## THE SADLIER SUICIDE.

### IS HE REALLY DEAD?

How complete and absolute either side of a case appears, till the opposite one is heard. A visit to any of our law-courts will illustrate this. the story of the plaintiff is usually so finished in all its details as to appear at the first glance impregnable; and persons who hear it are inclined to ask: 'What answer can it be possible to make to this?'—and to regret that the defendant or his counsel should take the trouble to reply to what appears so self-evident. It is difficult to believe, after the high sounding opening speech of the plaintiff's counsel, and the testimony of his witesses, that there can be a single flaw in the case, or a chance left even for the defendant to speak. But pause a moment, and see how confidently 'the learned gentleman on the other side' glides into the case under discussion, and observe how speedily he gives a different complexion to the whole matter—how his witnesses knock down the airy structure of the plaintiff; and amazement sits on our brow when, at the end of the trial, we are obliged to depart from our too hastily formed opinion, because we find the defendant to have the best of the case, and see him walking smilingly out of court. he verdict being in his favour. Every day we have the opportunity of hearing, or at least of reading, such cases. The is scarcely a point promulgated in art, science, literature, or law, in which there is not occasion for the use of the old proverb about 'doctors differ,' which we recently illustrated; and often enough are there cases still more noteworthy than the Torbanehill controversy or the recent affair of poisoning by strychnia.

Having thus premised, we proceed without further preface to an illustrative circumstance. So lately as February last, an instance of suicide occurred, which, from the position of the deceased and from matters that came out afterwards, attracted very great attention, and which has since given rise to a very curious controversy—one side contending that this person is not really dead, and the other asserting that upon that point there is no room for a moment to doubt.

The following brief summary of the facts of the suicide, and the reasons assigned for denying it, will put the reader in possession of the whole details. On the morning of Sunday the 18th of February last, the dead body of a man was found at a considerable distance from the public road on Hampstead Heath. A silver cream-jug, and a large bottle, labelled 'Essential Oil of Almonds,' were found by the side of the corpse. The body was quite cold, and the *rigor mortis* perfectly established. It was speedily removed to the wokrhouse, where it was seen by a medical man a few minutes afterwards. There were found near to, or on the person of the deceased, six sovereigns, a five pound note, twelve shillings and sixpence in silver, some coppers, a white cambric pocket handkerchief, a small pocket paper knife a latch key, a pair of gloves, a case containing two razors, and a piece of paper on which was written his name and address. As is usual in all such cases, an inquest was held upon the body. In addition the coroner to watchthe proceedings in in interest of the family of the deceased; and, according to the report in the *Times* newspaper, the jury having proceeded to the dead-house, the following facts were educed:—

1. The butler of the deceased identified the body as being that of his master, and stated that he must have left the house between half-past eleven when he saw him last, and a quarter to one when he proceeded to fasten the door. He also stated, that his master had taken with him a heavy greatcoat, which 'he seldom wore.'

2. A labouring-man deposed to finding the deceased 'lying on his back, with his head bent backwards against a furze-bush, and his feet towards the edge of the bog. All his clothes were on except his hat, which lay near to the body.' This witness also described the things mentioned above as having been found beside him, but 'he did not feel the skin of the body at all, to know whether or not it was cold.'

3. A police constable saw nothing about the spot to indicate a struggle, except a mark or two which the deceased appeared to have made with his heels. The cream-jug, which had a few drops of the poison still in it, lying near him, as if it had dropped from his right hand. The bottle lay on his left side with the stopper out, and about a foot distant from it.

4. The surgeon of Hampstead saw the body at twenty minutes to ten, in the dead-house. It was then quite cold, and the limbs rigid. There was a most powerful odour of the essential oil of bitter almonds perceptible st the mouth; but there was nothing else to shew that the unfortunate gentleman had committed suicide.

