TRUE STORIES OF THE NEWS.

A PSYCOLOGICAL STUDY.

Why Edward Koenig Has Made Six Peculiar Attempts to Take His Own Life.

Edward Koenig had tried in six ways, th[illegible]said, to kill himself, and night before l[illegible]while amidst the clatter of "L" trains [illegible] the monotonous tread of home-going work-people and the cries of newsboys night was settling down over the east side, he was taken away to Eldridge station by a big policeman. Yesterday noon saw him safe, but far from sound, in ward 38 of Bellevue Hospital, the section which is set apart for the male insane.

Where Edward Koenig came from nobody [illegible], at least nobody about Frau Dittman's [illegible]ng-house at No. 143 Allen street. It [illegible] old-fashioned house, with a hump[illegible] roof of the revolutionary period, and reminds you of the days before the horse-car had come to pave the way for the more rapid and even less soulful Elevated.

After you have passed the conventional, repellant old door and traversed the formal hallway and mounted the eighteenth century stairs, there is an attic. There you are face to face with the roof. There the bricks stare at you and the gables talk to you of days bygone. Off this cheerless area next to the roof doors open. Frl. Dittman, the landlady's daughter, carries the keys.

It was in one of these little old rooms, plain and carpetless, but neat and clean as German thrift and care and scrubbing could make it, that Edward Koenig lived his lonely life. He wasn't an imposing fellow in appearance. Under medium height, with his big sandy mustache out of all proportion to his measure, Koenig was a commonplace little man whom you would never in the world have turned in the street to look at a second time.

He was a locksmith, he said. More than that nobody knew. He lived in his attic alone, and seldom or never said a word to his landlady or any of her lodgers about himself. Where he ate or when she knew knew not. He used to come down punctually on Saturday and pay his board.

The little room—and it wasn't such a bad little room, either—with all those memories of early New York and Alexander Hamilton and all of them clustering about that gable window, cost only a dollar and a half a week.

Big, blonde Frau Dittman said last night:

"Of all my lodgers he was the most quick to pay. The first one always. I never knew that he was out of his head, because I never knew enough of him. But whenever he was about and I said anything to any one else he would open his eyes and look hard at me and say, 'What was that?' I thought he was, ah—what you call, ah—"

"Suspicious?"

"Ah, yes—suspicions. He always thought they were after him."

"Thought who were after him?"

"Ach! he didn't say."

So, up in his little attic room, where the notions of old New York mingled with memories of the dear, distant Fatherland, Koenig had sat staring at the egg fire in his little stove, and at the whitewashed walls, and brooded and brooded until his head went wrong.

Maybe it was the Christmas and New Year's time which turned that poor lonely brain. Who knows?

Somewhere in the wretched history of Koenig, either in some vine-girt village of Germany or in the dingy, rattlety-bang life of the American Metropolis, he had met a woman. Nobody who has thus far come to light knows who she was. Nobody who had anything to do with Koenig knows where she is. What the story of their relationship was not a tongue can tell.

Long ago it must have been that he met the great sorrow of his life—met it and went away, like a man and a gentleman, to live it down. This is what he said about it:

"I have been lonely and alone for over ten years. I have worked day and night to make a home for the woman I loved. Suddenly I found that my health was gone, so I went away from her sight."

There is the story.

I.

He Tries Starvation.

Up in his loft, where he could hear the birds singing early of a Fall morning, Koenig began the fell task of starving himself to death. Of course, Frau Dittman knew naught of it. He never had eaten at her table. Day after day, for several days, he looked on the white walls and on such small patch of sky as he could see through the gable window. And he read the German newspaper and studied the benign face of Augusta Victoria and the stern one of Von Moltke, which he himself had pinned upon the wall.

Koenig's face was growing gaunt. Frau Dittman noticed it when, one gloomy Saturday, he passed through the hall and told her in a voice which was weak and faltering that he would have to defer the payment of the rent.

Just a little bit of a Succi was he. He went and ate, and lived and mourned, and grew crazier, though he let no soul know it.

II.

An Attempt at Suffocation.

Lying in his bed, well fed but unhappy, Koenig thought. He canvassed the whole category of suicidal methods. On the bed which Frau Dittman made every morning for the love-lorn, crazy locksmith was a blanket. Hm! That was as good a way as any, and breath was shorter than hunger.

The little gable window was closed. There was a roaring fire in the little egg stove, and Koenig lay, blanket about his head, suffocating slowly, and thinking in his crazy way about that old unhappiness for which, this time sure, he was dying.

