THE FOOL-KILLER.

A Murderous Suggestion in a State Medical Society—Dr. Leffman's Paper on the Propriety of Killing Idiots and Monstrosities—Why Should the Unhappy Live?

A discussion, which occurred recently at a meeting of a State Medical Society—not more that 472 miles from New York—has not received the attention it justly deserves. The subject under consideration is one which is of grave importance to individuals and the general public, but it is one, also, which is generally handled, if at all, "with gloves." The learned Dr. Leffman, who read a paper at the meeting in question, handled it without gloves. In the present examination of its merits, it is designed to cover the field which the question opens, even to a fuller extent than Dr. Leffman. Like quarantine, disinfection and cremation, this subject should be treated regardless of individual opinion or prejudice, and in the interest of the race in general.

"IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?"

The frequently asked conundrum concerning the desirability of living can surely be answered easily and accurately with regard to the class of unfortunates considered in Dr. Leffman's paper. These were idiots and monsters, or monstrosities, and certainly there can be no reason for supposing that life to them is worth living. In the instance of the imbecile or idiotic, we can hardly say that they know they are alive, and they could not possibly miss what they do not know that they possess. Now Dr. Leffman (who appears to be an amiable theatrical benefactor of his species) suggests the propriety of putting these unhappy creatures out of their misery and their doubt by killing them. Said he: "Within reasonable bounds it would be wise end justifiable to remove from life the classes of persons mentioned." But the application of this humane suggestion would depend for its general extension upon the definition given to the words "within reasonable bounds." Where would we draw the line? Who would be the judge and what would be his standard? These are serious questions to entertain, in view of the possibility of adopting Dr. Leffman's suggestion, which, says the Baltimore *Herald*, "shows that scientific men are year by year becoming more bold and fearless."

HOW ABOUT IDIOTS?

Now, taking the different classes mentioned as ripe for killing, let us begin with idiots. Difficulties stare us in the face at once. There are so many different opinions with regard to idiots. The schoolmaster characterizes the dunce of a class as an "idiot," yet such often grow into wisdom and capacity, become barkeepers, aldermen, prizefighters, repeaters, Congressmen—in fact, an honor to any community. What would not the country lose if they were cut off in their youth—under the dictum of the schoolmaster, who is supposed to know more about them than anybody else? Then there is the dude Now there are not wanting plenty of people who do not hesitate to call dudes "idiots." But who could really have the cruelty to kill the poor, harmless, gentle, useless little dude? The tender heart throbs pitifully at the mere idea. One universal cry would go up in the face of an adverse judgment—a cry of "spare the dude." But if you spare the dude you open the gate to a whole procession of idiots that you would be forced to let live. There is the idiot who looks down the barrel of the gun to see if it is loaded; however, he kills himself, so it does not count. But his near relation, like the poor, is "always with us"—the idiot who points the gun at somebody else. We should be glad to kill him, and yet he is not a worse idiot (as idiots go) than the dude. Then there is the jumping "idiot," who always leaps at a ferry boat after it leaves the dock, and never, never gets drowned, but is invariably fished out by some kindly-meaning but weak-minded person at his own life's risk. We would all like the jumping idiot killed. The idiot who deluges the press with "letters" upon every imaginable topic is a suitable subject for killing; yet, under the dude classification, we couldn't do it. How many sweet young spinsters there are who, if all the "idiots" of their acquaintance were killed, would be absolutely companionless; yet the most of these are dudes and the rest only temporarily idiotic by reason of madness of love, "which levels all ranks and lays the shepherd's crook beside the sceptre," and the idiot beside—himself. Oh! the idiot class is full of obstacles to wholesale fool-killing.

CONSIDER THE "MONSTERS."

