

murder be the result of insane impulse, this may be granted, but that, we should fancy, few would be willing to concede. We have all along spoken with a full knowledge of Bordier's crime; but our direct statements have been met by a series of generalities. We here conclude the subject. Now that we have again stated the plain unvarnished facts of the case, we leave sensible men to judge for themselves. Our opinion has already been given.

The Alton Murder.

The Alton murderer certainly did no credit to his art. His crime was conceived without ingenuity, and executed in the coarsest manner; the only remarkable features in it being its simplicity and atrocity. On a fine afternoon a clerk in a solicitor's office takes a walk outside the town; he sees some children playing in a field by the roadside; one of these, a lively little girl, between eight and nine years of age, he persuades to go with him into an adjoining hop-garden, and the others he gets rid of by giving them a few halfpennies to go home. In a little while he is met walking home alone, and he returns to his office, where he makes an entry in his diary. But what has become of the little girl? No one has seen her since she was taken from her playfellows into the hop-field. Her parents become alarmed; they arouse their neighbours, and an anxious search is made for the missing child. It is ascertained that she was last seen on her way to the hop-field, and when the searchers hurriedly proceed there, they find the dismembered fragments of her body scattered here and there. A foot is in one place, a hand in another, the heart and the eyes are picked up after a long search; and some parts of the body cannot be found at all. The poor child had clearly been murdered, and her body cut into pieces; but what she underwent before she was butchered may be suspected but cannot be discovered, because the "vagina was missing." Suspicion fell directly upon the prisoner, and he was arrested. In his desk was found a diary, and in the diary the following entry just made: "Killed a little girl: it was fine and hot." Such are the main facts, briefly told, of the murder; it is not surprising that they excited horror and disgust in the public mind, and that the prisoner was denounced as a brutal and unnatural scoundrel, for whom, if he were found guilty, hanging was too good.

Emancipating ourselves from the natural feeling of indignation, let us look at the matter, however, from a purely scientific point of view, in order to draw any lesson that may be procurable from it in that light. In the first place, it is a libel on the beasts to call such a crime brutal—brutes do not violate and murder one another in that way; the crime is essentially and exclusively human. Men are very ready to claim their superiority of virtue and intelligence over

other animals ; let us not ignore our pre-eminence in vice also. In the second place, to call such a crime unnatural is not to take it out of the domain of natural law. That the murderer was a monstrosity may be admitted, but monstrosities are not self-created, they must have their necessary antecedents in the order of events ; not casualty but causality governs them, the universe, and their appearance in it. There is but one answer to the question, so strikingly put by the engraver Blake in his little poem addressed to the tiger—

“ Did He smile his work to see ?
Did He who made the lamb make thee ? ”

To any one who has really studied the forms and laws of human degeneracy, so far as these are known, the features of the Alton murder could not fail to excite a suspicion, if not to beget a conviction, that there was some taint of madness in the blood of the murderer. He was plainly an instinctive criminal: the impulsive character of the crime, the calm ferocity of it, the savage mutilation of the victim, and the placid equanimity of the murderer immediately after he had supped so full of horrors—all these indicate a bad organization, a nature to which horrors were congenial, whose affinities were devilward. “ Killed a little girl ; it was fine and hot.” He puts down the fact as indifferently as he might have done if he had just bathed in the river instead of bathing his murderous hands in a little girl’s blood. It is not possible, we fear, to call him actually insane, unless we are content to give up all exact notions of what insanity is ; but there can be little doubt that, had his life been prolonged, he would have become insane. The evidence at the trial showed that a near relative of his father was in confinement suffering from homicidal mania, and that his father had had an attack of acute mania. Moreover, it was proved in evidence by independent witnesses that he himself had been unlike other people, that he had been prone to weep frequently without evident reason, that he had exhibited singular caprices of conduct, and that it had been necessary to watch him from the fear that he might commit suicide. These testimonies of an insane temperament were not sufficient to stay the course of human justice ; this falls on the sinner often with indiscriminating force, taking no thought of opportunities and of that worst of all tyrannies, the tyranny of a bad organization. But it is not so above ; “ there the action lies in its true nature ; ” and it may well be that many sorrowing murderers shall come from the east and the west and find entrance into the kingdom of the redeemed, when some who have, with exultant homicidal yell, rejoiced over their fate on earth, are cast out into outer darkness.