

friends, but also to the friends of the patients, they may see something of the inner life that is led; they would then find that though lunatics are "shut up within the walls of an asylum," to use the current expression, yet that those walls contain persons who enjoy a fair amount of the pleasures and comforts of life, and are as happy as many of those who pity them; that they enjoy a considerable measure of liberty, which is being gradually extended, and which is capable of still further judicious extension.

Homicidal Insanity. By HENRY MAUDSLEY, M.D. Lond.

ON considering the uncertain state of popular and scientific opinion with regard to homicidal insanity, it will appear that the confusion is due mainly to the influence of the method of studying mental phenomena, to the false foundation upon which psychology rests. The method is subjective, whereas it should rightly be objective. Each philosopher looks into his own consciousness, makes generalisations from what he thinks he finds there, and then, with these false visions of unseen realities, constructs the fabric of his system. As, however, the animal, the infant, the idiot, the uncultivated man of every clime and time, are none of them capable of introspective consciousness, it is obvious that a very large part of psychical nature is ignored by the subjective method. It is furthermore evident that a system which thus concerns itself with the most complex, with mind only at a certain degree of development, and neglects, instead of beginning with, the most simple, has no right whatsoever to the claim which it sometimes makes of being inductive. Accordingly it is found that the advances which in recent times psychology has made, have been actual appropriations from the physiologist. Beneke's psychology is in great part physiology clothed in psychological language; and Sir W. Hamilton borrowed from Beneke.*

Let us see how incompetent consciousness really is to supply the facts of a mental science, even granting that it were trustworthy to the extent of its competency.

* Appendix to Beneke's 'Lehrbuch der Psychologie als Naturwissenschaft,' 3rd edition, from which it appears, that Beneke, by letters, asked Sir W. Hamilton about a certain coincidence, but received no reply. The strange thing was, that in 1847 Sir W. Hamilton and Professor De Morgan were quarrelling as to which of them was the originator of the new theory of logic, when Beneke had put forth that theory in 1832, and more fully expounded it in his 'System of Logic' which, in 1843, he sent to Sir W. Hamilton.

1. It can give no account of the state of the savage or the infant mind. Inferences certainly have been made from the self-consciousness of the adult as to the mental phenomena of the child, and have been proved erroneous, inasmuch as they assigned to the child motives for its acts which it was clear it did not possess. It was the physiologist who, by a careful observation of the lower animals, "having entered firmly on the true road, and submitting his understanding to things," arrived at inductions which were found to explain many of the earliest mental phenomena of the child.

2. Consciousness reveals nothing whatever of the material conditions which unquestionably underlie every mental manifestation. Thus it not only takes no account of the constitution or temperament, ignoring individual psychology, but it ignores all those temporary modifications, through bodily states, of the general feeling of the individual by which his ideas of the relations of objects to himself and to one another are so greatly influenced.

3. Consciousness gives no account of that unconscious appropriation of external impressions which is continually taking place. The brain or mind constantly receives such impressions without consciousness, and appropriates them so that they become a permanent part of the mental stock, and influence the character of our habits of thought, feeling, and action. No man escapes or can escape the influence of his surroundings. Thus it is that the *ego* of which metaphysicians have made so much, is no deep and abiding fact, but a constantly changing phenomenon.

4. Everything which has existed with any completeness in consciousness, even after it has disappeared therefrom, is yet preserved in the mind or brain; and may reappear in consciousness at some future time. Not definite ideas only, but every impression which is made on the nervous system, feelings of pleasure or pain, and even its outward activities, thus leave behind them their residua, and become the foundation of acquired automatic acts, feelings and thoughts. Consciousness gives no account of the manner in which these are perpetuated and exist, although a fever, a poison in the blood, a blow on the head, or a dream, may at any time call into activity ideas which seemed for ever vanished. The individual will sometimes sing in his sleep who knows nothing of music when awake, or talk fluently in his dreams a language which he has heard when awake, though he does not understand a word of it.

5. Psychology has never succeeded in giving a satisfactory account of the reproduction of ideas, simply because consciousness reveals nothing whatever of the process. In the association of ideas, consciousness is not the power by which one idea calls up another; the activity is unconscious, and it is only when the idea is excited that we are conscious of it. Thought which has disappeared from consciousness in a crude and incomplete form, is sometimes found,

when it reappears, to have undergone a wonderful elaboration; and the best thoughts of a writer are certainly the unwilling thoughts which astonish himself. Miserably unsuccessful is thought when the thinker consciously wills to think. It is to an excellence of his brain, of which he knows nothing, that the genius is indebted for his superiority over other men.

6. The brain not only receives impressions from without unconsciously, registers impressions unconsciously, calls latent residua into activity again unconsciously, but it responds as an organ of organic life to the inner stimuli of the organism unconsciously. A constant activity in reply to organic stimuli prevails in cerebral regions which are not illuminated by consciousness, and this regular activity is of more consequence in determining the general tone of the individual disposition or feeling than that of which we are conscious. In insanity, when the morbid state of some organ produces a tone of feeling which becomes the basis of, or condenses into, a series of peculiar conceptions, this kind of activity is notably manifest in its effects. No marvel, then, that consciousness is utterly incompetent to explain the phenomena of insanity when this organic activity is so much increased.

