

**IS SUICIDE A SIN?
ROBERT G. INGERSOLL'S
FAMOUS LETTER**

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Is Suicide a Sin? Robert G. Ingersoll's Famous Letter by Robert G. Ingersoll

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**IS SUICIDE A SIN?
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Is Suicide a Sin?

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ROBERT G. INGERSOLL'S FAMOUS LETTER.

Replies by

MGR. THOS. DUCHEY, *Roman Catholic.*

NYM CRINKLE, *Feuilletonist.*

MADISON C. PETERS, *Protestant.*

WM. Q. JUDGE, *Theosophist.*

C. WILFRED MOWBRAY, *Anarchist.*

JOHN T. NAGLE, *Statistician.*

AND

Col. Ingersoll's Brilliant Rejoinder.

A Verdict of a Jury of Twelve Eminent Men of
New York.

Prefaced by a Startling Chapter,

Great Suicides of History!

SCHOPENHAUER'S CELEBRATED ESSAY
"ON SUICIDE."

Extracts from OMAR KHAYYAM, the Poet
Philosopher of Persia.

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1895, March 25.

Divinity School.

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INGERSOLL

Why, if the Soul can fling the Dust aside,
And naked on the Air of Heaven ride,
Wer't not a Shame--wer't not a Shame for him
In this clay carcase crippled to abide?

'Tis but a Tent where takes his one day's rest
A Sultan to the realm of Death addrest;
The Sultan rises, and the dark Ferrash
Strikes, and prepares it for another Guest.

GREAT SUICIDES OF HISTORY.

FAMOUS MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE
SOUGHT THE BARE BODKIN.

The other day there died in Vienna one of the greatest philanthropists of Europe, Baron Jaromir Mundy. He was rich, titled, born to the highest station. Yet he gave not only his fortune and his position, but his life as well, to the service of the poor and the suffering. He founded the great Samaritan, or Ready Aid, Society of Vienna, which has now been imitated all over the continent. He became a physician, and yet throughout his long life he never accepted a penny for all his services to the State or the people. He faced the cholera in Russia and the plague in Constantinople. His charity was cosmopolitan; it knew no bounds. When he died, he had left only the little income he had reserved for his daily needs. He was given an official burial. That is to say, he was buried in disgrace. None of the great societies of which he was a member nor the charities he had founded were represented at his fu-

neral. Nevertheless there was an immense concourse of the Viennese poor, who had learned to bless and reverence his name.

This good, this great, this Christ-like man was a suicide. He drowned himself in the Prater. He was seventy-four years old, honored and loved throughout the empire. There seemed no possible motive for his act. Yet he was perfectly sane. He had simply wearied of life.

Apparently our modern world has not yet outgrown its curious mediæval prejudice against a man who takes his own life.

Yet a complete list of the great suicides of history would include half the celebrated names of antiquity and many of the most famed of modern times. The greatest poet, the greatest orator, the greatest philosopher, the greatest general and the two most famous women of ancient times—Homer, Demosthenes, Aristotle, Hannibal, Sappho and Cleopatra, were all suicides. In this same list would be found some of the wisest, the most humane, the most heroic, the most talented, the bravest, the kindest, and the most agreeable men and women who ever lived.

Let us run down the roll.

It is recorded that Homer wandering blind through Greece and spurned by seven cities, ended his life because he could not solve the famous "fisherman's puzzle," which in the time of the Greeks answered very much to the 15-14-16 puzzle of our own day. He wrote a poem which has been translated into almost every known tongue upon earth.

In this same far-gone day on the island of Mitylene lived a woman, whose songs, after a lapse of twenty-five centuries, are still the most perfect ever written by a woman. This was Sappho. She was honored in her own day and great philosophers and celebrities came to pay her homage. But her lover proved unkind and in despair she threw herself from the Lesbian Rock. The spot is pointed out to modern travelers in the Grecian Archipelago.

For that matter, the greatest of the Greeks for five centuries were suicides. Demosthenes, whose eloquence has survived the corroding touch and gnawing tooth of time, poisoned himself with a virus which he carried in the point of a pen. Empedocles, the philosopher; grew weary of life and threw himself into the crater of Vesuvius.

Cleanthes another philosopher, was afflicted with disease. His physician prescribed severe dieting and so great was his pleasure at the surcease of pain, that he refused to eat anything whatever, and the wise man starved himself to death.

Aristarchus did likewise.

Aristotle, at whose feet the students of philosophy have sat for twenty centuries and who looked so wisely into life that his philosophy is still practically supreme, found life a burden and laid it down with his own hand.

Isocrates, who added to the lustre of Attic eloquence, facing Phillip of Macedon, chose death before surrender.

Aristides, known to history as "the Just," was

a Grecian statesman and general. His people became corrupt and could not tolerate so perfect a man. He was banished and in his lonely exile, he sought death as an end of his disappointment.

Themistocles, a brave Greek was ordered to lead Persians against his own countrymen. Rather than do it, he killed himself.

At the age of 89, the philosopher Zeno fell and broke his thumb. He construed it as an evil omen and betook himself from earth.

Mithridates, surnamed the Great, was king of Pontus. He lived to an advanced age and growing weary of life, put it aside.

Lycurgus, whose genius for government made the Sparta of history, did likewise.

In Biblical history there are many suicides.

Sampson, to revenge himself upon his enemies, pulled down the pillars of the Temple.

Saul, rather than fall into the hands of the Philistines, took his own life.

Eleazar, Ahithophel, and Judas Iscariot were all self-murderers. There were others.

Among the Romans, there was a time when suicide was almost a mania. It was a time when the republic had reached its highest stage of civilization, when poetry and art and eloquence flourished and made the name of Rome immortal. It is a remarkable fact that in the savage age of Rome there were no suicides. The latter came with civilization and culture.

Shakspeare has pictured the deaths of four of the greatest names of that day. Brutus and Cassius committed suicide when they were defeated

by Octavius Caesar. At that time the name of Brutus stood for integrity and honor and high purpose throughout the Roman world.

Marc Antony thought his mistress was unfaithful and ran himself upon his sword.

When Cleopatra heard the news, she took the asp into her bosom. It might be said in passing that Cleopatra was not an Egyptian, but a Greek. This accounts for her charm.

Cato, the Younger, was reputed a just and wise man. He was an enemy of tyrants. He fought Caesar with all his strength, fought to save the Republic from a dictatorship. When Caesar triumphed, he fell upon his sword.

Terence was among the most famous of Roman poets. He lost his collection and in despair drowned himself.

Labienus had his works condemned to be burned. He preferred death to such a humiliation.

Portia, who was the daughter of Cato, and the wife of Brutus, committed suicide by eating burning coals.

One of the greatest philosophers of that or any other time, was Seneca. His "Morals" are still read by all who admire a noble life and high, unselfish thought. He wrote much on suicide—said it was the privilege of all and the refuge of the oppressed, and when life hung heavily upon him, he chose that method of release.

Lucretius was probably the deepest thinker as well as one of the greatest poets of the Augustan age. He anticipated by eighteen centuries the theories which the discoveries of Darwin intro-