I must further refer to the skull, the cephalic index of which was 76·5. It presented traces of the lambdoidal and sagittal sutures, and a slight superior occipito-parietal platycephaly. The occipital convolutions of the external surface of the brain, two in number, were very voluminous, not much convoluted, but rather simple in configuration. The lower posterior terminal branch of each calcarine fissure was wanting. Each calcarine fissure ended in a single sulcus; the right one turned obliquely upwards, and the left continued transversely, for two centimetres, to the superior occipital surface.—(From the "Archivio di Psichiatria," v., f. 2-3, 1884. Torino.)

OCCASIONAL NOTES OF THE QUARTER.

Mr. Irving's "Lear."

Shakespeare so clearly held up the mirror to nature that every special student finds his specialty recognized by the great dramatist. We do not for a moment suppose that Shakespeare made a prolonged study of the insane or of the mental defects associated with senility, yet when he came to portray a weak-minded old man his observation in no way misled him, and we have in his Lear one of the most masterly descriptions of a demented king that any literature, whether special or general, can provide.

Lear and Hamlet have been particularly looked upon as psychological studies, and they will ever provide food for further investigation. Here we are chiefly concerned with a particular actor's representation of one character. We do not think with many—particularly German critics—that Shakespeare is for the study and not for the theatre. We should rather say he is for the theatre as well as for the study, as much as the Bible is for the church and for the closet.

We can add little to the criticism of the play itself, or to the morbid psychology of Lear. These subjects have been considered and reconsidered till they form a literature of their own. Dr. Bucknill, in 1859, published in his "Psychology of Shakespeare" a very careful study of King Lear, and we would strongly recommend our readers to consult this essay. Dr. Bucknill recognized, as a practical psychiatric physician, that Lear's reason was tottering before his daughters' misconduct produced a further de-

gradation of mind. It seems strange that so few appear to have fully recognized this, and by some reviewers of Irving's acting his recognizing this has been looked upon as a discovery of his.

At the very outset Irving represents Lear as restless, irritable, boisterous, and beside himself. The mannerisms of the actor are marked in the earlier scenes, but either they are suppressed by the actor himself, or are so masked by his deeply pathetic acting in the later scenes that they can give offence to no one; Irving becomes the fierce, generous King, who, having always acted in a headstrong way, as he loses self-control, becomes more and more headstrong and wilful.

Perhaps the boisterousness of the first part is a little overdone, but it makes a very fine contrast to the misery, at first half-dumb, then incoherently voluble, of the old man who had discovered himself to be a fool. The eloquence of Lear and his prolonged speeches have at times been looked upon as being inconsistent with senile decay.

We, on the other hand, know that eloquence in old age may outlast judgment, and may be associated with varying degrees of moral and intellectual or sensory defects. Lear is represented by Irving as being in a great hurry, being restless and anxious to get rid of all his worries and to have a good and easy time. He is certainly "made up"—to our thinking—rather too old, and it is astonishing to the spectator to see the physical energy of one so aged. In the scenes where Lear discovers that he is deceived by his daughters, Irving very finely represents the slow growth of his doubt of Goneril and Regan, and his equally slow appreciation of Cordelia. The scenes with Kent, with Gloster, and with the Fool are all that could be desired. The King, formerly so exacting, is seen to be losing his grip of the world; he is passionate, but doubtful; at one moment tolerant of what appears to be insolence, and in the next passionate at ingratitude. We cannot go into each scene, but must pass on to the shock of the death of Cordelia. The old man, with tottering mind, is rendered insane by the griefs and worries produced by his daughters; then the deeper grief of the sense of his ill-treatment of his youngest daughter and of her death produce a temporary return of reason before the end. Irving does not over-act here; the restoration of reason is felt to be a passing change, and one is led to see the beautiful reconciliation of father and child in death.

Irving's death scene is pathetic and natural, and is without the ghastly realism which the French stage has used us to.

The whole character is well maintained, and we look upon Irving's Lear as one of the representations which will live in the history of the stage.

We may, perhaps, add one or two points on the play itself.

First, we have frequently been struck by the great increase of appetite and, apparently, of digestion which may occur with senility. Shakespeare represents Lear as being very hungry. "Let me not stay a jot for dinner. Go, get it ready. Dinner, ho, dinner!" This is probably of little moment, but we think it is another point showing the precise knowledge of the poet. We have a recollection of a proverb to the following effect: "Give a thing, take a thing, an old man's plaything." We should like to know the source of this; it represents Lear's frame of mind, and we have met with at least one case in which a man of near 80 gave away his property to his heirs, and then accused them of stealing it and of neglecting him. We have looked for signs of loss of recent memory in Lear, and have not found them, though we should have expected them.

There are several points in reference to the daughter's conduct which need notice. First, Cordelia, knowing as she did her father's mental weakness, had no business to behave as she did. In Shakespeare's time, beside punishing the insane, it was considered necessary to humour them, and we have always thought that Kate, in "Taming the Shrew," really was not so weak as supposed, but was acquiescing in what she supposed to be the delusions of a lunatic.

Cordelia ought to have known this much, and ought not to have thwarted her old doting father. We are inclined to think that she was the child of old age, and was probably rather weak mentally herself.

Then as to the other daughters we do not intend to whitewash them, but anyone who has had much to do with senile dements knows that such people upset ordinary households enough, and that in a semi-barbarous court they would be not only intolerable, but they would lead to brawls and license such as Goneril describes.

> "Every hour he flashes into one gross crime or another,
> That sets us all at odds. I'll not endure it."

"His knights grow riotous," etc. In this passage, too, is

the only suggestion that in Lear, as in many old men, there may have been uncontrolled lust. "One gross crime to another" might easily bear this interpretation. The foolish old man divided his property in the degeneratingly generous way, only to regret it; when he finds his personal importance lessened, he loses rapidly more self-control with each fresh buffet of misfortune, and passes away naturally enough.

In the play we have also the natural fool and the pretended lunatic, and we think all the parts were well taken, and the characters sustained, but as we really only intended to refer to Irving we must refrain from further comments.

Roe v. Nix.

The facts of this remarkable and extremely narrow case, which was tried by Mr. Justice Gorell Barnes and a special jury, at the close of last year, are too fresh in the minds of our readers to require or to justify recapitulation at any length, and it may suffice to state that the point at issue was whether certain testamentary documents executed by a Chancery lunatic, Miss Ellen Roe, were or were not vitiated by the alleged mental unsoundness of the testatrix. The evidence was very evenly balanced. On the one hand, Miss Ellen Roe had been found lunatic by inquisition; no supersedeas had been obtained. The Lord Chancellor's visitors were of opinion that she did not possess testamentary capacity at the critical period; the deceased lady had proposed to bequeath her property to the Dean of Norwich, and to leave legacies to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Chancellor, and a strong effort was made to show that she was under the influence of an insane aversion towards her sisters, and that the case, therefore, came within the *ratio decidendi* of *Dew v. Clark* and similar authorities. On the other hand, it was contended, and evidence was adduced to prove, that the only form of insanity from which Miss Roe had ever suffered was temporary alcoholism, and that her aversion to her sisters was at first merely the indifference caused by long absence from home, and afterwards the dislike which the inmate of an asylum is apt to feel to the persons whom she supposes to have put her there. It was also proved that one of the Chancery Visitors had expressed an opinion that Miss Roe