

*Notes on Homicidal Insanity.* By J. CRICHTON BROWNE, M.D.  
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DURING the few months that have passed of the present year eleven persons have received sentence of death, for the crime of murder, in England and Scotland. Others have been charged with the same offence, but have escaped through a deficiency of evidence, while others, again, have been arraigned for attempts at the destruction of human life. Five of the prisoners accused of murder were defended on the plea of insanity, which was in each instance met by a verdict of *guilty* and a sentence of death. Three of the men thus sentenced have undergone execution, one of them being unmistakably a lunatic, whom no medical man would have hesitated to certify as such before the commission of the act for which he died, and another of them exhibiting a state of mind strongly resembling, if it did not actually consist in, a form of madness. The latter, Burton, was condemned and hanged, while Mr. Touchett, who was tried in 1844 for a similar offence, prompted by a similar motive, was acquitted on the ground of insanity, a circumstance that illustrates the glorious uncertainty of the law and the present state of public feeling. The prevalence of crimes of violence of late, the fear lest the plea of insanity should be used as a shield for unquestionable culprits, and the knowledge that it has been advanced in cases of feigning and on the most unsatisfactory evidence, have led, we fear, to a reaction in public opinion, just as the garotte panphobia has produced some "panic legislation." The strange idea which so long lingered about our courts of justice and possessed the judicial mind, which recognised no madness but helpless fatuity and no madmen but raging maniacs, but which had lately become dotard and antique, seems now to have renewed its youth. It had for some years past been showing such signs of feebleness and decay that we had hoped ere long to be able to regard it as an extinct species of error, existing only as fossil remains in some rocky intellects of peculiar density and dryness. But the dry bones, it unfortunately appears, are likely to undergo a resurrection, if their reanimation has not already commenced. In 1812 Bellingham was hanged, in 1843 McNaughton was sent to an asylum, and in 1863 Fooks was sent to the scaffold by a judge and jury who would unhesitatingly have despatched both Bellingham and McNaughton along with him. If another and better change in public opinion does not happily take place, we may expect frequent repetitions of

the atrocious act of capitally punishing the irresponsible. That the repetitions will be frequent we can scarcely doubt, for, like Dr. Tuke (who has put the case admirably in his letter which appeared in the 'Lancet' of April 11th), we are not sanguine that the hanging of lunatics will prevent lunatics from murdering; indeed, we incline to the belief that it will have the opposite effect of increasing the number of crimes such as those committed by Fooks and Burton. We put no faith in the benefits to be derived from the certainty of punishment where lunatics are concerned. To those who cry out for the execution of madmen upon this principle, we can only reply that experience has already proved to the profession, and that time will demonstrate to the public, that this vaunted certainty of punishment has no influence upon the madman's mind. The truth is, that the more lunatics that are executed for murder the richer will be the harvest of transgression and the more numerous the candidates for a halter. The maniac who destroys life in a transport of fury, regards the scaffold with no horror or even consideration. The victim of hallucination who commits homicide at the command of Heaven, trusts to Heaven's protecting power. The sufferer from illusion does not pause to consider the consequences of the act that frees him from a haunting phantom. The man labouring under a morbid craving for death, contemplates hanging as a consummation to be desired; and the prey to a murderous impulse derives no additional restraining power from his knowledge of the fact that he must expiate his deed by a violent death. To him, indeed—and it is upon him that the fear of punishment might be expected chiefly to operate—there are already sufficient restraining motives in the opposition of his intellect and affection to the act, should these have time to operate. Every external inducement is, in general, opposed to it; but these, together with the promptings of conscience and the strugglings of will, are ineffectual to control the wild instinct that hurries him on to bloodshed.

