whether out of tune (as they generally are or not. Few people know the agony which these tormenting instruments cause to men whose brains are working beyond their proper pitch. Heart disease, arising from nervous excitability, attacked poor Leech. Still he worked on; for the income he derived from his labors depended mainly upon his weekly exertions. He never took rest, but died working. His last drawing in *Punch* appeared on the day of his funeral."*

The poets Keats and Shelley suffered from the literary diseases. While Keats was writing *Endymion*, he said to a friend: "I went day by day at my poem for a month, at the end of which time, the other day, I found my brain so overwrought that I had neither rhyme nor reason in it, so I was obliged to give up for a few days. . . . Instead of poetry I have a swimming in my head, and feel all the effects of a mental debauch, lowness of spirits, and anxiety to go on, without the power to do so.* Shelley was also subject to extreme morbid sensitiveness, aggravated by excessive tea-drinking, while composing his *Prometheus Unbound.* Writing to a friend he said: "My feelings at intervals are of a deadly and torpid kind, or awakened to such a state of unnatural and keen excitement that, only to instance the organ of sight, I find the blades of grass and the boughs of distant trees present themselves to me with microscopic distinctness. Towards evening I sink into a state of lethargy and inanimation, and often remain for hours on the sofa between sleep and waking, a prey to the most painful irritability of thought."*

* Though Leech died at fifty-seven of *Angina Pectoris*, the root of his malady was probably in the brain, as in the cases of John Hunter, Sir Charles Bell, Dr. Arnold, Dr. Croly, Douglas Jerrold, Lord Macaulay, and the Rev. F. Robertson, who died of the same disease.

† Lord Houghton, *Life of Keats* (edition 1867), p. 44.

‡ Mrs. Shelley's Note on Prometheus Unbound," *Poetical Works of Shelley*, 8vo. (edition 1839), P. 125.

Fernel, the French physician, said: "A capite fluit omne malum." Great works are for the most part the issue of a determination of blood to the head. Metastasio occasionally felt a rushing of blood to his head when he set himself down to write. "I grow as red in the face as a drunkard," he said, "and am obliged to quit my work." When the brain is in this high state of tension, the slightest extra strain may produce the most serious results. Malebranche was seized with a violent palpitation on first reading Descartes' work on *Man.* The poet Santeuil was so overjoyed at finding a phrase of which he had long been in search, that his reason was at once upset. Shenstone wrote to a friend: "I suppose you have been informed that my fever is in a great measure hypochondriacal, and left my nerves so extremely sensible that even on no very interesting subjects I could readily think myself into a vertigo—I had almost said an apoplexy; for surely I was oftentimes near it." Swift was for the greater part of his life subject to the literary disease, resulting in giddiness, vertigo, buzzing in the ears, tremblings in the limbs, and achings in the head, always accompanied by indigestion. Swift fully described his symptoms in his letters and journals, and Dr. Wilde speaks of his case as "one of the best described, and certainly the very longest instance of cerebral disease which he had ever met with, extending as it did over a period of fifty-one years." *

Thomas Hood was subject to his severest attacks of illness immediately preceding the publication of one of his works. Thus doubt, anxiety, and pain darken the brightest hours of genius. "The pitcher," it is said, "goes often to the well, but it is broken at last." Dr. Elliott, Hood's attendant, in describing his case to Mrs. Hood, said: "His diseases have been greatly aggravated of late years by the

* W. R. Wilde, F. R. C. S., *The Closing Years of Dean Swift's Life* (edition 1849), p. 5.

nature of his pursuits—by the necessity which, I understand, has existed, that he should at all times continue his literary labors, being under engagements to complete certain works within a stated period. The great and continued excitement attendant on such compulsory efforts, the privation of sleep and rest thereby entailed on him, and the consequent anxiety, depression, and exhaustion, have had a most injurious effect on these diseases, bringing on renewed attacks, and reducing him to such a state that he has been rendered utterly incapable of mental effort. The conviction that literary effort is necessary and urgent renders the effort fruitless. You must have remarked how generally these dangerous attacks have commenced at a period preceding the publication of his books; you have seen him break down under the struggle, and reduced to the brink of the grave by repeated attacks of hæmorrhage from the lungs, attended by palpitation of the heart."

