

there is seen to be only an apparent intensification of the inferior parts of the natural disposition. The vulgar man talks and acts offensively, the spiteful man becomes actively malicious, and the sensual man is openly indecent. I believe, then that, as a rule, insane patients masturbate as a consequence of disease of the brain, and from the same cause that many of them become peevish and greedy. There are some cases in which there is a strong warrant for the assumption that masturbation primarily causes grave mental disease, but in some of the best marked cases I have seen there has been inherited predisposition to mental disease. Obviously mental degradation, however begun, would be helped on by masturbation. The mental disease introduces a new or secondary cause of mental depravation.

I would here remark that I do not believe masturbation causes epilepsy, or chorea, or any such symptoms, any more than I should believe it could cause paralysis of the portio dura nerve. It is sometimes replied to such a statement as this, that it is a "question of fact." It is not a question of fact with me, because I admit the fact, that is, I admit that many epileptics masturbate. All I deny is the inference that masturbation has caused their epilepsy. That it is one of the gravest factors in producing mental deterioration is no proof that it leads to an entirely different class of symptoms, any more than the fact that lead-poisoning causes paralysis of the extensors of the forearms is proof that it causes hemiplegia.

The Morbid Psychology of Criminals. By DAVID NICOLSON, M.B., &c., Medical Officer, Her Majesty's Convict Prison, Portsmouth.

(Continued from page 185, vol. XIX.)

We were engaged, when we left off last, in considering some points bearing on the prison-conduct of criminals in relation to their crimes; and we now proceed to show how various questions as to mental condition are started by prison-misconduct.

Let us take the commonest of cases:—a prisoner misconducts himself and creates a disturbance by shouting and hammering in his cell, perhaps also breaking his window and furniture. This statement of the case is just such a

one as the warder in charge would hand to the governor in reporting the circumstance. Judging from the bare facts, to what possible sources is the conduct attributable? They are four: 1st—*Ill-temper and devilment*; 2nd—*Morbid impulse*, such as might be led up to by a prison-delusion in a weak-minded criminal; 3rd—*True maniacal outburst*; 4th—*Feigned Insanity*. Sometimes, of course, when the indications are plain, and when we have a previous knowledge of the prisoner, no difficulty is found in arriving at a conclusion as to the origin of the misconduct. The comparatively speedy subsidence of the signs of excitement, as well as the immediate history of the occurrence (probably a quarrel with his warder), will generally tell us when the display is merely one of temper. Putting aside mere temper, we then ask ourselves: are the mental manifestations real, or are they pretended? or, indeed, are they partly real and partly pretended? for some of the weak-minded class are found to sham the loss of what little senses they have.

It is, in many cases, most difficult to satisfy ourselves as to the right value to put upon them. Prolonged and careful observation of the individual is often necessary, as well as an investigation into the circumstances of the case, the existence of probable motives for deception, the previous behaviour of the prisoner, &c. But after all, after we have thought it out to the best of our ability—even after the case has been decided on, and, perhaps, dealt with in accordance with our recommendation—there may yet remain a considerable cloud of uncertainty as to the actual mental condition. We may be morally certain that the anomalous signs were only pretences; but yet some of them were such as real disease might give out, and we are chary of deciding hurriedly in the face of the fact that with our decision lies the responsibility and punishability, or the reverse, of the prisoner in question.

We pause, we doubt, we observe, we pause, and so on; until perhaps some trivial accident, possibly the individual himself, reveals the imposture, or else something occurs to establish the genuineness of the case.

Look how many there are who go the rounds of prisons and asylums!—now a convict, now a lunatic, again a convict. Like a bad coin, with its obverse and reverse impressions well executed, the mind of such an individual seems to bear the stamp of Insanity on the one side, and of Criminality and Vice on the other; and hence the results of inspection are

found to vary, according to the side that turns up, when the conduct of the man, like the ring of the coin, excites attention and suspicion.

The following cases will serve to illustrate what I have been saying:—

F.L., aged 34, was sentenced, in 1870, to seven years' penal servitude, at Birmingham, for larceny after previous conviction. From the Borough Prison at that place he was soon after sent to Broadmoor Asylum as insane. From Broadmoor he was transferred by Dr. Orange, the medical superintendent, to Millbank Prison, with the following remarkable history: "He has undergone two previous sentences of penal servitude. He was sent from Millbank to Bethlem in 1855, when he passed by the name of Coe. It was believed that he feigned insanity. In 1860 he was sentenced again, but it is not known by what name he then passed. He served the greater portion of that sentence at Gibraltar. In April, 1867, he was admitted into Broadmoor, passing by the name of Charles Mont.* On this occasion he confessed he was feigning, and he was sent back to Bristol Gaol, in July, 1867. On the present occasion there is no doubt that he feigned insanity at Birmingham, but he discontinued this feigning on the day after his admission into Broadmoor."

At Millbank Prison he became troublesome, and Mr. Wilson, then assistant-surgeon, reports in his notes that he had become excited, violent, and filthy, eating his own fæces, and those of other prisoners. His attacks of excitement were followed by great tremulousness, which lasted for several days. He was ultimately removed to Woking Prison, as being of weak mind, in the opinion of Mr. Gover, the medical officer.

At Woking, where I first made his acquaintance, his violent conduct continued; he was confused and agitated in manner; rambling and to some extent incoherent in his conversation; on one occasion refused his food for several days, and afterwards made a sort of an attempt to hang himself with his stockings. Was sent back to Millbank, where, for a time, he gave up his violence and was behaving better, although given to excitement and to talk loudly, with a great show of earnestness and gesticulation, as well as of agitation. Later accounts show that he is again violent, and full of threats that he will smash the doctors and officers of the prison. Such conduct has continued more or less for four years; and how inexplicable is it all! My impression is,

* Found insane on trial, and ordered to be detained during her Majesty's pleasure.

that he has a disturbed condition of his nervous system, and that he gives way to his impulses through a *moral incapacity* to restrain himself. Intellectually, he is no worse off than many criminals are, and he is quite capable of feigning insanity (of intellect) whenever it suits his purpose to do so. Punishment would not avail with a man of this sort, even if he were to be held fully responsible for all he does. There can be no doubt, at least, as to his weak-mindedness. He is shown to have been in four different asylums at various times in his life, as well as in a goodly number of prisons and gaols.