5. The butler was called a second time, and identified the cream-jug as that which his master used at tea on Saturday evening. He also proved that the poison in question had been procured from the chemist with whom the deceased was in the habit of dealing. The order for the poison was as follows;—'Get from Maitland's a bottle of the essential oil of bitter almonds; I don't know the quantity wanted, but—but Kenyon [a groom] writes to me to bring one pound's worth. Pay my bill at Maitland's.' The witness did not know it was poison he was to get at Maitland's. He thought it was some ingredients in a hair-wash which his master was going to mix in two bottles, which had been placed on the sideboard. 'The deceased was a temperate and sober man. He drank only a glass or two of sherry with his dinner. He had not of late noticed any change in deceased's manner. The deceased was much occupied in business. He had not complained of his head at all, of not being able to sleep. nor was he under medical treatment. He came home unexpectededly to dinner on Saturday evening. He seldom dined at home, but usually at his club. He left home on a Saturday morning with a quantity of papers with him, as he was accustomed to do. Before getting into the cab, he returned to his room upstairs, as if he had forgotten something. Again, before he had been away in the cab many minutes, he returned, and went upstairs for a few moments. He drove off in the cab again, and did not return until the evening. He had never before, to witness's knowledge made any attempt on his life.'

6. A solicitor, who was intimately acquainted with deceased, then gave evidence. He saw deceased last alive shortly before eleven o'clock on Saturday night last. He appeared oppressed by by his undertakings. Latterly, he seemed rather haggard. During the last week particularly, there was a great change in his appearance. He seemed to be quite borne down by the extent of his business, and 'particularly by some occurrences which took place last week. They were losses and pecuniary embarrassments which had lately come upon him.' During the interview, this witness noticed a peculiarity in deceased's manner His eyes were bloodshot; he was very restless, and evidently not in his usual temperament. Had never seen him in such a state before.' This witness had again occasion to call at night, when he was unexpected. 'He seemed surprised when I went in, and was walking about the room which was very unusual with him. I thought I perceived a great redness and peculiarity about the eyes as if he had been weeping. This witness, on being cross examined, admitted having made a remark to the effect that he would not be surprised if deceased was to shoot himself. 'The reason I made that remark was, that being a man of extraordinary clearness and strength of mind, my impression was that these reverses, coming suddenly upon him, as they did on Wednesday morning last, his mind would break down at once. I was told last week that his losses were very severe. The subject was discussed in my office, and he admitted it.'

The coroner said nothing can be clearer than the cause of death. It was perfectly evident to him that the unfortunate gentleman had died by his own act. Nothing could by possibility be plainer. 'It was much to be deplored,' said the coroner, 'that facility was afforded to him to obtain the poison in the way he had done; but, judging from his carrying a couple of razors in his pocket, it was clear, that if he had failed in destroying himself by taking or procuring the essential oil of almonds, he would have done it with a razor. The only question for the consideration of the jury was, as to what was the state of his mind at the time he committed the act.'

It also traspired, in evidence at the inqnest, that the pecuniary affairs of the deceased were greatly involved. He was what may be called a financier on a gigantic scale; and it has since transpired, that he was at the time of his death involved in frauds and forgeries to the enormous extent of one million pounds sterling and that an expected early exposure was the motive for the suicide.

In the face of such conclusive evidence as we find adduced at the inquest, and of which the above summary, it might, we think, be held as almost impossible to dispute the fact of this being a case of suicide of the most determined kind. The butler speaks positively on the subject of the identity; and the *Times'* report mentions that two of his brothers were also present, and likewise several of deceased's personal friends and acquaintances; and it is evident, as they say nothing to the contrary, that they believe the body to be that of the person whose name and address was found in the pocket. The coroner also is certain, and so is the surgeon who make the *post mortem* examination. But all this, we are told, must now go for nothing—it is only a case of imposture, and a deception which has been practised on the confiding public.

This view of the case was first promulgated in a newspaper on the 29th of March last, in a communication 'by R. W. A. of D.,' whom the editor of the paper in question* leads us, in a note, to look upon as the same ingenious person who questioned the existence of Napoleon Bonaparte. The following is a summary of the arguments contained in the letter of R. W. A:—

1. That the first fact of importance in the case is—What has become of all the enormous sums of money that were known to have passed through the hands of deceased? 'That on the particular Saturday of the alleged suicide, a very large sum of money (L.1300) was paid by a gentleman into the hands of deceased—a sum of which, from that time to the present, not the slightest trace has been found. Mr. Keating, also, on the second day's inquest, speaks of a bank-note of L.1000 which was not to be found among his effects.' Various large remittances are know to have been also made. in addition to this sum of L 2300, 'clearly made away with.' Therefore, on the very brink of the grave, we find deceased collecting, as it were, his accounts, and as eager for money as if he was to live a score of years longer.