This class is much larger than is generally supposed. If a woman's husband crosses her in a matter dear to her heart—or her imagination, which quite commonly is the feminine substitute for that organ—he is a "monster." The girl who marries against her parents' consent—though she is the one to suffer for it in the long run, and not the parents—is a "monster of ingratitude," though why she should be considered ungrateful for taking the responsibility of choice of a husband upon her own shoulders is not exactly clear. We should have to reform our definition of monsters before we commenced killing or some very innocent persons would suffer. Then there is the "moral monster," and here no refinement of cruelty would be too severe and the general public voice would consider "killing no murder." The drunken parents who add to the terrors of living by forcing their little ones to labor in the streets, to the end that they may be supplied with liquor; the brutal farmers who apprentice children to their service and abuse and ill-treat them; the heartless mongrel creatures in human form who beat their wives for failing to support them; the slimy, impish beings who, like fat spiders, sit concealed behind webs to lure the inexperienced, the unsophisticated, the unhappy into toils that bind them like chains, while they poison them from fangs that pierce their hearts and spread corruption through all their lives; the professional gambler, the corrupter of youth, the sly, spying corner watcher for the den of infamy; the agent and accomplice of those of the rich who would oppress the poor the slanderer, the character wrecker, the go between, the mischief-maker—these are the "moral monsters" who are sharp enough or influential enough to avoid the law, and who, being conscienceless, are without earthly punishment. Such as these could properly be considered within Dr. Leffman's category and killed for the good of society.

AS TO MONSTROSITIES.

Of the class included by Dr. Leffman under this title let us speak only with commiseration and regret.

I, that am curtailed thus of fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time
Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,
And that so lamely and unfashionable
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them.

For such as these the human heart opens its stores of pity—which is, however, qualified, when, as is too often the case, with a crooked body occur a warped mind and a distorted soul. And it is not a little remarkable that while this latter is frequently the case with male humanity, who display no better ingredients in their composition than "the plain devil and dissembling looks" among women who are deformed, we commonly find amiability of temper and tenderness of heart. To destroy the lives of unfortunates whose only crime is lack of finish, or physical beauty, would seem wanton cruelty. Yet this is among the essential conclusions we should reach if we fully adopted Dr. Leffman's ingenious but sometimes objectionable scheme. And then, when it comes to malformation, we are, necessarily, in doubt where to begin and where to end. Is an abnormal nose deserving of death to the possessor? Are "the lame, the halt and the blind" to be deprived of life because of their infirmities? Must we treat "Humpty Dumpty" and "Three-Fingered Jack" alike, quotha? Truly, the further we enter this field of discussion the more we encounter obstacles to a just decision. "In the kingdom of the blind the one-eyed man is king;" must he, then, order the promiscuous slaughter of all his subjects? The fact that public sentiment is, for one reason and another, mostly against murder (as a rule) must also have its weight. It is a melancholy truth that we don't even kill our moral monsters, to say nothing of our physical ones. So powerful is public opinion on this question that a man who is tired of his life, who may or may not be deformed, who has possibly been crossed in love, or squandered his substance, or played ducks and drakes with the assets of the bank of which he is cashier, who has run away with the wife of his employer—and found her not according to sample—who for any of all these objections to life (as a steady thing), desires to deprive himself of it by suicide—is ruthlessly prevented if possible, and if prevented punished for the attempt. This is sad—very. One may well cry, "Is this your boasted freedom?" and while society is cast in this mould Dr. Leffman's theories are certain to fall flat.

EUTHANASIA.

When it comes to the practice of "euthanasia," or the smooting of the path to the grave of those whose dying moments are accompanied by severe physical suffering, as to this there are differing opinions. On the face of it it does seem not only cruel but absurd to permit totally unnecessary suffering—when positive, certain death is a foregone conclusion and only a question of that miserably conventional and conservative old sinner Time. ["Time," who wickedly makes bright days fly swiftly and dark days "on leaden wings," and who seems to exist only for the purpose of prosecuting a chronic fued with "Opportuniy," who would, if let alone, occasionally permit a gleam of happiness to pierce the customary gloom.] If, by a taste of nepeethe, or hydrate of chloral, or morphia or other drug, the passage of the agonized moribund to the unknown may be rendered less painful, in heaven's name why not accommodate them? Then might they sink (or glide) by way of the gates of slumber—dreamless, or peopled with visions, as the case might be—into that blissful state in which

The wicked cease from troubling
And the weary are at rest.

Time's Changes.