The next case, although differing in the type of morbid display from that of F. L., was somewhat similar as to an experience of prison and asylum life.

Convict C. W., alias J. T., &c., aged 35, had been repeatedly in prison, under various names; his offences being larceny and burglary. Has not the rough, criminal look about him; rather spare and pale; looks downwards and askance, with a sly, cunning, and suspicious expression. Has usually a quiet demeanour, and talks with a sort of cynical sneer; when questioned, replies rationally but shortly, unless he gets on to his special topic—that of having committed a murder, near Plymouth, for which “they” are to murder him in return; for this he is quite prepared, and does not care so long as they do it in a fair way. Is altogether idle, and simply refuses to labour; and I think no power or punishment on earth would make him do so while this mood is on him. The only thing he cares to do is to sketch heads upon his slate or cell-floor. Has a great propensity to secrete pieces of knife-blade, or the like; and with these he makes a frequent show of attempting to cut his throat by scratching or picking at it. Does not seem to have any real suicidal intention. Attacked a warder at Woking. Had been in Bethlem in 1863, and more recently in Broadmoor Asylum. The following reply was made by Dr. Orange to enquiries made regarding him: “J. T., who was discharged from this asylum in May, 1870, was one of those persons concerning whose sanity a difference of opinion might easily exist. My own impression of him was, that with a sufficient motive—such, for instance, as the prospect of liberation—he could exercise sufficient control over his conduct, so as not to show any indication of insanity; but he was of irritable temper; and, with the prospect of a long sentence before him, he would probably not think it worth while to obey prison rules, and beginning in this course would, probably, soon become so reckless as to render it difficult to account for his conduct in any other way than upon the supposition of his being insane. He encouraged the idea that he had delusions as to his power of painting, but those delusions were doubtful, to say the least. The irritability and suspicion were, no doubt, genuine; and for a long time they amounted to insanity.”

These remarks are very pertinent, and carry with them a good description of the subjective side of the case. I am the more glad to be able to quote them, as they record an opinion of the highest value on such a subject. Such cases as these are by no means rare among those criminals who come under observation with regard to the state of their mind. They show the extreme difficulty of estimating the psychological value of acts committed by men of this stamp. "Punish them, at any rate, for their misbehaviour," some would say; but punishment is often useless, and even worse than useless. "Send them to an asylum," say others, "they are mad." They are sent, and what happens? *With* the changing scene, and not alone on account of it, the individual *turns himself* round, and is also changed; so much so that to retain him in an asylum as insane is felt to be nothing less than a premium upon crime. Hence is thrust upon us in our practical dealing with imprisoned criminals the necessity of recognising a special class as "weakminded," and requiring modified treatment *in prison*. As we shall see by-and-bye, the "weakmindedness" of this class appears in various forms; but I may here point out that in many cases, such as those of prisoners like F. L. and C. W., the mental weakness is determined or developed by the existence and operative influence of motives. And this fact would help to distinguish such weakmindedness from true insanity, as is borne out in the above suggestive expression of opinion by Dr. Orange.

While I write, an interesting "psychological study" is submitted to us by the Medical Officer of Pentonville Prison (Dr. Clarke) in his report on that establishment, just published in the Convict Prison Blue Book for the year 1873. The interest lies partly in relation to what I have been saying as to the frequent difficulty of forming an opinion regarding the mental source of the extravagant conduct in which prisoners indulge; and partly in the questions arising out of the fatal *dénouement* (self-strangulation) of the case. The history of the prisoner's behaviour I give in Dr. Clarke's words.

During a previous servitude in convict prisons he had incurred repeated reports for misconduct; he feigned insanity in a borough gaol; he affected to be palsied before the judge who tried him; and although he came here without a sign of disordered intellect, he soon commenced a course of malingering. The usual routine in some of those cases is to destroy books, clothing, or bedding, and the glass of the window. Refusal of food often follows, and then, if the abstinence

is persistent, hospital treatment becomes a necessity. This prisoner not only passed through those stages, but he added muteness to his other eccentricities, and so day after day passed, with this difference, as it was spent in hospitals, that he was under more frequent observation. Whether this restraint of close surveillance was intolerable, or whether he despaired of success in his imposture, is questionable, but after other symptoms of amendment, he assured me on the day before his death that he had resigned the attempt to feign insanity. All the ordinary precautions to frustrate suicide continued to be taken, and yet on the following night he succeeded in strangling himself by means of a bandage round his neck, tied to a looped sheet, in the bight of which he placed his feet, and by extension tightened the ligature. The act was unexampled for cunning and determination. Covered by his bedclothes, and refraining from any noise, he appeared to the officer on night duty, who passed and repassed all night in full view of him, to be sleeping naturally. A post-mortem examination of his brain revealed a healthy structure, and it may be said that the motive which impelled him to suicide was as mysterious as the physical signs of an unsound brain (if we presume it was so) were unrecognizable.

The physical possibility of accomplishing such an act without attracting attention is remarkable in itself. The investigation of the case from a psychological point of view is no simple one; but, beginning at the end, the principal positions to be taken up appear to be two. If, with Dr. Davey and others, we look upon the act of suicide as being *per se* a "positive and prominent symptom of madness," then the question falls; and we shall be able most likely to trace back a vein of insanity through the whole case—admitting a mixture of real and feigned insanity, for I think no one will doubt that imposture existed at some period. If, on the other hand, we hold that suicide is not necessarily the act of a madman, we are in a position to accept what appears to me to have been Dr. Clarke's opinion—at least up to the time the act was committed—viz., that the whole conduct was that of an impostor; to allow also that the self-destruction in this case was the result of a deliberate act of volition, and compatible with mental sanity. These are the two broad considerations involved, and to me the latter view seems quite as much in keeping with the whole outline of the case as the former. Carrying the inquiry still further, we shall be able, in a measure, to follow out the steps by which the mind of a criminal may be led up to this point. Feigning necessarily implies motive; and the feigned insanity of a prisoner would probably have for its motive the avoidance of the hard labour

and the other disagreeables of prison life. To effect his purpose, and to carry out his scheme of deception, look what the impostor will go through, voluntarily and by his own acts, in the way of refusing food, lying cold and naked, smearing himself with, and even eating, his own excrement, &c. Failing in his imposture, the source of his motive remains to him, namely, the labour and the disagreeables of imprisonment, together with the additional prospect of punishment for feigning insanity. With few "earthly ties," perhaps, and probably with no thought of a hereafter (or in spite of such thoughts), he prefers death to facing all this. The deliberate balance of motives and hopes falls in favour of death. The terrors of life have come to outstrip those of which death is the king.

