

The Legal News.

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THE CUSTODY OF INSANE PERSONS.

The very general reluctance to relax or weaken the checks which protect sane persons from being shut up fraudulently in lunatic asylums—a reluctance which has been greatly increased by writers of fiction like Charles Reade—has had a tendency to the opposite error, and persons undoubtedly insane, and often dangerous, are suffered to be at large, with no other restraint than can be exercised by friends or relatives. Suicides like that of the late Mr. Shannon in Montreal are now of almost daily occurrence throughout the country, as any one can be convinced by an examination of the telegraphic despatches in the files of a daily paper. These unfortunate people are usually observed with more or less certainty to be deranged several days before the irrevocable act is committed, but no effort is made to place them in safe keeping. Their lives are therefore sacrificed, when in all probability a few weeks of proper attention would have fully restored their mental health.

But a still more painful class of cases is that in which the person with disordered mind sacrifices others as well as himself. It is quite common for women laboring under delusions to kill their children before they commit suicide. The recent case of Mrs. Seguin in New York, in which the wife of a physician slaughtered her whole family before putting an end to her own life, furnishes a terrible illustration. Referring to this case the *Albany Law Journal* pertinently observes:—"There is no safety in the household against the craft and violence of the insane, and mild melancholy is ever ready to burst out into mad rage. . . . No family should be intrusted with the keeping, but every such person should be sent to an asylum. It should be made the duty of every physician, under penalty, to report to the proper officers the case of every insane person within his knowledge."

It must be confessed, however, that the subject is one of the greatest difficulty and embarrassment. It is admitted, we believe, that in the first stages of mental maladies the removal

of the patient from his ordinary surroundings is most salutary and conducive to a speedy recovery. Dr. Seguin is said to have entertained a contrary opinion; but the result has probably shaken his convictions. But, apart from the danger of confining those who are perfectly sane, how shall the reluctance of relatives to be separated from those who appear to them to be merely the victims of melancholy, be overcome? Certainly not so long as asylums are regarded with feelings of apprehension and even aversion as at present.

THE ADVOCATES' LIBRARY.

The Provincial Government have acceded to the suggestion of a deputation of the Montreal bar, that a gallery be erected in the Advocates' Library, and space will thus be provided for the fresh acquisitions of several years to come. The library at Montreal now comprises a very respectable collection of books, though possibly a little more care in the selection would not be labor lost.

JUDICIAL RECREATION.

Mr. Justice Lawson, now famous in connection with the Gray contempt case, and as the object of an attempted assassination, has for some time, according to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, been engaging his leisure in turning a collection of popular evangelical and other hymns into Latin verse. Sometimes the Horatian metres are followed, but more commonly the learned judge has sought to gain the exact measure of the original. Several of the hymns, adds the *Gazette*, are rendered with exquisite grace and taste.

To one who, like the learned judge, lives in hourly apprehension of death by knife, bullet or dynamite, some of the sacred melodies will doubtless have double significance. He may say, in the version of Brady and Tate,

"My hairs, though num'rous, are but few,
Compared with foes that me pursue—"

Or he may be excused for applying to his enemies, in bitterness of spirit, those other lines,

"They to the grave in peace descend,
And whilst they live are hale and strong;
No plague or troubles them offend,
Which oft to other men belong."

It is certain, however, that if judges are forced to toil, with one hand upon a revolver and a policeman at their back, deliberation will not be assisted, and an occasional eccentricity of judgment may be pardoned.