Beattie, author of the *Essay on Truth*, said he never dared to read the work after it had been printed. One of his friends read and corrected the proofs. "These studies," said Beattie, "came in time to have dreadful effects upon my nervous system, and I cannot read what I then wrote without some degree of pain, because it recalls to my mind the horror that I have sometimes felt after passing a long evening in those severe studies." But without citing innumerable other cases,* it may be sufficient to mention the case of Sir Walter Scott, who towards the end of his life, was the victim of *Morbus Eruditorem.*

Scott was naturally of a healthy constitution. Though lame, and of sedentary pursuits through his occupation as a solicitor, he fortified his health by many suburban walks round Edinburgh and occasional excursions into the Highlands. His first poetical efforts were sources of pleasure rather than of profit. It was not until the publication of *Waverley*, in his forty-third year, that he devoted himself more especially to literature. Had he confined himself to literature, he would probably have survived to an advanced age, and certainly lived a much happier life. But he unfortunately became a partner in the printing-house of Ballantyne and Company, Edinburgh, which led him into all manner of difficulties.

* Mr. Isaac Disraeli has mentioned many cases in his Literary Character, under the heading of "The Enthusiasm of Genius," "The Rapture of Deep Study," "Illusions of the Mind of Genius," etc., in his *Miscellanies of Literature.*

The success of *Waverley* was such that he proceeded to turn out his novels with wonderful rapidity. *Guy Mannering*, *The Antiquary*, and *Tales of my Landlord*, appeared in rapid succession; until, in his forty-sixth year, he was suddenly pulled up by a severe attack of cramp in the stomach, The disease yielded to severe treatment—bleeding, blisters, and opium—but he remained excessively weak. He could neither "stir for weakness and giddiness, nor read for dazzling in his eyes, nor listen for a whizzing sound in his ears, nor even think for the lack of power of arranging his ideas."

So soon as he was able, he proceeded with *Rob Roy*, which he wrote under constant pain. The building of Abbotsford had been begun, and money must needs be raised. *The Heart of Midlothian* was written, and he was proceeding with *The Bride of Lammermoor*, when he was again interrupted with the recurrence of cramp in the stomach, which culminated in an attack of jaundice. Nevertheless, he finished *The Bride of Lammermoor*, and wrote nearly the whole of that novel—one of the finest of his works—as well as *The Legend of Montrose* and *Ivanhoe*, under the influence of opium and hyoscyamus—a most depressing drug. He continued to turn out about twelve volumes yearly; but no human constitution could stand such an amount of brain-pressure. When Dr. Abercromby expostulated with him as to his enormous amount of brain-

work, and said: "Really, Sir Walter, you must not work," Scott's answer was—"I tell you what it is, doctor: Molly, when she puts the kettle on, might just as well say, kettle, kettle, don't boil!"

Yet Scott continued as hopeful and cheerful as ever; though the end was coming, and he was the first to feel it. At the age of fifty-four, he wrote in his *Diary*, as if in anticipation of an early break-up: "Square the odds, and good-night, Sir Walter, about sixty. I care not, if I leave my name unstained, and my family properly settled. *Sat est vixisse.*" A little later, he owned to a touch of the literary disease, though it had long been giving its warnings. He thus described it: "A touch of the *Morbus Eruditorem*, to which I am as little subject as most folks, and have it less now than when younger. It is a tremor of the head, the pulsation of which becomes painfully sensible—a disposition to causeless alarm—much lassitude—and decay of vigor and activity of intellect. The veins feel weary and painful, and the mind is apt to receive and encourage gloomy apprehensions. Fighting with this fiend is not the best way to conquer him. I have found exercise and the open air better than reasoning."

