

(3) Eighteen men and 10 women would be quiet, steady, and contented workers in an institution. Some of these would, of course, be merely "hewers of wood and drawers of water," but a fair proportion could be trained to do useful and remunerative work.

(4) Two men and 6 women would work fairly well under very tactful management; but their great irritability of temper and the marked instability of their characters would make them a disturbing factor in any institution. They would require to be kept in a separate class.

(5) Ten of the men are idle, "work-shy" vagrants. No training would ever get them into habits of work. Something might perhaps be done by placing them under less comfortable conditions than the other classes, and making extra luxuries the reward of a certain amount of work.

I am indebted to the Prison Commissioners for permission to publish these notes, and I would also express my thanks to Mr. G. J. Rons and Mr. W. J. Smith, of Stafford Prison, for their assistance in preparing some of the statistics.

*Suicide among Indian Convicts under Transportation.*

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THE question of suicide is one that has exercised the minds of most persons at one time or another, as cases are of such common occurrence, and present such a variety of features, that anyone interested in present-day social conditions cannot fail to give the matter some amount of consideration.

The relative frequency of this offence among certain communities in Europe has been rightly or wrongly taken as pointing to some defect in the conditions of life of the people among whom it occurs. In attempting, however, to arrive at the causation or circumstances that conduce to bring about an unusual tendency to suicide on the part of certain peoples, it becomes evident that the problem is by no means easy of solution. It is but natural to suppose that such conditions as poverty, overcrowding, bad sanitation, and such-like adverse circumstances, affecting as they do the masses of the population,

also other conditions, such as competition due to over-population, resulting in an insufficient wage-earning power, and a comparatively insufficient food supply, such as obtains especially at times when trade is bad among densely populated centres, such as the large manufacturing towns in Europe, would undoubtedly lead to an increase in the number of suicides, and that those nations in which these conditions were of most frequent occurrence would be the ones in which the suicide figure would be higher than in others in which such conditions were less common. Again that certain other factors, such, for instance, as compulsory military service, or the absence of adequate moral instruction in the education systems of different nations, might have some effect in this direction. Such circumstances, however, curiously enough, do not seem to be accountable for the disparity that prevails among the different peoples as regards this tendency to suicide. For instance, it is very much more common in Denmark than in England, whereas one might have expected the reverse. The distress and want that prevails at times in the densely populated commercial centres in Britain, the extent to which the people are addicted to the use of alcohol, too, with all its attendant harmful results, the competition in trade, and worry and anxiety experienced in providing for the needs of families, might well be expected to cause a higher suicide rate in places where they occur than elsewhere where the conditions of life are simpler and more favourable. But neither the above-mentioned conditions nor any form of religion, nor vexatious laws, nor heavy taxation, nor national temperament, appear in themselves to have any direct effect on the number of suicides that occur in the different European States. Why should it be so high in Denmark and Saxony, for instance, while low in England and Italy? Reasons there must be, but they are not apparent, and the matter is a very difficult one to explain. It is strongly urged by some that a want of adequate moral instruction in elementary schools is a factor that will raise the suicide rate in countries where it obtains. This, however, is not certain.

As regards Eastern people, it has always been recognised as common among the Mongolian races, especially in Japan. It is, moreover, stated that in the year 1910, this country showed a great increase in suicides, there having been no

less than 10,000, which high figure is attributed to the stress of life resulting from the war with its subsequent exorbitant taxation: this is a possible cause for the increase, but it must be remembered that in that country suicide has never apparently been regarded as a crime, both social and religious, as is the case in the west.

As regards India, the case is different from that of Japan and China, and is more in accordance with what is seen in western countries. Suicide is viewed with abhorrence by the Hindoo population, and the ordinary rites corresponding with burial ceremonies are denied in such cases. Of recent years, it seems, a more lenient view has been taken in many cases, the argument used being the usual one, *viz.*, that the act was done during a fit of insanity. The reason for this, again, is the same as in other places—consideration for the feelings of the relatives of the deceased. Still, the religious view remains unshaken, and in a place like India, where the masses of the people are strictly bound by religious teaching, this may be a great factor in keeping down the number of persons taking their own lives.

