

room, her house, and surroundings. The continuance of any source of irritation only tends to increase the disorder, and ought to be removed without delay.

The limit of this paper being the nomenclature, I must reserve for another the detail of the associated phenomena, and actual pathology. I may, however, here state that in treating insanity following parturition prompt and complete change of surroundings, absolute rest, nutritious diet and stimulants judiciously administered, will in most cases ensure recovery.

*Felo-de-se.* By J. G. DAVEY, M.D.

(*Read at the Annual Meeting of the Medico-Psychological Association, held at the Royal College of Physicians, Aug. 2nd, 1870.*)

If I were asked the especial and characteristic features of this present day, I should most certainly take good care to enumerate that one (feature) which seeks to modify or even undo the legislative acts of our progenitors, that is to say, of those who, living in the new or early times—not the *old* times—were without that needful experience and knowledge wherewith to realise the *truth*. As you know well, the science of our forefathers was, at its best, a poor and sickly thing—sadly misshapen and badly used; and as to Psychology, it was, indeed, at a miserable discount.

The *law* which even *now* encompasses the self-murderer is, without doubt, simple and expressive enough; it cost the smallest amount of trouble. It partakes, almost necessarily, of the law and revengeful feelings and desires; and seeks only to check *suicide* by the infliction of disgust and pain on the living. It follows then that the history of the past to this present time, in so far as *self-murder* is concerned, must make no pleasant reading. We learn, or rather we are told, that “the suicide is guilty of a double offence—one spiritual in invading the prerogative of the Almighty, and rushing into his immediate presence uncalled for; the other temporal, against the Sovereign, who hath an interest in the preservation of all his subjects;” and being so doubly guilty, he (the suicide) “is responsible in no ordinary sense, but for one of the very highest crimes—a peculiar species of felony—a felony committed on one’s self.”

Such being the estimation in which the self-murderer was held by our forefathers, we are prepared for some very extraordinary legislation wherewith to cover him and his act; or as Mr. Stephens writes in his "*Commentaries on the Laws of England*," Vol. iv., p. 110:—"The question follows, what punishment *can* human laws inflict on one who has withdrawn himself from their reach? They can only act upon what he has left behind him—his reputation and fortune; and this the law of England formerly did with the greatest severity. It acted on the former by an ignominious burial in the highway, with a stake driven through his body, and without Christian rites of sepulture; on the latter, by a forfeiture of all his goods and chattels to the King, hoping," writes Mr. Stephens, "that his care for either his own reputation, or the welfare of his family, would be some motive to restrain him from so desperate and wicked an act. As time rolled on, our lawgivers permitted the disuse of the *stake*, and were content to substitute the *churchyard* or *other burying ground* for the *highway*; but on no account is it even yet permitted to perform 'the rites of Christian burial' over the remains of the suicide. The law provides also that he shall be interred between nine and twelve at night, and *within twenty-four hours after the inquisition*. In regard to the forfeiture of property to the Sovereign, in virtue of his or her assumed priority to the natural heirs of the self-murderer, this is not now much insisted on; such *forfeiture* is nevertheless the law of the land to this day. Whilst admitting "that the letter of the law herein borders on severity, yet is it some alleviation that the power of mitigation is left in the breast of the Sovereign; who upon this, as on all other occurrences, is renewed by the oath of his or her office to execute judgment in mercy." (Stephens.)

So much, then, for the *law* in its relation to *self-murder* or Suicide. But what if it can be shewn that legislators have altogether erred in this matter of *Felo-de-se*? Suppose the "self-murderer" no felon at all; and what, in this case, becomes of the ignoble, the miserable revenge the law has provided for the dead body of the suicide—to say nothing of the cruel wrong and injustice heaped on his, or her, heirs or successors?

You will perhaps have anticipated me when I add that the act of suicide is not so *voluntary* as it has been, and is, even now, made to appear; that *self-murder* is, in fact, an effect of a pre-existing cause, and nothing more nor less than the sad

consequence of an abnormal condition of a portion of brain-tissue.

If this position can be sustained—if it be in strict harmony with the organic laws—as such obtain in man; if both theory and experience prove the important position now taken, then does it follow that the present *law* in regard to *Felo-de-se* should be ignored and put on one side—for ever. Then does it follow also that *Life Assurance Offices* are called on, necessarily and imperatively, to amend their ways; and if this be the case, the Government itself will realise the immediate necessity to omit from its scheme of *Life Assurance* that one plain rule which declares that “if any person whose life the Post-master General has insured shall die by his own hands, he will cancel the contract made with him; all the payments made by him will be forfeited, and no payment will be made to his, or her family, or representatives.”

Now the evidence in favour of the foregoing view of *Suicide* about to be submitted to you is, you will see, essentially practical, and gathered from the facts of every day occurrence. My premises lead inevitably to this conclusion, viz., the act of self-murder is simply a sign or indication of brain-disorder—a positive and prominent symptom of madness.