7. The condition of the blood which supplies the material of its nutrition to nerve element, has a manifest effect upon the functions, both conscious and unconscious, of the brain. By the presence in the blood of some foreign matter, as, for example, alcohol, tracts of brain may be excited which lie outside the usual circle of the association of ideas, and thus ideas may be brought into activity which seemed to have disappeared for ever, and which the utmost tension of consciousness would fail to arouse. If the action of the poison be increased, then crowds of ideas flicker in and out of consciousness without any coherency, so that in place of the melody of thought, the music of the *Æolian harp*, it is the music of "sweet bells jangled, out of tune," which the wave of the unconscious blood-stimulus now calls forth.

These reflections prove that by far the greatest and most important part of mental activity is unconscious activity. The consideration of the nature of consciousness itself further shows that, so far from its being separable from the particular mental act, and a valid witness of it, it is in reality but an occasional condition of a mental act or modification which it may accompany in every variety of degree of intensity. Though, then, when it does testify, it truly testifies to the internal fact, the subjective modification, it is not at all trustworthy as regards the external cause or objective fact. It is a condition of the thought and not the uninterested witness of it, so that when the thought is morbid it is morbid and the lunatic believes in his delusion with a conviction which facts cannot affect. A fact which lies deeper than his conscious activity is man's uncon-

scious activity; beneath his nature as a psychical being lies his nature as an organic being.*

How then, it may fairly be asked, can a science of mind rest on introspective consciousness? Many systems of psychology have been so raised, and have with the shifting of their sandy foundations crumbled away. And the system which exists at the present day is giving up one after another the vague terms with which it occupied itself, and is grasping at the realities which physiological investigation makes known. It is to be regretted that it does not once for all appropriate the method of positive science and begin with the observation of particular instances. The unsound mind is really as much a fact in nature as the sound mind, and must, therefore, have its place in a true science of mind. As long as a single lunatic, idiot, or imbecile exists, whom a system of psychology does not include, that system is insufficient; and if the mental phenomena of the idiot or lunatic contradict its principles, then that system is unquestionably false. Of what advantage is it to establish by much discussion the freedom of the will, or other such meaningless concatenation of words, when the raging maniac or the moping idiot exist to give the lie to such vain ingenuity? What real meaning is there in saying, as Sir W. Hamilton says, that "man is conscious to himself of faculties not comprised within the chain of physical necessity," when a blow on the head, or the virus of a fever, or any such physical cause, in a moment lays low the highest faculties of the proudest metaphysician? On what foundation can mental science surely rest save on a careful induction from all available facts, whether they are called physiological or psychical?

The unconscious action of the mind, as admitted by psychology, is happily in excellent harmony with the physiological views of the functions of the nervous system. Though constituting one whole, the different parts of the nervous system notably act as independent centres; the spinal cord causes reflex action, the sensorial ganglia consensual action, and the cortical cells of the hemispheres ideational action, and all this without the co-operation of will. It is further clear that the involuntary actions of any one of these centres are co-ordinated for a definite purpose, so that the so-called aim or design of an act is not evidence of the existence of will or consciousness. This must be admitted, unless it is assumed with Pflüger that the spinal cord of the decapitated frog is possessed of consciousness. Now, as these centres may act independently when they are in a sound state, so also may they act independently when they are in an unsound state,—they may exhibit insane actions of a

* The unconscious action of the mind is most fully set forth by Beneke. Sir W. Hamilton, in his 'Lectures on Metaphysics,' plainly follows him in this matter; but Beneke's works have been most largely made use of by Morell in his last work on 'Mental Philosophy on the Inductive Method.'

desperate kind without the co-operation of consciousness or will. The irregular and violent action of the spinal cord and medulla oblongata is witnessed in the convulsions of epilepsy; a convulsive action of the ganglionic cells of the sensorial ganglia is displayed in the horrible fury which sometimes follows a succession of epileptic fits, and which is a true sensorial insanity; and insane ideational action—a convulsive action, so to speak, of the cells of the cortical layers of the hemispheres—is seen, amongst other instances, in the uncontrollable impulse or desire to kill, from which the homicidal maniac sometimes suffers. Though these reacting centres are in the healthy organism subordinated and co-ordinated into definite conscious activity or voluntary action, yet disease, by disturbing the harmony of relations, may cause them to exhibit in irregular form that independent activity which they undoubtedly possess. Psychologically, physiologically, and pathologically we are brought back to the same conclusion, namely, that the unconscious action of the organism is a deeper fact than its conscious action, that the real conditions of mental action must be investigated by observation in regions of which introspective consciousness gives no account.*