In the case of the Mahomedan population also a similar view is taken regarding suicide; as to whether the spiritual penalties are still greater than in the case of Hindoos it is difficult to form an opinion. It is quite possible that they may be—as it would appear that among convicts at any rate, Mahomedans are less prone to suicide than are Hindoos—though it is quite possible that religious principles have but little to do with this.

#### *Suicides among Convicts.*

During the last ten years there have been sixty-five instances of suicide among the convicts, which gives a yearly rate per mille of .504. Among the numerous varieties of labour that convicts are called upon to perform, it is but natural that some are of a much more arduous nature than others, and are, moreover, carried on in more out-of-the-way places, where there is less to interest the convict than in the more crowded places near the headquarters station where most of the convicts are. Cases of suicide, however, are not more often met with in these parts than elsewhere, so that extra hard work in association does not seem prejudicial in this respect. One factor, however, stands out quite apart from the rest, namely

the Cellular Jail. This jail, as its name denotes, consists entirely of cells, and everyone incarcerated in it is in solitary confinement. It is the only jail of its kind in the Andamans. It is small, capacity 700, and is used for different purposes as regards classes of convicts. In accordance with the penal system now in vogue, every convict who comes into transportation has to go to this jail for six months, as a probationary period, which commences directly the few days' quarantine undergone on leaving the convict ship are over. There are on an average some 700 men admitted in this way yearly. They are drafted out into the Settlement for labour, at the end of six months in jail, if their conduct has been good.

Another class imprisoned there are convicts of any grade who misbehave outside. They get sentences of imprisonment and go to jail to serve them, leaving the gangs or the work they were employed on outside for the time being.

It is the above-mentioned new arrivals in the Cellular Jail that give a much higher proportion of suicides than the rest of the convicts. During the six years that this jail has been in existence, it is found that suicide was in proportion 6·4 times as common among this class of men than among the rest. This is probably due, partly at any rate, to remorse and acute mental depression, the solitary nature of the confinement inducing a melancholic frame of mind in persons who have before them a life sentence of banishment, and who have not had time or opportunity of learning the actual leniency of the system when once the six months' probation in jail is over, take a pessimistic view of things, and decide that the trouble is greater than can be borne.

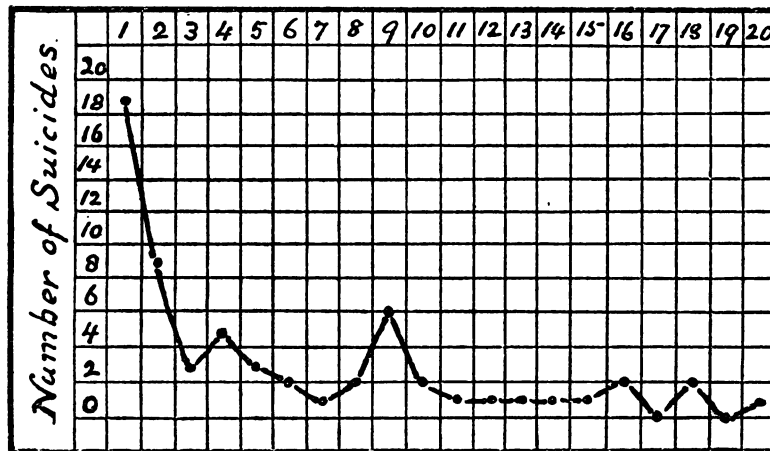
The following chart shows the incidence of suicide for a period of ten years,—1902 to 1911,—in relation to length of sentence, the notable feature being the much more marked prevalence during the first year or eighteen months of transportation, before there has been time for the mind to get rid of its ideas of home and relations, and to adapt itself to the new conditions.

It will be noticed that no less than 43·7 *per cent.* of all suicides occurred within the first two years of transportation, and the usual method was by hanging (90 *per cent.*) which is explainable by its being the most easy to perform for new arrivals, who during the first year or so do not work in boats or near the sea.