The heat grew awful. There was no air for breath.

But afterwards Koenig said it made him sweat too much, and he didn't think it best or refined to expire from excessive perspiration. So again he yielded to circumstances and thought of his lost love, and went out and got something to eat.

But in real good earnest the memory of that girl was making a soft spot somewhere in Koenig's gray matter and he seemed to know it. That was the reason he used to look out of the tail of his eye at the landlady and ask her those strange questions about what she was saying to the other boarders. Still he worked at intervals, no one knew where. But he paid rent promptly.

III.

Before the Wheels.

There was a paragraph in the city newspapers one morning about a fellow who, in the dusk of the previous night, had thrown himself in front of an east side horse-car. The driver had turned the brake down hard, fastened the lines to the dash-rail, jumped down and lifted from the track the half-witted suicidal fool and given him a sturdy kick, and he had slunk off in the darkness.

That was the trouble with Koenig. He had enough Teutonic melancholy, but he lacked about 50 per cent. of having sufficient fibre to become a real heart-broken, gory, ghastly self-killer.

IV.

On the River's Brink.

A watchman, with broad shoulders and a substantial night stick was smoking away after midnight some weeks ago upon one of the piers which jut out and break the ebb tide and gather driftwood and stuff in the East River in the neighborhood of Fourteenth street.

Down the wharf, sneaking in the shadow of the vessels at dock half unladen, came a man. He stopped furtively when the tide washed with unwonted force against the piles of the pier. The moon was now clear and now in cloud. The land breeze, which had swept through dirty streets and alleys, blew the smoke of the watchman's pipe straight out to sea. Faintly came the midnight chimes. "To the Dickens with them!" said the watchman, who was wont to listen for them as one does for the footsteps of dear friends upon a stair.

He was watching Koenig.

For it was Koenig who was creeping there, all unwitting that he was watched. He was taking off his coat as he went along.

Koenig had a lurking desire for life. He went like a cat, with soft tread, towards the end of the dock.

A hoarse, gruff voice came out of the darkness.

"Git out o' dat. W'at yer go'n' ter do, give yerself de' worst of it?"

There was a big club brandished over Koenig's head, and he looked first at the club and then at the pale moon.

And he went home. He hadn't forgotten that girl in Germany, either. There were plenty of piers, too. But somehow, Koenig hadn't quite enough nerve.

V.

Strangulation with Socks.

In the solitude of the high chamber, again, with the door shut, Koenig was trying to take his own life. And yet——

There were towels and counterpanes and sheets and what not, there. But Koenig was afraid they really would choke him to death.

He ties his two socks together. It makes a short hitch, but there is a big knot in the middle. It may kill him. Secretly, Koenig hopes it won't.

Still he thinks of that girl in Bavaria, or Wurtenburg, or Hanover, or wherever it was, and is mindful of how unhappy it would make her, and the fatal sock is about his throat, and he is tugging and straining, but somehow he isn't putting all his locksmith's muscle into it.

And he mutters a bitter swear-word of regret, and tears the hated, useless, unhelping thing from his neck and throws it in a corner.

And he still lives. Clearly Koenig is either crazy or an arrant coward.

VI.

A Sharp Knife in Hand.

He had a little knife which he had brought from the shop. Fraulein Dittman went up to see him. The good mother had heard from one of Koenig's neighbors that the lonely fellow was ill. The girl, who has yellow Saxon hair and a great dimple in her chin, went up to see if there was anything he wanted to eat. There was blood on the pillow and she ran away. Then the old lady climbed the three antique flights of stairs.

The single chair which the little room boasted was drawn close to Herr Koenig's bed, and there was blood all over his big mustache. The old lady, too, was frightened at the sight of it all. She brought some milk and moistened Herr Koenig's lips. It did no good.

She sent the daughter for the police officer on post. He came. Koenig was well nigh raving then, and saying that he couldn't help it. The bluecoat took him to Eldridge street station. The police surgeon found that Koenig had made a cut in his nose, another on his wrist, safely remote from any important artery, and that at the last, in sheer despair, and yet in a madman's coward hope of death, he had bitten, bitten, bitten at his wrist and forearm.

. . . . . .

Probably the "woman he loved" is wisely married, and her face gets red over the ironing board, and she nurses some other man's children in the Fatherland, and sings softly lullabys at eventide.

But the walls of ward 38 echo the gibberish of Koenig, and the workmen in some locksmith's shop wonder what has become of that little fellow with the big mustache.

And the attic room at No. 143 Allen street is to let.