

THE SANITIES OF THE INSANE



A Cast of the head of the Insane Painter, William Blake

Some Deranged Brains That Are at Times More Rational Than Those That Retain Their Reason

DR. WILLIAM MAHON, the superintendent and medical director of the Manhattan State Hospital for the Insane, was consulted recently by a business man named David Browne as to the advisability of Mr. Browne's commitment to the hospital on Ward's island, because Mr. Browne felt that he was going plumb crazy over business, and he'd better stop and take treatment in time.

Superintendent Mahon agreed with him; Mr. Browne committed himself to the hospital for the insane; and forthwith proceeded to get better.

That was one of the most markedly sane things which a person on the verge of insanity can do; and it has been done by many another man who had the sense to emulate the sensible Browne and "take himself in time."

But there have been madmen who have remained at large and have achieved impressive triumphs in creative work—produced the most profound philosophy, designed the most brilliant works of art, evolved inventions that have proved of the utmost practical value to humanity. All the while they were either positively known to be insane or were under grave suspicion of madness.

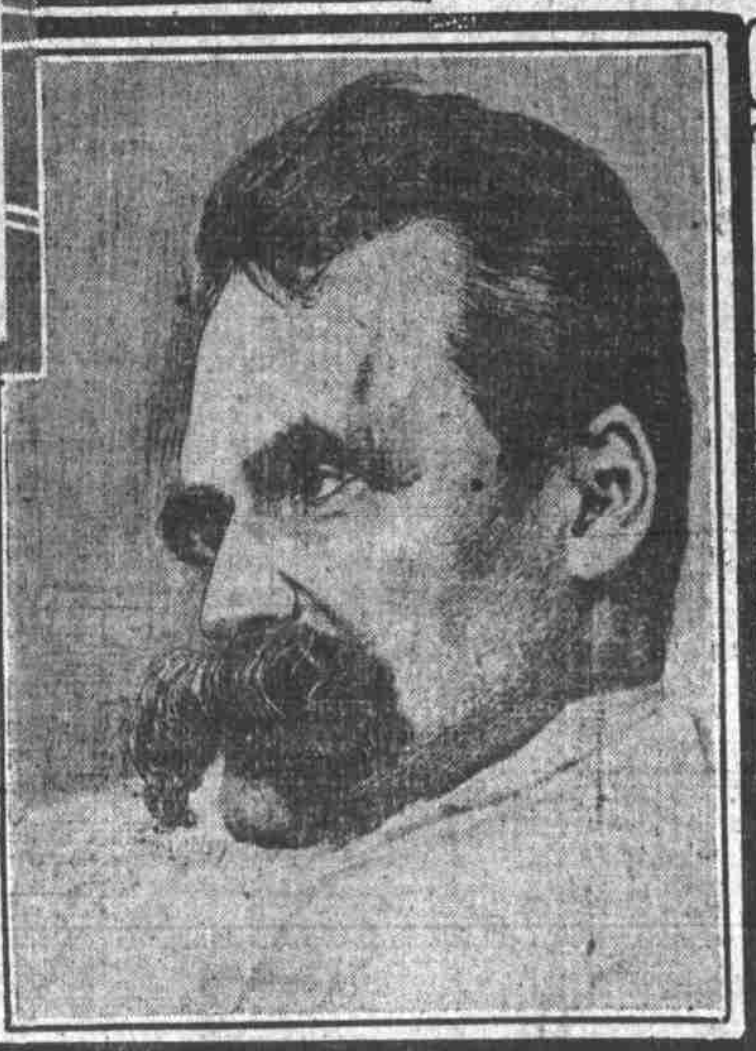
Nor do physicians always balk at the idea of insanity and try to get around it by declaring that it was only in lucid intervals that the great works were accomplished. Cases have been known where all medical observers were agreed on the fact that the brilliant subject did not do his work while in his right senses, and that he was actually and unmistakably insane when he did accomplish it.

THE sanities of the insane are among the most curious and yet most undeniable phenomena that are now admitted to the realms of fact attributed to the science of the study of madness. But there is no expert who would advise any man to strain himself to the intellectual breaking point in the hope of developing into a genius. The chances are all against such luck. Yet the exceptions are remarkable.

For years past the impression has slowly gained ground that the great intellectual light of the nineteenth century, Nietzsche, the philosopher, was the victim of a slowly progressive mental affliction which was present while he was producing some of his most abstruse and refined analyses of the human mind and of man's relations to his universe.

