

King Lear makes excuse for the behaviour of his son-in-law and shows us the wisdom—nearly 300 years before our educationalist days—of attributing much of conduct to physical conditions—

No, but not yet;—may be, he is not well:  
 Infirmary doth still neglect all office,  
 Whereto our health is bound; we are not ourselves,  
 When nature, being oppress'd, commands the mind  
 To suffer with the body: I'll forbear;  
 And am fallen out with my more headier will,  
 To take the indispos'd and sickly fit  
 For the sound man.

*King Lear*, ii, 4.

Even when mad, poor Lear seeks for a material explanation of his daughter's ingratitude—

Then let them anatomize Regan; see what breeds about her heart. Is there any cause in Nature, that makes these hard hearts.

*King Lear*, iii, 6.

*Constance*. For I am sick and capable of fears.

*King John*, iii, 1.

The idea that *two disease cannot co-exist*—responsible for the introduction of setons and issues—is doubtless referred to when Benvolio thus counsels Romeo—

Take thou some new infection to thy eye  
 And the rank poison of the old will die.

*Romeo and Juliet*, i, 2.

Dr. Emery points out to me that Shakespeare frequently alludes to this idea—

Falsehood, falsehood cures as fire cools fire.

*King John*, iii, 2.

One fire drives out one fire, one nail one nail.

*Coriolanus*, iv, 7.

and that there is a certain amount of truth in the belief that certain affections disappear when the patient is suffering from an acute infective disease. Modern bacteriology supports the idea, for we know that there are non-specific actions of vaccines (such as the increase in the amount of antitrypsin in the blood) which may lead to beneficial results, even although the vaccine used is not made from the organism which is actually causing the infection.

Evidently Shakespeare was quick to recognise a *deposit of lithates*—

*Lucio*. . . . But it is certain, that when he makes water, his urine is congealed ice; that I know to be true; and he is motion ungenerative; that's infallible.

*Measure for Measure*, iii, 2.

We cannot altogether accept Shakespeare's view that *fat people* are wanting in wits—

Fat paunches have lean pates; and dainty bits  
 Make rich the ribs, but bankrupt quite the wits.

*Love's Labour's Lost*, i, 1.