Last evening, says the Long Branch correspondent of the Chicago *Inter-Ocean*, I saw the latest startling novelty in dress, worn by a young lady who was waltzing with a son of Sir Hugh Allan, a youth remarkable for his combination of lilac vest and tweed trousers and coat. The young lady is a Philadelphian, a beauty and an heiress. She was incased in a flesh colored silk, "tailored" to her figure so closely that every curve and bend of it was exposed. The sleeves fitted so tightly she could hardly raise her arm to her partner's shoulder, and every respiration was visible. Over this skin-fitting silk was a plain drapery of exquisite black lace, the effect of which was absolutely startling, the wearer appearing like a flesh-tinted marble figure under a black veil. Shades of the departed! What would the great-grandmother of this young woman have said? If she knew it her very ashes would fly. Only this morning I read in McMaster's delightful "History of the People of the United States" how Pine, the artist, brought over, in 1784, the first plaster cast of the Venus de Medici ever seen in this country, and how all the prudes of Philadelphia set up such a cry of shame at the nude statue that Pine, abashed, showed it only to his friends in strictest privacy. Even twenty-two years later, when another generation had grown up, there were put on exhibition in the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts fifty casts of famous statues in the Louvre, but they were pronounced "indecent," and on the one day in the week when women were allowed to attend the exhibition, the undraped figures were carefully covered up. Marvellous are the changes of time.

DR. FRENCH, in a recent work, "Nineteen Centuries of Drink in England," says that mead was the intoxicant of the ancient Briton. The Romans introduced wine. Cider was known at an early date, but the Saxons, Danes and Normans brought in the secret of stronger beverages. Distilled liquors were introduced under the Plantagenets, and clergymen then began to tipple. In the sixth century men of all degrees "slumbered away their time in drunkenness." The prevalent intemperance of the seventeenth century is said to be due to the Act to Encourage Distillation, the exhaustion of light wines, the influences of the court, and the development of toasting and club life. Dr. French predicts that moderation will increase until intoxicating beverages shall be used and not abused, and thus become one of our blessings.

HIS WEDDING TRIP.

The Transmigrations of an Anecdote Illustrated by a Bright Example.

There is a story about a wedding trip that has been knocking about the country for some time. We have tried to keep it out of the "Drawer" but it is no use to kick against it any longer. It was first told to the "Drawer" editor in October, 1883, by a clergyman of strict temperance principles and high character—in fact, a total abstainer—who had it from a friend of his, first-hand, who had just returned from the west. This friend, mind you, saw and heard what he related, and he was a person of undoubted veracity, though perhaps as an abstainer, when travelling, not so total as the clergyman. It was, in brief, to this effect: In the car on a train from Toledo to Chicago was a man who sat alone, looking absently out of the window and appearing dejected. During the passage an accident happened to a newsboy and the generous passengers passed round the hat for him. The solitary man alone of all the carful refused to contribute anything, not even a quarter. Somebody remarked audibly upon his stinginess, when he turned round and said: "Gentlemen, it may appear strange to you that I give nothing; but I haven't a cent of money. The fact is, I was married yesterday, and am on my wedding trip, and I hadn't money enough to bring my wife along."

In December following the editor of the "Drawer" was seated with two other gentlemen in a library in New York. One of them said: "I heard a good story the other day from a friend of mine who has just returned from Europe. Going down the Danube from Pesth last summer he noticed on the steamboat a melancholy-looking man, who did not appear to care much for the scenery, but leaned over the guards and vacantly regarded the river. Falling into conversation with him, he ascertained that the man was a Prussian. Remarking that the journey did not seem to interest him, the Prussian said: 'No; I'm rather lonesome. The truth is, I'm on my wedding tour, and I could not afford to bring my wife.'"

The editor of the "Drawer" said that it was a good story, and that he began to think it was true, as it was confirmed by so many independent witnesses. Thereupon he took from his pocket a letter which he had received that morning from Paris. In it the writer, a gentleman of culture and travel, said that a curious incident happened to him last summer. He and his wife were on a Rhine steamer, when they noticed a melancholy passenger whom all the beauties of the scenery failed to rouse from his dejection. He was an object of interest to them all the morning, and at length his wife's sympathy was so much excited that she proposed to go and speak to the melancholy stranger and find out the cause of his sadness. The husband said that would be a foolish thing to do, and she might get into trouble. But the wife insisted (for though American women have little curiosity, they have warm hearts), and crossed over to where the stranger stood, and accosted him, and they engaged in conversation. In a few moments the lady returned, laughing. "What is it?" asked the husband. "Why, the man is a South German. He says that he is on his wedding trip, and couldn't afford to bring his wife."