The first case to which I would invite your attention is that of the late *John Sadleir*, M.P. for Sligo. You will remember that this person was so ardent a speculator—so sadly given to commercial gambling—that, involving himself, he endeavoured to regain his lost footing by various acts of forgery. These came at length, and so suddenly to the surface, that he (*Sadleir*) lost faith in his own devious and crooked pathways to wealth. After many vain attempts to wriggle himself right, and to ward off what he knew to be the coming storm; being assured of the discovery looming in the not far off future, and feeling the too sure consequences of his misdeeds to himself and to his many victims, he could no longer bear up against the constant and heavy pressure made on him. The organic laws of his being were infringed. The brain was rendered incompetent to the heavy and galling labours imposed on it; its various parts subserving dissimilar, yet concurrent functions were so kept on the stretch and so strained, so heavily taxed to meet the several and urgent requirements of the unhappy man named, that in the language of scientific truth, the subjective and objective conditions of his (*John Sadleir's*) being were no longer in accord or harmony the one with the other. Such were thrown so completely out of

gear—or working order—that he became, to all intents and purposes, *mad*. The issue of the whole was he killed himself by taking a large quantity of the essence of bitter almonds. The coroner's jury, presided over by the late Mr. Wakley, returned a verdict in these words, viz. :—“ *John Sadleir died by his own hands, when in a perfectly sane state of mind.*” I must now call your attention to the facts elicited at the *inquest*, and with these contrast the *verdict* just stated to you. A certain Bank in Ireland is—or rather *was*—supposed to be on the verge of failing; and this the consequence of the forgeries, &c., done by the suicide. The failure anticipated, it was known to him (John Sadleir), would involve the discovery of his many guilty deeds. He is seen in the city the day preceding his decease, and it is declared, on oath, that he exhibited *considerable excitement*. A second witness affirmed that he “had several schemes by which he thought money could be raised;” but which, it was added, ‘I could neither recommend nor adopt.’ He then became very excited, put his hands to his head, and said, ‘Good God! if the Bank (naming it) should fail, the fault will be entirely mine; and I shall have been the ruin of hundreds and thousands!’” We are told farther that, “He walked about the office in a very excited state, and urged me to try and help him, because he said he could not live to see the pain and ruin inflicted on others by the cessation of the Bank.” A third witness spoke to the deceased's intense and agonizing excitement throughout the whole of the Saturday preceding his death. He is visited by a friend late on the Saturday evening, and a few hours before the fatal act is supposed to have been committed; and this friend says, he “noticed a redness of the eyes, as though Mr. Sadleir had been weeping; and that when he arrived, he (Mr. Sadleir) was walking about the room, which, it was affirmed, was a very unusual occurrence with him; that “he was so impressed with the effects likely to be produced on the deceased by reverses of fortune, that he made the remark that he should not be surprised if Mr. Sadleir shot himself.” The coroner also, in his summing up, admitted that the deceased must have “*suffered* the most intense agony; and that the very act he committed proved, of itself, the mental suffering that drove him to such a measure of desperation.”

Now we are assisted in a very material degree in coming at a truthful conclusion in this painful matter by the letters of Mr. Sadleir, written by him but some few hours before his death:—

(1.)

“11, Gloster Terrace, 16 February, 1856.

“Dear Robert—To what infamy have I come step by step—heaping crime upon crime—and now I find myself the author of numberless crimes of a diabolical character and the cause of ruin and misery and disgrace to thousands—aye to tens of thousands.

“Oh how I feel for those on whom all this ruin must fall—I could bear all punishments but I could never bear to witness the sufferings of those on whom I have brought such ruin—It *must be better that I should not live*.

“No one has been privy to my crimes—they sprung from my own cursed brain alone—I have swindled and deceived without the knowledge of any one—Stevens and Norris are both innocent and have no knowledge of the fabrication of Deeds and forgeries by me and by which I have sought to go on in the horrid hope of retrieving.

“It was a sad day for all when I came to London.

“I can give but little aid to unravel accounts and transactions.

“There are serious questions as to my interest in the Grand Junction and other undertakings.

“Much will be lost to the creditors if these cases are not fairly treated.

“The Grand Junction, the East Kent, and the Swiss Railways, the Rome line, the Coal Co are all liable to be entirely lost now—so far as my assets are concerned.

“I authorize you to take possession of all my letters papers property &c &c in this house and at Wilkinsons and 18, Cannon Street.

“Return my Brother his letters to me and all other papers—The prayers of one so wicked could not avail or I would seek to pray for those I leave after me and who will have to suffer such agony and all owing to my criminal acts.

“Oh that I had never quitted Ireland—Oh that I had *resisted the first attempts to launch me into speculations*.

“If I had had less talents of a worthless kind and more firmness I might have remained as I once was honest and *truthful*—and I would have lived to see my dear Father and Mother in their old age—I weep and weep now but what can that avail.

“J. SADLEIR.

“Robert Keating, Esq., M.P.”

(2.)

“Saturday Night.

“I can not live—I have ruined too many—I could not live and see their agony—I have committed diabolical crimes unknown to any human being. They will now appear, bringing my family and others to distress—causing to all shame and grief that they should have ever known me.

"I blame no one, but attribute all to my own infamous villany. —, —, —, —, —, —, —, —, and hundreds of others ruined by my villany. I could go through any torture as a punishment for my crimes. No torture could be too much for such crimes, but I can not live to see the tortures I inflict upon others.

"J. SADLEIR."

(3.)

"James is not to blame—I alone have caused all this dreadful ruin.

"James was to me too fond a Brother, but he is not to blame for being deceived and led astray by my diabolical acts.

"Be to him at this moment all the support you can. Oh what would I not suffer with gladness to save those whom I have ruined.

"My end will prove at least that I was not callous to their agony."