Three weeks later, Scott made the following entry in his *Diary*: "Much alarmed. I had walked till twelve with Skene and Russell, and then sat down to my work [*Woodstock*]. To my horror and surprise, I could neither write nor spell, but put down one word for another, and wrote nonsense. I was much overpowered at the same time, and could not conceive the reason; . . . obliged to give up writing to-day; read Pepys instead." Scott was not satisfied with writing his *Woodstock*, but must write an article on Pepys's *Diary* for the *Quarterly*. And thus he went on, writing and correcting. Constable and Ballantyne failed; their bills were of no more use than so much waste paper; and Scott endeavored to recover and

pay off his debts, by writing the *Life of Napoleon Buonaparte.*

Neither liver complaint, nor heart-flutterings, not sleeplessness, nor hysteria, nor depression of spirit could stop him. "I know not," he said, "if my imagination has flagged—probably it has; but at least my powers of labor have not diminished during the last melancholy week. . . . These battles have been the death of many a man—I think they will be mine. Well, but it clears to windward; so we will fag on. . . . I am sensible that if I were in solitary confinement, without either the power of taking exercise or employing myself in study, six months would make me a madman or an idiot."

At length Scott tried travelling; but it did him no good; his brain still went on grinding. In his fifty-ninth year, he had his first paralytic seizure; but the warning was unavailing; and no sooner had he recovered than he went on with his *Letters on Demonology* and his *Tales of a Grandfather.* His physicians earnestly advised that he should cease working his brain; but the warning proved of no use. In the following year, he had his second attack of paralysis, which was more severe than the first; yet he had scarcely recovered from it, than he proceeded with his *Count Robert of Paris*—only to exhibit the last painful flickerings of an expiring genius. After the Roxburghshire election, when he was mobbed and hooted at Jedburgh because he was "a Tory," he had his third attack of paralysis;* yet, immediately on recovering his speech, his cry was "to work." "I must home to

[1] Napoleon, having a great fear of paralysis, asked his physician Corvisart his opinion of the disease. "Sire," replied Corvisart, "paralysis is always dangerous, but it, gives warning. It rarely strikes its victim without notice. The first attack, almost always slight, is (to use a legal phrase) a *summons without costs*; the second is a *summons with costs*; and the third is *an arrest* (*pries de corps*). The death of Corvisart verified the truth of his own decsription.

work," he said, "while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work. I put that text many a year ago on my dial-stone, but it often preached to me in vain." From this time his mind gradually decayed: he was taken abroad, almost helpless. At Naples, "the ruling passion strong in Death," he actually began a new novel, but it was never published. On his way home another attack prostrated him, yet he retained strength enough to enable him to reach home and die.

His son-in-law, Lockhart, died of the same disease, and from the same cause—over brain-work. While editing the *Quarterly Review* he undertook to prepare the *Life of Sir Walter Scott*—one of the finest biographies ever written. But the labor was too great for him. He contrived, however, to finish the *Life* in seven volumes: it was a matter of honor and affection for him, and nothing more; for he deprived no pecuniary advantage from the work. Then he gave up the editorship of the *Quarterly*, and went to Italy. He returned from Rome to Abbotsford, and died in a small room adjoining that in which Sir Walter Scott had breathed his last.

Southey was another victim of brain disease. He was one of the most industrious and continuous of literary laborers. As a reviewer of his life has said: "No artisan in his workshop, no peasant in the field, no handicraftsman at his bench, ever went so young to his apprenticeship, or wrought so unremittingly through life for a bare livelihood as Robert Southey." As in the case of Scott, work became his habit; he could not refrain from it. Dr. Arnold observed of him, that he even worked as he walked,—for exercise it could not be called: he was then reading and annotating. He derived little advantage from his poetry and histories; he maintained himself principally by his contributions to the *Quarterly*. By the age of sixty, he was already an old man. His memory began to fail; melancholy had him

for her own; he sank into second childhood; his mind became quite a blank; and he died of mental alienation at sixty-nine.

