

ARTICLE II.

STATISTICS OF SUICIDES,

Which have occurred in the State of New York, from Dec. 1st, 1847, to Dec. 1st, 1848; Compiled from the Records of the N. Y. S. Lunatic Asylum, at Utica, by GEORGE COOK, M. D., Assistant Physician at the Asylum.

DURING the past year, there has come to our knowledge through the principal and most widely circulated journals of the State, to which we have had constant access; a total of *ninety-one* cases of suicide, being *fifteen less* than in 1847, *twenty-seven more* than in 1846, and *seventeen more* than in 1845.

COUNTIES IN WHICH THEY HAVE OCCURRED, AND
THE NUMBER IN EACH COUNTY.

Albany,	MALES,	3	FEMALES,	0	TOTAL,	3
Allegany,	"	1	"	0	"	1
Cattaraugus,	"	1	"	0	"	1
Cayuga,	"	1	"	0	"	1
Chautauque,	"	2	"	1	"	3
Chenango,	"	2	"	0	"	2
Delaware,	"	0	"	1	"	1
Dutchess,	"	1	"	2	"	3
Erie,	"	2	"	2	"	4
Greene,	"	1	"	0	"	1
Herkimer,	"	2	"	1	"	3
Jefferson,	"	1	"	0	"	1
Lewis,	"	1	"	0	"	1

Livingston,	MALES, 1	FEMALES, 0	TOTAL, 1
Madison,	" 2	" 0	" 2
Monroe,	" 5	" 1	" 6
New York,	" 28	" 4	" 32
Niagara,	" 1	" 0	" 1
Oneida,	" 3	" 2	" 5
Ontario,	" 1	" 0	" 1
Orange,	" 1	" 0	" 1
Oswego,	" 0	" 1	" 1
Otsego,	" 2	" 0	" 2
Putnam,	" 1	" 0	" 1
Queens,	" 1	" 1	" 2
Rensselaer,	" 3	" 0	" 3
Saratoga,	" 0	" 2	" 2
Suffolk,	" 1	" 0	" 1
Tioga,	" 1	" 0	" 1
Tompkins,	" 1	" 0	" 1
Ulster,	" 0	" 1	" 1
Washington,	" 1	" 0	" 1
Yates,	" 0	" 1	" 1
	<hr/> 71	<hr/> 20	<hr/> 91

This table shows that the number of reported suicides, in proportion to the population, has considerably diminished since last year ; and further, that the reduction, according to our account, has taken place chiefly in the city of New York. Thus, while the total number of deaths by suicide in the whole State, is less by *fifteen* than last year, in New York alone there has been *thirteen* less. It is an interesting fact, that suicides in New York have been gradually diminishing for several years, while in many other large cities they have increased in frequency. A comparison of recent with former reports would seem to exhibit this fact very clearly. Thus, for the five years from January, 1805, to January, 1810, there

was an average annual proportion of one case in five thousand three hundred and thirteen and a fraction of the inhabitants ; for five years, from January, 1835, to January, 1840, there was a yearly average of one suicide to every seven thousand six hundred and twenty-eight ; and last year, there has been one to about every twelve thousand six hundred and ninety-seven of the population. From this, it appears that they have diminished in frequency more than one-half since 1810, though the relative number is still considerably greater than in the country.

According to some statistical tables recently published in France, it seems, that suicide has been for some years progressively on the increase in that country ; and as we should infer from the report, to an extent greater than would be indicated by the increase of population. The number of deaths by suicide amounted, in 1841, to two thousand eight hundred and fourteen ; in 1842, to two thousand eight hundred and eighty-six ; in 1845, to three thousand and eighty-four ; and in 1846, to three thousand one hundred and two.

The propensity to self-destruction is much stronger in men than women, and the proportion in the preceding table is about seven to two, which rather exceeds the ratio in previous reports.

Of the ninety-one cases reported, there occurred in,

December, (1847,)	MALES, 5	FEMALES, 1	TOTAL, 6
January, (1848,)	" 5	" 0	" 5
February, "	" 3	" 2	" 5
March, "	" 3	" 2	" 5
April, "	" 7	" 4	" 11
May, "	" 10	" 2	" 12
June, "	" 13	" 2	" 15
July, "	" 7	" 0	" 7
August, "	" 5	" 2	" 7

September, (1848,)	MALES, 4	FEMALES, 4	TOTAL, 8
October, " "	5	" 1	" 6
November, " "	4	" 0	" 4
	<u>71</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>91</u>

SEASONS.

Winter, (1847-8,)	MALES, 13	FEMALES, 3	TOTAL, 16
Spring, (1848,)	" 20	" 8	" 28
Summer, " "	25	" 4	" 29
Autumn, " "	13	" 5	" 18
	<u>71</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>91</u>

It will be seen from these tables, that suicides have been most frequent in the months of April, May, and June, and that a larger number by far have taken place in the Spring and Summer than in the Autumn and Winter.

CIVIL CONDITION.

Married,	MALES, 19	FEMALES, 14	TOTAL, 33
Single, " "	13	" 4	" 17
Unknown, " "	39	" 2	" 41
	<u>71</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>91</u>

From this it would appear, that there are more suicides among the married than the single, in the proportion of nearly two to one; but most of the former tables give a different result. According to them, the greatest number usually take place among the unmarried.

AGES.

From 10 to 20 years,	MALES, 2	FEMALES, 2	TOTAL, 4
" 20 to 30 " "	10	" 3	" 13
" 30 to 40 " "	5	" 3	" 8
" 40 to 50 " "	10	" 1	" 11
" 50 to 60 " "	1	" 1	" 2
" 60 to 70 " "	3	" 0	" 3
" 70 to 80 " "	2	" 0	" 2
Unknown, " "	38	" 10	" 48
	<u>71</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>91</u>

Self destruction is said by Winslow to be most frequent between the ages of forty and fifty years; but here, the period of life between twenty and thirty is productive of more. A similar table,* compiled last year, exhibits the same result.