The last of these epistles—as remarked by the lady, a relative of the deceased's, to whom it was sent, was "*without any signature.*" Let me fix your attention on certain utterances of the Coroner in his summing-up. "The facts of the case," said he, "were calculated to involve them all in a labyrinth of doubt," but "they must proceed backward to the last link in the chain of life. It is on record that Mr. Norris left Mr. Sadleir at a quarter to eleven o'clock on the Saturday evening; at about a quarter past ten he (Mr. S.) received a telegram from Dublin, in which were these words, viz.: "*If from £20,000 to £30,000 over here on Monday morning, all is safe.*" The Coroner added, in reference to these words—"probably at that time Mr. Sadleir knew the impossibility of transmitting so large a sum, but the poison had been sent for three hours before the arrival of that message." It is on record also that two of the preceding letters *appear* to have been written after the receipt of the telegram just quoted. "These letters," remarked Mr. Wakley, "contained, therefore, the latest evidence they had as to the condition of Mr. Sadleir's mind," but, he added, "insanity consists *not in depression of spirits, nor in agony of mind.*" The question to decide was, "Did they believe that at the time Mr. Sadleir committed the act of self-destruction he was a responsible agent?—in other words, that he was in such a condition of mind as made him morally and legally responsible for his actions?" The Coroner here read the several letters above cited, addressed by deceased to Mr. R. Keating and another; and he contended—so the *Times* asserts—on the face of these very letters, that when Mr. Sadleir stated in them that he could not live, &c., his mind was not in such a state of disturbance even as to

create any *confusion of ideas*. They were written, he added—"at almost the last moment before he died, and there was nothing in them that was inconsistent with the perfect retention of a correct memory. If they believed Mr. Sadleir was irresponsible for his actions, and that he was driven to commit the act of self-destruction by some uncontrollable impulse, they would say that he was of unsound mind. But if, on the other hand, they believed he was of perfect *memory and understanding* at the time, and that he could have controlled that act if he had thought proper to do so, they could come to no other conclusion than that he had committed self-murder. If, however, they had a doubt on the subject, he would call on them to give the memory of the deceased the benefit of that doubt. But if they had no such misgiving, it was impossible they could come to any other conclusion than that it was an act of *felo-de-se*."

The jury was, moreover, told that a careful *post-mortem* examination of the brain of the late Mr. Sadleir had been made, but "*no disease had been found to exist*."

You will not fail to observe well the references made by the late Mr. Wakley to the *ideas* and *memory* of the unfortunate suicide in his latest hours; nor will you hesitate to note, with care, the Coroner's comments on the *depression of spirits* and *agony of mind* of the deceased person.

I would I were able to persuade myself that it is now no longer necessary to insist on the false and spurious Physiology and Pathology involved in the foregoing remarks of the once Coroner for Middlesex—but even of him—far-seeing and clever though he was—it behoves us to speak the truth. The late Mr. Wakley erred—as very many medical men do even now err—in looking on the intellectual qualities of the mind as the index to or of insanity. Whereas, in not a few cases of downright madness, such are not affected or involved in the disorder, but escape for a definite period, and, it may be, for ever, the sad pains and turmoils whereby the moral man is borne down and preyed on. Insanity—it cannot be too well known—is located not so much in the perceptive and reflective mind, as in the emotional mind. The guiding star of man's life and actions is not seen so much in his mere knowledge of things, or found only in the objective conditions which surround him at any given time—but seen and found rather in the tone and quality of his ever active affections and propensities; or, what is the same thing, in his subjective conditions and very natural (innate) belongings. The

bonâ fide *power* to do, or *not* to do, this thing or that, must be sought for elsewhere than in man's knowledge of right and wrong. Sanity and responsibility, and conversely, insanity and irresponsibility, are matters to be estimated by his (man's) ability or inability to do or to leave undone the right or the wrong. The acts (*i.e.* the conduct and character) of both the sane and insane, are ever dependent on—in the language of metaphor—the *heart* rather than the *head*; or, what is the same thing, the feelings or affections—rather than the intellectual powers. "A man," writes SHAFTESBURY, "is by nothing so much himself, as by his temper and the character of his passions and AFFECTIONS;" these

—"insolent and strong,  
Bear our weak minds their rapid course along;  
Make us the madness of their will obey,  
Then die, and leave us to our griefs a prey!"  
CRABBE.

The questions raised then in regard to the *confusion of ideas* and the state of the *memory* in the deceased at the period immediately antecedent to his death are seen then to have been irrelevant and altogether outside the legitimate course of the enquiry; and that, in truth, the depressed spirits and the agonized mind *should* have formed the very pith and starting-point of this very important investigation—and because only insanity *does* consist in—in very many instances—such "depression" and *agony* of feelings. It may be said, in reply, that the course adopted *in re* J. Sadleir, was exactly that prescribed by the law of the land, and therefore the then Coroner *was* in perfect order; and especially so, in so far as the said *ideas* and *memory* are concerned. I cannot think this; though the law does judge, and rightly judge, that "every melancholy or hypochondriacal fit does *not* deprive a man of the capacity of discerning right from wrong;" and though, as Sir M. Hale has it, "It is not every melancholy or hypochondriac distemper that denominates a man non-compos or destitute of reason, for there live few who commit suicide but are under such infirmities;" yet inasmuch as the principle involved in the said *Law* is based on an untruth—is foreign to the *laws* of Psychological science—and is altogether antagonistic to a sound humanity—is it, I ask, not high time that we should be rid of such a "Law;" and, what is more, insist on the acceptance by our Law-makers of other and advanced views of sanity and of insanity, of responsibility and irresponsibility. But there is indeed no end to the incon-



sistencies and contradictions of the "Law," built up as it has been by the follies, prejudices, and passions of our untaught and inexperienced progenitors; for need I remind you that "passion" or "heat of blood," the consequence of or "upon provocation"—to quote the precise words of the act of parliament—is held to justify a homicide—but these go for nothing in the case of the suicide. Now, does not the very converse of this seem nearer the mark aimed at?