The editor then related the original true story as it was told by the T. A. clergyman. So it appeared, on unimpeachable testimony, that the same strange incident happened in the experience of three persons the same year—one near Chicago, one on the Rhine, the other on the Danube. Did it happen to any one of these veracious people? When the editor had raised this question, the third member of the party, who had been silent and had not interfered with the story in any way, said: "I can tell you the real original of that story. Several years ago, in a well-known wholesale house in this city, an old bachelor bookkeeper, who had been many years with the firm, suddenly announced that he was to be married. The partners gave him a week's holiday, and his fellow-clerks raised a little purse and presented it to pay the expenses of his wedding trip. A couple of days afterwards one of the members of the firm went down to Newport, and there, lounging about the Ocean House, and apparently enjoying himself immensely, he saw his recently-married old bookkeeper—but alone. 'Where's your wife?' 'She's at home.' 'But I thought you had money given you for a wedding trip?' 'So I did, but I didn't understand that it was intended to include her.'"

Now we are not saying that this is an unwise way of taking what is really one of the most perilous journeys in life—a wedding tour. But what could have induced all these different respectable people to appropriate this particular instance to their own personal observation? It sometimes seems as if people are not what they should be.—*Harper's Magazine.*

The Orange Tree.

The orange tree is the longest-lived fruit tree known. It is reputed to have obtained the age of 300 years, and it has been known to have flourished and borne fruit for more than 100 years. No fruit tree will grow and produce fruit so well under rough treatment. It commences to bear the third or fourth year after budding, and by the fifth year it will produce an abundant crop, but its yield will increase gradually under favorable circumstances, and as the years pass on it will become a very productive tree. The early growth of the orange is quite rapid, and by the tenth year it will have increased more than in the next fifty years, so far as its breadth and heighth are concerned; but as its age multiplies its fruit stems greatly, and an old tree will sometimes bear several thousand oranges.

The late Dean Stanley was once travelling in a railway carriage, when a blustering man exclaimed: "I should like to meet that Dean of Westminster. I'd put a question to him that would puzzle him.' "Very well," said a voice out of another corner, "now is your time, for I am the Dean." The man was rather startled, but presently recovered, and said: "Well sir, can you tell me the way to heaven?" "Nothing easier," answered the Dean, "you have only to turn to the right and go traight forward."

Hurling bricks at each other is missileaneous sport.

A NEW INVENTION.

Remarkable Electrical Apparatus for Examining the Interior of the Human Body.

One of the newest adaptations of electric illumination is in the shape of a very small lantern, which can be introduced into the stomach, for the purpose of aiding surgical and dental operations which cannot be carried on without light and for which it has been extremely difficult heretofore to obtain light by mirrors or other means. The lamp primarily consists of a delicate glass bulb, from which the air has been withdrawn and as nearly a perfect vacuum created as possible. The bulb varies in shape, being spheroidal, flat and compass-shaped, and also cylindrical, with a conical termination. Through the thin walls of the lantern run the conducting wires, connected by a carbon arc, on which the electricity centres, and which thus becomes the place of light. The glass lantern is very small, the cylindrical shaped being scarcely half an inch in length, and with a diameter not nearly so great as that of an ordinary lead-pencil. The compass-shaped lamp is about one-quarter of an inch thick, and has a diameter of three-quarters of an inch to an inch, while the spheroidal seems scarcely larger than a good-sized pea. The lamp is attached to a handle, from seven to nine inches long, and about half an inch thick, through which run the wires connecting with the battery. The handle and the lamp can be separated, and thus but one handle is necessary for use with the different forms of the lamps. The intensity of the power, and hence the brilliancy of the arc of light, can be regulated by moving along the handle a ring which connects with the wires. The handle has several joints, and its position can be arranged in almost any way so as to adapt it to the shape of the cavity which it is proposed to illuminate. Mirrors can also be fastened to the lamp and light reflected to planes where the lamp cannot be introduced. To prevent the too great diffusion of light and the radiation of heat, the lamp may be partially covered with a hard rubber or gutta percha case.

