We may now not inappropriately conclude this note with a story which is strictly true. A few days after the trials of which we have been speaking, when visiting an asylum, a patient, in loud tones, and with violent gesticulations, demanded his instant release. "Voice," he exclaimed, "won't kill." "What do you mean?" was naturally asked. "Mean that I shall make as much noise as I like, and that you've no business to keep me here. Read what Cockburn and Smith say. I'm not a dangerous lunatic; I only use my voice, and I will use my voice as loudly as I like." "Well, but Mr. ——, listen, please," we replied; "you must know quite well from what you see of the persons around you, that the opinion of these judges is most unreasonable—indeed, absurd, and could not be acted upon for a moment." "Certainly it is," he said, "the damnedest nonsense ever uttered; they don't know what they are talking about." Having said this, he went on to declare loudly that he would bring an action for damages as soon as ever he obtained his release, and that he would claim fifty pounds for every minute that he had been unjustly detained. When he brings his action, it may be hoped that neither the Chief Justice nor Mr. Justice Smith may try the case, for outrageously insane as he unquestionably is, he is certainly not a dangerous lunatic. He only means, by aid of the peasants of England, to drive a passage through the earth to the South Pole, and to do a few other wonderful things of that sort.

Epileptic Homicide.

The "Saturday Review," we regret to perceive, is still afflicted with the distressing homicidal mania from which it has so long suffered. An acute paroxysm has been recently brought on by the unexpected escape from the gallows of the convict Bisgrove, who was reprieved by the Home Secretary, Mr. Austin Bruce. Bisgrove, it will be remembered, had been sentenced to death, together with a man named Sweet, for murder, and soon after the sentence made a confession of the crime, exculpating Sweet from any knowledge of or part in it. This was bad enough: that he should by his confession have prevented a man from being hanged, who no doubt deserved to be hanged for something, if he did not happen to have been concerned in that crime. But the matter was made intolerable when Bisgrove himself, who had perpetrated the murder, and had gratuitously added to his iniquity by

https://doi.org/10.1192/S0368315X00232830 Published online by Cambridge University Press

making the execution of Sweet impossible, was reprieved. Certainly the trial was a severe one for the "Saturday Review." Two victims suddenly spirited away, when the ropes were all but round their necks! It was natural that it should immediately fall into a paroxysm of acute homicidal frenzy, and violently upbraid the Home Secretary; and we fear that similar paroxysms may be looked for periodically, seeing that homicidal mania is a form of insanity from which complete recovery can rarely, if ever, be believed to take place.

It turned out, when the explanation of the Home Secretary was made, that there were good and sufficient reasons for reprieving Bisgrove, and for sending him, as he has been sent, to a lunatic asylum. An illegitimate child, badly cared for, he had been from his youth upwards of weak health and intellect. For several years he had suffered from frequent epileptic fits, in consequence of which, and his inability to take care of himself, he had been discharged from the colliery at which he worked. In the intervals between his fits, he was good-natured and amiable, and was liked by his companions, but after the fits he was dangerous, being prone to seize upon anything which might be at hand, and to attack those who were near him. In the hope that a sea-voyage might do him good, he went to sea, but returned after some months unimproved; he had lost the bright look of intelligence, and had got the heavy, lost look, so often seen in confirmed epilepsy. Such was his condition when, one evening after drinking a little, he saw a man lying asleep in a field. He did not know the man, and might be presumed, therefore, not to have had any malice against him, unless on the principle on which Charles Lamb damned a man whom he did not know —*at a venture;* he did not want to rob him, for he might have done that without waking him in this world or the next; he had not premeditated murdering him, seeing that he had only stumbled upon him accidentally, and there was no evidence that he was wandering about seeking some one whom he might murder; it is not to be supposed that a person of his weak intellect had an æsthetic love of murder and was eager to perfect himself in it as one of the fine arts: all such motives were wanting, but there was the man's head lying in a very tempting manner, and there was a big stone near, so he took up the stone and with all his might dashed out the sleeping man's brains. Having done this, he lay down by the side of his victim, and went to sleep. When he woke,

https://doi.org/10.1192/S0368315X00232830 Published online by Cambridge University Press

he was taken into custody, *suspecto*, if not of the murder, at all events of being implicated in it. In due course he was put on his trial, when he was worse than undefended, for he was defended by counsel appointed at the last moment by the judge; thus he gained the miserable semblance of a defence, and the conscience of the court was satisfied. We shall be acknowledged to be amply justified in stigmatising the miserable semblance of a defence when we add that at the trial not a word was said of his epilepsy, not a word of his weak intellect, not a word of his history up to the events of the night of the murder; he was moreover condemned on mere suspicion, and with him was condemned an entirely innocent man, who gave an exactly true account of his actions during the night of the murder, but was not believed. Such a blind and terrible error of justice might well make all good men sad and anxiously thoughtful; but it does not so affect the "Saturday Review," which gloats over the unjust executions which it has instigated, and yells savagely for more trophies of its honourable prowess.

There can be no doubt that Bisgrove would have gone to his violent death, as many other insane prisoners have, but for the prompt action of a benevolent clergyman, who, though knowing nothing of him, was struck with the motiveless and strange character of the murder, and made enquiries into his history. This gentleman at once wrote to the Home Secretary, communicating the results of his investigation, which were confirmed by the examination made by the chief constable of the county at the request of Mr. Bruce. A reprieve most properly followed, since which a regular enquiry into the state of Bisgrove's mind has been made by the Visiting Justices of the gaol, and he has been removed to the Broadmoor Asylum.

It would be a work of supererogation to point out to the readers of this journal the characteristic features of epileptic insanity displayed in Bisgrove's case. Every one who knows anything of asylum life knows how dangerous and violent epileptics often are after their fits, and every one who has studied the connection between blind homicidal or other desperate impulse and epilepsy, knows how frequent it is. To hang an epileptic for a murder done openly, without premeditation, without malice, without motive, whose mind has been hopelessly weakened by his disease, and who lies down to sleep by his victim's side immediately after he has killed him, would be hardly more reasonable and less barbarous than to hang a man for doing murder in his sleep.

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