2. The dates of his letters shew that he meditated suicide a full week before its alledged consumation; during most of which time 'he was engaged in borrowing.'

3. The following observations on the *rigor mortis* are made a strong point in the argument. We have first a quotation from *Paris and Fonblanque's Medical Jurisprudence*: 'It may be laid down as a general rule, that the more sudden the death, the longer is cadaverous stiffness from taking place. . . . If a body in such cases be cold and stiff, we may be certain that more than twelve hours have elapsed since the fatal event.' It is argued that the deceased could not have reached Hampstead Heath before twelve o'clock, at the very earliest, taking into account that he was seen by his solicitor shortly before eleven, and by his butler at half-past eleven o'clock. The suicide, therefore, could not take place before half-past twelve at the earliest or two o'clock at the latest; and yet, at a quarter before nine in the morning, the body was *stiff and cold* 'the *rigor mortis* firmly established!' 'We have already established,' says the ingenious R. W. A., 'half-past twelve as the earliest hour at which a suicide could have taken place, which gives us as the greatest possible interval which could have elapsed between the supposed suicide and the finding of the body "cold and stiff," *precisely eight hours and a quarter*.

4. Dr. Guy, in his treatise on *Medical Jurisprudence* p. 278, says: 'One general rule may be laid down. We should never content ourselves with the mere passive exercise of our senses or judgment. It is not enough to see the objects which actually present themselves to the eye—we must look for such as are not obvious at the first glance. To the correctness of good observers, we must add the intelligence and invention of an experimenter. We must beware of a hasty decision and remember that the apparent cause of death is not always the real one.' And further, as to the place in which the body is found, 'the first caution is not to conclude too hastily that the spot in which a body is discovered is that in which death actually took place.' Dr. Beck says, that 'very soon after death such a total change of the features takes place that it is impossible for the nearest relatives to recognise them.'

5. Another medical authority says: 'It cannot be too generally known that upon the discovery of a dead body, its situation and attitude should never be disturbed until it has been examined by competent persons. We may, for example, find deceased in a posture which he could never have himself assumed, whence we should be led to conclude that he had not fallen by his own hands. In the case of the disputed suicide of the Earl of Essex in the Tower, much information was lost by the body having been stripped and removed before a due examination took place.'

6. We may note as a commentary on the above, that the body was removed to Hampstead workhouse before being examined by any competent person.

7. As to the indentification, the following remarks are made:—The body was not identified at the inquest by any individual whose *causa scientiæ* consisted in any knowledge of the body by marks or peculiarities of structure. The only witness who *swears* to the identity is the butler, who had been only eighteen months in the service of deceased. 'It is upon the evidence of this person, and this person only, that the body was identified for the jury.' The fact of the butler's not having observed any change in his master during the last month or two, and and that his manner on the fatal Saturday was the same as usual, does not agree with the statement of the solicitor, who states that deceased latterly appeared haggard, and that he noticed an extraordinary change in his appearance during the last week.

8. The remaning portion of the letter is occupied in criticising the fact of deceased being occupied in preparing a hair-wash, and is introduced by another quotation from *Paris and Fonblanque*, vol. ii., p. 18. 'In conducting our inquiry, the most trifling incidents connected with the deceased should not pass unheeded; for however unimportant they may at first individually appear, we shall often find, that, in combination, they will afford the principal data for the solution of our problem. With how many examples will the history of crime present us where the most minute circumstances have alone furnished the convincing proofs of guilt.' This is followed by a piece of truly singular evidence from the butler: 'Deceased had previously that evening asked him to clean two bottles and place them on the sideboard, which he did. He (witness) did not know that he had poison to get at Mr. Maitland'r He thought it was some ingredient in a hair-wash which his master was going to mix in the two bottles, which had been placed on the sideboard.'

