cruel and useless homicide.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
 HARRINGTON TUKE, M.D.
The Lancet, July 22nd, 1865.

Cardinal Wiseman on Hamlet.

I REMEMBER AN anecdote of Garrick, who, in company with another performer of some eminence, was walking in the country, and about to enter a village. "Let us pass off," said the younger comedian to his more distinguished companion, "as two intoxicated fellows." They did so, apparently with perfect success, being saluted by the jeers and abuse of the inhabitants. When they came forth at the other end of the village, the younger performer asked Garrick how he had fulfilled his part. "Very well," was the reply, "except that you were not perfectly tipsy in your legs."

Now, in Shakespeare there is no danger of a similar defect. Whatever his character is intended to be, it is carried out to its very extremities. Nothing is forgotten, nothing overlooked.

Many of you, no doubt, are aware that a controversy has long existed, whether the madness of Hamlet is intended by Shakespeare to be real or simulated.

If a dramatist wished to represent one of his persons as feigning madness, that assumed condition would be naturally desired by the writer to be as like as possible to the real affliction. If the other persons associated with him could at once discover that the madness was put on, of course the entire action would be marred, and the object for which the pretended madness was designed would be defeated by the discovery. How consummate must be the poet's art, who can have so skilfully described, to the minutest symptoms, the mental malady of a great mind, as to leave it uncertain to the present day, even among learned physicians versed in such maladies, whether Hamlet's madness was real or assumed.

This controversy may be said to have been brought to a close by one of the ablest among those in England, who have every opportunity of studying the almost innumerable shades through

which alienation of mind can pass.* And so delicate are the changeful characteristics which Shakespeare describes, that Dr. Conolly considers that a twofold form of disease is placed before us in the Danish prince. He concludes that he was labouring under real madness, yet able to put on a fictitious and artificial derangement for the purposes which he kept in view. Passing through act by act, and scene by scene, analysing with experienced eye each new symptom as it occurs, dividing and anatomising, with the finest scalpel, every fibre of his brain, he exhibits, step by step, the transitionary characters of the natural disease, in a mind naturally, and by education, great and noble, but thrown off his pivot by the anguish of his sufferings and the strain of aroused passion. And to this is superadded another and not genuine affection, which serves its turn with that estranged mind when it suits it to act, more especially that part which the natural ailment did not suffice for.

Now, Dr. Conolly considers these symptoms so accurately as well as minutely described, that he throws out the conjecture that Shakespeare may have borrowed the account of them from some unknown papers by his son-in-law, Dr. Hall.

But let it be remembered that in those days mental phenomena were by no means accurately examined or generally known. There was but little attention paid to the peculiar forms of monomania, or to its treatment, beyond restraint and often cruelty.

The poor idiot was allowed, if harmless, to wander about the village or the country to drivel or gibber amidst the teasing or ill-natured treatment of boys or rustics. The poor maniac was chained or tied in some wretched out-house, at the mercy of some heartless guardian, with no protector but the constable. Shakespeare could not be supposed, in the little town of Stratford, nor indeed in London itself, to have had opportunities of studying the influence and the appearance of mental derangement of a high-minded and finely-cultivated prince. How, then, did Shakespeare contrive to paint so highly-finished and yet so complex an image? Simply by the exercise of that strong sympathetic will which enabled him to transport, or rather to transmute himself into another personality. While this character was strongly before him, he changed himself into a maniac; he felt intuitively what would be his own thought, what his feelings, were he in that situation; he played with himself the part of the madman, with his own grand mind as the basis of its action; he grasped on every side the imagery which he felt would

* 'A Study of Hamlet,' by John Conolly, M.D., London, 1863. In page 52 the author quotes Mr. Coleridge and M. Killemain, as holding the opinion that Shakespeare has "contrived to blend both feigned and real madness in the extraordinary character of Hamlet; and to join together the light of reason, the cunning of intentional error, and the involuntary disorder of a soul."

have come into his mind, beautiful even when disordered, sublime even when it was grovelling, brilliant even when dulled, and clothed it in words of fire and of tenderness, with a varied rapidity which partakes of wildness and of sense. He needed not to look for a model out of himself, for it cost him no effort to change the angle of his mirror and sketch his own countenance awry. It was but little for him to pluck away the crown from reason and contemplate it dethroned.