Even the certainty with which punishment waits upon infringements of the physical laws of the world is without restraining effect upon the madman, who will jump through a window, though positively dreading pain or death, or who will follow the bent of an impulse leading to suffering which he clearly foresees and would fain avoid. The mere recognition of what is good and evil, or of what will be attended with pleasure or pain, does not of itself confer the ability of following the one and eschewing the other, so that the apprehension of certain punishment cannot withhold from evil where the power of preference is suspended or destroyed. But the law, if the answers of the English judges to the Lords are to be taken as an exposition of it, does not acknowledge any form of insanity, as a reason for exemption from punishment, in which good and evil, with their consequences, are distinguished, even although the selection of

the latter as a course of action should be the result of some obviously insane delusion. Simple uncontrollable impulses are, of course, altogether scouted. The possibility of their existence is denied by most legal authorities, and their non-recognition by law is declared by all. In the case of Milne, who was tried at Edinburgh for murder in February last, when Dr. Smith, of Saughton Hall, professed his belief in the possible existence of a morbid murderous impulse in a mind free from delusion and with unimpaired intellectual faculties, the Lord Justice Clerk observed, that if all the physicians in Europe were to maintain that opinion, he would be bound to tell the jury not to believe them. All the physicians of Europe, however, are by no means at one upon this or any other subject, though a considerable section of them, including many of those who have had the largest experience amongst the insane, will be found adhering to that opinion which a jury is bound to disregard.

In this state of the case, with the whole force of the law and a portion of the profession against them, it behoves those medical men who believe in an impulse to kill in a mind apparently sound, and in a disposition otherwise gentle and humane, to take every opportunity of stating the grounds of their conviction upon so important a question, and of adding to the number of recorded instances of this deplorable affection. In this manner, and by a careful examination of destructive tendencies in general, much may be done to convince the public, who must ultimately operate upon those higher and more frigid latitudes that are inhabited by our rulers. And at least much may be done to show that the defence of impulsive insanity in certain cases of murder is not to be laughed at as the mere "baseless fabric" of a "mad-doctor's" vision, nor to be denounced as an error dangerous to society, subversive of social order, and detrimental to morality and religion.

Now, as all morbid feelings and impulses are but perversions of ordinary powers, we have to seek in the healthy mind for the source from which those of a murderous character proceed. This we may find in that propensity, first clearly distinguished by the phrenologists, and called by them destructiveness, which is necessary to man in his natural state for maintaining himself upon the earth, for removing the dangers by which he is surrounded, and for procuring suitable food. Many of the acts arising out of this propensity are excited by certain painful sensations, and are conservative in their tendency, aiming at the destruction of the object which has inflicted suffering. Men seek to exterminate noxious vermin, are prone to return a blow for a blow, and a petulant child beats the ground upon which it has fallen. Under ordinary circumstances this propensity, in intimate relation with the other faculties of mind, governed by intellect and directed by moral sentiments, gives an impetus and an energy to the mental manifestations, and is requisite

to a proper discharge of the duties of life. It appears to be very unequal in its distribution among the different branches of the human family. In one tribe it is subdued and insignificant, in another restless and prominent; sometimes its growth in a particular race is so great that one is inclined to believe it morbid, a belief that is countenanced by the sudden excitements to which it is liable, but that is disproved by other circumstances. In the North American Indian, for instance, the desire for depriving the animal creation of life is so strongly implanted that it costs him a pang to pass a bird or a beast without an attempt to destroy it. From the history of the Oregon territory we learn that near York Factory, in 1831, this propensity, in spite of all the remonstrances of the Company's servants in that place, led to the indiscriminate slaughter of a countless herd of reindeer. The natives took some of the meat for present use, but thousands of carcasses were abandoned to the river, and infected its bank or drifted down into Hudson's Bay.\* Among the Papuan islanders also, destructiveness is so largely developed that it manifests itself in a taste for murder, and it has indeed been stated that there are tribes of anthropophagi in the interior of the Papuan territory.† But the destructive acts of these and other tribes, even if of a morbid, are not of an uncontrollable, character. They are performed under the guidance and sanction of intelligence, with a deliberate choice and intention; although, probably, they are accompanied by a pleasurable feeling, just as abstinence from them would be associated with pain, they are still under the restraint of will, which, when stimulated and sustained by the prospect of another pleasure or the dread of another pain, is perfectly capable of checking their development. So, too, is it with the individuals who represent the vices of those savages in civilised and humane nations, of loftier emotions and purer pursuits. The mischievous and heartless cruelty which they exhibit may be the offspring of inclinations stirring within them, difficult to smother and extinguish, but still subject to the authority of volition and amenable to motive and discipline. It would be hard to believe that Nero and Caligula were unfortunate lunatics, and not ruffians and desperadoes, who gave unbridled license to brutal appetites and violent passions, which they fostered by dissolute habits, but which they might have subjugated had they been so minded. The circumstances of their atrocities and the histories of their lives point to moral turpitude rather than moral insanity; but whatever may have been the guilt attachable to them, there are not wanting at the present day cases in which a parallel course of callous cruelty is traceable to debased propensities and unexercised power