So, too, the case of the famous artist, William Blake, whose works were the admiration of his contemporaries and still retain their prestige. Again, there was the Italian etcher and architectural designer, Giambattista Piranesi, who, like Wilkie Collins, produced marvelous flights of the imagination—all consistent and rational—which had their origins under conditions of delirium.

Piranesi has been called the "Rembrandt of architecture," for his productions have a magnificent depth, richness and power displayed by no others in his line. While he was wholly out of his mind, he beheld fevered visions of all interiors which he recalled as actual ones of his most complicated romances while he was continually delirious from the agonies of inflammatory rheumatism, which, more or less acutely, was chronic with him. Where Coleridge and Piranesi turned to "normality"—the one from dreams and the other from the delirium of fever—Wilkie Collins was in absolute ignorance of his achievement when he returned to his senses, and he read the novel precisely as every one of the countless readers has read it since.



The Insane Philosopher, Nietzsche

with not a suspicion of the way the plot was "going to turn out."

Prof. C. W. Burr, who has the department of mental diseases in the University of Pennsylvania, recalled a number of such famous instances recently, and said:

"One could write a very interesting work on the part insanity has played in the history of man. Nietzsche, some of whose most brilliant thinking was done when he was beginning to be abnormal and who died insane, is having an increasing influence upon thoughtful men of this generation. The mysticism of the artist, Blake, was distinctly due to mental disorder.

"Nor is it impossible that their conditions of productivity can be duplicated in others. I have seen a good many insane men whom the world can well get along without. But there are many others, suffering from types of recurring insanity, who do very good work along their own special lines when they are able to resume their regular occupations.

"There has been much discussion and much misconception as to the relations of genius and insanity. I

would not at all say that geniuses are mad. The Italian school avers that all genius has a streak of madness in it, and when you point out a genius such as Shakespeare, who was obviously, conspicuously sane, they escape the folly of their position by denying his genius."

The well-known expert in neurology, Prof. Charles K. Mills, when asked as to the frequency of the display of great ability on the part of the insane, replied:

"It may sometimes be the case, but it is by no means the rule. Now and then a man who is insane, in the medical and the legal sense, will prove that he is possessed of unusual mental power—in literature, in the professions, in art, in science. But such cases are rare.

"One of the commonest phases of paranoia and of general paresis is that which relates to inventions. The lunatic imagines that he has conceived some extraordinary invention that is to vastly benefit humanity. They have devised the means of performing some hitherto unheard-of feat—the crossing of the Atlantic in an airship, or any other achievement for which the means they proposed are merely nonsensical.

"The paranoiac is usually more plausible than the paretic, who merely asserts his invention, while the paranoiac will give plenty of reasons for its practicability. The reasons may be grotesque to the sane intelligence; but the necessity for them is apparent to the paranoiac mind.

"When real inventions, real discoveries are sought among the insane, they are certainly uncommon; yet occasionally we find instances of them. My experience has been that the men who have done meritorious work and have been at one or another time insane have usually been persons not suffering from constitutional insanity such as paranoia or the chronic toxic insanities, like paresis. They were rather cases of recurrent melancholy, or of some form of insanity that left the individual for a long time sane. In other words, the meritorious work was accomplished not by reason of his insanity, but of his sanity."

The most remarkable case known to modern medicine was under direct observation for a number of years in the United States; and only five years have elapsed since this remarkable madman, John Johnson, was laid in his grave, after giving to medicine itself a number of the inventions it prizes most highly today. His story is directly vouched for by Dr. John

Chalmers Da Costa, who, in an address before the American Philosophical Society recently, so stirred women throughout the land by averring that their sex is too heavily handicapped to remain in the open arena of labor. But not Doctor Da Costa alone vouches for the marvels wrought by the madman Johnson. Doctors Mills and Burr, and hundreds of other men whose labors brought them in contact with him at one time or another, preserve lively recollections of this modern marvel among lunatics. So universal and profound was the respect he inspired that his case has been but little quoted and reported on as such astonishing examples are in the medical profession.

Even this report of his activities, condensed from the affectionate description of his friend, Doctor Da Costa, becomes public only because the physician believes some record should exist of his exceptional character and abilities.

"Mr. Johnson," said Doctor Da Costa, "first came under my notice while he was a patient in the insane department of the Philadelphia Hospital. He was born in Belfast, Ireland, and had for years been a gunner in the British navy. Then he lived for a period in India, and became imbued with the Hindu mysticism, on which one subject he was undoubtedly mad and remained mad. He came to the United States and, while he was in Philadelphia, had an attack of acute insanity. He remained in the insane department of the hospital for months, and he never did become sane again, so far as his monomania was concerned. He was subject to delusions of a nature which, had he been living in India, would probably have passed him there for a highly pious and altogether normal sort of a person.

