

Why Do Washington Belles Kill Themselves?

In Washington last week it was reported that a young gentleman, Mrs. Thomas F. Lane, daughter of Senator Blackburn, had attempted suicide. Subsequently the occurrence was attributed to an accident, and the report denied. The incident may, therefore, be dismissed. But a text remains. A month ago Miss Leila Herbert, daughter of the former secretary of the navy, threw herself from a window. A fortnight later Miss Mary Waite, daughter of the ex-governor of Colorado, took poison. Meanwhile Miss Wells put a bullet through her brain. Anteriorly Miss Kate Bayard killed herself; so, too, did Miss Daisy Garland; so, also, did Miss Beattie Hillyer. Miss Bayard was the daughter of the secretary of state. Miss Daisy Garland was the daughter of the attorney general. The father of Miss Hillyer is a millionaire. These young women moved in what is colloquial to term the best set. Individually their deaths are recent. Each is without apparent motive. All occurred in Washington. Why?

That question it is the purpose of this article to consider. By way of preliminary, a definition or two may help. Mme. de Staël—a lady whose grace Byron described as not those of the person—commended suicide. She declared it to be the act of one who has conquered even the fear of death. Suicide, however, is little else than assassination driven in. Those who want to die usually do so because others don't. When they happen to have another reason it is more often than not because they really want to live. What they don't want are the miseries attendant on their own particular existence. Abolish them and they will swear by Methuselah. "I do not know," said Voltaire, "what life eternal may be, but I do know that this one is a very poor joke. Happiness," he added, "is a dream. Only pain is real. I have thought so for eight odd years, and I have hit on no better plan than to resign myself to the inevitable and reflect that flies were born to be devoured by spiders and man to be consumed by care."

Voltaire's views were not original.

character which have occurred there are due to a pathological condition of a morbid type. But it should be noted, too, that while now and again men of position kill themselves, the suicide of a girl of position is so unusual that when it comes to a succession of them, six, one right after the other, the circumstance ceases to be unusual, it becomes unexampled. In the history of afflicted cities, in the social chronicles of New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Baltimore, nothing of the kind is to be found. Washington, however, is another kettle of fish. New Yorkers, Bostonians, Philadelphians, Baltimoreans—particularly Philadelphians—speak of their good old families. A good old Washington family is a thing which genealogy has to hear of yet. Society there is heterogeneous and conglomerate. Composed of women from all over the globe, there is none as variegated. There is none as unstable. It is in process not of constant evolution, but of constant transformation. The origin of the members is elsewhere. It is not a home, it is an inn—one, parenthetically, which, conducted on the European plan, lacks European restraints. The young girls whom the various administrations gather there bring their beauty and sometimes lose their heads. That is natural. In the diplomatic set they encounter men who differ entirely from those of their race. The girls, too, differ from any whom these men have met.

It is the reshaping of platitudes to state that society as it is constituted on the other side differs radically from society as constituted here, but the reshaping is necessary for the convenience of the point which is sought. Over there the young girl is a neglectable and neglected quantity. Practically, until she marries, she can't be said to exist. Her parents, guardians and

than is enjoyed by the married at home. The fact surprises, and no wonder. Then, presently, before the surprise can subside, it has occurred that without effort, almost without knocking, he finds himself admitted into the intimacy of a young girl's heart.

Before him are candors such as he has never presumed to approach, opportunities for investigating them such as he has never known. Before her is the easy glitter of suggested scenes, evocations of sumptuous courts; the romance of the remote, the spangle of a title, perhaps, and, with it, the resonance of a sonorous name.

Such things affect a girl. In their absence there are the terrible chaps from the departments of the Navy and the War. The sword is yet to be forged that can work swifter havoc than the gleam of brass buttons, the sheen of gold braid and shimmering blue. Such things affect a girl also. But not infrequently the foreigner is preferred. In addition to other attractions, Washington provides him with a background of political thimble-riggers and provincial seam. It sets him off.

There, too, a title can be divided. A count makes a countess. There is a magic in that. It has happened, however, that the title has already been divided. It has occurred that the owner is not dividing just then. The inevitable does not necessarily ensue. There is an effect that does. That it should lead to suicide is pathetic.

