Dr. POWELL said he was of opinion that the vast majority of suicides were not really suicidal acts. Only last week he had a man in his charge who cut his throat in an alcoholic frenzy. A minute before he had not the slightest idea of doing anything of the kind, but he did it apparently not knowing what he was about. It was not an act of real suicide, although it was a suicidal attempt.

The PRESIDENT said his experience was that many cases of acute alcoholism were exceedingly suicidal, and many of them succeeded in destroying themselves in an alcoholic frenzy at home where there was a lack of supervision. That could be easily understood, because they laboured under such terrific hallucinations of sight and hearing that they were driven in sheer terror to do terrible things.

Dr. SULLIVAN, in replying, said Dr. Yellowlees seemed to think that the figures he had quoted were not sufficient for him to base the deductions which he had drawn. In his opinion, however, the percentages were markedly predominant, and therefore numerically sufficient to allow of the conclusions being drawn. Probably in reading the paper he did not express himself clearly, and Dr. Yellowlees had misunderstood him. The very cases he proposed to particularly treat of were those of alcoholic impulse unassociated with anything else. He had set aside all cases of pure accident. A very small proportion of the cases they saw under the circumstances mentioned were committed in the early stages of alcoholic delirium. Very few of the cases developed ordinary alcoholic instincts. Very few of the men had alcoholic hallucinations. There were those who had made suicidal attempts on a real impulse, and it was because he thought there must be some reason for the impulse that he thought the cases were worth analysing. In his opinion there must be some explanation for the fact that the impulse to a suicidal act rather than any other should develop, not on the first or second intoxication, but when the intoxication had lasted a considerable length of time. As for what had been said respecting the influence of the menstrual period upon the suicidal impulse, many of these people had passed through a great many menstrual periods before they made the suicidal act, and therefore, said Dr. Sullivan, I am entitled to my inference when any comparison is made between the chronicity of the alcoholic and the menstrual period, and their respective effects on the mind of the subject. He had treated the question of the alcoholic suicidal impulse as distinguished from other influences. He had pointed out the mode of attempt and the degree of deliberation, but the numbers are hardly sufficient to allow of any deduction. With reference to the physical signs found in alcoholics, they are signs of influence on the nervous system, and the ovarian sensation is to be regarded as a nervous affection. As to the hyperæsthesia of the muscles and the visionary effects, very few of our cases in asylums present these grossly morbid changes, and very few present marked signs of chronic cirrhosis.

Penal Servitude and Insanity. By A. R. DOUGLAS, Deputy Medical Officer, H.M. Prison, Portland, late Assistant Medical Officer, East Riding Asylum and Royal Albert Asylum, Lancaster.

IN this paper I propose to consider the questions which this subject involves, chiefly from observations I have made upon convicts in this prison.

One constantly reads and hears statements to the effect that individuals undergoing penal servitude are thereby prone to

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engender forms of mental disease. In an admirably arranged statistical table in his report for the year 1897 Dr. Herbert Smalley, H.M. Medical Inspector of Prisons, proves such a statement to be wrong, and that our prisons "are not manufactories for the production of lunacy."

It may be interesting to endeavour to show—by devoting a little attention to the "material" which is subjected to the penal environment—how undeserved is this accusation.

For the sake of brevity I shall consider criminals in two divisions—the first offender and the recidivist. On taking a man from the former class, we may find that he is one who prior to his conviction occupied a good place in society, and filled a position of trust. Such an individual has felt the disgrace of his trial and condemnation keenly, and in the early days of his imprisonment has beyond doubt suffered from depression. It must be borne in mind that we are going on the assumption that this man was of normal mental balance on his conviction. Given, then, that this individual is of sufficient mental calibre to have enabled him to take up to the time of his arrest a fairly successful part in the battle of life, it is absurd to suppose that this depression should deepen in intensity and become acute mental pain, or that a maniacal condition should supervene. This depression is, in my opinion, "normal," and is not of sufficient duration to act prejudicially upon the mind; besides, I shall presently show that the prison discipline itself affords as few facilities for brooding and introspection as could reasonably be expected under the circumstances.

A convict, then, who is a first offender, begins working out his sentence by a term of separate confinement. During this term he does not languish in his cell, as one occasionally hears, with nothing to occupy his attention and to keep him from introspection and brooding over his trouble. Labour of a light description and easily learnt is provided for him, and he is allowed the privilege of reading suitable books, together with regular and sufficient open-air exercise. The individual under consideration, whom we have assumed is a man of average mental stability, very soon finds that his normal depression gradually wears off; the discipline of the prison enjoins that duties shall be performed, and exacts due observance of the regulations; the predominant feeling now in his mind is to make his prison life as little unpleasant as possible by attention to work and amenability to discipline. He knows that if he is industrious he will earn a certain

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number of remission marks, which, if none are lost by bad conduct or laziness, will shorten his sentence within certain limits. Later on comes a change in his prison life, and he marches out to labour with a party on public works, or is put to learn a trade.

