AN idiot, or natural fool, is one that has had no understanding from his nativity; and therefore is by law presumed never likely to attain any. For which reason the custody of him and of his lands was formerly vested in the lord of the fee; 82 (and therefore still, by special custom, in some manors the lord shall have the ordering of the idiot and lunatic copyholders 83) but, by reason of manifold abuses of this power by subjects, it was at last provided by common consent, that it should be given to the king, as the general conservator of his people, in order to prevent the idiot from wasting his estate, and reducing himself and his heirs to poverty and distress; 84 This fiscal prerogative of the king is declared in parliament by statue 17 Edw. II. c. 9. which directs (in affirmance of the common law, 85) that the king shall have ward of the lands of natural fools, taking the profits without waste or destruction, and shall find them necessaries; and after the death of such idiots he shall render the estate to the heirs; in order to prevent such idots from alienating their lands, and their heirs from being disinherited.

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