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THE  
BIBLIOTHECA SACRA

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ARTICLE I.

THE ABASEMENT OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

BY EDWARD M. MERRINS, M.D.

THE inquiry into the nature of the human understanding—the powers thereof, how far they reach, to what things they are in any degree proportionate, and where they fail us—has made some progress since the time of Locke, but it is nowhere near its end. The physiologist has caught barely a glimpse of the ultimate elements and activities involved in consciousness, and the psychologist discerns only as through a glass darkly the deep principles and springs of human conduct. The problems presented by life and conduct which are abnormal, are even more obscure and baffling. Consequently, in the examination of mental disorder, questions arise which must be considered, although, at present, no satisfactory answer can be given to them.

In the first place, what is insanity? The insane, like the poor, are always with us, and yet no one has succeeded in framing a definition applicable to every case where the soundness of the mind is in question. “Distinguished philosophers, experienced physicians and psychologists, accurate and profound logicians, have in vain attempted to analyse, unveil, and penetrate into the hidden nature of this disease with a view

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of discovering a key to its accurate definition, and all have signally failed." There is no normal human standard. According to English law, it is a criminal act to publish maliciously that any person is afflicted with insanity, since it imputes to him a malady generally inducing mankind to shun his society; but it is not libelous to say that a man is not of sound mind, because no one is of perfectly sound mind but the Deity. We are obliged, therefore, to fall back on the general and practical rule, that, as long as a man retains the power of regulating his actions and conduct in accordance with the ordinary rules of society, he must be regarded as sane. It is only when the individual, from perversion of reason, shows a disposition to commit acts which may endanger his life and property, or the lives and properties of others, that the law interferes for the man's own protection and for that of society. There is the same indefiniteness at the other end of the scale. While, in the worst forms of insanity, there is almost an entire deprivation of reason, many of the insane are quite conscious of their actions in general, and are able to reason upon their feelings and impressions. But the main difficulty lies with the mental states ranging between perfect sanity and unmistakable insanity. There are no exact lines of demarcation between them, as the descent is by an inclined plane as it were, not by sharply defined steps. Thus the transition from

"The grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,  
A drowsy, stifled, unimpassioned grief,  
Which finds no natural outlet or relief  
In word, or sigh, or tear,"—

to the insanity of melancholia is so gradual as to be almost imperceptible. Moreover, the movement of the mind in the direction of insanity may not be steadily progressive. Excursions to the very borders of sanity and beyond may be made,

and yet the mind recover itself, again and again. In this movement back and forth, the exact time when a person becomes sane or insane, as the case may be, is difficult, if not impossible, to decide. Then there are all the queer humors, the unruly wills and affections of human nature, to be considered,—the emotional ebullitions, the caprices, eccentricities, perversities of judgment, and feebleness of will. To what extent are these the evidence of unsoundness of mind? When we turn to the most highly gifted men and women, those representative of the human mind at its best, we find they are so eccentric, that Lombroso and other alienists hold that the possession of genius or unusual talent is, of itself, *prima facie* evidence of insanity. Just as giants pay a heavy ransom for their extraordinary stature, in relative mental and muscular weakness, so, it is said, the giants of thought expiate their intellectual force in degeneration and psychoses. But the lives of those whose principal gift is simply that of stolid common sense, if closely scrutinized, would also show many departures from the normal. As a prominent writer has truly remarked, all people have sometimes a season of mental depression or aberration, when they do exactly what their friends would least expect. It is not necessary, however, to agree with those writers who contend we are, all of us, more or less insane; but the fact, that we cannot formulate a definition of insanity that shall include all who are insane, and exclude all who are sane, should make us regard the whole subject with a very open mind, particularly when cases of mental disorder are encountered which present features of mysterious interest seldom met with in ordinary experience.

The obscurity enveloping the manifestations of insanity extends also to the causes producing it. In the majority of cases there is certainly a deficiency or lesion of the deli-

cate brain substance, the result of mechanical injury or disease; or there is a disturbance of the functions of the nervous system, from malnutrition, toxæmia, or prolonged exhaustion. But insanity is occasionally induced in people apparently in perfect health by sudden and powerful emotions. The abrupt information of ill news may cause stupor, melancholia, or acute mania. Is it a satisfactory explanation to say that the insanity in these cases is wholly due to a sudden overdraft on the physiological energies of the nervous system, with a consequent disturbance of its nutrition? "When we are told that a man has become deranged from anxiety or grief, we have learned very little if we rest content with that. How does it happen that another man, subjected to an exactly similar cause of grief, does not go mad? It is certain the entire causes cannot be the same where the effects are so different."