Before taking leave of Dr. Conolly's most interesting monograph, I will allow myself to make only one remark. Having determined to represent Hamlet in this anomalous and perplexing condition, it was of the utmost importance to the course and end of this sublime drama, that one principal incident should be most decisively separated from Hamlet's reverse of mind.

Had it been possible to attribute the appearance of the ghost, as the queen, his mother, does attribute it in the fifth act, to the delusion of his bewildered phantasy, the whole groundwork of the drama would have crumbled beneath its superincumbent weight.

Had the spectre been seen by Hamlet, or by him first, we should have been perpetually troubled with the doubt whether or not it was the hallucination of a distracted or the invention of a deceitful brain. But Shakespeare felt the necessity of making this apparition be held for a reality, and therefore he makes it the very first incident in his tragedy, antecedent to the slightest symptom of either natural or affected derangement, and makes it first be seen by two witnesses together, and then conjointly by a third unbelieving and fearless witness. It is the testimony of these three which first brings to the knowledge of the incredulous prince this extraordinary occurrence. One may doubt whether any other writer has ever made a ghost appear successively to those whom we may call the wrong persons, before showing himself to the one whom alone he cared to visit. The extraordinary exigencies of Shakespeare's plot rendered necessary this unusual fiction. And it serves, moreover, to give the only colour of justice to acts which otherwise must have appeared unqualified as mad freaks, or frightful crimes.

What Dr. Conolly has done for Hamlet and Ophelia, Dr. Bucknill had previously performed, on a more extensive scale. In his 'Psychology of Shakespeare,'* he has minutely investigated the mental condition of Macbeth, King Lear, Timon, and other characters, In Hamlet he seems inclined to take a different view from Dr. Conolly, inasmuch as he considers the simulated madness the principal feature, and the natural unsoundness, which it is impossible to overlook, as secondary. But this eminent physician, well known for his extensive studies of insanity, bears similar testimony to the extraor-

* Pages 58 and 100.

dinary accuracy of Shakespeare's delineations of mental diseases; the nicety with which he traces their various steps in one individual, the accuracy with which he distinguishes these morbid affections in different persons. He seems unable to account for the exact minuteness in any other way than by external observation.

He acknowledges that "indefinable possession of genius, call it spiritual tact or insight, or whatever term may suggest itself, by which the great lords of mind estimate all phases of mind with little aid from reflected light," as the mental instrument through which Shakespeare looked upon others at a distance, or within reach of minute observation.

Still he seems to think that Shakespeare must have had many opportunities of observing mental phenomena. I own I am more inclined to think that the process by which the genius of Shakespeare reached this painful yet strange accuracy, was rather that of introversion than of external observation. At any rate, it is most interesting to see eminent physicians maintaining, by some means or other, that Shakespeare arrived by some sort of intuition at the possession of a psychological or even medical knowledge, fully verified and proved to be exact by the researches, two centuries later, of distinguished men in a science only recently developed. Mrs. Jameson* has well distinguished the different forms of aberration in Shakespeare's characters, when she says that "Constance is frantic, Lear is mad, Ophelia is insane."—*William Shakespeare. By His Eminence Cardinal Wiseman.* London, 1865.

The Westminster Review on Hamlet.

ONE lesson which Shakespeare implicitly teaches, is a lesson of infinite tolerance as the result of deep insight and a comprehensive view. Heartily do we sympathise with Hamlet in his great sorrow and sore trial; we esteem the faithful friendship and admire the cool judgment of Horatio; the treachery of Laertes, so greatly provoked as he was by events, does not excite unmitigated horror and render him inexcusably hateful—his repentance we accept with sincere satisfaction; and even the wicked king inspires sorrow rather than anger, though we abhor his deeds, and as he kneels to pray we would certainly forgive his crime if the decision lay with us: believing that God will be kind to the wicked, as he has been kind to the good in making them good, we cannot give up the comforting hope that, after the day of retribution, the fratricidal king may find rest. No poet, save Goethe, thus approaches Shakespeare in the tolerant and emancipated point of view from which he contemplates humanity. On account of this surpassing excellence, some, fired by

* 'Characteristics of Women,' New York, 1833, p. 142.