

A MORBID MANUSCRIPT.

BY A. F. PIRIE.

In looking over some manuscripts one day—you know how manuscripts accumulate in a newspaper office—I came across a packet which was left with me to "Look over at my leisure." As there was evidently no hurry about it I put it aside and forgot all about it. But do we not all do this? On the lower left hand corner of the envelope containing the manuscript was the name of the contributor, an odd name, as it struck me at the time, but I should probably not have thought of it again had not a startling incident recalled it to mind. But let me first give you an idea of the contents of the envelope. The manuscript was written in a straggling sort of hand but the composition seemed cleverly conceived and not badly put together. I can only give you an outline of it from memory, as unfortunately the packet was subsequently mislaid, and to this day I cannot put my hands on it although I have searched high and low. How is it that when we put anything in a place that we feel that it will be perfectly secure it is so perfectly secure that we cannot remember ourselves where the place is? You think over a dozen places where you imagine it would be safe to put something you wish to keep, discussing in your own mind the comparative security of each of them, and you end by putting the thing in some nook or cranny where you are absolutely certain to forget all about it. You remember the man who used to turn the pictures on his bedroom wall at night to remind him of something in the morning, and then in the morning he would lie awake for an hour wondering what in the world he turned the pictures for.

This manuscript professed to be written by a member of a Suicide Club. The members of the club were limited in number, a new member being ad-

mitted only on the death of an old member, each one binding himself to cut the thread of his existence on the expiration of his club year. There are not many of these clubs, but it is said that they are increasing, and certain it is that the aggregate of suicides every year is steadily growing. There never was a time when so many persons seemed disposed to take their own lives as at present. How is it? Self preservation is the first law of nature. Suicide is a perversion or reversal of the natural instinct of love of life, leading to its destruction. What is the cause of it? The coroners' juries usually attribute suicide to temporary insanity, but we all know that this is merely a kindly way of throwing the mantle of charity over the act of the unfortunate victim.

"As a member of The Suicide Club," the writer of the manuscript said, "I desire to leave on record a few reasons in justification of what the world calls self-murder but which is more properly termed self disposal. We all set foot in this planet without being consulted. We should have the right to leave it at our own pleasure. Let a man go to the theatre to see a play. If he does not appreciate it he is free to depart. The world is a universal theatre. Life is a play. To some it is a comedy, to some a farce, to all too many a tragedy. Suicide was taught by the ancients as a virtuous action and has been justified by some of the greatest of modern minds. The ethical code of the early Christians permitted the voluntary provocation of martyrdom, and the Christian maidens or matrons who, like St. Pelagia, took their own lives at the prospect of violation by pagan persecutors, have been recognized as saints. To contend that suicide presupposes insanity is absurd. Was Seneca insane when he entered the warm bath and opened his veins?"