Furthermore, what is the physical lesion in the strange forms of mental disorder which occur among people of backward civilization,—the *latah* of the Malays, the *ikota* of the Samoyads, lycanthropy, demoniacal possession, and kindred psychopathies? An interesting problem of this kind meets us in the weird experiences of Captain Welby, who, a few years ago, started to explore certain out-of-the-way places in the heart of Abyssinia? Entering the Walamo district, his Somali and Soudanese followers were in a state of fear and perturbation, because of the evil influences which the Walamos were believed to possess. According to his narrative, "It is supposed to be especially dangerous to eat food in the presence of the Walamo people. On one occasion one of my Soudanese saw a Walamo gazing intently upon him while he was having his meal. Nothing untoward occurred at the time, but two days later the man became a raving lunatic." Others of the retinue were similarly afflicted, and the captain was obliged

to devise means to check the spread of the disorder. "Thinking I could perhaps do something to explain these extraordinary occurrences, I resolved to eat solemnly a meal in the presence of the Walamo myself. When all was prepared, I had something like a hundred of these people watching me. In due time the meal was over, and I thought no more about it. Here I should state that I had not had a day's illness during the journey, and was in the best of health at the time. The next day, however, I felt thoroughly ill. Needless to say I did not let any of my people know that anything was wrong, nor can I attempt to explain the cause. I was quite unable to find a cause for this mysterious business. I merely confine myself to a bare statement of the facts. It was an anxious time for me, as I did not know whether at any moment the whole camp might not become 'Walamo.'"

An editorial in one of the leading English medical journals, in commenting on the narrative, observes, "As for explanation, so far as we can see there is none. Emotion and a consciousness of the evil reputation of the country might possibly explain the occurrence in the case of the Somali and the Soudanese, but this explanation would hardly hold in the case of an avowed unbeliever like Captain Welby."<sup>1</sup>

It cannot be denied that there are forces in the world, both physical and psychical, of which we know nothing,—a consideration to be borne in mind in dealing with all forms of madness, but especially with those of unusual origin. Perhaps the madness of Nebuchadnezzar can be brought within the limits of ordinary human experience; but if not, the facts concerning it as stated in the book of Daniel cannot be disproved, nor can they be regarded as inherently improbable. By no means are we shut up to the conclusion that "probably some Babylonian

<sup>1</sup>The *Lancet*, September 9, 1899, p. 731.

legend on the subject of Nebuchadnezzar had, perhaps in a very distorted form, reached the ears of the author of Daniel."

The extent and strength of the connection between insanity and sin is another interesting question. We do not refer to those sins of the flesh, such as intemperance and impurity, which lay the system open to the inroads of diseases which eventually may cause insanity, but to the sins of the spirit, such as pride, envy, hatred, malice, and tempestuous anger. Can habitual indulgence in these work the ruin of the mind? When St. Paul speaks of men, because of wickedness, being given over to a reprobate mind, is the end thereof a form of insanity? There are medico-legal writers who claim there is a state which they call moral insanity, which is manifested simply by a perverted or disordered state of the feelings, passions, and emotions, without illusions, erroneous convictions, or other evidences of intellectual aberration. Since to admit this as an independent form of insanity would relieve many wrong-doers apparently of sound mind, of all responsibility for their injurious acts, the doctrine is too dangerous in the present state of society to be upheld. But may not the above-mentioned sinful states of the mind, if persisted in, almost certainly in time be accompanied by intellectual aberration? "It is my belief," said the physician of a female lunatic asylum, "that two-thirds of the women here have come to require restraint, through habitual indulgence of an originally bad temper." When kings vested with vast and irresponsible power begin their reign well, but after a longer or shorter time act like madmen, are we right in saying that madness was always there, as it were, and was simply drawn out by the force of circumstances? or shall we hold that the madness originated *de novo*, because of the abandonment of all self-restraint, and the wild indulgence of evil passions?

It is obvious that the madness of Nebuchadnezzar presents many interesting and complicated issues. Turning to his history as found in the Bible and contemporaneous Babylonian records, it appears he was one of the mightiest rulers and soldiers who ever lived, a man of unquestioned intellectual greatness. He made his country renew her youth, and more than regain her former power. He fought against his enemies on every side, and whithersoever he turned himself he was victorious. He routed the Egyptians; he destroyed Jerusalem; he transplanted the Jews on account of their rebellion; and reduced the city of Tyre after a memorable siege. He built a new Babylon, and the city became one of the wonders of the world. The power of the king was absolute. Whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive; whom he would he raised up, and whom he would he put down. He stood at the summit of earthly greatness.

