

It is also remarkable and important to notice that there has been a great decline in the *male* population in three out of these four counties. Thus in Norfolk there are 4,642 *males* less than in 1851; in Cambs. 938 less; and in Hants 616 less than in 1851; while in Suffolk, where the increase is only at half the normal rate for the whole country, the males have increased to 4,256 since 1851, whereas the females amounted to 7,008—nearly double. It is clear, therefore, that the most important element in the population has declined, and this fact has a great influence on the fate of the more helpless. The infirm and lunatic are sure to remain as a greater burden, and to swell the proportion unduly. Probably the explanation is to be found in the low wages and the tendency to migrate on the part of the younger and able-bodied men, but anyhow the fact is worth notice.

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#### *Homicidal Impulse.*

In the Annual Report of the Suffolk Lunatic Asylum, Dr. Kirkman mentions an event which shows how impossible it is to foretell, and how difficult to guard completely against, the desperate and suddenly rising impulses of insanity. Familiarity with the insane, under the modern humane system of treatment, tends perhaps to make us forget what a constant danger they are, and how little they are really to be depended upon.

It may be well to introduce here the notice of a patient who was admitted from a recent seizure of suicidal melancholia. It was a first attack of only six days' duration. He was placed in an associated dormitory, watched over by the head attendant, ever close to his room. As the Assistant Medical Officer, Dr. Harris, was passing through the wards at twelve o'clock at night, the man suddenly jumped up from his bed, broke through a glazed door, seized him violently by the throat, and nearly succeeded in doing him serious injury. The act was impulsive, but sufficiently alarming to un-nerve any man; and if Dr. Harris had not possessed more than ordinary presence of mind, such as it is difficult to imagine untutored attendants to possess, he might have received injuries which would have embittered his future life.

Another case of a similar nature, though attended by more terrible results, occurred early in March (1872) at the Surrey County Asylum (Tooting). A male patient, Edmund Dainty,

was employed with five others in filling the coal sacks one morning, and being left with only one of the patients for a few minutes, he murdered his unfortunate companion with a coal shovel. The coal porter was met by the patient, who said, "I have killed Mountain, sir." The patient, Dainty, voluntarily said that "something came over him, and that he was obliged to kill Mountain." Dr. Biggs said at the police inquiry that the patient was admitted into Somerset Asylum in 1869, and transferred to Surrey, and that he was the subject of dementia, and liable to occasional impulses of violence.

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## PART II.—REVIEWS.

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*The Science and Practice of Medicine.* By WILLIAM AITKEN, M.D. Edin. 6th edition. In two volumes. London: Griffin and Co., 1872.

The issue of a sixth edition of Dr. Aitken's well-known work is a sufficient testimony of the appreciation which it has received. This edition has been carefully revised, many portions have been re-written, and additions have been made which have swelled the second volume to an almost unwieldy bulk. It may be well for the author to consider whether, in the next edition, which is pretty sure to be soon called for, addition of matter may not properly be accompanied by condensation of bulk. We certainly think that a re-digestion of some of the articles, which have progressively grown by accretion, may be advantageously made. The conscientious practice adopted of giving the opinion of different authorities, with the insertion of their names in brackets, gives a jerky character to the style, and by no means improves the artistic look of an article—gives it, indeed, a scissor-and-paste appearance. Moreover, by the adoption of such a system, an article is very apt to increase in length out of proportion to its value. It is quite right, of course, that merit should be given to whom merit is due, and laudable in the author to be anxious to do so, but a few references in a foot-note, or at the end of an article, would suffice for that in most cases, an exception being made in any special case when the authority