\* 'History of the Oregon Territory,' by John Dunn.

† Quoy et Gaimard, 'Zoologie du Voyage autour du Monde de M. le Capitaine Freycinet,' Paris, 1822, quoted by Gall.

of will. The son of a gentleman of property, whose peculiarities we have watched with interest, was permitted at his own request to act as butcher to all the farmers on his father's estate, and seemed to have attained his highest enjoyment when putting multitudes of rabbits and fowls to death. He displayed considerable ingenuity in the methods of massacre which he devised, and took the most thorough delight in his business, which at the same time he could break off at any moment when an inducement for doing so was placed before him: he was aware of the impropriety of his proceeding, never urged want of self-control as an excuse, and was always considered perfectly responsible by those about him. A little girl of our acquaintance has been cured by moral means of a disposition to kill spiders, insects, cats, and other creatures. She still occasionally gives evidence of the existence of the tendency, but it is now entirely under her power, and she professes that she feels gradually less and less difficulty in its subjugation, a circumstance which may be due to the influence of habit or to nutritive changes in the organism. Numerous cases of a similar description to those now quoted seem to prove that some of the instances of destructive impulse which are encountered are not entitled to the plea of irresistibility as a defence from punishment, for the evil inclinations and practices may be subdued, amended, reformed; while, on the other hand, again, another class of examples leads to the conclusion that men are occasionally visited by impulses of such force, and so little subject to intellectual and moral control, that they are actually impelled to destructive acts which they vainly strive to avoid, and commit, regardless of the rights of others and of their own safety. But the grand problem is to distinguish between those two types of impulse, to separate the controllable from the uncontrollable, and to classify cases as they arise. And no simple matter is it to draw the line of demarcation. Such boundaries are generally more clearly defined in idea than in nature, but even thought fails to trace the barrier of volition. With regard to the actions of the muscular system, the same difficulty is experienced in distinguishing voluntary from automatic motion. A connecting link joins these two varieties, and is intermediate in having an equal share of the physical and psychical elements. The motions belonging to this group are semi-voluntary or sympathetic, and comprise laughing, weeping, yawning, certain changes of the voice, expressions of the countenance, &c. These actions are ordinarily automatic, and are given uncurbed indulgence. But should we desire to check their occurrence, we are usually able to do so by directing the whole activity of our minds in a concentrated effort to oppose these movements. But this again may prove ineffectual by reason of the power and urgency of the stimulating causes, and laughter or tears may burst forth in spite of our most determined