Nebuchadnezzar was also a very religious man, certainly so in his younger days. He claimed it as his glory to have established the worship of those deities and superior beings whose will he recognized as more powerful than his own; he was proud to call himself the priest-king, or the king-vicar of the gods. Almost every temple and shrine throughout the land underwent restoration at his hands. He was very enthusiastic in the worship of his own particular god, Merodach, who was "the lord, the joy of his heart." It was to him he owed his elevation to the throne. "Merodach, the great lord," he records, "has appointed me to the empire of the world, and confided to my care the far-spread peoples of the earth. Merodach the great lord, the senior of the gods, the most ancient, has given all nations and peoples to my care." And he knew, as shown in the following beautiful prayer, that he ought to rule in righteousness:—



"To Merodach my lord I prayed, I began to him my petition. The words of my heart sought for him; and I said, 'O prince, that art from everlasting, lord of all that exists, for the king whom thou lovest, whom thou callest by name, as it seemeth good unto thee thou guldest his name aright, thou watchest over him in the path of righteousness! I, the prince who obeys thee, am the work of thy hands; thou hast created me, and hast entrusted to me the sovereignty over hosts of men; according to thy goodness, O lord, thou hast made me to pass over them all. Let me love thy supreme lordship, let the fear of thy divinity exist in my heart, and give what seemeth good unto thee, for thou upholdest my life.'"

The possession of despotic power, making it so easy for a man to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, accompanied by a religious bent of the mind, the mark of which should be self-abasement, must be very disturbing to the personality. Can Nebuchadnezzar steadily maintain his mental and moral balance at the dizzy height where he stands? Marcus Aurelius observed it was possible to live well even in the palace of a Roman emperor. But very few autocratic rulers have reached his level of austere goodness. It is a matter of dispute whether Solomon, the wisest of kings, succeeded in saving his soul, and the number of those who have given every indication of positive failure to do so, is very great.

Mankind is still in the making, acquiring with difficulty those faculties of the mind which constitute true greatness. The highest function is self-control, and it is the last to be acquired as a permanent possession. Insanity is a retrogression, a traversing of the path of mental development in the reverse direction, the faculties latest acquired being the first to disappear. Frequent exhibitions of uncontrollable passion may constitute, therefore, an early and serious symptom of approaching insanity. The circumstances of Nebuchadnezzar's life were not favorable to the culture of the virtue of self-restraint, and he did not rise superior to them. In his fury

against the wise men of Babylon because of their inability to interpret his dream which he was unable to recollect, he exhibits an unreasoning passion that does not point to perfect sanity. The people of Eastern countries tolerate much in their monarchs that we should regard as being outrageously cruel and tyrannical, but the remonstrances of the wise men prove that Nebuchadnezzar far exceeded the limits to which even they were accustomed.

There was another ungovernable ebullition of rage when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to worship his image; and doubtless such irrational displays were very frequent, or became so as time went on, to the increasing disorder of his mind. Many people have become insane through the sheer exaggeration of their own wickedness; they have given way to their desires till the holding anchor of the will is lost, and the mind has become riotous with evil passions. He is a bold man who would say that Nero and other kings of his stamp were always sane. Of the mad king, Louis II. of Bavaria, who committed suicide in 1886, it is recorded that his malady was continuous and progressive, a rising self-will which, guided solely by his likes and dislikes, brooked neither delay nor denial in the gratification of his fancies; there was a gradual diminution of mental balance and self-restraint, complicated in the end with hallucinations, stormy fits of passion, violent assaults on his attendants, and orders for the assassination of those who had offended him.<sup>1</sup>

A further indication of the mental and moral peril of Nebuchadnezzar is his growing spiritual pride. He gets out of harmony with his environment. Regarding himself as a special favorite of the gods, and his kingly rank forbidding his association with ordinary mortals on anything like equal

<sup>1</sup> Ireland, *The Ivory Gate*, p. 142.

terms, he becomes intoxicated with his grandeur. His heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened, so that he dealt proudly. And he said in his heart: "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; and I will sit upon the mount of congregation in the uttermost parts of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High." On the plain of Dura, therefore, he sets up an enormous golden image of himself,<sup>1</sup> which he commands his subjects to worship. The penalty of disobedience is death by burning. It may be, as some assert, that the erection of the image was intended to celebrate some national triumph, and that the worship of his particular god was implied in the worship of the image of himself; it may also be true that the claims of Babylonian kings and heroes for a seat in the mountains of the gods were not always mere arrogance, but the first efforts of the Babylonian mind to emancipate itself from the gloomy conceptions of Hades, and to provide a worthy immortality for virtue. The dominant motive, however, with Nebuchadnezzar, was the desire to exalt himself, and the refusal of three