It is worse. There is nothing as dismal as a young girl's death. She has lived so little. In her heart is the longing and the dream of beautiful to-morrows. "Wait for me," she cries, "I am coming." When a malady pounces and carries her off what is it but one of Death's assassinations? Yet, when, instead of the unexpected, the unnatural supervenes, when the dream of the morrow retreats, and the longing subsides, when the future narrows into a blind alley, when some formless thing she knows not what comes

SAND SET THEM FREE.

SOLDIERS GAINED LIBERTY IN A PECULIAR MANNER.

Where the Idea Came from—A Little Piece of Newspaper Floating on the Surface of a Stream Gave One of the Men the Suggestion.

"When we were stationed at Port Conway, below Fredericksburg a scouting party of our people had what might be called a very narrow escape from an involuntary trip to Richmond as prisoners," remarked a sergeant of the 5th Pennsylvania cavalry, who, with other enlisted men, was relating his experiences to a Philadelphia Times reporter. "You see," said he, "we had been sent out by Gen. Bayard to see what the enemy were doing. We numbered all told thirty-six men, under the command of a lieutenant, and our instructions were to go as far as the old warehouses on the river below us, and then return the way we had gone. Everything went right until about 1 o'clock; we hadn't seen any of the enemy and were marching to camp again, when the lieutenant thought he'd see what was in a house over on our right. When we arrived at the house we found no one at home but an old woman, two young girls, and half a dozen female slaves. We dismounted and asked for something to eat. There wasn't a mouthful of anything in the house; the women were fed by a son-in-law over by Port Conway. There wasn't a horse or other animal to be seen about the whole place.

"Are there no men about?" asked the lieutenant. "Not one," replied the lady with dignity. "They are all in the confederate army. If you are after them you'll have to go where they are to find them." "Thanks," laughingly replied the lieutenant, "we have no particular wish to go on the other side of the river at present."

"Perhaps you may go," said the lady, "without any desire." "We mounted and were soon on our way to Port Conway, distant about six miles. As we rode along I thought over what the lady had said. Did she mean a threat or was it only woman's talk? I rode up to the lieutenant and was just about to mention the thing to him when from a clump of bushes there sounded such a shout as I had never heard before. Our men were scattered over about half a mile of road and there was no chance to get them together; as it was, I don't believe any effort was made, for each man seemed to be taking care of himself. As I pulled up I saw about a dozen Johnnies making toward me.

"Surrender, you Yankee —, or we'll fill you full of holes." I could do nothing, so thought discretion the better part of valor and pulled up where I stood.

"Dismount," cried a big fellow, aiming his gun at me. "I dismounted and was led into the woods, where I found a number of our men who had been previously captured. There was another sergeant beside myself and I asked him how many there were of us. He told me that nine had been captured with him. We did not halt long in the woods, but were soon taken over the river, there to wait until the others came in. Only three men were left to guard us, but as we were without arms that was quite enough. While we were sitting on the river bank bemoaning our fate I noticed a little piece of newspaper floating on the surface of the water. I played with it awhile, then drew it forth. Glad to do anything to pass the time I sat down and looked it over. Down in one corner I read the story of a woman throwing vitriol into another's eyes.

"When you have given up in despair, when nothing but a rebel prison stands before you, your thoughts are somewhat lively. Mine were, at any rate, and I prayed for an ounce of vitriol at that moment. But the prayer was in vain; I had no vitriol and nothing to take its place. We were sitting in the sand and the guards were talking to us like old friends. All at once I started up. I had an idea that looked feasible. What's the matter with sand? If we could manage to get a handful of sand in each guard's eyes we might escape. It was an inspiration. The more I thought of it the more feasible it became, and I got so nervous thinking over it that I couldn't sit still. I sat down and got up. I walked as far as I dared and sat down again. We prisoners were all together and I thought of some plan by which I might communicate with the others. The guard surrounded us and it looked to be impossible. I made sly motions to the other sergeant, but he was so much taken up with his own affairs that he couldn't understand, and I gave up the idea of attracting his attention. Right next to me was a little York county Dutchman. I'd try him. I whispered that if we could only cast a handful of the others would get in as soon as they saw the point.