John Galt was at the same time a remarkable instance of *Morbus Eruditorum* and of extraordinary tenacity of life. He was one of the most industrious writers, in history, political economy, and fiction. He first broke down while editing the *Courier*; a stroke of paralysis having for a time interrupted his labors. He recovered, and went again to his newspaper work. His enemy returned again and again; he continued to write as long as he could hold his pen, and long after he had lost the use of every limb of his body, he went on dictating to an amanuensis. Corvisart's remark to Napoleon, as to the third attack of paralysis being a *prise de corps*, did not apply to Galt; for it was not until he had suffered his fourteenth stroke of paralysis that he sank under its attacks in his sixtieth year.

The poet Heine was suddenly arrested in his labors by nervous disease; yet it took eight years to kill him, during which time he lost the use of his limbs, and became wasted to the proportions of a child. Yet he preserved his gayety through all his sufferings, and went on composing to the end. While the Paris Exhibition of 1855 was afoot, a friend asked him about the state of his health, to which he replied: "My nerves are in such a remarkable condition, that I am convinced they would get the grand medal for pain and misery, if I could but show them at the Exhibition." He read all the medical books which treated of his complaint: "But what good this reading will do me," he said, "I don't know, except that it will qualify me to give lectures in heaven on the ignorance of doctors on earth about diseases of the spinal marrow."

The case of the Rev. F. Robertson of Brighton was an excessively painful one, especially towards the close of his career. He was nervous in temperament, and exceedingly

sensitive; he studied and preached by turns; not writing his sermons, but trusting to the excitement of the moment for the words in which to clothe his ideas, and often for the ideas themselves. The result was intense brain excitement after every extempore sermon: sleeplessness, pain in the head, "as if an eagle were rending it with his talons." * and consequent loss of memory, and confusion of thought. He longed for rest, yet worked on. Occasionally he had qualms as to the wisdom of the course he was pursuing: "I am becoming of opinion," he said, "that no duty whatever has a right to interfere with a human existence." But the calls upon him were great, and he yielded to them. He not only preached but lectured. After his lecture on Wordsworth at the Brighton Athenæum, he wrote to a friend: "The room was a perfect cram, and hundreds went away; but I have been suffering from severe pains in the head ever since—shooting thrills so sharp and sudden that I can scarcely forbear an exclamation." A few days after, he fainted in the street and was carried into a druggist's shop; but he had no sooner recovered than he went to fulfil an engagement! The pains in the head continued: "Every thought I think," he said, "and every line I write or read causing pain, sometimes acute and sometimes dull, of brain."

Robertson then went to consult the London doctors. They proscribed many medicines; but after taking them he felt no better. He next consulted a homœopathist, who recommended microscopic doses of aconite. A fourth, the wisest of all, refused to prescribe anything save entire and total cessation from the pulpit for life.† But the advice was rejected, and Robertson continued working on as sedulously as ever. His condition gradually grew worse.

* The Rev. S. A. Brooke, *Robertson's Life and Letters*, (edition 1865), ii. p. 161.

† The same advice was given to the late Dr. Guthrie of Edinburgh, under somewhat similar circumstances; and the advice was followed. Hence his useful life was prolonged for many years.

One of the members of his congregation undertook to prescribe for him; and, thinking that galvanism would do him good, sent an electric shock through his brain! "Instantly," he says, "a crashing pain shot through as if my skull was stove in, and a bolt of fire were burning through and through." He was for some time wild with pain; the wonder is that he was not killed on the spot. Yet he recovered from the shock, and still went on working. At length he became paralyzed, and at last passed away to his welcome rest in his thirty-seventh year. It was a short but beautiful life, full of quick enjoyment, though sadly checkered by suffering and pain. Had Robertson, amidst all his knowledge, known something of the conditions of physical and mental health, his moral suicide might never have happened.