<sup>1</sup> See Speaker's Commentary on Daniel iii. 1, where there is the following note in support of the view that the image was of Nebuchadnezzar himself: "In the annals of Samas-Rimmon (the son of Shalmaneser, the Assyrian contemporary of the Israelite kings, Ahab and Jehu), this prince is described as erecting, after a victorious campaign, a statue of himself: 'an image (*zalam*) of my magnified royalty I made' (Records of the Past, I. 17), and the same practice is recorded of Shalmaneser and others (Norris, Assyri. Dict. ii. 345; Oppert, Gram. Assyri., p. 120)." Other writers, however, hold that the *zalam* was simply a memorial or honorary bas-relief, never intended for religious worship; and while they admit that some of the early Assyrian and Babylonian kings were certainly deified, e.g., Naram Sin, Gudea, and Dungi, they contend that the deification of a human being was contrary to the religious genius of the Semitic race, the honor was not conferred upon any of the later Semitic kings of Babylonia and Assyria, and that in the instances mentioned the deification can be traced to foreign influences (Barton, Semitic Origins, p. 169).

captive Hebrews to worship his image throws him into paroxysms of fury. He daringly asks, who is the god that shall deliver them out of his hands, and then, at his command, they are thrown into a burning fiery furnace, seven times heated. This terrible punishment may not have been uncommon among the Assyrians; from the Bible we know that others suffered a similar fate, as it was a proverb among the Jewish captives, "The Lord make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire,"<sup>1</sup> and the Assyrian records prove that other kings punished their enemies in the same way. Yet the pride and fanaticism, the rage and the cruelty, shown in this incident, and in his merciless treatment of King Zedekiah,<sup>2</sup> are evidence that Nebuchadnezzar was traveling on a dangerous path the terminus of which is madness.

The elevation of his favorite god, Merodach, above not only the gods of other nations, but also above other Babylonian divinities, would cause the worship of the latter to be very much neglected; the apotheosis of himself would have a similar effect, so far as he was concerned, on the rites and ceremonies of ancestral worship, and on the prayers and oblations prescribed by kingly predecessors for their posthumous honor, or to insure their well-being, as far as may be, in the spiritual underworld. The terrible curses pronounced on omissions of this kind, Nebuchadnezzar would be inclined to scornfully disregard in the day of his power. For example, there was the worship ordained to take place before the statue of King Gudea, a predecessor who reigned about B.C. 2800. The statue was one of the most sacred objects of the temple, and was protected by all the laws of ancestral worship. It

<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah **xxix.** 22.

<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah **xxxix.** 6, 7.

was perpetually to stand before the gods, so that Gudea should never be forgotten by them, and prayers and oblations were continually to be made before it. The reigning monarch seems to have been made responsible for the proper and regular performance of these duties, and the curse which Gudea suspended over the heads of his successors as the penalty for disobeying his injunctions is very bitter:—

“Whoever shall transgress my judgments, revoke my gifts, or in the recitation of my prayers shall suppress my name and insert his name,

“Like an ox shall he be slain in the midst of his prosperity!

Like a wild bull shall he be felled in the fulness of his strength!

As for his throne, may those whom he has bound captive, overthrow it in the dust.

His name in the temple of his god, may they erase it from the tablets.

May his god upon the ruin of his country not look!

May he ravage it with the rains from heaven!

May he ravage it with the waters of the earth!

May he become a man without a name!

May his princely race be reduced to slavery.

May this man, as every man who acts evilly to his chief from under the vault of heaven, in no city find a resting place.”

Such curses as these, though not quite so searching and comprehensive as the more recent Jewish and Roman Catholic bans of excommunication, are apt to haunt the mind of those liable to be brought within their range, and who have some belief in their power.

At last the delirious pride of Nebuchadnezzar reached its culmination. He exalted himself against the Most High to such an extent as to give open expression to the conviction that all his greatness and glory had been won by the strength of his own right arm. “Is not this great Babylon which I have built for the royal dwelling-place, by the might of my power, and the glory of my majesty?”

What then happened he narrates himself. While the words

were yet in his mouth, he hears a voice from heaven, saying: "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken: the kingdom is departed from thee. And thou shalt be driven from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; thou shalt be made to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee: until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." The same hour the thing began to be fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar.

It is not for the Christian to question the subjective reality of the voice which Nebuchadnezzar heard. From the days of St. Paul to the latest revival service, in those critical and dramatic moments when the individual is compelled to face eternal issues, voices are heard in the soul which convict of sin, point out the way of deliverance, or in other ways influence the heart and mind. Nebuchadnezzar, as we should say in these days, was convicted of sin. As by a lightning flash, his darkness was illumined, and he saw with startling distinctness his spiritual peril. There is a complete revulsion of feeling. From the height of self-exaltation, he is plunged into the depths of despair. He now looked on all the works that his hands had wrought, and on the labor that he had labored to do, and saw that all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and he knew that he was under the manifest displeasure of the Most High.