"We had been waiting for half an hour and the guards were becoming restless. They stood about and talked of sand into each guard's eyes we might escape. He was a cunning little duck and instantly grasped the idea and signaled that it was all right. I saw him look for sand right away. Then I whispered to another man and he signaled that he understood and he looked for sand. In this way I managed to communicate the idea to the others and in a little while I had six men in the secret. I had no doubt that

to each other and to me. Then I entered into a conversation with them about the war and saw the York county man gather a double-handful of sand; then some of the others did the same and one would have thought that us Yankees were mud-pie makers without doubt had they seen the industry of these men. I had not got my sand yet, but I determined to be in it and soon left the guard and collected my sand. The other men were sitting about thinking of their trip to rebel-dom, when I suddenly arose as if to depart, which caused my guard to look about. The next instant I had dashed a handful of sand directly into his eyes and he was swearing as only a trooper can. I looked about and saw that the other guards had been taken care of by our fellows and were scampering about rubbing their eyes like madmen. We were not long in disarming them and making them prisoners; it was all over in less than two minutes. When we had shared their sabers, pistols and carbines among us and were masters of the situation we walked them down to the river and assisted them to get the sand out of their eyes. Then we took their lariats and tied them.

"Thus far there hadn't been a loud word spoken, except when we dashed the sand into their eyes. They sat for a time in stoical silence; then, as if the comical side of the affair had just occurred to them, they set up a laugh, in which we all joined.

"You all got us this time, Yanks," said one of them. "I've often heard that the Yanks were cunning, but I sw'ar if this wasn't the cunningest thing I ever heard of," said another. "How in — did you ever think of such a thing?" "That gave me the idea," said I, and I showed them the piece of paper I had fished out of the river.

"It ain't much," said the first speaker, "but it done the business, didn't it?"

FREEDOM OF BURMESE WOMEN.

Things Are Strangely Reversed in That Country.

Women in Burma are probably freer and happier than they are anywhere else in the world, says the Philadelphia Ledger. Though Burma is bordered on one side by China, where women are held in contempt, and on the other by India, where they are kept in the strictest seclusion, Burmese women have achieved for themselves and have been permitted by their men to attain a freedom of life and action that has no parallel among oriental peoples. The secret lies, perhaps, in the fact that the Burmese woman is active and industrious, while the Burmese man is indolent and often a recluse. Becoming, therefore, both by taste and by habit, the money earner, the bargainer and the financier of the household, she has asserted and obtained for herself the right to hold what she wins and the respect due to one who can and does direct and control. Things are strangely reversed in Burma, for here we see a man as the religious soul of the nation and woman its brain. Burmese women are born traders, and it is more often the wife than the husband who drives the bargain with the English buyer for the paddy harvest, or, at any rate, she is present on the occasion and helps her easy-going husband to stand firm. So highly is trading esteemed that a daughter of well-to-do parents, and even a young married woman, will set up a booth in the bazaar, and, dressed in a bright silk tamsin (skirt) and white jacket, with a flower jauntily stuck into her coiled black tresses, she will start every morning with a tray of sweetmeats, fruit or toys on her head, and, with a gayety and grace born of the sunshine and the bounteousness of the land, will push a brisk trade all through the short and sunny day. The earnings thus made are the woman's own, and cannot be touched by her husband.

MAKING RATS WORK.

St. Louis Firm Gets Its Drain Pipe Cleaned Gratis.