I do no more than put this as a possible solution of the problem started by this strange history. I dare say some further points of interest would be suggested by fuller particulars; and the view taken by the coroner's jury, and their verdict, would also be interesting.

I have come across a case almost exactly parallel, which occurred in 1852 at Millbank prison, and which deserves to be recorded here. The late Dr. Baly, who was then Medical Superintendent, reports it in the following terms (Blue Book for 1852):—

Joseph Kellachan, received into the prison from Glasgow, after four months' separate confinement in Glasgow prison, on the 24th of August, became restless and insubordinate about the end of September. On the 30th of that month he used threatening language towards his officer, and it being doubtful whether he was sane, he was removed to the infirmary. Later on he declared that his apparent insanity had been feigned, and that he had been instigated by another prisoner to continue the imposture, and he promised to behave well for the future. After a few days, however, he again presented the manner of an insane or idiotic person, but with such features as to produce in those who saw him a strong suspicion that he was still feigning madness. He was treated as a mad person, and was never left alone, except at times when he was mischievous. He was then placed in a separate cell, under the restraint of a strait waistcoat. On one of these occasions, when he had been left by the warder only half an hour, he contrived, though his hands were confined by the strait waistcoat, to attach the handkerchief which was around his neck to a hammock hook fixed in the wall, only three feet from the floor of the cell, and then sitting on the floor to destroy himself by strangulation. The termination of the case gives support to the opinion that the man was insane from the time of his first misconduct in the prison. But, all the cir-

cumstances considered, it is not improbable that his insanity was at first feigned, with the view of being sent to a lunatic asylum, and a vague hope of thus escaping altogether from his punishment, and that afterwards, finding his object not attained, he became reckless of life, and perhaps really insane.

*Statements and Opinions on Weakminded Criminals, by
Medical Officers of Prisons.*

The recorded experiences of the Medical Officers of Prisons are extremely valuable and useful in furthering our acquaintance with the weakminded class of criminals and their behaviour. They not only touch upon the subject from various points, but they show also certain features which are more or less common to the group. I may here explain that the details here given refer to the English Government Prisons, throughout which the weakminded are distributed in the following way. At each prison there are, very possibly, so many of the class who are looked upon as "queer" and defective, but who, with some modification of labour or discipline, go on for the most part quietly and contentedly. Others, again, are at Millbank, having been sent there from other prisons for prolonged observation as to the actual state of mind. If they are found to belong to the weakminded class they are transferred from Millbank to Woking or Parkhurst, where the great bulk of such convicts are under special care and treatment on mental grounds.

I have already recorded Dr. Baly's opinion regarding the effects of separate confinement on the minds of prisoners, and the risk there was of its producing disturbance and derangement, when continued for any length of time (say over twelve months) in all its intensity and rigour.

Dr. Campbell, of Woking Prison, thus records his experience (Report for 1870):—

Most of the prisoners sent here as imbeciles were reported to require supervision night and day, and they displayed the usual characteristics of the weakminded or imbecile class; such as excitability, eccentricity, impaired memory, vacancy in the expression, often marked peculiarity in the countenance, and formation of the head; and in some the ears are thickened and pendulous. Some are of low mental capacity, but the greater number are able to read and even write; they answer questions generally with some degree of hesitation, but in a rational manner, except in the worst cases attended with incoherency and loss of memory. Headache and restlessness at night are often complained of, but the sleeplessness is seldom imputed

to any particular cause. In three instances, the men laboured under the delusion that they were visited by people at night. With the sullen and irritable, abstinence from food is sometimes indulged in, not because it will prove injurious, but evidently with the view of gaining some object; and in some instances they have persisted to such an extent as to require the administration of remedies to counteract the consequent depression. The same class are also destructive as regards clothing, bedding, cell furniture, or indeed anything within reach, and their persistency in that line of conduct is often remarkable. They are also subject to sudden fits of excitement, when they have assaulted officers and their fellow-prisoners, without any assignable cause. When guilty of acts of violence, or in other ways misconducting themselves, they may talk rationally, and appear perfectly aware they have done wrong; still the power of controlling their vicious dispositions appears, to a great extent, wanting.

Mr. L. Bradley, the former Medical Officer of Pentonville, usually referred to these cases as cases of "Mental Irritability," under which, he says (Report for 1866) "are comprised various shades of disordered mental action, not amounting to insanity, but indicated by the presence of morbid depression, irritability, excitement, or feebleness of intellect, and occasionally accompanied by a suicidal tendency."

The following cases—which I give *in extenso* from Mr. Bradley's Report for 1857—serve well to show what an amount of dogged ill-nature and viciousness may be displayed by prison characters, and what a source of trouble and anxiety they are to those holding responsibility in connection with them:—

Convict W. W., 7082, aged 22, a carter, and a reputed thief, was convicted at the Bolton Sessions, October 6th, 1853, of larceny, after a previous conviction, and was sentenced to six years' penal servitude. It appeared from the caption papers that he was first confined in the New Bailey Prison, where he was "sullen, idle, insubordinate," and was whipped for refusing to work. Thence he was sent to Wakefield Prison, where his conduct, during an imprisonment of nine months, was "bad." Thence to Portland, where he was detained between eleven and twelve months, and where he obtained the following character from the governor: "Very bad; a most insubordinate and idle prisoner. I fear incorrigible." From Portland he was removed to Millbank. There he remained fifteen months, during which period his general conduct was "bad," and he was flogged for insubordination. From Millbank he was passed on to Portsmouth. He remained in the latter prison only twenty-six days; and was then, on account of refusal to work and continuous insubordination, removed to Pen-

tonville, to undergo a third period of probation, in separate confinement. During his imprisonment here his conduct was very similar to what it appears to have been in other prisons. He was generally idle and insubordinate. At times he was violent, smashing the windows, and *threatening the lives of the officers*. Although no delusion was manifested, yet, the silly laugh, the motiveless misconduct, and other features of the case, sufficiently indicated the existence of weakness or unsoundness of mind, and the necessity for special treatment. The prisoner was placed in the infirmary, and put to associated labour. Subsequently he was removed to Dartmoor, as an unfit subject for separate confinement. He was visited and examined by Dr. Winslow, who gave an opinion to the effect that the mental condition of the prisoner was such as to excite a grave suspicion as to his responsibility, although the symptoms were not sufficiently pronounced to justify a removal to a lunatic asylum.