It is evident that medical science and law must come into collision in the matter of homicidal insanity because of the opposite methods on which they proceed. The former regards man as an object in nature, an organic being, and deals with him in accordance with the inductive method as an objective study; the latter looks upon him as a citizen, and deductively applies to him the principles of a subjective psychology. Medicine deals with matter, force, and necessity; law deals with mind, duty, and responsibility.† Thus, then, the man whom the law assumes, the citizen, is an abstract or ideal being having a certain knowledge of his responsibility, and a certain power of performing his duties. He represents, so to say, a constant quantity. It is quite natural that exceptions, such as must be made of palpable lunatics and idiots, should be admitted with great jealousy, for, in the first place, the exemption is opposed to the self-conservative instinct of humanity which the law represents, and, in the second place, it is established by observation of instances, which is the opposite method to that on which the recognition of culpability rests. It would plainly simplify practice much to deal with mind as an abstract and invariable quantity of which certain qualities might always be assumed, rather than as a concrete

* The independent action of different parts of the nervous centres has been elaborately expounded by Dr. Carpenter, in his 'Principles of Human Physiology;' but an admirable compact account of the different involuntary actions will be found in the article "Instinct," by H. Lötze, in Wagner's 'Handwörterbuch der Physiologie,' 1844. For suggestiveness, nothing equals the philosophical work of Müller; and the actual state of knowledge at the present time, may be best learned from Funke's very complete 'Lehrbuch der Physiologie.'

† 'Handbuch der gerichtlichen Medicin,' von Dr. L. Krahmer.

and variable force which may exist in different degrees of quality and quantity. As, however, that is impossible, and the law, admitting exceptions, must acknowledge observation, it should rightly leave to medical science the exposition of the conditions of a particular case. Instead of that, however, it jealously and inconsistently demands that the physician give his evidence with reference to a particular ill-grounded theory which it deductively applies as the test of culpability. And as facts, when they come into contact with the unsafe supports of the theory, make known its tottering insecurity, the representatives of the law are apt to try to make up by an exhibition of dogmatism for the logical instability of their position; they talk about the welfare of society being endangered if a lunatic is not hanged, as they once talked about the welfare of society being in danger if the sorcerer was not burned. Then again, common sense, which in a matter of science is pretty sure to represent common prejudice or ignorance, is invoked by them, as if common sense were applicable as a standard of measurement to that the essence of which is that it is not common sense, but insanity. It is truly remarkable how little in all times the law has been indebted to its representatives. Affected, seemingly, by the littleness of mind which the practice of law undoubtedly begets, its representatives have deemed it sufficient for all possible cases, and have thought themselves excellently well employed while they were putting new wine into old bottles; they would search in a statute of Elizabeth for regulations applicable to a steam-engine or a balloon, and would insist that science cannot reveal anything which the law has not contemplated. When we see the judge, whose wisdom age and office might well attest, thus irritably engaged in labouring to make the old garment cover the new fact, the reflection cannot but occur, that 'tis well for truth that man is mortal.

It must be confessed, however, that medical science has not acted altogether wisely in regard to homicidal insanity. Since Marc and Esquirol recorded their observations, and drew their conclusions, very little more has been done than to repeat their generalisations with a vagueness which did not attach to their conceptions. As the best argument to present to the law, if the law is wrong, will be the facts in their best ascertained relations, it will be my present attempt, not carefully to classify, but roughly to group the reported cases of homicidal insanity, so as to exhibit the relations of them as morbid states of the nervous system.

Pathological observations may then be arranged in several groups:

I. Instances sometimes occur in young children of blind destructive impulse, or even of persistent homicidal desire. Romberg met with a child six years old which suffered from attacks of blind destructive impulse in which it smashed to pieces whatever it could,

rushed with a knife into the street, and could scarce be restrained. In younger children of three or four years old, attacks of shrieking, stubbornness, rage, biting, and destructive propensities, which come on periodically, are sometimes met with. And if any one should think that these are instances of early depravity, what will he say to the case of a child raving mad immediately after birth? Crichton quotes such a case, in which a child, four days after birth, had so much strength in his legs and arms that four women could scarce hold him. The paroxysms of violence ended in an uncontrollable fit of laughter, or else the child tore to pieces everything near him which he could tear. When he began to have teeth he died. The case seems to be an example of sensorial insanity, and is not unlike those cases in which convulsions prove fatal to young children. The earliest acts of the newborn child are reflex, and these, when there is a morbid condition of nerve element, may become convulsions. To the reflex acts follow consensual or sensational acts, and these, when there is a morbid state of the sensory ganglia, became the tearing, biting, and unnatural laughter of the insane infant. In the animal, where the nervous centre of idea is but imperfectly developed, the insanity is also sensorial. These attacks of mania in young children are, in reality, frequently found to alternate with attacks of epilepsy and chorea, and with cataleptic states, while at other times epilepsy may coexist with the insanity; they represent, in fact, a condition of independent reacting centres analogous to that which in other centres is the condition of epilepsy.