In numerous cases a convict's labour is congenial to him, and he often evinces lively interest in his work. He attends the services in the chapel, and is visited by the chaplain. He is also allowed to correspond with and receive letters and visits from his friends at regulation times, provided his conduct merits these indulgences. He has easy access to the medical officers should he wish to consult them. After he has completed his term of separate confinement he is thoroughly examined by the medical officer, who decides for what class of labour he is physically fit. No convict is put to labour for which he is, by reason of any infirmity, unfitted, and he can at any time obtain a change of work upon showing sufficient grounds.

A first offender is, by the Star Class system, kept strictly separate from those habituated to crime, and it is difficult to over-estimate the advantages of this. I shall only quote one, which is relevant to the subject of this paper, and one which I have repeatedly heard spoken of appreciatively by several Star Class convicts themselves, that, inasmuch as whilst keenly sensible of the degraded position in which they have placed themselves, they yet feel that their future is regarded in a more hopeful light, and that they are not counted as utterly damned. From this many derive considerable mental comfort and assuagement.

So much for the first offender, of which class I have purposely instanced as example a man of education and superior social position.

To this man penal servitude is at first terrible indeed, not because his prison life is a hard one, but because of the keen sense of degradation aroused in him by his surroundings during the early days of his incarceration. That this keen sense of degradation amounts to depression, which is present for some short period in a subacute form, I think there can be no doubt, but its duration and degree of intensity is not great enough to operate detrimentally upon a normally constituted mind. It has also been urged that protracted separation from his family and business must exert a prejudicial influence upon the mind. I would contend that it is highly improbable that a man free from mental heredity,

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and having already taken his share of responsibility in the struggle for existence, should not accept his position, and, under adverse circumstances, adapt himself thereto. I further contend that it would not be at all unreasonable to believe that in certain cases where there is an hereditary tendency to insanity the quiet routine life of the prison with its freedom from excitement would conduce, if anything, to exempt the individual from the risk of an attack.

We will now consider the recidivists, which are of a type very different from the one just described; and in order to correctly estimate the mental effect of imprisonment upon such, it is necessary to know something of their conditions of life outside the prison walls. Emile Gautier, in one of his chapters, remarks that such men see the world in two aspects, either as an immense gaol or a huge brothel, and to a certain extent this is true. The child is father to the man; from their earliest years they have been surrounded by vicious influences, the example of immorality, drunkenness, and crime set by their parents or friends, their earliest recollections being those of squalor, filth, and vice, and their daily contamination from almost every source of moral pollution whilst mere children, all contribute to mould the character of the individual at present under consideration. He may be a boy of twenty years of age, who, after having done several short periods of imprisonment, we now find working out a term of penal servitude; or he may be forty years older and doing his third, fourth, or even fifth sentence in a convict prison.

Havelock Ellis believes that imprisonment is for this class of criminal their normal condition, liberty being their holiday, during which, when not engaged in actual crime, they wallow in debaucheries of every kind.

A noteworthy and constant attribute of their character is a constitutional laziness almost amounting to inertia; they are well-nigh incapable of any regular and continuous exertion, but they have occasional spurts of energy, when they sometimes display extraordinary activity. It is in this connection that one can clearly comprehend their strong craving for stimuli, which may be alcohol, gambling, or sexual excitement, for by these they temporarily rouse themselves from their lethargic condition. When at liberty, this tendency attains its climax in periodical states of uproarious and drunken exhilaration, so graphically described by Vidocq in his *Memoirs*.

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So much for the so to speak "extra-mural" conditions of life of these criminals. In prison they may fairly well be divided into two classes:—(*a*) Those who come to prison with the intention of "doing their lagging," as they term it, with a good grace, and whose conduct is often excellent; they take their imprisonment as almost a matter of course, and are accustomed to it from former experience; (*b*) Those who from their day of conviction seem to make it their business to give as much trouble as they can. They besiege the visiting director and the governor in the hope of securing advantages which, from previous bad conduct, they have no right to expect. They also assail the medical officer, and as they are often malingerers of a high order, every resource of that art is employed in the endeavour to obtain indulgences upon medical grounds. Refusal to grant such unreasonable requests does not by any means result in worry on the part of the petitioners, and it would be absurd to think that such refusals operated prejudicially upon their minds.