endeavours to strangle them in their birth. The relations of the will are further illustrated by the actions of the limbs under certain circumstances. A leg exposed to acute suffering or irritation is retracted or moved by a diastaltic operation, without the assent of our wish or desire. But should we desire, for any ulterior benefit, to preserve the leg so irritated in a state of rest, we may accomplish this by an exercise of volition, which is potent, however, only up to a certain point, when the tendency to reflex action becomes irresistible. The amount of restraint upon the limb which may be so imposed—in other words, the power of the will over reflex action—varies, we think, we have observed, with varying times and conditions. In the morning, and when fresh from repose, we have been able to refrain from motion under a degree of stimulation which easily produced it later in the day and after fatigue. This may, perhaps, be attributable to the accumulation of vis-nervosa, which Mr. Alexander Bain believes to take place during sleep. Under the influence of alcohol and opium, the power of resistance was perceptibly diminished, while it was similarly affected, though in a less degree, under emotional excitement. But under whatever conditions the authority of the will was exerted, it only prevailed over reflex action up to a limit at which involuntary movements took place. Movements habitually automatic are so far subjected to volition. Thus the actions of the respiratory muscles may be for a time arrested at pleasure, and one gentleman whom we have met, can will the intermission of the cardiac pulsations. Continued attention and concentration of thought upon the bodily organs, undoubtedly enlarges the dominion of the will over the automatic functions.

It is another fact to be observed in examining into the relations of will with the muscles, that voluntary movements may become automatic. The influence of habit in this conversion is, of course, well known. Complicated combinations of muscular action, which need for their acquirement the putting forth of much voluntary effort, ultimately, after frequent repetition, may be performed even when the mind is busied with something else. The choicest "pieces" of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, or Vincent Wallace, may be exquisitely "rendered" while the musician is engaged in conversation. The pensioner, long retired from the service, will suddenly and unconsciously respond in an appropriate manner to any word of military command that may be unexpectedly uttered. In acts like these, which spring out of what is popularly, and not inexpressively, called a man's "second nature," there is involved a mental as well as a muscular process, which has freed itself from its original subjection to volition. This is involved also in those peculiar attitudes and motions of the body to which some people are addicted, and which, originally voluntary, have become, through indulgence, spontaneous and constant; they are then no longer subservient to the wishes

of their originator, who may strive in vain to put a stop to them. Disease, as well as use and want, is powerful in robbing actions of their voluntary character; convulsions and the gyrations of certain lunatics are familiar examples of this.

If we believe, as there seems every reason for believing, that the relations of the will with the mind are closely analogous to its relations with the muscles, a few of which have just been indicated, we can have no reasonable doubt of the possible existence of a simple impulse to destroy, a mental convulsion as uncontrollable as spasm of the throat in tetanus or hydrophobia. Those who dispute this proposition have based their repudiation of it upon various grounds. One distinguished authority, whose opinion is entitled to the highest respect, who has done much to elucidate the medico-legal relations of insanity is disposed to reject it because "the will is a faculty so simple and undecomposable, that it may be doubted whether it can lapse into a diseased condition."\* This is an objection frequently urged, and a refutation of it embraces replies to other objections of minor importance.

In the first place, it must be remarked that in order to admit an irresistible impulse to homicide, it is unnecessary to suppose any lesion of the will whatever. The impulse is essentially a morbid state of a primary propensity, and exists independently of voluntary power, which may be perfectly healthy, even though it should be of insufficient force to check the manifestation of the impulse. We do not declare the will to be diseased because it is inadequate to restrain those muscular actions, ordinarily voluntary, which have from some cause become involuntary. We refer the disease to an excess of power in the apparatus of action, and not to any diminution of it in the restraint of the will, and so in impulsive insanity the disorder may be resident in exalted propensities, and not in enfeebled volition. The craving of appetite may be so pressing and vehement that action has been accomplished before time has been allowed for awakening some other impulse, feeling or emotion, which might counterbalance its urgency; or its impetus may be so overwhelming that all other considerations are borne down before it. In the second place, it is to be observed that it is by no means certain or even probable that the will is "a simple and undecomposable faculty," while there is abundant evidence to show that it may lapse into disease. In fact, we are inclined to believe that the will, as a regulative agency, is very often disordered, not only in cases of morbid impulse, but in all cases of insanity. It is often inoperative or powerless in interrupting or banishing particular trains of morbid thought; it may become unfit to direct our ordinary mental processes, incapable of regulating the conduct, or of imparting that firmness of purpose which gives the dignity of consistency even to the