Of two thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine suicides in France, in 1846, were twenty-seven from ten to fifteen years of age; one hundred and thirty-nine from fifteen to twenty-one years of age; four hundred and forty-three from twenty-one to thirty years; twelve hundred and fourteen from thirty to fifty years; five hundred and thirteen from fifty to sixty years; four hundred and three from sixty to seventy years; two hundred and nine from seventy to eighty years; and fifty-one above eighty years.

ASSIGNED CAUSES.

	MALES, 24	FEMALES, 8	TOTAL, 32
Insanity,			
Melancholy, " 5	" 5	" 2	" 7
Domestic trouble, " 2	" 2	" 0	" 2
Intemperance, " 4	" 4	" 1	" 5
Delirium Tremens, " 2	" 2	" 0	" 2
Despair, " 1	" 1	" 1	" 2
Destitution, " 1	" 1	" 0	" 1
Fear of want, " 1	" 1	" 0	" 1
Pecuniary em- } barrassment,	" 3	" 0	" 3
Insanity caused } by intemperance,	" 1	" 0	" 1
Insanity, at the } same time stran- gled her child,	" 0	" 1	" 1
After murder of } his wife,	" 1	" 0	" 1
After arrest for } murder,	" 1	" 0	" 1

*Vol. IV., No. 3, page 250.

After arrest for throwing sulph'ric acid on a female,	}	MALES, 1	FEMALES, 0	TOTAL, 1
After arrest for an assault on a female,	}	" 1	" 0	" 1
Unknown,		" 23	" 7	" 30
		<hr/> 71	<hr/> 20	<hr/> 91

This table goes to confirm preceding observations, that insanity is the most frequent cause of suicide. Of the sixty-one cases above, for which causes were assigned in the journals, thirty-four were attributed to insanity alone, and eleven others to causes which were probably attended with temporary derangement.

The propensity to suicide is often transmitted from parents to children; and M. Falret says, of all the forms of melancholy, that which tends to self-murder is most frequently hereditary; and he gives an instance, where all the female members of a family for three successive generations, either attempted or committed suicide. M. Esquirol mentions a case, where a father, son, and grandson all took their own lives; and another, in which an entire family of seven brothers, when between the ages of thirty and forty years, destroyed themselves. There are, undoubtedly, many who are first led to think of suicide, from a consciousness that they inherit a disposition to insanity; or from having a relative or friend commit the act.

There is good reason to believe, that the list of victims to this crime is greatly increased by the publicity which is given the details, connected with the death of this unfortunate class, by the newspaper press throughout the country. The voluntary death of a boy between eight and nine years of age, by hanging, which lately

took place in Monroe county, may, without doubt, be mainly attributed to a perversion of the natural instinct of imitation, caused by hearing the circumstances of a case of suicide narrated. A short time previous to his death, he had frequently spoken of a man who had hung himself. In the following table will be found two cases, in which the mode adopted was opening the femoral artery; one occurred very soon after the other, and may, we apprehend, be put down to the same cause, perverted imitation.

MANNER OF COMMITTING THE ACT.

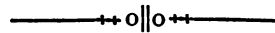
	MALES, 25	FEMALES, 9	TOTAL, 34
Hanging,			
Cutting throat,	" 12	" 1	" 13
Poisoning,	" 10	" 4	" 14
Fire-arms,	" 8	" 0	" 8
Drowning,	" 8	" 5	" 13
Abstinence,	" 1	" 0	" 1
Strangulation,	" 1	" 0	" 1
Bleeding from } femoral artery,	" 2	" 0	" 2
Bleeding from } arm,	" 1	" 0	" 1
Jumping from } height,	" 1	" 1	" 2
Unknown,	" 2	" 0	" 2
	<hr/> 71	<hr/> 20	<hr/> 91

In London, if we take the means of death employed by eight hundred and forty-one suicides, the following will be the order of their frequency;—hanging, strangling, and suffocation, three hundred and eighty-one; poisons, one hundred and sixty-one; wounds by cutting instruments, one hundred and twenty-nine; drowning, one hundred and seven; fire-arms, forty-five; leaps from heights, eighteen. Of two thousand seven hundred and

sixty-four suicides in France, in 1846, there were by hanging and strangulation, one thousand and seventy-seven; drowning, one thousand and thirty-six; suffocation with charcoal, two hundred and twenty-two; fire-arms, four hundred and twenty-nine.

The above statistics show, that in this State, as in other countries, hanging continues to be the most frequent means employed by suicides to terminate their existence. Of the other means to which recourse has been had, poisoning, drowning, and cutting instruments, come next in frequency, and each have been resorted to by nearly an equal number. Of nine cases of poisoning, in which the substance taken is known to us, there were by opium, two; laudanum, two; arsenic, two; corrosive sublimate, one; prussic acid, one; and sulphuric acid, one.

This table also agrees with previous ones, in showing that females rarely have recourse to fire-arms or cutting instruments, as a means of committing suicide. Hanging, drowning, and poisoning are the modes which they most frequently employ.



ARTICLE III.

MEDICO-LEGAL REPORT,

*Upon the Mental State of Mrs. Mary Magdalen Droin,
Accused of an Attempt to Poison. Acquittal.*

Translated from the "Annales Médico-Psychologiques,"

By M. M. BAGG, M. D.

ON THE 5th of November, 1847, the girl named Céline Ravier, while driving her cows to pasture, was met by Mrs. Mary M. Droin, who offered her a cake containing arsenic. Mr. and Mrs. Ravier, parents of the