Dostoieffsky describes an interesting condition at times noticeable amongst criminals, which is a sudden accession, autogenetically, of imperious desire to assert the degraded individuality; this manifests itself in sudden insubordination, assault, or noisy rowdyism, and under other than prison environment would have found an outlet in either an uproarious orgy or a crime of violence. This is not temporary mental aberration, for the reasoning faculties are then in their normal and unimpaired condition, and the individual is in every way responsible.

The troublesome part of the prison population, which I have placed under the subdivision (*b*), are like those in subdivision (*a*), inasmuch as they are accustomed to prison life, but unlike the latter they appear constantly discontented, and lose no opportunity of giving trouble. I say they "appear" to be discontented, for it is highly improbable that they are so in reality, or that their "discontented" frame of mind ever disturbs their mental equilibrium; it certainly affects neither their appetite nor their sleep.

Instances frequently occur when a prisoner on reception evinces signs of weak-mindedness, although perfectly responsible for his actions, and very far from being insane in the strict sense of the term.

A case of this description generally shows some congenital abnormality, often in physiognomy. Such an individual may, soon after admission, be reported for laziness, inattention to

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regulations, or for destroying his clothing. But it must not be supposed that this prisoner is stubbornly kept under conditions which are unfavorable to him; due consideration is always given whenever possible, and not infrequently he goes on steadily ultimately.

When we consider the factors concerned in the production of mental disease, which are said to be offered by imprisonment in a convict establishment, I think it may be safely assumed that they are practically *nil.* To the recidivist the aspect of imprisonment is by no means terrible; whilst there he is kept clean and comfortable, with a sufficiency of wholesome food, and the labour which is exacted from him is less severe than that which he would need to do outside to gain a livelihood. In prison he is shut out from worry and anxiety, from alcohol and deleterious excitement of all kinds; and from the quiet uneventful routine of his life there, I am convinced that, far from predisposing to insanity, it actually shields many from attacks to which they would otherwise be exposed, from the nature of the life they lead outside.

It certainly does not appear that length of sentence is conducive to the production of insanity. My personal experience of convicts doing their third or even fourth term of penal servitude is that the majority of them are men not only of more than average acuteness and shrewdness, but that they are remarkably cheerful individuals as well. I have repeatedly observed that prisoners who have done ten or fifteen years of one long sentence are often persons of exceptional physical and mental health. In the case of recidivists, it must always be borne in mind that imprisonment for them is not at all what ordinary law-abiding people imagine it to be; as Ellis says, when they are at liberty they wallow in a *dolce far niente*—a holiday which by some act of their own they are well aware will assuredly have an end—a termination which is foreseen and expected. Many people are of opinion that remorse is an important cause of mental derangement amongst convicts. After very careful observation of the large criminal population here, I have very rarely found this feeling present at all; in cases where I have heard it expressed I have, from previous knowledge of the character of the individuals concerned, had very strong reason for doubting the sincerity of such professions. Dostoieffsky and Gall, perhaps two of our most intelligent criminologists, both assert that the feeling of remorse is very uncommon amongst criminals, and that the regrets

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which one does hear expressed are far more frequently for the careless omission or neglected opportunity which led to their apprehension and consequent conviction.

Finally, to return to the first offender, I do not think that any intelligent person could possibly imagine that his prison environment could have the effect of unhinging his mind. Of course, given an individual with a strong hereditary tendency to insanity, the effect of the disgrace attendant upon his position might be a predisposing cause of mental disorder; but I contend that a man of normally constituted mind is not more than normally depressed by his position, and that only at the commencement of his sentence, and by the prison discipline his mind is sufficiently diverted from any groove which might, so to speak, disturb the normal swing of his mental pendulum.

The Relation of Acquired Syphilis to Insanity. A Critical Digest. By W. R. DAWSON, M.D. (Dub.), L.R.C.P.I.; Assistant Medical Superintendent, Farnham House Asylum, Dublin.

MODERN opinion as to the nature of syphilis regards it as an exanthematous fever, with a period of incubation, a stage of efflorescence, and an epoch of sequelæ, and in fact diverging in no essential from the type of its class save in its more protracted course, by which peculiarity all other seeming variations can be explained. If the periods of incubation and efflorescence be taken as one, each stage of the disease may be said to have its own characteristic nervous phenomena, including psychoses; and this fact may serve as a basis for the classification of the syphilitic insanities.

Owing to the comparative chronicity of the active period of syphilis, the occurrence of nervous, and above all of mental, phenomena at this stage depends to a far greater degree than in other exanthemata upon predisposition, whether hereditary or acquired. While the majority pass through the disease without showing nervous symptoms, others suffer from them to a greater or less extent, and in a few the mind gives way. As might be expected, the amount of anatomical evidence collected as to the affection of nervous structures by the syphilitic virus is comparatively small, since but few die at this stage, and the specific nature of the lesions cannot at present be proved in all cases. However, implication of the

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