But a child may be afflicted also at an early age with a persistent morbid homicidal desire. A well-known case is recorded by Esquirol in which a girl, aged eight, manifested a fixed desire to kill her mother-in-law who had always treated her kindly. The grandmother had, in the child's hearing, expressed her dissatisfaction with its father's second marriage, without foreseeing the effect which might be produced on a child then only three years old. To sensational response to external nature succeeds in the order of mental development ideational reaction; and when ideational activity is first beginning, it is not difficult to implant an idea which may long abide. Another case of a girl, aged seven years and a half, who made repeated attempts to injure and kill her mother, is related by Parent-Duchatelet; the morbid tension of the ganglionic cells had been brought about by the long-continued practice of self-abuse, a well recognised cause of disturbance at all ages.*

* With regard to insanity of children the following references may be made, 'Die Pathologie und Therapie der Psychischen Krankheiten,' by Dr. Griesinger; Dr. West, in the 'Journal für Kinderkrankheiten,' vol. 23; Morel's 'Traité des Maladies Mentales,' p. 101; Delasiauve, in the 'Annales Medico-Psychologiques,' vol. vii, p. 527; Esquirol's 'Traité des Mal. Ment.,' ii, p. 61; Durand Fardel's 'Étude sur le suicide chez les Enfants,' in the 'Annal. Med. Psych.,' for 1855;

II. It is well known that homicidal insanity may occur in connection with epilepsy. And as an attack of mania may precede the epileptic fit, or may take the place of it, as in what has been called masked epilepsy, or may succeed it, so also may an attack of the special form of homicidal mania. The symptoms which immediately precede the epileptic convulsions may be referable to a disturbance in any part of the nervous system; and, accordingly, the sensory ganglia may be affected, so that a vivid and dangerous hallucination precedes the fit. A shoemaker was subject to severe epileptic fits, and was often furious immediately after them; but in the interval he was sensible, amiable and industrious. One day he met the superintendent of the asylum, to whom he was much attached, and violently stabbed him to the heart. He had not had a fit for three weeks, but in the night following his desperate act he had a severe fit, and for some time afterwards the attacks were frequent and severe. The voices of the members of a secret society had told him that if he did not kill the superintendent he would be miserable all his life.

The disturbance of cerebral action which may take the place of an epileptic attack, the mania, that is, which is unquestionably sometimes vicarious of epilepsy, may take the form of homicidal mania. A peasant, aged twenty-seven, had suffered from his eighth year with epilepsy; but two years ago the character of his disease changed, and instead of epileptic attacks he was seized with an irresistible impulse to commit murder. He felt the approach of his attack sometimes for days beforehand, and then begged to be bound in order to prevent a crime. "When it seizes me, I must kill some one, were it only a child." Before the attack he complains of great weariness; he cannot sleep, feels depressed, and has slight convulsive movements in his limbs.

There is no need to illustrate the fact that homicidal insanity may follow epilepsy. The paroxysm of frenzy which then occurs, the wild fury and blind destructive impulse are seemingly maddened consensual movements; the senses are possessed with hallucinations; the patient sees blood and flames, and hears roaring noises or voices urging him to save himself, and his actions are the reactions of disordered sensory ganglia. Such actions in sensorial insanity may have an appearance of design as far as the destruction of an object is concerned, which is quite compatible with their reflex character; but there is no true consciousness, no will; the object has, perhaps, appeared as a devil in the midst of flames, and the whole nervous force has been absorbed in the fury of the convulsive action of the diseased sensory ganglia. When, in place of violent frenzy, delusions follow epilepsy, we see the result of an affection of the ideational reacting centres, the ganglionic cells of the cortical layers of the 'Irrsein bei Kindern,' by Dr. Beckham, 1863. Cases are recorded by Perfect, Haslam, Guislain, Rush, and Ideler.

hemispheres. The homicidal act may, under these circumstances, be dictated by the delusion, or it may be the passionate impulse springing up in a diseased mind to escape, by such act, from dangers which the delusion creates.