Again—

R. D., 7570, received from Dartmoor, was removed to Millbank as unfit for the discipline of this prison. The prisoner, aged 24, had been a private in the Royal Marines. He was tried, in September, 1854, by a general court-martial, and sentenced to fourteen years' transportation for striking his sergeant. In pursuance of his sentence he was first sent to Maidstone Gaol. His conduct there was violent and disorderly, and after a detention of four months, he was pronounced to be mad, and was removed to Bethlem. He was confined as a lunatic there and at Fisherton, for about a year and three-quarters, and was then re-conveyed to Maidstone Gaol. He remained two months in Maidstone, was again pronounced to be mad, and was again placed in Bethlem Hospital. After a lapse of five weeks he was discharged thence as sane, and removed to Millbank, where he was detained about six weeks. His conduct during that period was "bad," and he is said to have feigned an attempt at suicide. He was then removed to Portland, where his conduct for two months was "very bad." He attempted suicide, and was sent to Dartmoor. At Dartmoor he used threatening language, violently assaulted the officers, and was then, after three months' detention, removed to Pentonville, to undergo a period of probation in separate confinement.

Such is a "bare outline" of the case, and it was not difficult to see from it that the convict was, "at all events, an unfit subject for the discipline of separate confinement." This is certainly a history of "transportation," not across the seas, but from gaol to asylum, from asylum to prison, from prison to prison.

"Such cases," Mr. Bradley goes on to say, "illustrate a peculiar class of prisoners received into Pentonville, and the convict prisons at

the present time (1857). Prisoners of the class referred to are characterised by inveterate idleness, obstinacy, and insubordination, by gross and apparently motiveless misconduct. They are, at intervals, violent, and smash everything within reach. They assault officers, disturb the prison by shouting, and set all order at defiance. Some are also intractable malingerers; others threaten or attempt suicide. Such men occupy, as it were, a neutral territory between crime and insanity, oscillating from one to the other, until at length in some cases incoherence or delusion becomes apparent, the mental equilibrium is perceived to be lost, and they fall obviously into the domain of insanity. In other cases the mental condition continues doubtful, and in the prisons they are as often recognised as "cracked" or crazy as they are in the lunatic asylums as criminals and impostors. On these the authorised prison punishments are found to be worse than useless, and the existing systems of discipline, whether 'separate' or associated, appear to be productive of little benefit. To deal effectually with them before actual insanity is established, a special and peculiar discipline is needed."

That there are forms of "mental irritability" without this violent and outrageous conduct is evidenced in the following remarks by Mr. Bradley in his report, 1858:—

In two cases the prisoners suffered from dyspepsia, and imagined that that their illness was caused by deleterious substances clandestinely mixed by the officers with the food supplied to them. The third fancied he was in possession of an important secret connected with religious subjects, which he refused to disclose. The fourth asserted that he was made unhappy by being suspected and pointed out by the officers as guilty of vicious practices. Although it would appear from the above statement that delusions were observed in these cases, yet they were not sufficiently "fixed" or absurd to be regarded as *insane* delusions, but, nevertheless, were indications of a mental condition, which, under adverse circumstances, would probably have terminated in actual mental disease.

He notes the following cases (Report for 1862), which may be taken in illustration:—

P. S. became dull and depressed in spirits. He also refused his food, and behaved strangely. He was frequently found muttering and laughing to himself. Was treated in association, and with benefit.

J. W. appeared for a time to labour under morbid religious impressions. He fancied "chloroform" was mixed with his food. Under treatment in association this condition appeared to subside, and the prisoner was removed to public works.

1291, an ill-conducted convict, of low intellect, singed the hair off his head by means of his gaslight, threatened suicide, and was

depressed for some days. Under treatment he now appears to have recovered.

Dr. Roome, Medical Officer of the Invalid Prison at Parkhurst, summarises his experience in the following extract from his report for 1871 :—

The class denominated imbecile or weakminded will always be an anxiety and a care; 124 of these have been under our care during the year. All are not merely weak in mind, as the name would seem to indicate; many are as insane as those to be found in an ordinary asylum, and when their cases become more pronounced they are selected for ultimate removal to Broadmoor, for which asylum Parkhurst may be regarded as a feeder. A certain number have been thus selected during the past year, and more remain for transfer. The moral depravity exhibited by some of this class is, as may be supposed, greater than that which obtains in an ordinary asylum, and the acts of violence to which such men are impelled often, I am convinced, lead to an erroneous impression regarding their true mental condition, for which the fittest emotions to be called forth are probably pity and compassion rather than anger and disgust. But, taking them altogether, I think their conduct and general demeanour will bear favourable comparison with that of any similar body of men elsewhere. Many exhibit a congenitally defective state of mind not to be judged of by ordinary standards. Though undoubtedly responsible beings, their sense of right and wrong is altogether warped, and the intellect they bring to bear upon the question is sadly defective. I have observed that there is frequently a concurrent physical deficiency, the phenomena of both mind and body being abnormal. The difficulty of deciding what amount of responsibility to attach to the acts of such men forms one of the duties peculiar to the office of the medical man in charge, and can hardly be realised by an ordinary observer of the insane. Hence, when any crime of startling magnitude is brought to light, the profession is scandalised by the difference of opinion expressed in the witness-box by medical men of undoubted ability, and probably equal sagacity. Such criminals require a system of treatment peculiar to the class to which they belong, and their acts can be judged of only by those who have long made it their study.