The religious experiences of many other penitents since then furnish a guide to the course of his malady. The mental gloom accompanying the sense of guilt and of being under the wrath of God is often so profound as to bring the sufferer very close to the borders of insanity. Where there has been previous weakness or disorder of mind, either hereditary or acquired, the boundary may be actually crossed. This hap-

pened in the case of the poet Cowper, whose periods of mental darkness were intermittent, and reference may be made also to those numerous and more chronic cases of melancholia found in all the asylums of Christian lands, known as "the unpardonable sinners," because they imagine they have blasphemed against the Holy Ghost, or committed some other unforgivable sin. It must be said, however, that, in most of these cases, religion colors rather than produces the insanity.

There are many examples of the lesser degrees of religious melancholy, from which the soul sooner or later emerges. "I thought none but the devil himself," writes John Bunyan, "could equal me for inward wickedness and pollution of mind. Sure thought I, I am forsaken of God; and thus I continued for a long while, even for some years together. And now I was sorry that God had made me a man. The birds, beasts, and fishes, I blessed their condition, for they had not a sinful nature; they were not obnoxious to the wrath of God; they were not to go to hell fire after their death. I could therefore have rejoiced had my condition been as theirs. Now I blessed the condition of the dog and toad, yea, gladly would I have been in the condition of the dog or horse. How gladly would I have been anything but myself! Anything but a man! and in any condition but my own."

Another, who afterwards became a devoted evangelist, writes: "I had now so great a sense of the vanity and emptiness of all things here below, that I knew the whole world could not possibly make me happy, no, nor the whole system of creation. I would many times look on the beasts with envy, wishing with all my heart I was in their place, that I might have no soul to lose; and when I have seen birds flying over my head, have often thought within myself, Oh, that I could fly away from my danger and distress! Oh, how

happy should I be, if I were in their place." As Professor James<sup>1</sup> observes, in examining the psychology of such conditions, envy of the placid beasts seems to be a very widespread affection in this type of sadness. It was so with Nebuchadnezzar. While his conviction of sin may not have been of quite so searching a character as that of the Christian, it was yet very deep and real, and doubtless, in the torment of self-accusation, he too envied the placidity of the beasts of the field. Perhaps, also, as he passed into the depths of melancholia,—which we opine was the malady from which he suffered,—such bitter curses as those pronounced by Gudea harassed his mind:—

"Like an ox shall he be slain in the midst of his prosperity!

Like a wild bull shall he be felled in the fulness of his strength!  
May this man . . . in no city find a resting place."

Later, when his morbid thoughts crystallized into the delusions of melancholia, he not only envied the beasts, but identified himself with them, and ate of their food. Such delusions are not uncommon in this malady.

Very briefly, melancholia may be defined as a painful state of consciousness, more or less abnormal in its origin, intensity, and persistence, accompanied by disturbance of ideation and volition, and by disorder of the bodily functions. Very early the social feelings are lessened; the patient prefers solitude, so that he can brood over his state undisturbed; he is centered in himself, wrapped up in his misery. Soon delusions of the most somber kind haunt him: he has offended the Deity in an unpardonable manner, or he feels that he is too vile to associate with his fellow-men, regards himself as an outcast from society, and is inclined to commit suicide. Morbid bodily sensations give rise to various hallucinations and illusions

<sup>1</sup> *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 159.



of the senses. At last he sinks into a state of stolid stupor, is wholly absorbed in his mental agony, is confused as to his personal identity, neglects to eat, and is careless and dirty in his appearance and habits.

What a contrast to Nebuchadnezzar's former state and pretensions! The love of approbation has gone: he is now indifferent to the good opinion of others, rather he would lower himself in their estimation. His fine courage has disappeared: he is oppressed by many fears. There are no longer paroxysms of uncontrollable rage and fury because of opposition to his desires, for the feelings which have anger as their fundamental emotion are markedly diminished; the melancholic is no longer indignant at what he thinks is wrong; combativeness is lost; submission is made with meekness and humility to events that in health would have been strenuously resisted. If Nebuchadnezzar had been a raging maniac, it would have been very difficult to have driven him from the throne. It was very easy to drive the melancholic forth. In his restlessness and longing for solitude, he would himself lay aside all the powers and insignia of his rank, and wander forth to be as one of the beasts of the field. "They that see thee, shall narrowly look upon thee, and they shall consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms, that made the world as a wilderness, and overthrew the cities thereof?"

