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Gossip of The Day

No one-track man was J. W. N. Sullivan, who has died, aged 51, of a painful disease, writes William Hickey in the "Daily Express." His main track was science, especially mathematics. But at different times in his life he suddenly developed passions for other paths of learning, pursued them whole-heartedly.

Like many mathematicians, he thought much of music. He looked a little like Beethoven. He wrote a book about him.

Sullivan was in youth a powerful heavy-weight boxer.

Another of his many interests: beer. He was a great drinker (I use "great" admiringly.)

Once at the Dome in Paris, noted Bohemian café, he drank 44 steins of light beer. He was not drunk.

Once, in Berlin, he found that 14 heavy beers *had* affected him slightly. So he ate a lot of goulash, rested for two hours, was then able to drink 17 more.

He might not have died if he had undergone treatment rigorously. But he hated doctors as much as he hated all other professional hierarchies; rarely kept appointments with them.

Years ago he spent some time at the "Abbey" in Sicily run by magician Aleister Crowley; came round to some extent to the view that some phenomena cannot be explained by "pure science."

He is bracketed with Jeans and Eddington.

His odd quasi-autobiography, "But for the Grace of God," showed a great, disturbed, not wholly satisfied mind. It was nearly a first-class mind.