I have to thank Mr. Gover, the Medical Officer of Millbank Prison, for the following valuable and suggestive thoughts on this strange class of criminal, which he kindly, and at short notice, wrote out for me :—

“The term ‘weakminded,’ as we use it in the convict service, is very comprehensive, and includes every variety and every degree of mental affection short of that which would

justify a certificate of insanity. It comprises, for example, many who are merely dull and slow; men who are dull of apprehension, and whose reasoning processes are carried on slowly and with apparent difficulty. Such men, however, *do* reason, and not only draw correct inferences, but act upon those inferences if time be given them. These are the men who irritate busy or impatient officers; and who, by reason of the keen sense of injustice by which they are distinguished, are in their turn irritated, and commit some offence for which they are reported. Such men may make good and steady farm labourers, but let them migrate to a town, and they stand no chance against their more nimble-minded competitors. Like 'unready' men generally, they are always at a disadvantage, and their fate must depend very much upon those into whose hands they fall. Their infirmity is such as to necessitate the exercise of patience on the part of those who would give them fair play; and considering the rarity of this virtue, it cannot be wondered at that many find their way into county gaols, and, finally, into convict prisons. When once in prison, it is well that they should be segregated from those who reach the standard of intelligence implied by a full compliance with discipline, and this can be most conveniently done by classing them with those to whom the term 'weakminded' more correctly applies. If to these dull and slow men be added the eccentric, the passionate, the obstinate, the lethargic, and those of depraved tastes and habits, the residuum of purely weakminded convicts will not be large. There is, doubtless, a simple debility of mind as there is of the body, and it is such as these, whose mental debility falls short of imbecility, who may be correctly described as 'weakminded.' Of the characteristics by which these men are distinguished there is nothing more noticeable than a condition of what (for want of a better term) I may designate as 'mental instability.' The weakminded do not continue in one stage; their moods vary from day to day, and although they can conduct themselves well and conform to the requirements of prison discipline if constantly looked after, and with good examples always before them, yet they show a decided tendency to relapse into the evil courses into which they have generally plunged at one time or other, and they almost inevitably do so relapse if left to themselves. Often, under the kindest management, they will break out, and, without motive, set officers and all at defiance, apparently from the impossibility of longer maintaining a restraint

which is alien to their nature. In prison they are a plague to those in whose charge they are placed, and out of prison they are a danger to themselves and a source of grief to their friends. It may be asked in what respect such men differ from imbeciles, and no doubt weakmindedness and imbecility do graduate imperceptibly one into the other; nevertheless, there is a well-marked difference, of which those who have had the practical management of the two classes are conscious, however difficult it may be to state that difference in precise language. Taking a type of each class, and comparing them together, I would say that the weakminded man is capable of entering into a simple argument; the imbecile is not. The imbecile can compare two objects together, but he cannot draw an inference; he cannot complete the syllogism. The weakminded man can do so; he can draw a correct inference from true premisses, but he cannot go far beyond. He cannot accomplish the complicated process of reasoning which is called 'foresight;' he is at the mercy of the impulses and impressions of the moment; weak in volition; often a slave to animal passions; and sometimes insubordinate through the sheer force of animal spirits which he cannot control. What is to be done with such a being? How comes he into existence? What is his position in society? What his mission in nature? To what extent is he responsible? These and other like questions cannot be answered within the limits of a few lines. But it may be remarked that the weakminded man is a necessary product of an imperfect stage of civilisation. A time will surely arrive when some limit will be put to the propagation of their kind by the half developed in mind and body; when overcrowding and its attendant evils will be things of the past; when wise sanitary legislation will have done its work, and a new generation will arise to whom the weakminded man will be a stranger. In the meantime he is in our midst; let us deal gently with his weaknesses; exercise pity and forbearance towards his caprices; and avoid undue severity when punishing him for those crimes into which he has been led, either by evil example or by the coercion of designing men who have taken advantage of his infirmity."

Having greatly extended our knowledge regarding the weakminded criminal by these valuable opinions and practical utterances on the part of experienced prison medical officers, and having, as it were, taken a general survey of the variety

of mental phenomena which characterises them, I now go on to see how far these phenomena may be reduced into order, and classified.

Forms of Weak-mindedness.

I cannot help feeling that in proposing a classification of weak-mindedness I may appear to some to be attempting a refinement which is but a process of psychological hair-splitting. But if they will bear with me for a little, I hope to be able to show them, first, that the arrangement in itself is "no new thing," but merely an adaptation (with some modification) of knowledge they already possess, and secondly, that some such arrangement is necessary in order to get anything like a clear view of those morbid psychological conditions of which I have been speaking, as more or less peculiar to criminals. Our psychological standpoint in this matter permits us a full view into the regions of insanity on the one side, without shutting us out from visual communication with the sphere of healthy and responsible mental action on the other.

The mind of man, taking its whole range, stretches by an infinity of the most intricate and complex gradations from what we are accustomed to look upon as a state of sanity and stability, down to an opposite extreme, where it may truly be said to become "conspicuous by its absence" (idiocy), or where its activity is unstable and unhealthy (insanity). For our present purpose, we apply the term weak-mindedness to that part of the range which forms the link of connection, in the chain of downward transition between mental sanity and its opposite; and it so happens that among prisoners and criminals generally this connecting link assumes an importance which it can scarcely be said to have among other classes of individuals.

I have all along sought to keep prominently in view the unintellectual and impulsive character of a large proportion of criminals. If we extend those two characteristics, each in its own direction, until they come to give rise to behaviour so anomalous as to be incompatible with the requirements of surrounding conditions (*i.e.*, of prison life), we arrive at the simplest, as well as the most comprehensive, notion of the prevailing features of mind in the group of prisoners who come under the term "weak-minded." If, again, we take into consideration the character of the thoughts (mostly referring to past life and present surroundings) by which

prisoners' minds are exercised, we shall be able to see how our general view of weakmindedness comes to include individuals whose minds are not necessarily ignorant or weak; accidental prisoners who may say to themselves with Calista in the old play—

Here's room for meditation ev'n to madness,
Till the mind burst with thinking.

In short, weakmindedness in prisoners is traceable for the most part either to original mental inferiority, or else to the pressure of such disturbances as the mental life of imprisoned criminals is necessarily invested with.

The weakness of mind may show itself as mere passive mental incompleteness in the presence of requirements to which it cannot come up, or it may consist of a morbid activity in some direction. Such an activity is a common feature, and the excitement and irritability that arise from it are vented in noisy and demonstrative conduct.