Because it is stated in the Bible that the heart of Nebuchadnezzar was changed to that of a beast, and that he ate grass as an ox, it has usually been held that his disease was of the same order as lycanthropy. "There is now no question," writes a learned commentator, "that the disease under which Nebuchadnezzar is said to have suffered is one of a well-known class of diseases known by such names as lycanthropy,

kynanthropy, etc., according to the animal whose habits are simulated by the subject of this disease." The statement needs considerable qualification. Lycanthropy, strictly speaking, means not merely the adoption of wolfish habits, but the belief in the actual transmogrification of the human form into that of a wolf. Consequently, if Nebuchadnezzar's disease be called bo-anthropy, it implies that his body was changed into that of an ox. God is great, and perhaps we ought not to deny the possibility of such transformation, but it is doubtful if, in these days, there are any who would interpret so literally allusions to the bestial proclivities of fallen human nature. Neither can we assert with the Jewish rabbins that the soul of Nebuchadnezzar entered by transmigration into the body of an ox. Therefore, for the sake of clearness, the malady of Nebuchadnezzar ought not to be classed with lycanthropy. Melancholia is a solitary affection, to which even the most intellectual and cultivated are prone, and it appears to be increasing under the stress of our modern complex civilization. Lycanthropy and similar delusions were usually epidemic, affecting only the ignorant and superstitious, and they rapidly disappear as education becomes general.

This uncanny superstition of the were-wolf was very widespread in ancient and mediæval times. Allusions to it are not infrequent in the classic writings of antiquity, and it may be observed that the metamorphoses are said to have occurred even then among the most uncivilized. Thus Herodotus tells us the Neuri, a savage tribe of Sarmatia, turned to wolves for a few days every year. These transformations were also common in Arcadia. According to the poets and idealists, this was a land of peace, innocence, and patriarchal manners. As a matter of fact, it abounded in forests and morasses, was overrun with wolves and other wild beasts, and the inhabitants were

barbarous shepherds and cattlemen. It was just the place where the gloomiest superstitions would find victims. Lycaon, one of its kings, was changed into a wolf by Jupiter for impiously offering him sacrifices of human flesh, and lycanthropy became epidemic among the people. The three daughters of Proetus, the king of Argos, were transformed into cows for neglecting to worship the gods, and, because the king their father was unwilling to pay the price demanded for their cure, other women of the country were similarly transformed. It is interesting to note that the women were all restored to sanity, and of course to their proper shape, by the administration of black hellebore, a plant that for centuries before the Christian era, and after, had a very great reputation for curing melancholia.

In the darkness of the Middle Ages, the superstition lost none of its terrors by being closely associated with diabolical agency and cannibalism. According to an old English writer, "Ther ben somme that eten chylidren and men, and steth noon other flesh fro that tyme that thei be a-charmed with mannys flesh, for rather thei wolde be deed." A later author informs us that "the were-wolves are certayne sorcerers, who, having annoynted the body with an oyntment which they make by the instinct of the devil, and putting on a certayne inchaunted girdle, doe not onely unto the view of others seeme as wolves, but to their owne thinking have both the shape and nature of wolves, so long as they weare the said girdle and they do dispose themselves as very wolves, in wourrying and killing, and most of humane creatures."

Lycanthropy was prevalent in Europe down to quite a late period. At the close of the sixteenth century, there was an epidemic of it in France among the people of the mountains of Jura, the largest number of victims being in the district of St.

Oyant, which was under the absolute jurisdiction of the abbey of the same name. Owing to neglect, the people had fallen into the lowest depths of ignorance, poverty, and superstition. Yet it cannot be said the monks knew much more about lycanthropy than the peasants. It was still the orthodox teaching of the church, as expounded by St. Thomas Aquinas, that "all angels, good and bad, have by natural virtue the power of transmuting our bodies." In the fifteenth century a council of theologians, convoked by the Emperor Sigismund, had gravely decided that the loup-garou, or were-wolf, was a reality.

With such views it is not surprising that the local church authorities determined to rid the earth of these were-wolves, who were thought to have sold themselves to the devil, or to be otherwise in league with him. More than six hundred of the unfortunate deluded people were therefore either burned to death or strangled. From France the disorder spread to other countries. When it reached Scotland, where wolves were rarely seen, the people affected imagined they had been changed into crows, hares, foxes, cats, dogs, and other animals.

The belief in lycanthropy still lingers in different parts of the world, but with the spread of education and increased spiritual enlightenment, it must soon completely disappear. The whole subject forms a very sorrowful minor chapter in the religious history of the race.