III. Cases of insanity are occasionally observed in which an attack of mania suddenly comes on and soon passes away, so that, although there is no epileptic fit, one can scarce avoid looking upon the attack as a sort of epilepsy. Now, this *mania transitoria* may take on the homicidal form. A shoemaker, who was of industrious and sober habits, gets up early one morning to go to work; in a short time his wife is struck with his incoherent talk and wild look. He seizes the knife which he uses in his work, and rushes upon his wife. She escapes, and the neighbours, who came in, with difficulty restrain him. His face is flushed, his pulse frequent and full, his body is covered with perspiration, and his look is wild. In the afternoon he became calm and went to sleep; and in the evening he was quite himself and remembered nothing of what had occurred. Dr. Hill reports the case of a madman who in an access of sudden fury cut the throat of his son, and wounded his wife in several places. He was conscious of his frightful disease, and had requested to be put into confinement; he felt the approach of his attack, and often endeavoured to avoid the fatal effects of them by binding himself. Another patient, after a little previous excitement, such as sometimes precedes an epileptic fit, suddenly sees himself surrounded by enemies, devils, and crocodiles, and, crying out for help, furiously attacks his nearest neighbour whom he mistakes for a ghost; after an hour he becomes calm, and has no further attack. A farmer, who has lived an indolent and intemperate life, is suddenly seized, while lying on the sofa, with the horrible idea of shedding the blood of his wife and children. "I struggled against the idea as long as I could; I shut my eyes, I tried to think of something else, but all in vain; the more I struggled the more powerful became the idea, until, not being able to restrain myself, I ordered them in a voice of thunder to leave the room. If they had refused, or made any opposition, I should certainly have killed them. No language can describe the violence of the frightful thought. Great God! how thankful I am that I am not stained with that crime!" His face was flushed, his eyes sparkled, his pulse was rapid and hard, and his breathing hurried. He willingly submitted to a certain restraint, and the morbid impulse soon disappeared under appropriate treatment. An industrious carpenter, who was rather given to drink, but who was kind to his family, one night, as he lay in bed, felt a strange anguish fall upon him, so that his whole body trembled, and it appeared as if some one said to him, "Thou must immediately kill thy child." As such a frightful thought had never before entered his head, he jumped out of bed, and with clasped hands paced up and down the

room, exclaiming, "Lord God! Lord Jesus! thou must immediately kill thy child!" He then lay down again, and, patting his sleeping child's cheek, said, "Sleep, my little dear, sleep." After he had lain three or four minutes, and the trembling and anguish had again fallen upon him, he heard repeated, in a commanding tone, the words, "Thou must immediately kill thy child!" He could no longer resist, but jumped out of bed, took an axe and struck the child over the head with it several times. When he saw the blood flow he came to himself, laid down the axe, and awakened his eldest daughter, saying, "Letty, get up and call your mother; I have killed little Charley with the axe." He fell into the deepest despair when he reflected on his crime, and could not comprehend how he had come to do the deed.

These three groups might be said to include the acute forms of homicidal insanity; and they seem to justify the conclusion that there exists in some individuals a particular character of nerve element, which might be described as a *neurosis spasmodica*, and which, on the occurrence of certain exciting causes, may manifest itself in (1) epilepsy, (2) sensorial insanity, and (3) mania transitoria, or ideational insanity. The last form may again be (*a*) general, or (*b*) partial, when it has the character of homicidal impulse. In accordance with the generalisation is the fact that causes which may in one person produce epilepsy may in another give rise to insanity.

IV. In insanity in which there has been a hereditary predisposition to the disease, homicidal mania is more likely to occur than where there has been no such taint. This is quite in accordance with the impulsive, or, so to say, instinctive character of the phenomena which characterise hereditary insanity; for what is the signification of hereditary predisposition to insanity? It really implies an innate disposition in the individual to act out of harmony with his relations as a social being; the acquired irregularity of the parent has become the natural infirmity of the offspring, as the acquired habit of the parent animal sometimes becomes the instinct of the offspring. If, then, it were required to indicate the peculiar characters of hereditary insanity, these might be said to be, first, the decided, extravagant, and unaccountable (*quoad* consciousness) nature of the morbid manifestation; and, secondly, an insanity of action without corresponding insanity of thought. Moral insanity, when it occurs as an independent disease, and not as the first stage of general paralysis, almost always occurs as the result of hereditary predisposition. In young children who have committed suicide in consequence of a morbid impulse, there has usually existed a hereditary taint. The hereditary madman, indeed, often gives the idea of a double being—appeal to his consciousness and he seems rational and nowise deranged; but leave him to his own devices, and his unconscious life appears to get the mastery and to impel him to extravagant or violent acts. An

old lady, more than seventy years old, for the most part lies back in an easy chair with eyes closed, and moaning as though in great affliction; she might seem incapable of any exertion; every now and then, however, she suddenly jumps up, without any warning, and rushes upon her daughter with the design of strangling her. When this paroxysm comes on two people can scarcely hold her; but as soon as it is over she sinks down utterly exhausted, and, panting, says, "There! there! I told you; you would not believe how bad I was." Her family is saturated with insanity. In a case of this kind the idea has so great a tension, struggles so for outward realisation, that it appears as an irresistible impulse of which the patient is scarce conscious; her body becomes an organic machine set in destructive motion by the morbid cause; but when the idea has not such a great tension it may abide in consciousness, and then the patient feels the horrible idea, struggles against it, and is miserably afflicted by it. The different relations are, indeed, expressed by the terms impulse and idea; and it is a simple question of the degree of morbid action as to whether the idea shall become uncontrollable. It is not necessary to illustrate further by cases such well recognised form of insanity.