\* Bucknill, on 'Criminal Lunacy,' p. 83.

delusions of diseased minds. It varies in strength at the different stages of life—in youth, manhood, and age; and that it also varies in its control over the bodily organs in various affections is shown in the phenomena of tarantulism and hysteria, of fascination and fainting, and of chorea and delirium tremens. The distempers of the brain which produce insanity may involve any or all of its functions in a pathological change, and it is therefore but reasonable to suppose that the will is liable to suffer along with the other faculties. But whether it be so liable or not, the theory of morbid impulse, which the will is inadequate to restrain, remains unaltered, established on a basis of facts. For a very large number of cases are now on record in which an impulse to destroy has coexisted with perfect clearness of mind, and with a consciousness of the criminality of the feeling and of the consequence of its indulgence.

The manner in which some of these impulses are experienced leads us to regard them as allied, in their nature, to reflex actions of the muscular system. They are not only sudden and invincible, but they pass on to action, almost without consciousness on the part of their subject, and they are excited only by certain definite stimuli, resembling in this, those types of reflex action dependent upon impressions conveyed by the nerves of the special senses. A physician was consulted a few years ago by a lady of about thirty years of age, of robust bodily health and calm and self-possessed manners, who confessed to him that whenever she approached a window in the street she felt a strong inclination to break the panes, and that whenever she was intrusted with the care of an infant, which frequently happened, she was immediately tempted to crush it or dash it upon the floor. She felt no disposition to break glass when in any other form than that of window-panes, or to destroy children above the period of infancy. This lady looked upon these impulses as criminal and unnatural, and struggled earnestly to overcome and conceal them, and it was only because their violence increased, and her dominion over them became doubtful, that she sought medical advice. A maid, on each occasion of her dressing the infant committed to her care, "was so struck with the whiteness of its skin, that she was seized with an urgent desire to tear it in pieces;" and a man of mature years and intellect felt frequently a desire of great intensity to assault and injure persons wearing articles of clothing of a brilliant colour. They both succeeded in restraining these inclinations, which were the result of no delusions, but simply of paroxysmal tendencies of a few moments' duration, instances of what we are disposed to call reflex homicidal impulse, a kind of impulse that does not occur as one passing attack, experienced, vanquished, and then returning no more, but that assumes the distressing character of frequent recurrence. Seeming to depend upon some established bodily disorder, its



assaults are repeated again and again during the persistence of this, and it is only finally dismissed when health is restored.

But without any specific external stimulation, homicidal impulses may arise in the mind spontaneously, and prompt towards indiscriminate destruction and demolition or to solitary acts of murder. "The desire to energise" in a destructive manner arises as an intuition, and proceeds to the attainment of its end, excited by affinitive impressions from within or by vital changes in the nervous centres. The lower animals sometimes exhibit impulses of this description. The elephant, though not carnivorous nor aggressive, but notoriously a placid, patient creature, that will quietly endure ill-usage and hardship, is nevertheless liable to attacks of fury, exclusively manifested in a tendency to destroy. These fits, which are not connected with the sexual instinct, have no discoverable exciting cause. During their continuance the animal affected moves rapidly about, roars aloud, and destroys everything within his reach. Mr. Corse Scott, who was long in charge of the Company's elephants in India, states that he has seen an elephant thus excited gore other elephants with its tusks, and kill them outright by transfixing them to the ground. In India, when this rabies appears, it is allowed to subside of itself, which it does in a short time; but an elephant which it attacked at Exeter Change some years ago had to be shot down in its stall by a detachment of the guards. It is worthy of remark that, accompanying these attacks, there is invariably a profuse discharge from a gland situated between the ear and the eye. This seems to indicate a state of irritation in the immediate neighbourhood of the phrenological organ of destructiveness.\* Horses, rabbits, cats, and birds, are also occasionally visited by paroxysms like those just described as affecting the elephant.