The lives of literary men are full of warnings as to the dangers arising from over brain-work. Sir Walter Scott used to say that he regarded literature as a staff rather than a crutch. But the time arrived when he came to regard it as both staff and crutch. "Woe to him," said Madame de Tencin, "who depends for his subsistence upon his pen! The shoemaker is secure of his wages; the bookmaker is not secure of anything." Coleridge, in his *Biographia Litteria*, said: "Never pursue literature as a trade: with the exception of one extraordinary man, I have never known an individual healthy or happy without a profession,—that is, some regular employment, which does not depend on the will of the moment. . . . Money and immediate reputation from only an arbitrary and accidental end of literary labor. The hope of increasing them by any given exertion will often prove a stimulant to industry; but the necessity of acquiring them will, in all works of genius, convert the stimulant into a narcotic. . . . If facts are required to prove the possibility of combining weighty performances in literature with full and

independent employment, the works of Cicero and Xenophon among the ancients; of Sir Thomas More, Bacon-Baxter, or, to refer at once to later and contemporary instances, Darwin and Roscoe, are at once decisive of the question. . . . Be not *merely* a man of letters! Let literature be an honorable *augmentation* to your arms, but not constitute the crest, or fill the escutcheon."* This was wise advice; but it was not acted on by Coleridge himself. Perhaps the "extraordinary man" to whom he refers was, his brother-in-law, Southey; to whom he left the maintenance of his wife and family at Keswick, while he himself was engaged in brilliant monologues at the house of his friend, Mr. Gillman, on Highgate Hill, London. Southey certainly "pursued literature as a trade"; and though it shortened his life, his was an honest, industrious, virtuous, and indeed a noble career.

Macaulay, however, had something to say in favor of literary employment. While in India, he wrote to his friend Ellis (in 1835): "Literature has saved my life and my reason. Even now I dare not, in the intervals of business, remain alone for a minute without a book in my hand. . . . I am more than half determined to abandon politics, and to give myself wholly to letters; to undertake some great historical work which may be at once the business and the amusement of my life; and to leave the pleasures of pestiferous rooms, sleepless nights, aching heads, and diseased stomachs, to Roebuck and Praed."

De Tocqueville was warned of danger by his memory leaving him; but he was so immersed in his studies that the warning was unheeded, and he went on writing to the end. "I rise at six," he said, "and sit for six hours before my paper, and often leave it still white. Sometimes I find what I am looking for, but find it painfully and imperfectly: sometimes I am in despair at not finding it at

* Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, chap. xi.

all. I leave work discontented with myself, and therefore with everything else." * Disraeli the elder was subject to the same literary malady—"a failing of nervous energy, occasioned by study and too sedentary habits, early and habitual reverie, and restless and indefinable purpose." Yet by careful regimen, abstinence from excitement, and regular exercise, he contrived to live and labor to a ripe old age.† Professor Wilson, like Scott, suffered from *Morbus Eruditorum;* he had an attack of paralysis—his first warning. He went on as usual, and had another attack, which carried him off. The pitcher went once too often to the well, and came back broken at last.‡

Men of exalted intellect, said Pinel, perish by their brains; such is the end of those whose genius procures the immortality which so many of them ardently desire. Heavy, indeed, are the penalties which men have to pay for distinction. It is born of labor and brain-work, and is reached through self-sacrifice, unrest, and often suffering. Genius, though a possession of glory, is often found one of sorrow. "Poor great men," says Saint Beuve, in his *Memoir of Ballanche*, "so infirm in your greatness; great because you are infirm, and infirm because you are great! Philosophers or poets, thinkers or singers, do not set the one above the other, do not except yourselves, do not boast. . . . Bleeding fibres were the origin of the first chords of the lyre: they will also

* De Tocqueville, *Memoirs and Remains*, ii. p. 435.

† *Curiosities of Literature*, (edition 1864). Memoir by Lord Beaconsfield, p. xxi.