One word more in reference to the case of J. Sadleir. We, Mr. President, are assured that the mere normal appearance of the brain must go for not much. It is already on record that five per cent. of the brains of insane persons examined by myself at the Hanwell and Colney Hatch Asylums, between the years 1840 and 1852, were without appreciable lesions of structure.

The case thus dwelt on will allow but of one conclusion. It is this: the "conscientiousness" of the man was stung—mortally stung—by his own misdeeds—his "love of approbation" became outraged by his own sins of omission and commission. REMORSE seized upon him, and so held him in its dread grasp, that all escape was in vain. The long-continued infringement of the moral law demanded restitution, and the sinner was punished for his disobedience. He "self-condemned" was made to anticipate the hard decree of that "avenging fiend" ever near (so says the poet) to punish those who err. In a word SIN drove the late J. Sadleir, as it has done thousands before his time, MAD—and the suicidal act was but the terrible climax to or of his insanity. The case of the late Mr. Sadleir was one in which—

"CONSCIENCE roused sat boldly on her throne,  
Watched every thought, attacked the foe alone,  
And with envenomed sting drew forth the inward groan."

The "groan" was nothing more nor less than the proximate cause of the suicidal act in this poor man alluded to.

What an opportunity was here lost to the Coroner and to a jury composed of wise and really competent men, to enforce a great truth in Psychology—one so well calculated to amend an old and sanguinary law—one begotten in ignorance and inhumanity.

The second case to which I would invite your attention is that of a young lady who (the mother of an illegitimate child), forsaken by her seducer, suffering the pains and penalties of an outraged confidence and love, steeped in poverty, aban-

doned by her family, and lost to all hope in the future, is attacked with "Melancholia" (so-called); under the pressure of which deep affliction—with no one to take the necessary care of her—she kills herself. The annexed account is to be found in the "Chelmsford Chronicle."

**SUICIDE OF A YOUNG LADY IN A BATHING MACHINE.**—On Tuesday last the visitors and inhabitants of Walton-on-the-Naze were greatly distressed by the circumstance of a young woman, about 22 years of age, having committed suicide in one of the bathing machines. Our correspondent states that the deceased, whose reputed name was —, about three months since arrived at Walton from London, and, up to the time of her death, occupied apartments at Mr. —'s, North street. She had with her an infant six months old, whose guardian she represented herself to be, and for some time past it had been observed that her spirits were greatly depressed, neglect and the scanty meals at her command evidently preying heavily on her mind. It had been noticed also that, since the arrival of visitors, she has sought the utmost seclusion, even to absenting herself from public worship, and, on Saturday last, it appears, she went to Colchester, where she raised funds by pledging her watch, &c. On her return, after discharging some pressing claims, she intimated her intention to leave for London on the morning of the catastrophe. She, however, instead of doing so, repaired to the sands at high tide and engaged a machine for the avowed purpose of bathing. The attendant suggested that, as she was a stranger and alone, his daughter should accompany her, but the offer was politely declined, and the machine was, at her request, placed out in deep water. After a lapse of about 20 minutes, some ladies bathing from the adjoining machine observed some clothes floating under the curtains of that of the deceased, and, their attendant failing to obtain a reply from that quarter, search was made, when the lifeless body of the young lady above alluded to was discovered, her head being firmly fixed downwards under the bathing steps of the machine. Her shawl and bonnet only had been removed. Instant attendance was afforded by a surgeon, but life was entirely extinct. From letters, &c., found in her luggage, it appears that an attachment had been formed with an officer in her Majesty's service, resulting in the birth of the infant above named, and on his return from the seat of war she learnt he was on the eve of marriage. This, added to her abandonment by most of her family, no doubt led to the distressing event, which has cast a gloom over the entire district. Several documents have also been discovered, which were to be produced at the inquest, and which may tend to explain the cause of so direful a catastrophe. The orphan excites the warmest sympathy among the visitors, more particularly as it has been observed that both mother and infant were totally without friends. The child remains under the care of Mrs. —. An inquest was subsequently held on the body of the deceased. The unfortunate young lady had

been evidently long suffering from a series of domestic troubles and misfortunes, as appeared from memoranda she left behind; and in a note enclosing her rings she intimated a desire that her dear sister should accept them as a last offering, and not mourn for her loss. After a long consultation the jury returned a verdict of *felo-de-se*, and the unfortunate creature was interred accordingly before nightfall without funeral rites. Miss —— is said to have been a governess of considerable talent.—“Chelmsford Chronicle.”

One can hardly read this sad piece of biography without a deep sense of shame that—first, the seducer should be allowed, as it is to be supposed he was allowed, to escape his reasonable and just responsibilities in this matter; that, secondly, a jury of twelve British subjects could, for a single moment, and under the terrible and trying circumstances of the case recited, doubt the insanity and consequent irresponsibility of the “*officer’s*” repentant and deeply injured victim; or, what is the same thing, could come to a conclusion so out of harmony with the facts put before them, and incompatible with the most common-sense view of the whole case. But so it was, and so it must continue to be, until the question I have ventured to raise, in regard to “*felo-de-se*,” be taken up, as it demands to be, and answered, as it should be, by a body of men—fairly thinking men—like to that I have now the honour to address.