HELD IN GREAT RESPECT

"After his release from the hospital, as a person able to take care of himself and not dangerous to the community, he obtained employment at Jefferson College Hospital as clinical orderly, and he held the position until he died, always dependable, always respected, indeed, always loved. He lived 60 years, and his death was due to a general physical breakdown.

"Now, it is to be remembered that, up until the time of John Johnson's death, he was definitely insane. But for all those years he was occupied with his responsible duties as clinical orderly and was treated with the same respect by physicians and trustees as if he had been one of themselves. And all that time he was doing scientific work of the highest order and was reaping great pecuniary gains from his inventions.

"It was John Johnson who invented the modern



An Etching by the Italian Architect Piranesi a memory of his wild dreams

method of preparing catgut for use in surgical operations. It was he who discovered the secret of dissolving castile soap in ether, and furnished to the medical profession one of the most magnificent cleansers it has today. His 'etheral soap,' as he named it, is one of the standard articles in use by the profession now.

"I am convinced that he discovered the element argon two years before Lord Rayleigh did. He showed me the strange substance in the residuum he obtained after extracting the nitrogen from air. That was one of his discoveries, the secret of which perished with him, and for which he never received the credit due him.

"Only recently I had an appeal from a capitalist in St. Louis, begging me to aid him in getting on the track of the lost Johnson method for treating cottonseed oil, another invention in chemistry which he successfully accomplished, but would never disclose in its details. He so purified the oil of the cottonseed that it was impossible to distinguish it from the best olive oil, and you could let it fall, in drops, on a red-hot stove and detect no odor other than that of pure olive oil. That one invention was worth millions of dollars, and millions are probably waiting to exploit it. But Johnson never told how he made the purification.

LIKE AN ANCIENT ALCHEMIST

"He received an income from his inventions so large that his wages as orderly were merely a minor addition to it. Yet, he died poor—for two reasons: He spent lavishly for the rarest of chemicals, for use in his continual experiments, and he gave greatly in charity. There was not a boy patient in the free wards of the hospital who, when he was sent home, failed to receive from John Johnson a whole new suit of clothes.

"He was the incarnation of the ancient alchemist. You could see his single gas jet burning in his room until the late hours of the night, and if you were admitted, you would find Johnson, in his long coat and his white beard, at work distilling his precious essences or seeking the solution of some fresh mystery of nature.

"A madman, if ever there was one. Yet his death, five years ago, filled every man who knew him with the most sincere grief, and brought to science the loss of one of its most brilliant minds. He lies now in Woodlands Cemetery; and it is my privilege and honor to be the one permitted to take care of that madman's grave."

The Whys of Red Trousers In War

EVERY once in a while it is found out afresh that nature is wiser than man. And less frequently it is discovered that man is wiser than himself—that is, that he has unconsciously been doing the right thing.

Even so apparently a hopeless combination as soldiers and red trousers may be useful. In recent years Germany, England and America, not to mention many other countries, have adopted plum-colored and khaki and other neutral hues uniforms because they render men less easily seen by the enemy.

If that were the only consideration they would be ideal. But in modern warfare artillery must operate at great distances, and the "partridge colored" uniforms cannot be seen at long range. Therefore, to avoid hitting their own men, the artilleryists must cease firing when the attacking bodies are approaching the enemy and must need support.

This point was recently pointed out by a British officer, Colonel F. N. Maude, who said:

"The question of invisibility of uniforms was duly investigated about the time of the Boer war, and a report was presented by the infantry greatly in favor of less conspicuous colors. This report was passed to the artillery for any remarks, and returned by them with a note pointing out that if the change was adopted the field artillery could no longer promise the infantry the support of shrapnel fire up to the last moment before the assault. The wording was curious, perhaps a little too Rabelaisian for our English press, but in substance it said: 'When you are lying down now in the final fire position we can see quite clearly where you are, and keep up a storm of shells over your heads; if you make yourselves inconspicuous like partridges, we shall have to cease fire long before you get near the enemy, and leave you to assault him unarmed.' The French infantry saw the point, and hence have retained their red breeches, worth a couple of hundred thousand men to them against a hunkle-clad foe; and if any one doubts this conclusion they have only to go through the many incidents of the Boer war where our gunners either failed to fire on the Boers, mistaking them for our own men or vice versa, and trace out the results of the casualty lists and the duration of the whole campaign."

THE MAN WHO GREW YOUNG AT 70

WOULD you learn the secret of perpetual youth, which Ponce de Leon sought in vain?

