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PSYCHOPATHIC RULERS.

BY ALLAN MCLANE HAMILTON.

EVERY nation has its period of turmoil and demoralization which is often brought about through the conduct of one or more of its rulers; and whether there be a short-lived disturbance, depending upon the isolated reign of a psychopathic monarch, or it be due to the gradual decadence inseparable from the perpetuation of an insane or immoral strain, like that, for instance, of the Bourbons, the burden of national misery, as every one knows, has at times been great indeed. It is not necessary to go back for illustrations to the insane Cæsars, to Nero or Caligula, or even to Tiberius; or to the degenerate kings or queens of a later time who had so much to do with misrule and oppression in Middle-Age Europe; for all periods are replete with examples. Historians who are untrained in psychiatry often allude only to the weakness and immorality of the individual, disregarding the origin of such defects; but modern students of mental disorder find no difficulty in recognizing the dependence of much of this upon actual disease or deterioration. It is to be regretted, therefore, that there is so little specific information from a medical point of view in most of the historical records to which we have access. Wood,* whose work upon the subject shows much patient research, is content to divide the mental attributes of the members of many royal families into classes which are denominated "intellectual," "virtuous" and "obscure," although in his tables he refers to certain subjects as being insane, melancholic, weak-minded, epileptic and imbecile, but without further analysis. Even contemporary history is barren, except so far as generalization is concerned; and various acts of cruelty, inconsistency, licentiousness or stupidity are related without any attempt at de-

* "Heredity in Royalty."

tails. We are, therefore, greatly hampered in our researches. The older chroniclers are as apt as not to invest some strenuous and unbalanced individual with transcendental heroism or supernatural attributes who to-day would simply be called a fanatic.

It is only with to-day's knowledge of the influence of psychopathic heritage, and the development of paranoid states in persons of defective organization, that we are able to explain the place in literature of those dramatic and picturesque characters whose hysterical and delusional utterances and grandiose assertions have led without question to their acceptance as leaders of mobs, and even to their canonization.

An inspection of the records of any great European royal stock enables us to speculate with something approaching certainty as to the possible usefulness or the to-be-expected incompetence of one of a line who has come into power, and from abundant data we are usually able to study successfully the psychopathic strain of several great ruling families, especially the Bourbons, the Hapsburgs, the Oldenburgs and the Romanovs. The careful investigation of some such line, for instance, as the Bourbons will disclose wide-spread degeneration, and it is known that one notable lunatic, like "Joanna the Mad," was responsible for much of the moral and intellectual Bourbon decay. Her great-granddaughter, Marie de Medici, married Henry IV of France, "the great and good king," and the progeny immediately presented the taint of insanity which subsequently cropped out very extensively in the French and Spanish lines. The children of this monarch and his queen were, with one exception, psychopathic. The whole French and Spanish lines, from the notorious Joanna and her weak husband, Philip "the Handsome," are filled with all manner of mental disorder and degeneracy, and Philips II, III, IV and V were mentally unsound or more or less degenerate. In Russia the same thing appears. Although Peter the Great was an epileptic, and Peters II and III and Nicholas I were mentally defective, the most conspicuous example of Romanov insanity was that of Paul, son of Catherine II, herself a psychopath; whose cruelty was the direct result of delusions of persecution. "He was," says Rappoport,* "looked upon as a dangerous madman whose forcible confinement was impracticable. He finally signed an order for the arrest of his wife and children

* "The Curse of the Romanovs." By A. S. Rappoport. London, 1907.

on the suspicion that they were accomplices in a conspiracy against his life."

The mental instability of the Stuarts in England is well known, and the House of Hanover, until the early part of the last century, was noted for its unbalanced members; the weakness and profligacy of the Georges, who were more or less deranged, were notorious, while William IV "was dull and eccentric and the victim of a psychoneurosis* . . . Queen Caroline was more insane than her foolish and dissipated husband," and it was only when the Saxe-Coburg blood was infused that it neutralized that which was synonymous with degeneracy, and with the accession of Victoria a new order of things was established to the great good of the English nation.

In every community are to be found a number of men who are so different from their fellows, by reason of their conduct and inability to accommodate themselves to ordinary social conditions, that they are looked upon as queer and eccentric. Baldwin has defined the exact place of these persons, classifying them as unfit or "anti-social," and he insists, first, that the individual must be *born to learn*, and, next, that all individuals must be *born to learn the same things*. It is also necessary that the individual be free from hereditary tendencies rendering him anti-social to a "suppressive degree."† The disposition of the ma-

* Wood: "Heredity in Royalty."