Many will remember “the Salisbury poisoning case” as it is called. This is a very painful story of a young surgeon who was committed for trial on the charge of having caused the death of his betrothed—with whose father he lived as an assistant. The report of the case states that the accused was consulted by Miss —— for some irregularity of health, and that he prepared for her certain pills, each of which contained the  $\frac{1}{8}$ th of a grain of strychnia. One was directed to be taken every night—to three doses. Pills of this strength—it came out on evidence—had been taken on a previous occasion by Miss —— . However, it appears that four only had been taken when the young lady became ill, and after a few days died. The young surgeon was an inmate of the “Fisher-ton county gaol,” where he was waiting—with what patience he could command—his trial. His incarceration commenced on the 21st of September, 1865, and at the period of his death, which took place towards the end of December, he had, it seems, three months more to wait his trial. “The assizes are not held” he writes, “till next March, some time.” I apprehend no one who hears me will doubt that the position of

this young man was one inseparable from deep and continuous mental suffering. It will be, I am sure, conceded that his surroundings were of the most painful character; and that therefore, he was, to all intents and purposes, exposed to very sufficient causes of cerebro-mental disorder. Now presume him to have been, as I think he was, innocent of every thing criminal—guiltless of the foul and wicked deed for which he stood charged. Fancy him mourning—as he must have mourned—the loss to him, and through an untimely death withal, of her whom he had loved so tenderly. See him exposed, day by day, to the coarse rule of his ill-bred jailors, placed in close confinement for successive days, and fed on bread and water only—because he incautiously replied to a question put to him by a fellow prisoner; denied too, all the sympathies of life, and at a time too when, of all others, such were so especially needed. The future too—how sad, and dark, and terrible, must it have loomed on him; his “self-esteem” wrecked, and all “hope” prostrate and forbidden: how awful his suffering, how sad his fate. What, I would ask, was to have been expected else than that the “brain-power” should succumb, or break down under so hard and gloomy a pressure as was that under which Mr. — laboured. He did become mad, and committed suicide when in a warm-bath.

In a letter from S—— to a near relative, written a few days before his death, are these words, viz.:—“I need not tell you how this sad affair has afflicted me,”—“It grieves me more than I can tell you to have to remain here on that charge,”—“This a dreadful life to lead.” It is said that on an envelope produced, inclosed within a design for a tablet, was this inscription:—

Sacred to the memory of E. S. B—, aged nineteen years and six months.

Inside the envelope, written in ink, was the following:—

Mr ——— or the Governor’s cruelty.—Saturday, Nov. 19.—Merely by answering a prisoner, the Governor sentenced me to two days’ close confinement, and bread and water. I had three days’ confinement—most cruel. I was nearly starved, and also caught cold sleeping on the plank beds.

On another piece of paper was the following:—

“Mem. No! little did I think that ——— would have taken four of the pills I gave her, or she would not have had them. I loved her

sincerely, but Providence has so willed it. And knowing as I do that I should get an acquittal if I stood the test of an earthly trial, yet I cannot live with a broken heart another three months in this gaol. I feel that my Saviour will forgive me my past sins, and now I go to Him. Rest! Rest!"

"December 12."

"W. J. S."

"Oh, glorious hour! oh, bless'd abode!"

"I shall be near and like my God;"

"Then flesh and sin no more control"

"The *sacred pleasures* of my soul."

"My flesh shall slumber in the ground"

"Till the last joyful trumpet sound,"

"Then burst the chains with sweet surprise,

"And in my Saviour's image rise."

In summing up, the Coroner said there appeared no evidence that the deceased was of unsound mind; but the responsibility of the verdict rested with the jury. The jury returned a verdict of *Felo-de-se*, adding that they were of opinion the warders ought to have an opportunity of superintending prisoners while in the bath. The body was ordered to be interred at midnight without religious service.

Gentlemen, it becomes a society like our own to put a stop to cases such as the above. Can it be doubted that our duty is to develope such a state of things in our Coroner's Court which shall not so outrage either the claims of medical science, or the fixed laws of our organism?

Case 4th.—The subjoined is remarkable, inasmuch as the evidence, though so strongly in favour of the insanity of "John Page," was ignored by the jury—and with the effect of realizing a verdict thus strangely worded, viz., "Deceased took away his own life by hanging himself." The Coroner, it should be added, had previously declared, in his summing up, that "he had the greatest possible horror" of the expression *Felo-de-se*. The antecedents of this suicide were precisely those which characterise insanity. The history of the poor fellow is told in a few lines:—Six years before his untimely death the wife had consulted a medical man concerning him. At this time, it appears, he suffered from various delusions—these had reference to certain of his neighbours, whom he accused of seeking the means to destroy him. His acts became strange, and his conduct much altered and eccentric, without anything like sufficient reason. One witness (a neighbour), who knew deceased well, declared him to have been "a queer-tempered man," and "had got peculiar ways." "He had not," he said, "been like a man in his proper senses for ten years past; he

was sullen and uncouth. He was sober until within the last few years." A second witness said, "his bad temper and sullen manner commenced about nine years ago." A friend described John Page as "a man with a downcast appearance, who would seldom answer when spoken to." More even than this—Mr. Audland (the family medical attendant) deposed on oath, that he "had no doubt, according to the medical definition of the term insanity, that the deceased was insane when he visited him five or six years ago, and that he was then a fit person for an asylum. The foregoing most important information was confirmed by the following—the evidence of Mr. John Page, junior:—

