

by contracting AIDS by marrying a man who was suffering from the disease. She refused to allow her husband to use a condom and had unprotected sex for a year. After about a year of marriage she became pregnant and quite suddenly developed a desire to "live for my child". She now requested that her husband use a condom. After her delivery she and her son have remained negative for HIV.

Since parasuicides are usually acute events, to describe this case as a parasuicide does not appear to be a satisfactory description. Perhaps the term 'bradysuicide' (from the Greek, brady=slow) would convey the unusual aspects of this case better. This term may be defined as repeated and deliberate acts

of risk-taking behaviour with the intention of self-injury and which, if persisted in, over a period of time would gradually result in death or self-harm. By including the intention to harm oneself in the definition, other repeated acts such as substance and alcohol abuse or cigarette smoking, which may also result in self-harm, are excluded.

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ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

Kleptomania

The wealthy American lady, Mrs Castle, recently tried at Clerkenwell, and sentenced to three months' imprisonment in spite of Sir Edward Clarke's defence, has been set at liberty, but at what cost of mental anxiety to herself and to her unhappy friends. At the trial it was conclusively proved that she had no need for the articles stolen, and that her past history showed similar aberrations. Drs Savage and Gabriel are reported to have stated in court, *after she pleaded guilty*, that "she was suffering from disorders which had so mentally affected her as to render her not responsible for her actions." Is there not something very much amiss in this procedure? Is it seemly that any person should be found "guilty," and immediately thereafter, evidence should be led to mitigate or nullify the sentence? The late Committee on Criminal Responsibility

appointed by the Medico-Psychological Association excluded minor offences from their consideration; but the matter cannot rest while such cases as this recur from time to time. Is there any reason why the victims of mental disease should not be dealt with as insane offenders, why some such procedure as is prescribed by the Scottish Lunacy Act for 1862 (Sect. 15), should not be made generally applicable? By that enactment the Sheriff can, if satisfied, order and delivery of the sufferer to a friend or relative for the purpose of proper care and treatment; and thus in open court or *in camera* obviate the scandals following upon such incidents as we now mention.

Reference

Journal of Mental Science, January 1897, 208.

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