Although Nebuchadnezzar did eat grass as oxen, it is not required as an article of faith that we should hold he lived on ordinary grass and nothing else. Such a wretched diet is insufficient to support human life. According to the evolutionists, even our homo-simian ancestors did not live entirely on the vegetable food which nature provided for them. In addition to seeds, fruits, leaves, young shoots and roots of the

vegetable world, all of which may have formed part of the diet of Nebuchadnezzar, they also devoured such animal food as insects, grubs, caterpillars, frogs, lizards, snakes, birds, birds' eggs, and the smaller mammals,—on the whole, a fairly varied and nutritious diet. It is hard to believe that Nebuchadnezzar was entirely neglected. The allusion to his vegetarianism probably means that he was utterly indifferent as to what he eat and drank, and that his appetite was depraved, as in the following modern instance: "The patient [a young lady], a prey to melancholic anxiety, either sat, dumb and motionless, lost in thought, or wept and sighed, occasionally exclaiming, 'What a misfortune! What have I done?' She refused food; her appearance became altered; her former freshness was changed into an earthen hue; she became wrinkled, and her strength left her. . . . After a time her appetite returned; she went to the trough containing the food for the poultry, or sought elsewhere for raw and dirty food, which she secretly devoured."<sup>1</sup>

Of another patient, with a somewhat different form of insanity, it is recorded: "A great change, however, took place in her conduct; she became rude, vulgar, abrupt, and perfectly unmanageable; doing no work, running about the fields, and, if rebuked, very abusive and extremely passionate. Her appetite was perverted, so that she preferred raw vegetables to her proper food; and she would sleep upon the cold and wet ground rather than upon her proper bed."<sup>2</sup>

It is said the expression "eating grass" is used symbolically in Babylonian songs for "living in misery," and the conclusion is therefore drawn that the narrative of Nebuchadnezzar's madness is simply the product of a misunderstanding of

<sup>1</sup> Griesinger, *Mental Diseases*, p. 238.

<sup>2</sup> Maudsley, *Pathology of the Mind*, p. 286.

language.<sup>1</sup> How came the expression to be so used? The eating of grass by cows and other graminivorous animals is not suggestive of misery, but rather of sensual contentment, and this is the meaning of the prophet Amos when he addresses the ladies of Samaria as "kine of Bashan"; but the eating of grass by the insane may well be the symbol of the most pitiable forms of human misery. If Nebuchadnezzar was living in misery, as in any event the words imply, what was the misery? Raised above the vicissitudes of rank and wealth, it must have been due to some calamity that affected his mental or bodily state, or both. So far from dissolving the story into pure romance, the statement as to his eating grass, even if it means only that he was living in misery, adds to the verisimilitude of the narrative.

As the digestive and eliminative functions are almost always disturbed in melancholia, the abnormal indulgence in a more aboriginal diet may be due to an instinctive craving for forms of food capable of supplying chemical or other substances of which the system of the patient is sorely in need. A singular case was reported a few years ago by the physician of an English lunatic asylum. One of his patients gathered every blade of grass in the garden and eat it all. Taking the hint, the physician prescribed an unlimited quantity of green vegetables for the patient, and this food appeared to be the chief agent in his recovery.<sup>2</sup> But "grass" is a very comprehensive term, and for Nebuchadnezzar it may have meant many other plants beside the grass of the field. Perhaps quantities of black hellebore, so famous in ancient times for the cure of melancholia, and which had the reputation of restoring to their human form the daughters of Proetus who had been trans-

<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopedia Biblica*, art. "Madness."

<sup>2</sup> *Kidd, Laws of Therapeutics*, p. 98.

formed into cows, were brought from the west in the hope that it would cure Nebuchadnezzar.

A learned writer has recently advanced the novel and interesting theory, that the reference to Nebuchadnezzar's eating grass as oxen, is only another way of saying that he was addicted to the use of *hashish*, a drug greatly prized in the East for its intoxicating properties.<sup>1</sup> He reaches this conclusion by observing the resemblance of the name of the drug to *hachach*, the Arabic word for "grass." Almost anything could be proved by this ingenious method of reasoning. The French word *hachis*, meaning "hash"; the English word "hashes"; and the Scotch word *haggis*, the name of the savory dish which the soul of every Scotchman is commonly supposed to love, the "great chieftain o' the puddin' race," as Burns enthusiastically describes it,—all these words resemble the Arabic *hachach* to some extent; yet it would be as reasonable to argue that a person partial to either "hashes" or "haggis" was a lover of "hashish," as to say that those who drink cocoa are addicted to the use of the deadly drug cocaine. Besides, the narrative of Nebuchadnezzar's trouble leaves the impression that it was essentially of a melancholic nature. The intoxication of hashish, on the contrary, is usually of a very happy kind, laughter being easily excited and uncontrollable. "Those who make use of the hashish in the East, when they wish to give themselves up to the intoxication of the fantasia, take care to withdraw themselves from everything which could give to their delirium a tendency to melancholy, or excite in them anything else than feelings of pleasurable enjoyment; and they profit by all the means which the dissolute manners of the East place at their disposal."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Creighton, "Janus." No. lxxii. 1903. Abstr., Journal Amer. Med. Association, Aug. 1903, p. 471.

