

considered as a distempered condition, occasioned by disorder or accident, from which the recovery of the patient is deemed possible and probable; and therefore he and his property are always disposed of with a view to a recovery. 1 *Coll. Id.* 33; *Beverley's Case*, 4 *Co.* 124; *Donegal's Case*, 2 *Ves.* 408; *Attorney-General v. Parnter*, 3 *Bro. Ch. Ca.* 441; *Fitzgerald, a lunatic*, 2 *Scho. & Lefr.* 437; *Shelf. Lun.* 36.

Dotage is that feebleness of the mental faculties which proceeds from old age. It is a diminution or decay of that intellectual power which was once possessed. It is the slow approach of death; of that irrevocable cessation, without hurt or disease, of all the functions which once belonged to the living animal. The external functions gradually cease; the senses waste away by degrees; and the mind is imperceptibly visited by decay. The inert and dull senses transmit the passing occurrences so imperfectly to the sensorium, that they leave none, or but a very transitory impression there. Hence long past transactions are often remembered with much more exactness than those which have taken place recently. In the second childhood, as in the first, all the present makes but a faint and fleeting impression upon the mind. Hence the judgment in both stages, is weak, and the conduct unsteady and frivolous. (*m*)

* But a man in his dotage is evidently distinguishable from an idiot, who has no mind at all; a patient in delirium, whose mind is uncontrolled and ungovernable; or a lunatic, whose mind is in ruins, broken up, and the component parts of which are at variance with each other. The old man has a mind, worn and in a state of decay, it is true, but still, so much of it as remains, is feebly governed upon the principles of its former sound condition; its conceptions are not impertinently mixed; nor is it grossly misguided in any of the feeble operations of which it is capable. Perhaps the most striking peculiarity of dotage is its imbecility of perception. The senses not supplying the mind as usual with matter for exertion, it decays for want of use; and becomes incapable of receiving any additional ideas, or of following through any unusually catinated, or long combination of thought. Hence

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(*m*) "The soul in all hath one intelligence;

Though too much moisture in an infant's brain,

And too much dryness in an old man's sense,

Cannot the prints of outward things retain:

Then doth the soul want work, and idle sit;

And this we childishness and dotage call."

Davies.

Or, as has been said, it is that decline of all the powers of the man, when

Nature, as it grows again towards earth

Is fashion'd for the journey, dull, and heavy.

Cowper.

Shakspeare's *As You Like It*, Act 2, s. 7, and second part of *Henry 4th*, Act 1, s. 2.