When appearing in man, the homicidal impulse, that depends upon an internal stimulus, is not necessarily cruel. It often takes possession of a calm and collected or of a gay and happy mind, in the absence of all provocation and of all intention to do injury to any one. It may have for its object a child or an adult, a near relative, a valued friend, some one cherished and loved, or a stranger seen for the first time. Its gratification may be followed by the most poignant contrition and remorse for the evil perpetrated, or by the pleasing equanimity of an ambition fulfilled. A condition of mind such as is here represented it is very difficult to realise; indeed, a just notion of it can only be formed by those who have themselves experienced impulses of the same or of a like kind. Of these the most common is that obscure suicidal impulse which seizes upon some persons as they stand upon a precipice, or at any great elevation, inciting them to throw themselves over, or which urges them to dash themselves before a railway train as it rushes past, so that

\* Wilford, in 'Asiatic Researches,' vol. iii.

they have to step back in order to dispel this horrible suggestion, so alien to all their ordinary feelings. Those who have suffered in this manner will best understand the mental condition of the victim of homicidal impulse, and will best sympathise with unfortunates like him who describes his own case in these words:—"Many years back, while sitting at dinner, my eldest girl, then a very little one, by my side, I felt—the desire, shall I say?—no, it filled my mind with horror; but I felt, while looking at her head, an impulse as though I could cleave the skull with the knife which I held in my hand. Now, I love my children, and I think I may say they dearly love their father. I had then no feeling of dislike or resentment in my mind towards my child: whence, then, arose that dreadful thought, that horrid impulse?" Different in its result from this case, but identical in its origin, was that of Henriette Cornier, which convinced Esquirol of his error in having written against isolated homicidal impulses. Henriette Cornier was a young, kind, and amiable woman, who had never shown the slightest symptom of insanity, but who, having gone to reside in the house of a cousin, was impelled, as she afterwards stated, by an inexplicable desire to kill, so that she went upstairs to a room where her cousin's baby was lying asleep and cut off its head. Her health had been indifferent for some time before she committed this rash act; she had suffered from amenorrhœa, and probably chlorosis, but she had never been suspected of any mental aberration. The case produced a deep impression at the time of its occurrence, and the form of morbid impulse under which she laboured was propagated by imitation. Minds prone to mental disease would be apt to brood and meditate upon her offence, and thus excite the destructive propensity; or, perhaps, conscious of their own weakness, they might fear lest they should offend in like manner. And the very existence of this fear would occasion hazard, for it is the trembler who falls from the position of danger, and solicitude about the preservation of health is known to degenerate into suicide.

The development of homicidal impulses in defiance of all resolves, ties, and motives, in opposition to will, and with a perfect appreciation of right and wrong, is well illustrated in the following examples:—1. "A young man came voluntarily to Charenton on account of an impulse to kill his mother, whom he adored, and against whom he had no complaint. Armed with a knife, which he took from the table while dining with her, he had only just time to call out, 'Oh my mother, my good mother, save yourself; I am about to strike you.'"\* 2. A gentleman, who was always restrained, at his own request, on the accession of the impulse, was accustomed to exclaim when it had passed away, "Release me; alas! I have suffered much,

\* 'De la Folie considérée dans ces Rapports avec les Questions Médico-Judiciaires,' par C. C. K. Marc, tom. i, p. 49.

but I am fortunate, since I have killed no one.”\* 3. M. R., an eminent chemist, was tormented with the desire to kill, and implored God to deliver him from this temptation. When he found, however, that his will was becoming mastered by it, he fled to the superintendent of an asylum and made him bind his wrists together. This had the effect of calming him; nevertheless he shortly after attempted to kill one of the attendants, and he died himself in a violent paroxysm.† An illustration is also afforded by the remarkable case of G. T—, related by Dr. Lockhart Robertson, in the number of this Journal for July, 1860; while the coexistence of such impulses with perfect calmness of mind and correctness of deportment was singularly exhibited by a patient under my father’s care, who would attempt a murderous assault while blandly engaged in conversation, and would then pass immediately and composedly to the performance of a piece of music or the perusal of Tacitus.