† "Suppose we take the man of striking thoughts and withal no sense of fitness,—none of the judgment about him which society has. He will go through a mighty host of discoveries every hour. The very eccentricity of his imaginations will only appeal to him for the greater admiration. He will bring his most chimerical schemes out, and air them with the same assurance with which the real inventor exhibits his. But such a man is not pronounced a genius. If his ravings about this and that are harmless, we smile and let him talk; but if his lack of judgment extends to things of grave import, or he is accompanied by equal illusions regarding himself and society in other relationships, then we classify his case and put him into the proper ward for the insane. Two of the commonest forms of such impairment of judgment are seen in the victims of 'fixed ideas,' on the one hand, and the *exaltés* on the other. These men have no true sense of values, no way of selecting the fit combinations of imagination from the unfit; and even though some transcendently true and original thought were to flit through the diseased mind of such a one, it would go as it came, and the world would wait for a man with a sense of fitness to arise and rediscover it. Men of such perversions of judgment are common among us. We all know the man who seems to be full of right and varied thought, who holds us sometimes by the power of his conceptions or the beauty of his creations, but in whose thought we yet find some incongruity, some eminently unfit element, some grotesque application, some elevation or depression from the level of commonplace truth, some ugly strain in the æsthetic

jority of mankind is to hold such a person to account for his laches, and he is usually tolerated as a bore, or one who forms an "anti-social" judgment, or is actually held responsible for his pernicious and freaky tricks. His ideals may be high enough, and he may strive to cultivate a personal altruistic life, yet his studied desire to help and reform others often ends in mischievous disregard of those who do not need development or protection or correction, and he may be even looked upon as a "mischievous meddler." Should he be invested with power, he may imperil the peace and safety of those over whom he rules.*

This kind of altruism is in some ways quite as offensive and dangerous as actual self-interest or immorality, and is as detrimental in some instances to the welfare of the community as actual wrong-doing. It would, therefore, seem that the apparent unselfishness of the mentally unbalanced is almost as much fraught with danger to a people as corrupt self-interest. Persistent effort, energy and fixity of purpose, even for the accomplishment of seemingly important results, of course do not in themselves of necessity indicate sanity. An erroneous fixed idea, no matter how lofty, if irrational and obstinately entertained, may be highly dangerous in its consequences, as all psychiatrists know. The true tests, after all, are the existence of consistency and continuity, of thought and action; the presence of sufficient and proper basis for the exercise of will; the realization of the conditions of existing order which are believed in and accepted by the majority; the avoidance of disorderly impulses, which are inconsistent with proper self-control; and the regard for the general social comfort of one's kind.

Many individuals, while not necessarily insane in a way to necessitate their being shut up, are at all times making their impression. The man himself does not know it, and that is the reason that he includes it. His sense of fitness is dwarfed or paralyzed. We in the community come to regret that he is so 'visionary,' with all his talent; and so we accommodate ourselves to his unfruitfulness, and at the best only expect an occasional hour's entertainment under the spell of his presence. This certainly is not the man to produce a world movement."—JAMES MARK BALDWIN: "Mental Development," etc., page 160, section 107.

* The possible explanation of the apparent lawlessness of those who hold that the end justifies the means is that of Plutarch, who says: "There is a necessity, if a man must do wrong by detail, who will do right in gross, and injustice in little things that will come to justice in great." In the interpretation of this, we are confronted with the danger of the exercise of an anti-social judgment.

presence unpleasantly felt in the community. Some of them are kept more or less in order by their environment, or by restraint of various kinds which is inseparable from communal requirements and interests. These persons are quite likely under slight excitement or opposition, or perhaps dissipation, or even too much license, to indulge in conduct which is so characteristic as to be recognized by most normal people and to be especially clear to alienists. When their psychosis has developed sufficiently, it may be expressed by expansion, and false and exaggerated ideas of personal power; by vanity, love of display and personal decoration, and a futile attempt to correct the abuses supposed to exist by the person of diseased intellect, who is always prone to magnify trivial things or those in conflict with his morbid ego. Psychiatrists are familiar with such defects, for there is a well-known disorder called *paranoia reformatoria** which is expressed in erratic attempts at social betterment when none are needed, and in disorderly efforts which usually fall far short of accomplishment. Another class come under the head of what is known as *querulants*, whose unhinging is usually manifested by purposeless and unnecessary litigation; while ideas of persecution and conspiracy are accompaniments of both forms to a greater or less degree. Unfortunately for these people, they are too often looked upon simply as eccentric members of society, possessing the full responsibility of their mentally healthy fellows, thus escaping care and treatment, or detention; while in reality they often go through life bringing trouble upon themselves and others. It can easily be conceived how, in other countries than our own, an autocratic monarch may subject his people to all sorts of cruel oppression, his derangement being entirely unappreciated. All of these subjects are more or less "constitutionally inferior"; and, like certain high-grade imbeciles, they are perhaps exceedingly brilliant in some directions while deficient in others. There is, however, a conspicuous lack of stability in all their plans, and a want of consistency in what they say and do. They are obsessed by the *cacoethes* both of *loquendi* and