It is desirable, however, plainly to set forth the fact that hereditary taint is a positive defect in the constitution of nerve element, and predisposes, therefore, to any of those forms of nervous disease in which degeneration of nerve element may display itself. In the recent trial of the boy Burton, who suffered from notable hereditary taint, the judge said that "Hatfield's case differed from the present, for there wounds had been received on the head, which were found to have injured the brain." If the judge's knowledge had been equal to his assurance, he would not have been ignorant that a hereditary predisposition to insanity is frequently as injurious to the brain as blows upon the head are. When a youth, like Burton, commits murder quite objectively with the design of being hanged, the act might well suggest inquiry into the hereditary antecedents, even when it is not given in evidence, as it was in his case, that the mother and brother were insane at the time; for it is certain that murder for the express purpose of being hanged is one form in which hereditary insanity displays itself. Indeed, so unaccountable are the impulses which are witnessed in insanity where hereditary taint exists, that those who have had practical experience of such cases are never surprised at any sudden extravagance of action displayed by them. The hereditary taint appears to generate the *neurosis spasmodica*, which, under certain conditions, declares itself in mental convulsion. It should not be forgotten, moreover, that any disorder of nerve element in the parent predisposes to that condition in the child; the epilepsy of one generation is the insanity of the next; and the insanity of the parent, again, the epilepsy of the

child; while it is sometimes observed in families in which the hereditary taint exists, that one member may be afflicted with insanity, another with epilepsy, or some other neurosis, and that another may commit suicide.*

V. Homicidal acts are sometimes committed by those who are insane without there being sufficient relation evident between the diseased ideas and the act. In that form of partial insanity which is designated monomania or hypomania, there is a condition of the whole mind which, when it occurs as the consequence of hereditary taint, or as the first stage of general paralysis, is described as moral insanity. In other words, the manifest disease of one part of the brain has given occasion to a condition of nerve element in the rest of it, such as prepares us for the appearance of unaccountable ideas and impulses. For example, the mother of two children became depressed, and then distrustful, fancying that she was persecuted by imaginary enemies; she was suicidal also, but was put under no restraint. One day, without seeming anywise different from usual, she took one of her children, and beat its head against the floor until it died; she would have done the same with the other child had she not been prevented. She was then sent to an asylum, where she tried to cut out her tongue, beat her head against the wall, and swallowed pieces of glass. After a time, however, she recovered, and could not understand how she had killed her child when she was so fond of it.

There is a relation evident between the delusion and the homicidal act when the melancholic patient kills one whom he believes to be his persecutor. Then there is a cry for his punishment, and he runs the danger of being hanged, as Fowkes recently was hanged. The action appears to be dictated by revenge, and the passion resembling that which may be aroused in a sane mind is assumed to have no greater force than the latter, and to be equally under control by the insane mind. Such is the false conclusion of a subjective psychology. The fact, however, is, that when a positive delusion exists in the mind, the rest of the mind is so far affected that unaccountable impulses spring up without being dictated by the delusion, and impulses which are in relation with the delusion acquire an irresistible force. There may be apparent in consciousness

* Though a distinct group has been made of the cases in which hereditary taint exists, it has only been done for the purpose of laying stress upon the importance of considering the hereditary antecedents in cases of homicidal insanity. In reality most of the cases in this group might be distributed through the other divisions. Still it is a question, whether it might not be desirable to make a distinct group of certain hereditary cases. Thus, there is now, and has been for some time, in the Sussex Asylum, a man in whom no one has been able to detect the slightest intellectual disturbance; Dr. Robertson can, in fact, find no insanity in him; and yet no one will undertake the responsibility of discharging him, because he made a murderous homicidal attack upon his sister before admission, and because he has a strong hereditary taint.

a motive for the act, but the act is utterly disproportionate to the motive; for the disease has, at the same time, increased the force of the impulse and diminished the power of volitional control. A farmer became melancholic and suspicious, at times getting attacks of despair in which he fancied that his children were lost for time and eternity. He believed that a neighbour corrupted his children and servants; but in all other regards he seemed quite rational. One day he took his gun and deliberately shot a servant whom he believed to be in league with his neighbour. He then went to the bedroom of his children, murdered his son, and left his daughter for dead. After that he gave himself up, saying that since he must die for the murder of the servant it was better that his children should be preserved from the seductions of the world and of his neighbour. At the end of a year he died in a state of very evident dementia—a condition which is the natural termination of homicidal insanity, when the halter does not cut short its course. It is an everyday experience again, that melancholy patients who are, for the most part, quiet and dull, and whose delirium seems confined to a certain circle of ideas, do now and then become fearfully excited in consequence of the sudden activity of a certain idea or series of ideas, though why those ideas should become so active passes comprehension.

In cases of dementia sudden and unaccountable impulses to violence are not unfrequently witnessed. An utterly demented patient, who usually muttered to himself, but never uttered an intelligible sentence, used every now and then to make a desperate attempt on the life of an attendant or another patient, so that all who came in contact with him had the greatest fear of him. It was precisely the same with a gentle, amiable, demented young lady, who was usually the favorite of every one. Another woman, who was quite demented, would sometimes, without apparent cause, begin stamping with her feet and shrieking fearfully, while her whole body was in a paroxysm of agitation. The seizure either issued in a murderous attack on some one, or continued for some minutes and then passed off.