There are 150 men in North St. Louis who defy any one to dispute the fact that Tom Maguire is a genius, says the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Mr. Maguire is a yard foreman at a gas company's plant. The enthusiastic proclaimers of his genius are his fellow-workers in the big yard. A sewer pipe leading from one of the buildings to the river bank, 160 feet away, became clogged. The pipe is sixteen feet below the surface. It was not known just where the obstruction was, so arrangements were made to open the trench. Then Maguire brought into play what proved to be the trump card—viz.: rats. He had been thinking about the plan for several days. One night, by the aid of generous hunks of fresh cheese, he managed to entrap two big gray rodents and these he determined to put into the sewer. They were taken to the mouth at the river bank and released. The opening was then closed securely behind them, leaving the animals with only one chance of life. That was to go straight ahead. And they did. Several more rats were caught, each succeeding day and turned into the sewer, until a dozen fine specimens were gnawing away in the pipe. The morning after the last detachment joined the main rodent army water commenced to trickle from the pipe. Iron rods and steam were applied. In ten minutes the sewer was clear.

Definition.

Tommy—Paw, what sort of a fighter is a "cyclope fighter?"

Mr. Pigg—I don't know much about fighters, but I suppose he is one who goes blowing around.—Indianapolis Journal.

A person should never go out walking in a driving rain.

FRENCHMAN SAW ONE TRAIT.

Biggest Things in America Are the Smallest Ones, He Says.

From Invention: A French engineer who has been on a tour of inspection in the state, was not impressed by the big things of the country. "I shall report to my government," says he, "that the biggest things in America are the little things. The French people are experts in domestic economy, and live comfortably by saving what average families in the states throw away. But Americans are, on the other hand, experts in industrial economy. They make money by saving wastage in the business and lose some of it by wastage in domestic economy. The attention paid to small details in big works is amazing to me; I have visited some establishments where I believe that the profits are made not in the manufacture proper, but in the saving of materials and labor by close attention to details that are with us unconsidered trifles. For example, I saw a grindstone in operation at a big works automatically sharpening lathe and planer tools. This machine costs probably as much as 100 of our ordinary grindstones cost, but I see that it automatically grinds all the tools for 300 high-priced mechanics, and it only works a few hours each day. The skilled mechanics in our country frequently stop their regular work to grind their own tools, and then do it imperfectly. In the states tools are all accurately ground to the best shape by the machine, so that they do more and better work on this account in a given time. I believe that that machine has brains—the brains of the inventor—and it has no doubt revolutionized work of this kind in American machine shops. This is but one case out of many that I have noted." The visitor correctly defined a peculiar characteristic of American inventive genius. The great engineering undertakings, the immense manufacturing establishments and the levithian machinery are, of course, most conspicuous and impressive, but these big things a comparatively few in number, while the novel improvements in little things—usually classed as "yankee notions"—are legion, and each one contributes its mite toward the general sum of prosperity of the business of the country.

FOR ARCHITECTS TO LEARN.

Designing and Good Taste Cannot Be Taught.

Sound and ready knowledge of building, dextrous readiness and some approach to excellence as a free-hand draughtsman and some skill as a modeler—these are the three things which the students should be taught, says the Atlantic. All else is a part of his higher education, of his training as a man rather than as an architect. Time was when there existed no such distinction; when there were living traditions which the young architect had to learn, which he would learn naturally as an apprentice—exactly as the apprentice painter picked up his art of painting naturally and ground his master's colors and swept out his master's workshop while. Those days are gone. There is no tradition now which ought to be learned, because there is no tradition which is not that of some school or coterie, none which binds the world of building men. There is no tradition now which should not be avoided, because there is no tradition which is not telling against a healthy growth of the fine art of building. The traditions now are of the most mischievous character, and nothing can come of a familiarity with them but prolongation of the sterile years, the years of the lean line, through which the European world goes starving in spirit for food of the solid and wholesome sort known to men of old. Designing cannot be taught; good taste cannot be taught, and yet it is well for the artist in any department to learn what other artists have done, and to learn how they designed and to see what they accounted good taste.

ODDS AND ENDS OF FASHION.

A striking visiting gown is of red silk checked with alternate squares of black-and-white satin and trimmed around the hips with a scroll design in black satin ribbon, this trimming being repeated on the bodice, where it outlines a white satin vest tucked.

A black cloth dress has a skirt made with a flounce at the back, a plain front seam, and bands of cloth, elaborately hemstitched, extending their influence from the front round to the back. There is scarcely any fullness in the flounce at the back, but it gives just that sweep which makes for grace.