John Page, a son of the deceased, tendered himself as a witness. He said—I live at Maindee, near Newport. I left home first through my father's ill-treatment, and went to London, but he wished me to return, and I came back. He was in the habit of drinking then, and was very violent if he was crossed. He was difficult to please, and was very obstinate. He quarrelled with my mother at times. He was in the habit of saying, "They'll finish me before the morning." I and my mother would ask him who he thought was going to injure him, and he would say, "They'll tell them by and by." Mother would say, "Take and hush, John," and he would get ten times worse, and we were afraid to stay with him. I visited him last summer, in May or June, and when he was going to bed he said, "This is the last sunset I shall see; they'll finish me." I would say, "Take and hush, father," and then he would say I was going to do it. He liked me upon times, and at other times he did not like me. He would make friends with me at one time and hit me another. When he would come to me in the field he would say, "I dare say they'll finish me before I come back; however, you may go on." I have spoken to many about it. I have not told all I knew, because we didn't wish it known. I knew my mother was in danger, and she would leave him when he became very irritable, and then he would feel the loss of her and would send for her, but upon her return he would in a day or two be as bad as ever. I have told parties much the same. I have said how bad father was, and how he did go on.

The Coroner—Can you recollect anybody whom you have told of this extraordinary delusion—that he was to be destroyed by some one?

Witness—I have told Mrs. Dibdin and others.

Examination resumed—I did not talk to many, because all the neighbours knew what he was.

The Coroner—Have you anything else to say?

Witness—There are several gentlemen on the jury who knew my father.

The Coroner—Yes, but they must be guided only by the evidence given before them.

A juryman—How long has your mother lived apart from your father at any one time?

Witness—I can't say—a good bit. She was backwards and forwards.

The foreman of the jury—Was it a month at any time?

Witness—Yes, sir; more than that.

The summing-up of the Coroner was much after the old fashion. Mr. M. F. Carter is reported to have said :—

He was bound to say that the law of England presumed that every man was sane until the contrary was proved. The legal definition was, that a man must be aware of the difference between right and wrong. It was not sufficient to prevent a man from liability to crime that he had some moral aberration; but it must be proved that he was suffering from mental aberration. To prove that a man was sullen, debased, and depraved was not to prove insanity according to the legal definition. If a man who was of good temper became of bad temper; if a man who had been kind-hearted became brutal, it was not a proof of insanity; and neither would eccentricity or drunkenness be proof of insanity; but if a man through drunkenness became in such a frenzy as to be unable to control himself, then that would be insanity. Therefore, they would not be justified in acting upon Mr. Audland's evidence in that case; he was right medically, but not legally.

You will not fail to observe that the Coroner's law, as explained by Mr. Carter in 1869, is precisely that accepted by the late Mr. Wakley *in re* Sadleir, some twelve or 14 years previously. But, Mr. President, it must not be that another fourteen years shall pass away with no alteration or amendment of this same law. Will it then be said as now that "moral aberration" does not imply insanity; or, that the change of character involved in the transition from a good temper to a bad temper, or from a kind-hearted to a brutal man or woman, is altogether and invariably independent of cerebro-mental disorder? Are the laws of cerebral pathology to continue to be so shamefully ignored, or truth remain so dishonoured and so held in bondage. I ask, yet again, is it not the duty of the Medico-Psychological Society to strike the fetters from off our department of medical philosophy, and give to it the necessary impulse or force to protect the sufferer and the insane from "the world's cold law?"

The press of Bristol has recorded, within a short time, the suicide of Mr. W. F., described as a "ship captain." He was found lying in bed with his throat cut. In the face of evidence calculated in an especial manner to demonstrate the existence in him of mental derangement, the jury returned a

verdict of *felo-de-se*. That I am right in my estimate of the merits of this case you will perceive when I tell you the story of this person. For the past three years his previous good fortune seems to have left him. From having commanded his own vessel he was reduced to the necessity of accepting employment. He lost a very fair property, and was worsted in a law suit. He became very straitened in circumstances, and, ere long, out of health. An old friend of the deceased's, a witness before the coroner's court, said that "his difficulties oppressed him very much, and he was reduced to poverty." He, the late Mr. F., complained that his losses would "drive him wild," and that he (F.) "seemed vacant, and quite absorbed in grief." This witness said he had received a letter from deceased in which he declared he "should never recover his position." One letter, written by the late Mr. W. F., contains these words, viz. :—

My senses are almost exhausted; my fingers tremble whilst I am writing this. But I cannot help it. O my dear wife and dear child, pity and forgive me! But I cannot help it, my poor heart is in a flame. If I could see you once more—but I am afraid before the close of another day I shall be no more in this world. Adieu, dear friend, mind you do as I have said. Your affectionate cousin, W. F.

A letter to his wife and daughter, dated Jan. 14th, and subsequently re-dated Jan. 17th, was amongst those found in possession of deceased. It was written in a rambling way and in fragments, evidently penned at different times, down to within a short time of his death. We give the following extracts as a specimen of the contents of most of the letters read :—

I now commence to tell you my melloncoly story. I am in an awful state of mind. I find everything has gon against me, my mind in all business matters is at an end. My dear tender wife it was a very great struggle the day I felt my heart was breaking—if you remember I came and kissed your dear Face the second time, for the last in this world. . . . He has threatened to have me before the Marine Board; so I cannot beare the idea of being brought up by them. My dear, when I come to look round I cannot see anything like a friend who would give me a single meals victules—I have no friend on earth but you and my dear little maid. I am got hold, and I am not able to work now as I used to do, so I am entirely gone out of my mind, and by the time you get this I am afraid I shall be in another world. I hope and trust that God will help you in your great trouble. My two dear friends, forget me as soon as possible, and never think that you had any knowledge of me, and of all my troubles. O,



when I think of it, it drives me mad. Adue my beloved wife, may God give you strength to overcome this terrible trouble.

