THE INCUBUS OF TWENTIETH CENTURY CIVILIZATION.¹

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M. R., male, aged about 26, of uncertain parentage, financially poor, the subject of much privation, was cousin to a young man somewhat older, who had been indicted and convicted of the crime of murder of a most brutal character, and after a trial that had naturally greatly excited the whole community. M. R. was always considered a mild, inoffensive individual, intellectually not bright, inclined to wander about the neighborhood, disinclined to regular employment, restless and trifling. A part of the time he made his home with the mother of the cousin before mentioned, who was a worthy woman of good intelligence. He had some slight trouble with her over an account, but not such as to receive any serious consideration from her or others. One night he called at her home, called her to the door and without a word of explanation shot her through the bowels from which shot she died. He ran away or went away, but was found and arrested without any serious difficulty. When asked the motive of his deed he claimed the woman was abusing him, an accusation that the testimony showed to be wholly without foundation. He was convicted of murder in the second degree, sent to the Ohio Penitentiary and died there a year or so later, a mental and physical wreck.

Levi M. M., aged 32, native of Ohio, son of a farmer in comfortable circumstances, was one of a family of fourteen children who had been born within about fifteen years. His mother had an attack of melancholia lasting the most of one year, after the birth of the third or fourth child. One of her sisters had an attack of melancholia at sixteen or seventeen years of age lasting for several months, each ending finally in recovery.

¹ Presidential Address read before Columbus Academy of Medicine, January 6, 1896.

with such individuals, as far as possible their criminal acts should be anticipated instead of permitting them to recur time after time as is now often the case. We cannot expect perfection in the regulation of society by law, but surely something should be done to bring about an improvement. The first of the cases mentioned was by a jury of his peers convicted of murder in the second degree and died a demented imbecile, I use this term advisedly, within two years. The second is convicted in the same manner of murder in the first degree, and if the verdict of twelve "true and impartial men" is to stand he will hang, although clearly the victim of persecutory delusions and imaginary fears of undoubted pathological character and origin. The third is convicted, doubtless as far as society is concerned, fortunately, of murder in the second degree. The fourth case, when placed under surveillance and hospital protection, is released through the process of law that should protect him and supplement his own weakness with its strength, and is bidden by it to exercise his own sweet will in going to destruction in whatever manner his fancy may suggest, and continue himself a menace to the safety of society, as his history thus far clearly demonstrates to be the inevitable result of his law-given liberty.