I have already pointed out that one advantage of the term "weakminded," as applied to the class of prisoners under consideration, lies in the fact that it does not commit us to too much in the direction of insanity; it does not indicate the presence of actual insanity. But it is a term also which allows of the possibility of individual cases possessing the features of insanity, or passing on to the graver stages of positive disease. Hence, a system of classification has to be adopted for it by which some distinction of weakmindedness from positive insanity may be maintained without breaking down the line of continuity by which they are connected. We have, in fact, to use terms which are applicable both to weakmindedness and insanity, and which are as capable of extension as weakmindedness is capable of extending to insanity.

Looking through the various classifications of insanity for a basis upon which to proceed, I find that the arrangement adopted in Germany, and followed out by Griesinger, is the one that recommends itself as the most suitable. Taking this as a foundation, we can attain simplicity, together with the avoidance of technical terms.

Speaking of the forms of mental disease, Griesinger thus expresses himself: *—"The analysis of observations leads to the conclusion that there are two grand groups or fundamental states of mental anomalies, which represent the two

* *Mental Diseases*, "Sydenham Society," Ed., p. 207.

most essential varieties of insanity. In the one, the insanity consists in the morbid production, governing, and persistence of *emotions* and *emotional states*, under the influence of which the whole mental life suffers according to their nature and form. In the other, the insanity consists in disorders of the intellect and will, which do *not* (any longer) proceed from a ruling emotional state, but exhibit, without profound emotional excitement, an *independent*, tranquil, *false mode of thought* and *of will* (usually with the predominant character of mental weakness).” This may also be taken as a text regarding weakmindedness, which is a degree of mental anomaly.

The two groups may be taken as corresponding to what Maudsley terms affective insanity and ideational insanity, and they are represented, although under less prominently marked forms, in weakmindedness. Although I base my arrangement on the German classification, I must state, to prevent misconception, that it is not my intention to show a parallelism or to draw a distinction between the forms of weakmindedness and those of insanity. It will be seen that in many cases the weakmindedness is simply a condition short of insanity—a diluted insanity as it were—that it is sometimes but an early or premonitory stage of insanity, and that sometimes it is neither more nor less than a partial insanity. My present purpose is to point out under what heads it seems to me the forms of weakmindedness may be classed, together with some of the leading features of the various forms, and to give some illustrative cases.

It will be seen that I have substituted, as more suitable to us, the term “simple mental weakness” for that of “states of mental weakness,” which, according to Griesinger, “continue as remnants and residues” of pre-existing forms of insanity, and which are therefore taken beyond our reach, in the general sense. Paralytic dementia is omitted as not concerning us.

The following is the classification which I would suggest for weakmindedness in criminals, and as a matter of convenience and reference I place side by side with it the German classification of insanity:—

CLASSIFICATION OF WEAKMINDEDNESS IN CRIMINALS.

I.—*Simple Mental Weakness.*

- 1.—Infirmary from inherited or congenital defect.
- 2.—Morbid infirmity coming on in adult life.
- 3.—Infirmary from decay in old age; senility.

II.—*States of Mental Depression.*

Melancholy, including hypochondriasis, home sickness, and self-innocence as to crime.

III.—*States of Mental Exaltation.*

1.—Emotional exaltation.

2.—Delusional exaltation.

GERMAN CLASSIFICATION OF INSANITY.

I.—*States of Depression.*

1. Hypochondria.

2. Melancholia.

II.—*States of Exaltation.*

1. Acute Mania.

2. Monomania.

III.—*States of Mental Weakness.*

1. Craziness or incoherence.

2. Dementia or fatuity.

3. Idiocy and Cretinism.

IV.—*Paralytic Dementia.*

General paralysis of the insane.

I. *Simple Mental Weakness.*—This is a negative form of mental manifestation. It implies a want of mind; a want of mental penetrability. The individual is intellectually dull or blunt; slow of comprehension; unteachable; thick-headed: and he is looked upon as “soft” or “simple.” It is for the most part a *passive* weakmindedness, and it is thus distinguished from the two other forms.

The dulness of intellect which is here found to stretch away into imbecility, is not a form of mental defectiveness peculiar to criminals; for our agricultural and mining districts abound with the same ignorant type of mind in their inhabitants. A certain number of dull-minded convicts there are who go through their penal servitude for all the world like mere automatic machines. They are wound up, as it were, by the judge in passing sentence, and they go on, from day to day, from prison to prison, from labour to labour, without resisting and without grumbling; and apparently with little more than an instinctive consciousness of their existence. But now and again the mental machinery of these men gets out of gear, and they tumble into difficulty. Very possibly some of their cleverer companions have made them dupes in some scheme which has come to light. As the

scapegoats, they get punished; their temper is ruffled, they become sulky and angry, and the want of judiciousness on the part of a warder will serve to increase this to insubordination and violence. Ultimately it may be that, with such apparent thickheadedness, there is no help but to take him under medical protection as weakminded.

Similarly, it is found, outside, that there are dull-minded creatures who go on harmlessly, from day to day, labouring at their farm or navy work, without any mental pre-occupation of a criminal nature. But although it cannot be said of them that they *seek* an occasion of doing wrong, or committing themselves criminally, yet in the face of temptation, and when such an occasion comes, or is thrown in their way, they are unable to resist it, and thereby become criminal. There is a something wanting in them which should enable them to restrain themselves under such circumstances. This "something" (which comprises a mixture of ready judgment, forethought, and healthy volition) is the common factor in this case of weakmindedness and criminality; it is this which here links together crime and mental weakness, which makes crime an expression of mental weakness; and which, if you will, makes crime, but assuredly *not all crime*, a "form of insanity." The same mental defectiveness which prevents the harmless labourer resisting a temptation to crime, oftentimes necessitates his being treated as "weakminded" when a prisoner. But the bearing of this case, where we *start with mental deficiency*, is altogether different from that of the great proportion of criminals who have been often convicted, and whose criminality shows itself as a positive propensity to evil doing. These last, not unintelligent, and quite capable of balancing motives, deliberately, and in spite of their consciousness of its risk, prefer crime to an honest livelihood, such as would fall to their share. Such men have said to me, "I am a thief, and I don't see that I'll ever be anything else; I never did like work much; of course there's risk, but I'll chance my luck again." Now, apart from the moral and social degradation (which the already thief does not feel), and the risk of a "lagging" or sentence to imprisonment (which he is willing to run), there is surely no madness in an idle-minded fellow preferring to live "like a gentleman" by helping himself directly from moneyed pockets, instead of sweating his life out with a pick and shovel at 14s. a week. I fail to see insanity in this, any more than I do in the forged bill of the

man of business, or in the "sanded" sugar and "spurious" tea of grocers who knowingly adulterate their goods.