The previous generalisation may then be extended so far as this, that the *neurosis spasmodica* may accompany chronic insanity, especially that partial form in which there are delusions of suspicion, so that insane acts of violence occur without recognisable relation to the morbid mental manifestation. The relation really does exist in the sphere of unconscious mental action, in the brain as an organ of organic life. We see, then, how just Esquirol was when he stated "moral alienation to be the proper characteristic of mental derangement," and how mistaken Lord Erskine was, as far as science was concerned, when he laid it down that "to deliver a lunatic from responsibility to criminal justice, the relation between the crime and the act should be apparent."

VI. The homicidal propensity may exist in a chronic form and itself constitute the disease. The exciting cause may then be any of those moral or physical causes which produce insanity. A woman becomes depressed and despondent in consequence of great mental anxiety, and applies for medical aid because of a strong and almost irresistible impulse to destroy her infant. The first cases of homicidal insanity described seem to have been of this kind. Etmüller was the first to name it *melancholia sine delirio*, and he cited in illustration two observations of Platner, one of which refers to a mother who had often been tormented with the desire of killing her child.

A morbid state of some part of the organism may be the cause of a mental disturbance out of which the homicidal propensity springs. Irregularities of menstruation, as recognised causes of nervous disorder, may act on different parts of the nervous system in different persons, in one giving rise to hysterical convulsions or hysterical mania, in another to epilepsy, and in another to suicidal or homicidal impulse. A woman who was in the deepest despair because she was afflicted with the thought of murdering her children, and who frequently ran up and down stairs so as to endeavour to drive away the idea by motion and exhaustion, perfectly recovered on the return of her menses. "We have, amongst others," says Dagonet, "observed a patient who was seized at each menstrual period with violent impulses. Under the influence of this disposition she had killed her three children a short time before her arrival at Stephansfeld." Morbid impulses notably spring up during pregnancy.

As nothing is more exhausting to the nervous system than habits of self-abuse or of sexual excess, it is no wonder that the degeneration of nerve element thereby produced sometimes manifests itself in homicidal impulse. Lallemand relates cases of spermatorrhœa in which the patient was afflicted with a painful impulse to suicidal and homicidal acts. When epilepsy is produced by sexual excess no one doubts that it is a disease; when the same cause produces homicidal impulse clever theorists can see no disease.

In other cases the morbid idea may be suggested from without, and take complete possession of a feeble mind. A girl invites her friend to take coffee with her, and while the latter sleeps from weariness, she takes a knife and effectually kills her; whilst young she had witnessed an execution of a woman at Dresden, and had been much impressed with the gloomy pomp of the culprit's last procession to the scaffold. The idea of ending her life in that way never left her, but she struggled against it until another recent execution again acted upon her imagination. Her idea then became a resolution, and one of her best friends was the victim. After the trial of Henriette Cornier, which made such a sensation in France, Marc and Esquirol were both consulted by women who were tor-

nented with the impulse to kill their own children. Such facts are quite in accordance with physiological observation of idea as an independent cause of movement; in hypnotism and electro-biology the body of the individual operated upon becomes a machine governed by the idea which the operator suggests. He who would judge of insanity by the revelations of a subjective psychology, should rightly make his generalisations from his dreams. When he can explain his dreams by the principles of his psychology, then he may have some hope of applying these successfully to the phenomena of the unsound mind.

The case reported at length by Dr. Skae, in the Report of the Morningside Asylum for 1850, of a female who was tormented by "a simple abstract desire to kill, or rather, for it took a specific form, to strangle," without any disorder of her intellectual powers, and who "deplored, in piteous terms, the horrible propensity under which she laboured," may be referred to as an excellent example of persistent chronic homicidal impulse.

Because in this chronic form the morbid impulse is often resistible, it would be very unjust to argue that it might always be resisted. As a chronic disease may become acute, so the morbid idea may become irresistible; the question is as to the degree of disease, and the morbid activity which under conditions arises may, under certain conditions, become irresistible. Those who, arguing from the self-consciousness of a sound mind, maintain that the impulse might always be controlled, are logically bound, if they cared about being logical, to show that the madhouse is such a desirable haven, or the scaffold such an attractive outlook, as to furnish a motive strong enough to make murder the means of obtaining such joys. The conscious action of the sound mind is the correlate of the motive; what, then, on the supposition that she is of sound mind, is the motive of the wretched mother who kills her child which she loves tenderly? But if she is of unsound mind, then there is no necessity to show a motive; for the characteristic of unsoundness of mind is the loss of volitional control over the thoughts, in other words, the reflex involuntary action of the brain. The connection between cause and effect lies in the unconscious organic activity of the brain.