When the lamp is placed in the mouth of a patient every portion of the throat, even to the lowest parts, and every recess of the upper places can be plainly seen. This will greatly facilitate the work of surgery and dentistry, and enable an operator to conceive a much more thorough diagnosis of a case than the use of any other means previously known. Placed behind the teeth, the intense light renders not only the teeth, but even the gum above, highly transparent. If the teeth are good and undecayed, no lines will be visible—but the presence of a filling or of the mere beginning of decay may at once be seen. When the lamp is placed within the mouth and the lips are closed, the entire front structure of the mouth is brought to view. The bone and tooth formations are easily discoverable, and even the interior of the nasal passages. In the same way the instrument is of great value in the treatment of obstetrical disease, and in studies of the stomach. No unpleasant sensations are experienced by patients, even in cases of protracted use, no other effect being noticeable than that which follows the drinking of a hot cup of coffee. Mr. E. T. Starr, of Philadelphia, is the inventor.—*Philadelphia Press.*

LOCK LORE.

With Some Singular Keys to Match.

In the middle ages locks for church and cathedral doors were often rare specimens of art metal work. Elaborate scrolls, the images of saints, and other ambitious efforts of the true artisan of those days, entered into the design of locks, which were really an ornament to the magnificent doors and cabinets of those times. A design for the escutcheon surrounding the keyhole frequently had the figures of two guardian angels with outspread wings. Locks of very curious construction, known as "Apostle locks," were also common in mediæval times. These locks had on the front the figure of one of the Apostles, and on touching the hand of the figure the bolts flew back. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth one Mark Scalist, a smith, constructed a lock consisting of eleven pieces of iron, steel and brass, all of which, with a pipe key, weighed only two grains of gold. That great inventor, the Marquis of Worcester, who flourished in the reign of King Charles I., devised a lock containing a steel barb, which was perfectly harmless so long as the right key was used, but if a wrong key were inserted the barb sprang through the keyhole and "caught the hand of the intruder as a trap catches a fox." It is said that while the inventor was experimenting with this curious lock he was scarcely nimble enough in removing his hand and was caught in his own trap. At Willenhall, in Staffordshire, which is a great seat of the lock trade, silver padlocks, the sides of which are much smaller than a three-penny piece, are still made and are quite perfect in their mechanism. Locks containing single bells and even chimes, which sound an alarm when tampered with by a false key, are among the modern curiosities of the trade. Common padlocks are largely made for the natives of India and Africa at Walsall. A lock and key complete are sold by the maker for a half-penny, and merchants abroad state that many of the natives string these locks together so as to form necklets and wear them as "charms."

The Dukes and the Goose.

The following incident is told us of the Duke of Buccleuch, who recently died in England. Not very long ago, while travelling with the Duke of Northumberland, they found themselves in a carriage with a commercial traveller. The conversation between the three soon became general. At Alnwick station the Duke of Northumberland got out and was driven away in a showy equipment. "That must be a swell," said the commercial traveller, "do you know who he is?" "He is the Duke of Northumberland," replied his Grace of Buccleuch. "And yet they say that our nobility is haughty! Why, he talked to us two snobs as though we had been his pals!"

"What is this?" exclaimed a Burlington lady, as she opened a letter and something like a crumpled postage stamp fell out. "Oh, yes; I remember now. It's that Boston bathing suit I ordered for Nellie."

THE LIMITS OF SPEED.

Why the Time Now Made by Atlantic Steamers Will Not Be Improved.