I do love you but I cannot overcome this trouble. I am bound to leave you, my own dear and tender child when will you and your dear aunt be able to read this most horrible declaration. I am well aware it will be a dreadful shock but my dear child I am compelled now to do what I could wish I could in any way avoide but I can't. . . . O my two very dear creatures I can see you in your agonies about me but I can't help it. But tell Edmund (and let him see this) that if he does not comply with what I have said *I will trouble him if it is in my power, after Death.* He had better take you booth away from them where you will be by yourselves. O my God! what am I writing of! but I am deranged and I am not in my right mind.

Friday, 3 p.m., the last I shall ever write. My watch will be here at Jenkins and my clothes and carpet bag. I have wandered about Bristol in a sad way but now I am afraid this day will be my last. I wish I had taken my dear child up with me then things would have taken another turn, but now I am alone and trouble has overcome me. . . . My dear wife it will be a dreadful blow to you and my dear child. If I had the means I would go anywhere to get some work. I would be glad to work my fingers to the bone, but I cannot get away. I would go to Liverpool, but I have not the means. So I have fixed my mind on what I shall do to-night. I am afraid I shall be compelled to leave you.

This letter was enclosed in an envelope addressed to his wife, and stamped ready for posting. In other letters and scraps of memoranda the deceased said he had not had two pennyworth of food for two days. Upon an envelope was the following:—"My dear wife, I have no letter to-day—now I am done for—I am driven mad! God have mercy on you both."

In addition to the above I am in a position to state, on the best private authority, that W. F. was subject to "severe pains in the head," and that "he often walked the whole night in his room with his hands clasped over his head in agony." Furthermore, that "for some days before his death" an old and intimate friend, with whom he was staying at the time of his sad end, "noticed a great difference in him."

That the fate of the late Mr. W. F. added one to the present long list of erring judgments, for which the Coroner's Court is responsible, there can be no kind of doubt.

The last instance of *felo-de-se* to which I ask your attention is that involving two young women. Their sad fates are, it would appear, but too well calculated to put those on their guard who will persist in accepting every idle rumour, or personal slander as gospel, and are inclined, as the busy

priest was on the occasion referred to, to enact the part of Paul Pry among his parishioners. The young women referred to were accused of "immoral conduct" with certain young men; this they denied. Being threatened with discharge from their situations (they were domestic servants, living near Highbridge), they, it is said, suffered much "distress of mind," and—

Sick in the world's regard, wretched and low,  
Held their "reputation dearer far than life."

They absconded, and being sought after, "their dead bodies were found in a deep cattle pond in the grounds of their master, locked tightly in each other's arms, and quite dead and stiff." It was evident they had left the house on Sunday night, and committed suicide together. "An inquest was held on the bodies on Wednesday, before Mr. W. W. Munckton, coroner, and after hearing evidence bearing out the above statements, the jury regretted that they felt compelled to return a verdict of *felo-de-se*. The Coroner issued his warrant that the bodies should be interred that night, between the hours of nine and twelve o'clock, and without the ceremony of Christian burial. The affair has created the most painful excitement in the village and neighbourhood."

Hood's mournful stanzas have, indeed, scarcely more force than the unvarnished tale of these poor girls:—

All day she has wander'd through the town,  
Charity none would give;  
Sorrow and want have worn her down—  
"Why should she wish to live?"  
Over the bridge with a fearful splash,  
Into the darksome wave—  
And the bubbling waters mournfully dash  
O'er the poor suicide's grave!

\* \* \* \* \*

There is no one to mourn for the friendless dead;  
And when her poor body is found,  
All dripping and dank, in the river's bed—  
They will enter a verdict, "drowned!"  
Aye, drown'd—but how? or when? or where?  
Say—do you know the tale?  
Why does your heart grow still with fear?  
Why does your cheek grow pale?

It was a boast of a late Coroner for Middlesex that out of a large and given number of inquests, the verdict of "temporary insanity" in so far as suicidal deaths were concerned, was scarcely known. If, as I believe, the cases of *felo-de-se* brought now to your notice are but a reflection of the common experience day by day, and afford, in point of fact, so many examples of self-sought death—the immediate effect of

brain-disease, then must it follow that the unfrequent occurrence of the above verdict should be, rather than otherwise, a matter of deep regret to all interested in truth and humanity.

A reference is made in the commencement of this paper to "Life Assurance Offices," and their dealings with those of their clients, "who die by their own hands." Now, as you are aware, the act of suicide renders the "Life Assurance" invalid, or of no effect. This is the case in both the ordinary "Life Assurance Societies," and in that one "under the authority of Parliament." In the "plain rules" of the Governmental scheme of Life Insurance, are these words, viz. : "If any person whose life the Postmaster General has insured, shall die by his own hands" \* \* \* "he will by so doing, cancel the contract made with him, all the payments made by him will be forfeited, and no payment will be made to his or her family or representatives."