‡ A list of the victims of paralysis and apoplexy, the result of over brain-work, would be a long one; but a few of the more illustrious may be given; Copernicus, Malphigi, Linnæus, Cheselden, Spallanzani, Cabanis, Corvisart, Dupuytren, La Bruyére, Daubenton, Marmontel, Monge, Cuvier, Fourcroy, Handel, Glück, Hobbes, Dugald Stewart, Monboddo, De Foe, Swedenborg, Richardson, Dollond, Dalton, Wollaston, St. Frances de Sales, Petrarch, Beattie, Tom Moore, Mendelssohn, Heine, Porson, Curran, Garrick, Sir H. Davy, Sir W. Scott, Lockhart, Wilson, Tegner, Sir W. Hamilton (Edin.) Some of these men, however, lived to an advanced age.

be the last. It was because the statue of Memnon was broken, that it gave forth its musical sounds at the rising of the sun." *

Everything, it is true, is shortlived. Life passes swiftly, and death comes surely and quickly. And for what is literary instruction desired? Glory and fame? A slight noise in a little corner of the earth—"a splash in the great pool of oblivion," an imagined existence in the breath of others." What is beauty? A rose that lasts but for a day. Health? A blessing which you may lose at any moment. Youth and vigor? Treasures which time every day devours. Sensitive minds cannot help reflecting on the fleetingness of all human enjoyments. There is an intellectual sadness which overcasts the best and brightest—the thought of man's utter insignificance in the immensity of the creation amidst which he lives; the merest fraction of time which his life occupies in the boundlessness of eternity; and the extremely little that he does know or can know compared with the vast domain of knowledge and science that must ever remain altogether unknown.

At the same time, men and women are bound to cultivate the faculties with which they have been entrusted:—

> "What is a man,
> If his chief good, and market of his time,
> Be but to sleep and feed?—a beast, no more.
> Sure He that made us with such large discourse
> Looking before and after, gave us not
> That capability and godlike reason
> To fust in us unused."

Every function should be duly and properly exercised—of mind as well as body. We ought at all events to know something of the ordinary conditions of life. A little unprejudiced observation and some knowledge of physiology would enable the thinker—poet, author or philosopher—to do his work with comfort as well as impunity. Pinel held that the study of the exact sciences, in moderation, fortified

* Saint Beuve, *Portraits Contemporains*, i. p. 301.

the mind and preserved it against derangement. His opinion is justified by the statistics of longevity. Moderation in everything is to be observed: the *aurea mediocritas* much extolled by Horace. Good temper, too, is almost as requisite as moderation. Thus life may be utilized and prolonged.

Magistrates (who are usually of assured income), clergy men, and philosophers,* are the longest lived; then merchants and gardeners; then surgeons† and butchers. The shortest lives are those of millers, bakers, stone-cutters, and licensed victuallers. Dr. Guy read a paper at a recent meeting of the Statistical Society, in which he stated that the average age of nine of the chief Latin poets was fifty-three, and that of nine of the chief English poets was forty-two. In general, women (not being bread-winners nor troubled with business worry) live longer than men; and married men longer than bachelors. Length of days are usually secured by leading a virtuous life; in fact, physical and moral health are as nearly related as body and soul; and longevity bears an intimate relationship to human comfort and happiness.

The evils of mental excitement and over brain-work have of late years been much increased by over-pressure in schools. "How many have I seen in my time," said Montaigne, "totally brutified by an immoderate thirst after knowledge."‡ The cry of the present day is "Education but it is education in books, and books only. "Read, read, read!" as if God had not given us bodies as well as brains to be cared for and cultivated. Boys and girls are pressed

At a recent meeting of the London Linnæan Society, the death of sixteen Fellows were reported, whose average age was seventy-three.—*Journal of Statistical Society*, 1859.

† Voltaire remarked that among centenarians, not one was from the faculty of medicine. The king of France, he said had interred forty of his physicians.

‡ Montaigne's *Essays*: "Of the Education of Children," book i. chap. XXV.