<sup>2</sup> Moreau, *De Hachisch et d'Aliénation Mentale*, p. 67.

Incidentally, the strange effects of this drug on the conceptions of time and space may be noticed. The sense of time is marvelously prolonged, so that minutes seem hours, and hours stretch away into years, until at last all distinct ideas of time seem to be obliterated, and the past and the present are confounded together. Space seems to be lengthened out interminably, and persons and objects seen from a distance are apparently diminished in size as if seen through the obverse end of a telescope. In some cases there also occurs a peculiar separation of the mental powers, during which the hemispheres of the brain seem to think differently on the same subject. It is true that excessive use of this drug leads to insanity, but as a rule this quickly disappears when the drug is withdrawn. The notion that Nebuchadnezzar was a slave to hashish does not seem to be in harmony with the narrative, nor with the larger record of his life.

Another writer, because of the same allusion to the eating of grass, thinks Nebuchadnezzar's disease may have been pellagra.<sup>1</sup> This is a disease which at present prevails extensively among the poorer classes of Italy, Spain, and the south of France, due to their use as food of poor and unsound maize. The principal manifestation of the disease in its early stages occurs in the skin. In the severe and chronic forms, there are pronounced nervous symptoms such as headache, backache, spasms, finally paralysis, and such mental disturbances as melancholia and suicidal mania. This theory also does not appear to meet all the facts of the case; and we may be quite sure that prior to his judgment, the food of Nebuchadnezzar was the best that could possibly be procured.

The alterations in the hair and nails of Nebuchadnezzar need not be fancifully interpreted; they simply point to the

<sup>1</sup> Von Feuchtersleben, *Principles of Medical Psychology*, p. 25.



extreme neglect of his personal appearance. In the "Story of Ahikar,"<sup>1</sup> which is believed by learned scholars to throw considerable light on the Book of Daniel, it is related of the wise and wealthy vizier of Sennacherib, that on his liberation, after a long and unjust imprisonment, his intellect was unimpaired, but he came out of his dungeon, "with the color of his face changed, his hair matted like that of a wild beast, and his nails like the claws of an eagle."

As to restoration to sanity, the prognosis in cases of melancholia is favorable, much more so than in any other form of insanity. A majority of the patients recover, even at an advanced age and after years of the most intense mental disorder. And recovery is often so very complete, that the highest and most active brain work is performed; and so permanent, that a relapse never occurs during a long, subsequent life. In some cases the recovery is gradual; in others the malady disappears suddenly and mysteriously. Of one patient it is recorded that, after standing like a veritable statue of woe for fifteen months, neither speaking, nor eating, nor allowing anything to be done for him, he suddenly became mentally alert, conversed freely, and thereafter remained quite well for over twelve years. Another was in an insane asylum for thirty-four years. For fifteen years he sat with his head bent upon his chest, apparently regardless of everything about him. One evening, while sitting in the billiard-room without taking any interest, he suddenly began to look about him; a few days after he was cheerful, in fact almost exuberant, and it was not long before he was completely cured.<sup>2</sup>

How long the "seven times" were which passed over Nebuchadnezzar—whether they were days, weeks, months, or

<sup>1</sup> Barton, "The Story of Ahikar," *Amer. Journal of Semitic Languages*, xiv. 243.

<sup>2</sup> See *Savage, Insanity and Allied Neuroses*, p. 205.

years,—we do not positively know. His own inscriptions speak only of a four-year-long suspension of interest in public affairs; but, taking the longest period of seven years, his sudden and complete recovery at the end of that time is quite in accordance with what we know of the malady. Neither is the king's remembrance of the circumstances of his degradation and of the causes which led to it very remarkable. Patients on recovery are often able to tell what was their mental state immediately prior to their madness, and some are able to describe the whole course of their disease with its various delusions. Nebuchadnezzar knew his reason had been dethroned, and why the judgment came upon him, and after his recovery he was a better man. As in the case of King Lear of the dramatist, the madness has been purgatorial: "he has been delivered from his pride and passionate wilfulness; he has found that, instead of being a master, at whose nod all things must bow, he is weak and helpless, a sport even of the wind and the rain." Surely for the rest of his life he walked, as did King Hezekiah after his almost mortal illness, as if he were in a sorrowful procession, and was not unworthy of the company of those holy and humble men of heart who, in the song of the three Hebrews whom he had tried to put to death, are invited to bless the Lord, praise him, and magnify him forever. And Nebuchadnezzar does this, sincerely and humbly. "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise, and extol, and honour the King of heaven; for all his works are truth, and his ways judgment; and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."