Now those even who differ from me, and take another or the more ordinary view of *felo-de-se*, will, I doubt not, go with me so far as to recognize this fact, viz. : that the act of suicide is not unfrequently the direct effect or consequence of insanity, *i.e.*, of involuntary brain-disease. But the benefit of even this much is denied to the insurer of his life; in other words, it is alone sufficient that a man insure his life to be forbidden the possibility of going mad, and, as a consequence, committing suicide. To take the every-day view of the question before us, both the *felo-de-se* (so to speak) and the insane self-murderer, are put on a complete par, or what is the same thing, are made to incur the very same kind and amount of responsibility. In the eyes of the "Directors," and of the "Post-master General," suicide is simply suicide. Neither the subjective man nor his objective conditions or surroundings at any given time can avail anything. The sane man, if a suicide, and the insane man, if a suicide, are treated quite alike; no kind of account is taken of antecedents or of accidents.

Surely if A insures his life, and then destroys himself, being sane (as some would say), and if B also insures his life, and is attacked after a time by some form of cerebral disorder, whether disopathic or symptomatic, it matters little, by ordinary mania or melancholia, or even by some febrile affection, inducing delirium, *i.e.* insanity; and under the influence of which, no help being at hand, he commits suicide, the two, A and B cannot in justice or in reason be similarly dealt with. That such would be and are treated alike, and that the representatives of both do forfeit everything in the shape

of money claim on the said "Directors," as well as on the "Postmaster General," is, however, too true.

I have copied the two following instances of suicide, one the consequence of protracted "fever" (with delirium), the other of the delirium induced by an attack of "small-pox," aggravated, or very quickly succeeded, by "erysipelas in the head." To these cases I desire, very particularly, to draw the close attention of all interested, in any way, in "Life Assurance Societies," and their near relationship to the public.

**FRIGHTFUL SUICIDE IN BETHNAL GREEN.**—Last evening Mr. Richards, deputy-coroner, resumed, at the Butlers' Arms, Butler-street, Bethnal Green, an inquiry relative to the suicide of Emily Manning, aged 35 years. Richard H. Manning, 2, Nottisford-street, Bethnal Green, widower of the deceased, said that he had been a clerk at a gas works, but was latterly a labourer at the docks, earning 2s. 6d. a day. On last Monday morning, when going out to his work, he left the deceased in bed, ill from fever, and she asked him to kiss her. Witness did not suspect that she was going to commit suicide. She had six children; and there were eight people to be supported out of his wages. The rent was 5s. 6d. a week. Witness did what he could for his wife. Ellen Manning, a little girl eleven years of age, said that at nine o'clock on the morning in question her mother, who was ill in bed, told her to fetch her father's razors out of the other room. Witness refused at first, but upon her mother threatening her she brought them. She was then told to leave the room, and she did so for an instant, but upon looking in she saw her mother cutting her throat. Witness was terrified, and ran for help.—John Nokes, 2, East-street, Bethnal Green, lamplighter, said that the deceased was his daughter. She was always fretting through distress. She had eight people to support on 15s. a week. Poverty overcame her. She worked until she could work no longer.—Mr. R. Meldola, M.R.C.S., proved that deceased died from very severe wounds in her throat twenty minutes after she had inflicted them upon herself. The jury returned a verdict of "Suicide while of unsound mind from the delirium of fever."

**A MELANCHOLY DEATH.**—An actor well-known on the Paris stage, M. Charles Lemaitre, son of the eminent veteran actor Frédéric Lemaitre, was attacked about a week since with smallpox, which epidemic is now so prevalent in the French capital. He was attended at his apartments, on the fourth story, 40, Boulevard de Strasbourg, by a sick nurse. Three days since his condition became alarming, erysipelas in the head having set in, and his reason became affected. On Tuesday evening, during the momentary absence of the nurse, M. Lemaitre sprang out of bed, opened the window, and was about to cast himself out, when the nurse returned, and seizing hold of his shirt endeavoured to restrain him, shouting for assistance, while the unfortunate patient in his turn cried out that he was being murdered. A

crowd collected, some of whom rushed upstairs, and had just entered the room when the protracted struggle was brought to a close by the poor madman breaking from the hold of the nurse and casting himself headlong into the street, where he was immediately afterwards picked up quite dead. M. Frédéric Lemaitre, the father, who is still playing in Paris, arrived shortly after the catastrophe, and was overwhelmed by the fearful calamity which had bereaved him of a beloved son.

Let me ask on what possible grounds could "Directors" refuse the payment of monies to the representatives of any such as the "actor" above named, and poor "E. Manning?" The act of self-destruction in both of them was as involuntary as either the fever or the erysipelas which begot the delirium. And this it was which proved the immediate cause of these self-sought though unwilling deaths. Hence would have resulted the validity of any assumed claims on the part of "representatives" of either of these much afflicted persons.

In conclusion: if, then, the several cases of "Felo-de-se" above narrated are very fair specimens of their kind; and, as such, reflect our every day experience of such sad and painful catastrophes, then must it follow—on grounds the most logical and conclusive—that the act of suicide is at all times and under every kind and variety of circumstance the effect of pre-existing cerebro-mental disease; the mere effect of an antecedent cause.

I claim, therefore, the repeal of the present law in regard to "Felo-de-se." I claim for the "self-murderer" his abolition or freedom from all and every responsibility; and, as a sequence, the non-liability of his heirs or representatives to suffer either in person or in purse in any way whatsoever.

If the science of Psychology is to prove of good service in the cause of civilisation,—if it be destined to add to the blessings of social life, to promote and diffuse well doing and happiness throughout society, and further the great and noble cause of truth and Christian charity among men, then will the question now raised come in for a large share of the attention of the really wise and good; of those

" Whose actions teach,  
More virtue than a sect can preach."

And not the less of those who

" Hold that ever  
Virtue and knowledge are endowments greater  
Than nobleness and riches."