

victim to the same mental disorders as the lunatic. His whole moral nature undergoes a complete change, his character is the antithesis of what it was before disease affected him, and in all that he does, he is actuated by the same motives as the insane. Morose, suspicious, obstinate, fitfully happy and fitfully violent, science has christened him by the name of dipsomaniac, and in France he is subject to the same restraints as the unsound. A dipsomaniac Charles was, if ever man deserved the name. And if, as the medical world maintains, drink is so terrible a poison, that when once it has enslaved its votary, it renders him the exact opposite of what he was before his bondage, then the contrast between the Charles of the '45 and the driveller at Florence is at once accounted for. Never did character undergo so complete a transformation. His bold daring degenerated into the most childish cowardice; his sensitive humanity, that was always loth to shed blood, changed into the worst kinds of brutality—cruelty towards woman; generous, so far as his means had allowed him, he became selfish, and meanly avaricious; his courtly manners, which had won the admiration of all who met him, were now changed to an uneasy swagger, and the coarse hilarity of a tavern haunter; from being a dandy, he became a sloven. Peevish, suspicious, easily offended, yet always offending, we are not surprised to learn from more than one envoy that he was considered no gentleman, and shunned even by those who wished to be loyal to him. Biography scarcely records a dawn more brilliant, a sunset more clouded.

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*The Tichborne Imposture.*

It is a pity that some one possessed of the requisite knowledge and of suitable analytical power has not undertaken a study of the notorious Tichborne trial from a psychological point of view. No richer mine of erroneous observation and fallacious inference will easily be found. The sublime audacity of the Claimant has served to put in a strong and vivid light the truth, which is illustrated every day in a less striking way, that it is impossible to go too far in speculating upon the stupidity of mankind. And it may fairly be questioned whether those who, having for some time firmly believed that the Claimant was Sir Roger Tichborne, are now convinced that he was a vulgar impostor, deserve any more credit for their present disbelief than they did for their former belief in him. Neither the one nor the other has been founded upon a rational exercise of their mental faculties. They believed in him because their minds were much impressed with the knowledge which he displayed of

certain circumstances that occurred to Sir Roger, and which he had the means of easily learning, entirely overlooking all those facts of which he knew nothing, but which, had he been what he represented himself, he could not, having the memory which he had, possibly have forgotten. They were like those who testified to his identity with Sir Roger, and who, being struck with certain resemblances which they imagined they perceived, ignored altogether gross and palpable differences. This is one of the commonest fallacies in observation, and one which everyone who is accustomed to observe carefully knows well that he must guard against; it requires a better observer to take notice of differences than of resemblances; and hence it is that the testimony of most persons concerning identity based upon vague resemblances of features is valueless. The strong tendency to erroneous generalisation, which is thus manifested in perception, is manifested also in the formation of crude and hasty inferences from observation. A few instances of a like kind which seem to warrant the generalisation engage all the attention, while the opposing instances which entirely contradict it are overlooked; the mind, as Bacon remarked, being more moved by affirmative than by negative instances, although the latter are of more weight in philosophy. What would have become of the authority of weather prophets and of omens, of the saying that dreams come true, and of the opposite equally well founded saying that dreams go by contraries, of the proverb—"Talk of the devil and he's sure to appear," and of the belief in the special answers vouchsafed to prayers, were it not for this inherent tendency in the human mind to take note of coincidences and to neglect opposing instances. "And therefore it was a good answer," says Bacon, "that was made by one, who when they showed him hanging in a temple a picture of those who had paid their vows as having escaped from shipwreck, and would have him say whether he did not now acknowledge the power of the gods, 'Ay,' asks he again, 'but where are they painted that were drowned after their vows?'"

Why do those who at one time believed so hotly in the Claimant disbelieve in him now? And why did they cry out so loudly and contemptuously against the ignorance and folly of the people who sent to Parliament the advocate who lost no occasion, and forbore no speech or act calculated, to damn his client's cause? Is it that they have now trained themselves to examination of evidence and to think rationally

about it? Not at all: the same want of that which can be properly dignified by the name of reason, which influenced them to believe, has now influenced them to disbelieve. The jury having given a verdict, the Judge having made a long, clever, and ostentatious display of argument, unhappily flavoured with injudicial vituperation, the newspapers having joined in a chorus of approbation of the verdict and of execration of the culprit, they were convinced. They were infected with the prevailing tone; the contagion of belief spread to what they were pleased to call their minds; there was no reasoning about it; and if they were asked to set forth the grounds of their present opinion they would be as imbecile and foolish in the matter as they would be if they were asked to set forth the fallacies of their former belief in the Claimant. Such is the effect of mental infection, which causes multitudes to think and howl together, as jackals hunt, in packs. It is with the spread of a mental contagion as it is with the spread of a conflagration; the heat of the burning part raises the adjacent parts to a temperature at which they take fire, and one earnest fool fails not to make many fools. Few indeed are the persons whose beliefs are affected by arguments demonstrating their soundness or unsoundness; beliefs rest for the most part on foundations which arguments cannot reach—on feelings, sentiments, prejudices, habits, the bias of interests, wishes, or fears; and all history proves that a change of popular belief occurs not gradually in consequence of the assaults of reason, but takes place commonly with great suddenness, from no immediate help of reason, when a certain change of sentiment has unconsciously taken place in the public mind. Those who believe one thing to-day, as it were, believe another thing to-morrow, and they would, if asked, be utterly at a loss to set forth the reasonable grounds of either faith—nay more, there are not a few persons who manage to hold two irreconcilable beliefs side by side without ever being discomfited thereby. They don't really believe that Jonah was swallowed by a whale and lived three days and nights in its interior, but they would be sincerely shocked if they were charged with doubting the miracle.