The figure for suicide in the Andamans is '504 per mille. How does this compare with the Indian rate? During the year 1909 there were 881 cases of male suicides in the Lower Provinces of Bengal, and it appeared doubtful whether these were all genuine suicides. That is to say, the figure is a maximum one. Taking the male population of this province as 27,500,000, we obtain a figure of '030 per mille, *i.e.*, the Andaman rate is 16·8 times higher than that of Bengal

*Chart showing Greater Liability to Suicide of New Arrivals.*

Year of sentence in which the cases occurred.



*Class of Criminals most prone to Suicide.*

The majority of those committing suicide had been sentenced under Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code—Murderers. They outnumbered the others by as much as 5 to 1. When it is noted that the proportional strength of murderers in the convict population is only some 59 *per cent.*, or 1·4 to 1, it will be seen that those most prone to suicide are murderers, and that this tendency is 3·5 times as strong among this class as among the rest.

*Racial Influences.*

Taking the three principle races present, *viz.*, Burmese, Hindoos and Mahomedans, the proportional numbers are 1, 18, and 3·8, Burmese being least and Hindoos most numerous :

1, 2·5, and 29, however, is the proportion for those of these races who commit suicide, from which it will be observed that the Burman is less likely and the Hindoo very much more likely to commit suicide than their proportionate numbers in the community would lead one to expect.<sup>(1)</sup> Adequate explanation as to this marked difference between the races is difficult to arrive at; whatever may be the reasons, the discrepancy cannot but be regarded as a very remarkable one.

The above remarks would indicate, then, that there are various conditions prevailing among the convicts which have their bearing on the suicide rate, and they may be stated as follows :

(1) Adverse circumstances : These are of a penal nature, and include transportation, prison discipline, hard labour, etc., and apply equally to all convicts.

(2) Some want of virility, stamina, or self-confidence, in the temperament of certain races of people—compare, for instance, Hindoos with Mahomedans. The latter have always shown themselves more masterful, active and self-reliant, the Hindoo temperament being of a more submissive and docile nature, and one it seems that, as far as suicide is concerned, is less able to withstand the stress of the initial stage of transportation.

(3) Youth : A period of life not far removed from that of childhood, during which the mental state is apt at times to be one of extremes, either of considerable optimism and self-confidence, or of a correspondingly deep depression, and giving up of hope in the future. The mental balance of the adolescent is more easily disturbed, especially in neurasthenic subjects. There is none of the experience of life to assist such persons with the knowledge that better things may be in store for them. The mind becomes beset by a deep melancholy, resulting from the realisation of the punishment before them, and in the absence of controlling and steadying influences an impulsive act of suicide may take place.

(4) A fourth factor, the most important of all, has now to be considered, *viz.*, a psychasthenic tendency. It will be admitted that there is something very contrary to the dictates of Nature in deliberate self-destruction in the case of a young man, and it is with young men that we are dealing. They are not the older persons who in western countries frequently commit suicide, having nothing further to live for, and as a desirable release

from the worries and troubles of life. Such cases are often much more easy to understand; there is more reason about them, and less suspicion of any deficiency in the mental condition. Cases such as these belong to a different type from convict cases; the same may be said of those suicides that occur in countries where under certain circumstances suicide becomes an honourable deed, in which the individual is called upon to sacrifice himself for the good name of his family. The individuals concerned are in such cases apparently perfectly sane people, and taking into consideration the social conditions under which they live, the act of suicide becomes easily understandable.

Let us return, however, to the convict type of suicide, which belongs to quite a different category. Are we justified in going a step further and saying that this factor we are considering is more than a psychasthenic one, and that it is indeed of a psychopathic nature, and that the familiar expression, "suicide whilst of unsound mind," is admissible in our cases? Circumstances would point distinctly in favour of such a verdict—at any rate as concerns the class of case with which we are dealing.

The following considerations bring out this point pretty clearly:—

Murderers are much more liable to commit suicide than are other classes of convicts; the number that do so are out of all proportion to their relative strength in the convict population. A man who has committed murder is, in fact, three and a half times more likely to take his life than any other convict would be.