But to return to simple mental weakness in prison life. A good many of those who belong to this class find occupation at ordinary prisons, but they cannot be entrusted in any position requiring sharpness or intelligence, or where risk and responsibility are involved. Some warders, knowing them, can manage to get work out of them, even when they are scarcely inclined to work. They are dull, insensitive, and terribly ignorant. I had to ask one of this class one day, for purposes of hospital location, whether he was a Protestant or a Roman Catholic. He stared vacantly, and I repeated the question, which at last seemed to strike his centres of intelligence; for, with something of pride in his tone, he replied, "I'm an Englishman!"

Almost the only active sign of a reasoning mental life which may be said to characterise some in this class, lies in their cunning, and in their attempts at deception. When they have some object in view which is somewhat out of the ordinary course, they will come and, by some round-about way of putting it, try to get what they want. Knowing that they are under special care, owing to their mental condition, they try sometimes to make capital out of it, and either "act the fool" by some extra token of simplicity, or else sham insanity by taking up some absurd or noisy line of conduct.

J. S., æt. 21, was decidedly "soft," and mentally weak. He came to prison described as a bad character, having been convicted and sentenced for fire-raising. He was at Woking in the weakminded class, but there is no doubt he acted the fool occasionally. Once he proclaimed himself "Hemperor and King of Prussia and Germany," and required that court should be paid him; he himself performing some antics of a pompous nature in his cell. This at first was rather amusing, but he happened to carry it too far by giving some impertinence, for which he got a couple of days' bread and water. This rather reduced his imperial notions, and he resigned his dignity in disgust, very probably owing to the want of appreciation shown. But those who are simply mentally weak are apt to show temper when crossed, and, become, for a time, dogged, ill-natured, and even violent.

Simple weakness of mind may be shown to have a three-fold mode of origin, generally referable to one of three stages in life, and according to which it is subdivided:—

1. Infirmity from inherited or congenital defect.
2. Morbid infirmity coming on in adult life.
3. Infirmity from decay in old age. Senility.

1. *Infirmity from Inheritance or Congenital Defect.*

Here the mental weakness is simply the expression of an originally defective constitution of mind.

The signs of weakness are presented to us with the intellectual and moral powers of the individual at their best.

The vice-begotten son very possibly of depraved and debauched parents, what wonder if he comes into the world with a degenerate condition of nerve element. This, together with the small and mis-shapen head which is not unfrequently his further portion, renders impossible any considerable development of mental power. In addition, he gets an early experience of vicious habits and practices, which find in him a congenial soil for their growth; and he is not long before he becomes the inmate of a prison or reformatory.

On the other hand, the criminal who is simply mentally weak, may be the dull-minded progeny of honest country folks, who either from wantonness or malice fires his master's haystack, or else, forgetful of his human nature, seeks to gratify his lustful passion by means of a *bestly* intercourse.

Prisoners of this congenitally weak stamp carry their defects with them in their face; their gait and expression at once tell those who come in contact with them what they are or are not to expect from them. If, when standing their trial for burglary or petty larceny, some of these "incorrigibles" of the police courts were to be favoured with counsel, and if the issues were the same as in cases of murder, there is no doubt the plea of mental unsoundness would often be advanced and maintained with success. But as it is, the prisoner of this class has simply to be identified by some prison warder, or otherwise recognized as an "old hand;" a calculation is made of the present offence in relation to previous convictions, and the award is told off as so many "months with hard labour," or so many years' penal servitude with subsequent police supervision.

R. R., a boy of 16, with quite an idiotic cast of countenance, mental vacancy, and almost drivelling, was in the weakminded group at Woking. He was undergoing a sentence of 10 years for committing an unnatural offence. No one could look at this boy without being struck with his natural defects. He had never been in prison before.

G. P. was also mentally weak, full of scrofula, and with a wretched and stupid expression of face. He was only 18 years of age, and had already undergone three periods of imprisonment, being in this time for burglary. Does not seem capable of working out any scheme.

Notwithstanding his physical weakness, he fancies he is quite strong and could do almost any hard work. Would sometimes show temper and violence.

G. H., an unhealthy-looking subject, is at present in this (Portsmouth) prison. When quite a boy, he began a criminal career by stealing a pair of boots; he then got a month's imprisonment and five years reformatory for endeavouring to upset a railway train. Turns up again in 1870 as a rogue and vagabond; and after two or three short sentences he got seven years' penal servitude for burglary. He is dull in comprehension, with small head, sunken eyes, and a general want of expression; stolid, and looks as if he were always listening for something, but could never catch it. Goes on for the most part almost automatically, with occasional misconduct by refusing to labour, or by destroying his clothing.

W. H., aged 36, with several aliases, and repeated convictions against his name. A thief. Large round head; has nothing to say for himself. When asked his name, he always replies, "I answer to the name of Howard," in a thin, quiet voice. Is now tolerably well behaved, and evidently feeble-minded. For about three years he was constantly under report for disorderly conduct, but never noisy. His misconduct began by his refusing to labour, he then became disrespectful and insubordinate, and tore up his clothes, books, &c., then threatened warders, and committed an assault upon one, for which he was flogged. Among his reports is one for "drinking his urine out of his shoe and mixing it up with his bread." Again, "having excrement in his wash-hand basin;" "mixing up excrement, oatmeal and clay, and eating it for breakfast." From all this he ultimately settled down, and for the past 14 months has scarcely misconducted himself in any way.

Some of those whose general condition of mind is "simply weak," show from time to time signs of irritability, peevishness, and even of violence. This happens when the usual tenour of their disposition is disturbed by alterations which take place in their disposal and employment in the prison. They are sometimes quarrelsome with their fellows, but it usually happens that they are in the first instance teased. If they get reported for some offence, and punished, they will very possibly display irritability with some insubordination for a week or ten days, or more, and then settle down into their usual groove.