VII. The earliest actions of infancy we have seen to be reflex; to the reflex acts soon succeed sensational acts, and upon these follows ideational activity. Most of the actions of childhood may be observed to be prompted by ideas; and, at any rate, the course of development is through reflex, sensational, and ideational, up to volitional activity. Consequently some idiots, in whom there has been an early arrest of cerebral development, scarce exhibit more than reflex and sensational activity, while others, a little higher in the scale of life, are capable of a few ideas which prompt their actions.

An idiot sees a butcher stick a sheep, and forthwith goes and sticks a man after the same fashion. The passions which arise in connection with their simple ideas are uncontrollable because there is no will to control them; it is with them as it is with the animal in which cerebral development has been arrested short of the appearance of will in its true sense. It is evidently impossible to say what degree of stupidity shall render any one irresponsible for his acts; and cases difficult to decide upon must occur. But it is certain that there are some who with no notable intellectual deficiency are, from the want of a good education, or from the influences of a bad education and inheritance, genuine moral idiots. Though they may be brayed in the mortar of the severest penal justice, yet will not their vice depart from them. In estimating the responsibility of such, as criminals, the condition of their development should rightly be kept in mind. Pinel relates the case of an only son who was brought up by a weak-minded mother, who was indulgent to all his humours. The violence of his inclinations increased with his years, and as he had plenty of money, all impediments to the indulgence of his passions were removed. If he met with any resistance he became excited and furious, so that he made violent attacks upon the object of his anger, and was continually in quarrels. If it was an animal that he was enraged at, a dog, a horse, or a sheep, he immediately killed it; if he took part in any festival, he was sure to get into a scuffle. On the other hand, when calm he was perfectly rational; and he managed his large property with intelligence, and was benevolent to the poor. For a long time wounds, lawsuits, fines, were the results of his passions; but one day being enraged with a woman who had abused him he threw her into a well. After that he was shut up in the Bicêtre.

VIII. Lastly, those cases may be grouped together in which the homicidal act is done in consequence of a delusion. It may be that the individual believes that God wishes to try him as he tried Abraham, or that he has a commission to regenerate the world by the baptism of blood, or that he acts under some other delusion. The connection between the delusion and the act is sufficiently apparent to enable the law to admit him as irresponsible. Nevertheless, some of these homicidal maniacs, who act under a delusion, know well enough the difference between right and wrong, and can foresee the consequences of the act, so that, according to the legal test of responsibility, they should rightly be hanged. Few, indeed, are the insane, and far gone those few, who do not know the difference between right and wrong, and who are not able to foresee the consequences of their acts.

The physician who studies insanity as a disease finds, then, that he has mainly to do with the reflex action of the spinal cord, of the sensory ganglia, and of the ganglionic cells of the cerebral hemispheres, as

causes of the morbid phenomena. There may be a consciousness of the reflex actions of these different reacting centres, and yet an inability to resist them, as there is notably a consciousness of the reflex action of the spinal cord, with an inability to resist it. By an act of the will a person may prevent the involuntary movement of his limbs when the soles of his feet are tickled, but the strongest-minded mortal could not prevent spasms of his limbs on the application of a stimulus if the excitability of the cord were increased by a dose of strychnia. A similar condition of the ganglionic cells which minister to sensation or to idea may be brought about by physical causes, and an idea or impulse, of which there is consciousness, may then become uncontrollable. How, then, can the physician admit the legal test of responsibility? The responsibility of the individual is *not in relation to consciousness, but in relation to power of volitional control*; and when nerve-activity of a lower kind than will-action exists, that is, *pro tanto*, a diminution of volitional power. When the morbid idea or impulse becomes irresistible, for the time being there is no will—the idea does not undergo the upward transformation into will. The disappearance of the tension of idea is the necessary condition of the full reappearance of will; or, to sum the matter up in one proposition, the principle of the conservation of force is strictly true of every form of mental activity.

Those who have faith in human nature must needs regret the popular outburst of exultation which sometimes occurs when an unfortunate lunatic has the life strangled out of him; but those who with scientific calmness observe man in all his relations, who, regardless of the professions which he makes, study him as he actually exhibits himself, will be nowise surprised at this howling outbreak of the animal in him.* If man were the moral being which he professes to be, he would surely look on criminals even rather in sorrow than in anger, and in place of punishment would speak only of protection. At any rate, much malignant abuse by anonymous writers paid to excite popular passion might be spared if the criminal were allowed to pass in silence to his fate, until he who was without sin should cast the first stone. Although, however, man's aspirations are heavenwards, his actual relations are too plainly those of an animal amongst animals, so that it is not surprising that the combination of brutes to kill an offending brute, which is witnessed sometimes amongst the lower animals, should be exhibited also among mankind.†

* Witness the wild exultation of the 'Saturday Review,' when the lunatics Fowkes and Burton were sentenced to be hanged. A wild Indian flourishing his bloody scalping-knife could not have done better. The 'Times,' in order to excite popular passion, spoke of the brutality of this young man of 20 (Burton). He was a youth of 18.

† References to the following works, from which some cases have been selected