Now, it must be observed that in many of the cases which we have yet cited the impulse to destruction was the single, solitary, appreciable diseased spot in the mental constitution; that it was, in fact, the disease itself, and that it was compatible and contemporaneous with soundness of judgment. But it is from the spot in the apple that decay spreads through the mass, and so it generally happens that this isolated impulse is but the herald of the invasion of some more marked form of mental disorder. Besides, it is rarely indeed that it does appear in this isolated condition. That it may so appear we have no doubt, but at the same time we believe that it is most frequently but one of a series of symptoms. A minute analysis of the cases in which it is manifested will most often reveal that the emotions participate more or less in the morbid change, or that the outbreak of destructive frenzy has been preceded by a career of irregularity and waywardness, or that the mind has been long the sport of vain or visionary fancies. A homicidal act may be but in fact a cropping out of a substratum of unhealthy mind, which could previously have been inferred from eccentricities of conduct, foibles of temper, and perversions of affection, or it may be but one of the expressions of some well-marked form of mental derangement. It is, associated with various other mental maladies—with mania, delusion or hallucination—that homicidal tendencies are most usually encountered. It is not our purpose at present to deal with impulses when so complicated, and we only refer to the destructive tendencies of ordinary, recognised insanity, in order that we may derive from them some support for the existence of simple destructive impulses in minds otherwise apparently unimpaired. These destructive tendencies of ordinary insanity require to be divided into two classes, the first of which

\* Marc, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

† Marc, *tom. i.*, p. 241.

embraces all those which are the result of errors of belief or of sense, and which have no necessary connection with homicidal impulses, properly so called. Delusions and hallucinations are not seldom the convictions, creeds, and motives of action of the insane, and the lunatic who is ordered by God to take away a life, or who has resolved to destroy some one who is regarded as an enemy, and whose persecution is intolerable, has no inclination to bloodshed or thirst for destruction. To him *murder* is not the end in view, but only an unavoidable and painful step towards the attainment of his object, and he would gladly intrust its commission to any one else who would undertake it, and upon whom he could rely. It is, in short, distasteful to him; but very different is it with those labouring under the homicidal tendencies of the second class, which are impulsive, and depend, not upon delusion or hallucination, but upon disease of the destructive propensity. To the victims of this type of disorder the destruction is an end in itself, and is not pursued for any supposed ulterior advantage, but for present gratification. The destructive propensity is diseased, just as in a case of simple, uncomplicated impulse, while there is also at the same time disease of some other mental powers. All of these may be implicated, as in mania, which is very generally characterised by a sheer insensate antipathy to the *wholeness* of everything that will tear, or break, or bruise, by a love of ruin and devastation, and a predilection to bring everything to nought. For the destructive acts of the maniac cannot be considered mere expressions of the intensity of muscular activity, but must obviously be traced to those tempestuous impulses of which he is the prey, and which have their origin in lesions of the appetites and passions. But only a few of the mental powers may be disordered in conjunction with the destructive propensity. In melancholia and monomania destructive impulses are sometimes developed, and then they are either interwoven by some process of thought with the pre-existing insanity, or are altogether detached and independent; in the latter case, they are only different from the simple irresistible impulses which have been here considered, in that they are contemporaneous with derangements of other faculties; with these they have no connection except in a common pathological cause, and their perfect independence of delusive motives under such circumstances affords us ground for believing that they may spring into being when the mind is otherwise free from disorder.

