

INSANITY.—As well try to describe the hues of the chameleon as to describe the phenomena of insanity. They are as various as the different cases and changing every hour. It is impossible to draw the line between soundness and unsoundness of mind. Eccentricity so strongly marks the conduct of some individuals that actions natural to them would be marks of insanity in others. The best and easiest test to decide the question in any individual case is to inquire whether there has been any strongly marked change of character or departure from the ordinary habits of thinking, feeling and acting without any adequate external cause. In short, a man should be compared with himself, and not with others, to decide whether he is insane or not. If there has been no departure from his ordinary conduct and character he may safely be declared sane; if there has been a marked change in these respects such a judgment would hardly be safe.—*Massachusetts Medical Journal*.

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AS TO TOBACCO SMOKING.—The many questions concerning the good and bad effects of smoking seem incapable of scientific settlement. The pros and cons are ever at war, and in the meantime the world goes on smoking more than ever. No one can estimate how great has been the influence of tobacco in deciding the Cuban and other questions of war and international politics. Looked at in a large way it is significant that the whole world, in a remarkably short time, has accepted the good (or the evil) of smoke and of the American tobacco-plant. *Ex oriente lux* has one most noteworthy exception. Smoke, at least, is from the West. There is probably no instance in the history of the world in which an occidental custom has attained vogue throughout the nations of the globe with hardly an exception even among the most savage and exclusive peoples. The fact itself must argue for some physiologic or psychologic need that as yet may be incapable of statement and analysis, but which is in accord with some subtle fact of nutrition whose logic is irresistible. Physicians with the evil consequences of tobacco used to excess constantly before them are not prone to forget these results, and yet there are few of us who do not smoke, or who advise absolute prohibition in our patients. This being true the affair resolved itself into questions of discrimination and judgment. In tobacco-using the argument *ad hominem* is peculiarly apropos. We cannot enter upon the *questio vexata* of the physiologic action of nicotine and of smoking. There is a deal of mystery here that the scientific have not cleared up. So far as we know no one has been able to decide as to the action and use of moderate smoking on the human economy. Probably the first distinction to arise in mind is that relating to age, and few observant