

and "temporary insanity," according to Justice Darling (appeal of Ethel Harding, 1908), "is not known to English law."

The verdict of "suicide whilst temporarily insane" therefore has no definite legal meaning or recognition, is purely a "lay" expression, and conveys a lay and not a legal meaning, which is, that the self-killing was the outcome of mental disorder.

The legal assumption that self-killing is crime until it has been proved to be the contrary would seem to err more often than the opposite assumption, and justice would seem to be most frequently arrived at in the popular verdict, in its popular meaning, of suicide whilst of unsound mind.

The difficulty of arriving at the truth in these cases suggests that the investigation of the actual condition of the mind of the suicide should be more fully inquired into by the coroner's court than has been the practice hitherto.

This brief presentment of the subject is, of course, by no means exhaustive, and is intended to draw the discussion and lead to its full consideration by the members of the Association.

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#### *Temporary Insanity.*

In the preceding "occasional" on suicide, Mr. Justice Darling's pronouncement that "*temporary insanity* is not known to English law" is quoted from the report of the appeal of Ethel Harding in 1908. The plea for the accused woman was that whilst temporarily insane she had murdered her child.

In Tuke's *Dictionary of Psychological Medicine* are articles on evanescent, ephemeral insanity, mania and melancholia transitoria, etc., describing various forms of insanity, from a variety of causes, too familiar to need recapitulation, with references to the writings on those subjects from nearly every alienist of repute in every country. Numerous cases of insanity lasting only a brief period are recorded with exact detail in psychiatric literature, and probably every living alienist could describe cases of this kind from his personal experience. Even from classical times we have the saying, "*Ira furor brevis est.*" Many cases of unsuccessfully attempted suicide give evidence in the same direction. In spite of all this overwhelming evidence of insanity, enduring from a few minutes to a few hours only, an eminent judge makes the above assertion.

Such an astounding failure to recognise facts at once suggests the inquiry "are things what they seem," or whether to the law, as to Jowett, what it "does not know is not knowledge." Such an attitude would be amusing but for the serious fact that the lives of human beings hang on this dictum. This decision, however, will be quoted increasingly in such cases unless some action can be taken, by an outside influence, to bring the legal view into accordance with the facts of everyday life.

The Medico-Psychological Association, in this and some similar matters, would be performing an appropriate function in drawing the attention of the Lord Chancellor to the actual facts. If that functionary cannot be brought to move, it is a question whether the Legislature should not be appealed to with a view of stimulating or directing the legal mind.

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*Asylum Officers' Superannuation Bill.*

This Bill passed its second reading without discussion late on Thursday night, the 1st inst., and on the motion of Sir William Collins was referred to a Select Committee.

A copy of the Bill appears in this number of the Journal (see p. 393), and appended thereto are the amendments which have been suggested at a special meeting of the Parliamentary Committee of the Medico-Psychological Association.

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**Part II.—Reviews.**

*Mental Pathology and Normal Psychology.* By GUSTAV STÖRRING, Dr. Phil. et Med. Translated by Thomas Loveday, M.A. London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co. 1907. Pp. 298.

This work consists of a series of twenty-five lectures delivered originally by Prof. Störring at the University of Leipzig. The particular purpose of these lectures is to trace the significance of mental pathology in the elucidation of various problems in normal psychology, and they are therefore representative of a method of investigation which is essentially of recent development, and which promises to be of the greatest utility. It is being increasingly recognised that no arbitrary distinction can be drawn between the phenomena of normal and abnormal psychology, and that it is necessary for the psychologist and psychiatrist to work in combination if progress is to be made.