The statement recently made of the amount of coal consumed by the various trans-Atlantic steamers in making their quick passages makes it pretty evident that unless some great improvement is made in the direction of economizing fuel or of applying power, we shall very soon reach the limit of speed to which steamers making long trips can hope to attain. The statement is that the steamer Oregon burned in her quick trip across the Atlantic, during which she averaged a little less than eighteen knots an hour, 337 tons of coal a day. The steamer Aurania, which sailed at the same time, but which had a longer trip, going at an average speed of a little less than seventeen knots per hour, burned 240 tons per day. The assumption is that it was the ninety-seven additional tons of coal that enabled the Oregon to make her quick trip. Some little time ago, in treating of this subject, we asserted that when a certain average speed had been attained by a steamer, putting this at twelve knots an hour, for example, all increase over this demanded a geometrical increase in the quantity of fuel consumed, and the experience of those two steamers very thoroughly substantiates the ground we then took. If it needed nearly 100 tons of coal extra a day to gain a little over one knot an hour, it would be safe to assume that it would have required quite 300 tons additional coal to have gained two extra knots an hour. It will be seen that at this rate of progression a vessel would need to be converted into a species of coal furnace in order to make much quicker trips than those now being made, and hence could not carry either passengers or freight to any great extent. It is the compound marine engine that alone makes the present high rate of speed possible. The old Arabia and Persia used to burn 250 tons of coal per day when making an average speed of 12 or 13 knots per hour; but steamers have since been built, in consequence of the mechanical improvement referred to above, that averaged this rate of speed per diem with a consumption of coal hardly over one-tenth of that formerly required. But, if some corresponding improvement is not made in the application or conservatism of power, we are not likely to see much quicker time on the ocean than has recently been made.—*Boston Globe.*

SOME MEDICAL NOTES.

Early Dental Decay Said to be Caused by not Eating Bones.

Dr. Bennett, writing in the *New England Medical Monthly*, attributes the early dental decay which seems now to be the rule to the fact that bone is never eaten by civilized people. All carnivorous animals, guided by their instincts, gnaw the bones of their prey. Man is carnivorous, but has in this respect abandoned instinct, while his reason has not stepped in to help him. Clean teeth will decay as well as dirty ones when vitiated acid saliva, caused by improper diet, acts upon the lime of which they are composed. Several years ago the lions at the Zoological Gardens of London were fed upon the thighs of horses. They could not break and eat the large bones, and their young were born with cleft palates and died soon after birth. The diet was changed to one of deer and small animals, and the young, born with well-formed palates, lived and thrived. The same thing has been noticed with dogs. Even a cow will gnaw bones to make up for the drain upon the lime salts of her body consequent upon having a calf every year. A continued experiment upon a family, for whose use healthy bones were finely granulated and mixed with soups, gravies, bread, etc., has proved the claims of bone to be regarded as food. In bone, the lime salts required by the human body exist ready-made, and no administration of lime, or even of lime phosphate, is likely to be assimilated as thoroughly as the substance which has already been properly prepared for use.

A Very Politic Scotchman.

"He said the Scotch were a measly nation, the hull piling of 'm; that they lived on meal husks, fed their horses on thistles, and wore no more breadth of pants than would satisfy the sense of modesty of a well-conducted bull-frog," snorted Sandy McGillicuddy, as he joined the crowd round the stove at the Hays House last Thursday evening.

"He did, did he?"

"Yes, sir. He said that for driving a bargain a Scotchman is a cross between a German Jew and a Cossack; that he'd more gall than a Saratoga hackman, and for unadulterated meanness he'd double discount a Yankee pedler and make a Chicago patent-right man howl with envy."

"And as a pure-blooded Caledonian, Mac, you couldn't stand that. Well, what did you do? Did you knock him down?"

"I didn't. But there was only one thing that saved him," said Sandy savagely.

"Your consideration for his wife and family, eh?"

"Not much?"

"Respect for his gray hairs?"

"Bah! He's under 30 yet, and his poll is as red as the scarlet woman of Revelations."

"What was it then, Sandy?"

"Hoot, sir. Dinna ye ken the man was a coostomer?"—*Evansville Argus.*

Physiological Curiosities.

We speak of some persons as tender-hearted, says the Boston *Budget*, but as a matter of fact, every one is, literally, very hard-hearted, the heart being a very tough muscle, so insensible that one would not feel it if it could be seized and held in the grasp of a giant. The heart is no more the seat of our affections than is the stomach or liver. It causes no more pain to cut a nerve or the brain than to pare one's nails. Large portions of the brain may be lost without any impairment of the intellect. An entire bone may be removed, and, provided the periosteum, the membrane which covers it, is retained, the bone will grow again as good as before. A new nose may be reconstructed with a flap taken from any other part of the body. A person dying from the loss of blood may be restored by injecting blood from another person's body.

Paris is suffering from her annual scarcity of water.