

child," whereas her pregnancy was subsequently certified to by competent medical authority, whose opinion stayed her execution, an opinion which was in due time fully verified.

The subject of insanity has been so fully studied in France, America, and England, during the present century, as to leave but few questions connected with it unsolved, so far at least as they permit of solution. As a result of this close investigation, there is not one circumstance more fully established, than, that an inability to discriminate between right and wrong, is not only not a universal characteristic of the disease, but that the contrary is almost always present in cases of the description, termed by modern authors, moral insanity, in which the reasoning powers may be scarcely impaired, while the natural feelings, affections, or desires are so perverted as impulsively to lead to breaches of the moral law. This is a fact, as firmly and fully established by observations as a fact can well be; and yet in opposition to universal medical testimony concurrent on this point, because the law of England maintains the contrary, such testimony must be set aside, and these laborious investigations rendered of no avail. It is full time that this condition of matters should be altered, and that the jurisprudence of insanity should not be fettered as it is. We have no wish to quarrel with the Honorable Judge who defined what the law was on the subject. He was the expounder of the law, as it is, not its maker; but emphatically some wider, more generous views should be entertained in regard to this matter, founded on the generally recognised principles of science. Medical science, may, under certain circumstances, be truly said to be the handmaid of justice, and the latter cannot with propriety, accept some of the advances or improvement, which the former has made, and reject blindly others.

One of the most singular incongruities in reference to this subject, consists in the fact, that the law will readily recognise and admit evidence of insanity in

civil cases, which it stoutly rejects in criminal—that it has a willing and keen eye for it in cases of the former description, while it almost disdains a search for it in those of the latter. To a certain extent this is right; but it must not be forgotten that the practice may be carried too far, and that a too jealous administration of the law, which has thrown its *Ægis* around society to restrain the criminal, or punish him for his crime, may at the same time inflict a deeper—far more rankling—wound, by a bigoted sacrifice to form and precedent, of one victim of perverted reason. Let us not be misunderstood upon this subject. We do not belong to that sect of philanthropists who advocate the abolition of the death penalty for murder; but we do think that that movement owes its origin mainly to the ill-judged administration of retributive justice. Men's minds naturally revolt at the stern execution of a criminal, placed in that position by an act, for which, by a mysterious dispensation of Providence, he is not responsible; and in all cases, especially when the previous existence of insanity has been proved, and knowing well the strong tendency to relapse—if a doubt can be entertained, the prisoner should have the benefit of it.

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*Demonstrative Midwifery.*—During the last session of the University of Buffalo, Dr. White the Professor of Obstetrics, adopted the system of Demonstrative Midwifery, practised in some of the European schools. The *graduating* class was alone present, and everything appears to have been conducted with the greatest decorum. Seventeen medical gentlemen of Buffalo, however, with greater zeal than discretion, openly stigmatized the proceeding as "wholly unnecessary, and grossly offensive alike to morality and common decency"; that it should not be "practised in any civilized community"; and wound up by administering what they were pleased to term "a severe rebuke" to Dr. White. Anonymous letters upon the subject, appeared also in some of the Buffalo daily