Would you like to know the secrets of the beauty of the famed Ninon de l'Enclos, who never grew old and, at the age of 70 years, was reckoned among the beauties of the court of Louis XV?

Would you acquire the lore of the health that cannot fade and the strength that is daily renewed?

Well, you needn't take any patent medicine that has occurred to you while you were reading those thrilling exordiums. There is a man in California who says he is 70 years old and young, and can prove it, and is perfectly willing to tell any one who asks just how he did it.

HE IS Sanford Bennett, of San Francisco, who, fifteen years ago was clinically reported on by Dr. Carl Reuz, of his home city, thus:

Weight, 135 pounds; abdomen, decidedly embonpoint; skin, sallow; muscles, atrophied and flabby; skin around neck, hanging loose; hair, thin, dark, but streaked with gray on crown and head quite bald; forehead, deeply lined; temperament, very nervous; complaints of chronic dyspepsia, biliousness and heart palpitations; general physical condition, poor; appearance, that of a man who had devoted too much attention to business, to the neglect of his health.

In 1906, eleven years later, the same physician recorded the results of a new examination thus:

The hair, now gray, has become quite luxuriant; no indications of former baldness. The neck, smooth and very muscular, is in appearance the neck of a young man. The skin of the throat is no longer loose and hanging, but firm. Chin and cheeks, round. Face, smoothly color, excellent. The lines which formerly existed have disappeared. The development of the arms, chest, back, shoulders and abdominal muscles are creditable for an athlete of 30. Heart sound—no palpitation or irregularity of pulse. Waist, 25 inches. No fat around the abdomen. Digestion, good. There is a remarkable preservation of tissue integrity and functional activity. The subject has now entered his sixty-sixth year and has all the elasticity and appearance of a young man. His condition seems to be due solely to the systematic method of muscular contractions and alternate relaxations, which he daily practices.

If Ponce de Leon, who quested all over the new world for his fountain of youth, had only known what Mr. Bennett knows before he started on his famous and fruitless wanderings, he would have had a voyage of only about twelve inches to make, for he need not have got out of bed.

That is where Mr. Bennett has transformed himself from a sexagenarian invalid to a septuagenarian youth—just plumb in bed, exercising. It seemed com-



Sanford Bennett at the Age of 50

Mr. Bennett on his Seventieth Birthday

fortable that way, and it worked as well as if he had climbed mountains.

"Nature's law," he says, "is this: All muscles, all organs, grow in size, strength and elasticity when they are properly and persistently exercised. In short, the secret is exercise—exercise, persistent and methodical from the time you toddle across the floor as an infant until the shadow falls and the vital cord that connects you with the great reservoir of the life principle snaps, and you step into the mystery beyond. For the encouragement of those who have touched or passed middle life, and think they are too old, I would state that my experience has been that there is no period of life when improvement is impossible."

The number of exercises he has developed for use while lying in bed of a morning, before getting up for breakfast, is astonishing. He uses them for an hour, and then takes a quick, tepid bath. It is impossible to give them all in detail, but a few can be referred to, as indications of others, the aim of all of them being to alternately tense and relax the muscles whose use they involve.

A massage exercise, for developing the biceps and triceps simultaneously with the loin muscles, begins by lying on the side and extending the upper arm down hard and grasping it firmly, between elbow and shoulder, with the opposite hand. Contract and tense the muscles grasped by bending the arm, and mean-while massage them vigorously with the hand. During these movements, exercise the muscles of the loin by throwing the upper hip forward and then back to its original position.

To develop the triceps, or back muscles of the arms, lie on one side, grasp firmly the upper arm between elbow and shoulder, and pull backward with the lower

arm while you resist the pull by the firm grasp and downward pull of the lower hand and arm.

The exercise for reduction of an obese abdomen begins with tensing the abdominal muscles. The palms of the hands being placed on the abdomen, they are pressed down firmly and the accumulation of fat is rubbed back and forth, the hands never being permitted to slip. The process is varied by striking the abdomen rapidly with the clenched fists, alternately contracting and relaxing the abdominal muscles. The contraction is easily accomplished by raising the head.

There is a series of exercises for strengthening and developing the face muscles. This is the way Mr. Bennett braced up his sunken cheeks. He drew up the corners of his mouth toward the eyes—in the form of an exaggerated smile. Then he dropped his chin as far as it would go. Alternately opening and closing his jaws he contrived an active exercise for the cheek muscles that simply wouldn't let them stay weak and flabby.

The principle of muscle tensing and self-massage, applied all over the body, for an hour every morning, is all that he prescribes—and that in your comfortable bed.

Why grow old? as the advertisement says.