Of this second class of homicidal tendencies associated with another form of insanity, an instance was brought under my observation in the Derby county asylum.\* W. D—, a middle-aged man, a tailor by trade, was brought to the Derby asylum under the escort of three powerful men, so dangerous was he considered. He

\* I have to thank Dr. Hitchman for permission to make use of this case.

had been previously in confinement in Bethlehem Hospital, London, from which he was discharged uncured. During his residence there, to judge from his own description, he had been labouring under melancholia. Since his discharge he had resided at home, and had there taken considerable quantities of morphia, to relieve the depression of spirits under which he laboured. He had been perfectly manageable until within a few days of his admission into the Derby asylum, when he became more than usually miserable, and began to manifest destructive tendencies. He had several times made desperate and determined attempts to murder the men who were placed in charge of him, and had nearly succeeded in strangling one. On his admission it was found that, notwithstanding his alleged dangerous character, his pockets contained two table-knives. He was a hale, stout man, of nervo-lymphatic temperament, pale and anæmic, with an expression of great wretchedness and a small and feeble pulse. Several of his relations had died of heart disease. Soon after his arrival he made several attacks upon the attendants, warning them first to beware of him, for he felt he must "be at their throats." D— was perfectly aware of the painful nature of his position, mourned over his insanity, and especially over his homicidal desires, which he stated that he only experienced in paroxysms. These paroxysms were very frequent when he was first placed under observation, but gradually diminished in number. He was very unhappy, and felt remorseful as to his past life and hopeless as to his future; and he also confessed that he had contemplated suicide, and yet he was liable to fits of great fear and apprehension of impending death. He at first conversed freely about his homicidal tendencies and the uncontrollable inclination which he felt to tear his clothes and break windows; but as he improved, and as these past away, he appeared ashamed of them, and ultimately repudiated them altogether. When he did speak of them he declared that they were quite inexplicable to him, and that they had no connection which he could discover with his desponding state of mind. He had hallucinations of vision during the night, seeing bright-red or scarlet objects passing before his eyes, and he complained of slight pain in the coronal region of the head and of intense pain behind and above the ear; pain was also felt in the cerebellar region, from which, too, a thrilling sensation was sometimes felt, passing down the spine. He was very restless and tremulous in his movements when the paroxysms were "upon him," but was at other times extremely lethargic. He was treated with aperients and the tincture of the muriate of iron. A certain degree of improvement soon took place, the paroxysms happened at wider intervals, and then left him entirely, but when I last saw him he was still deeply depressed.

Among the points of interest in this case we would remark—1, the

entire independence of the destructive tendencies of the other mental affections; 2, the pain which was felt in the phrenological organs of destructiveness and combativeness, and which disappeared, coincidentally with the destructive impulses; 3, the shame which he experienced when reference was made to his homicidal impulses after their abatement, and his ultimate entire repudiation of them; 4, the colour of the hallucinations, bright red or scarlet, which we generally associate with the war instincts, which is known to excite the Spanish bull to ferocity, and is said to have the same effect upon the turkey, and which is affirmed by Rosch and Esquirol to render choleric those tradesmen who use it as dye; 5, a circumstance connected with the knives found in his pocket on admission. When these were taken from him he at once admitted that they had been secreted during a paroxysm at home, with a view to the destruction of some one; but a short time afterwards, when they were referred to, he stated that they merely happened to be in his pocket, because he had been making a kite for his children before leaving home, and had taken them to cut the strings, thus exhibiting a change in the alleged motive of an insane act, such as was disputed in the case of Milne, at Edinburgh.

If simple irresistible homicidal impulses really exist, as it has been here maintained they do, it will be in vain to urge that they are unrecognised by law. A recent writer, with no leaning to extreme psychological views, pithily says, "*The law must recognise facts, and many cases (of homicidal impulse) have occurred which can hardly be described by any other name;*"\* indeed, the law has already acknowledged homicidal impulses as facts and as grounds of exemption in cases of infanticide, when they have arisen at the period of parturition. We earnestly hope that the same recognition may be extended to them when they appear under other circumstances.

\* 'Saturday Review,' April 25th, 1863.