board and lodge" an alleged lunatic. Sir F. Lushington, it will be noted, declared that if he had been asked to commit Dr. Hutton for trial he would have had no alternative but to do so.

The vast majority of cases in which such questions have arisen in the past, and will probably arise in the future, are cases in which the certifiability of the patient is in doubt. There are at the present moment hundreds of persons more or less unsound in mind, who are for payment taken charge of and received to board and lodge in unlicensed houses all over England, and in the great majority of these cases opinion as to the certifiability of the patient would be pretty equally divided among half a dozen competent experts. But the law does not need that the patient should be certifiably insane. If he is an *alleged* lunatic, that is enough; and the very serious questions that have to be faced are: "What constitutes an allegation? and Who are the persons whose allegations are to be attended to for the purpose of the Act? It seems clear that a wife who temporarily detains in his own house her husband, who suffers from some mental disorder, would, unless she had an independent income, and defrayed the whole expenses of the house out of her own pocket, be liable to prosecution under this clause of the Lunacy Act, 1890. The *British Medical Journal*, which puts the case, truly says that "the position is an intolerable one. It will not ease mind or conscience to reflect that as long as things go well no trouble will arise. Few people care to continue under a knowledge that they are breaking the law, even if they feel that they are acting under the most natural and righteous circumstances."

The Slough Accident.

In this recent railway accident it will be remembered that the driver of an express train ignored two sets of signals that were against him, and ran into another train which was drawn up at a station. An inquiry has been held by Colonel Yorke, the Board of Trade inspector, with the result that the driver of the express "took upon himself the whole responsibility;" but at the same time it does not appear that he offered any

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explanation. Under these circumstances there has been a great deal of very unprofitable speculation as to the reason of the driver's action, or failure of action. It has been suggested that he was "unconsciously drowsy," whatever that may mean; that he suffered from temporary "absence of mind;" that he was suddenly overcome by premature senility; and there have been various other hypotheses, culminating, of course, in demands for more legislation to render such occurrences impossible in future. Engine-drivers should, it is said, be medically examined once a year after the age of fifty-five; they should not come on duty at five in the morning; they should not be on duty more than eight hours a day; and so on, and so forth. As to all these suggestions, we would point out that it is quite useless to propose remedies until we know the actual nature of the malady. All that we know at present is that the driver did in fact overrun his signals. When we ask how such a thing can possibly happen, we are confronted with a number of alternatives besides those which have been suggested, and in suggesting these we do not intend to imply that any of them was actually operative in the Slough case, but that such alternatives must be considered before legislative remedies are decided on. A man might overlook his signals from pre-occupation of mind, his attention being absorbed in internal contemplation. He might, for instance, have a favourite child lying dangerously ill at home, and be able to think of nothing else. His circumstances might be so desperate that he had determined on suicide, and, in the selfish absorption in his own misery, he might be reckless of the misery that he inflicted on others. He might have had a row with his wife, and be determined to punish her by a reckless and desperate act, on the same principle as an aggrieved wife so often puts her hand through the window-pane. These and other alternatives should be considered before we invoke the explanation of a premature sudden senility.

Dr. St. John Clarke.

A lamentable affair occurred at Leicester on October 9th, Dr. Clarke having been fired at and wounded by a man named Kirby. Kirby had been several times sent to a lunatic asylum, and Dr.

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