9. He had just previously posted away a letter to his sister, informing her of his intention to commit suicide.

10. Why did this person walk out to Hampstead Heath at midnight to commit the deed? is next asked. 'It has appeared to me very strange that a man intending to make away with himself by a poison instantaneous in its effects, should trugde out to Hampstead Heath in the middle of the night for the purpose, first putting into his pocket a piece of paper to tell his name. In short, the doing so were putting one's self to a deal of trouble for no intelligible purpose.'

As might have been anticipated of a speculation so curious as that of R. W. A., it was extensively circulated by being immediately copied into all the Loudon and provincial papers. Of course it was at first only laughed at, as an ingenious piece of reasoning; and the coroner who presided at the trial was thought finally to have settled the matter when he wrote to the *Times* in answer to the above, that there could be no doubt whatever as to the identity of the body, as he himself had made a very minute examination of it, and had even opened the eyelids,&c. The surgeon, too, who made the *post-mortem* examination, thought it necessary to state again, through means of the press, the fact of his having found a very considerable quantity of poison in the stomach of the corpse.

Notwithstanding the re-statement of these two great facts, the idea gained ground that the suicide was in reality a complete deception. The old facts were once again dwelt upon. His anxiety about his papers on the Saturday morning, and his repeated returns to his study after he had gone out, point, it is thought, to anxiteies of a different kind from those of approaching death, and lead to the supposition of his being at that time busy making arrngements for flight. The gigantic system of swndling in which it is now know deceased had been engaged, must, it is said, have put him in possession of a sum of money so immense, as to render it easy for him to carry out any piece of deception, however difficult. And we are also triumphantly told, that as the whole career of the man was a developement of swindling and forgery, 'he has, in fact, been merely capping the climax of his forgeries by dexterous forgery of himself.' We are also told, 'that the *agony of mind* displayed to his visitor of Saturday evening was a clever piece of acting—that the letters were an ingenious contrivence to strengthen belief in his death—that the written order for the poison, the selection of the silver jug, and the body carefully placed on a mound on Hampstead Heath were all of a piece, cleverly contrived, and admirably carried out.'

The elaborate and varied collection of matters found on deceased, consisting of money of varied kinds, the paper knife, &c., are all a part of the sham; and the writing of the name and address was unnecessary in the case of a man so well known as deceased, who was a member of parliament, and a celebrated shareholder in, and chairman of many joint-stock companies. It is asked—would the body have been so readily known had there been no written paper with the name? It is also reported that deceased said, on meeting a friend in the city: 'Good-bye; I am going a long journey.'

Another great fact on the case is derived from the circumstance of deceased being perfecly clean and free from mud. Why did he choose to go so far from home to die? How did he get there?—in a cab? If so, where is the cabman who drove him? If he walked on a wet night, how happens it that his boots were perfectly free from stain? 'How did he cross the moist and muddy ground that encircled the hillock on which the body was found? This particular spot could not in the daytime be approached without soiling the boots or shoes; and yet, on a wet evening, at midnight, the journey across the bog was cleanly accomplished! This brings the evidence to a most dramatic climax, and scarcely requires the additional and very latest intelligence we have received on the subject, which goes to prove the whole reasoning to be correct: it is, that a respectable correspondant, living in Tipperary, writes to the *Cork Examiner* to say that a lady, residing a short distance from that town, had received a letter from her father in Louisiana, United States, in which he states that the supposed suicide is there alive and well, and that he saw him. The name of this Americam correspondent has been furnished to the above paper, and he is represented as being a gentleman of undoubted respectabitiy.—*Chamber's Journal*.

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"They Say."—"They say" is the monarch of this country, in a social sense. No one asks "who says it," so long as it is believed that "they say it." Designing men endeavour to persuade the public that already "they say" what these designing men wish to be said, and the public is only two much disposed blindly to join in the cry of "they say."

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In the Irish language, the electric telegraph is called "Sgeal abata bolta," the literal translation of which is, "News upon stilts."

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The *Albany Knickerbocker* mentions that some robbers upset a pot of yeast while entering a house, which raised the family, and prevented the accomplishment of their designs.

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Louis the Fourteenth advanced to the top of the staircase to meet the great Conde, after the battle of Senef. The prince, who ascended slowly from the effects of his gout, apologised to his majesty or making him wait. "My cousin," was the reply, "do not hurry; no one could move quickly who was loaded with laurels as you are."