They are apt to become possessed of weak and childish fancies about their treatment, and even delusions may show themselves from time to time.

Mental weakness from congenital defect may be associated from the very outset with epileptic states.

2. *Morbid Infirmitv of Mind coming on in Adults.*

Here the mental weakness is the more or less permanent resultant or residuum of continued indulgence in vicious or intemperate habits and practices, or else of positive and active disease. Some criminals have passed through one or more attacks of insanity; many of them have led what they call a "hard life," and a dissolute one; and what conditions are more likely to be followed by an impoverishment of the nervous and mental energies? Look what miserable wrecks a round of *delirium tremens* leaves behind it. It is only what we must expect, if the mechanism of thought and healthy mental action is submitted to such rough dealing.

Again, and this is a reflection which connects itself closely with prison life, what a terrible filtering away of mind is there among prisoners by the noxious practice of self-abuse. Although it is impossible to estimate the extent to which this pernicious and enervating vice is practised by prisoners, there is not the least doubt that it is common among them; and its consequences frequently to be traced in connection with nervous and mental disturbance and degeneracy. From the wretchedness and nervousness which are among its first effects, self-pollution comes in time to sap the processes of thought, and ultimately, in some cases, to produce a form of delusion in which, without any actual grounds beyond himself, the prisoner thinks and complains that he is pointed at by the officers of the prison, who say things about him, and are to bring charges against him for filthy practices. His guilty self-consciousness rises up against him in the form of a morbid fancy which he is unable to suppress. Secret masturbation undoubtedly operates as a *cause per se* of weakmindedness, as well as being a cause among other causes; and its practice is on the other hand sometimes—often, I should say—a *symptom* of the mental weakness, and then it takes place openly and shamelessly.

Simple mental weakness may, further, result from injuries about the head, or from inflammatory attacks in the same region. In one prisoner received at Woking, weakness of this sort remained after a sunstroke which he had at Chatham in 1868.

The worst feature of the mental weakness which comes on in adults under the circumstances which I have described is its tendency to advance into graver and more active forms of disturbance, and even into positive insanity.

A. W., æt. 36, burglar, with four previous convictions, became very troublesome, and was repeatedly punished. He became filthy in his habits, and quite indifferent to all around him; passed his urine and fæces in his clothes and bed wilfully, and used most disgusting language to anyone that came near; frequent self-abuse. A chronic case advancing into graver disease.

W. T., undergoing his tenth sentence, although only 25 years of age; was weakminded and eccentric, and would best be described as having a "bee in his bonnet." Would talk with a fair amount of intelligence on most subjects within his knowledge, but with a scornful and sinister expression in his face; he was full of suspicion that he was being made game of. Appeared high-minded, and as one not to be trifled with, but in reality quite harmless.

W. T., had been a commercial traveller, and appears to have been given to sexual excesses; was unfitted for prison discipline owing to simple infirmity of mind, being only about 33 years of age. Body moves in a nervous, "finniking" way when he speaks; appears hypersensitive, and his address and conversation are marked by an overweening politeness at almost every sentence; shallow-minded.

W. A., aged 20; doing ten years for rape; is of a low type of mind, with some amount of cunning. He is quarrelsome, idle, and frequently under report for disobedience of orders.

R. J., 23, sentenced for manslaughter while under the influence of drink. Low and weak expression of countenance, but not gross. Quiet manner and very reserved; behaves well, and is at present amenable to discipline; but if he were thwarted and began to give trouble, his mental deficiencies would show themselves more strongly.

There can be no doubt that a little management on the part of officers keeps such men as this working on smoothly and with comparative comfort.

J. D. is another case something similar. He is an elderly man, who belongs to the rogue and vagabond class, although he looks quiet and respectful at present. Is quite harmless, talks rationally in general, and behaves well. But he has high and exalted notions, of the nature of a delusion, regarding religious and Scriptural matters; and thinks he is entrusted with a divine power to expound Holy Writ. He is not obtrusive with his fancies, but will talk for any length of time about them when once he starts.

3. *Mental Infirmity from Decay in Old Age: Senility.*

Cases of this description, as might be expected, are not frequent. There is usually some accompanying physical disease for which invaliding takes place, as rheumatism, paralysis, &c. They are mostly crotchety, garrulous, and lewd in their ideas, with dirty and careless habits; and not free from cunning.

J. D., about 60 years of age, convicted, and sentenced for an unnatural offence; was dirty in his habits, and very obstinate and perverse. Feigned a fit while speaking to me one day. I asked him in a half-bantering tone when he got up, if he could do another for me, and he went through the performance a second time, letting himself gently down on his knees, and rolling over on his back.

J. C., a low-minded old creature; was given to lewd practices. Very irritable, and ill-tempered, and revengeful. Had been convicted three times for arson, having set fire to farm stacking each time.

(To be continued.)

Necrophilism. By W. A. F. BROWNE, Esq., late Commissioner in Lunacy for Scotland.

(Read at the Quarterly Meeting of the Medico-Psychological Association, held at Glasgow, May 21st, 1874.)

The subject of cannibalism cannot be omitted from such an inquiry. The consideration of this revolting instinct and practice becomes imperative because there are grounds, derived both from history and psychology, for believing that cannibalism, either as a primitive or corrupted instinct, has at one time or other been universally prevalent, has characterised certain states or stages in the progress of every race. This proposition does not exclude the existence, either originally or in certain stages of progress, of purely vegetarian nations. We are so accustomed to regard modern communities in their civilised and mature condition, and in the same manner as the ancients fabled Minerva starting from the front of Jove, perfect, graceful, armed, that we forget that nations had beginnings, that their growth was from a mist or a myth which we cannot grasp, or that they emerged from barbarism so gross and degraded that we can scarcely realise its enormity. It would be a vain and futile task to establish by reference the proposition that a craving for human flesh, or, at all events, its use as food, preceded the habits and manners of civilised life, and we shall confine the allegation to our own progenitors as conveying a lesson at once to our pride and to our philosophy. Montalembert, after eloquently painting the striking and pleasing contrast between the aspect and social state of the west of Scotland, between 412 and 1867, perhaps the very spot in which these