A beautiful yet simple evening gown has a skirt of shot gray and white silk, with a surface like Terry velvet, and the bodice of ivory lisse set into many tucks, striped with pale-yellow lace and edged with chinchilla. Round the waist of this is a belt of pale-blue moire, fastened with diamond buttons.

In regard to underskirts red is a very popular shade in which these, for day wear, are shown, while pink and yellow hold the field for evening skirts. Red is, indeed, becoming almost as popular as it was last season, and is beginning to supersede the beautiful violet shades, of which, however, we cannot but be rather tired now, seeing how much they have been overdone.

Every garment, more or less, is assisted to its effects by chiffon. Evening capes of the short order, which are still in favor, by reason, no doubt, of their usefulness, have second shorter capes, or panels, or vandykes, all of which are profusely flounced with the ever-decorative chiffon; while the aprons of party-going gowns are outlined again with frills and ruchings of the same, which, brought up over the hips, are continued in wide sashes to the end of the skirt at back.

"Does your wife jump at conversations?" "No, she jumps at bargains."



They have been running about the bookshelves ever since books were shelved. Through them the theory originated that a being superior to man could not exist. With higher intelligence he would refuse to put up with what we have to.

her, plucks at her sleeve, sits by her, whispers to her and incites her to hide herself from life, then it is not death alone which has passed that way; it is tragedy.

Misery manifestly is immedicable. Life is a vale of tears. We respire, aspire, perspire and expire. Solomon told us that; other things, too. But he was unacquainted with modern society. There is the reverse of the medal.

Society is an elixir of bon-bons. It represents the joy of being alive, the presence of beauty, usually of birth, occasionally of brains, but always wealth, and with it every opportunity for fastidious delight. Breathed through the newspapers, the atmosphere seems a trifle heady. One fancies it to be the real air of the heights, a compound of the exhilarant and the sedative, the mixture of oscillant suavities, ambient harmonies and exalting refinements fused into one. When it does not happen to be otherwise such is the case. Society is the happy hunting-ground of the elect.

Society in New York, in Boston, in Philadelphia, and in Baltimore is relatively the same. It constitutes a free masonry of which the lodges vary but in location and importance. They differ in degrees. The object of each is identical. That object is the enjoyment of life.

These premises admitted, it becomes important to determine what there is in the Washington chapter which can so defeat that object as to induce one young woman after another to kill herself. Without entering into personalities, and putting aside the cases recited, it may be noticed that suicides of the

spiritual masters interfere. The duenna is forever at her side. Even with her brother she may not walk alone. She might be seen by third parties, who, knowing him, but not knowing her, would take her for what she is not. At the entertainments severally known as the "five o'clock" and the "white ball," she may flirt if she likes, or, rather, if she knows how, but she does so under the nose of all. There is no getting her away, talking in her ear and examining the lines in her hand. It is the married women who enjoy such attentions. The young girl passes from the schoolroom to the altar, delayed at most but by a surreptitious squeeze. The passage is made as opportunely as her people can manage. She is dowried and married in season.

The custom is not admired here, but it has its advantages. Be that as it may, the foreigner who lands in Washington finds a collection of demoiselles who are not only prettier far than any he has seen, but who possess all the liberty, sometimes much more liberty,

must be something wrong. The individual cases recited belong to the domain of private life, and as such exempt themselves from examination. It is the society that produced them which is serviceable to consider. Apart from the conglomerate and the foreign, there must be a screw loose somewhere. If it is not the heterogeneous that is at fault, it must be the climate, unless, indeed, it be possible to regard Washington as one regards Monaco—a resort to which curious passions converge, and to which the suicide gravitates. The supposition would be tenable were the other sex concerned. It would be even satisfactory. The elimination of a few political thimble-riggers, the evaporation of a little of that seam and the country would not deteriorate. Washington would even improve. But it is young girls that are concerned. In view of which, the only conclusion deducible from the premises is that a society conducted on the European plan but without European restraints, must in certain natures produce a pathological condition of which suicide is the climax.

EDGAR SALTUS.

Minors in the British Army.

More than half the infantry recruits of the British army for the past year have been under 18 years old.