There is, moreover, another very significant fact that must be stated concerning these murderers, *viz.*, that they are the men from whom a disproportionately large number of convict lunatics come. The asylum, indeed, contains as many as 92 *per cent.* of murderers, a figure which is 33 *per cent.* above their normal proportion in the population. It appears from this that the average murderer is a much more erratic person as regards his mental qualities than is the dacoit or habitual thief.

Insanity and suicide would thus appear to be very closely related; and if we say that most of the convict suicides are committed whilst of unsound mind we shall probably be correct in the vast majority of instances.

*Female Convicts.*

No reference has been made hitherto to the case of the women convicts, the figures and details given above having been obtained from statistics affecting the men only ; as regards the women there is less to be said, as the numbers are comparatively small, and the records are incomplete. Males outnumber females in the Settlement by some 20 to 1, so that such figures as are obtainable for the latter are necessarily small, and consequently of less value.

During the past five years there have been five attempted suicides in the Female Jail : it must be explained that prisoners here live in association, which probably accounted for the detection of the cases before life became extinct. The average number of female prisoners is 720 ; about half this number live outside as the wives of Self-supporter convicts in the villages. There have been no cases of suicide or attempted suicide among these village women ; such as have occurred have all taken place in the jail, and are attributable to punishments for misbehaviour. None of them were new arrivals and the attempted suicide-rate for the Jail is 2·76 per mille, which is extremely high. Too much importance should not, however, be assigned to this figure for the reasons above mentioned.

It may be here noted that in one respect there is a marked difference between India and western countries as regards suicide, *viz.*, in the sex-prevalence more men commit suicide in the West, the women numbering only some 20 *per cent.*, while in India the reverse is seen, the most recent figures showing that  $2\frac{1}{2}$  times as many women take their lives as men.

The jail figures, then, such as they are, are in accordance with this greater tendency to suicide among Indian women.

All the attempted suicides above mentioned were cases of Hindoo women—here again is seen the same peculiarity as was remarked in the case of the male convicts.

Such, then, are the conditions under which suicide occurs in the Andamans. As regards its incidence, it is 16·8 times as common as in India (Bengal). This figure may be considered a high one, but perhaps not markedly so, when one considers the dangerous and desperate dacoits, and various types of murderers undergoing transportation.

In this connection, however, it is necessary to mention that



the penal system in force is of a remarkably lenient nature, and quite distinct from such as prevails in Indian prisons ; and it may be taken as pretty certain that in this fact is to be found the explanation as to why suicide is not of more frequent occurrence than it actually is among the convict population of these islands.

(<sup>1</sup>) The author is difficult to follow here.—Ed.

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### Clinical Notes and Cases.

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*Criminal Types in a County Asylum.* By JOHN R. LORD, M.B., Medical Superintendent of Horton Asylum, Epsom. With a Summary of Eighty-nine Cases by G. N. BARTLETT, M.B., Assistant Medical Officer, Horton Asylum, Epsom, Surrey.

THE prime importance of classification of patients in asylums with a view to securing the best results of treatment cannot be denied. By classification is meant, not a rigid division of patients strictly according to their form of mental disorder, but rather a selective grouping of patients in wards and villas, where the amount of supervision, the nature of treatment, the extent of freedom and the general environment is best calculated to promote recovery, to discourage mental excitement, and to secure contentment and the highest possible standard of conduct in each case.

No effort is ever spared to prevent patients having an evil effect, one on another. Those whose residence in the asylum will be probably only of limited duration, as far as structural arrangements will permit, are kept apart from undesirables and institutionised chronics, particularly from those with depraved habits and tastes. Thus, many patients are discharged without ever acquiring much knowledge of asylum life proper, having resided mainly or entirely in the acute hospitals and convalescent villas.

Although it is a well acknowledged fact that insane patients are not, as a rule, prone to fraternise—the tendency being for each patient to live in a little world of his own—it is the experience