* "The psychopath is apt to pose as a champion of justice, as an avenger of humanity. He is given to anarchistic ideas, seeks to interfere in public affairs, to become the leader of popular movements, and he succeeds but too often. His conduct is often inconsistent with his ideas of justice and charity, though he fails to see it himself. Theoretically, he strives for the good of the Universe; practically, for the satisfaction of his own egotistic tendencies."—DE FURSAC.

scribendi, and the literature of the insane furnishes us with striking examples of verbosity; their oral and written productions being quite characteristic. Specimens of the writings of the expansive insane are not only redundant in exalted phrase and florid rhetoric, but in energetic invective as well.

While it is easy, as has been said, in other countries than our own to beware of certain pitfalls, or to know what to expect from degenerate monarchs, it cannot be denied that there is a great danger attached to all republican forms of government, no matter in what part of the world, where new presidents are chosen every few years, about whose antecedents and mental health little or nothing is known. While we are careful enough to question the political principles and declarations of such candidates as present themselves for this high office, no proper or adequate attempt has ever been made to analyze the mental integrity of presidential or other nominees, or to question for a moment the existence of any bad heredity or any previously expressed trouble, which, under the prod and stress of newly acquired power and great responsibility, may develop into a psychosis. It may be seen, when such is the case, that an entire country may be exposed to the gravest consequences through the unrestrained influence of an irresponsible demagogue, who may even impress others by his apparently lofty, but really visionary, ideas. The worst of it is that nearly always the *unfit*, and especially the educated unfit, is very apt to impose upon others by the display of a certain kind of superficial mental brilliancy, or by something akin to genius; but this, like all the rest, is merely a flash in the pan in the productions of such persons in whom there may be underlying mental disorder. Attention may be called to the fact that lately in the United States a movement has been inaugurated to remove from the public service, especially from the army, certain individuals whose alleged mental instability, it has been held, interfered with the proper discharge of their duties; but the way in which this has been done leaves much to be desired, and the reform is not thorough or far-reaching enough.

In other times than ours there have been occasions when nations, fretting under the oppression and misrule of licentious monarchs, have unhesitatingly accepted the leadership of some fanatic whose initial attempts to bring them freedom have for

a time been successful, but ultimately the psychopath has always asserted himself. Every one in this connection must recall the career of Cola di Rienzi, who, in the fourteenth century, for a long time exercised his fanatic sway, and put in operation his insane populistic and religious ideas, completely demoralizing Italy. Lombroso and several older writers have pictured him as a paranoiac, Lombroso analyzing his extraordinary writings. "By his fantastic eloquence he harangued the populace and with stilted oratory enchanted their ears." He soon had a mob following; and, after his usurpation of power, he first brought about a number of apparent reforms through the exercise of stringent measures which appealed to the masses. He abolished the rather aristocratic and licentious Roman Senate, rearranged taxes, and ordered that the granaries should be opened for public use. When his insanity became pronounced, he next insisted that confession should be made once a year under penalty of confiscation of one-third of a person's property. He became more and more unbearable, and his religious vagaries and enthusiasm were such that he compelled immediate obedience to his mandates, comparing himself to Christ; he believed in mysticism and symbols, and upon one occasion he waved his sword three times to the known divisions of the world and said: "They too belong to me." He became "incapable of undertaking any resolution which was not merely theoretical." His early more or less altruistic conduct was followed by erratic excesses, and a violent death, yet there are many to-day who think that he was anything but insane. There was something very characteristic in his behavior, and much in common with that of various unbalanced persons who hold the public ear from time to time. Such individuals, despite their pathological egoism, are themselves susceptible to suggestion from all sources, which perhaps is first sought for the satisfaction to be derived from the possible praise and mob-approval it may bring, and again a preternaturally active and disorderly mind is ready to take hints which it amplifies and makes its very own. In speaking of the crowd, Le Bon says:

"The leader has most often started as one of the led. He has himself been hypnotized by the idea whose apostle he has since become. It has taken possession of him to such a degree that everything outside it vanishes, and that every contrary opinion appears to him an error or a superstition. An example in point is Robespierre hypnotized by the

philosophical ideas of Rousseau, and employing methods of the Inquisition to propagate them. . . . Nations have never lacked leaders, and the latter have by no means been animated by those strong emotions proper to apostles. These leaders are often subtle rhetoricians, seeking only their own personal interests and endeavoring to persuade by flattering base instincts. The influence they exert in this manner may be very great, but it is always ephemeral. The men of crowds, the Peter the Hermits, the Luthers, the Savonarolas, the men of the French Revolution, have only exercised their fascination after having been themselves fascinated first of all by a creed. They are then able to call up in the souls of their fellows that fond dream of power known as faith, which renders a man the absolute slave of his dream.”*

The existence of mob feeling, it is unnecessary to say, is just now making itself felt in the condition of unsettlement, and not a little of it is due to the existence of a temporary emotional instability which should be out of place in a country like ours, where Anglo-Saxon ideals have always existed and where sturdy men of healthy mentality have always governed us. Perhaps we are more than ever in need of discipline and the controlling influence of official dignity, for never in the history of the country has our population been so heterogeneous, and so susceptible to the influence of the moment as it is at the present time. Within the past few years there have been landed upon our shores an unassimilated crowd of “undesirable” emigrants, many of whom are the unfit of overcrowded Europe, and have come here with an absolutely erroneous idea of what they are to find or what they are to do, and are quite ignorant of our law or social customs. Many of them undoubtedly soon learn to believe that we are a swashbuckling, restless people, eminently selfish and undisciplined, and that the one thing for them to do is to “hustle,” and that this must be done with an utter disregard for the feelings and rights of others; to find that older and slower business methods, even if stable and honest, are for the time discarded, for money must be made quickly and easily. No longer does reasonable contentment prevail. The strenuous and extreme life of excitement and unrest is expressed in general discontent, and the alleged interference with the rights of the unreasonable working-men who in turn find warm sympathizers in high places. What is really wanted is an example of unquestioned dignity, and the logical and unvarying administration of justice which requires absolute mental lucidity and poise.

* “The Crowd,” pp. 134-135.

The power vested in a President of the United States is so great that if there be not sanity, self-control and self-respect, and a regard for the rights of every one, its immoderate and irrational use may be readily directed in a way which may be compared with the tyranny of any of the worst monarchs of other ages. President Roosevelt has elsewhere said:*

“The President of the United States occupies a position of peculiar importance. In the whole world there is probably no other ruler, certainly no other ruler under free institutions, whose power compares with his. Of course a despotic king has even more, but no constitutional monarch has as much.”

The investiture, therefore, of power in an unstable person is likely to lead to an abuse of privilege, and a quasi-delusional assumption of the right to regulate in an arbitrary way the affairs of a great nation with a total disregard of individual rights.

In these days of mediocre or erratic rulers in all parts of the world, it is at least comforting to look back into the annals of Japan, a nation whose early traditions are replete with the deeds of great and sane men, and those who prate about “higher civilization” and the “supremacy of the white races” are referred to the comments of Lafcadio Hearn† upon the career of one of the greatest of Japanese rulers—Iyéyasu, who was a striking combination of a fearless warrior and a temperate statesman. Says Hearn:

“He was of Minamoto descent and an aristocrat to the marrow of his bones. As a soldier, he was scarcely inferior to Hidéyoshi, whom he once defeated,—but he was much more than a soldier: a far-sighted statesman, an incomparable diplomat, and something of a scholar; cool, cautious, secretive,—distrustful, yet generous,—stern, yet humane. By the range and the versatility of his genius he might be not unfavorably contrasted with Julius Cæsar.”

The influence of this great man lasted 250 years; and long after his death the house of Tokugawa gave to the Japanese prosperity and peace under fifteen Shoguns; and, in fact, until 1867,—when we civilized them.

ALLAN McLANE HAMILTON.

* “The Works of Theodore Roosevelt,” vol. I, page 1.

† “Japan: An Interpretation,” by Lafcadio Hearn, p. 303.