

result of the loss of property, a dread of poverty, and in others such considerations would have no application. The law punishes, as a crime, the attempt to commit suicide, but beyond that it seems to be powerless. Religion, which teaches the sacredness of human life, is, apparently, the only influence that can avail to check this great and growing evil, and it can only do so by enforcing the truth that as murder is a crime, so is suicide a crime.

The fundamental cause of the prevalence of suicide is the negation of faith—a disposition of mind inherited now through some generations educated with scarcely any knowledge of God. In former days there was a general personal belief in God as a judge and punisher. However faulty and sinful the life, there was also a sense of One higher than the individual, a rock to the weak, a refuge even to the evil-doer, One able to deliver, One more merciful than man. With this belief, or superstition if you will, though dim and scarcely thought about, the human soul was afraid to rush into the presence of the misty but portentous and all-powerful Being that rules the universe. In Shakespeare's time God was, it may be said, a Factor in all men's lives, and the alternative of endurance of utmost evil, or of self-destruction, is well debated by his great character, Hamlet, who decides that it is nobler and better "to bear the ills we have, than fly to others that we know not of."

The statistics of suicide which have been carefully elaborated shew only one positive result. In other respects they only add perplexity to knowledge. The one ascertained fact is that in any country which advances in civilization the number of suicides in proportion to population increases also. In general also it may be stated that the rate of suicide is higher in towns than in the country, and among males than among females, though this is said not to be true of the thinly settled districts in the prairie tracts of Canada and the United States. But why these things are so, is a question which has not yet received any satisfactory answer.

Occupation does not per se throw any light upon the subject